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MPs slam assault of Kuwaiti students

Kuwait condemns beating by Egyptian security men • Lawmakers firm on debt relief

Crown Prince receives outgoing GCC chief



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives outgoing GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf at Bayan Palace on Sunday. HH Sheikh Mishal praised Dr Hajraf's great and sincere efforts during his tenure as he supported joint Gulf action, unity and solidarity, wishing him good health and continued success. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs on Sunday vented anger over the reported beating of several Kuwaiti students by Egyptian security guards, vowing they will raise the issue during the National Assembly session on Tuesday. The lawmakers were upset mainly at a statement issued by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo, which blamed the students for quarreling and called on them to respect Egyptian laws. Some MPs demanded the removal of the ambassador.

The Kuwaiti students were first involved in a fist-fight among themselves at a commercial mall in Alexandria. They were separated by Egyptian security, who beat them in public. The students were later interrogated by police and freed. The Kuwaiti foreign ministry later issued another statement in which it strongly criticized Egyptian security men for beating the students and called on authorities to investigate. The ministry also called the Egyptian ambassador in the country and called for a probe.

The statement said Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Mansour Al-Otaibi communicated with Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout, calling on Egyptian authorities to take official and legal action. The Kuwaiti official also called on Egyptian authorities to carry out investigations into the case, bring the perpetrators to accountability and take necessary measures to deter such unac-

ceptable individual behaviors that do not reflect fraternal relations between Kuwait and Egypt. The Kuwaiti official told the Egyptian ambassador that the foreign ministry, in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo, would follow up the required action to be taken by Egyptian authorities.

MP Hamad Al-Matar said he will file a motion at the start of the session demanding a debate on the incident, adding that the assault on Kuwaiti students should be condemned by the foreign ministry, which should demand the security men be penalized. He also called on the foreign ministry to summon the Egyptian ambassador.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said the foreign ministry must deal with the Kuwaiti envoy in Cairo because he condemned the students rather than assisting them. He said that the fighting among the students does not give anyone the right to beat them. MP Khaled Al-Otaibi criticized the attack and also blasted the Kuwaiti ambassador for blaming the students.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun sent out the agenda of the regular sessions for Tuesday and Wednesday, which are expected to debate crucial issues, including a draft law calling on the government to purchase over KD 14 billion in bank loans owed by Kuwaiti citizens. MP Faisal Al-Kandari said the issue is very

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Migrants, drugs on agenda as Biden heads to Mexico



US President Joe Biden boards Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on Jan 8, 2023. — AFP

MEXICO CITY: US President Joe Biden will seek Mexico's help tackling illegal flows of migrants and drugs, particularly deadly opioids, during a visit beginning Sunday for a North American leaders' summit. Aiming to tame criticism over what he has called a "broken" immigration system, Biden will stop off in the southern US state of Texas for his first trip to a border overwhelmed by record numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers.

Previewing his trip on Twitter, the president spoke late Saturday of the "need to expand legal pathways for orderly immigration," adding: "We can do this all while limiting illegal immigration". The issue seems certain to top the agenda when Biden meets Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on Monday, a day before Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joins them for the so-called "Three Amigos" summit.

Another priority for Biden - who boarded Air Force One mid-morning Sunday bound for his first stop, the Texas border city of El Paso - is stepping up joint efforts to fight trafficking of fentanyl and

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Qatar, Chevron to build \$6bn plastics plant

DOHA: Qatar signed a \$6 billion deal with Chevron Phillips Chemical on Sunday to build a plant including the biggest ethane cracker in the Middle East, converting natural gas into polyethylene and other plastics. The Ras Laffan Petrochemicals Complex, which will produce 2.1 million tons of ethylene a year along with 1.7 million tons of polyethylene derivatives, will come on stream in 2026.

The complex will have "lower

waste and greenhouse gas emissions" than similar facilities around the world, said Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, Qatar's energy minister and the CEO of QatarEnergy. QatarEnergy has a 70 percent equity share in the joint venture with Texas-based Chevron Phillips taking the other 30 percent. "This marks QatarEnergy's largest investment ever in Qatar's petrochemicals sector and the first direct investment in 12 years," Kaabi said at a signing ceremony in Doha.

Ras Laffan will double Qatar's ethylene production capacity and increase its polymer output from 2.6 million tons to more than four million tons a year. Overall, Qatar's petrochemical production capacity will rise

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China ends quarantine for arrivals

BEIJING: China lifted quarantine requirements for inbound travelers on Sunday, ending almost three years of self-imposed isolation even as the country battles a surge in COVID cases. The first people to arrive expressed relief at not having to undergo the grueling quarantines that were a fixture of life in zero-COVID China.

And in Hong Kong, where the border

with mainland China was re-opened after years of closure, more than 400,000 people were set to travel north in the coming eight weeks. Chinese people rushed to plan trips abroad after officials last month announced that quarantine would be dropped, sending inquiries on popular travel websites soaring. But the expected surge in visitors has led more than a dozen countries to impose mandatory COVID tests on travelers from the world's most populous nation as it battles its worst-ever outbreak. China's outbreak is forecast to worsen as it enters the Lunar New Year holiday this month, during which millions are expected to travel from hard-hit megacities to the countryside to visit vulnerable older relatives. — AFP (See Page 5)

Residents of 'sinking' Indian town evacuated

DEHRADUN, India: Authorities in one of the holiest towns in the Indian Himalayas were evacuating panicked residents Sunday after hundreds of houses began developing yawning cracks and sinking, officials said. The cause of the apparent subsidence in Joshimath in the northern state of Uttarakhand was

unclear, but residents blamed the building of roads and tunnels for a nearby hydroelectric project.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called a high-level meeting for later Sunday to discuss the problem after the government formed an expert panel to carry out a "rapid study" into the cause. Local official Himanshu Khurana told AFP that at least 60 families had been relocated into shelters and many more were likely to be shifted out from their sinking dwellings. Residents said a much larger number had already fled their homes and that around 600 houses and hotels were sinking in the town of around 20,000 people.

Another official said on condition of anonymity

that several areas in the town had been "demarcated unsafe" and entry restricted. "People are deeply worried. The fear is that the town is sinking," he said as helicopters surveyed the area. Many locals have been forced to sleep out in the freezing cold and said they had been warning authorities for weeks and in some cases months about cracks in buildings and roads, some of which were oozing brown muddy water.

Around 1,800 m above sea level, Joshimath is a major gateway to a number of important religious sites in the Himalayas, attracting thousands of pilgrims every year.

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DOHA: Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, Qatar's Energy Minister and CEO of QatarEnergy, and Bruce Chinn, CEO of Chevron Phillips Chemical, attend a signing ceremony at the QatarEnergy headquarters on Jan 8, 2023. — AFP



SHANGHAI: A passenger receives a hug while leaving the arrival area of international flights at Shanghai Pudong International Airport on Jan 8, 2023. — AFP



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Local

Amir, Crown Prince,
PM congratulate
Kuwaiti surgeon

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated Creighton University Hospital's new head surgeon Dr Waddah Al-Rifai, who was recently appointed as head of the technical research department at the University. His Highness commended Dr Al-Rifai's profoundly accumulated knowledge to be head such a position of responsibility, while also wishing him a prosperous journey. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also congratulated Dr Al-Rifai on his new position. —KUNA

FM meets
IISS chief

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah held talks on Sunday with visiting Executive Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) - Middle East Sir Tom Beckett. During the talks, the Kuwaiti top diplomat commended IISS for its contributions towards research on defense policy and planning in the wider Middle East region, while they also exchanged viewpoints on current developments around the world. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah holds talks on Sunday with visiting Executive Director the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) - Middle East Sir Tom Beckett. —KUNA

PM meets economic
ensemble members

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Sunday head and members of the economic ensemble made up by several state entities. The reception focused on issues connected with the development of Kuwait's national economy. The Prime Minister's Diwan, in a press release, said that the ensemble would seek the assistance of Kuwaiti experts to look into venues of economic development.

The ensemble is one of the Diwan's strategic initiatives aimed at a prosperous future under the guidance of the Kuwaiti leadership. It was tasked by the Prime Minister to look into matters of financial, economic, and developmental importance, affirmed the statement, noting that its experts would contribute to the realization of Kuwait's Vision 2035. —KUNA

Costs of recruiting domestic workers fall sharply in Kuwait

Recruitment offices say they are committed to honor government fee list

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: After a significant decrease in the cost of recruiting domestic workers of various nationalities recently, Kuwait Times spoke with several domestic labor offices to learn more. Mohammad, who works at a domestic labor recruitment office, said the market has seen few applications submitted for the recruitment of workers, adding that starting from January 2023, his office lowered its fees for recruiting new domestic workers.

"The cost of recruiting domestic workers from the Philippines will be KD 700, including the flight ticket, while that of cooks and drivers will be KD 180 with tickets," he said. He said hiring charges for domestic workers from Sri Lanka will be KD 650, excluding the ticket, indicating the office will guarantee the domestic worker for six months from the dates of arrival.

Head of the Union of Domestic Labor Offices Khaled Al-Dekhanan explained to Kuwait Times that the lower fees for recruiting domestic workers is due to the circumstances some offices are going through. He affirmed that domestic labor offices are committed to the price list by the ministry of commerce and industry which set a recruitment fee of KD 890.

Khalid Amro confirmed the information given by Dekhanan, stating that the fees for recruiting a

domestic worker through the office is KD 890, including airfare, but the price for recruiting a domestic worker when the employer presents the passport to the office is KD 390, according to ministerial resolution no. 33 issued on Feb 1, 2021. The law for the establishment of domestic labor offices stipulates that the company should train and qualify workers in specialized institutions before they enter the country and take all necessary steps, including for the safety of workers, and ensure they are free of any diseases.

Issa Mansour, one of the owners of domestic labor offices, said reducing fees is not an option, saying even the fees set by the ministry of commerce need to be amended. "Domestic labor offices aren't greedy. Huge sums are paid by the office to recruit workers from their countries for transportation, housing and meals. It is a cost borne by the office and exceeds the amount determined by the ministry of commerce," he said.

According to the Central Statistical Bureau,



Khaled Dekhanan



KUWAIT: A woman waits at the office of a manpower recruitment agency in Kuwait in this file photo. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

domestic workers make up the lion's share of expatriate workers in Kuwait, as the number of domestic workers at the end of the first half of 2022 reached around 750,000, or 37.5 percent of the total expatriate workers in the country. Earlier, Mubarak Al-Azmi, former Director

General of the Public Authority of Manpower, stressed all executive decisions issued by the authority provide effective protection for workers in accordance with the standards and agreements of Kuwait, especially with regards to their financial rights.

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Al-Baghli holds talks with Chinese envoy

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Social Affairs Minister May Al-Baghli held talks on Sunday with China's Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei, focusing

on issues of common concern, in addition to bilateral relations.

Kuwait and China are both eager to improve bilateral ties across numerous fields, chiefly political and economic cooperation, the Kuwaiti minister and the Chinese envoy were both cited as saying in a statement. The Chinese ambassador went on to express his appreciation for the opportunities given to the Chinese diaspora in Kuwait, added the statement. —KUNA

Gold prices reach highest level in six months in December

KUWAIT: Gold prices climbed to their highest level in six months last week at \$1,875 an ounce, stated a report on Sunday, mentioning that this coincides with release of American employment statistics. The report, issued by Kuwaiti Dar Al-Sabaek Company, attributed the rise of gold prices to the slowing pace of American employment last December where the price reached \$1,867 per ounce.

Head of strategic planning at the company, Adel Al-Fadhli, explained that American employment statistics affect the American Federal Reserve's interest rate. Al-Fadhli further added that employment rate in the US slowed down slightly last December with 223,000 jobs compared to November's 256,000. The waning of wage pressures is one of the main factors affecting gold price positively, indicating that infla-



tion is diminishing while income average increases on annual basis with 4.6 percent last month, less than market expectations of five percent. The US dollar index stabilized at 105.22 points whereas the treasury's 10-year bonds remained at 3.72 percent.

As for the local market, the report mentioned that the price for 22 carat gold reached KD 18.37 per gram and the 24 carat gold reached KD 16.84 per gram. —KUNA

Local

Zain joins Watheefti, Kuwait's biggest career gathering

Company showcases job opportunities to attract national talents

Watheefti features over 14 sectors and over 80 companies to serve over 15,000 job seekers

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, joined Watheefti, the biggest career gathering in the nation. The event was held during the weekend at the Arena Kuwait under the patronage of Deputy First Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Zain was present at the event's opening ceremony, attended by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Mojel, who represented the event's patron, as well as National Assembly Member Abdullah Al-Mudhaf, Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeeh, and Zain's HR team.

Zain is always eager to participate in career fairs all year round as part of its Human Resources strategy, through which it contributes to enrich the local job market, exchange experiences, and offer career opportunities to students, fresh graduates, and those who are looking for their next career journey. The company is keen on offering job seekers with career opportunities that best suit their skills, competencies, and passion to progress national economy and increase national talent representation in the

Kuwaiti private sector. The company was present at Watheefti to present its available job vacancies, introduce visitors to its leading experience in the telecom sector, and share its internal policy and wonderful workplace environment. Zain's team also provided a detailed explanation of the nature of work at various departments and divisions and answered questions and inquiries.

Watheefti is considered Kuwait's biggest career gathering, having featured over 14 sectors and over 80 companies to serve over 15,000 job seekers. The event also featured many seminars, workshops, and panels that discussed some of the most essential topics to help those who are just beginning their careers. Topics included career excellence, leadership, decision making, getting ready for job interviews, self-empowerment, workplace culture, and more. Zain is committed to playing an active role in the investment in the human capital of Kuwait. The company seeks to provide young and eager Kuwaitis with job opportunities that allow them to apply their talents, achieve their potential, and fully develop their capabilities.



KUWAIT: Abdulaziz Al-Mojel and Abdullah Al-Mudhaf with Hamad Al-Musaibeeh and Zain's HR team at the company's booth.



Cosmetic surgery ads: Youngsters at mental health risk

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Advertisements of cosmetic surgery procedures could negatively affect the mental health of young people in Kuwait, a psychology expert says.

The large billboard ads dotting the streets of Kuwait all year round, while advertising for cosmetic services, are also sending young people a message: you are not worthy if you don't match society's beauty standards. Gracing the ads are pictures of women who arguably represent those standards - all with perfectly sculpted features, fair skin, full lips and almond eyes.

Dr Hassan Al-Mousawi said the consistent exposure to these images, whether on the streets or in social media, might result in a skewed perception of beauty among young women, often leading to more serious mental disorders, from anxiety to self-harm. The unrealistic beauty standards not only put women at risk, he said, but also men who have been recently going under the knife more frequently compared to previous years.

The more people view these images, the more likely they will subconsciously internalize that their value as people lies within their appearance and not their character traits and behaviors, said Al-Mousawi. These beliefs could lead them to jump from one procedure to the next, continuously changing their appearance in hopes of reaching an unattainable ideal. Al-Mousawi emphasized that the threat comes from procedures done only for the sake of fitting into a trend, not those prescribed for a medically-necessary reason.

He added that it is only human nature to always be on the lookout for ways to become better at everything, but it is much more valuable for young people to utilize their energy in expanding their horizons through travel and education or in improving their interpersonal skills.

That's where the role of parents and guardians comes in, Al-Mousawi said. Ensuring that young people have high self-esteem begins from a young age. For one, parents shouldn't compare their children's appearance to that of their friends, relatives, or even popular child-celebrities. Instead, they must focus on helping them learn new skills that build character and expose them to experiences that allow them to develop interests beyond their looks.

If families and the society do not step up to educate young people about the hazards of comparing themselves to the images they see on social media, Al-Mousawi said he fears the comparison could exacerbate existing societal issues, such as high divorce rates and infidelity.

National Guard hails MoU with UK defense ministry

KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf said development of human resources and providing support to soldiers is important with regards to gaining certifications from elite military academies.

Sheikh Faisal expressed his happiness on the achievements of graduates from Sandhurst College, which reflects the Guard's insistence to achieve exceptional levels and represent the Guard in good light. "This reflects the success of the National Guard and the memorandum of understanding between the National Guard and the British defense ministry over defense cooperation and exchange of expertise," he added.



Kuwait finances housing project for Yemeni IDPs. —KUNA

Kuwait finances housing project for Yemeni IDPs

ADEN: Yemeni Marib Province's Deputy Governor Mohammed Al-Mawadhi laid Saturday the cornerstone of a housing project for displaced families funded by the Kuwaiti Mansour Al-Khulaifi endowment and super-

vised over by Tanmia Charity.

In a press statement, Al-Mawadhi said the project consists of 60 housing units. He expressed deep appreciation and gratitude for Kuwait's role in this relief and development projects. "These types of interventions are a direct help in alleviating the sufferings of the displaced" and a direct solution to a humanitarian crisis, Al-Mawadhi said in a press statement. Director of the unit managing the camps accommodating the displaced, Saif Muthani, confirmed that this project "is a type of humanitarian intervention" to save the lives of the displaced people and protect them harsh weather. —KUNA

Lulu Group's Yusuff Ali meets new Indian Ambassador

KUWAIT: Yusuff Ali MA, Chairman of Lulu Group International has called on Dr Adarsh Swaika, the new Indian Ambassador to Kuwait. During a meeting held at the embassy last week, Yusuff Ali welcomed the new envoy to the State of Kuwait and conveyed greetings for a successful tenure.

The Ambassador was briefed by Yusuff Ali about Lulu's expansion plan in Kuwait. Also present on the occasion were Smita Patil, First Secretary (Political & Commerce), Mohamed Haris, Lulu Kuwait Director, S Sreejith, Lulu Kuwait Regional Director and other officials. Indian Ambassador Dr Swaika, an officer of 2002-batch of Indian Foreign Service, holds a Ph D Degree in Chemistry from Delhi University. Prior to his appointment in Kuwait, Ambassador Swaika has served at the Indian diplomatic missions in Russia, Bulgaria, China and Bangladesh.



KUWAIT: Dr Adarsh Swaika being presented a memento by Yusuff Ali MA in the presence of Smita Patil, Mohamed Haris and S Sreejith.

Girl Guides hold peace camp

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Girls Guide Association, under the sponsorship of the education ministry, organized a celebratory peace camp on its 26th anniversary under the slogan "With you we grow and with you we prosper". "The credit goes to all departments in the ministry which ensured the best ways to develop the skills of young students, while other ministries are cooperating as well. The peace camp was the best conclusion for the events and activities that will have lasting memories and a great impact on volunteer and guidance work in Kuwait," Acting Undersecretary of the ministry Faisal Al-Maqseed said.

"The KGGa movement is a developmental educational movement that ensures development of young girls. They start their development in kindergarten until they are prepared after graduation to start their professional careers. We all aim to open doors for girls in order to hone their abilities through workshops and lectures, and are working to achieve sustainable development in cooperation with members of the UN," Head of the association Hind Al-Houli said.

Amal Al-Awadhi, official at the ministry, said: "After a hiatus of two years due to the COVID pandemic, we have thankfully come back to help achieve the dreams of our young girls in order to provide all that helps the growth of education and achieves prosperity."

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YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

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COMMERCIAL : 24835618
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

News in brief

1,900 alcohol bottles
seized at Shuwaikh Port

KUWAIT: Kuwait Customs seized 1,900 bottles of alcohol hidden in a container of ceramics that arrived from an Asian country. "The 40-ft container arrived from an Asian country and was not collected for 90 days. So customs followed procedures by sending the container for public auction, where inspectors found the bottles hidden inside," the customs announced.

KPS: Pharmacists deserve
allowance for overtime

KUWAIT: Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society insisted pharmacists deserve allowances including overtime and training during off days to be equitable with their colleagues in other medical professions. The Civil Service Commission asked to not allow these allowances as well as to add a decision which allows the health minister to practice all authorities given to the CSC. "The minister showed his understanding for the request and promised to discuss the issue, as the CSC has been contacted to discuss the cadre," the society announced.

Kuwait dinar remains
stable against dollar

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar Sunday remained stable at KD 0.306, and the Euro went up by 0.30 percent to KD 0.325, compared with Thursday, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). CBK added in its daily bulletin that the British Pound Sterling went up by 0.43 percent to reach KD 0.370, the Swiss Franc by 0.18 percent to reach KD 0.330 and the Japanese Yen remained stable at KD 0.002. The currency exchange rates as declared by CBK reflect average rates, not actual trade. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: This picture taken on January 8, 2023, from Kuwait City shows a view of the sun and the sunspot regions, AR3182, AR3181 and AR3183 (left) and AR3180 (right).
—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Growing number of road accidents linked to drug use: Kuwaiti surgeon

Stiffened penalties for law breakers may help rein in traffic accidents

KUWAIT: There is an increasing relationship between narcotic abuse and injuries caused by traffic accidents in Kuwait, said an orthopedic surgeon on Sunday. In an exclusive interview with KUNA, Consultant and head of the orthopedic ward at Al-Razi Hospital Dr Mishal Al-Hadhoud said that driving under the influence of drugs was becoming more predominant in recent years.

Some illicit drugs increase violent tendencies and having that on the road was extremely hazardous, he affirmed,

noting that injuries caused by traffic accidents related to drug abuse were horrific.

Despite no clear-cut correlation between drug abuse and traffic accidents, there were an increasing number of accidents due to driving under the influence in Kuwait, indicating the doctor who gave a rough estimate. In this context, the Kuwaiti doctor pointed out that it is uneasy to check patients' drug use since this matter requires necessary pieces of legislation and laws.

He noted that some countries have stiffened penalties for traffic law-breakers as a successful approach for reining in recklessness and over-speed in a bid to ensure the safety of people, given rapidly rising car accidents. The physician called for establishing a registry to state the cause of accidents in Kuwait to have a better picture of the situation and determine what was needed in terms of laws and preventative measures to curb the number of accidents caused by drug abuse. —KUNA



Dr Mishal Al-Hadhoud



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Borgan Bank takes part in Kuwait's largest job fair: Watheefti

KUWAIT: In a major recruitment initiative, Borgan Bank recently participated in Watheefti, the largest career fair of its kind in the country, which took place at The Arena Kuwait. This event served as an important initiative with which Borgan Bank kicked off the new year: once again reaffirming its commitment to human capital development and the investment in national talents.

Considered one of the biggest recruitment gatherings in Kuwait, Watheefti witnessed remarkable participation from some of the biggest names and brands, from both the public and private sectors. These companies were on hand to help aspiring young professionals explore the available job opportunities in the market. Workshops were also organized throughout the duration of the exhibition, featuring a large number of experts across various fields, including employment, work relations, communication and internal cultures.

In a move highlighting Borgan's commitment to ESG, the Bank's entire recruitment process at the booth was paperless, with applications fully done digitally. Booth visitors also received special giveaways which included small plants, symbolizing growth and the Bank's dedication to sustainability. Moreover, the booth showcased the Borgan Sidra; the Bank's overarching philosophy and community initiative which seeks to celebrate and foster Kuwaiti talents - from customers, to employees, to trailblazers across every sector, all the way to the community at large.

Halah El Sherbini, Group Chief Human

Resources and Development Officer at Borgan Bank, spoke of the Bank's participation in this mega event, saying: "Borgan Bank is excited to begin the new year with a renewed commitment to investing in people and talents. We continue to be focused on our efforts to support, nurture, and develop young Kuwaitis - helping them achieve career success. We are proud to say that we have always been market leaders and early adopters when it comes to human resources. Our investment in talent is long-term and mutual. We seek to attract and acquire the best talent our Kuwaiti market has to offer; by providing exciting, rewarding and exciting career opportunities with a clear path of growth and development."

On the other hand, Abdulwahab Abdullaheem, Senior Recruitment Manager at Borgan Bank, said: "We spare no effort when it comes to supporting Kuwaiti talents. This includes actively participating in all forums, exhibitions and events that contribute to the development of our future generation of business and community leaders. Our participation in Watheefti underlines our whole-hearted commitment to talent acquisition in the long-run. This exhibition was a great opportunity for young men and women who are getting ready to begin their careers to openly explore the job market - and understand what it has to offer. This interactive and engaging platform allowed for a more transparent, informed and empowered recruitment process, ultimately leading to better career choices and better hiring choices." It should be noted that Borgan Bank continues to support and nurture young Kuwaiti talents with a comprehensive program of activities and initiatives. The bank is always keen on creating excellent job opportunities, which contributes to the long-term, sustainable development of the banking sector on the one hand, and the national economy on the other.



Filipinos march in reverence of Catholic icon

Iran's regime divided on how to tackle protests



BEIJING: Flight attendants walk at the arrival area at the Beijing Capital International Airport in Beijing on January 8, 2023. —AFP

China ends quarantine for travellers

Chinese rush to plan trips abroad on popular travel websites

BEIJING: China lifted quarantine requirements for inbound travellers on Sunday, ending almost three years of self-imposed isolation even as the country battles a surge in COVID cases.

The first people to arrive expressed relief at not having to undergo the gruelling quarantines that were a fixture of life in zero-COVID China.

And in Hong Kong, where the border with mainland China was re-opened after years of closure, more than 400,000 people were set to travel north in the coming eight weeks.

Beijing last month began a dramatic dismantling of a hardline zero-COVID strategy that had enforced mandatory quarantines and punishing lockdowns. The policy had a huge impact on the world's second-biggest economy and generated resentment throughout society that led to nationwide protests just before it was eased.

At Shanghai's Pudong International Airport, a woman surnamed Pang told AFP Sunday she was thrilled with the ease of travel. "I think it's really good that the policy has changed now, it's really humane," she told AFP.

"It's a necessary step I think. COVID has become normalised now and after this hurdle everything will be smooth," she said.

Chinese people rushed to plan trips abroad after officials last month announced that quarantine would be dropped, sending inquiries on popular travel websites soaring.

But the expected surge in visitors has led more than a dozen countries to impose mandatory COVID tests on travellers from the world's most populous nation as it battles its worst-ever outbreak. China has called travel curbs imposed by other countries "unacceptable", despite it continuing to largely block foreign tourists and international students from travelling to the country.

China's COVID outbreak is forecast to worsen as it enters the Lunar New Year holiday this month, during which millions are expected to travel from hard-hit megacities to the countryside to visit vulnerable older relatives.

And Beijing has moved to curb criticism of its chaotic path out of zero-COVID, with its Twitter-like Weibo service saying it had recently

banned 1,120 accounts for "offences against experts and scholars".

'We just walked out'

At Beijing airport Sunday, barriers that once kept international and domestic arrivals apart were gone, as were the "big whites"—staff in hazmat suits long a fixture of life in zero-COVID China.

One woman, there to greet a friend arriving from Hong Kong, said the first thing they'd do was grab a meal. "It's so great, we haven't seen each other in so long," Wu, 20, told AFP.

"They are studying over there, and we can meet each other directly in Beijing... It's been a year," she added. At Shanghai airport, one man surnamed Yang who was arriving from the United States said he had not been aware that the rules had changed. "I had no idea," he told AFP.

"I'd consider myself extremely lucky if I only need to do quarantine for two days, turned out I don't have to do quarantine at all, and no paperwork, we just walked out like that, exactly like in the past," he added.

"I'm quite happy not needing to be in quarantine," another woman being picked up by her boyfriend who declined to give her name told AFP. "Who wants to be in quarantine? Nobody."

Hong Kong opens

In China's southern semi-autonomous city of Hong Kong, visitors streamed across the border as travel restrictions with the Chinese mainland were eased. Hong Kong's recession-hit economy is desperate to reconnect with its biggest source of growth, and families are looking forward to reunions over the Lunar New Year.

Official data showed some 410,000 people in Hong Kong planned to travel north in the next two months, while some 7,000 people in the mainland planned to travel south on Sunday.

At the Lok Ma Chau checkpoint near Shenzhen, a postgraduate student from mainland China surnamed Zeng told AFP they were happy to cross with no more restrictions. "I am happy as long as I don't have to be quarantined—it was so unbearable," Zeng said. — AFP



KAFFRINE: A general view of the scene of a bus accident in Kaffrine, central Senegal, on January 8, 2023 where at least 40 people have died and scores were injured when two buses collided. — AFP

40 killed in Senegal bus disaster

DAKAR: Forty people were killed and 85 were injured when two buses crashed in a head-on collision overnight on an arterial road in Senegal's central Kaffrine region, the government said on Sunday. Images of the incident showed the completely mangled front end of a white bus, with blood-flecked seats, personal items and a shoe strewn around the tree-lined crash site.

Road accidents are common in Senegal, largely because of driver error, poor roads and decrepit vehicles, say experts, but the latest disaster has caused one of the heaviest losses of life from a single incident in recent years.

In a statement, the government announced three days of national mourning beginning Monday, with flags to be flown at half-mast throughout the country. President Macky Sall will visit the crash site just outside of the village of Sikilo on Sunday, it said.

"In view of this tragedy, the head of state extends his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured," the government said. Public prosecutor, Cheikh Dieng, said in a statement that early investigations suggested a public passenger bus suffered a burst tyre and swerved off course. It then crashed "head-on with another bus coming in the opposite direction", he said.

'Tragic'

The statement said the incident happened around 0330 GMT. It is "a tragic accident," Kaffrine mayor Abdoulaye Saidou Sow, who is also the Minister of Urbanism, told AFP. Speaking from Kaffrine, he said President Sall would be joined there by the prime minister and several other ministers on Sunday.

Opposition politician Ousmane Sonko announced on Twitter that he would postpone a scheduled fundraising program in light of the accident. "We bow before the memory of the deceased, offer our very sincere condolences to their grieving loved ones and to all Senegalese and pray for the merciful rest of their souls as well as a speedy recovery for the injured", he said.

Colonel Cheikh Fall, who heads operations for the National Fire Brigade, told AFP the victims were taken to a hospital and medical centre in Kaffrine. The wreckage has since been cleared and normal traffic has resumed on the road, he said. The governor and local officials have visited the scene, he added. In a tweet, President Sall said that after the period of national mourning finished, a government council will be held to "take firm measures on road safety".

In October 2020, at least 16 people were killed and 15 more injured when a bus collided with a refrigerated lorry in western Senegal. The bus, with a 60-seat capacity, was heading to Rosso near the border with Mauritania, the fire brigade said, adding that the number of people onboard was unknown. Local media said at the time that the truck was hauling fish to Dakar. —AFP

46 Ivorian soldiers return home after Mali pardon

BAMAKO: Forty-six Ivorian soldiers detained in Mali since July arrived home late Saturday, according to an AFP reporter at the airport, a day after they were pardoned by the neighbouring country's junta. The troops, whose detention triggered a bitter diplomatic row between the countries, were arrested on July 10, 2022, after arriving in the Malian capital Bamako.

Mali accused them of being mercenaries, while Ivory Coast and the United Nations say they were flown in to provide routine backup security for the German contingent of the UN peacekeeping mission. On Saturday, the 46 arrived at an airport in the Ivorian economic capital Abidjan.

After their plane landed at 11:40 pm (2340 GMT), the uniformed soldiers disembarked one by one, each brandishing a small Ivorian flag. They were greeted by President Alassane Ouattara before entering the presidential pavilion at the airport where their families were waiting for them.

Ouattara said he hoped the two countries could move on from the diplomatic spat. "Now that this crisis is behind us, we can resume normal relations with the brother country of Mali, which needs us and which we also need," he said in a speech at the airfield. A spokesman for the soldiers thanked Ouattara, and "the Ivorian people for their support and active solidarity".

"We are happy and relieved to return to the motherland," he said. On December 30, a Bamako court sentenced the soldiers to 20 years in prison, while three women among the original 49 arrested received death sentences in absentia. They were convicted of an "attack and conspiracy against the government" and of seeking to undermine state security, public prosecutor Ladj Sara said at the time. The sentence came in the run-up to a January 1 deadline set by leaders from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for Mali to release the soldiers or face sanctions. But on Friday, Mali's junta leader Assimi Goita pardoned all 49.

Diplomatic efforts

An Ivorian delegation had travelled to Mali for talks before the trial opened, and the Ivorian defence ministry had said the dispute was "on the way to being resolved". An agreement reached between Mali and Ivory Coast at the time had left open the possibility of a presidential pardon.

The Malian government on Friday cited a memo-



ABIDJAN: One of the 46 Ivorian soldiers who was arrested in July and condemned by Malian justice, and pardoned by the president of the transition Assimi Goita, is welcomed by his parents after a ceremony at Abidjan airport. — AFP

randum of understanding the two countries had signed "on the promotion of peace and the strengthening of relations of friendship, brotherhood and good neighbourliness between the Republic of Mali and the Republic of Ivory Coast".

It also thanked Togo's President Faure Gnassingbe, who mediated in the row, but denounced the "aggressive position" of ECOWAS leader Umaro Sissoco Embalo.

Long-standing tensions

Relations between Mali and its West African neighbours were strained before the arrests, since elected president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was toppled in August 2020 by officers angered at failures to end a jihadist insurgency.

Ivorian President Ouattara is considered one of the most intransigent West African leaders towards Mali's junta. After the troops were detained, the UN acknowledged some procedural "dysfunctions" in a note addressed to the Malian government, saying that "certain measures have not been followed".

The Ivorian presidency also admitted "shortcomings and misunderstandings". But the row escalated in September, when diplomatic sources in the region said Mali wanted Ivory Coast to acknowledge its responsibility and express regret for deploying the soldiers. Bamako also wanted Ivory Coast to hand over people who had been on its territory since 2013 but who are wanted in Mali, they said. Ivory Coast rejected both demands and was prepared for extended negotiations to free the troops, the sources said. — AFP

International

Maduro hosts Colombia's Petro for 'very fruitful' talks

Venezuela 'will support Colombian govt in its goal to maintain bilateral ceasefire'

CARACAS: Colombia's President Gustavo Petro made a surprise trip to meet his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro on Saturday—their second face-to-face after the thawing of a years-long diplomatic freeze.

The two leaders held talks for about three hours in Caracas at the Miraflores presidential palace, where Petro-Colombia's first leftist president-arrived around midday. The summit came just days after the final reopening of the South American neighbors' shared border, closed in a spat over Maduro's disputed 2018 reelection.

Since taking office in August, Petro's government has worked to mend diplomatic ties with Caracas. Venezuela has also served as a key facilitator for Petro as he seeks to fulfill a campaign promise of establishing "total peace" with the armed groups still active in Colombia, some of which operate along the two countries' porous border.

At the end of 2022, Petro seemed to have made major progress on that front, announcing a bilateral ceasefire with five armed groups that would last from January 1 to June 30. But one of the groups, the ELN, said just three days later that it had not entered into any such deal, and the government conceded later that nothing had been signed.

A joint statement released after the Maduro-Petro meeting Saturday said that Venezuela "will support the Colombian government in its goal to maintain the bilateral ceasefire." It also said that the

two leaders celebrated "the progress achieved in the opening of the border bridges" and that they hoped to reach a future agreement on the "reciprocal promotion and protection of investments."

'Very fruitful meeting'

Petro shook hands with Maduro and left the palace without speaking to the media. "We had a comprehensive and very fruitful meeting," Maduro tweeted after the meeting. "We have a clear path of shared work that will continue to give positive results for our countries, in different areas. Long live the union between Colombia and Venezuela!" Maduro wrote.

It was the leaders' second meeting since Petro took power from Ivan Duque last August and the official resumption of diplomatic ties a month later. On Petro's earlier November 1 visit to Maduro, he called for Venezuela to be brought back into a regional trade alliance and human rights system.

Venezuela had severed diplomatic relations with its neighbor in 2019 after increasingly strained ties between Petro's predecessors Juan Manuel Santos and conservative Duque—who Maduro accused of orchestrating plans to assassinate him.

The final straw came when Duque backed Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido—recognized by dozens of countries as the victor in 2018 elections claimed by Maduro. Petro heads to Chile on Monday for a state visit and talks with another fellow leftist leader, Gabriel Boric. — AFP



CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro (L) and his Colombian counterpart Gustavo Petro bid farewell after holding a private meeting at Miraflores Presidential Palace in Caracas. —AFP

Iran sentences four to jail over strike call

TEHRAN: Iran's judiciary announced on Sunday jail terms of up to 10 years for people who called for strikes as part of a months-long protest movement. It is the first time the judiciary has announced prison sentences for such incitement during the nationwide protests triggered by the September death in custody of Mahsa Amini.

The judiciary's Mizan Online news website said the four defendants received between one and 10 years in prison. They were not identified and may still appeal the verdicts. Activists on social media had called for three-day nationwide strikes starting on December 5, in support of the movement which began with the death of Amini, 22. She had been arrested by morality police for allegedly violating the strict dress code for women.

Mojtaba Ghahramani, head of the judiciary for Iran's southern province of Hormozgan, said the four were sentenced principally "for having incited drivers to strike", and for vandalism. He was quoted by Mizan.

According to Ghahramani, "none of the defendants is a driver or has anything to do with the transport sector." "One of the defendants was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and another to five years for forming a group with the aim of disrupting national security," Ghahramani said. — AFP

Iran's regime divided on how to tackle protests

NICOSIA: Iran's Islamic clerical regime is divided in its response to months of unprecedented protests, wavering between repression and what it views as conciliatory gestures trying to quell the discontent, analysts say. "The conflicting messages we are getting from the Iranian regime suggest an internal debate on how to deal with ongoing protests," said Nader Hashemi, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver.

"In most authoritarian regimes, there are hawks and doves" who disagree on how repressive the state should be during crises, he said. The granting of retrials to several death-row protesters, and the release from detention of prominent dissidents, are signs that some seek to take a softer approach.

But a reminder of the hardline tack came Saturday when Iran executed two men for killing a paramilitary member during protest-related unrest. Demonstrations began after the September 16 death in custody of Kurdish-Iranian Mahsa Amini, 22. She had been arrested by morality police who enforce a strict dress code which requires women to wear a scarf-like covering over their hair and neck.

The protests have escalated into calls for an end to the Islamic regime, posing the biggest challenge for the clerics since the 1979 revolution deposed the shah. Authorities have responded with deadly violence that has left hundreds dead. Thousands have been arrested and 14 detainees sentenced to hang, many for killing or attacking security force members,

according to the judiciary.

The Supreme Court has upheld some of the death sentences and a total of four men have now been executed. The judiciary has also announced retrials for six of the 14. This reflects a "political calculus", said US-based Iran expert Mehrzad Boroujerdi, co-author of "Post-Revolutionary Iran: A Political Handbook".

"They know that mass executions will bring more people into the streets and further agitate them. On the other hand, they want to send a signal that they are not reticent to execute protesters so that people are intimidated."

In what analysts see as another attempt to calm the situation, two prominent dissidents arrested early during the protests, Majid Tavakoli and Hossein Ronaghi, were freed weeks later. Ronaghi had been on a hunger strike. The regime is using "everything from pressure release valves to long prison terms and executions. They are experimenting with these as they struggle to formulate a more clearly articulated policy," Boroujerdi said.

Anoush Ehteshami, director of the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the UK's Durham University, said the retrials partly reflected mounting foreign and domestic pressure. "But also within the regime there is division about how to handle this," Ehteshami said, with hardliners on one side and others who see executions as further encouraging resistance.

Retrials and the release of dissidents are "measures of appeasement... to try and throw a bone" to the protesters, he added. While such measures may appear insignificant, from the perspective of a "securitised, beleaguered regime... they think they are being magnanimous and responding to public pressure".

Celebrities have also been detained, but often for

far shorter periods. Star actor Taraneh Alidoosti was freed on bail Wednesday after being held for almost three weeks over her support for the protests, her lawyer said.

Some analysts see this hold-and-release strategy as intimidation but it is also, according to Hashemi, part of the regime "testing the waters, seeing what the reaction is". The "leniency" sometimes displayed by authorities "is an attempt to prevent further factionalism within the security establishment" as some of its members are alienated by the deadly bloodshed, said Afshin Shahi, associate professor in Middle Eastern studies at Keele University in the UK.

The regime "doesn't seem to have a clear strategy" in response to public anger, he added. Despite some releases, other prominent figures have spent months in prison. These include longtime activist Arash Sadeghi and the two Iranian journalists who helped expose Amini's case.

In early December, Prosecutor General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri said the morality police had "been abolished". But no one else has confirmed this. The announcement reflects the internal debate and shows that "at least one section of the ruling regime" favours a less brutal way of enforcing the female dress code, said Hashemi.

According to Ehteshami, some in authority "are now beginning to talk about a compromise", though it is too early to know what that would be. But "in broad terms I don't think they have what the people want", which is wholesale change, the details of which have not been defined, he said.

The regime, however, has historically shown an ability to "make concessions when it has to", according to Hashemi. "People forget that this regime has survived for 44 years because it can be very intelligent, very clever, very Machiavellian in terms of what it has to do to survive," he said. — AFP

MPs slam assault of Kuwaiti...

Continued from Page 1

crucial and must be debated on Tuesday, adding the report putting the size of the debt at KD 14.6 billion is incorrect.

Migrants, drugs on agenda as Biden...

Continued from Page 1

other drugs behind a deadly addiction crisis in the United States. "Mexico is extremely relevant and important in dealing with both acute issues, which have become political vulnerabilities for Biden," Michael Shifter, a senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue think tank, told AFP.

On Thursday, Washington announced that up to 30,000 qualifying migrants a month would be allowed into the United States from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela if they arrive by plane. The quota will be restricted to those who already have a US sponsor, while those attempting to cross the border illegally will be expelled in coordination with Mexico. The International Rescue Committee humanitarian group warned that the new measures "will only push more asylum-seekers into dangerous situations, the likes of which have already been seen in the form of mass kidnappings across northern Mexico".

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, who is accompanying Biden on the southern trip, emphasized Sunday that the immigration problem reaches far beyond the US and Mexico, with millions of Venezuelans, Nicaraguans and others on the move. "This is something that's not unique to the United States," he said on ABC talk show "This Week". "It's gripping the hemisphere, and a regional challenge requires a regional solution."

Flows of migrants fleeing violence and poverty in their countries are a particular challenge for Mexico, whose border has become a revolving door for people trying to cross to the United States. Thousands of peo-

ple are stranded in Mexico because of the controversial Title 42 rule implemented under ex-president Donald Trump's administration, ostensibly as a health measure to reduce the entry of people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On drug trafficking, Biden will seek Mexico's assistance stemming inflows of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid. Mexican cartels are major players in production and trafficking of fentanyl, which the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) describes as the "deadliest drug threat" facing the United States. Washington is "making strides" with its partners to seize illicit opioids and other drugs, US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said ahead of Biden's trip, his first to Mexico as president. "It's an ongoing effort. It's not something you can ever take your foot off the gas on," he added.

In 2021, the United States and Mexico announced a revamp of their fight against drug trafficking to address the root causes and step up efforts to curb cross-border arms smuggling. Lopez Obrador wants Washington to invest in regional economic development instead of sending helicopter gunships and other weapons to take on drug traffickers.

Mexico is plagued by cartel-related bloodshed that has seen more than 340,000 people murdered since the government deployed the military in the war on drugs in 2006. Days before Biden's visit, Mexican security forces captured a son of notorious drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, who is serving a life sentence in the US. The United States had offered a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to Ovidio Guzman's arrest, accusing him of being a key player in the Sinaloa cartel founded by his father. The timing was more than a coincidence, according to some analysts. "When there are these types of meetings (between presidents), the Mexican authorities always have something to offer," said security expert Ricardo Marquez. — AFP



JOSHIMATH, India: A resident sits next to a cracked wall of her house in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand state on Jan 8, 2023. —AFP

Residents of 'sinking' Indian...

Continued from Page 1

The town also hosts a major Indian army base and a strategic road to the disputed border with China that has also reportedly developed wide cracks. Pillars supporting a four-kilometer cable car

ropeway, one of Asia's largest, leading to the Auli ski resort were also reportedly showing damage.

The region is prone to earthquakes and has seen a number of disasters in recent years blamed by experts on melting glaciers and untrammled construction. Building projects include hydroelectric plants as well as a major road improving military access to the Chinese border area and Hindu pilgrimage sites - a pet project of Modi's. In Feb 2021, at least 200 people were killed in flash floods in Joshimath and surrounding areas in a disaster that experts partly blamed on excessive development. — AFP

Qatar, Chevron to build \$6bn...

Continued from Page 1

to almost 14 million tons a year. The investment "marks an important milestone in QatarEnergy's downstream expansion strategy", Kaabi said. "It will not only facilitate further expansion in the downstream and petrochemical sectors in Qatar, but will

also reinforce our integrated position as a major global player in the upstream, LNG, and downstream sectors."

Ethane crackers, which convert gas into ethylene, have been targeted by environmental activists for their emissions, while ethylene and polyethylene are used in a swathe of plastic products from piping to water bottles and food packaging. Wealthy Qatar has large reserves of natural gas including the North Field, which contains the world's biggest deposits and stretches under the Gulf sea into Iranian territory. — AFP

International

Benin elects lawmakers, with opposition allowed to stand

Majority of Talon's main opponents are either in prison or in exile

COTONOU: Benin voted for a new parliament on Sunday with opposition candidates authorised to stand in the legislative elections for the first time under President Patrice Talon after four years of absence.

Sunday's vote will be a key test for the West African nation, where Talon's supporters say he has ushered in political and economic development, but critics argue that his mandate has eroded democracy. The streets of Cotonou, the economic capital, were calm and all markets and shops were closed, AFP reporters said. Polling stations opened at 7:00 am (0600 GMT) and will close at 4:00 pm (1500 GMT), according to the Autonomous National Electoral Commission.

The last legislative elections in 2019 were marked by deadly violence, record abstention and a total shutdown of the internet-rare events in Benin, once praised as a bastion of democracy in the region. The opposition was unable to participate in the 2019 elections due to a tightening of the voting rules.

Only two movements allied to the president were authorised to compete, bringing about a parliament entirely won by Talon's supporters. This time, seven political parties—including three claiming to be in opposition—were allowed to participate.

After voting in the morning in the capital Abomey, Defense Minister Fortuné Alain Nouatin called on the population to come out "massively" to vote. Parties winning more than 10 percent of the vote will distribute the 109 parliament seats, according to the proportional system.

The results are expected within the next week.

"We are confident because we are from the presidential movement. Everything is fine," said Hamdan Moussa, 22, local representative of the Republican Bloc (BR), a pro-government party.

Early turnout

But turnout—historically low in 2019 — appeared slow on Sunday morning at polling stations visited by AFP in Cotonou and other areas. "People no longer have too much hope, they are afraid of some trickery," said Bawa Alimiyo, 40, in front of a primary school in Cotonou, where he voted for an opposition party.

"This government disappointed me, we had hope. We are waiting for change and we need deputies representative of the people." A wealthy businessman, Talon was elected in 2016 and re-elected in 2021. The majority of Talon's main opponents are either in prison or in exile. Reckya Madougou was sentenced to 20 years in prison for "terrorism", while Joel Aivo—an academic—was given 10 years in prison for "conspiracy against the authority of state" in December 2021.

Both were tried by a special court dealing with terrorism and economic crimes, known as the CRI-ET. Critics say the court, created by Talon's government in 2016, has been used to crack down on his opponents.

Around 6.6 million voters were eligible to elect deputies on Sunday, including at least 24 women—at least one per constituency—according to a new electoral code. Beyond the opposition's drive to reclaim seats in parliament, Sunday's election will impact the future of some of the other institutions in the



COTONOU: A general view of a billboard at the edge of a road of the Democrats Party, the main opposition party that participates for the first time in the elections under the mandate of President Patrice Talon, in Cotonou. —AFP

small country, which sits between Nigeria and Togo on the Gulf of Guinea.

The mandate of the Constitutional Court ends this year and, three years before the 2026 presiden-

tial ballot, the court's composition is crucial as it oversees decisions on elections. Four judges are appointed by lawmakers while the other three are chosen by the president. —AFP

Filipinos march in reverence of Catholic icon

MANILA: Tens of thousands of Catholic faithful walked through the streets of Manila early Sunday in reverence of a historic statue of Jesus Christ, which is believed to have miraculous powers. The "walk of faith", which church officials estimated attracted more than 80,000 people, began after a midnight mass for the so-called Black Nazarene statue.

Many Filipinos believe touching or getting close to the statue can lead to the healing of otherwise incurable ailments and other good fortune. Evangeline Rugas, 59, was among the worshippers attending the open-air mass where a replica of the icon has been on display.

She was "praying for a miracle" for her five-year-old nephew who suffers from seizures and cannot walk. "Nothing is impossible for the Black Nazarene," Rugas told AFP as she sat on a plastic sheet laid on the ground.

The original wooden statue was brought to the Philippines in the early 1600s when the nation was a Spanish colony. Many Filipinos believe it got its dark colour after surviving a fire aboard a ship en route from Mexico.

This year's parade replaced the traditional frenzied procession, which used to involve hundreds of thousands of believers thronging a life-sized statue as it was pulled through the streets on a float.

One of the biggest displays of Catholic devotion in the Philippines, it was cancelled for two years in a row due to COVID-19. This year's event was held a day before the feast of the Black Nazarene, which falls on January 9, and without the venerated statue in the hope of reducing crowd numbers



MANILA: Roman Catholic devotees carrying miniature statues of the Black Nazarene and candles walk along a street dubbed "walk of faith" as they celebrate the annual feast of the Black Nazarene in Manila on January 8, 2023. —AFP

and the risk of infection.

The roughly six-kilometre (3.7-mile) route ended at Quiapo Church, where the Black Nazarene is enshrined. Mask-wearing devotees, some carrying candles or small replicas of the Black Nazarene, poured through narrow streets in the early hours of the morning.

Mercy Dayrit, 70, said she had prayed "day and night" to the Black Nazarene after she was diag-

nosed with breast cancer in 2016. She was declared "cancer free" last year, which she attributes to the icon.

"So many miracles happen," Dayrit said. In the weeks leading up to Sunday's walk, the statue was taken to churches around the city and nearby provinces to give worshippers the chance to see and touch it in the hope of avoiding a huge crowd on the feast day. — AFP

200 Rohingya refugees land in Indonesia

BANDA ACEH: A wooden boat carrying nearly 200 Rohingya refugees, a majority of them women and children, landed on Indonesia's western coast on Sunday, police said. The ship is the fifth boat carrying Rohingya refugees to land in Indonesia since November, according to authorities.

Thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya, heavily persecuted in Myanmar, risk their lives each year on long and expensive sea journeys—often in poor-quality boats—in an attempt to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

The wooden vessel—which carried 69 men, 75 women and 40 children—arrived at around 02:30

pm local time (0730 am GMT) on a beach in Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh, local police chief Irwan Fahmi Ramli said Sunday.

"They are generally healthy, but there is one pregnant woman among them, and four people are sick," Ramli said. "We had coordinated with doctors who will come here to conduct an initial health check of these refugees, particularly those who are sick."

He added that the refugees will be transferred to a local government facility. According to one of the passengers, the boat departed Bangladesh on December 10. "We feel very happy because we arrived here. Already, our engine is damaged and also we don't have food in the boat," 26-year-old Fairus told reporters.

Around a million Rohingya were estimated to be living in refugee camps in Bangladesh after they fled persecution in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017. Four vessels carrying Rohingya refugees have already landed in Indonesia in November and

December last year, carrying a total of more than 400 passengers.

More than 2,000 Rohingya are believed to have attempted the risky journey in 2022, according to the UN refugee agency UNHCR—at levels similar to 2020. The agency estimated nearly 200 Rohingya have died or remain missing after attempting hazardous sea crossings last year.

But the figure could rise after relatives of around 180 Rohingya refugees that were on another vessel drifting at sea for weeks lost contact and were feared dead. The UNHCR could not confirm their deaths.

But spokesman Babar Baloch said if true, it would make 2022 the deadliest year for Rohingya crossings since 2013 and 2014, when more than 900 and 700 were reported dead or missing respectively. Relatively affluent Malaysia is a favoured destination for the refugees, but many land first in Muslim-majority Indonesia, seen as more welcoming. — AFP

German MPs travel to Taiwan as China tensions rise

BERLIN: A high-ranking parliamentary delegation from Germany said they were travelling to Taiwan on Sunday, ahead of an anticipated ministerial visit later this year in moves that could spark tensions with China.

Johannes Vogel of the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP) — a junior partner in Germany's coalition government—posted a picture on Twitter of him and party colleague

Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann on "the plane to Taiwan".

The visit was a gesture of "solidarity" with the self-ruled democracy which China claims as part of its territory, Strack-Zimmermann, the head of the parliamentary defence committee, told AFP on Thursday.

The trip is set to be followed by a visit from German Education Minister Bettina Stark-Watzinger, also of the FDP, in the spring, sources told AFP. It would be the first by a member of the German cabinet in 26 years.

The delegation would meet with representatives of Taiwan's government and the opposition, as well as human rights organisations, business leaders and members of the military during its stay, Strack-Zimmermann said ahead of the trip.

Berlin's diplomatic overtures to Taiwan are likely to rile Beijing. President Xi Jinping, China's most assertive leader in a generation, has made clear that what he calls the "reunification" of Taiwan cannot be passed on to future generations.

Last year saw a spike in tensions as Beijing ramped up military pressure and launched its largest war games in decades to protest against a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August. China opposes any official exchanges with Taiwan, and has reacted with growing anger to a flurry of visits by Western politicians to the island.

Also in August, the German air force boosted its presence in the Indo-Pacific with the deployment of 13 military aircraft, one year after it dispatched a frigate to the region for the first time in almost two decades. — AFP

News in brief

Quake strikes Vanuatu

SYDNEY: A 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck just off the coast from the Pacific nation of Vanuatu late Sunday, the US Geological Survey said, triggering a tsunami warning for the region. The shallow quake hit around 11:30 pm local time (1230 GMT) around 27 kilometres (17 miles) deep, said the USGS, which placed it about 25 kilometres from the village of Port-Olry. A tsunami warning was issued for Vanuatu, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands but later cancelled about an hour and a half after the quake. "Tsunami waves reaching 0.3 to one metre above the tide level are possible for some coasts of Vanuatu," the NWS Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii said. Waves smaller than 0.3 metres were possible for New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands, it added.

Kidnap king arrested

JOHANNESBURG: A Mozambican suspected of masterminding kidnappings for ransom has been arrested by Interpol in South Africa, the country's police said Sunday. Esmael Malude Ramos Nangy is suspected of orchestrating kidnappings that netted several million dollars over the past two decades. The man was arrested in a raid late Saturday at "an upmarket estate in Centurion", near the capital Pretoria, South African police said in a statement. A firearm, cartridges, five mobile phones, as well as several bank cards and SIM cards were seized. Mozambique is seeking his extradition. Ramos Nangy is due in court on Monday. Kidnappings for financial gain have also exploded in recent years in neighbouring South Africa, already infamous for its high crime rate.

19 killed in China road accident

BEIJING: Nineteen people died and 20 were injured Sunday in a road traffic accident in eastern China's Jiangxi province, state media reported. The "major road traffic accident" took place just before 1:00 am (1700 GMT) in Nanchang County, state broadcaster CCTV reported, citing local authorities. "The cause of the accident is under in-depth investigation," CCTV added. Local news outlet Jimu, affiliated with the state-owned Hubei Daily Media Group, reported the accident took place when a truck hit a funeral procession. People had been carrying out a roadside offering to the dead before planning to head to the crematorium Sunday morning, a local woman surnamed Deng told the outlet. They were then hit by a truck, the report said, with most of the dead and injured being funeral attendees.

Mexico metro crash kills 1

MEXICO CITY: Two metro trains collided in a Mexico City tunnel Saturday, killing one person and injuring 57, authorities in the megacity of 20 million reported. Television footage showed injured passengers being treated in ambulances following the crash, which occurred on the north-south Metro Line Three. "There are 57 injured people, some with minor injuries, who in any event went to the hospital, and unfortunately one death," Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said in a brief statement from the scene of the accident. The train conductor was the most seriously injured person in the collision, which occurred between the Potrero and La Raza stations, she said.

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Business

Shortage of private land a major hurdle to solving housing problem

Real Estate Union holds panel discussion on housing sector issues



KUWAIT: (From left) Hassan Kamal, Ibrahim Al-Awadhi, Abdulrehman Al-Terkait, Adel Al-Sabeeh, Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi and Faye Al-Kandari.

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Real Estate Union organized a panel discussion titled "The Law for Launching Companies to Establish Cities or Residential Areas" with the participation of member of the housing and real estate committee in the National Assembly Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi, Former Minister of Housing Adel Al-Sabeeh, Municipal Council Member Hassan Kamal and legal advisor to the Federation of Banks Faye Al-Kandari.

The session was headed by Chairman of the Union Ibrahim Al-Awadhi and Vice-President Abdulrahman Al-Terkait. The session discussed the new housing cities law that was approved in the first deliberation at the National Assembly, which is scheduled to be presented again in the Jan 24 session for approval.

Saqabi stressed the main solution to addressing the housing issue relies on solving the lack of supply of private housing land, indicating that the increase in supply is through the provision of land, infrastructure liquidity, housing loans and the provision of electricity, water and services.

He said the proposed housing city construction law deals with the infrastructure aspect, adding this law will not succeed unless it becomes part of a package of laws through which the housing issue is resolved. "Perhaps the most important of these laws are on financing housing loans and Credit Bank liquidity, in addition to the idea of establishing a housing bank," he said.

Saqabi stressed the Assembly is on the verge of another stage related to organizing real estate chaos by bringing together various real estate agencies (real estate registration, licenses, state property) under the umbrella of a unified real estate authority that regulates real estate brokerage and trading operations, in addition to some restrictions, along with electricity and water fees, real estate registration of the third house, property tax, and restrictions on selling and speculation.

Sabeeh said the main goal of these laws is to reduce the waiting period in the housing queue, and reducing the number of people waiting for housing welfare. "The previous laws issued in this matter do not reach the goals, as the waiting period increased in the queue from seven years to 21 years. In addition, currently the number of actual housing welfare applications has also increased from 60,000 to 140,000," he said.

Sabeeh pointed out the real problem does not depend on the issue of construction, but on financing, because in order to resolve the housing issue in the next 10 years, it requires that the government completes 22,000 housing units annually to be able to meet the existing and new requests that will come during the next 10 years. He noted the cost of executing 22,000 housing units annually reaches KD 2.2 billion for a period of 10 years, which constitutes 13 percent of the state's income from oil and investment, wondering if the state can meet these requirements.

Sabeeh mentioned that providing water and electricity to houses after building costs around KD 100,000 for each house. The total cost constitutes in its entirety around 26 percent of oil and investment income, which confirms that the main problem from the onset is a financial and financing problem.

Awadhi stressed the current law did not take the opinion of the Real Estate Union as well as the opinion of investment companies and the Union of Kuwaiti Banks, supporting the opinion saying the law will not contribute to resolving the housing issue unless there are other supportive laws such as the real estate developer law, the mortgage law, the liberation of land and the preparation of infrastructure before handing it over to citizens.

Awadhi added the Real Estate Union does not reject the law, especially in the presence of a serious desire to resolve the housing problem. But the union's goal is to participate in amending and revising the law to suit all parties, especially since the union believes that the reason for the failure of all



previous laws are the "restrictions" that these laws have been witnessing, including the restriction of building areas and restriction of the percentage of private sector profit without taking into account market fluctuations and other restrictive matters.

"The Real Estate Union believes that this law should be open to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, so that it determines by itself the needs of the project according to its area, location and needs of the citizens and the state when launching a project," he said.

Regarding financing projects, Awadhi said that the law did not take into account the issue of financing, especially since these projects require huge capital, especially since self-financing for these companies is difficult, and therefore whenever there is a clear and organized mechanism for the financing process, these projects will achieve success.

Kandari said that the law lacks flexibility, as it

includes a number unnecessary details, or that some of them are sufficient to be in executive regulations. Therefore, the drafting of the legislation must be reviewed so that it creates an attractive environment for both local and foreign investors.

He added the law should focus on the issue of resolving the housing crisis, but it is clear that the law wants to address everything at the same time, meaning that it seeks to involve the citizen in investment by investing in 50 percent of the company's shares, and also seeks to promote the work of small and medium projects, in addition to achieving the principle of supporting employment, which cannot be achieved all at the same time.

Kandari also indicated that the project is not clear whether it is part of the partnership project or outside this concept, and whether the companies that will be established will be in accordance with the partnership law issued in 2014 or outside this law.

Stop and smell the metaverse roses at CES fest

LAS VEGAS: Immersive technologies that can better lives, whether helping people treat dementia or learn to pilot fighter jets, is the future of the metaverse, virtual reality startups say. Some entrepreneurs at the annual CES gadget fest that ended Sunday in Las Vegas were eager to combine real and virtual worlds to help people stop and smell the roses.

The company OVR Technology has created an accessory for VR headsets that treats users around a faux campfire to whiffs of smoke and toasting marshmallows. Smell is essential to the metaverse, said OVR Vice President Sarah Socia, because it's "the only sense that is directly connected to the limbic system, a part of the brain crucial for memory and emotion."

The Vermont-based startup also has a prototype of another device that can hold scent cartridges created by users through a mobile app. Japanese "digital scent technology" company Aromajoin is also betting that the metaverse will be a place of many smells. "It's like before smartphones, we didn't know how big a part they would play in our lives," Aromajoin's SeonHoon Cho said of scent in the virtual world.

Slowly taking shape

When Facebook changed its corporate name to Meta in late 2021, it signaled faith in the metaverse



LAS VEGAS: Attendees sit beneath a projection of the moon at a display about Amazon Project Kuiper at the Amazon.com, Inc. booth during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada, on January 7, 2023. — AFP

becoming the center of online life, and the company continues to invest in that future despite profits suffering. "Metaverse these days is very likely to be met with skepticism," said Steve Koenig, a vice president at the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), which organizes CES.

"I do think that the term metaverse still is somewhat speculative in nature." But the metaverse is starting to take shape through various applications and devices, Koenig said. The Indian firm AjnaLens believes immersive online experiences can help solve unemployment problems and the lack of

skilled labor. The company has designed an AjnaXR mixed reality (virtual and augmented) headset, which is lighter than existing models so it can be worn comfortably for hours.

Businesses use it to teach workers how to handle tools for jobs such as welding and painting, adding joysticks or haptic gloves that bring a hands-on feel to the experience. "VR has a multiplied impact on the part of the brain where you store things for life," AjnaLens co-founder Pankaj Raut told AFP. "It's like when you learn to ride a bike, you never forget it afterward." — AFP



Lebanese Business Council meets

KUWAIT: Lebanese Business Council in Kuwait held on Saturday a meeting at the Lebanese Republic Embassy to Kuwait in the presence of the Head of Basil Fuleihan Financial and Economic Institute, Lamia Moubayed Bissat, and Faisal Al-Munawer, International Expert and Consultant at Arab Planning Institute, where they discussed the crisis management and its impact on human development perceptions in Lebanon.

The meeting was opened by Charge d'Affaires of the Lebanese Republic Embassy, Basil Oueidat, and attended by number of Lebanese and Kuwaiti officials.

Business

Jack Ma: Tycoon who soared on China's tech dreams grounded by regulators

Alibaba founder saw his fortune fall by around half to an estimated \$25bn

BEIJING: Jack Ma, the unconventional billionaire founder of tech giant Alibaba and the totem of China's entrepreneurial brilliance, has stepped out of the limelight since a Communist Party crackdown that chopped back his empire. The most recognizable face in Asian business, Ma has seen his fortune fall by around half to an estimated \$25 billion after authorities pulled what would then have been the world's biggest-ever IPO in 2020.

Chinese regulators torched the planned listing of Ma's Ant Group in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and the following year hit Alibaba with a record \$2.75 billion fine for alleged unfair practices. A reshuffle of Ant's shareholding structure will now see Ma cede control of the fintech giant he founded in 2014.



Jack Ma

He will hold just 6.2 percent of the voting rights as the company moves to ensure "no shareholder, alone or jointly with other parties, will have control over Ant Group", the firm said in a statement Saturday. It is the latest humbling of China's former poster boy for enterprise, who in recent years has retreated from the public eye he once so relished.

A Communist Party member, Ma's rags-to-riches backstory came to embody a self-confident generation of Chinese entrepreneurs ready to shake up the world. Charismatic, diminutive and fast-talking, Ma was cash-strapped and working as an English teacher when someone showed him the internet on a 1990s trip to the United States—and he was hooked.

He toyed with several internet-related projects, before convincing a group of friends to give him \$60,000 to start a new business in 1999 in China, then still emerging as an economic giant.

Alibaba was the result, an e-commerce behemoth founded from his bedroom in the eastern city of Hangzhou that started an online shopping revolution and grew into a fintech titan.

The company changed the shopping habits of



HANGZHOU: This file photo taken on October 13, 2020 shows the Ant Group headquarters in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

hundreds of millions of Chinese people and catapulted Ma to international stardom. "The first time I used the internet, I touched on the keyboard and I find, 'Well, this is something I believe, it is something that is going to change the world and change China,'" Ma once told CNN.

In 2014, Alibaba listed in New York in a world-record \$25 billion offering.

Ant is still the world's largest digital payments platform, with hundreds of millions of monthly users on its Alipay app. But any future listing appears a long way off, with fears persisting that its personal finance products reach too deeply into the pockets of ordinary Chinese.

Crossed the line?

Ma long enjoyed an image as the benevolent and unconventional billionaire. Sometimes referred to in China as "Father Ma", he was praised for his self-deprecation—he recounts being rejected by Harvard "10 times". He is also known for lighting up compa-

ny events with song-and-dance appearances as Lady Gaga, Snow White and Michael Jackson.

As his fortune grew, Ma rebranded as a philanthropist, in 2019 retiring from the business to focus on giving. But he has faced his share of travails over the years in a country where getting rich risks catching the attention of the powerful.

Eyebrows were raised when the state-run People's Daily newspaper revealed that he is a member of the Communist Party—something Ma has never fully commented on. He had previously indicated he preferred to keep the state at arm's length, telling the World Economic Forum in 2007: "My philosophy is to be in love with the government, but never marry them." Days before Ant's IPO was pulled, a swaggering Ma launched a stinging public broadside against Chinese regulators, accusing them of stifling growth. He is far less outspoken these days, rarely featuring in the headlines save for appearances at charity events and occasional sojourns overseas. — AFP

Egypt's exports of engineering goods jump

CAIRO: The Engineering Export Council (EEC) of Egypt has announced that the sector's exports increased by 10 percent to \$3.32 billion from January–November 2022, compared to \$3 billion in the same period in 2021. According to the EEC's monthly report, the most notable industries with export growth in the first 11 months of 2022 over the same time in 2021 were cables, up 33 percent, car components, up 15 percent, home appliances, up 5 percent, and machinery and equipment, up 128 percent.

According to the research, exports of the electrical and electronic sectors climbed by 2 percent, while exports of transportation equipment increased by 14 percent, metal forming saw an impressive gain of 96 percent, and exports of pumps, boilers, and engines increased by 91 percent. —Agencies

Remittances from US to Guatemala exceed \$18bn

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala: Guatemala received more than \$18 billion in remittances mainly from the United States in 2022 — a figure that exceeded the country's income in exports, according to central bank data. Last year's remittances from migrants abroad were up 18 percent from 2021, according to a report on the bank's website. Exports between January and October 2022 totaled \$13.2 billion. Thousands of Guatemalans migrate to the United States every year to escape the poverty that affects almost 60 percent of the country's 17 million inhabitants, according to official data. The foreign ministry estimates about 2.7 million Guatemalans live in the United States, but only about 400,000 have work papers. —AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 5 JANUARY 2023

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	36,816	7,899.29	-2.7%	-2.7%	-0.6%	314,359,131	124,301,306	23,002	21.4	2.2	78.6%
Main Market	10,034	5,541.04	-1.0%	-1.0%	-0.5%	303,786,551	30,195,882	12,406	46.2	1.4	21.4%
All Share	46,850	7,122.02	-2.3%	-2.3%	-0.6%	618,145,682	154,497,188	35,408	26.8	2.1	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	29,604	1,757.85	-2.0%	-2.0%	-0.2%	122,636,179	74,685,944	10,689	22.6	2.2	63.19%
BASIC MATERIALS	753	836.78	-3.3%	-3.3%	-2.3%	3,487,489	2,694,195	640	5.0	0.9	1.61%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	937	1,397.76	-6.0%	-6.0%	-1.7%	57,348,104	5,842,806	3,299	26.6	10.2	2.00%
CONSUMER STAPLES	145	476.87	-0.6%	-0.6%	1.2%	3,760,992	1,420,309	207	0.0	1.1	0.31%
ENERGY	233	1,119.44	-1.7%	-1.7%	-4.9%	5,654,242	142,000	166	9.9	1.1	0.50%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,330	1,218.56	-3.1%	-3.1%	-1.5%	261,248,425	30,842,608	9,469	77.2	1.7	9.24%
HEALTH CARE	229	0.00	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.000	0	14.3	5.8	0.49%
INDUSTRIALS	3,679	1,038.93	-3.7%	-3.7%	-0.8%	40,839,475	20,701,663	5,169	35.0	1.5	7.85%
INSURANCE	638	1,550.21	0.0%	0.0%	-0.2%	262,181	55,554	70	9.5	1.0	1.36%
REAL ESTATE	2,553	1,182.24	-2.2%	-2.2%	-0.7%	113,580,343	13,391,562	3,955	18.3	1.2	5.45%
TECHNOLOGY	10	756.60	8.7%	8.7%	3.0%	16,000	2,262	10	0.0	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,534	1,152.15	-2.5%	-2.5%	-1.4%	7,971,237	4,472,714	1,511	12.9	1.9	7.54%
UTILITIES	202	484.21	-2.1%	-2.1%	0.0%	1,341,015	246,196	223	15.1	1.7	0.43%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ASC	104	8.67%	16,000	1,638,899	10
GFC	96.9	7.79%	350	33,915	1
GIH	417	5.57%	353,224	143,008,054	88
ALMANAR	62	5.45%	420	24,263	3
KCIN	999	5.16%	1	0,999	1

Top Losers

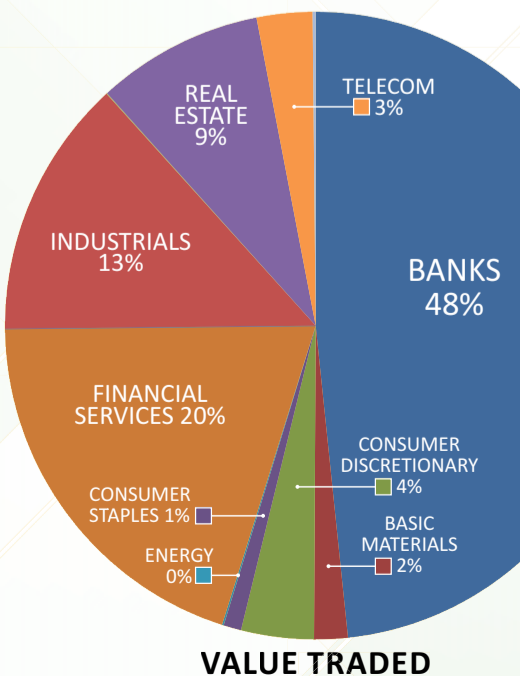
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
JYAD	19.3	-16.81%	48,918,511	1,014,403	1,224
JAZEERA	1,650	-13.16%	1,942,194	3,226,693	1,192
KPROJ	100	-11.16%	57,387,858	5,972,690	1,752
MUNSHAAT	56.0	-8.20%	5,000	283	5
NRE	115.0	-8.00%	21,207,503	2,484,742	1,047

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	791	-3.89%	63,659,257	50,562,265	5,864
KPROJ	99.5	-11.16%	57,387,858	5,972,690	1,752
KRE	107	-0.93%	56,675,577	6,163,051	1,036
JYAD	19	-16.81%	48,918,511	1,014,403	1,224
IFA	95	-4.14%	37,872,861	3,714,523	677

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	791	-3.89%	63,659,257	50,562,265	5,864
AGLTY	682	-5.28%	21,087,091	14,482,759	2,920
NBK	1,077	-0.09%	8,307,959	8,905,074	1,011
KRE	107	-0.93%	56,675,577	6,163,051	1,036
KPROJ	100	-11.16%	57,387,858	5,972,690	1,752



Market Summary:

- Premier Market's weekly volume and value increased by 29% and 16%, respectively. The Main Market weekly volume and value decreased by 20% and 25%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indices started the year with a considerable drop from which they recovered marginally.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7122, with support levels at 7105, 7041, and 7000, while resistance at 7162. The Premier index closed at 7899, with support levels at 7841, 7784, and 7701, while resistance at 7926. The Main index closed at 5541, with support levels at 5523, 5495, and 5484, while resistance at 5550.

Business

From bees to bullets, CES tech show gives gamers the feels

At CES tech show, video game industry shows off

LAS VEGAS: Getting shot, standing in a downpour, being surrounded by bees: None are ideal, but for gamers, feeling the sensations of each is the goal. At the CES tech show, the video game industry is showing off just how lifelike gaming can be made with new vests, head cushions and other simulation products.

"Lots of consumers are doing games, and they are looking for gaming hardware," Kiuk Gwak of hHaptics Inc. told AFP as he demonstrated his company's vest and gloves at the Las Vegas gathering, which ends on Sunday. The haptic vest replicates the feeling of action playing out in virtual worlds, while matching haptic gloves add a feeling of touch.

"People are not just using our vest for getting shot, but they can feel the wind or rain or even bees in virtual reality," Gwak said. Gaming hardware company Razer showed off what it said was the world's first surround-sound audio and haptics head cushion, called Project Carol, which allows "gamers to feel everything behind them, placing them firmly in the middle of the action."

Razer also said it will release an "Edge" handheld gaming unit in the United States on January 26 at a price of \$400.

Backseat gamer?

Razer is one of multiple companies, including Dell and Acer, that showed off laptops sporting rich screens and mighty computer chips meant to tempt gamers who crave speed and immersion. Gaming computers powered by the latest chips from rivals AMD and Nvidia were also on display. "Modern games with increasingly life-like visuals require new

levels of graphics horsepower," said AMD graphics unit senior vice president Scott Herkelman.

Nvidia also announced that its GeForce Now cloud video game service would be included in vehicles for the first time thanks to an alliance with Hyundai Motor Group, BYD and Polestar. "Thanks to cloud technology and the mobile internet, vehicle occupants can keep boredom at bay with the ability to enjoy music, movies and now video games in the car," Nvidia said in a release, noting whoever is in the driver's seat will only be able to play while parked.

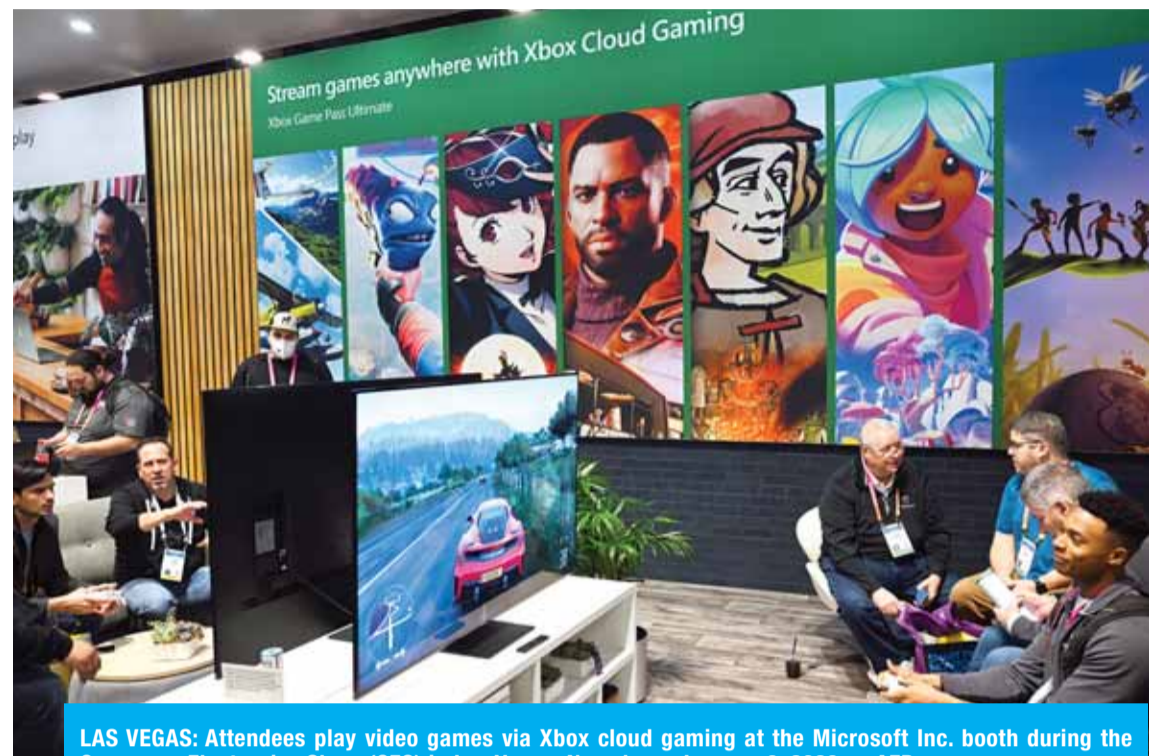
"The ability to stream games to the car is a key component of the future of in-vehicle experiences." CES exhibits by tech titans such as South Korean competitors LG and Samsung, meanwhile, included screens tailored for gamers with features such as sweeping curves to enhance the feeling of immersion.

Evolving field of play

Dominican Republic-based Clover Gaming flaunted a virtual casino that offers slots, roulette, horse betting and other Las Vegas-style gambling in the metaverse. The CloverLand casino platform plans to use blockchain and cryptocurrency, chief development officer Eilla Lefebvre told AFP.

"We are using new technologies, which is part of the reason we came to CES," Lefebvre said.

"And we want to find out what people like and don't like to make sure we are going in the right direction." As gadgets become more interoperable and innovations such as the metaverse promise to transform the way people live, CES has become critical for companies to see how they can better connect with players.



LAS VEGAS: Attendees play video games via Xbox cloud gaming at the Microsoft Inc. booth during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada on January 6, 2023. —AFP

"You talk about Web3 and you talk about the metaverse, a lot of that is going to start with gaming," said Jeff Netzer of Las Vegas-based PlayStudios, which specializes in mobile games whose winners are rewarded with restaurant meals,

hotel stays and helicopter rides. "People are looking at what hardware is going to be needed," he said. "I think a lot of the companies are particularly interested in CES to understand where that particular piece of the industry is going." — AFP



LAS VEGAS: A Hispano Suiza Carmen Boulogne electric super car is displayed in front of a NB 480 electric vehicle power charging station at the Power Electronics booth during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. —AFP photos



LAS VEGAS: The functional prototype Aska A5 eVTOL flying car folds its front wings during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada, on January 7, 2023.

Auto industry races into metaverse

LAS VEGAS: Allowing the driver of an autonomous vehicle to watch a movie, a dealer to sell automobiles from a "virtual" car lot, or an engineer to simulate how a new part fits: the auto industry is getting a tantalizing taste of the metaverse at the huge CES technology show.

One gadget on display in Las Vegas is an in-car television system, developed by French parts maker Valeo, that needs no remote. To change the channel, drivers or passengers wearing a headset make a simple swipe in the air with their hand, and sensors in the car detect the movement.

For users who dislike the feel of a full headset, sensors on a vehicle's exterior make it possible to integrate actual pedestrians or landscapes into virtual reality (VR) images, said Ghaya Khemiri, who leads the Valeo project. And if sensors detect that a person is feeling stressed, the system can offer soothing images to promote relaxation.

At Valeo, "we're doing a lot of work on electric and autonomous cars, and work a lot on sensors,"

Khemiri said. "We had asked ourselves what we could offer (with them) for users' pleasure."

The company's system, still in prototype, would initially be meant for use by passengers, or drivers on break, such as when charging their electric vehicle. Once vehicles become entirely autonomous, the driver could possibly use it while on the road.

Movies on the windshield

Holoride, a start-up backed by automaker Audi, is already selling a virtual reality headset intended solely for rear-seat passengers. The system allows users to watch a movie or play a video game using a controller, and synchronizes VR content to the movements of the car to prevent nausea. A new version introduced by Holoride at CES can work in any car.

German automaker BMW on Wednesday presented a concept car for upcoming models that combines "the real and virtual worlds." The system showcases a potential project involving augmented reality images projected on the windshield—such as the car's speed or direction—and could even transform the entire windshield into a screen to watch a movie. "Although a fully immersive, interconnected metaverse remains years away, mobility stakeholders can already capture real business value from the technologies designed to enable it," said a report from the McKinsey consulting firm, published on the eve of the CES show, which ends Sunday. One

example: Italian carmaker Fiat in December launched what it called "a metaverse store" where clients can research, configure and even purchase a vehicle with the help of an online assistant.

Remote repairs

If technologies continue to improve—notably the "haptic" devices that simulate a touching sensation—consumers could virtually "examine a highly realistic replica of a vehicle, opening its doors, feeling its seats, accelerating onto a highway — just as they would with a real car," McKinsey said. And if a vehicle breaks down, a technician could remotely guide a user to make simple repairs.

The metaverse can play a role in designing new products or more easily testing them in differing environments. Alexandre Corjon, the head of innovation for French parts maker Plastic Omnium, came to CES to explore ways his company could apply the new technologies.

The metaverse could, for example, make it possible to show a client how a recycled material might react in a specific form and "demonstrate to the designer the effect that would have" on the vehicle, he said. It could also show the superiority of a new product. The group might also experiment with using the metaverse for meetings of its global management team—saving them the hassle of hitting the road in the first place. — AFP

Tesla shares open to terrible start in 2023

WASHINGTON: Tesla shares began the new year on an ominous note, bucking this week under renewed concerns about weakening demand for its electric cars, and sending its market value briefly below Facebook parent Meta Platforms' for the first time in more than a year.

The Elon Musk-led EV maker's shares fell as much as 7.7 per cent to \$101.81 in early trading on Friday. The stock later erased the losses to close up 2.5 per cent as the broader market rallied after economic data showed wage gains have slowed down, a development that can help the US Federal Reserve fight inflation. Earlier in the session, Tesla's market capitalization dipped to around \$321 billion, dropping below Meta's roughly \$334 billion.

Tesla's stock has been in freefall over the past three months, as wider anxiety about the technology selloff and Mr Musk's preoccupation with his acquisition of Twitter gave way to growing doubts about the demand for EVs in the face of a recession. Two big events in the first week of the new year — weaker-than-expected deliveries for the fourth quarter and another round of price cuts on its vehicles in China — have intensified those fears.

It is those risks that make investors wary about the stock's future, at least in the near term. "With all the moving parts to Tesla — China price cuts and increased competition, there are currently too many unknowns to get a good handle on what an appropriate valuation is," said Mark Stoedde, chief executive of Adams Funds, which holds Tesla shares. "When you see a train wreck like this, it is better to stand back and observe, not jump in."

Though mega-cap tech companies, key drivers of the prior Wall Street bull market, struggled last year as they bore the brunt of rising interest rates and



lower investor appetite for risky investments, Tesla's decline still stands out. The company finished 2022 at the very bottom of the NYSE Fang+ Index, a gauge of 10 technology behemoths, including names like Meta, Apple, Microsoft and Amazon.com. Tesla's valuation dropping below Meta's also

highlights the many commonalities between the two stocks. While they have very different businesses, both companies are facing a general skepticism among investors about their futures while their highly prominent chief executives have made recent missteps. — Agencies

Scanners for avocados and your brain

LAS VEGAS: At the annual CES tech show in Las Vegas, hundreds of start-ups presented products aimed at improving health, education and work, increasing productivity and helping to save the planet. Here are some highlights from the 2023 edition of the popular gadget fest, which ends on Sunday:

Brain-scanning cap

Like the Sorting Hat in the "Harry Potter" book series, the iSyncWave sits atop your head, does a quick analysis of you, and reads out its results. But this gadget isn't magic.

Developed by iMediSync, the headset performs an electroencephalogram (EEG) and uses artificial intelligence to predict potential risks of cognitive issues, including Alzheimer's disease, within 10 minutes. The South Korean company believes its headset could drastically reduce the financial cost and time needed to do such diagnostic tests. The device could also possibly be used one day to perform certain therapies for neurodegenerative diseases.

Ripe and ready

The start-up OneThird, which aims to fight food waste, presented its infrared device that "scans" avocados—for which ripeness seems to be a roll of the dice. All one has to do is hold an avocado under the scanner, then algorithms determine whether it is "not yet ripe," "ripe" or "override," presenting a color-coded response on a mobile app. The device is also touted as a way of preventing supermarket customers from squeezing avocado after avocado, which can make them spoil quicker. The company takes its name from the fact that one third of global food products go to waste.

Coding without coding

As computers increase in complexity by the day, many startups are facilitating communication with tech, especially for people who don't know how to code. At the Tactigon booth, Nadia Giuliani stands behind a small robot, grabs two connected joysticks and claps her hands saying "clap."

The device imitates her immediately by clapping. She can also use it to teach dance moves to the robot. "We are now using voice commands and gestures because we need to have a more natural interface with the digital world," says Massimiliano Bellino, boss of Tactigon parent company Next Industries. "We need to humanize interaction with the digital world," he adds. The Italian company's suite of software, based on artificial intelligence, is designed in particular for factories, so that technicians can teach robots to perform tasks instead of having to program them manually. Tactigon promises productivity gains of 30 percent thanks to its algorithms.

Smart punching bag

The I-Perskin, a wireless sack that slips over any punching bag, features light-up targets and flexible electronic sensors that guide workouts and analyze the user's strength and accuracy. A mobile app helps set workouts and review performance. The French startup that designed the cover, I-Percut, intends to sell it initially to gyms. — AFP



Egyptian DJ Yas Meen Selectress plays music at a restaurant-turned-dance-hall in Egypt's capital Cairo. In Egypt's patriarchal society, the music industry remains male-dominated, while the conservative country's cultural establishment marginalises and even bans electronic music artists. —AFP photo



People attend a music performance by Egyptian DJ Yas Meen Selectress at a restaurant-turned-dance-hall in Cairo.

Egypt's women DJs creating inclusive dance floors

Laser beams illuminate a darkened restaurant turned dance hall in Cairo as revellers move to thumping beats from female DJs — part of a generation of women shaking up Egypt's underground electronic music scene.

"All my life, I've seen men behind the decks," said party-goer Menna Shanab, 26, as psychedelic visuals reflected off the waters at the Nile-side venue.

"It's good to see the music scene evolving," said the young Cairo resident, decked out in fashionable streetwear. In Egypt's patriarchal society, the music industry remains male-dominated, while the conservative country's cultural establishment marginalises and even bans electronic music artists.

Female party-goers for years have complained about harassment on the dance floor, while many revellers find mainstream venues too pricey.

Now, a generation of young women DJs are forging their own path, seeking to create more inclusive spaces for performers and party-goers alike. A small but vibrant electronic music scene is "booming" in the Egyptian capital, according to Yemeni music journalist and occasional DJ Hala K, asking like others AFP interviewed to be identified only by her stage name. "A lot of female talents feel more confident and empowered to pursue DJing," the Amsterdam-based Hala K said by telephone.

Aspiring artists are taking inspiration from female DJs from the region, she added — such as Palestinian Sama Abdulhadi, who has performed from Egypt to France and at premier US festival Coachella. In Cairo, there are "powerful, talented women at the turntables: they know how to make people dance", Hala K said.

'Party in peace'

DJ and promoter A7ba-L-Jelly decided to establish her own collective as part of making the underground electronic dance music scene more inclusive.

"I wanted to organise events where I would feel safe myself, without harassment," said the 32-year-old. "I just



Egyptian DJ A7ba-L-Jelly plays music during a concert in Giza.

wanted to go and party in peace."

More than 90 percent of women in Egypt aged between 18 and 39 said in 2019 that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment, according to the Arab Barometer public opinion research network.

"In some places in Egypt, where they play more commercial music... you won't enter because you are single, or because you don't look rich enough," A7ba-L-Jelly added. "I book male and female DJs to create dance floors that are inclusive in terms of music, gender and social class," she said.

From the Nile-side dance venue, DJ Yas Meen Selectress complained that regardless of gender, "there are no dedicated spaces for us where we can play our music". Locations are often gardens or other makeshift sites, organisers told AFP.

"Traditions, society and other factors mean that there are fewer women than men in the scene," Yas Meen Selectress added. Less than 20 percent of



Egyptian DJ Yas Meen Selectress plays music at a restaurant.

women are officially employed in the country of 104 million. For the DJ in her late 20s, who lives between Cairo and New York, however, "to be only defined by one's gender is reductive". For others like Dalia Hassan, it is a selling point.

Over the past two decades, she has made a name for herself playing at women-only events from Cairo to the Yemeni capital Sanaa and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.

Hassan said she DJs at bachelorette parties, gender-segregated weddings and anywhere a female audience wants to "get dressed up and dance as they please". Having a woman at the turntables allows other women to let loose — "especially those who are veiled", she added.

'Dominated by men'

For France-based researcher Hajer Ben Boubaker, the lack of women DJs runs counter to Egypt's strong tradition of women performers. "Female singers have always been well represented in the Arab cultural

scene," she told AFP.

"The symbol par excellence of Egyptian music is still the mythical Umm Kalthoum," she added, referring to the 20th-century diva revered around the Arab world. But "women are barely represented in the Egyptian electro scene of mahraganat, which is the most popular music today," she added. Mahraganat relies heavily on computer-generated and synthesised beats and features blunt lyrics that tackle topics including love, power and money. The country's musicians' union announced late last year it was abolishing the genre as part of a campaign to "preserve public taste".

Frederike Berje from Germany's Goethe-Institut in Cairo noted that Egypt's "music industry, especially the electronic scene, is heavily dependent on private initiatives and the commitment of individual artists".

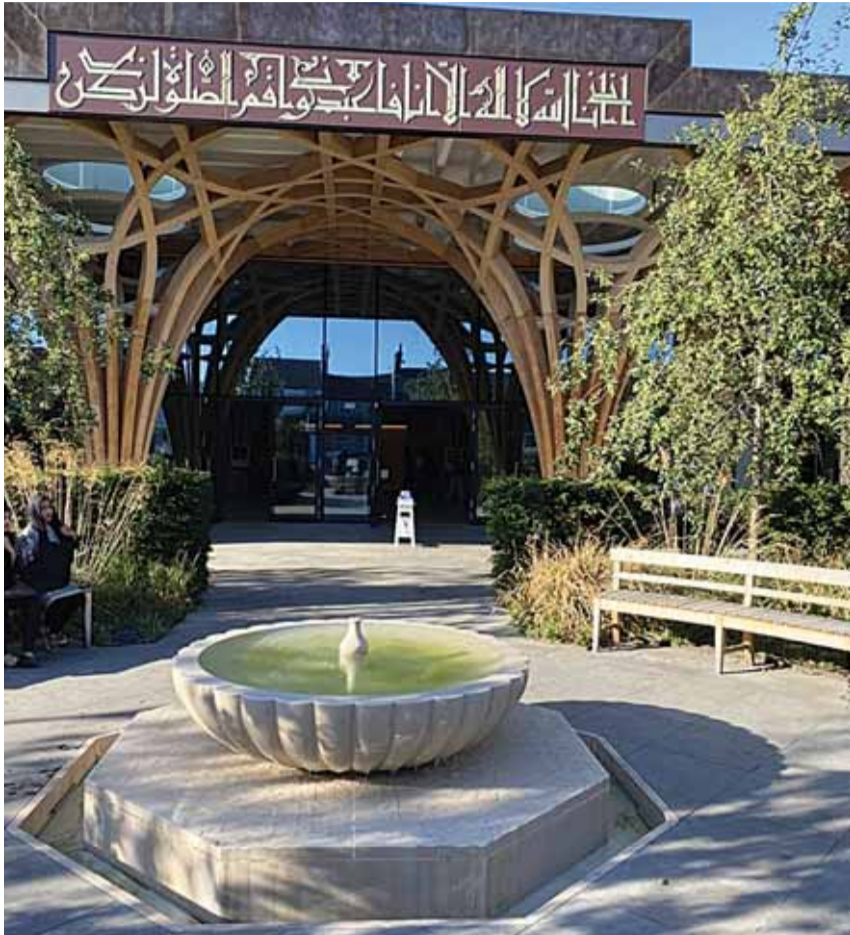
Despite rising numbers of women DJs, however, it "remains dominated by men — especially when it comes to production and management", she added. —AFP

Beirut's traditional buildings still withstand wave of modern construction



Despite the wave of modern construction in the past 25 years, several of the Lebanese capital heritage and traditional buildings still withstand the test of time. The buildings, dating back to the 19 and 20 centuries, have remained intact in spite of all that occurred throughout the history of the nation. Some 640 buildings, recognized by UNESCO, still stand tall even with occurrences such as the August 4, 2020, Beirut port explosion. —KUNA

Cambridge Central Mosque: Most environmental friendly religious facility in Europe



Since finishing construction in 2019, the Cambridge Central Mosque had become one of the most environmental-friendly religious facilities in Europe. The architectural design of the mosque focuses on lowering carbon emissions via decreasing dependence on lighting through its well thought windows designs and also using innovative methods to produce heat, air conditioning and water. Vegetation is visible and at the forefront of the mosque design, making it one of the most, if not the premier, religious facilities in the European continent. —KUNA

Prince Harry to defend scandalous memoirs in TV interviews

Prince Harry will discuss his memoirs in television interviews Sunday after the book's explosive revelations about royal rifts, sex and drugs cast doubt on his future in the British royal family. The 38-year-old prince's ghost-written book "Spare" was widely leaked after it mistakenly went on sale in Spain ahead of the official publication date Tuesday.

Details include an allegation his brother Prince William, the heir to the throne, attacked him during a row about his wife Meghan: an account of how he lost his virginity; an admission of drug use; and a claim he killed 25 people while serving in Afghanistan. British media reported Sunday that the book had deeply hurt William and the boys' father, King Charles III, but the monarch wants to reconcile with his son. The palace has not reacted officially.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak declined any comment on the scandal in a BBC interview while stressing his "enormous regard for the royal family". The TV channels have already released clips where Harry speaks about his fractious relationship with William and accuses his family of planting negative stories about him and Meghan in the media. Britain's ITV television will be the first to air its show "Harry:

The Interview" at 9:00 pm (2100 GMT) Sunday.

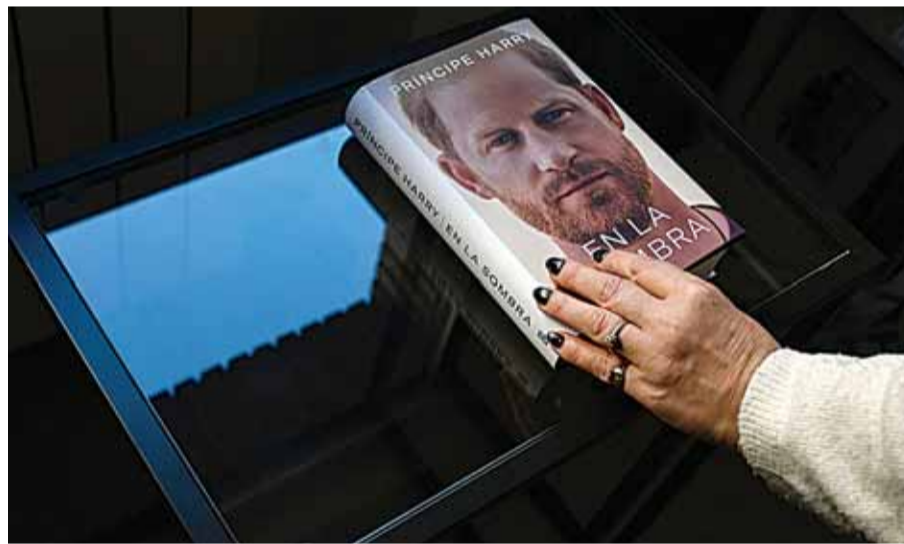
William 'burning inside'

In the latest clip released by ITV, Harry revealed he "cried once" after his mother Diana was killed and said he felt guilty at being unable to express grief while greeting crowds of mourners whose hands were wet with tears.

In previous clips, he focused on his combative relationship with William, saying his elder brother physically attacked him as they argued over Harry's wife Meghan, and "I saw this red mist in him". "I want reconciliation, but first there has to be accountability," Harry said.

Sources close to William and Charles commented to broadsheets Sunday. The Sunday Times quoted an unnamed friend of both brothers as saying William "won't retaliate, he never would," but "he's anxious and he's sad".

"He's handling it so well on the outside - inside he's burning," the source said. Another unnamed friend told the newspaper that William "is staunchly protective of his own family, and he's not just going to roll over." The Sunday Telegraph broadsheet quoted sources close to Charles as saying the king saw a reconciliation with



A woman leafs through the "En la sombra" (In the shadow) Spanish version of the book "Spare" an autobiography by Britain's Prince Harry after buying it in Madrid. —AFP

Harry as the "only way out of this mess", however.

While Harry's book is more critical of William, Charles "is no less hurt because he personally hasn't been the focus of the majority of the anger and frustration of the book," The Sunday Times reported, citing

a friend of the king. Harry told ITV he still believes in the monarchy, although he does not know if he will play any part in its future.

No coronation role
Unlike William, Harry will not have a

formal role in Charles' coronation this year which he is expected to attend, The Sunday Times reported. In "a major break with tradition, Charles has scrapped the act of the royal dukes kneeling to 'pay homage'", it wrote, and "William will be the only royal to perform the tradition".

US channel CBS was later to broadcast its interview with Harry on its "60 Minutes" evening show. Another US network, ABC, was to air its interview Monday, Harry referred to William as his "beloved brother and arch-nemesis", ABC presenter Michael Strahan said in an interview excerpt.

"There has always been this competition between us, weirdly," Harry told the US channel. "I think it really plays into or is played by the 'heir/spare'." The interviews were recorded before Harry's book was widely leaked Thursday-prompting a backlash from media, royal commentators, military veterans and even the Taliban.

British papers slammed Harry's claim to have killed 25 people while serving in the military in Afghanistan, after veterans criticised such statements as risky and inappropriate. A Taliban official condemned Harry for saying the killings felt like removing chess pieces from a board. —AFP

'More the merrier': Asia tourist hubs ready for China influx

In Tokyo's Asakusa tourist district, caricaturist Masashi Higashitani is dusting off his Chinese as he prepares for an influx of travellers after Beijing ends inbound quarantine rules. "We used to say 'ni hao' all the time," he said with a laugh as he whipped up a portrait in minutes.

Nearly 9.6 million Chinese visited Japan in 2019, the biggest group of foreign tourists by far and a massive leap from the 450,000 who came in 2003. Higashitani estimates around 20 percent of his customers were from China before the pandemic, and he and his employees picked up Chinese phrases from those visitors and each other.

He had to downsize and let staff go during the pandemic, so he is thrilled about the expected wave of arrivals, even though he admits some apprehension too. "I wonder if an influx of too many of them might overwhelm our capacity. I'm also worried that we need to be more careful about anti-virus measures," he told AFP.

Travellers arriving back in China will no longer need to quarantine from Sunday, removing one of the main barriers to travel for the country's population. The move, announced in late December, sparked a frenzy of trip planning, with searches spiking for Macau, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand and South Korea.

Chinese tourists also made up about a third of all pre-pandemic foreign visitors to South Korea and were among the top

three groups visiting Thailand and Indonesia.

'Not the time'

At a crepe stand in Seoul, Son Kyung-rak said he was already making plans to deal with a flood of tourists from China. "We're looking to hire and preparing to stock up," the 24-year-old told AFP in Seoul's popular downtown Myeongdong district.

"Chinese tourists are our main customers, so the more the merrier." But authorities in Seoul are more cautious. The slump in Chinese visitors "has been a blow to our tourism industry", said Yun Ji-suk, an official from South Korea's culture ministry. "But now is not the time to be active in tourism marketing, due to the ongoing COVID situation."

China's sudden lifting of pandemic restrictions has led to a massive wave of infections, but Beijing's refusal to share information means the scale of the surge is unclear. It has been enough to spook governments around the world, with some countries even banning arrivals from China.

'Full house'

Seoul is capping flights from China, and travellers from the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau will have to test negative before travel. Mainland visitors will also be tested on arrival. Japan has announced similar rules for China, although Hong Kong and Macau travellers are exempt.

Other Asian tourist hubs such as Indonesia have decided not to impose any restrictions. Two million Chinese tourists visited annually before the pandemic, and restaurant owners on the resort island of Bali are hoping for a rebound.

"Before the pandemic, we had a lot of Chinese customers... At least 100 to 200 customers came daily," Kadek Sucana, who runs a seafood restaurant in the Jimbaran area, told AFP. He is hoping for a "full house again... because Chinese tourists come in large groups".

While Beijing has loosened many of its COVID restrictions, overseas travel by tour groups remains banned. And there is little sign that the availability of flights will quickly catch up to renewed demand. As a result, travel destinations throughout Asia are expecting any rebound in Chinese tourists to be slow.

Indonesia is aiming for just over 250,000 Chinese tourists in 2023, a fraction of pre-pandemic figures. Thailand, which is also not imposing new rules, is hoping for around five million Chinese tourists this year, less than half the number who came in 2019.

Tourism accounted for nearly 20 percent of Thailand's national income before the pandemic, with China its largest source of foreign tourists. "This is an opportunity to restore our economic situation and recover from losses we suffered for nearly three years," Thai Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul Anutin said Thursday. —AFP



People walk down a street in the Chinatown section of Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture, south of Tokyo. —AFP photos



A general view shows a street in the Chinatown section of Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture, south of Tokyo on January 7, 2023.



People walk down a street in the Chinatown section of Yokohama.

Golden Globes return after Hollywood boycott

The Golden Globes—long known as Hollywood's favorite party, but rocked by recent scandals—will attempt to stage a celebrity-filled comeback Tuesday, as films from Steven Spielberg's "The Fabelmans" to "Top Gun" and "Avatar" sequels compete for top honors.

The Globes traditionally play a key role in kick-starting the movie awards season, but were taken off air last year amid controversy over ethical lapses and a lack of diversity in the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which organizes the Beverly Hills gala.

This year, following efforts to reform the HFPA—which previously had no Black members—NBC will broadcast the 80th Golden Globe Awards on a one-off basis, and invitations have been dispatched to Tinseltown's brightest stars.

A-listers expected in the ballroom at the Beverly Hilton include Spielberg, whose semi-autobiographical film is the favorite to win best drama, and Eddie Murphy, who will receive a career achievement award. Comedian Jerrod Carmichael will host the ceremony, and Quentin Tarantino is among the night's presenters.

But many top nominees have not yet confirmed their attendance, and Deadline awards columnist Pete Hammond expects this year's Globes to be "different" from the glitzy, hard-partying, champagne-soaked bashes seen before COVID and industry boycotts interrupted the merrymaking.

"They are going to be muted. There's no after-parties to go to. There's none of that. They're not spending big bucks, the studios, on all of this," Hammond told AFP. Those who walk the red carpet will be peppered with questions from journalists like "Do you feel comfortable being here?" and "Are you satisfied they've made all the changes?" he predicted. "It's not going to be exclusively 'What are you wearing?'"

Spielberg, Cruise, Cameron

Unlike the Oscars, the Golden Globes movie



US director Steven Spielberg attends the 40th Anniversary Screening of "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" presented on the Opening Night of the 2022 TCM Classic Film Festival at the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood. The Golden Globes — long known as Hollywood's favorite party, but rocked by recent scandals — will attempt to stage a celebrity-filled comeback Tuesday. —AFP

awards are split between "drama" and "comedy or musical" categories. On the drama side, "The Fabelmans" is up against last year's two biggest box office hits—the blockbuster sequel "Top Gun: Maverick" starring Tom Cruise, and James Cameron's "Avatar: The Way of Water."

"Tar," set in the cutthroat world of classical music,

and rock-and-roll biopic "Elvis" could also spring surprises. Their respective stars—Cate Blanchett, who plays a ruthless conductor, and Austin Butler, stepping into Presley's blue suede shoes—are frontrunners for drama acting prizes.

But "The Whale" nominee Brendan Fraser, who alleges he was once sexually assaulted by a former

HFPA president, has ruled out attending Tuesday's gala. Cruise, a producer on "Top Gun: Maverick," is also unlikely to attend, after he returned his three Globes to the HFPA in 2021 in protest at its behavior. "The Banshees of Inisherin" holds the most overall nominations at this year's Globes, with eight, and is a favorite to win best comedy, as well as best comedy actor for Colin Farrell.

The movie about a shattered friendship on a remote Irish island will contend with surreal, multi-verse-hopping sci-fi film "Everything Everywhere All At Once," which is seeking acting prizes for Michelle Yeoh, Jamie Lee Curtis and Ke Huy Quan.

'Scandal'

In years past, success at the Globes was a potential bellwether for films hoping to win Oscars, and served as a valuable marketing tool. Indeed, Academy voters will begin casting ballots for Oscar nominations on Thursday, just days after the Globes gala.

But recent controversies have muddied the waters. The addition of more than 100 new, more racially diverse Globes voters, who are not full HFPA members, has made it even harder to predict who the enigmatic group of foreign journalists will reward.

While movie billboards and commercials boasting of Globes nominations have returned after last year's notable absence, few nominees have publicly thanked the HFPA. According to Hammond, some in the industry privately yearn for the old Globes to return because the show is an important "cog in the wheel of awards season" which has "been around Hollywood for 80 years."

"You can't buy tradition," he said. But rows over diversity, alleged corruption and lack of professionalism have "lessened" the Globes' sheen when it comes to influencing the Oscars, Hammond said. "When every (Globes) story talks about the scandal... it doesn't make it as credible, I think, to the Oscar voters," he said. —AFP



Palestinian theatre director Mustafa Sheta, general manager of the "Freedom Theatre" at the Jenin camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank, stands before a mural showing the faces of prominent Palestinian figures (R to L) Nizar Banat (late activist), Mahmoud Darwish (author and poet), Naji al-Ali (cartoonist) and others during a tour of the premises. —AFP photos



People stand outside the "Freedom Theatre" at the Jenin camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank.

Show goes on at Palestinian theatres overcoming obstacles

Past the sandbags and anti-tank obstacles in Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, theatre director Mustafa Sheta ponders the fate of Palestinian thespians. "We are under a very abnormal situation," Sheta told AFP at the camp's Freedom Theatre.

The streets were silent that December day as residents had called a public strike to protest Zionist forces killing a 16-year-old Palestinian girl in Jenin hours earlier. With Zionist forces raiding Jenin repeatedly in recent months, engaging in gunfights with Palestinian militants, the Freedom Theatre's ability to provide residents with respite is under growing strain.

In 2011, the theatre's well-known Zionist-Palestinian director Juliano Mer-Khamis was gunned down in Jenin's refugee camp, in an attack that remains unsolved. Other Palestinian cultural institutions across the West Bank, annexed east Jerusalem or Zionist entity also face many obstacles.

"It's not like you have a clear plan in your schedule... you need to prepare for different scenarios," said Sheta, 42. Ahead of the opening night of the theatre's latest production, "Metro Gaza", the creatives woke up to find three Palestinians had been killed in an Zionist operation.

"What can we do? Can we continue, or stop, cancel the show?" asked Sheta. The actors took to the stage as planned and an audience of around 75 filled half the stalls. Yasmin Shalalkeh, 30, a Jerusalemite who plays a Gazan girl in the show, said it was

"essential to keep on working", particularly in Jenin.

More than 40 Palestinians were killed last year during Zionist operations in the Jenin area, including militants, children, and a teenager involved in the theatre's youth programme who was shot dead in November.

Funding ban After Jenin, "Metro Gaza" went on tour to Ramallah, east Jerusalem and finally Haifa in northern Zionist entity. Each playhouse faces its own challenges and Jerusalem's El-Hakawati, also known as the Palestinian National Theatre, has seen its audiences dwindle since Israel began constructing a barrier around the West Bank in the early 2000s.

"After the wall and the checkpoints, (it) started to get less and less, people cannot come," said director Amer Khalil, as the sound of children enjoying a puppet show drifted into the room. Whether living in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Zionist entity or the blockaded Gaza Strip, Palestinians hold different papers which impact the ability of theatre casts and audiences to travel.

"It's torture," said Shalalkeh. "When you have a play in Jerusalem and you send it to someone from Gaza and they want to come, they can't." Long gone are the days when directors must submit their script to Zionist censors, yet the theatre is "threatened by other things," said Khalil. Decorated with posters of past productions, El-Hakawati's foyer bustles with Jerusalemites ahead of each new performance.

But the director described a "very, very, very difficult-critical-economic situation", with ticket sales

not even covering a third of running costs. El-Hakawati cannot receive any support from the Palestinian Authority, which is banned by Israel from operating in Jerusalem, leaving it to "live on donations" largely from European states, said Khalil.

"Like the whole world, you have a national theatre and... the running costs—electricity, water, taxes—are all paid by the government or by the municipality. And this is what we don't have here," he said.

'Delivering art to people'

For Al Saraya, a theatre in the coastal city of Jaffa that receives state funding from Zionist entity, such support is far from unconditional. Mahmoud Abu Arisheh, its 34-year-old director, said the theatre's mission is to celebrate "the richness and uniqueness of the Arab culture".

In November, then finance minister Avigdor Lieberman called on authorities to take "all the available measures, including denying funding" when Al Saraya screened "Farha", a film depicting alleged Zionist atrocities against Palestinians.

Abu Arisheh said threats and incitements against the theatre "are already limiting our freedom of speech and expression." And sanctions by Zionist authorities "could happen at any time", the director warns. But Palestinian artists, whether in Jaffa, Jenin or Jerusalem, must keep the show going, said actor Shalalkeh. "Even with all of this situation... and the cruelty in the world, it is important to keep on living and delivering art to people." —AFP

Record-breaking winter temperatures warm Europe

Europe has seen "extreme" warm winter weather in recent days, experts have said, with 2023 already posting record temperatures for January across the region.

As temperatures rise globally because of human-caused climate change, scientists say heatwaves and spells of warmer-than-average weather are becoming more common throughout the year.

After experiencing searing summer heat and a drought unprecedented in centuries, a wave of warm weather across Europe this winter has melted the snow from ski slopes in the Alps and Pyrenees, and seen temperatures above 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) even in normally-freezing central regions.

Several European countries saw record-breaking heat on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Hundreds of weather stations across Europe have recorded all-time highest daily temperatures for the months of December or January, it said this week.

Freja Vamborg, Senior Scientist at Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), said the current winter heatwave is an "extreme" heat event in Europe in terms of how far temperatures have deviated from what is expected at this time of year. Here Vamborg answers some key questions about the heatwave:

What caused these high temperatures?

"On the 1st of January there was strong flow of air from the southwest across the affected area, which would have brought warmer air further north and penetrated unusually far east, reaching even to Belarus. Minimal snow cover was very probably another relevant factor."

"The circulation of any given weather situation and climate change are not two independent things. Climate change itself also has an impact on the circulation, and will also impact how warm those moving air masses are. This is what makes it so complex to disentangle just simply a weather event, from the level to which climate change influenced such an event."

How is climate change involved?

"With increasing global temperatures, heatwaves and warm spells are becoming more frequent and intense — this is not restricted to the summer months."

"While the warming trend in Europe is on average stronger in the warmer seasons, winters are also becoming warmer as a result of global temperatures."

"Northern Europe has warmed more strongly in winter than in summer, while in the south the warming trend is more apparent in summer."

What is the impact of these high winter temperatures?

"A couple of things can be mentioned for warm temperatures during the winter months. While it means less need for heating of housing and other infrastructures, low snow cover affects the winter tourism industry."

"Possible impacts on natural ecosystems, include early return from hibernation, which may have negative impacts if followed by much less mild/freezing conditions." "The overall impact will be different depending on the longevity and intensity of the event." —AFP

Widely decried, in Colombia 'blackface' celebrates diversity

The practice of blackface is denounced as racist in the United States and many other countries. In Colombia, it is a key element of a festival to celebrate diversity. The Carnaval de Negros y Blancos (Carnival of Blacks and Whites) gathers thousands of revelers from December 28 to January 6 each year in Pasto in southwest Colombia.

Billing itself as a celebration of equality, it has been held for more than a century in a region home to many Afro-Colombians and Indigenous communities heavily marked by racial and economic inequality. "Welcome to the only party where painting one's face is World Heritage!" the festival website proclaims.

The carnival, one of Colombia's biggest, is inscribed on UNESCO's "Representative List of the

Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." Every year, celebrations kick off with giant water battles followed by bonfires on December 31, the burning of wooden or straw puppets, and a costume parade.

'Human brotherhood'

"The main days of the carnival are the last two, when people of all ethnicities don black cosmetics on the first day, then white talcum on the next to symbolize equality and integrate all citizens through a celebration of ethnic and cultural difference," according to UNESCO. "The festival is especially important as the expression of a mutual desire for a future of tolerance and respect," states its website.

Unlike in the United States or elsewhere, the

carnival's practice of blackface elicits no controversy. Quite the contrary. Toby Boecker, from Germany and in blackface, said he had asked around whether the practice was controversial so as not to fall foul of local mores. "I was told: 'No, it's part of the local culture.'"

The carnival is a relic of slave festivals of the 17th and 18th centuries, allowed by Spanish colonists in a bid to stave off revolt. "The Carnival of Blacks and Whites celebrates human brotherhood. We are one people," said Milton Portilla, culture director for the Narino department of which Pasto is the capital. For Leonardo Sanson Guerrero, a former organizer of the event, it is an important "expression of a cultural identity." —AFP

Sports

Mahomes breaks record as Chiefs secure AFC top seed, Jaguars take AFC South

MIAMI: Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes set a record for most total yards in an NFL season as the Chiefs secured the AFC top seed with a 31-13 win over the Las Vegas Raiders on Saturday while the Jacksonville Jaguars beat the Tennessee Titans 20-16 to clinch the AFC South title. The top seed spot ensures a first-round bye for the Chiefs, who end the regular season with a 14-3 record and are looking for their third Super Bowl appearance in four seasons.

Mahomes passed for 202 yards and rushed for 29 giving him 5,608 total yards for the season. That took him past the previous record of 5,562 yards set by former New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees in 2011. Kansas City scored on their first drive - Mahomes finding Justin Watson with a 67 yard pass deep left before a trademark two yard shovel pass to Jerick McKinnon for the touchdown.

A two-yard rush from Ronald Jones at the start of the second quarter put the Chiefs 14-3 up and looking in firm command of the game. After a clever wildcat play for a Kadarius Toney touchdown was ruled out for holding, Toney then compensated by rushing for an 11-yard touchdown on the next play. Isiah Pacheco's one yard rush in the fourth made it 31-6, but the Raiders reduced the deficit with quarterback Jarrett Stidham connecting with Hunter Renfrow with an 11-yard touchdown pass.

But it was a convincing win for Andy Reid's side, who will now enjoy a week off before beginning their post-season push. "It's important, it's like winning a playoff game," Mahomes said of securing the bye. The Chiefs' innovative offensive plays featured an unusual move before the penalized wildcat touchdown with the players spinning in a circle, a move Mahomes said was dubbed the "Snowglobe." "We enjoy it, we draw up these plays all the time and coach Reid lets us have rein to add our own flair," he said.

'Win and you're in'

The Jaguars made the post-season after Josh Allen ran in a fourth quarter touchdown from 37 yards after scooping up a fumble recovery forced by Rayshawn Jenkins on Titans quarterback Josh Dobbs. The game was a straightforward "win and you're in" clash for the AFC South division title and was a gruelling battle for much of the game.

The inexperienced Dobbs, making just his second start after a five-year career as a back-up, had been well protected by the Titans who relied heavily on the run with Derrick Henry putting up 109 rushing yards. The Titans, who had been 7-3 before losing their last seven games, opened up a 10-0 lead on a 21 yard touchdown pass from Dobbs to Chigoziem Okonkwo.

Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence responded, connecting with Christian Kirk for a 25-yard touchdown. While Lawrence missed two potential touchdown passes, Jacksonville's defense delivered a strong showing in the second half and after a Riley Patterson field goal they drew within three. Then Jenkins closed on Dobbs from his blind side and palmed the ball free just as Dobbs was into his passing motion with Allen pouncing on the loose ball and taking it home. The result concluded an impressive turnaround for the Jaguars, who had been 4-8 before winning their last five games.

"We just kept believing, nobody ever lost faith, we never started pointing the finger, we lost five games straight and just got tighter...it is cool to see a team come together like we have," said Lawrence, who threw for 212 yards. "It is hard to sum up this season and what we have been able to do and to get the opportunity to go and play in the playoffs with a home game...we are all fired up," added the Jaguars quarterback. "It was one of those games where the defense had to win it for us, we were a little frustrated on



LAS VEGAS: Quarterback Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs attempts a pass against safety Roderic Teamer of the Las Vegas Raiders at Allegiant Stadium on Jan 7, 2023. —AFP

offense but in these games, just win," he added.

Both games saw gestures of support for hospitalized Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who had suffered a cardiac arrest in Monday's game against the Cincinnati Bengals. Jaguars and Titans players knelt together in prayer before the kick-off

while Chiefs and Raiders players wore T-shirts in support of the player. Hamlin, who remains in critical condition but continues to progress according to a team statement, took to Instagram to express his appreciation for the wave of support he has received. —AFP

After Freire's fatal final wave, surfing world shocked, silent

NAZARE, Portugal: The day after the death of Brazilian surfer Marcio Freire, a leaden silence had settled over Nazare, the Portuguese fishing village that has become a winter destination for big-wave surfers. Around the lighthouse perched on the rocky promontory of Praia do Norte, everything, even the ocean, seemed calm.

The rollers breaking on Friday were, for once, just a few meters high on a short stretch of coast in central Portugal that draws surfers keen to ride its famed wall of water. The Nazare Canyon, a five-kilometre deep crack in the floor of the continental shelf, allows waves to roll in with little loss of energy to be thrown upward as the fault ends just off the shore, creating giant breakers.

Since Hawaiian surfer Garrett McNamara rode a series of record-breaking Nazare waves starting in late 2011, the village has drawn big-wave surfers and those who like to watch them. German Sebastian Steudtner set the world record for the tallest wave surfed, an 86-foot (26.2-m) breaker, on Oct 29, 2020. On Thursday, Freire, a veteran big-wave chaser, died there at the age of 47. Freire was being towed out in a moderate swell when he fell. "The rescuers found that the victim was in cardio-respiratory arrest, immediately starting resuscitation maneuvers on the sand," said Portugal's National Maritime Authority in a statement. "It was not possible to reverse the situation." It was, local authorities said, the first death surfing the canyon, yet the conditions were relatively benign and Freire was an experienced surfer. He was one of a trio of Brazilians who starred in a 2016 documentary called 'Mad Dogs' about their battle to surf the legendary Jaws wave in Hawaii without being towed into place.

On Friday, Mario Lopes de Figueiredo, the commander of the Nazare maritime police told AFP that they were still investigating exactly how Freire died. "The waves did not exceed five meters," de Figueiredo said. "These are not difficult conditions for surfing here. On the days of the greatest swell, they reach between 15 and 20 meters. The surfer fell and was submerged by the wave. Then he was hit by two or three waves from behind and he did not have time to react in time or found himself unconscious at the impact of the first."

The Brazilian filmmaker Bred Oliveira, a member of Freire's team, the "Jagua Boys", filmed his friend's last wave, thinking at the time he was simply recording a training session. "We had no idea. Nobody really knows how it happened. I was filming and, suddenly, I heard the sirens of the rescuers," he told AFP. "The world of big surfing is in mourning, many surfers are in shock," he continued.

Oliveira hopes that at least the accident will help "improve safety" in Nazare. While many of the community of big-wave surfers in Nazare had decided to refuse to speak to the media they are expected to organize a tribute to Freire on Sunday. Forecasts suggest it could coincide with the arrival of a giant swell. —AFP

South Africa hold out for draw to deny Australia sweep

SYDNEY: South Africa were untroubled as they batted out for their first draw in almost six years on the final day of the third Test in Sydney on Sunday, denying Australia a series whitewash. Australia went into the fifth day of the rain-ravaged Test requiring 14 wickets for an improbable victory, but the Proteas comfortably negotiated their way through to earn a first draw in their last 47 Tests going back to New Zealand in 2017.

The teams shook hands with five overs left and South Africa at 106 for two in their second innings with Sarel Erwee unbeaten on 42 and Temba Bavuma 17. Australia enforced the follow-on after Josh Hazlewood led the way with four wickets to dis-

Celtics hold off Spurs, Lakers edge Kings in thriller

LOS ANGELES: Jayson Tatum scored 34 points, including a go-ahead basket with 33.7 seconds remaining on Saturday as the Boston Celtics escaped San Antonio with a 121-116 NBA victory over the tenacious Spurs. While the Celtics followed up their dominant victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Thursday, the Mavs bounced back with a 127-117 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans with the help of a triple-double from Luka Doncic.

The Celtics improved their league-best record to 28-12 as they finished up a 2-2 road trip - but it looked harder than it needed to be against a rebuilding San Antonio squad. Jaylen Brown added 29 points, and Malcolm Brogdon scored 23 off the bench for the Celtics, who led by 11 midway through the fourth quarter. The scrappy Spurs - who had 18 points apiece from Zach Collins, Tre Jones and Josh Richardson - tied it up at 116-116 on Richardson's three-pointer with 37.4 seconds remaining.

Tatum's step-back basket - off a pass from former Spur Derrick White - restored Boston's lead, and three Celtics free throws sealed it. "There's obviously a lot of stuff tactically we can work on," said Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla, who nevertheless insisted he was happy to

see his team work through adversity to get the win. "We needed a game like this, to where it's back and forth, things aren't going our way, they are going our way - you don't get a lot of those. It's easier to say that because we won," he acknowledged. "But I'm happy the game went the way it did because we got to execute some stuff."

Boston had opened their four-game road-trip with defeats at Denver and Oklahoma City before routing the Mavericks in Dallas on Thursday on the back of Tatum's second career triple-double. In Dallas Doncic rebounded from his seven-for-23 shooting performance against Boston with 34 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. The Slovenian star notched his 55th career triple-double and his ninth this season, one behind the league-leading 10 of Denver's Nikola Jokic.

Center Jonas Valanciunas scored 25 points to lead the Pelicans, who were without injured Zion Williamson and Malcolm Brogdon and resting CJ McCollum. In Sacramento, LeBron James scored 37 points to lead the Los Angeles Lakers in a dramatic 136-134 victory over the Kings. Tied at halftime and heading into the fourth quarter, the Lakers pushed their lead to as many as nine midway through the final period.

But they had to fight to the finish for a fifth straight victory. De'Aaron Fox put the Kings up by two with one minute remaining, but James answered with a three-point play. It was tied at 134-134 after Fox's turnaround jump shot with 7.4 seconds remaining, but Dennis Schroder made two free throws to seal it for the Lakers as Fox missed at the buzzer. —AFP



SAN ANTONIO: Jayson Tatum of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball during the game against the San Antonio Spurs on Jan 7, 2023 at the AT&T Center. —AFP

Shiffrin equals World Cup victory record

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia: Mikaela Shiffrin equaled Lindsey Vonn's women's record of 82 World Cup victories when she won the giant slalom at Kranjska Gora on Sunday. The 27-year-old American produced two dominant runs to beat the Italian Federica Brignone by 0.77 seconds. The Swiss Lara Gut-Behrami was third, 0.97sec behind Shiffrin.

"I was so nervous on this run, I even had a rash on my face, maybe a bit of that was because of

82," a tearful Shiffrin told broadcaster Eurosport. "I wanted to ski well and I did it. I can't believe it. It was a fight but it was pretty amazing conditions. I got a report from the coaches that everything is fully attackable and you have to go for it. I have been in this position and given it away. Today I wanted to fight for it."

Shiffrin picked up her first World Cup win when she was only 17. She is now just four wins shy of matching the overall record of 86 wins held by the Swedish legend Ingemar Stenmark, who dominated the men's slalom and giant slalom disciplines for a decade from 1975 before retiring in 1989. Shiffrin might have equaled the record 24 hours earlier but after five successive World Cup wins, she could only finish sixth in the weekend's opening giant slalom as Valerie Grenier gave Canada its first victory since 1974. —AFP



KRANJSKA GORA: American Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates with teammates after winning the Women's Giant Slalom event of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup on Jan 8, 2023. —AFP

Davis stops Garcia to retain 'regular' WBA world title

WASHINGTON: American Gervonta Davis took his record to 28-0 with 26 knockouts on Saturday when he stopped previously unbeaten Hector Luis Garcia in a World Boxing Association lightweight fight. Davis retained his WBA "regular" world title in the division, in which American Devin Haney is recognized as the WBA's "super" world champion. Unbeaten Haney also holds the WBC, IBF and WBO belts, which he defended with a dominant victory over Australian George

Kambosios in Melbourne in October.

Saturday's bout at the Capital One arena in Washington saw Dominican Garcia push Davis in the early going. But Davis began to assert himself in the middle rounds. At the end of the eighth - after a brief timeout because of an altercation in the crowd at ring-side - Davis found Garcia with a punishing left. Garcia didn't answer the bell for the ninth. He was heard saying "I can't see" in his corner and referee Earl Brown officially stopped the fight seconds into the ninth.

"I'm never surprised," Davis said of his reaction to Garcia's refusal to answer the bell for the ninth round. "When I caught him, I knew he was hurt, he was hurt bad. He's a fighter, so he didn't want to show it." Garcia, the WBA super featherweight champion from the Dominican Republic, fell to 16-1 with 10 knockouts. —AFP



WASHINGTON: Gervonta Davis celebrates after defeating Hector Luis Garcia in their WBA World Lightweight Championship bout at Capital One Arena on Jan 7, 2023. —AFP

miss the Proteas for 255 - 21 runs short of their target, but their highest innings total of a dismal series.

"We tried different things, kept putting balls in good areas and hoped the luck would turn," Australia skipper Pat Cummins said. "We were up against it, we had 150 overs to take 20 wickets on a good surface." Australia could only muster two wickets in South Africa's second innings with skipper Dean Elgar yet again failing along with Heinrich Klaasen. Elgar fell for the fourth time in the series to a leg-side catch by wicketkeeper Alex Carey for 10.

Cummins peppered him with a rising delivery and targeted Elgar's technical batting flaw off his hips for yet another cheap dismissal. Elgar finished a miserable series with just 56 runs from six innings at an average of 9.33, raising yet more questions about his future as South Africa's Test skipper. "Touring Australia is never easy," Elgar said. "The message to the group yesterday was to fight it out on day five. Only three or four guys have played here before, so there are a lot of learnings. It is a tough place to tour, maybe the toughest in the world. Test cricket teaches you resilience. When things aren't on your side, you still have to wake up and try again." Australia opener

Usman Khawaja was named man-of-the-match for his unbeaten 195 in Australia's first innings declaration of 475-4. Fellow opener David Warner was man-of-the-series, based largely on his double century in Melbourne.

Lyon distraught

Asked about his feelings on being stranded short of his first Test double-century by the declaration, Khawaja said: "I would have loved to get a double ton. But this is what cricket is about. You play for milestones but you also need to do the best for the team." Australia had some chances on the final day and leading spinner Nathan Lyon was left distraught when two contentious reviews involving Klaasen went against him.

Klaasen survived a strident leg before wicket appeal and subsequent review on 27. A run later a low catch by Steve Smith was given out after a review with the third umpire Richard Kettleborough ruling that part of the ball was touching the grass when it went into Smith's fingers. Smith was adamant he took the catch. "I was pretty certain I caught it, but it was deemed the other way. It's the umpire's call and you move on."

But Klaasen didn't last much longer and was bowled by



SYDNEY: South Africa's Sarel Erwee plays a sweep shot during the third cricket Test match against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Jan 8, 2023. —AFP

Hazlewood for 35. Hazlewood had earlier made a crucial double-wicket breakthrough to help wrap up South Africa's first innings. —AFP

Sports

Newcastle stunned, Liverpool held on day of FA Cup surprises

LONDON: Premier League high-flyers Newcastle suffered a shock FA Cup exit against Sheffield Wednesday and holders Liverpool rode their luck in a draw with Wolves, while Nottingham Forest and Bournemouth crashed out on a day of third round surprises. Elsewhere on an enthralling afternoon of FA Cup action, Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, the Hollywood actors who co-own Wrexham, led the celebrations on social media after their non-league side's surprise 4-3 victory at second tier Coventry.

But it was Wednesday, second in League One, who stole the show on Saturday with their impressive 2-1 victory at Hillsborough against a Newcastle team sitting third in the Premier League. Eddie Howe's side were unbeaten in 15 games, but Wednesday have now gone undefeated in 10 matches after Josh Windass's double stunned the Magpies. Wednesday went ahead in the 52nd minute when Windass, who looked in an offside position, diverted Dennis Adeniran's ball across from close-range.

Windass scored his second 13 minutes later, coolly converting after being put through by Michael Smith. Newcastle reduced the deficit in the 68th minute when Bruno Guimaraes poked home from close-range, but Chris Wood squandered a golden opportunity to equalise as he fired over from 10 yards. "It was a disappointing result for us. We are aware that we don't have the deepest squad of any team in the Premier League," Howe said.

At Anfield, a difficult week for Liverpool that started with a Premier League loss at Brentford, concluded with a fortuitous 2-2 draw against Wolves. Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker was guilty of a woeful error when his pass was intercepted by Goncalo Guedes, who slotted Wolves' 26th minute opener. Darwin Nunez cushioned a superb volley

past Matija Sarkic to equalize on the stroke of half-time and Mohamed Salah's deft finish in the 52nd minute put Liverpool ahead.

But the Reds, who gave a debut to Netherlands forward Cody Gakpo after his move from PSV Eindhoven, were pegged back in the 57th minute through Hwang Hee-chan's composed effort. It could have been even worse for Liverpool, as Toti's goal was disallowed for offside in the final minutes as the Reds survived for a replay. "The first goal should not happen, but we all know how often Ali saves our backsides," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said. "I'm not sure about their disallowed goal. We have one picture where it may look offside, but I can understand why they are angry about it."

Wolves manager Julen Lopetegui was furious with the decision and also claimed Salah's strike should have been ruled out. "We have seen it, the offside doesn't exist, I'm sorry. It's impossible. The decision is wrong," he said. "Then Mohamed Salah was offside before Toti touched the ball, so he got an advantage."

'Great chapter'

Sam Dalby, Elliot Lee, Thomas O'Connor and Paul Mullin scored for National League side Wrexham as they swept into a 4-1 lead at Coventry. Despite a late fightback from 10-man Coventry, Wrexham reached the fourth round for the first time since 2000, sparking a celebratory Instagram post from Reynolds laced with profanity. "It's a great chapter in the story of Wrexham since the new owners have come in and I'm sure they will be overjoyed with what they've seen today," Wrexham boss Phil Parkinson said.

Forest boss Steve Cooper named an entirely different starting team for the match at Blackpool after his side's midweek win against Southampton, which lifted



SHEFFIELD: Sheffield Wednesday's English defender Dominic Iorfa vies with Newcastle United's English midfielder Jacob Murphy at Hillsborough Stadium on Jan 7, 2023. — AFP

them out of the Premier League relegation zone. The plan backfired badly as the Championship team won 4-1 at Bloomfield Road, with goals from Marvin Ekpiteta, Ian Poveda, CJ Hamilton and Jerry Yates.

Two goals each from Anass Zaroury and Manuel Benson put Championship leaders Burnley on course for a 4-2 win at Bournemouth. Harry Kane

moved closer to becoming Tottenham's all-time record goalscorer as he netted in the 50th minute of a 1-0 win against Portsmouth. Kane, with four goals in four matches since missing the penalty against France that led to England's elimination at the World Cup, has 265 goals for Spurs - just one behind the club's all-time record scorer, Jimmy Greaves. — AFP

Fatat remain on top of league

KUWAIT: Kuwait women's futsal team put an end to Fatat's winning streak after drawing 1-1 in



the 8th round of the URC women futsal league. Kuwait now have 3 points and are in third place, while Fatat remain on top with 19 points. In the second match, Tadhamon defeated Fatayat Al-Oyoun 6-0, raising their point total to 18 to go second, while Fatayat Al-Oyoun remain pointless in last place.



Danilo honors Vialli by firing Juve second, Inter slip at Monza

MILAN: Danilo made sure that Juventus paid the perfect tribute to deceased former captain Gianluca Vialli by netting the only goal in Saturday's 1-0 win over Udinese which fired the Turin giants second in Serie A. Massimiliano Allegri's team jumped one point above AC Milan and to within just four of league leaders Napoli thanks to a beautifully-constructed goal finished off by the Brazilian defender four minutes from the end at the Allianz Stadium.

Danilo extended Juve's league winning streak to eight games, a run in which they haven't conceded a goal, after Federico Chiesa controlled fellow substitute Leandro Paredes' delicate chip and then played a perfect pass across goal. That was one of the few clear-cut chances Juve created against eighth-placed Udinese, who were missing their talisman Gerard Deulofeu and are winless in nine matches.

On Friday, Juve travel to Napoli, who on Sunday are in action at Sampdoria, where former Italy forward Vialli - a victim of pancreatic cancer - played most of his football and may be mourned the most. "After the win our first thoughts go to Gianluca Vialli. He was a great guy, I was lucky

enough to have had him in my life," said Italy forward Chiesa. The 25-year-old was part of the Italy team which won Euro 2020, and hailed Vialli's role in that triumph despite him not having a coaching role with the Azzurri set-up. "You could speak for hours and hours about what a great man he was," Chiesa added.

Champions Milan will move back into second if they beat Roma in Sunday's late match, and sit two points ahead of Inter Milan after Denzel Dumfries' stoppage-time own goal led to them drawing 2-2 at Monza. Spirited Monza are nine points clear of the relegation zone in their first ever Serie A season thanks to Dumfries deflecting former Inter youth player Luca Caldirola's header into his own net.

However Inter coach Simone Inzaghi was livid that a Francesco Acerbi strike had not been given 10 minutes earlier because referee Juan Luca Sacchi blew for a non-existent foul before the ball went in, leaving VAR powerless to intervene. "We're very angry, because it's a clear mistake. After five years of VAR... Everyone knows to wait and see what happens," said Inzaghi to Sky.

It was an emotional day for many Juve fans, who will remember Vialli as the last captain to lead their team to a major European honour more than a quarter of a century ago. Fans brought jerseys emblazoned with the former Italy striker's name, while one flag in the Allianz Stadium stands depicted the moment he lifted the Champions League trophy in 1996. — AFP



Athletes shine at Special Olympics

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Special Olympics held an athletics competition for the mentally challenged under the patronage of the Public Authority for Sport (PAS), with 67 athletes representing 14 different clubs, schools and establishments over two days at Kuwait athletics club's track. Competitions of the closing day were held in the presence of Deputy Director General of PAS for sports for all sectors Hamid Al-Hazeem, Chairwoman of Kuwait Special Olympics Hanaa Al-Zawawi, Deputy Chairwoman of Tomooh Club Huda Al-Khaldi, Secretary Sadeeqa Al-Ansari and board member Fahad Al-Sahly.

Hazeem appreciated the organization and technical level of the events, as well as the efforts of Kuwait Special Olympics to improve the sports level of the mentally challenged in all competitions, as this expanded the base of participants who had many achievements regionally and internationally. Zawawi said the Special Olympics is keen on organizing such events to give children the opportunity to practice sports and discover outstanding athletes to include them in the national team and prepare them for participating in the world games to be held in Berlin in June.

The competitions were held according to international rules using the Game Management System (GMS) for the first time in running the competition and athlete rankings, as well as results of the 50m and 100m races and shotput for men and women. In the 50m men's race, first place went to Hussein Karam from Kuwait Educational Academy, Yousef Al-Joudar from Guidance Education Establishment and Abdelaziz Nasrallah from Al-Resalah School.

The women's race was won by Noor Al-Ibrahim from Kuwait Society and Ahmadi and Ayat Al-Tulaibi from Integrated Care Establishment.

In the 100m women's race, Mariam Al-Hindi from Tomooh club won. In the 100m men's race, Ziyad Al-Maatouq from Kuwait Academy, Nasser Al-Hashimi and Mohammad Al-Hinnawi from Tomooh Club won. Shotput women: Zahraa Sarkhouh from Al-Ikhlash Establishment and Aysha Mahdy from Integrated Care Establishment won. Shotput men: Mejib Mejib and Othman Yaqoub from Autism Center, Ali Dashti from Al-Resalah School and Ali Al-Shirazi from Integrated Care won.

Today's matches on TV

ARABIAN GULF CUP

Oman v Yemen 16:15

Dubai Sports 1

AD Sports 1 HD

Saudi Arabia v Iraq 19:15

Dubai Sports 1

AD Sports 1 HD

SPANISH LEAGUE

Athletic de Bilbao v Osasuna 23:00

beIN Sports HD 1

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Hellas Verona FC V US Cremonese 20:30

AD SPORTS Premium

Bologna FC V Atalanta 22:45

AD SPORTS Premium 1

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075

Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MIDHAT FATEMA, holder of Passport No. V3760728, do hereby change my name to MIDHAT FATEMA (as Given name) ZIAEE (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name MIDHAT FATEMA ZIAEE and I also undertake to carry

out this name change in all my documents. (C#2826)

I, Sreeram (current name as in Passport), holder of Indian Passport No. Z2815357, having permanent address Kerala, India, Pin Code: 682017, and residing in Kuwait at present, do hereby declare that I change my name to Sreeram (Given

name) Sreekumar Pillai (Surname) for all purposes, and that I undertake to effect the change in all my official documents. (C#2827) — 09-01-2023

I, Sandeep (current name), holder of Indian Passport No. V 7778715 residing in Kuwait hereby declare that henceforth my new name will read as given name Sandeep

Kumar and surname Panchal. (C#0881) I, JOHAR JOHAR, holder of Passport No. Z 2816653 do hereby change my name to JOHAR (as Given name) LOKHANDWALA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name JOHAR LOKHANDWALA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

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Djokovic pushes ahead with Adelaide title

Sabalenka sends Australian Open warning with Adelaide triumph



ADELAIDE: Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning the final of the ATP Adelaide International tournament against Sebastian Korda of the US on Jan 8, 2023. — AFP

ADELAIDE: Top seed Novak Djokovic saved a match point Sunday before defeating Sebastian Korda to win the Adelaide International and reinforce his status as a heavy title favorite for the Australian Open. The 21-time Grand Slam winner needed more than three hours to stamp his authority on his unseeded American opponent, son of former world number two Petr Korda, 6-7 (8/10), 7-6 (7/3), 6-4. In doing so, Djokovic extended his unbeaten streak in Australia to 34 straight matches.

The winner of 92 career titles now heads to the Australian Open in about a week with momentum in his bid to secure the Grand Slam for a 10th time, helped by the absence at Melbourne Park of injured world number one Carlos Alcaraz. Djokovic, the 2007 champion at Adelaide in the early days of his career, called the pre-Open tune-up week "very special for me", thrilled by overwhelming fan enthusiasm.

"It's been an amazing week. To be standing here is a gift definitely," said the Serbian world number five, who missed last year's Australian Open after being deported over his vaccination status. "I gave it my all today and throughout the week in order to be able to get my hands on this trophy. The support I have been getting in the last 10 days was something that I don't think I've experienced too many times in my life," he added, with packed pro-Djokovic crowds whenever he played. It definitely felt like playing at home."

Djokovic nullified Korda's match point while serving at 5-6, 30/40 in the second set, coming

good on an overhead to make the save before the set moved into another tiebreaker which the Serb won. Korda, 22, was playing his fifth career final and said the experience boded well for the rest of the season. "It was a great start to the year, I wish I could have gotten it done today, but I know there's a long journey to go and a lot of positives from this week," he said. "I

think we're (he and his team) are going to have a great year together."

Djokovic, who showed no sign of the leg problem which bothered him on Saturday during his defeat of Daniil Medvedev, agreed, paying tribute to the fast-emerging American. "Amazing effort today Seb. I'd probably say you were closer to victory today than I was. It was decided in one or two shots, one or two points," he said. "Tough luck today but the future is bright for you."

Ready for 'big fight'

Meanwhile, Aryna Sabalenka said she was ready for a "big fight" at the Australian Open after firing a warning shot Sunday by winning her first title since 2021 at the Adelaide International. The world number five ended a slump of three consecutive defeats in WTA finals with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) victory against rising Czech teenager Linda Noskova in torrid 36 Celsius (96.8 Fahrenheit) conditions.

The Belarusian double-faulted on the first of three match points but sent over a serve winner on the second to wrap up the afternoon.

"I'm super happy with another title, it was a great week," the winner said. "I enjoyed every moment here in Adelaide, I'm happy with my performance. My serve helped me a lot, today especially. I was able to put her under pressure on her serve. I think that's why I won today."

The second seed, a holder of 10 titles, added one more to her career total as she put her veteran's experience to good use, ending the week without the loss of a set. She last lifted a trophy at the Madrid Masters in May, 2021 and is optimistic about her Australian Open chances after her week in South Australia. "I just feel that I'm ready to show my best. I'm ready for a big fight," she said.

World number 102 Noskova, the 2021 Roland Garros junior champion, will rise towards the top 50 with her run to her maiden final, upsetting world number two Ons Jabeur and veteran Victoria Azarenka along the way. At 18, she was the youngest finalist at a WTA 500 event since Caroline Wozniacki at New Haven 2007. "It was obviously a very tough match today. Aryna played just amazing," Noskova said. "I didn't have a lot of chances. I did have some break points, but she always served her way out of it. That was really tough to beat."

The teenager added: "When I trust myself and my game, I can actually beat some of the best players; that's really a great feeling. But I'm obviously going to have to develop my game. There are a lot of blind spots. There's always things to work on." — AFP



ADELAIDE: Belarusian tennis player Aryna Sabalenka holds the trophy after winning her final match against Czech Linda Noskova at the WTA Adelaide International tournament on Jan 8, 2023. — AFP

Loeb takes Dakar Rally stage; Sainz caught speeding

RIYADH: Sebastien Loeb grabbed victory Sunday in the eighth stage of the Dakar Rally after Carlos Sainz was hit with a five-minute penalty. The victory lifted Loeb to fourth overall but he remains almost two hours behind rally leader Nasser Al-Attiyah. The 48-year-old Frenchman won the stage by 2 minutes and 11 seconds in his Prodrive from Qatari Attiyah after 822 km of racing through valleys and sand between Al-Duwadimi and Riyadh.

Loeb has had a wildly up-and-down race in his Prodrive. After bad days on Monday and Tuesday he won on Wednesday but rolled his car on Thursday and on Saturday lost more than 16 minutes. "It was a good stage, a clean stage this time, for us," said Loeb at the finish on Sunday. "Just one puncture, we had to change one wheel, but the rest was okay. We tried to make it a big one."

Sainz has also had shifting fortunes in the sands. On Sunday he was caught driving 40 km over the limit in his Audi in a 30kph section. The penalty dropped him to third for the day at 3min 31sec. The Spaniard is 17th overall. Sainz said he was happy with his drive after a 'disappointing' first week. "We had a good stage, a clean stage. Finally, we got to enjoy ourselves a little



RIYADH: Brazilian driver Lucas Moraes and German co-driver Timo Gottschalk and Chinese driver Zhang Guoyu and French co-driver Jean Pierre Garcin compete during Stage 8 of the Dakar 2023 between Al Duwadimi and Riyadh on Jan 8, 2023. — AFP

bit and get a clear run." The Spaniard complained that because of his poor results he has been starting way down the field. "I liked it much better before in the Dakar, when a priority driver got a problem, you were immediately put in the top 15," he said. But on Sunday, despite "starting so far behind, we had no dust, thanks to the rain."

Before the penalty was announced Attiyah said he was happy with third. "Finishing third is okay," he said. "We have to try and be in the top 3 every day to earn as many points as we can for the championship." Attiyah gained time on his closest pursuer, Henk Lategan, who was fourth in a Toyota at 4min 53sec. — AFP

Kuwait must benefit from participation in Gulf Cup: Coaches

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti coaches Mohammad Al-Mashaan and Malik Al-Qallaf stressed Sunday the necessity of benefiting from the participation of the Kuwaiti national team in the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 25). In statements to KUNA, the two coaches said that most of the teams participating in the championship adopted a clear plan by involving new players to develop them, raise their readiness and benefit from technical returns in preparing strong teams on the continental level.

Mashaan noted that the Kuwaiti team's performance in the first match of the competition was good, despite some tactical blunders, stressing that Kuwaiti players possess sufficient talent and high technical standards. He also said the technical level of the teams in the first round was average, but at the same time achieved the technical goals desired by the coaches.

Qallaf pointed out the Kuwaiti team did not deserve to lose in its first match, but some individual mistakes committed by some players affected the entire performance. Qallaf praised the Saudi and Bahraini teams, considering them the most convincing in the first round of the tournament, due to their characteristic technical and administrative stability, which enhance their chances of reaching far in the tournament. — KUNA



Mohammad Al-Mashaan



Malik Al-Qallaf