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Assembly panel not to drop controversial laws

Speaker proposes amendments to election law

Amir receives message from Jordan King



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Sunday Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi. The minister relayed a message addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from King of Jordan Abdullah bin Al-Hussein on the

Continued on Page 6

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee will not withdraw a number of controversial draft legislations, including the purchase of bank loans that last week forced the government to boycott parliamentary sessions, rapporteur of the panel MP Saleh Ashour said.

But he added that the committee may decide to recall those draft laws if fundamental changes on them were proposed and the National Assembly approves the move. Two ministers attending the Assembly session last Tuesday walked out of the chamber when MPs refused to return those draft laws to the financial committee and insisted to debate the laws.

The government completely boycotted the next day's session and held an extraordinary meeting after which it said that the panel did not allow the government to provide its opinions on such laws which are costly for public funds.

One of the draft legislations requires the government to purchase billions of dinars of

bank loans owed by over half a million Kuwaiti citizens, write off interest and then reschedule their repayment by deducting the KD 120 monthly cost of living allowance.

The government said the purchase is too expensive for public funds. It said the total value of such loans is KD 14.7 billion while MPs insist the value is under KD 2 billion because the rest is housing loans not included in the proposed scheme.

Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid said on Sunday that the government's proposed purchase of the bank loans will stimulate consumption as a result of boosting spending, eventually leading to a major rise in prices. He added the purchase will convince citizens that the state will always repeat the process, which will encourage them to take more loans and refrain from repayment.

MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf last week filed to grill the finance minister over a variety of allegations including mismanagement of Kuwaiti investments. The grilling will be listed on the agenda of the January 24

Assembly session.

MP Ashour also said that the committee will meet with representatives of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry to review a draft law calling to convert the chamber into a trade union for businessmen.

In the meantime, National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun yesterday submitted a draft law calling to amend the election law including a major change in the voting system. In his bill, Saadoun proposes that Kuwaiti voters are allowed to vote for up to four candidates at least one of them must be from their constituency.

Under the amendments, the voters have the right to vote for a maximum of three candidates from their constituency and at least one from other constituencies. The amendments state that the winners in the election will be the first 50 candidates who score more votes regardless of the constituency they have registered in.

Under the current voting system, Kuwaiti voters vote for just one candidate from their constituencies only.

News in brief



Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi

COVID-19 situation 'stable' in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The COVID-19 situation in Kuwait is stable and under control, said Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Sunday. This came on the sidelines of the 13th conference of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences. Dr Al-Awadhi affirmed that the ministry gathered daily random samples to make sure that the situation was monitored. The three-day conference is focusing on sexually transmitted disease and the Islamic answer to this problem. Treatments and means of prevention would be discussed during the course of the event. — KUNA (See Page 4)

Kuwait to host next Gulf Cup in Dec 2024

BAGHDAD: Kuwait will be hosting the 26th Gulf Cup in December of 2024, Gulf Football Association's head Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani announced on Sunday. In a press conference, Al-Thani affirmed that the tournament would be held in Kuwait as efforts and preparations for the upcoming event are in place. He commended the 25th Gulf Cup held in Basra, saying that it was so far a success. The semifinals of the tournament, on Monday, will see Iraq facing Qatar and Bahrain against Oman. — KUNA

At least 67 killed in Nepal plane crash

POKHARA, Nepal: At least 67 people were confirmed dead Sunday after a plane with 72 on board crashed in Nepal, police said, in the Himalayan country's worst aviation disaster in three decades. Those on board the ATR 72 twin-engine turboprop aircraft that plummeted into a steep gorge, smashed into pieces and burst into flames in the central city of Pokhara included six children, officials said. As light faded late Sunday and soldiers extracted bodies with ropes and stretchers out of the 300-metre-deep (1,000-foot) ravine, there was no word on the fate of the five people still unaccounted for.

"We are actively working to retrieve and identify the bodies as soon as possible and hand (them) over to their families," police official AK Chhetri told AFP at the crash site, which was still smoldering and strewn with aircraft debris, including the mangled

Continued on Page 6



POKHARA, Nepal: Rescuers gather at the site of a plane crash in Pokhara on January 15, 2023. — AFP

Egypt unveils ancient royal tomb in Luxor

LUXOR: Egyptian authorities announced Saturday the discovery of an ancient tomb in Luxor dating back around 3,500 years that archaeologists believe holds the remains of an 18th dynasty royal.

The tomb was unearthed by Egyptian and British researchers on the west bank of the River Nile, where the famous Valley of the Queens and Valley of the Kings lie, said Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

"The first elements discovered so far inside the tomb seem to indicate

that it dates back to the 18th dynasty" of pharaohs Akhenaton and Tutankhamun, Waziri said in a statement.

The 18th dynasty, part of the period of Egyptian history known as the New Kingdom, ended in 1292 BC and is considered among the most prosperous years of Ancient Egypt.

Piers Litherland of the University of Cambridge, head of the British research mission, said the tomb could be of a royal wife or princess of Thutmosid lineage. Egyptian archaeologist Mohsen Kamel said the tomb's interior was "in poor condition". Parts of it including inscriptions were "destroyed in ancient floods which filled the burial chambers with sand and limestone sediment", Kamel added, according to the antiquities board's statement.

Continued on Page 6



CAIRO: Tourists view the colossal (10-metre long) reclining limestone statue of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II (1279-1213 BC), originally found in the ruins of the nearby Temple of Ptah and now on display at its special enclosure in the ruins of ancient Memphis (Mennefer) in Mit Rahina, south of Egypt's capital Cairo. — AFP



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Call to complete demarcation of Kuwait-Iraq maritime borders

Kuwait FM, Jordan Deputy PM discuss regional developments

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met on Sunday Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs Ayman Al-Safadi. Al-Safadi conveyed greetings of Jordanian King Abdullah II to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, reported KUNA.

The Jordanian top diplomat expressed King Abdullah II's keenness on boosting bilateral ties on various levels. During the meeting, the two sides shed light on deep-rooted relations, stressing importance of continuing consultation and coordination vis-a-vis regional issues and challenges.

Both sides also affirmed importance of completing the demarcation of maritime borders between Kuwait and Iraq beyond Mark 162, which contributes to strengthening relations between the two countries, KUNA added.

The meeting dealt with the strong relations between Kuwait and the brotherly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the frameworks for expanding joint cooperation and deepening the existing coordination between the two brotherly countries at all levels.

They discussed various areas of cooperation, especially economic, investment, tourism, education, food security and defense, in a way that enhances the

common interest of the two countries and realizes the aspirations of their two brotherly peoples, added a press release issued by the Foreign Ministry.

The two ministers agreed on the importance of continuing consultations and coordinating stances towards regional issues and challenges and ways to deal with them in a way that contributes to resolving crises in the region and achieving security and stability in the region.

They discussed means of strengthening relations between the two brotherly countries, achieving common interests between them and taking them to broader horizons.

During the meeting, current developments on the regional and international arenas and joint coordination regarding them were discussed. They also touched upon developments related to the advanced talks on Palestinian cause, condemnation of the massive attacks carried out by the Zionist entity's occupation against the brotherly Palestinian people, and its violations of international legitimacy resolutions. In this context, the two sides emphasized the centrality of the Palestinian cause and the need for concerted Arab and international efforts to solve it on the basis of the two-state solution, in a way that guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. The talks also dealt with the situation in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya, support for Iraq and the fight against terrorism, the release added.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs Ayman Al-Safadi on Sunday. —KUNA

Ministries may raise tariffs for services

KUWAIT: Government sources revealed that the Council of Ministers received replies from some ministries regarding the issue of raising charges and tariffs for various services.

"Ministries, including Interior, Health and Electricity, responded in an official memo, that according to studies, fees must be raised based on a reasoning that current tariffs are too low in comparison with services offered and they are significantly lower than the tariffs that exist in the countries in the region," sources revealed to Kuwait Times.

"The Electricity Ministry intends to increase tariffs by 50 percent from current rates, especially since the production costs are too high and consumes much of the state's budget without positive return to the public storage. New prices, if implemented, will not exhaust citizens, but will halt some current negativities," sources added.

"The health ministry also intends to raise charges of medical tests such as X-rays and some medical equipment usages in hospitals, as well as charges of operations and rent for private rooms. Moreover, raising the charges of gynecological services are in the pipeline and they are only awaiting a final decision," the sources added. They said that the increase in charges does not need a parliamentary approval as it is within the ministry's authority.

"The Interior Ministry is also raising charges regarding the issuance of driving license, traffic violations, residency and other services by various departments," the sources added pointing out that the increase for each contract may be raised from KD 5 to KD 10 depending on the type of services given.

When asked if these hikes will affect general prices in the country in different fields, the sources said that the hikes in governmental charges are unlikely to have an impact on inflation. "Fixing the prices of commercial products is done by the Commerce and Industry Ministry and under strict supervision. These measures will deter businessmen from abusing the situation to jack up prices," the sources added.

Wet spell to continue in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Rainy weather is expected to start gradually Monday evening until Tuesday afternoon across the country, said Kuwait Meteorology Center on Sunday. The presence of a deep low pressure in the atmosphere mixed with high surface humidity creates the perfect conditions for low and mid-level clouds formation, as well as thunderstorms, indicated meteorologist Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi.

Light to moderate rainfall is expected with the possibility of some heavy downpours over the southern part of the country. High wind and low visibility make for bad sea condition as waves expected to reach up to six feet. Al-Qarawi said conditions will improve as a cold weather front is expected to arrive later on Tuesday bringing dry cold conditions.



KUWAIT: A thick blanket of fog covers skyscrapers in downtown Kuwait on Sunday. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Hawally Governor and Acting Governor of Asimah Ali Al-Asfar inaugurates the new bus waiting station in Hawally.

Hawally governor opens new bus waiting station

KUWAIT: Hawally Governor and Acting Governor of Asimah Ali Al-Asfar reiterated that

the governorate is keen on providing all necessary support to develop public places and beautify them in service of nationals and residents in the governorate. He made this statement during the inauguration of a new bus waiting station in Hawally.

"It is important to follow this example in all other areas of the governorate in order to develop public transport stations and reduce traffic con-

gestions on roads. The governorate also aims to gain the attention of private companies to sponsor ideas like this and to finance them for the service of the residents," Al-Asfar said.

The bust waiting station includes an electronic gate, air conditioning system which works on cooling the station during the summer, as well as a surveillance camera to maintain security.



KUWAIT: The free studio artists in Kuwait held on Sunday a unique art exhibition that includes plastic paintings alongside an awareness symposium it is organizing. The exhibition was organized to support the National Cancer Awareness Campaign (CAN). —KUNA photos

Local

Zain's 'Generation Z' 2023 graduate program to focus on everlasting change in workplace

Al-Kharafi: To support Zain's 4Sight growth strategy, embracing change rather than fearing it, is key to its success

- Generation Z will learn and apply 'empowerment, advocacy, and courage to engage'
- Six graduates to focus on 'youth, inclusion, corporate wellness and innovation'

KUWAIT: Zain announced the selection of six talented Kuwaiti nationals to undertake the company's highly sort-after annual graduate program cycle for 2023. This year, the 'Generation Z' program is an evolution of the successful 'Z Twenty Two' (Z22) program undertaken in 2022 and other similar graduate programs Zain has implemented since 2016.

Generation Z remains geared towards enhancing the skills of fresh graduates and looks to cultivate internal entrepreneurs and innovators who already possess an entrepreneurial mindset to support Zain's 4Sight profitable growth strategy.

Additional new themes for this year include Empowerment, Advocacy, and Courage to Engage in alignment with Zain's recently revamped inclusion competencies. This progression is in harmony with the new generation's desire to be heard, challenged, and leave an everlasting mark in the workplace.

Zain's graduate program has built up substantial recognition and standing in Kuwait and indeed across the region. Competition for places in the program is fierce, with the Generation Z 2023 program attracting applications from a total of 300 candidates. Of these, 85 were invited for first-round interviews; 20 for second round; and just 12 were shortlisted to undertake a week-long assessment. Ultimately, six candidates were selected to participate in the year-long program.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented, "To support the continued success of Zain's 4Sight growth strategy, embrac-

ing change rather than fearing it, is key to its success. As such, it takes young talent, or "new blood" like the incoming Generation Z participants to help keep us at the cutting edge of innovation, by being courageous and agile in identifying evolving opportunities."

Al-Kharafi continued, "I'm extremely impressed by the caliber of incoming participants and wholeheartedly encourage them to make the most of this opportunity to super charge their careers and play their future role in taking Zain to new heights."

This year, Generation Z will adopt a project-based format, following a 'learn then apply' methodology. Each quarter, the participants will focus on one of four topics, namely, Youth; Inclusion; Corporate Wellness; and Innovation. The development and deliverables will be centered around this approach, with the graduates applying what they have learnt during the quarter.

The "Generation Z" program seeks to foster talented individuals with the mindset of creativity and innovation, with the long-term aim of them playing a key role in supporting the company's growth strategy, which has recently gained tremendous momentum in the core telecom business as well as in multiple promising new areas including Fintech, Esports, the DizleeAPI platform, Infrastructure sharing, as well as ZainTech's many digital transformation offerings for governments and enterprises covering areas of managed cloud services, Big Data, Internet of Things, Cybersecurity, Drones and



KUWAIT: The six talented Kuwaiti nationals of the program's new edition.

Robotics to name a few.

It is planned that all six 'Generation Z' participants, namely Abdullah Al-Zaid, Lina Shammas, Muneera Al-Jeeran, Noor Al-Musallam, Abdullah Al-Awadi and Ismail Dashti are recruited once the program is completed end of 2023. Of the five participants in the Z22 program in 2022, four were

recruited as full-time employees to Zain. The Generation Z 2023 graduate program remit falls under one of the pillars of Zain's Corporate Sustainability strategy of 'Build the Youth of the Future' and the Diversity & Inclusion strategic pillar of "Zain Youth" (ZY) that fosters the growth of youth employees.

Kuwait Astronomical Society receives govt recognition

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and State Minister for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Al-Baghli issued a ministerial decision to recognize officially the Kuwait Astronomical Society.

Head of Kuwait Astronomical Society and astronomer Adel Al-Sadoun, said that the society was established to gather people who share an interest in the study of astronomy and discuss astronomical topics while sharing knowledge and resources.

He affirmed that the Kuwait Astronomical Society aims to generate astronomical culture among social groups through various visual, audio, and print means, noting that the society will seek to create a generation interested in astronomy and appreciating its role in their lives, along with attracting specialists to be members and providing possible facilities to raise their cultural and scientific level.

Sadoun affirmed that the society will coop-

erate with similar associations and organizations, universities, academic institutes, and schools inside Kuwait and beyond to achieve common goals, adding "The society will contribute to research and scientific studies on local and international astronomy. Also, the society will be updated on the news of astronomers around the world as it is keen on issuing scientific books, pictures, and videos on astronomy, in addition to translating astronomical books, magazines, articles, and scientific research."

He revealed that the Kuwait Astronomical Society will build a database and implement various astronomical activities such as astronomical observation camps. It will endeavor to attract people who have an interest in astrophotography and taking photos of celestial bodies and analyzing the data given, whether obtained by the members of the society or available by observatories or satellites around the world.

The society aims to hold seminars, lectures, and astronomical lessons and establish and



Adel Al-Sadoun

organize astronomical conferences in which Arab and international bodies, associations, and organizations can participate. "The field also needs an annual astronomical calendar, so we will issue an annual calendar for astronomical phenomena," he stated.

"We will build a fixed and mobile astronomical observatory to monitor various astronomical phenomena, such as observing the sun, stars, galaxies, and celestial bodies, and invest and market it in organizing events, activities, and publications. In addition, we will import scientific materials that will contribute to achieving the goals of the association," Sadoun pointed out.

The astronomical society also will have educational programs for the public and may have access to telescopes and other equipment for members to use. It will be a presence on social media where it will share information and updates about events, meetings, and astronomical news.



Gold prices cross \$1,900 per ounce

KUWAIT: Gold price in Kuwait has exceeded the 1,900 barrier for the first time in 10 months, coinciding with US data that indicates a decline in inflation rates. A report issued on Sunday by Dar

Al-Sabaek Company pointed out that gold hovered to \$1,920 per ounce on Friday. Meanwhile the US consumer prices grew 6.5 percent in line with the expectations of inflation rates decline.

The report showed two more reasons for gold prices' incline, firstly, the US monetary policy that helped in this increase, and secondly is the rise in the Michigan index that measures US consumer rates with benefitting from investors' expectations towards the Federal Reserve System and continuation of slow inflation. —KUNA



Al-Bassam lights up nights of Arab Theater Festival

CASABLANCA: Osama Al-Jamei, an actor and production manager of the show (i-media) of Tunisian origin, expressed his pride in participating in the play and working alongside the able writer, director and actor Suleiman Al-Bassam, considering that the director's keenness to choose actors from different Arab and for-

eign countries gave the show a distinct character.

The performance of the play was a great interaction on the part of the audience, who filled the sides of the Mohammed VI theater and applauded for a long time for the writer, director and actor Suleiman Al-Bassam, who illuminated with his enjoyable show the nights of the Arab Theater Festival held in Casablanca during from January 10 and 16 January, with the participation of about 400 playwrights from Arab countries, including the State of Kuwait, which he represented.

A group of playwrights and artists, including director Suleiman Al-Bassam, head of the Artists and Media Syndicate, Nabil Al-Failakawi, and head of faculty members at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts, Khalifa Al-Hajri. —KUNA



LOYAC launches 'Kontinue' program for social work

KUWAIT: LOYAC institution has hosted international professor Dr Phillip Kim, in an inaugural program called "Kontinue." He led the organization's workshop during the first week of the program. Dr Kim is an expert in the field of business from Babson College for Business in the United States.

This program comes as a result of a collaborative initiative by the National Bank of Kuwait, Zain and Agility that supports young men and women from 17 to 30 years of age who aspire to turn their innovative ideas into reality. The program also responds to the aspirations of entrepreneurs for developing their projects with the aim of serving the community.

It also serves those wishing to hone their skills in the field of entrepreneurship, which contributes to

enhancing their career path, and it also provides the possibility of participation, whether as an individual or as a group under the idea of one project, provided that each member of the group completes the application to join the program.

"The young entrepreneurs participating in the program are fully qualified to tackle complex problems and provide innovative solutions to improve our communities and our well-being. I would like to thank LOYAC Foundation and sponsors of the program for their efforts to train and support those who want to make a positive social impact through their innovative projects. We look forward to seeing the fruits of these projects," Dr Kim said.

Head of training and development department, Eman Al-Omar said: "The program team has ensured to launch this program to support the social ideas of young people. Moreover, the experience that the participants will gain from the program will be very beneficial in the future, especially since there will be many social benefits for them."

Program consultant, Ghalia Al-Tawaree said: "The program is not unique because it is presented



KUWAIT: Dr Phillip Kim (right) during the inaugural session of the program called "Kontinue."

by a leading college, but because it could achieve financial profits for participants after they turn their dreams into reality." The program will last for seven weeks and will be held every Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 5 pm to 8pm until February 21.

CSC to hold 11 programs in February

KUWAIT: During the month of February, the Civil Service Commission will organize 11 training programs for middle, supervision, specialized, upper and executive jobs.

The training program includes preparing newly-admitted employees, updates on the civil service system, the rights of employees, increasing integrity and combating administrative and financial corruption, institutional loyalty, working on team spirit, creative vision when making decision, as well as strategic planning for sustainable development, the skills of preparing and writing reports, writing administrative meeting memos, advanced techniques in investigations and conflict, administration of priorities, the art of controlling work pressure, the art of public speaking and governance in a quality methodology.

The CSC has clarified through its account the dates and timeframes of all programs according to their job position. The CSC has contacted everyone who intends to participate in the published programs to quickly send the application for nomination in the CSC to take necessary procedures. The details of the plan can be reached by scanning a barcode attached with the published announcement on the CSC official website on Twitter.



Munhaaj: 18,000 needy families will benefit from coupons

KUWAIT: The head of the administrative council at Munhaaj Al-Salaheen Society, Abdulmehsen Al-Mutairi has announced that an agreement has been reached between the society and the defense ministry with the support of the general secretariat of the endowment ministry to provide electronic purchasing coupons for needy families. This will be at the cost of KD 260,000 for a total of around 18,000 families.

"We appreciate the generous and continuous support from the general secretariat of the endowment ministry for standing by all charitable societies. Munhaaj Al-Salaheen has ensured that 90 percent of Bedoon families will benefit from the decision, and the rest will be for other residents in Kuwait," Al-Mutairi said.

"After comparing prices for the first time in cooperation with defense ministry society, we found that the society provides lesser prices than cooperatives and markets, but products at the same quality. Therefore, we have decided to cooperate with defense ministry cooperative for future projects," he concluded.

News in brief



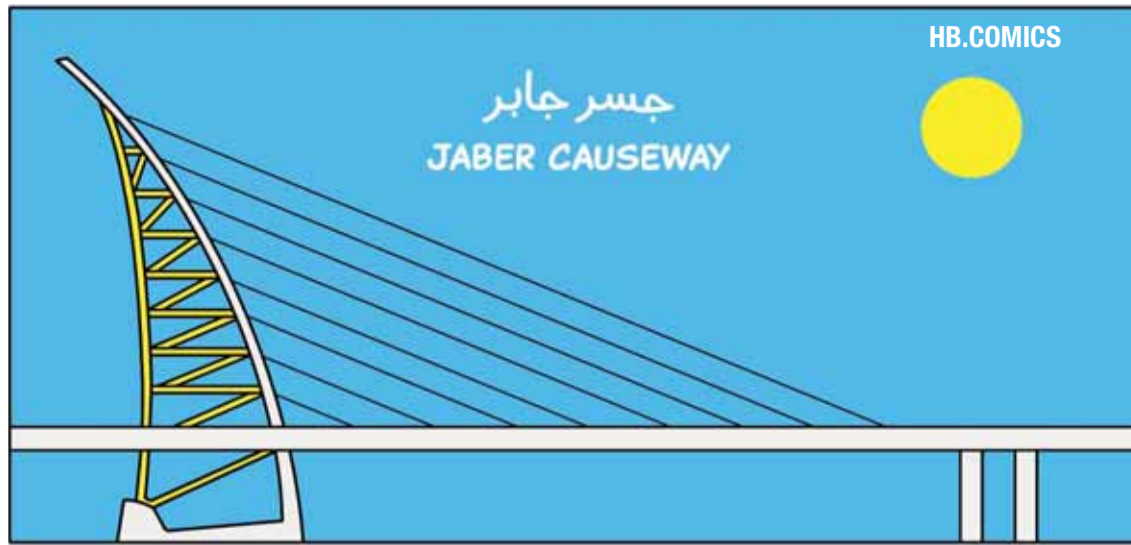
KUWAIT: Mansour Al-Otaibi receives Lisa M Buttenheim. —KUNA

Deputy FM meets
UN official

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi received on Sunday Lisa M Buttenheim, the Assistant UN Secretary-General for Field Support, Department of Field Support. The two sides discussed means of enhancing relations between the State of Kuwait and the United Nations. —KUNA

Kuwait Navy to hold naval
exercises from Tuesday

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Navy will carry out a naval exercise using live ammunition at a sea shooting range from 7 am until 6 pm on Tuesday and Wednesday, the army said in a statement on Sunday. The shooting range is located 16.5 nautical miles east of Ras Al-Jlaiaa, stretching to Garo island, six nautical miles east of Ras Al-Zor and extending to Umm Al-Maradem island. It called upon sea goers to refrain from approaching the drill region. —KUNA

Global action needed to fight viruses
spread through illegal practices: MoH

Dr Al-Awadhi opens 13th international conference of IOMS

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said that international action is required to face viruses transmitted through illegal practices, while the western society is fighting to legitimize those forbidden relations. This came during the speech of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's representative, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, during the opening ceremony of the 13th international conference of The Islamic Organization for Medical Science (IOMS). Dr Al-Awadhi stressed that the conference is being held during a period where many people are suffering from viruses and pandemics, old and new.

Head of the Islamic Organization for Medical Science Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah said in his speech that IOMS was formed to fill a need to clarify the Islamic point of view of certain medical practices, to collect Islamic medical heritage and to determine how to apply it to modern day medical practice. President of Al-Azhar University and Chairman of the conference's advisory committee Dr Salama Dawoud said in

his speech that the more the civilized world advances scientifically, the worse and degrading it becomes. Director General of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel referred in his speech that Kuwait is known for its support in launching distinguished scientific research initiatives, pointing out that KFAS has always supported science, technology and innovation to contribute to development.

For his part, Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashed Al-Maktoum Award for Medical Sciences Board of Trustees member, Mirza Al-Sayegh said in his speech that the cooperation between the award and the organization has authentic roots, adding that a memorandum of understanding was signed to achieve desired goals and support the activities of the organization.

Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Kuwait Dr Asad Hafeez said in his speech that the conference discusses various important issues, pointing out that the aim of the conference is to have an impact in preventing the spread of

Kuwait wins case
against foreign
consortium

KUWAIT: The Fatwa and Legislation Department on Sunday declared that a verdict in favor of Kuwait had been issued regarding the international arbitration presented by a consortium of Italian and Spanish companies. The consortium is a party of the contract for construction and maintenance of Jamal Abdunnasser Street, against the Kuwaiti government, represented by the Ministry of Public Works in front of the international arbitration center for settling investment disputes—affiliated to the World Bank.

The Kuwaiti legislation department said in a statement that the consortium sought a compensation totaling \$264 million for purported violations on part of Kuwait, namely alleged irregular fees, as these companies claim, in addition to interests and arbitration costs. Moreover, the consortium claims that the State of Kuwait breached a number of terms in the bilateral agreements with Italy and Spain on protecting and encouraging investments. The local department also said in a statement that Kuwait challenged the claims, noting that the arbitration authority was not specialized in cross-examining disputes because it was related to a commercial contract and not investments in the sense that places it under the category of protection as enshrined in international conventions.

Kuwait had also challenged capacity of the litigators, and responded in details to their claims for compensations. The case had dragged on for six years, during which the two parties exchanged defense, documents and proofs where the Kuwaiti legal team succeeded in persuading the arbitrators that the other party had no right to ask for reclamation. The hearings were held between September 27, 2021 and October 8, 2021 in front of the arbitration authority of the WB. The assigned Kuwaiti legal team had attended the sessions non-physically. In conclusion, the claims were overruled and the other party would be compelled to pay costs incurred by Kuwait for the proceedings—thus they would pay up to \$12 million to Kuwait. —KUNA



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi

diseases. He also added that adhering to the Islamic principles is necessary as it naturally combats the spread of diseases, pointing out that Kuwait has an excellent health care system, but needs more focus on preventing the spread of viruses and diseases. —KUNA



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KUWAIT: The inspection team of the audit and follow-up department at the Ahmadi Municipality.



KUWAIT: Officials of the Commerce and Industry Ministry shuts down centers of oil change services.

10 Fahaheel shops
served notices; 7 oil
change centers shut

KUWAIT: The inspection team of the audit and follow-up department at the Ahmadi Municipality concluded an inspection campaign on commercial shops in the industrial area in Fahaheel which resulted in issuing 10 violations that were related to the placement of advertisements without licensing.

Head of the department Saad Al-Shiba has reiterated that stores must follow rules and regulations

stipulated by the Municipality in place, as inspection campaigns will continue on stores and adjacent stores throughout the day and night to proceed with legal procedures against any violators.

In other related news, the Commerce and Industry Ministry has shut down seven centers of oil change services for selling counterfeit oil in violation of the law. It also causes harm to consumers' vehicles and threatens the safety of passengers.

The violations have been recorded after a dense campaign launched by the commerce ministry on oil replacement shops in Omayriah, Salmiya, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Al-Naeem, Bayan, Adan and Qusoor areas. The commercial supervision team proceeded with legal action against violators following the raid.



Ukraine puts Dnipro toll at 21 after wave of Russian strikes

Biden declares disaster as California takes another storm-pounding

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RAMMUN: Palestinians attend the funeral procession of Ahmad Kahla in the village of Rammun in the occupied West Bank, on Sunday. —AFP

Palestinian government condemns 'execution' at West Bank checkpoint

Large protest against Netanyahu's 'government of shame'

RAMMUN/TEL AVIV: Palestinian foreign ministry on Sunday condemned as an "execution" the killing of a Palestinian man by Zionist entity forces at a checkpoint in the occupied West Bank. The ministry slammed the "heinous execution" of Ahmad Kahla, 45, who was shot dead by troops near the village of Silwad north of Ramallah. The Zionist entity's military did not immediately respond to requests by AFP to comment on the incident.

The man's son, Qusai Kahla, told AFP he was in the car with his father when they were stopped at the checkpoint. "Soldiers came and they sprayed pepper spray on my face and pulled me out of the car," the 18-year-old said at the family home in Rammun village. "I don't know what happened after that," he said. "I found out from my uncle that my dad was killed."

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported soldiers shot Kahla at "point blank" range after forcing him out of his vehicle. He died from a gunshot wound to the neck, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Kahla's death brings up to 13 the number of Palestinians killed in the territory so far this month, the majority shot by Zionist entity forces, according to an AFP tally. The Palestinian foreign ministry said the Zionist entity's leadership has made it "easy for soldiers to kill any Palestinian without them posing any danger to the occupation soldiers".

The Zionist entity's most right-wing government in history was sworn in last month, including ministers known for their anti-Palestinian remarks who have taken over key powers in the West Bank. The rising toll this month follows the deadliest year in the West Bank

since United Nations records began in 2005.

'Government of shame'

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of people protested in central Tel Aviv Saturday against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new hard-right government of the Zionist entity. Protesters braved the rain for the rally, brandishing signs with slogans decrying a "government of shame" and urging: "bring down the dictator". AFP correspondents said.

Media reported 80,000 people joined the rally, citing police sources. Police gave no official estimate after reporting 20,000 protesters earlier in the evening. The demonstration is the biggest since Netanyahu's new government took power in late December. "The situation is worrying and scary," said 22-year-old protester Aya Tal, who works in the high-tech industry. "They want to take away our rights... We must unite."

Other rallies were held in Jerusalem, outside the prime minister's and the president's residences, and in the northern city of Haifa, local media reported. Already the Zionist entity's longest-serving premier, Netanyahu returned to power at the head of a coalition with extreme-right and ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties, some of whose officials now head key ministries. Protesters called for Netanyahu, who is fighting corruption charges in court, to resign. "Bibi (Netanyahu) doesn't want a democracy, we don't need fascists in the Knesset," read one sign at the Tel Aviv protest.

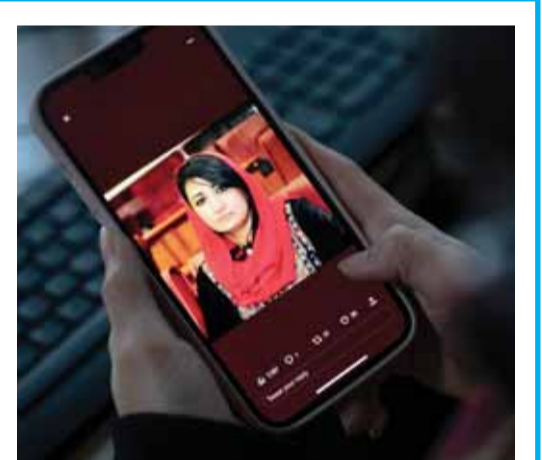
'Save democracy'

The crowd filled the streets surrounding Tel

Aviv's Habima Square and chanted "democracy, democracy", according to an AFP correspondent. Opposition parties had called on the public to join the demonstration—organized by an anti-corruption group—to "save democracy" and in protest at a planned judicial overhaul.

Justice Minister Yariv Levin announced on January 4 a controversial plan to hand more powers to lawmakers in appointing judges and overriding Supreme Court decisions. In the Zionist entity, which does not have a constitution, the Supreme Court currently has the authority to repeal laws it considers discriminatory. The new government has also announced intentions to pursue a policy of settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank. The rally included messages against the Zionist entity's occupation of the Palestinian territories. "There's no democracy with the occupation," read one sign.

Netanyahu is the Zionist entity's first sitting prime minister indicted while in office. He denies the charges against him of bribery, fraud and breach of trust. The leader of right-wing party Likud was ousted from office in 2021 after a record 12-year run by a motley coalition of parties, elected on the heels of anti-corruption protests that called for Netanyahu's resignation. His return to power ended an unprecedented period of political gridlock that forced five elections in less than four years and deepened social divisions. The leader of center-left opposition party Labor, Merav Michaeli, was among several politicians at the Tel Aviv rally, as was former foreign minister Tzipi Livni. — AFP



KABUL: A woman looks at a picture of former Afghan lawmaker Mursal Nabizada on her mobile phone, who was shot dead by gunmen last night at her house in Kabul on January 15, 2023. — AFP

Gunmen shoot dead 'fearless' Afghan woman ex-lawmaker

KABUL: Gunmen shot dead an Afghan former lawmaker and one of her bodyguards in the capital Kabul in a night-time attack at her home, police said on Sunday. Mursal Nabizada had been a member of parliament in the US-backed government that was overthrown by the Taliban in August 2021.

"Nabizada, along with one of her bodyguards, was shot dead at her house," Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadrani said. "The security forces have started a serious investigation into the incident," he said, adding that a brother of the former lawmaker was also wounded in the attack, which took place during the night between Saturday and Sunday.

Nabizada was a "fearless champion for Afghanistan", former lawmaker Mariam Solaimankhil said on Twitter. "A true trailblazer - strong, outspoken woman who stood for what she believed in, even in the face of danger," she wrote. "Despite being offered the chance to leave Afghanistan, she chose to stay and fight for her people," she added.

Nabizada, 32, hailed from the eastern province of Nangarhar, and had been elected as a member of parliament from Kabul in 2018. "I am sad and angry and want the world to know!" tweeted Hannah Neumann, a member of the European parliament, in response to the killing. "She was killed in darkness, but the Taliban build their system of gender apartheid in full daylight."

Women had worked in prominent positions across Afghan society in the two decades since the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, with many becoming judges, journalists and politicians. Many women in such professions have fled the country, however, since the Taliban returned to power.

Taliban authorities have rapidly squeezed women out of almost all areas of public life, banning them from secondary and higher education, public sector work and even from visiting public parks and baths. They have also ordered women to cover their bodies in public, ideally in an all-encompassing burqa. — AFP

China-Myanmar border towns eye revival after COVID

RUILI: At a checkpoint on China's southern frontier with Myanmar, shuttered stores advertising the region's famed jade jewelry appear abandoned, driven out of business by a pandemic-induced closure of the border. The city of Ruili is slowly creaking back to life as China ditches its zero-tolerance COVID strategy after years of strict lockdowns and other grueling restrictions.

An absence of cross-border travel has haunted the trade-dependent city since April 2020, when the flow of goods and people from Myanmar was cut off. On Sunday a Myanmar official told AFP the border had finally been partially reopened, with some trucks making the crossing — spurring hope for a revival of the local economy.

Two men on the Chinese side were leaning against the barrier dividing the countries when AFP visited on Friday, gazing through the gates at the Myanmar town of Muse. "We are from Myanmar," said one. "We haven't been home in three years and really miss it."

Ruili was one of China's hardest hit cities during the three-year campaign to keep the virus at bay. It became a key battleground in the fight to keep imported COVID cases out of China, with residents living through nearly a dozen lockdowns and prevented from travelling for most of the period.

"We were locked down so many times each year, not just once or twice — as if we were sleeping for months and months at home," Duan, a jade seller in the city's Delong jewelry market, told AFP. Unable to operate normally, many businesses closed down, Duan said, pointing to the shuttered stalls surrounding his stand.



RUILI: This photo shows a border checkpoint between China and Myanmar in the county-level city of Ruili in Dehong prefecture, in China's southwestern Yunnan Province. —AFP

The city of around a quarter of a million people saw its population decline by 40,000 between 2020 and 2021, the most recent census figures show. Huang, another jewelry seller, told AFP she became trapped outside Ruili by a travel ban in 2020 after attending her mother-in-law's funeral in distant Shanxi province. When the restrictions were lifted last month, she rushed back to seize her first chance in years of celebrating the upcoming Lunar New Year with her parents.

'Very bad experience'

U Min Thein, vice-chairman of the Muse Rice Commodity Exchange, told AFP on Sunday that China was not yet allowing people across the border. But people in Ruili told AFP that Chinese

authorities had given the green light to reopening checkpoints and Myanmar had not yet agreed to resume travel.

In Muse, residents were worried about soaring COVID cases in China. "Over a hundred people were killed in the COVID-19 pandemic during 2021 in Muse, and so the people in the town have had a very bad experience," a water pipe seller told AFP. He criticized what he said was inadequate testing on the Myanmar side. "If they tested properly and carefully, we would not have to be afraid."

He and others acknowledged the importance of reopening to boost people's livelihoods. "I hope the economy will recover and be like it was before," said Soe Soe Aye, who used to work in a garment factory in China. — AFP

International

Ukraine puts Dnipro toll at 21 after wave of Russian strikes

Zelensky pleads for more Western military weapons

KYIV: Ukraine said Sunday that the death toll had risen to 21 after a Russian missile slammed into a tower block in the city of Dnipro during a massive wave of strikes causing power outages and blackouts across the war-torn country.

Officials said more than 40 people were still missing after the Dnipro strike Saturday, which came as Ukraine celebrated the Old New Year holiday and as Britain became the first Western country to offer Kyiv the heavy tanks it has long sought.

At least 21 people were killed and 73 others wounded in the attack on the Dnipro tower block, Ukraine's regional council head Mykola Lukashuk said. A 15-year-old girl was among the dead, officials said, after dozens of people were pulled from the rubble, including a woman brought out by rescuers on Sunday. "Rescue operations continue. The fate of more than 40 people remain unknown," regional governor Valentyn Reznichenko said.

The strike destroyed dozens of flats in the apartment block leaving hundreds of people homeless, said Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a senior official at the presidency. The Ukrainian army said the block was hit by an X-22 Russian missile that it lacked the capacity to shoot down. "Only anti-aircraft missile systems, which in the future may be provided to Ukraine by Western partners... are capable of intercepting these air targets," it said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday pleaded for more Western military weapons, saying that Russian "terror" could be stopped only on the battlefield. "What is needed for this? Those weapons that are in the warehouses of our partners," Zelensky said.

British tanks

On Saturday, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged to provide Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, the first Western country to supply the heavy tanks Kyiv has been demanding. The tanks would arrive in Ukraine in the coming weeks, Downing Street said, adding that Britain would also train the Ukrainian Armed Forces on how to use them.

Russia's embassy in Britain warned that "bringing tanks to the conflict zone... will only serve to intensify combat operations, generating more casualties, including among the civilian population". Moldova, Ukraine's southwestern neighbor, said it had found Russian missile debris on its territory after Saturday's strikes. "Russia's brutal war against Ukraine directly impacts Moldova again," President Maia Sandu tweeted, posting photographs of the wreckage.

Ukraine's energy facilities were still reeling Sunday from what was a 12th wave of large-scale Russian attacks on energy infrastructure in recent months. The attacks targeted power infrastructure in the Kharkiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia and Kyiv regions, Energy Minister German Galushchenko said.

On Sunday, operator Ukrenergo said energy infrastructure was "being restored" but that the attacks had "increased the energy deficit". "The period of outages may increase," it acknowledged. Zelensky said Ukraine shot down 20 of the more than 30 Russian missiles fired.

"Unfortunately, energy infrastructure facilities have been also hit," he said, adding that the regions of Kyiv and Kharkiv, home to the country's epony-



DNIPRO: Residents carry their belongings from a residential building destroyed after a missile strike, in Dnipro on January 15, 2023, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

mous second city, were suffering the most. The strikes came amid uncertainty about the fate of Soledar, a salt mining outpost that Russia claimed to have captured, despite denials from Ukraine.

Both sides have conceded heavy losses in the

battle for the town, which had a pre-war population of about 10,000. On Sunday, the US-based Institute for the Study of War said that "Ukrainian forces are highly unlikely to still hold positions within the settlement of Soledar itself". —AFP

Pakistan provincial assembly dissolved

LAHORE: The provincial assembly in Pakistan's most populous province, Punjab, was dissolved late Saturday, in a move orchestrated by former prime minister Imran Khan as part of a bid to force early general elections. The country has been gripped by political instability since Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote and replaced last April by a shaky coalition led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The South Asian nation is also battling a severe economic crisis. It is drowning in debt, facing galloping inflation and dwindling foreign exchange reserves as the economy tries to claw to recovery from last year's devastating monsoon floods. Punjab Governor Baligh Ur Rehman on Saturday signed a letter ordering the appointment of a caretaker chief minister, replacing Khan's coalition partner Chaudhry Pervez Elahi's government.

Elahi had advised the governor to dissolve the assembly earlier this week, with Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party seeking a provincial election. Khan's party continues to command popularity, and is expected to also dissolve the provincial assembly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where it holds power in a coalition government.

Fresh elections to the Punjab assembly — which governs vital services for roughly half of Pakistan's 220 million citizens — must now be held within 90 days. Provincial polls in Pakistan have historically been held at the same time as general elections, although the synchronicity is not constitutionally mandated. —AFP



JIPAPAD: This handout photo shows residents wading chest-deep through a flooded road in Jipapad town, Eastern Samar province. —AFP

Death toll in Philippine storms rises to 27

MANILA: At least 27 people have died in storms across the Philippines this month, authorities said Sunday, as forecasters warned of continued heavy rains in the disaster-prone country. Heavy downpours and flooding have plagued the nation's southern and central islands since the Christmas weekend, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes. Since the start of the year, at least three storms have killed 27 people across the

country, the civil defense office said in a report on Sunday. Eleven people were reported injured and three are missing.

The state weather forecaster PAGASA warned Sunday of heavy rains over the Bicol peninsula and Quezon province in the southern tip of the main island of Luzon. "Under these conditions, flooding and rain-induced landslides are likely in areas that are highly... susceptible to these hazards," PAGASA said in an advisory. More than 83,000 people are sheltering in evacuation centers, according to the civil defense office, and over 1,200 houses have been damaged by floodwaters and heavy rains. The Philippines is ranked among the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change, and scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer. —AFP

Girl, 7, critical after shooting outside London church

LONDON: A seven-year-old girl was fighting for her life in hospital Saturday and five other people were injured after a shooting following a requiem mass for a mother and daughter in London, police said. Mourners ran screaming from the scene outside a Roman Catholic church in the capital as gunshots rang out. "Initial enquiries suggest the shots were fired from a moving vehicle which was then driven away from the scene," London's Met Police said in a statement as they launched an urgent appeal for witnesses.

The priest who conducted the service, Father Jeremy Trood, told the PA news agency it had been a requiem mass for Sara Sanchez, 20, and her mother, who both died within a month of each other in November. The younger woman had succumbed to leukaemia while her mother died after suffering a blood clot on arrival from Heathrow from Colombia, the MyLondon news website reported. "I heard this almighty bang and I thought this was not normal, and the next minute everyone was screaming and shouting," a neighbor told PA.

In addition to the seven-year-old girl, four women and another girl, 12, were wounded in the incident near the busy Euston train station. The other girl was discharged from hospital after treatment for minor leg injuries. A 21-year-old woman is also in a central London hospital. Police said her injuries were not life-threatening. —AFP

Amir receives message from...

Continued from Page 1

special fraternal relations tying the two countries, bolstering unity, joint Arab work and latest developments on regional and international fronts.

On his part, the Crown Prince conveyed his

At least 67 killed in Nepal...

Continued from Page 1

remains of wings and passenger seats. A local official had earlier said that "some survivors" had been taken to hospital, but this was not confirmed by the aircraft's operator Yeti Airlines or other officials.

Yeti spokesman Sudarshan Bartaula told AFP that 15 foreigners were on board, including five Indians, four Russians and two South Koreans, with one passenger each from Argentina, Australia, France and Ireland. The rest were Nepalis.

The flight from Kathmandu slammed into the gorge between Pokhara's domestic and brand new international airport on Sunday, shortly before 11 am (0515 GMT). An unverified clip shared on social media purportedly showed the plane flying low over a residential area before banking sharply to the left, followed by a loud explosion. "I was walking when I heard a loud blast like a bomb went off," said witness Arun Tamu, 44, who was around 500 meters (yards) away and who posted live video of the blazing wreckage on social media. "A few of us rushed to see if we can rescue anybody. I saw at least two women were breathing. The fire was getting very intense and it made it difficult for us to approach closer," the former soldier told AFP.

It was unclear if anyone on the ground was injured. Rescue workers rushed to the site littered with debris,

greetings and appreciation to King of the Hashemite kingdom, and to the crown prince Al-Hussien bin Abdullah, wishing them good health and the people of Jordan further progress and prosperity.

Attending the meeting were Chief of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah and chief of the Crown Prince's office retired Lieutenant General Jamal Al-Thayab, Jordanian Ambassador to the country Saqr Abu Shatal, and foreign ministry officials. —KUNA

trying to put out several raging fires that were sending thick black smoke billowing into the sky.

Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas, as well as ferrying foreign mountain climbers. But it has been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance. The European Union has banned all Nepali carriers from its airspace over safety concerns. The Himalayan country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, flanked by snow-capped peaks with approaches that pose a challenge for even accomplished pilots. The weather is also notoriously capricious and hard to forecast, particularly in the mountains, where thick fog can suddenly obscure whole mountains from view.

Last May, all 22 people on board a plane operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air — 16 Nepalis, four Indians and two Germans—died when it crashed. Air traffic control lost contact with that twin-propeller Twin Otter shortly after it took off from Pokhara and headed for Jomsom, a popular trekking destination.

Its wreckage was found a day later, strewn across a mountainside at around 4,400 meters (14,500 feet) above sea level. After that crash, authorities tightened regulations, with planes to only be cleared to fly if there was favorable weather forecast throughout the route. Nepal's deadliest aviation accident was in 1992, when all 167 people aboard a Pakistan International Airlines plane died when it crashed on approach to Kathmandu. Just two months earlier, a Thai Airways aircraft had crashed near the same airport, killing 113 people. —AFP

Timeline: Nepal air crashes

KATHMANDU: At least 67 people died when a plane crashed in Nepal on Sunday, officials said, the deadliest aviation disaster to hit the Himalayan nation in three decades. Nepal's air transport sector has been plagued by accidents due to poor maintenance, insufficient training and lax standards.

The country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, with approaches flanked by towering mountains that challenge even accomplished pilots. Here is a timeline of major air disasters to hit the country in recent years:

May 29, 2022

A Twin Otter plane operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air crashes shortly after takeoff from Pokhara in western Nepal, killing 22 people.

April 14, 2019

A small plane veers off the runway while taking off near Mount Everest, hitting two helicopters and killing three people. Three people were also injured.

March 12, 2018

A flight from the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka crash-lands at Kathmandu airport, skidding into a football field where it bursts into flames. Fifty-one people are killed in what was the deadliest aviation accident in the country for decades.

February 24, 2016

A Twin Otter aircraft operated by Tara Air crashes

into a hillside in Myagdi district, killing all 23 people on board.

February 16, 2014

Eighteen people are killed when a Nepal Airlines flight crashes in Arghakhanchi district, with rescuers finding body parts and debris strewn across the mountainous countryside.

September 28, 2012

A plane flying 19 people towards Mount Everest goes down in flames on the outskirts of the Nepali capital, killing everyone on board including seven Britons and five Chinese citizens.

May 14, 2012

Fifteen people die when an Agni Air plane carrying Indian pilgrims crashes near the treacherous high-altitude airport of Jomsom in northern Nepal, while six make a miraculous escape.

September 25, 2011

A small plane taking tourists on a sightseeing trip around Mount Everest crashes into a hillside near Kathmandu, killing all 19 people on board.

December 15, 2010

All 22 passengers and crew on board a passenger plane that crashes in eastern Nepal are killed. Most of the victims are pilgrims from Bhutan, with one US citizen also among the dead.

August 24, 2010

A small Agni Air plane crashes in bad weather near Kathmandu, killing all 14 people on board including four Americans, a Japanese and a British national. —AFP

Egypt unveils ancient royal...

Continued from Page 1

Egypt has unveiled several major archaeological discoveries in recent years, most notably in the Saqqara necropolis south of the capital Cairo.

Critics say the flurry of excavations has prioritised finds shown to grab media attention over hard academic research. But the discoveries have been a key component of Egypt's attempts to revive its vital tourism industry, the crowning jewel of which is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids. The country of 104 million inhabitants suffers a severe economic crisis.

Egypt's tourism industry accounts for 10 percent of GDP and some two million jobs, according to official figures, but has been hammered by political unrest and the COVID pandemic. —AFP

International

Biden declares disaster as California takes another storm-pounding

Federal aid ordered to support local recovery efforts

SALINAS: US President Joe Biden has declared a major disaster in California, as the latest in a succession of storm systems blew into the state, bringing heavy flooding to already waterlogged regions.

"Waves of heavy precipitation continue to batter California," said the National Weather Service (NWS) on Twitter. "Heavy rain will continue bringing the threat of flooding and mudslides/landslides. Hazardous travel due to heavy mountain snow and blowing snow from (California) to (Colorado)."

Much of the town of Felton in the north of the state was under water Saturday, as it had been on New Year's Day and again Monday. "I'm so angry, it just makes me want to cry," said Camilla Shaffer, a Briton whose house flooded for the third time in two weeks.

Amberlee Galvin, a chef at a local restaurant, was another victim, her front room entirely inundated. "Within 10 minutes it had flooded completely to the ceiling. It happened crazy fast," the 23-year-old said. "We had to get canoed out by a neighbor." "I hope this isn't the new normal," sighed Melissa Foley, pushing a wheelbarrow full of cleaning kits donated by the Red Cross, which she distributes to her neighbors.

Late Saturday, Biden "declared that a major disaster exists in the State of California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the areas affected by severe winter storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides," the White House said in a statement.

The declaration makes federal funding available for relief to affected people, including temporary housing and repairs. At least 19 people are known to have died from storm-related causes in the last three weeks.

Rescuers called off the search for five-year-old Kyle Doan, who was swept away in floodwaters as his mother tried to pull him to safety from their car, the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's office said Saturday, citing rising waters and unsuitable conditions. An AFP journalist saw the Salinas River overflowing its banks in many spots, at times covering farm fields for hundreds of yards, as rain continued under leaden skies.

In Spreckels, a community a few hundred yards from the river, most residents opted not to evacuate despite warnings from authorities. "It looks like we might have missed kind of the worst of it," said Robert



SALINAS, California: In an aerial view, floodwaters cover an agricultural area after the Salinas River overflowed its banks. — AFP

Zagajeski, out walking his dog under a light rain.

But Governor Gavin Newsom warned Californians that they were not in the clear yet: "We're not done," he said Saturday after visiting impacted residents. Urging them to remain vigilant, he said Californians should continue to exercise "common sense over the course of the next 24 to 48 hours." Nearly 26 million Californians remained under a flood watch Saturday evening, according to the NWS, with tens of thousands under evacuation orders and advisories. The storms of recent weeks were originally welcomed — coming after years of drought — but by now have brought disastrous flooding, officials have said.

Around 08:00 GMT Sunday, there were more than 16,000 homes without power in California, according to poweroutage.us. "This place was hit hard by the drought over the past years," 58-year-old farm worker

Manuel Paris told AFP near Salinas. "We're not used to this much rain anymore." The NWS said another two to three inches of rain (5.0 to 7.5 centimeters) could cause new flooding and mudslides, with parts of the Sierra Nevada seeing three to six feet of snow, and heavy winds buffeting central and coastal California at up to 50 miles (80 kilometers) per hour.

Dangerous travel

The most populous US state has been pummeled by near-record downpours over three weeks — an average of nine inches of rain has fallen — with the Salinas Valley among the hardest hit. On Friday, forecasters warned that the Monterey Peninsula could be cut off and the whole city of Salinas — home to 160,000 people — could be hit by flooding. But on Saturday, an AFP journalist said the city itself had so far been

largely spared. Between storms, workers have rushed to clear some of the mess, shoveling mud from roads even in the heart of Los Angeles and using heavy machinery to remove fallen trees or clear rockslides. An AFP journalist saw tractors in fields near Salinas fighting to pump floodwaters back into the river. Newly falling rain was not helping the effort.

And forecasters say the unsettled weather in the US West — associated with what is called an atmospheric river pattern — is not done. Over the mountains, heavy snow was making travel dangerous or impossible on a three-day holiday weekend honoring civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Officials urged people to stay home due to a heightened risk of avalanches. Authorities in the Lake Tahoe resort area posted pictures showing dozens of vehicles lined up on a road, stalled by a fierce blizzard. —AFP



BRASILIA: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva gestures during a breakfast with accredited journalists at the Planalto Palace in Brasilia on January 12, 2023. — AFP

Brazil riots may have strengthened Lula's hand

RIO DE JANEIRO: By ransacking government buildings in their fervent opposition to leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Brazil's January 8 rioters may have strengthened his hand, at least temporarily, analysts say. Many even among the backers of defeated far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro were shocked by the pillaging of national heritage buildings and artefacts.

Immediately after the storming of the presidency, Congress and Supreme Court, Lula gathered leaders of the three institutions — many of them from the political right — for a unanimous condemnation of the events. Presenting a united front, they affirmed publicly that democracy would not be allowed to falter just three decades after the fall of Brazil's military dictatorship.

"The events (of January 8) had the opposite effect" of what was intended, said Mayra Goulart, professor of political science at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). "Lula will no doubt emerge stronger. These assaults have created a climate of national unity for the defense of democracy," she told AFP.

The riots happened exactly one week after Lula's inauguration went off with much pomp and ceremony, but in the absence of Bolsonaro who left the country two days earlier and dodged the traditional duty of handing over the presidential sash. Thousands forced their way into the seats of power, smashing windows and furniture, destroying priceless works of art, and leaving behind graffiti messages calling for a military coup. The military did not rise to the call.

More than 2,000 alleged rioters were detained, and the authorities are tracking those suspected of having masterminded and financed the revolt that shocked Brazil and the world. An investigation has been opened into a possible role played by Bolsonaro, whose justice minister was arrested Saturday for possible collusion with the vandals. Condemnation from abroad was unanimous.

Washington, Moscow, Beijing, the European Union, Paris and Latin American capitals expressed their full support for the new president of Brazil — a country that was isolated from the global stage under Bolsonaro. "The international uproar will reinforce the position of Lula, who will be perceived as an important leader who can contribute to strengthening multilateral forums," said Goulart. Leandro Gabiati of consulting firm Dominion said Lula's image has been "strengthened" by his perceived firm but fair handling of the mop-up operation. Bolsonaro's in turn, has been harmed. Lula "was challenged and he did quite well," said Gabiati, citing "a balanced attitude that somehow restored normalcy" without an air of retribution. —AFP

Protest-hit Peru declares state of emergency in Lima

LIMA: Peru's capital Lima was under a state of emergency Sunday, along with three other regions, as the government responded to weeks-long protests against President Dina Boluarte that have seen at least 42 people killed.

The state of emergency, in force for 30 days, authorizes the army to intervene to maintain order and suspends several constitutional rights such as freedom of movement and assembly, according to a decree published in the official gazette. It covers Lima and the regions of Cusco and Puno, as well as the port of Callao adjacent to the capital. Supporters of ousted president Pedro Castillo have taken to the streets and blocked roads across the South American country since December, demanding fresh elections and the removal of Boluarte, who has refused to step down.

Protests have been announced for Monday in Lima as well as the marginalized southern Andean regions, which have been the epicenter of the unrest. Some groups of protesters from the south plan to travel to Lima for a "takeover of the city".

"We have the decision to go to Lima (from Monday), yes or yes," said Julio Vilca, a protest leader from the province of Ilave, in the Puno region. "We cannot indicate the time, because what we want is to travel in unity." More than 100 protest roadblocks

More classified documents found at Biden home

WASHINGTON: Five additional pages of classified material have been found at Joe Biden's family home in Delaware, the White House said Saturday in a new twist in a politically sensitive affair for the president.

It was the latest in a series of revelations about the apparently improper storage of papers dating from Biden's time as Barack Obama's vice president. Biden has said he had no intention of keeping any classified documents. White House lawyer Richard Sauber said the latest papers were found after he visited the home Thursday to oversee the transfer to the Justice Department of a first batch of documents found a day earlier in a room next to the home's garage.

Biden's personal lawyers searching the garage at the home in Wilmington, Delaware — where the 80-year-old president often spends weekends — had found a document marked classified in the garage itself. As these attorneys lacked the necessary security clearance to read it, they notified the Justice Department, Sauber said in a statement. A 1978 law obliges US presidents and vice presidents to hand over their emails, letters and other official documents to the National Archives. Sauber said he does have the necessary security clearance, so he then went to the Delaware house to check out the situation for himself. That is when he found the other five pages, he said. He said all documents were "immediately and voluntarily" handed to the Justice Department.

Republican criticism

Critics of Biden have seized on the steady series of revelations to argue that he has not been transparent and forthcoming. Others papers had been found on

were in place across Peru on Saturday. The airport in Cusco, gateway to the famed Machu Picchu site, reopened Saturday after being shuttered Thursday, the second time it had been closed due to the protests.

Trains to Machu Picchu were still suspended, and local unions say tourism workers are losing out on up to seven million soles (1.7 million dollars) a day due to the crisis. The mass anti-government demonstrations first broke out in early December, after Castillo was ousted from office for attempting to dissolve Congress and rule by decree, seeking to prevent an impeachment vote against him.

Peru has been politically unstable in recent years, with 60-year-old Boluarte being the sixth person to hold the presidency in five years. Castillo, who was being investigated in several fraud cases during his tenure, has been remanded in custody for 18 months, charged with rebellion.

The unrest has been largely concentrated in the southern Andes, where Quechua and Aymara communities live. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which visited the country this week, has said that in order to end the crisis, these groups need to be better integrated into Peruvian society.

Authorities insist radical groups are behind the protests, including remnants of the Shining Path communist guerrilla group. As proof, they have presented the capture this week of a former member of that organization, Rocio Leandro, known within the group as "Comrade Cusi."

According to police spokesman General Oscar Arriola, Leandro financed the unrest that left a dozen dead in the Ayacucho region. He called Leandro "a Marxist, Leninist, Maoist assassin." — AFP

Eight dead in Somalia bombing claimed by Al-Shabaab: Police

MOGADISHU: Police said Sunday that eight people were killed in a roadside bombing claimed by Al-Shabaab in central Somalia where a major offensive is underway to retake territory from the jihadists. The attack occurred on Saturday afternoon in Buloburde, a city in Hiran district where government forces and clan militias have been battling the Al-Qaeda-linked insurgents since the middle of last year.

The bomber detonated a car laden with explosives near an administrative building, said Abdullahi Mohamad, a local police commander. "Five people were killed on the spot, while three others died overnight in hospital," he said on Sunday, adding the bomber had been planning to destroy the city's main bridge before redirecting the attack at a civilian area. Witnesses said the explosion damaged buildings and the city's main mosque. "I saw the bodies of five people. Two were elders coming out of the mosque," said Muhidin Sokorow, who witnessed the blast.

Separately, police said a car bomb was detonated in Jalalaqi, another town in Hiran, but only the attacker died. A second attack was foiled and the suspect detained trying to flee a vehicle packed with explosives, police said. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for all three attacks in a message transmitted via its communication service. —AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden makes his way to board Marine One before departing from the White House in Washington, DC on January 13, 2023. — AFP

November 2 at Biden's former office at a Washington think tank, where he had offices after leaving the Obama White House. The president's attorneys had also found "a small number of documents," potentially confidential, on December 20 in the Wilmington garage, and alerted the Justice Department.

Amid rising furor over the discoveries in Washington, US Attorney General Merrick Garland on Thursday named Robert Hur as an independent prosecutor to investigate Biden's handling of classified documents. The issue is an unwelcome distraction for Biden as he prepares to announce whether he will seek a second term. The disclosures have prompted comparisons to the case of former president Donald Trump, who is also being investigated by a special counsel for storing hundreds of classified materials at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and allegedly obstructing government efforts to retrieve them.

In contrast, Sauber emphasized that Biden had returned documents "immediately and voluntarily" when they turned up. "I take classified documents and classified material seriously. We're cooperating fully (and) completely with the Justice Department's review," Biden told reporters Thursday. "As part of that process, my lawyers reviewed other places where documents from my time as vice president were stored, and they finished the review last night." The first cache of Biden documents was discovered in November, a week before last year's midterm elections, but only acknowledged by the White House on Monday, prompting accusations from Republicans that it was kept secret for political reasons. Republicans, newly in control of the House of Representatives, have vowed to launch an inquiry to be headed by James Comer, a conservative from Kentucky who chairs an oversight committee. —AFP

MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2023

Business

China's 2022 economic growth seen as its lowest in 40 years

Exports took their biggest plunge since the start of pandemic

BEIJING: China's economic growth for 2022 is expected to have been among its weakest in four decades after the twin crises of the pandemic and property woes, analysts said ahead of Tuesday's GDP announcement.

Ten experts interviewed by AFP forecast an average 2.7 percent year-on-year rise in gross domestic product (GDP) for the world's second-largest economy, a sharp plunge from China's 2021 growth of more than 8 percent.

It could also be China's slowest pace since a 1.6 contraction in 1976 — the year Mao Zedong died and excluding 2020, after the COVID-19 virus emerged in Wuhan in late 2019.

Beijing had set itself a growth target of around 5.5 percent for 2022 but this was undermined by the government's "zero-COVID" policy, which put the brakes on manufacturing activity and consumption.

Strict lockdowns, quarantines and compulsory mass testing prompted abrupt closures of manufacturing facilities and businesses in major hubs-like Zhengzhou, home of the world's biggest iPhone factory—and sent reverberations across the global supply chain.

Beijing abruptly loosened pandemic restrictions in early December after three years of enforcing some of the harshest COVID measures in the world.

'Growth is slowing'

China is battling a surge in COVID cases that has overwhelmed its hospitals and medical staff. This is likely to reflect in 2022's fourth-quarter growth, which will also be announced on Tuesday alongside a series of other indicators such as retail, industrial production and employment.

"The fourth quarter is relatively difficult," said economist Zhang Ming of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. "No matter whether it's by the metrics of consumption or investment, the

growth is slowing."

China's exports took their biggest plunge since the start of the pandemic in December, contracting 9.9 percent year-on-year, while consumption was in the red in November and investment was slowed.

"The three horse carriages of the Chinese economy are all facing a relatively evident downward pressure in the fourth quarter," Zhang said.

Rabobank analyst Teeuwe Mevissen echoed Zhang, saying the final quarter will "almost certainly show a decline because of the fast spread of COVID" after the loosening of health restrictions in December.

"This will affect both demand and supply conditions for the worse," he said.

Problems in the property sector are also still weighing on growth, Mevissen said. This sector, which along with construction accounts for more than a quarter of China's GDP, has been suffering since Beijing started cracking down on excessive borrowing and rampant speculation in 2020.

This regulatory tightening marked the beginning of financial worries for Evergrande, the former Chinese number one in real estate that is now strangled by huge debt. Real estate sales have since fallen in many cities and many developers are struggling to survive. However, the government appears to be taking a more conciliatory approach to reviving this key sector.

Measures to promote "stable and healthy" development were announced in November, including credit support for indebted developers and assistance for deferred-payment loans for homebuyers.

'Worst is over'

Some analysts took these measures as a reason for optimism. "The transitional phase will likely be bumpy as the country may need to grapple with surging cases and increasingly stretched health sys-

tems," warned analyst Jing Liu of HSBC, predicting a slowdown in the near term.

But, after three years of health restrictions, "China's reopening process has started", she said.

The World Bank forecast China's GDP will rebound to 4.3 percent for 2023 — still below expectations. Economist Larry Yang declared 2023

economy has crumbled alongside a simmering political crisis, with the rupee plummeting and inflation at decades-high levels, while devastating floods and a major shortage of energy have piled on further pressure. The South Asian nation's enormous national debt — currently \$274 billion, or nearly 90 percent of gross domestic product — and the endless effort to service it makes Pakistan particularly vulnerable to economic shocks.

Teetering on a tightrope

Islamabad has been pinning its hopes on an IMF deal brokered under the last Pakistani leader Imran Khan, but the latest payment has been pending since September. The global lender is demanding the withdrawal of remaining subsidies on petroleum products and electricity aimed at helping the population of 220 million with the cost of living.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif this week urged the IMF to give Pakistan some breathing space as it tackles the "nightmarish" situation. Zubair Gul, a 40-year-old father of four and daily wage labourer in Karachi, said it has become "hugely difficult" to live on his earnings. "I have to queue up for two or three hours to purchase subsidised flour — the regular prices are not affordable," he told AFP. For Shah Meer, an office worker, borrowing from relatives or using credit cards are the only ways to get by.

"A common man cannot afford to buy milk, sugar, pulses or any necessity you name," he said. With an election due at the end of the year, implementing — or campaigning on — the tough conditions demanded by the IMF would be political suicide, but Pakistan is unlikely to secure fresh credit without making at least some cutbacks.



NANJING: File photo shows cranes and cargo ships at Nanjing port in China's eastern Jiangsu province. China's exports in December fell the most since 2020, according to official figures released on January 13, 2023, after health restrictions hit the economy hard. —AFP

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The World Bank forecast China's GDP will rebound to 4.3 percent for 2023 — still below expectations. Economist Larry Yang declared 2023

as "the year of returning to certainty".

He said he expected growth to accelerate quarter by quarter in 2023, forecasting 5 percent GDP for the full year—a prediction in line with other analysts interviewed by AFP. "The worst period of the economy itself has already passed," Yang said. —AFP

Pakistan's economy grinding to a halt as dollars dry up

KARACHI: Thousands of containers packed with essential food items, raw materials and medical equipment have been held up at Pakistan's Karachi port as the country grapples with a desperate foreign exchange crisis.

A shortage of crucial dollars has left banks refusing to issue new letters of credit for importers, hitting an economy already squeezed by soaring inflation and lacklustre growth. "I have been in the business for the past 40 years and I have not witnessed a worse time," said Abdul Majeed, an official with the All Pakistan Customs Agents Association.

He was speaking from an office near Karachi port, where shipping containers are stuck waiting for payment guarantees — packed with lentils, pharmaceuticals, diagnostic equipment and chemicals for Pakistan's manufacturing industries.

"We've got thousands of containers stranded at the port because of the shortage of dollars," said Maqbool Ahmed Malik, chairman of the customs association, adding that operations were down at least 50 percent. State bank forex reserves this week dwindled to less than \$6 billion — the lowest in nearly nine years — with obligations of more than \$8 billion due in the first quarter alone.

The reserves are enough to pay for around a month of imports, according to analysts. Pakistan's



KARACHI: A dealer counts US dollars at a money exchange market in Karachi. Pakistan's usually bustling ports have ground to a halt, factories shut down, and tens of thousands of workers laid off as the country grapples with the worst forex crisis in its history. —AFP

On Thursday, the United Arab Emirates agreed to roll over \$2 billion owed by Pakistan and provide the country with an extra loan of \$1 billion, helping it to avoid immediate default. Islamabad won some relief last week when donors pledged over \$9 billion to help with recovery efforts after devastating monsoon floods left almost a third of the country under water last year. —AFP

Iraq's currency in flux as transfers come under scrutiny

BAGHDAD: Iraq's local currency has been on a two-month roller coaster ride following a tightening of procedures for international transfers, with some blaming Washington for the dinar's woes. While the official exchange rate has been fixed at 1,470 Iraqi dinars against the dollar, the currency was trading at up to 1,600 to the greenback on local markets from mid-November, before settling at about 1,570 dinars, according to state media.

Though the depreciation does not seem particularly dramatic, especially compared to other countries in the region, it has sent panic through the Iraqi population, which fears a price surge on imported goods such as gas and wheat.

"The fundamental reason" for this depreciation is "external constraints", said Muzhar Saleh, a financial adviser to Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. But other Iraqi officials have placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of one actor—the United States.

Hadi al-Ameri, a key figure in the pro-Iran former paramilitary Hashed al-Shaabi, has accused the United States of using the dollar "as a weapon to starve nations". But Iraqi economic expert Ahmed Tabaqchali said that "contrary to current misconceptions, rumours and misinformation, there is no evidence of US pressure on Iraq".

'Shock'

Since mid-November, Iraqi banks have had to comply with certain criteria of the SWIFT international transfer system in order to access their foreign reserves, estimated at \$100 billion and held at the US Federal Reserve. "Taking part in the international cross-border fund transfers requires complying with global anti-money laundering provisions, counter terrorist financing provisions, and sanctions provisions—such as those that apply to Iran or Russia," Tabaqchali said.

"The new regulations require high levels of disclosure and transparency," he said, adding that this came as a "shock for many... of our banks, who were not used to this". According to Saleh, Iraqi banks must now register their dollar transfers "on an online platform that reviews transfer requests".

"The US Federal Reserve examines the requests and if there are any suspicions, it stops the transfer," he said. Since the adoption of the new mechanism in November, the US Federal Reserve has blocked about 80 percent of transfer requests to Iraqi banks due to doubts over the final destination of these transfers, according to Saleh.

This has led to a shortage of dollars on the Iraqi market and in turn a depreciation in the dinar's value. The Iraqi central bank has described the currency fluctuation as a "temporary situation" and the authorities have taken measures seeking to stabilise the exchange rate. —AFP

Thousands of teachers protest in Lisbon

LISBON: Tens of thousands of teachers from across Portugal joined a protest in Lisbon Saturday, after several days of industrial action for better working conditions and higher pay. Police said more than 20,000 people joined the march, called by the Union of All Education Professionals (STOP), the Lusa news agency reported, but organisers put the numbers at "more than 100,000".

The teachers were also protesting a reform that provides for a "decentralisation" of the recruitment process, with greater autonomy for institutions. Saturday's protest follows a series of partial strikes since the start of December which have led to the closure of several schools.

They want a wage increase to keep pace with inflation, which reached an average of 7.8 percent in 2022, the highest level in 30 years. They also want their real working hours to be taken into account. From Monday, the main teachers' union FENPROF has called a fresh wave of strikes, rotating by region, starting in Lisbon, which will end with a



LISBON: Thousands of teachers from across the country demonstrate, after several days of a partial strike, to demand improved working conditions and higher salaries in Lisbon. —AFP

national demonstration on February 11.

Denouncing the new strikes starting next week, Education Minister Joao Costa described the action

as "atypical, disproportionate and radical in the middle of a negotiation process". The minister is set to meet the unions for fresh talks on Wednesday. —AFP

Business

Around 70 police injured in German coal miners protest

Site has become a symbol of resistance to fossil fuels

LUTZERATH: Around 70 police officers have been injured in environmental protests at a German village being razed to make way for a coal mine expansion, police said on Sunday. In an operation that began on Wednesday, hundreds of police have been removing activists from the doomed hamlet of Lutzerath in western Germany.

The site, which has become a symbol of resistance to fossil fuels, attracted thousands of protesters on Saturday, including Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Some of the protesters clashed with police. The organizers reported that dozens had been injured.

A spokesman on Sunday said the tally of police injuries was down to difficult conditions on the ground since Wednesday, as well as Saturday's clashes. Criminal proceedings have been launched in around 150 cases, police said, including for resistance against police officers, damage to property and breach of the peace.

Activists on Saturday had accused the police of using "massive batons, pepper spray... water cannons, dogs and horses". At least 20 activists had been taken to hospital for treatment, said Birte Schramm, a medic with the group. Some of them had been beaten on the head and in the stomach by police, she said.

Organizers said that 35,000 protesters demonstrated on Saturday. Police put the figure at 15,000. The situation on the ground was "very calm" on Sunday, the police spokesman said. About a dozen activists were still held up in tree houses and at least two were hiding in an underground tunnel, according to the police. Lutzerath-deserted for some time by its former inhabitants-is being demolished to make way for the extension of the adjacent open-cast coal mine. The mine, already one of the largest in Europe, is operated by energy firm RWE. The expansion is going ahead in spite of plans to phase out coal by 2030, with the government blaming the energy crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Thunberg marched at the front of a procession of demonstrators who converged on the village, showing support for activists occupying it in protest. "That the German government is making deals and compromises with fossil fuel companies such as RWE is shameful," she said from a podium. "Germany, as one of the biggest polluters in the world, has an enormous responsibility," she added. Local media reported stones being thrown at police and one protester was seen with a head injury, as ambulance sirens sounded near the protest site.

Police said activists had smashed protective barriers near the huge coal mine and entered the mine site. "The police barriers have been broken," the police tweeted. "To the people in front of Lutzerath: get out of this area immediately."



LUTZERATH: People attend a large-scale protest to stop the demolition of the village Lutzerath to make way for an open-air coal mine extension. — AFP

immediately." "Some people have entered the mine. Move away from the danger zone immediately!"

The village has become a symbol of resistance to fossil fuels, and as part of an operation launched earlier this week, hundreds of police have been removing activists from the hamlet. In just a few days, a large part of the protesters' camp has been cleared by police, and its occupants evacuated.

German press, quoting the police, reported that around 470 activists had been removed from the village since the beginning of the evacuation. But between 20 and 40 were still held up in the contested village late Friday, a spokeswoman for the protest movement said. Officials said they were entering the final stages of evacuating the activists. Demolition works were progressing slowly on those buildings that had been emptied, while surrounding trees had been felled as part of the clearance. Police reinforcements have come from across the country to participate in the forced evacuation.

Meanwhile AFP saw protesters arriving in buses, holding banners with slogans including "Stop coal" and "Lutzerath lives!" In the village, many of the activists

have built structures high up in the trees, while others have climbed to the top of abandoned buildings and barns. Activists said they had also dug a tunnel under the hamlet in a bid to complicate the evacuation effort.

The movement has been supported by protest actions across Germany. On Friday, masked activists set fire to bins and painted slogans on the offices of the Greens in Berlin. The party-part of Germany's ruling coalition with Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats and the liberal FDP-has come under heavy criticism from activists who accuse it of betrayal. Following the energy crisis set off by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the government has brought old coal power plants back online.

Officials signed a compromise deal with RWE that made way for the demolition of Lutzerath but spared five nearby villages. The energy firm also agreed to stop producing electricity with coal in western Germany by 2030, eight years earlier than previously planned. Chancellor Scholz on Saturday inaugurated a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal at the northern port of Lubmin, on the Baltic coast, part of plans to compensate for the loss of Russian gas imports. — AFP

Argentine consumers reel as inflation hits 94.8% in 2022

Buenos Aires: Argentina registered inflation of 94.8 percent in 2022, its highest annual figure since 1991, the Indec national statistics institute said last week. Latin America's third-largest economy has one of the highest inflation rates in the world. But December's monthly figure of 5.1 percent continued a general downward trend since a peak of 7.4 percent in July. The annual figure, nonetheless, was a huge jump on the 50.9 percent inflation from 2021. The government has set a 2023 inflation target of 60 percent. For most Argentines, going to the supermarket is a disheartening experience. "You stand in front of the shelves and analyze prices as if you were picking out jewelry," said Julian Rattano, 66, a retired chemist. Prices for daily staples rose monthly, even weekly, last year. A liter of milk rose 320 percent in 2022, while cooking oil shot up 456 percent and a kilo of sugar soared 490 percent, the Abcecb consultancy says. Price rises were steepest in clothing and footwear, at more than 120 percent, and hotels and restaurants, where they jumped a little under 109 percent. It was bad news for the government just nine months out from a general election. These are the worst yearly figures since Argentina recorded an inflation rate of more than 171 percent in 1991, during the presidency of Carlos Menem.

The two previous years had seen hyperinflation at more than 2,000 percent. In 1991, Menem launched the convertibility plan, pegging the Argentine peso to the US dollar in a bid to rein in hyperinflation. But that move was abandoned a decade later. Argentina has been grappling with an economic crisis for years, registering double-digit inflation in each of the last 12 years. Causes of inflation are multiple, including persistent deficit spending, constant devaluation and external factors like the war in Ukraine that affected energy and grain prices. A result is a baked-in expectation of "systematic increases of prices, tariffs, salaries, rents... according to expectations that are not always solid, sometimes based on fantasy or rumor about future inflation," economist Ricardo Aronskind told AFP.—AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 12 JANUARY 2023

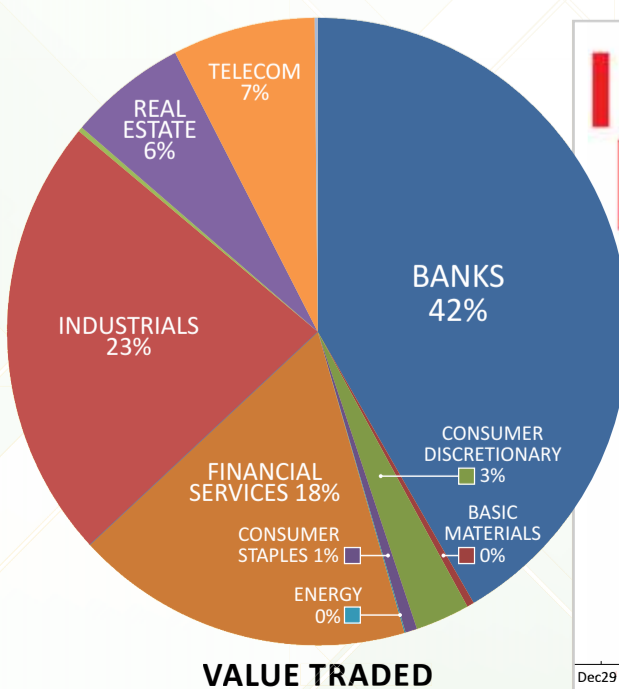
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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	36,773	7,895.29	-0.1%	-2.7%	-0.6%	371,863,547	174,364,231	30,885	21.2	2.3	78.5%
Main Market	10,063	5,588.39	0.9%	-0.2%	0.4%	403,096,931	46,633,302	18,070	47.4	1.4	21.5%
All Share	46,836	7,131.47	0.1%	-2.2%	-0.4%	774,960,478	220,997,533	48,955	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	29,774	1,768.84	0.6%	-1.4%	0.4%	140,647,177	91,989,988	12,118	22.8	2.2	63.57%
BASIC MATERIALS	753	837.20	0.1%	-3.2%	-2.3%	1,071,090	823,869	392	5.0	0.9	1.61%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	950	1,417.70	1.4%	-4.6%	-0.3%	38,031,151	6,241,643	2,665	27.2	10.5	2.03%
CONSUMER STAPLES	146	480.98	0.9%	0.2%	2.0%	3,448,513	1,352,661	207	0.0	1.2	0.31%
ENERGY	236	1,129.69	0.9%	-0.8%	-4.1%	6,154,031	142,787	249	9.9	1.2	0.50%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,348	1,236.88	1.5%	-1.6%	0.0%	347,155,207	38,947,154	12,186	80.1	1.7	9.28%
HEALTH CARE	229	461.85	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	341	150,040	3	14.3	5.8	0.49%
INDUSTRIALS	3,435	973.38	-6.3%	-9.8%	-7.0%	95,961,685	50,640,793	11,370	30.5	1.4	7.33%
INSURANCE	639	1,553.23	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	2,693,274	522,469	174	9.5	1.0	1.36%
REAL ESTATE	2,541	1,177.13	-0.4%	-2.6%	-1.1%	109,873,828	13,572,048	4,807	18.6	1.2	5.43%
TECHNOLOGY	10	712.95	-5.8%	-3.0%	-3.0%	16,900	1,663	4	0.0	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,570	1,163.95	1.0%	-1.5%	-0.4%	28,054,206	16,422,168	4,475	13.0	1.9	7.62%
UTILITIES	204	486.84	0.5%	-1.6%	0.5%	1,853,075	340,140	305	15.2	1.7	0.43%

Top Gainers						Top Losers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
TAAMEER	24	9.77%	2,904,871	67,031,740	173	TAHSSILAT	18.5	-15.14%	449,834	7,586	31
STC	621.0	8.57%	6,133,085	3,752,616,417	1,590	AGLTY	595	-12.76%	66,369,056	41,837,975	8,373
KPROJ	107	7.54%	58,191,429	6,095,436,526	1,457	SALBOOKH	13	-11.26%	458,221	6,461	26
RKWC	135	7.14%	319,642	43,310,036	9	MRC	42.5	-9.38%	101,301	4,817	54
ALSAFAT	109	6.86%	7,909,810	855,091,713	431	EKTITAB	9.0	-9.09%	5,967,675	54,907	166

Top Volume					Top Value						
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	76	0.53%	76,713,382	5,956,770	2,205	KFH	802	1.39%	63,819,566	51,720,138	5,564
AGLTY	595	-12.76%	66,369,056	41,837,975	8,373	AGLTY	595	-12.76%	66,369,056	41,837,975	8,373
KFH	802	1.39%	63,819,566	51,720,138	5,564	NBK	1,070	-0.65%	21,576,023	23,375,527	2,566
KPROJ	107	7.54%	58,191,429	6,095,437	1,457	ZAIN	542	-1.63%	20,906,235	11,525,040	2,550
AAAYAN	136	2.26%	45,174,857	6,112,310	722	AAAYAN	136	2.26%	45,174,857	6,112,310	722



Market Summary:

- Premier and Main Markets' weekly volume and value increased by 18%, 40%, 33%, and 54%, respectively. The significant increase is due to the rise in selling pressure.
- Premier Market is under huge selling pressure that pushed the index further down with no signs of reaching the bottom. Main Market is trying to hold its place.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7131, with support levels at 7105, 7041, and 7000, while resistance at 7162. The Premier index closed at 7895, with support levels at 7841, 7784, and 7701, while resistance at 7926. The Main index closed at 5588, with support levels at 5575, 5550, and 5523, while resistance at 5601.

Business

London bids to turn disused rail viaduct into its own High Line

'We're hoping to build an amazing park in the sky'

LONDON: London is on track to transform a disused stretch of elevated railway in the heart of the city into a "park in the sky", emulating similar successful schemes in Paris and New York. Local planning officials are poised to give the first section of the Camden Highline named after its famous Manhattan predecessor the formal green light next week.

It follows a half-decade of dogged planning, designing and fundraising by an alliance of residents, businesses, politicians and donors to get the project off the ground. The reimagined 1.2-kilometre (0.75-mile) viaduct will eventually link bustling Camden with the revamped King's Cross district, turning a corridor of overgrown foliage-adjacent to still-active rail lines into a new green space and attraction.

"We're hoping to build an amazing park in the sky," Simon Pitkeathley, who is spearheading the project, told AFP, as he led locals on a regular street-level tour of the planned walkway. "(It's) going to be a pleasant, beautiful environment in which to move between these very vibrant parts of London."

Tourists

Local architects vPPR and James Corner Field Operations, the urban design firm behind New York's acclaimed High Line, drew up the blueprints after beating out competition from dozens of interested companies. The US raised walkway, built on former track on the west side of Manhattan, has become a major destination since opening in 2009 and underwent a recent extension. The forerunner to both is the lauded Promenade Plantee in Paris, which was inaugurated in 1993.

James Corner has promised the Camden project will be a "one-of-a-kind elevated park along the viaduct that speaks to the magical symbiosis of nature, culture, arts and community". The venture has electrified Camden, a vibrant neighbourhood just north of central London best known for its market and nightlife.

"We love the High Line in New York and (we're) very excited that the same company are involved in this one," said resident Charlotte Tansey, checking out the route with her Dalmatian, Ziggy. "There are so many tourists going through Camden every day, it'd be great for them to have a different viewpoint, just like the one in Manhattan."

Celebration

The scheme will differ from its transatlantic namesake given the disused siding's proximity to live rail lines, which will be the other side of thick transparent screens. "They're going to be quite different beasts, not least because we're right next to a real train," said Pitkeathley, noting those involved in the New York endeavour had been "very supportive".

The Camden team has agreed a long-term lease for the Victorian-era viaduct from Network Rail, which owns 20,000 miles of track and 30,000 bridges, tunnels and other structures, as well as stations. The siding on an east-west commuter and freight route has been disused for nearly four decades.

The Highline will incorporate derelict platforms at Camden Road station and a shuttered stairway entrance to it—one of several envisaged entries along the route. Its designers aim to "celebrate" the wild twinning of nature and ageing infrastructure, leaving bridge structures exposed and adding new planting and railway artefacts. Set to be filled with new trees, plants and other vegetation, they also expect it will provide green space to tens of thousands of nearby residents.

Fundraising

The entire walkway will be built in phases and estimated to cost at least £35 million (\$43 million). The first section will start in the shadow of Camden market and could open by 2025. The remaining two parts would likely take an additional minimum of two years, if built concurrently.



LONDON: Chief executive of Camden High Line Simon Pitkeathley guides visitors near the proposed construction land, in Camden, north London. —AFP

But organisers first need to find an initial £14 million. The charity formed to deliver the project has already raised and spent around £1 million and hopes to turbocharge further efforts once formal planning permission is granted.

With the support of Camden Council, London Mayor Sadiq Khan and national politicians including main opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer—who represents the area in parliament —, Pitkeathley insists the money can be found.

He is targeting a combination of high-net-worth

individuals, trusts and foundations, public sector organisations and commercial partners. Fundraisers have already been held with the likes of sculptor Antony Gormley.

Residents along the route, which encompasses several public housing projects, appear enthusiastic. But some said the cost-of-living crisis gripping Britain could hinder efforts. "There is an argument that if you spend millions and millions on building walkways, what else could that be spent on," conceded doctor Naomi Craft, 58. "But I think it's exciting." —AFP

Tunisians rally over worsening economic crisis

TUNIS: Hundreds of Tunisians marched after opponents of President Kais Saied called for protests over a worsening economic crisis. "The people want what you don't want. Down with Saied," chanted the activists, including supporters of the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party. Ennahdha had dominated parliament until Saied launched a dramatic power grab on July 25, 2021, sacking the government and freezing parliament before appointing a new cabinet and ruling by decree.

"The coup has brought us famine and poverty. Yesterday the grocer gave me just one kilo of macaroni and a can of milk," said Nouha, a woman at one protest. "How can I feed my family of 13 people with that?" the 50-year-old housewife lamented.

Saturday's protests were staged in the capital Tunis by two different opposition groups and were held far apart with a heavy police presence to avoid any unrest. They were held against a backdrop of deepening political divisions on the 12th anniversary of the fall of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

The biggest opposition force, the National Salvation Front (FSN) which includes Ennahdha, was kept about one kilometre from left-wing party activists gathered in front of the municipal theatre. Another march attended by hundreds of people was led by Abir Moussi of the anti-Islamist opposition Free Destourian Party, in the south of Carthage, where the presidential palace is located.

Tunisians who largely supported Saied's takeover have become increasingly fed up with the economic crisis. The state, which is heavily in debt, has found it difficult to import basic goods, and there are chronic shortages of staples such as coffee, milk and sugar. —AFP

UK economy wins WCup boost but recession looms

LONDON: Britain's economy unexpectedly grew in November as consumers splurged during the World Cup, official data showed Friday, but analysts warned that it remains on course for recession due to the cost-of-living crisis. Despite a series of strikes, gross domestic product grew by a slight 0.1 percent in the month, aided by services, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That confounded expectations for a modest decline as Britain battles decades-high inflation fuelled by runaway energy bills. Yet the economy slowed from a 0.5-percent expansion in October following a drop in September, when many businesses closed for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II. Britain, like many other nations, is plagued by run-

Ex-Volkswagen boss Carl Hahn dies aged 96

BERLIN: Carl Hahn, who headed the Volkswagen group during the German car giant's heyday in the 1980s, has died, a spokeswoman for the Carl and Marisa Hahn Foundation told AFP on Sunday. Hahn died peacefully at his home in Wolfsburg on Saturday morning aged 96. Die Welt daily reported late Saturday.

As head of VW from 1982 to 1993, Hahn is credited with overseeing sweeping changes that helped catapult the company to international suc-

cess. The group took over Seat and Skoda under his watch and also began expanding into China—now its most important market.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Hahn also took pains to ensure that Volkswagen expanded into East Germany and rebuilt the company's Zwickau plant, which today makes electric cars. "With his sense for opportunities, timing and emerging markets, Hahn laid the foundations for Volkswagen's success," Die Welt said.

Hahn was born in 1926 in Chemnitz into a family of industrialists. He studied economics in Germany, Switzerland and Britain before beginning his career with Fiat in Italy. He first worked at Volkswagen in North America and later completed a stint at tyre company Continental in Hanover before returning to the German group as chief executive. —AFP



Carl Hahn

Paris to hold referendum on e-scooter rental

PARIS: Parisians will be invited to vote on whether to allow electric scooter rental services to continue operating in the city as authorities weigh banning the controversial for-hire vehicles, the capital's mayor has said. The issue is "extremely divisive", mayor Anne Hidalgo told the weekend edition of Le Parisien newspaper, with critics saying riders show only cursory respect for the rules of the road.

They often defy bans on riding on pavements, or park without consideration, while some abandon the scooters in parks or even toss them into the Seine river. Fans meanwhile praise the zippy fleets — totalling 15,000 scooters operated by companies Lime, Dott and Tier — as a fast, non-polluting alternative to cars or crowded public transport.

Hidalgo said Paris residents would be asked "a very simple question" in the referendum planned for April 2: "Do we or don't we continue with free-floating rental scooters?" The mayor said she herself was leaning towards a ban but would "respect Parisians' vote".

A ban would make Paris an exception among major cities. In September, the capital already threatened the three operators with non-renewal of their licences, which expire in March, if they failed to limit reckless riding and other "misuses".

The operators in November came up with a number of suggested improvements, including equipping the scooters with licence plates that would allow

away consumer prices with UK inflation at 10.7 percent — the highest for about 40 years.

World Cup boost

Britons splashed cash while watching the football World Cup, which was held in Qatar and began on November 20. "The economy grew a little in November, with increases in telecommunications and computer programming helping to push the economy forward," said ONS director of economic statistics Darren Morgan.

"Pubs and bars also did well as people went out to watch World Cup games. "This was partially offset by further falls in some manufacturing industries ... as well as falls in transport and postal, partially due to the impact of strikes."

However, the ONS also revealed that the UK economy shrank 0.3 percent in the three months to November compared with the three months to August. "Over the last three months ... the economy still shrank — mainly due to the impact of the extra bank holiday for the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in September," Morgan noted.



Electric scooters are seen on display.

easier tracking of riders running a red light, or travelling in pairs on the single-person vehicles — both common violations. But David Belliard, Hidalgo's deputy in charge of urban transport, still said a cost-benefit analysis did not favour the rental schemes.

"They are in the way and they are dangerous," he told AFP, saying he favoured a ban to "pacify

our streets and pavements". There was "too much negative feedback" from citizens about the scooters, he said.

Hidalgo told Le Parisien meanwhile that privately owned scooters, also hugely popular in the capital, were not targeted in the referendum. They are "not a problem", she said. —AFP

The Bank of England and the UK government believe the economy has already entered recession on fallout from sky-high inflation. GDP had already contracted by 0.3 percent in the third quarter, or three months to September.

A fourth-quarter decline would place Britain in a technical recession. Germany's economy, which is also expected to go into a recession this year, avoided a contraction late last year, with data Friday showing it stagnated in the fourth quarter.

'Smells of stagnation'

"On a three-monthly basis, the UK still shrank, and a 0.1-percent gain on a monthly basis smells heavily of stagnation, rather than real growth," warned analyst Sophie Lund-Yates at stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown.

"The idea that the UK will formally enter a recession soon is still very much a likelihood. "The boost in November could stem from extra spending in the economy in the run up to Christmas, and there's real risk now that consumers are going to tighten their belts." Britain's CBI business lobby remains fearful of

a prolonged downturn, warning that monthly data cannot mask the economy's underlying problems.

Intense cost pressures

"High inflation is severely impacting household budgets and businesses are facing intense cost pressures. As a result, consumer spending and investment plans are weakening," said CBI economist Almesh Paleja.

"The question for the government now is not whether we will fall into recession, but how long and deep the recession will be." Inflation has surged on rocketing energy bills caused by key producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as supply constraints following the lifting of COVID lockdowns and Brexit fallout.

The Conservative government of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is currently partially subsidising energy bills in a bid to cushion the impact.

In recent months, however, strikes have multiplied across the economy — including by hospital, railway and postal workers — in protest over pay that has failed to keep pace with runaway prices. —AFP



Tourists pose for a photo before the site of the Treasury at the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra in southern Jordan. — AFP photos



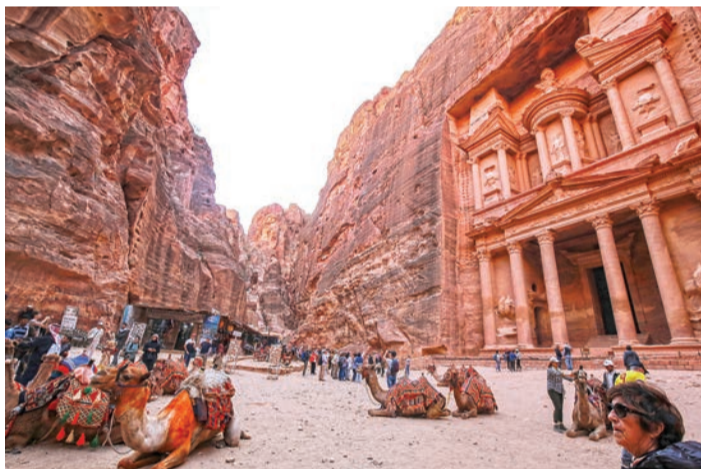
Tourists tour the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra in southern Jordan.



Hussein Bdoul, a 35-year-old camel guide, rides his camel outside the Treasury in the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra in southern Jordan.

TOURISTS SURGE BACK TO JORDAN'S DESERT MARVEL **PETRA**

Tending to his camels in Petra, Jordan's spectacular archaeological marvel hidden deep in a desert canyon, Hussein Bdoul is all smiles: the tourists are back. After years in which the COVID pandemic turned the storied "Rose City" into a ghost town, the father of seven is back at work, offering visitors rides on his decorated animals. "Tourism has returned and the numbers are even greater," said Bdoul, 35, wearing Bedouin garb with a red keffiyeh scarf over his long black hair, reflecting on a resurgence last year.



Camels sit awaiting tourists outside the site of the Treasury at the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra.

"At the time of the coronavirus pandemic, we did not see anyone in Petra," said Bdoul—a disaster for the town where, he said, "90 percent of people work in tourism". "We hope from God Almighty that people will stay well." Jordan tourism authorities confirm that Petra is back in business and drew 900,000 visitors last year, close to the record of one million set in 2019.

Jordan as a whole received 4.6 million visitors in 2022 — almost four times the level from 2020 — earning the country \$5.3 billion. Top draw Petra, famous for its stunning temples hewn out of the rose-pink cliff faces, is a United Nations World Heritage site and was chosen as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in a 2007 online poll. It was built in 312



Tourists tour the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra in southern Jordan.

BC as the capital of the ancient Arab kingdom of the Nabateans, which fell to the Romans in 106 BC. The ancient city remained unknown in the West until a Swiss traveler visited it in 1812.

'Sigh of relief'

"This place and the colors are incredible," marveled French student Alia, 16, taking a break from exploring with her mother to check out a souvenir stand. Around 1,700 people make a living from Petra as tour guides, trinket sellers or by taking visitors through the site on donkeys,

horses, camels or electric buggies. "We breathed a sigh of relief when we saw the return of tourists," said Muhammad Samahin, 16, selling drinks while sitting on woven rugs inside the Moon Cave near the famed Treasury site. Suleiman Farajat, head of the Petra Development and Tourism Regional Authority, said the post-pandemic tourism comeback had exceeded all expectations.

At the height of the pandemic, "there were days when there were no tourists" in Petra, located 230 kilometers (140 miles) south of the capital Amman. The recovery was helped by

official promotional campaigns in new overseas markets, low-cost airline flights and new hotel rooms, said Farajat. Petra now has 4,000 rooms, and permits have been granted for three new five-star hotels, so capacity will soon almost double from 2019, he said. "If things continue this way, we may reach, during the next three to four years, the threshold of two million tourists in Petra" every year. — AFP



Tourists tour the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra in southern Jordan.



A tourist poses for a photo while riding a camel before the site of the Treasury at the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra.



Mohammad Samahin, a 16-year-old who serves traditional coffee and tea for tourists while resting on traditional "bisat" (rugs) at the "moon cave" near the Treasury speaks during an interview in the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra.



Alia, a 16-year-old French tourist, gives an interview as she stands near the Treasury in the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra in southern Jordan.



Alia, a 16-year-old French tourist, views souvenirs being sold by a vendor at a stall in the ruins of the ancient Nabatean city of Petra.

Lifestyle | Features

AI, do my homework! How ChatGPT pitted teachers against tech

Know-it-all chatbots landed with a bang last year, convincing one engineer that machines had become sentient, spreading panic that industries could be wiped out, and creating fear of a cheating epidemic in schools and universities. Alarm among educators has reached fever pitch in recent weeks over ChatGPT, an easy-to-use artificial intelligence tool trained on billions of words and a ton of data from the web. It can write a half-decent essay and answer many common classroom questions, sparking a fierce debate about the very future of traditional education.

New York City's education department banned ChatGPT on its networks because of "concerns about negative impacts on student learning." "While the tool may be able to provide quick and easy answers to questions, it does not build critical-thinking and problem-solving skills," said the department's Jenna Lyle.

A group of Australian universities said they would change exam formats to banish AI tools, regarding them as straight-up cheating. However, some in the education sector are more relaxed about AI tools in the classroom, and some even sense an opportunity rather than a threat.

'Important innovation'

That is partly because ChatGPT in its current form still gets stuff wrong. To give one example, it thinks Guatemala is bigger than Honduras. It isn't. Also, ambiguous questions can throw it off track. Ask the tool to describe the Battle of Amiens and it will give a passable detail or two on the 1918 confrontation with World War I. But it does not flag that there was also a skirmish of the same name in 1870. It takes several prompts to realize its error.

"ChatGPT is an important innovation, but no more so than calculators



or text editors," French author and educator Antonio Casilli told AFP. "ChatGPT can help people who are stressed by a blank sheet of paper to write a first draft, but afterwards they still have to write and give it a style." Researcher Olivier Ertzscheid from the University of Nantes agreed that teachers should be focusing on the positives.

In any case, he told AFP, high school students were already using ChatGPT, and any attempt to ban it would just make it more appealing.

Teachers should instead "experi-

ment with the limits" of AI tools, he said, by generating texts themselves and analysing the results with their students.

'Humans deserve to know'

But there is also another big reason to think that educators do not need to panic yet. AI writing tools have long been locked in an arms race with programs that seek to sniff them out, and ChatGPT is no different. A couple of weeks ago, an amateur programmer announced he had spent his new year holiday creating an app that could analyse texts and decide if they were written by ChatGPT. "There's so much chatgpt hype going around," Edward Tian wrote on Twitter. "Is this and that written by AI? We as humans deserve to know!"

His app, GPTZero, is not the first in the field and is unlikely to be the last. Universities already use software that detects plagiarism, so it does not take

a huge leap of imagination to see a future where each essay is rammed through an AI-detector. Campaigners are also floating the idea of digital watermarks or other forms of signifier that will identify AI work.

And OpenAI, the company that owns ChatGPT, said it was already working on a "statistical watermark" prototype. This suggests that educators will be fine in the long run. But Casilli, for one, still believes the impact of such tools has a huge symbolic significance. It partly upended the rules of the game, whereby teachers ask their pupils questions, he said. Now, the student questions the machine before checking everything in the output. "Every time new tools appear we start to worry about potential abuses, but we have also found ways to use them in our teaching," said Casilli.—AFP



(From left to right) Lamar Johnson, Jeffrey Pierce, Storm Reid, Nico Parker, Pedro Pascal, Bella Ramsey, Merle Dandridge and Gabriel Luna attend the Los Angeles Premiere of HBO's "The Last of Us" at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos

'The Last of Us'-a new test for video game adaptations

However thrilling they are to play, video games rarely translate well to the big or small screen—indeed, the crossover genre is littered with flops. But the dystopian, zombie-filled HBO series "The Last of Us," premiering in the United States on Sunday and the following day elsewhere, could be about to break the curse. The series has already won a slew of positive reviews, with a score of 97 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, and is on track to be the streaming world's first success of 2023, 10 years after the "The Last of Us" game first debuted on PlayStation.

Game creator Neil Druckmann, along with "Chernobyl" screenwriter Craig



Craig Mazin attends the Los Angeles Premiere of HBO's "The Last of Us" at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California.



Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey attend the Los Angeles Premiere of HBO's "The Last of Us" at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California.

Mazin, helped develop the narrative for television. The story remains faithful to the original Naughty Dog title, following the unlikely duo of demoralized smuggler Joel and spirited teenager Ellie, whom he must protect as the planet's potential last hope against a fast-moving zombie fungus. The nine-episode season-in which Joel is played by "Narcos" and "Mandalorian" star Pedro Pascal and "Game of Thrones" actress Bella Ramsey portrays Ellie—is set in a post-apocalyptic America ruled by a military dictatorship.

The stakes of the series' success are high for HBO Max, which just raised its US subscription fee from \$14.99 to \$15.99 for an ad-free monthly package. HBO "clearly remains the gold standard for original series, but its parent company (Warner Bros. Discovery) is at a crossroads in terms of how much it's willing to spend on projects," said John Cassillo, an analyst with TVREV.

Rare success

Adaptations of blockbuster video games tend not to do well when they are turned into movies or television series. On a list drawn up by Box Office Mojo, only five films in this genre have surpassed \$400 million in earnings. The top one, "Warcraft" (2016) — which took in \$439 million worldwide—doesn't figure in the top 250 on the overall box office list. Other rare successes include "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" (2001) starring Angelina Jolie, and more recently Netflix's Emmy-winning animated series "Arcane," set in the "League of Legends" universe.

"What makes video games entertaining doesn't always make movies/shows entertaining, and vice versa," said Cassillo. In the case of "The Last of Us," he explained, "the post-apocalyptic story taps into a popular genre even outside of gaming, and HBO has a long-standing track record succeeding with dramatic series."

Cassillo predicted that if the series "uses the backdrop of the game's plot to tell a compelling character story (that could exist even apart from the game), it'll stand a great chance to succeed where other video game adaptations have failed." In an interview with The New York Times, Druckmann said the most important thing in adapting the game was "to keep the soul of it," not necessarily every scene. "What makes the show are the characters, the philosophical arguments of, 'Do the ends justify the means?' And, 'How big is your tribe that you're going to care for?'" he said.

Many more video game adaptations are in the pipeline, including a new "Super Mario Bros" film, a third installment in the "Sonic the Hedgehog" franchise and a "Gran Turismo" movie, as well as a Netflix animated series based on "Tomb Raider." — AFP

Censored woman painter Artemisia laid bare in restoration

Using gentle, circular motions, an art restorer gently cleans the painting of a half-nude woman that was censored more than 300 years ago by a prudish descendant of Michelangelo. The piece by Artemisia Gentileschi, the Italian Baroque's trailblazing woman artist, is undergoing a months-long restoration to rediscover her original vision, hidden for centuries under a thick layer of strategically placed paint. While the restorers consider it too risky to remove the drapery and veil later painted on to cover the figure's breasts and loins, diagnostic imaging will provide a glimpse of the original nude as Artemisia intended.

"As we say in Italian, it's been turned inside out like a glove with all the diagnostic techniques possible to understand how the painting was conceived, how it was painted," conservator Elizabeth Wicks, the head of the team of restoration experts, told AFP. The experts also want to uncover "what happened to it afterwards, and to see if we can read between the veils of censorship that were added to the painting."



This photo shows "Studio" (Study room), one of a rooms of the Casa Buonarroti Museum, a study room designed by Michelangelo, where the restoration work on the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's "Allegoria dell'Inclinazione" (Allegory of Inclination) is taking place, in central Florence.

Artemisia painted "Allegory of Inclination" in 1616 to glorify Italy's most celebrated artist, Michelangelo Buonarroti. But the work's curious history has only added to the fascination surrounding Artemisia, the 17th century's most eminent woman painter whose talent, independence and dramatic life story have fuelled new appreciation in the post-#MeToo era.

Hide the flesh

The painting, which many believe to be a self-portrait of Artemisia, depicts a female nude sitting atop a cloud, repre-



US conservator Elizabeth Wicks, speaks during an interview with the AFP in front of the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's painting 'Allegoria dell'Inclinazione' in the Casa Buonarroti Museum.



US conservator Elizabeth Wicks, works on a painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's painting 'Allegoria dell'Inclinazione' in the Casa Buonarroti Museum.



This photo taken with a fisheye lens shows "The Galleria" of the Casa Buonarroti Museum, a room dedicated to the glorification of Michelangelo, during the restoration work on the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's "Allegoria dell'Inclinazione" (Allegory of Inclination), in central Florence. — AFP photos

senting innate creative talent and drive. It was commissioned by Michelangelo's great-nephew, who turned his ancestor's home into a sumptuous residence and museum to celebrate his genius. It was one of 15 paintings Michelangelo the Younger commissioned for the ceiling of the palazzo's gallery.

Artemisia, who went on to achieve fame and the patronage of kings during her lifetime, was paid three times more

known as "Il Volterrano", to modify it. He painted a diaphanous veil over the figure's breasts and heavier drapery over her loins. That extra layer of oil paint, which can take up to 200 years to fully dry, now presents too great a risk to remove.

"I like to think that she had passed away by the time this painting was censored because I don't think she would have been very happy about it," said Wicks. "We're not too happy about it either, but it's part of the history of the painting at this point."

Heroine at centre

Centuries of smoke, and varnish added in the 1960s, have imparted an orangey fake tan to the figure's skin, while the brilliant blue sky painted with lapis lazuli has turned a sickly grey-green. "You can see this leg is lighter because I have cleaned (and) thinned the varnish in this area," said Wicks, dabbing at the canvas while peering through magnifying glasses. Wicks started at the edges, and next month will begin working on the back of the canvas. After a careful restretching, resins will be added to strengthen the fibres of the canvas and re-adhere the paint.

Thus far, X-rays and other imaging techniques have revealed not only the underlying nudity but also changes made to the eyes and hands as Artemisia worked. "What you'd think is under the veil is under the veil. It's all there!" laughed Wicks. During an exhibit that starts in September, visitors will be able to see the work up close before the painting permanently returns to the palazzo's ceiling.—AFP



This photo shows "The Galleria" of the museum, room dedicated to the glorification of Michelangelo, at Casa Buonarroti Museum, where the restoration work on the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's "Allegoria dell'Inclinazione" (Allegory of Inclination) is taking place, in central Florence.



US conservator Elizabeth Wicks, works on a painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's painting 'Allegoria dell'Inclinazione' in the Casa Buonarroti Museum.



Models present creations of Dolce & Gabbana during the Autumn-Winter 2023-2024 Men's fashion show as part of the Milan Fashion Week. — AFP photos

BOOM TIME FOR MENSWEAR AS PARIS FASHION WEEK RETURNS

The fashion juggernaut returns to Paris this week, with Saint Laurent rejoining the line-up and menswear on a hot streak, even if the industry remains wary of economic headwinds. The changing world of menswear is evident on red carpets around the world, where the likes of Timothee Chalamet and Harry Styles have helped redefine male style, ditching monochrome tuxedos in favor of daring outfits and bright colors. Just last week, Vogue declared that "the night belonged to menswear" at the Golden Globes, and stores have been reporting unprecedented growth in the sector for months.

So the buzz is deafening around the menswear shows hitting Paris from Tuesday, boosted by the return of two big

hitters in Saint Laurent on Tuesday's opening night, and John Galliano's Maison Margiela closing the week next Sunday. Saint Laurent has not presented a men's show in the official calendar since Belgian designer Anthony Vaccarello took the reins in 2016, preferring one-off appearances in exotic locations such as Marrakesh and Venice.

Succession talk

In Milan last week where fashion shows have not even finished as the industry caravan decamps for Paris—the talk was all about who would succeed flamboyant creative director Alessandro Michele at Gucci following his recent surprise departure. In Paris, the big unanswered question is who will take over at

Louis Vuitton following the early death of Virgil Abloh in November 2021.

The label got fashionista tongues wagging when it announced that Thursday's show is being handled by wunderkind Colm Dillane, the man behind hot young Brooklyn label KidSuper—along with an accompanying film shot by French director Michel Gondry. While many are worried about the impact of possible recessions, tightening environmental regulations and inflationary costs, menswear is seen as a bright spot. "Saint Laurent, Gucci and Givenchy are working almost better in men's than women's at the moment," said Alice Feillard, director of buying for Paris department store Galeries Lafayette. "We've been seeing this exponential growth for two or three

years... It's really taking off," she added.

'New field of expression'

Even men's undies are gaining ground on the female market. Male underwear was up 3.3 percent in the first 10 months of 2022 to 400 million euros (\$435 million), against 2.5 percent growth in women's lingerie (to a still dominant 1.5 billion euros), according to figures from the Salon International de la Lingerie, which is held in Paris this month.

"Menswear has greatly evolved in recent years," said luxury expert Serge Carreira of Sciences Po university. "It has created a major new field of expression, innovation and research for the houses." Givenchy notably abandoned haute couture and took up menswear after the

arrival in 2020 of US designer Matthew Williams, known for his luxury streetwear. They stage their catwalk show on Wednesday, with key rival Dior strutting out on Friday.

One name that often comes up as a possible successor at Louis Vuitton is Grace Wales Bonner, who presents her own show on Tuesday. She is part of a growing trend of women designers who focus on dressing men, along with fellow Brit, Bianca Saunders. There is also excitement for the return of award-winning US designer Emily Bode, known for using recycled material, who stayed away from Paris during the pandemic.—AFP



Models present creations by Fendi during the Autumn-Winter 2023-2024 Men's fashion show, as part of the Milan Fashion Week, in Milan. — AFP photos

13th proves lucky for \$1.35bn lottery ticket holder in US

Friday the 13th proved lucky for one lottery player in the US state of Maine, whose winning ticket is worth an estimated \$1.35 billion, Mega Millions officials announced Saturday. The winner's identity has yet to be announced, but only one person matched all six numbers, thereby claiming the second-largest jackpot in Mega Millions history (someone in South Carolina won \$1.53 billion in 2018).

"Congratulations to the Maine State

Lottery, which has just won its first-ever Mega Millions jackpot," said Pat McDonald, lead director of the Mega Millions Consortium. "It's the fourth billion-dollar jackpot in Mega Millions history." The big win was the lottery's seventh on a Friday the 13th—a date normally considered unlucky—since the game began in 2002.

In the latest drawing, Mega Millions said, 14 people in 10 states matched the five white-ball numbers (30, 43, 45, 46, 61) to win \$1 million each, but only the single ticket-holder in the northeastern state of Maine also guessed the gold Mega Ball number: 14. The jackpot had been growing since October 14, when winning tickets in California and Florida shared a prize of \$502 million. The next drawing is Tuesday, with a jackpot set back to the starting value of \$20 million.—AFP

Harry reconciliation with royal family 'possible' before coronation

A reconciliation between Prince Harry and the British royal family could take place before the coronation of King Charles III in May, a report said on Saturday, following the publication of his scorching tell-all memoir "Spare". A source close to the king who also knows Harry and his wife Meghan told The Sunday Times they believed a meeting would take place in coming months before the coronation on May 6.

"It's going to take flexibility on all sides, but it can be done, it's fixable," the newspaper quoted the source as saying in a report published on its website. "It needs Harry over here, in the room with the King and Prince of Wales, a couple of other family members, some of 'his people' he trusts who always had his back, so he doesn't think he's being ambushed," the source added.

After months of anticipation and a blanket publicity blitz, Harry's book "Spare" went on sale Tuesday, clocking up a record 1.4 million English language sales in its first 24 hours. "Both sides need to hold their hands up and admit we didn't get everything right, and we got a lot wrong, and we have to say to him 'we

understand the pain you've been through'. The King can do it," the source said. Although the royal family has not commented on the book, the source said Harry's elder brother, heir to the throne Prince William was "burning inside" over his sibling's disloyalty.

the newspaper, Harry and Meghan—who quit royal life in the UK for California in 2020 — must be invited in before the historic royal event. If that didn't happen, the spiraling feud between the brothers would become "a circus and distraction". In his blockbuster autobiography, Harry



Prince Harry's memoir Spare is offered for sale at a Barnes & Noble store in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

'Distraction'

"Not everyone here behaved well, but Harry's got to be able to sit down and say 'we didn't behave well either'. That takes a lot of academic flexibility, which Harry isn't great at," the source added Harry, who accuses his brother in the book of pushing him to the ground in an altercation in 2019, has said he would like to be reconciled with his family but that he needs "accountability" first. The source said time was now of the essence. "We've got to move on it, and get it done by April. Then, we need to get the wives in. The King needs a clear run for the coronation."

Another royal source agreed, telling

complains bitterly of his treatment as the second son of Charles and the late Princess Diana.

The book also details a string of often petty grievances after he became engaged to Meghan who has also complained she was not supported by the royals. Public opinion in Britain has swung against Harry in the wake of the book's publication — in the middle of the country's most serious cost of living crisis in a generation. A YouGov survey published in The Times daily found only 24 percent of people now have a positive view of the prince—down from 80 percent a decade ago—with 68 percent critical.—AFP



Sports

Kohli's 166 helps India crush Sri Lanka by record 317 runs

India bowled out the tourists for 72 in just 22 overs

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Virat Kohli smashed an unbeaten 166 to help India beat Sri Lanka by 317 runs and record the highest ever victory margin in a one-day international as they swept the series 3-0 on Sunday. Kohli's third century in his last four matches and a 116 by opener Shubman Gill powered India to 390-5 in Thiruvananthapuram.

Fast bowler Mohammed Siraj then returned impressive figures of 4-32 as India bowled out the tourists for 72 in 22 overs as India went past New Zealand's 290-run thrashing of Ireland in 2008. A 131-run second-wicket stand between Gill and Kohli stood out after India elected to bat first.

Gill put on 95 runs for the opening wicket with skipper Rohit Sharma, who made 42, to set the tone for the team's batting domination. Rohit missed out on a fifty after he fell to Chamika Karunaratne but Gill kept up the attack with Kohli and raised his second ODI hundred, celebrating it with a fist bump.

Gill smashed Jeffrey Vandersay for four fours in the over after the ton, but was soon bowled off a slower delivery from Kasun Rajitha. "King Kohli" put on another century partnership with Shreyas Iyer, who hit 38, and went on to record

the ton with his arms and bat raised to an applauding crowd.

The ball before Kohli got his hundred saw a nasty collision at the square-leg boundary between Vandersay and Ashen Bandara, with both fielders stretched off. Dunith Wellalage came in as a concussion substitute for Vandersay and batted for the tourists at number eight. Kohli changed gears after his 46th ODI century—three behind Sachin Tendulkar's all-time record of 49 — as he smashed Karunaratne for two successive sixes.

Kohli, who surpassed Sri Lankan great Mahela Jayawardene's 12,650 ODI runs to enter the top five all-time run getters, reached his 150 in 106 balls and finished off with 13 fours and eight sixes. Sri Lanka were never in the chase after Mohammed Siraj struck thrice in his first five overs including the wickets of Avishka Fernando, for one, and Kusal Mendis, bowled on four.

The tourists kept losing wickets to Siraj's pace and swing and the quick also ran out Karunaratne with a direct throw that caught the batsman off guard and out of his crease at the striker's end. Mohammed Shami and Kuldeep Yadav picked two wickets each to flatten Sri Lanka's batting with 28 overs to spare, with the tourists losing nine wickets and injured Bandara not batting. — AFP



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: India's Shubman Gill celebrates after scoring a century (100 runs) during the third and final one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Sri Lanka at the Greenfield International Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram on January 15, 2023. — AFP

News in brief

Leeds sign Rutter

LONDON: Leeds have splashed out "a club record transfer fee" to sign Hoffenheim striker Georginio Rutter, the English Premier League side announced on Saturday. Rutter, who has scored 11 goals and added 11 assists in 64 appearances since joining German Bundesliga side Hoffenheim in February 2021, has signed a five-and-a-half year deal at Elland Road, subject to international clearance. The French youth international is Leeds' second signing of the January window after Max Wober. "Leeds United are delighted to announce the signing of striker Georginio Rutter for a club record transfer fee," a statement on the club's website stated. While they have not revealed the fee reports have indicated it could rise to £32million (36 million euros) for the 20-year-old who made his breakthrough with French Ligue 1 side Rennes in 2020. Rutter will not be available for Wednesday's FA Cup third round replay against Cardiff but will come into contention for next weekend's Premier League match against Brentford. Jesse Marsch's side lost 2-1 to Aston Villa on Friday to leave them struggling two points above the relegation zone.

Former cyclist Westra dies

THE HAGUE: Former Dutch cyclist Lieuwe Westra, runner-up to Bradley Wiggins in the 2012 Paris-Nice, has died aged 40 after a long battle with depression, his biographer and Dutch media announced on Sunday. Westra was part of the Astana team that helped lift Vincenzo Nibali to victory in the Tour de France in 2014. That season he picked up stage wins in the Tour of Catalonia and the Criterium du Dauphine. Nicknamed 'the Beast' for his unrelenting riding style Westra's body was found at his business premises on Saturday near the northwest Dutch city of Enkhuizen, local broadcaster Omrop Fryslan said, quoting family sources. "Lieuwe Westra, 40, died on Saturday afternoon," his biographer Thomas Sijtsma tweeted. "Over the last few years the former rider fought a battle with himself and lost," Sijtsma said, adding "Rest softly, Beast". Born in Friesland in 1982, Westra in 2009 turned professional, joining the Vacansoleil team. The former road worker in his first year won the Tour de Picardie and was earmarked to have the potential to become one of the great riders from the Netherlands.

Stosur to retire after Australian Open

MELBOURNE: Veteran Sam Stosur said Sunday that the Australian Open would be her final tournament, ending a 23-year career in which she won a singles Grand Slam title and seven others in doubles. The 38-year-old Australian's greatest moment came when she defeated Serena Williams to win the singles crown at the 2011 US Open, which she described as "the pinnacle" of her career. This week will mark her 21st Australian Open. "That was certainly a dream of mine to achieve that, and I did," she told reporters of her Flushing Meadows triumph. "That's a moment I'll never forget. I'm very fortunate that I have so many great memories, yeah, from the sport, winning, losing, travelling, on and off the court," she added at Melbourne Park, where she will play in the doubles with France's Alize Cornet. Stosur reached a career-high ranking of four in the world in singles and one in doubles after making her Grand Slam debut at the 2002 Australian Open. She won four Grand Slam women's doubles titles, most recently at the 2021 US Open alongside China's Zhang Shuai, and three mixed doubles titles. — AFP

Burl knock wins T20 series for Zimbabwe

HARARE: A whirlwind unbeaten 30 by Ryan Burl, better known as a leg spinner than a brisk batsman, lifted Zimbabwe to a 2-1 Twenty20 series victory over Ireland in Harare on Sunday. Ireland were put in to bat and made 141-9 with Harry Tector top scoring on 47 as they sought to buck a trend in this series of the side fielding first winning.

Captain Craig Ervine scored 54 to lift Zimbabwe to 116-5 with three overs remaining and Burl then became the unlikely hero, hammering two sixes and three fours off 11 deliveries. Another bowler, Luke Jongwe, won the match and the series, hitting a four off the last ball of the penultimate over to take Zimbabwe to 144-6, and a four-wicket triumph.

It was a dramatic end to a series that began

with a five-wicket win for Zimbabwe on Thursday, followed by a six-wicket victory for the tourists two days later. After the cheap loss of opener Tadiwanashe Marumani (5), Ervine took charge, with his 65-minute stand including six fours.

His knock ended when caught by Chris Campher attempting a cover drive off a short-pitched ball from Mark Adair. Spinner Ben White (2-26) and fast medium pacer Barry McCarthy (2-32) were the most successful Irish bowlers.

Batting at No. 4, Tector rescued the tourists, who had slumped to 19-3 having faced just 23 deliveries. He put on 70 runs before being separated from Campher, the second highest Irish scorer with 27, including two fours.

Tector departed next, adding a further six runs before his middle stump was uprooted by off spinner Wesley Madhevere, the most successful Zimbabwe bowler with two wickets for eight runs. The batter faced 38 deliveries and struck three fours. Mark Adair was the only lower-order Irish batsman to reach double figures with his 14 off 10 balls contributing to a 31-run seventh-wicket stand. — AFP



HARARE: Zimbabwe's Clive Madande (L) watches the ball after playing a shot as Ireland's wicketkeeper Stephen Doherty (R) looks on during the T20 international cricket match between Zimbabwe and Ireland at the Harare Sports Club in Harare. — AFP

Badminton king Axelsen secures Malaysian title

KUALA LUMPUR: Danish ace Viktor Axelsen stormed to victory in the final of badminton's Malaysia Open on Sunday, successfully defending his title by outgunning Japan's Kodai Naraoka. The world number one only needed 40 minutes in Kuala Lumpur to secure his first trophy of the year, displaying top form to walk away with the match 21-6, 21-15.

Wasting no time in the first game, Axelsen immediately went on the offensive, raining his signature pinpoint smashes on a defenceless Naraoka. He then kept up the pressure in the second game against a visibly exhausted opponent to clinch the win.

Axelsen conceded fatigue may have been a factor in the match, with Naraoka having played a mammoth

113-minute semi-final just a day earlier. "He looked stiff-legged due to the long matches he's played. For me, that was a good thing," Axelsen told reporters.

"I just tried to play consistently at a high pace, and not give him many chances. If he wanted to win, he had to work really hard." The reigning Olympic champion has been badminton's standout performer over the last year, winning eight titles in 2022 including the All-England and World Championships.

But he said Sunday there were many strong players capable of overtaking him, though he declined to give names. "You cannot predict who will do well. For me it's just about minding my own business, trying to do what works for me and keep improving," he said.

Naraoka, who played 362 minutes in the tournament before his showdown with Axelsen, said the run had taken a toll on his body. "I did feel tired coming into this game, but I still did my best. But he used his height well, and his smashes were too powerful for me," said the world



KUALA LUMPUR: Denmark's Viktor Axelsen poses on the podium after winning against Japan's Kodai Naraoka during their men's singles final match at the Malaysia Open badminton tournament in Kuala Lumpur on January 15, 2023. — AFP

number seven.

Their match-up followed a hard-fought semi-final between the two at the World Tour Finals last month. In

the women's final, Japanese player Akane Yamaguchi took the title by beating South Korea's An Se-young 12-21, 21-19, 21-11. — AFP

Two eagles lift Buckley to Sony Open lead

LOS ANGELES: Hayden Buckley had two eagles in a six-under-par 64 on Saturday to grab a two-shot lead after three rounds of the Sony Open, where he's chasing a first US PGA Tour title. The 26-year-old American holed out from the fairway for an eagle at the 10th, then broke free atop the leaderboard with another eagle at the par-five 18th, where his approach from the fairway settled two feet from the pin.

He was two strokes clear of overnight leader Chris Kirk, David Lipsky and Ben Taylor. England's Taylor carded a five-under-par 65 to join the group on 13-under 197 while Lipsky fired a second straight 66 and Kirk posted a 68.

Andrew Putnam charged up the leaderboard with an eight-under 62 that featured 10 birdies, and was joined on 198 by South Korean Kim Si-woo, who signed for a 64. Buckley, who finished tied for fifth at the Zozo championship in October,

said his round was "a testament to being patient."

"I missed a three-, four-footer for birdie kind of early on and I just stuck with it," he said, adding that he didn't feel as in control as he had on Friday. "I hit a lot of greens, obviously, but I hit them in some tougher spots today—a lot of shots pin-high, with a lot more break and a little bit quicker putts," he said. "I feel like I just played smart."

On a day when a dozen players held at least a share of the lead at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu, Hawaii, Buckley's eagles made the difference. The first came after he "chucked" his tee shot at the 10th, then hit his 50-degree wedge second shot "a hair thin."

Buckley admitted he thought it might miss the green, but instead it hit the putting surface and rolled in. At 18 he said he was "just trying to play to the front edge. "Luckily I had a great number and hit a five-iron in close."

Buckley will be playing in the final group of the final round for the first time in a US PGA Tour event. Taylor and Lipsky are also chasing maiden US tour wins, although Lipsky's three international titles include an Asian Tour victory in 2012 and European Tour wins in 2014 and 2018.

Taylor rebounded from an opening



HONOLULU: Hayden Buckley of the United States plays a second shot on the 14th hole during the third round of the Sony Open in Hawaii at Waialae Country Club on January 14, 2023 in Honolulu, Hawaii. — AFP

bogey with six birdies, rolling in a six-footer at the 18th. "Solid round," he said. "I had a little bit of a hiccup on the first with an early bogey ... but we had level shoulders on us today."

Lipsky opened with back-to-back bogeys, but had seven birdies the rest

of the way. After a bogey at 17 he rolled in an 11-foot birdie at the last. Kirk kept himself in the hunt despite a nightmare start. His overnight lead evaporated instantly when he hit it out of bounds off the first tee on the way to a double bogey. — AFP

Sports

Jaguars overturn 27 point deficit, rookie Purdy stars for 49ers

They couldn't have written a better script: Trevor Lawrence

MIAMI: The Jacksonville Jaguars pulled off a remarkable playoff comeback, fighting back from 27 points down to beat the Los Angeles Chargers 31-30 while rookie quarterback Brock Purdy led the San Francisco 49ers past the Seattle Seahawks 41-23 in the NFL playoffs on Saturday.

A last second, 36-yard field goal from Riley Patterson completed an astonishing turnaround from the Jaguars, who had trailed 27-0 late in the second quarter of the AFC wildcard clash. It was the third-biggest comeback in NFL playoff history and came after Jacksonville quarterback Trevor Lawrence endured a nightmare first half, throwing four interceptions.

"They couldn't have written a better script," Lawrence said. "We are never out of the fight." The game had all the hallmarks of a blowout as the Chargers took advantage of Jacksonville's turnovers, with a pair of rushing touchdowns in the first quarter from Austin Ekeler.

Asante Samuel had grabbed three of the picks for the Chargers, who extended their advantage to 27-0 with Gerald Everett collecting a nine yard touchdown pass from Justin Herbert and Cameron Dicker converting a 23-yard field goal.

"I was breaking, not a good record in the first quarter, I had a couple of interceptions, we were not looking good offensively but we just kept believing in one another," Lawrence said. The Jags gave themselves some hope just before the interval with Lawrence finding Evan Engram with a nine yard touchdown pass, but there was no sign of what was to come.

Jacksonville began the second half with a 14-play, 89-yard drive which ended with Lawrence finding Marvin Jones in the corner of the end zone. After a Cameron Dicker 50-yard field goal for the

Chargers, Lawrence threw a 39-yard touchdown pass to Zay Jones.

With 5:25 left in the fourth, Lawrence connected with Christian Kirk and then reached across the line for a two-point conversion. That left Jacksonville needing just a field goal to complete the stunning result and a ten-play, 61-yard drive left Patterson to convert from 36-yards and set off the wild celebrations.

Purdy puts nerves aside

San Francisco quarterback Purdy, who only took on the starting role last month after injury to Jimmy Garoppolo, became the first rookie quarterback with three touchdown passes and a rushing touchdown in a playoff game.

Putting any early nerves aside, Purdy threw for 332 yards and no interceptions while running back Christian McCaffrey rushed for 119 yards. The 49ers made a strong start, opening up a 10-0 lead when McCaffrey rushed three yards into the end zone to finish off a drive that had seen him produce a blistering 68-yard run.

Seattle responded early in the second quarter with Kenneth Walker III's seven-yard rushing TD. A 33-yard field goal from Robbie Gould for the 49ers made it 13-7, but Seattle got themselves in front when quarterback Geno Smith found D.K. Metcalf with a 50-yard scoring pass.

Another Gould field goal restored San Francisco's advantage but then some ill-discipline from the normally rock solid Niners defense allowed the Seahawks to go in at half-time with a 17-16 lead. Smith was sliding when Jimmie Ward inexplicably dived into a low tackle conceding a 15-yard penalty that led to Jason Myers's 56-yard field goal.

But San Francisco started the second half in



JACKSONVILLE: Austin Ekeler #30 of the Los Angeles Chargers carries the ball against the Jacksonville Jaguars during the first half of the game in the AFC Wild Card playoff game at TIAA Bank Field in Jacksonville, Florida. — AFP

emphatic fashion with a 13-play drive ending in a quarterback sneak from Purdy. Smith was then sacked by Charles Omenihu with Nick Bosa recovering the ball for a decisive turnover. Purdy connected with Jauan Jennings with a 33-yard pass and then found Elijah Mitchell with a short pass which the running back took into the end zone. The 49ers went for the two-point conversion, Purdy finding

tight-end George Kittle to make it 31-17. Seattle fell further behind when they left Deebo Samuel in acres of space to collect a pass from Purdy and burst down the left for a 74-yard touchdown. When Smith was picked off by Deommodore Lenoir it was all over for a Seattle team who had snuck into the playoffs when the Green Bay Packers lost their final game of the regular season. — AFP



NAPLES: Napoli's Nigerian forward Victor Osimhen (R) celebrates with Napoli's Georgian forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (C) after he scored a goal during the Italian Serie A football match between Napoli and Juventus at the Diego-Maradona stadium in Naples. — AFP

Napoli's title dream fuelled by 'goal twins'

MILAN: Dazzling duo Victor Osimhen and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia have Napoli dreaming after starring in a five-goal massacre of Juventus which made them clear favourites to claim a first Serie A title in over three decades. Luciano Spalletti's team have bewitched much of Europe with their all-action football this season and the way his two star attackers combined to destroy Juve on Friday night and secure a nine-point lead on champions AC Milan suggests that this time southern Italy's biggest club are the real deal.

Osimhen took his league tally to 12 with a brace, while Kvaratskhelia netted his ninth of the season in all competitions and had a hand in all the others as Juve and their eight-match winning streak were blown away in Naples. The pair set up each other's goals with the crowning moment Kvaratskhelia's inch-perfect cross which allowed Osimhen to head in Napoli's fourth midway through the second half at a packed, and delirious Stadio Maradona.

On Sunday daily La Repubblica crowned them "the goal twins", the same nickname given to Roberto Mancini and recently deceased Gianluca Vialli who shot Sampdoria to their one and only league title in 1991. Napoli last won the Scudetto

the previous season, at the tail end of Diego Maradona's reign in Naples before he was chased out of Italy in disgrace.

Kvaratskhelia is the closest Napoli have come to replicating the Maradona magic, his seven league goals matched with as many assists and an air of attacking menace which has taken his team to another level. "He's an extraordinary player, the best of the lot, the most complete," said Spalletti on Friday.

"In some situations he's simply devastating and he's got the courage to try things out." Meanwhile the astonishing form of Nigeria striker Osimhen has made him look like the club's best centre-forward since Edinson Cavani.

On fire Osimhen

The 24-year-old has scored 11 times in as many games in all competitions since returning from a thigh injury in mid-October, and Spalletti thinks there is even more to come. "Osimhen is such a great striker. The potential he has is scary, I'm excited to see what he can do in future," Spalletti said.

"He still has a remarkable amount of room for improvement." The one negative note for Napoli is that they will not have their hardcore fans following them away from home after they were barred from travelling for two months on Saturday.

The ban was put in place after serious clashes between Napoli's ultras and their Roma counterparts last weekend, a mass brawl at a service station which temporarily shut down one of Italy's most important motorways. — AFP

Nadal facing tough test in Australian Open defence

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal opens his Australian Open title defence Monday feeling vulnerable and against a dangerous young opponent, with women's top seed Iga Swiatek also facing a tricky encounter as she targets a maiden crown.

The first Grand Slam of the year kicks off at Melbourne Park with the men's world number one ranking at stake and a new women's champion set to be crowned after Ashleigh Barty's shock retirement following her win last year. Spanish great Nadal, 36, has lost six of his past seven matches, including his opening two this year, ahead of a difficult afternoon clash on Rod Laver Arena against Britain's in-form Jack Draper.

"Probably one of the toughest first-round (games) possible, being seeded," said the 22-time Grand Slam winner and top seed. "Young, powerful, growing very, very fast on the ranking, playing well." The fast-improving Draper, 21, made the semi-finals of the Adelaide International this week and said he would not be overawed, despite Nadal being an idol.

"I want to go and compete hard and really play well and I want to go and win the match, of course. So that will be the plan," he said. Nadal surged to the title last year with a thrilling five-set win over Russia's Daniil Medvedev, who faces American Marcos Giron on centre court in an evening match.

His run to a first Australian crown since 2009 came in the absence of nine-time champion Novak Djokovic, who is back this year and heavy favourite after missing the 2022 event when he was deported over his COVID vaccination stance.

The 35-year-old Serbian begins on Tuesday against Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena, bidding not just for a 10th title and to equal Nadal's 22 Slams, but to reclaim the top world ranking. "I like my chances," said Djokovic, who is in form, winning at Adelaide last week after ending 2022 with another ATP Finals triumph.

He can return to the top by lifting the trophy. So can Norway's Casper Ruud and Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas, according to the governing body ATP. World number three Ruud can also become world number one by reaching the final, as long neither Djokovic nor Tsitsipas win the title.

If none of those scenarios play out, the reign of Carlos Alcaraz, who is not playing in Melbourne due to injury, will continue. Tsitsipas opens his campaign against France's Quentin Halys on Margaret Court



MELBOURNE: Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a return during a practice session at the Melbourne Park ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 15, 2023. — AFP

Arena, with Ruud in action on Tuesday. Top seed Swiatek is clear favourite having dominated women's tennis following the retirement in March last year of Barty. The Pole secured eight WTA titles in 2022 and became the first woman in six years to win two Grand Slams in the same season - at Roland Garros and New York.

With retired great Serena Williams and two-time Melbourne winner Naomi Osaka also missing, it is almost certain that there will be a new name on the Daphne Akhurst trophy. The only former title-holders in the draw are out-of-sorts Sofia Kenin, who won in 2020, and Victoria Azarenka, whose second Australian Open triumph was a decade ago. — AFP

Today's matches on TV

ARABIAN GULF CUP

Iraq v Qatar 16:15
Dubai Sports 1

Bahrain v Oman 20:15
Dubai Sports 1

SPANISH LEAGUE

Cádiz CF v Elche CF 23:00

beIN Sports HD 1
beIN Sports HD 2

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Empoli v UC Sampdoria 22:45
AD SPORTS Premium 1

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Physiotherapy Hospital

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Clinics

24874330/9	Nuzha Industrial Shuwaikh	22526804
	Qadsiya	24814764
	Dasmah	22515088
	Bneid Al-Gar	22532265
	Shaab	22531908
	Qibla	22518752
	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22459381
	Mirqab	22451082
	Sharq	22456536
	Salmiya	22465401
		25746401

Change of Name

I, SAIFUDDIN (current name in passport) holder of Indian Passport No. Z3810159 having permanent Address NAJAMPURA, SAGWARA, DISTT. DUNGARPUR, RAJASTHAN, INDIA, PINCODE NO. 314025 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: SAI-

FUDDIN and Surname: BURAKSHA (C#2833) - 16-01-2023

I, DIANA AGNELA FALEIRO, holder of Passport No. L3856658, do hereby change my name to DIANA AGNELA (as Given Name) PEREIRA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name DIANA AGNELA PEREIRA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2832) 15-1-2023

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988

Chelsea ease pressure on Potter

Newcastle strike late to move up to third



LONDON: Crystal Palace's English midfielder Eberechi Eze (R) vies with Chelsea's English defender Trevoh Chalobah (2R) during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Crystal Palace at Stamford Bridge in London on January 15, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: Chelsea eased the pressure on manager Graham Potter with a 1-0 win over Crystal Palace as Newcastle struck late to beat Fulham 1-0 and move up to third in the Premier League on Sunday. Kai Havertz scored the only goal at Stamford Bridge with a towering second half header on the day Chelsea paid tribute to former player and manager Gianluca Vialli.

The Italian great died earlier this month aged 58 from pancreatic cancer. A number of Vialli's former Chelsea teammates joined the players from both sides on the field for a minute's silence, while the home fans unfurled a banner with a picture of

Vialli against the backdrop of the Italian flag.

The action on the field was also overshadowed by the official announcement during the first half that Chelsea had completed the signing of Mykhailo Mudryk for a fee that could rise to 100 million euros (£88 million, \$108 million). The former Shakhtar Donetsk winger was presented at half-time draped in the Ukrainian flag with the move set to take Chelsea's spending in their first season under the ownership of Todd Boehly's consortium beyond £400 million.

There was not been much to show for that investment so far, but Potter's injury-ravaged

squad did enough to grind out just a second win in 10 league games. Havertz made the breakthrough as he rose highest to power home Hakim Ziyech's cross from a well-worked corner on 64 minutes.

Chelsea still needed some heroics from goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga to see the game out as the Spaniard made a flying save from Cheick Doucoure's sweetly-struck volley. Despite a much-needed win, Chelsea remain 10 points adrift of the top four after Newcastle kept their title dreams alive at St James' Park.

The Magpies were given a huge let off when

Aleksandar Mitrovic saw a second half penalty ruled out against his former club. The Serbian slipped as he took the spot kick and his right-footed effort rebounded off his left foot into the net.

Newcastle took full advantage as club record signing Alexander Isak came off the bench to head in the winner a minute from time. Victory takes Eddie Howe's men back above Manchester United into third in the table on goal difference and within six points of leaders Arsenal.

The Gunners could move eight points clear at the top should they win the north London derby away to Tottenham later on Sunday. — AFP



DAMMAM: Toyota's driver Nasser Al-Attiyah of Qatar (C) with Prince Khalid bin Sultan al-Abdullah al-Faisal, President of Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation (Center-L), after winning the Dakar Rally 2023, at the end of the last stage between Al-Hofuf and Dammam in Saudi Arabia. — AFP

Al-Attiyah crowned Dakar Rally champion for fifth time

DAMMAM: Qatari driver Nasser Al-Attiyah on Sunday won his fifth Dakar Rally driver's title and second in a row, with Argentina's Kevin Benavides securing his second motorbike crown. The 52-year-old Al-Attiyah won three stages and had more than an hour's advantage in the overall standings over Frenchman Sebastien Loeb, who also finished runner-up last year.

Al-Attiyah's Toyota team-mate Lucas Moraes of Brazil finished third on his debut in the iconic test of endurance which reached its climax in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Al-Attiyah took the overall lead after the third stage, having built up a commanding advantage in the first week and deployed a safety-first strategy in the second half of the race.

"We just finished and I'm so happy. It was a difficult Dakar for everyone," said Al-Attiyah. "It's crazy to manage to defend my title. I'm very happy to win five times, and Mathieu (his co-driver Mathieu

Baumel) four... Sorry, Mathieu! "We didn't have to attack like crazy. We managed to get through the second week and win the Dakar at the end, that's what really matters."

Loeb gave it all he could as he won a record six successive stages in the second week. But the 48-year-old Frenchman had lost so much time on the first part of the race that it was a lost cause. "After the beginning of the Rally we had we could not hope for better than this," said Loeb.

"Nasser was so consistent that he was unbeatable, he produced a brilliant performance without any mistakes." Moraes-whose co-driver Timo Gottschalk was Al-Attiyah's partner in his first win in 2011 — was proud as punch to be the first Brazilian to finish in the top three. "It was important for the rally community in Brazil because it had never happened before," he said. "I'm going to celebrate with all the Brazilian photographers."

'Incredible'

The car category may not have had a lot of suspense about it but the motorbike title race more than made up for it with plenty of thrills and spills. Benavides, the 2021 champion, edged out Australian Toby Price by 43 seconds with Skyler Howes of the United States finishing third. — AFP

Celtics sting Hornets, Grizzlies nab ninth win

MIAMI: Jayson Tatum scored 33 points as the Boston Celtics overturned a double-digit deficit to extend their lead at the top of the NBA Eastern Conference on Saturday with a 122-106 road victory over the lowly Charlotte Hornets. The Celtics entered the game heavily favored to record their sixth straight victory against a Hornets team propping up the conference table with just 11 wins.

But Boston were startled by a confident first-half performance from Charlotte, who surged to a 16-point lead midway through the second quarter. Boston trimmed the gap to just four points at halftime, with Charlotte leading 66-62. Then the Celtics cut loose in a devastating burst of scoring after the break.

The Celtics outscored Charlotte 33-19 in the third quarter to turn the game on its head and maintained a comfortable cushion through the final period. Malcolm Brogdon had 30 points for Boston, while Al Horford added 16 and Marcus Smart 13.

LaMelo Ball led the Hornets' challenge with 31 points. "They were more 'up' to play us, and we came out on our heels," Tatum said. "I'm just glad that we played with more physicality, played tougher. We started hitting some shots, too." The Memphis Grizzlies bagged their ninth win in a row with a 130-112 blowout of the Indiana Pacers.

The win leaves Memphis level with Denver at the top of the Western Conference with both teams at 29-13. Desmond Bane drained five three-pointers in a 25-point haul while Ja Morant finished with 23 points and 10 assists in an emphatic win for Memphis.

Embiid lifts 76ers

The Philadelphia 76ers escaped with a 118-117 victory over the Utah Jazz in Salt Lake City, where Sixers big man Joel Embiid made the game-winning step-back jump shot off a pass from James Harden with 4.9 seconds remaining. Harden scored 31 points and handed out 11 assists and Embiid scored 30 for the Sixers, who were in control after scoring 41 points in the first quarter for a 17-point lead.



PORTLAND: Dwight Powell #7 of the Dallas Mavericks drives to the basket during the game against the Portland Trail Blazers at the Moda Center Arena in Portland, Oregon. — AFP

The Jazz had whittled that to three points going into the fourth period, finally taking the lead for the first time on Walker Kessler's tip-in of a Jordan Clarkson miss that made it 115-114 with 33 seconds left. Harden and Clarkson—who led Utah with 38 points-traded baskets that left the Jazz up 117-116 before Embiid struck, and the 76ers' strong defense denied Utah on the final possession.

In Miami, Gabe Vincent scored 27 points and snaffled five steals as the Heat took full advantage of the absence of Giannis Antetokoumpo to defeat the Milwaukee Bucks 111-95. Miami extended their winning streak to three games after dominating Milwaukee from the outset.

Vincent was one of five Heat players in double figures, with Victor Oladipo and Bam Adebayo catching the eye with 20 points each. Adebayo hauled in 13 rebounds with two assists while Jimmy Butler added 16 points in his 26min 35sec on court at the Miami-Dade Arena.

Nigeria international Vincent, who re-signed with Miami in 2021 after going undrafted in 2018, credited "perseverance" with his latest impressive showing, which followed 28 points in a win over Milwaukee on Thursday. Miami are now within striking distance of the automatic playoff places in seventh place. — AFP