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IRAQ LIFT KHALEEJI ZAIN 25

Lions of Mesopotamia beat Oman 3-2 in thrilling Gulf Cup final



BASRA: Iraqi players celebrate with the trophy on the podium after winning the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 25) final against Oman at Basra International Stadium on Jan 19, 2023. — AFP (See Page 16)

BASRA: Iraq lift the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 25) on Thursday after winning the final against Oman by three goals to two. Basra International Stadium witnessed dramatic events amid a large presence of spectators, with the game heading into extra time. Iraq won the fourth title in its history in the tournament after an absence of 35 years, after it won the title three times previously in 1979, 1984 and 1988, while Oman won two titles in 2009 and 2017.

Hours before the Gulf Cup final, one person was killed and dozens injured when a stampede broke out outside the stadium. Thousands of fans, many without tickets, had gathered outside the 65,000-seat stadium in Iraq's main southern city of Basra since dawn in the hope of watching the final. "There has been one death and dozens of slight injuries," a medic said. An interior ministry official gave the same toll. "A large number of fans, many of them without tickets, had gathered since first light to try to get in," the official said.

An AFP photographer inside the stadium said the turnstiles were still closed when the crush occurred. Sirens blared as ambulances arrived to ferry the injured to hospital. Images posted on social media showed a sea of people outside the stadium. Fans began arriving again in the afternoon as calm was restored to Basra International Stadium, said interior ministry spokesman Saad Maan. The gates were closed after fans entered the arena, many of them waving Iraqi flags ahead of the match that went ahead Thursday evening.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani had earlier chaired a meeting with key ministers and the governor of Basra to discuss "special measures for the Gulf Cup final", his office said. The Iraqi leader headed to Basra to oversee the situation on the ground, it added. The army called on fans to heed the instructions of security force personnel on access to the stadium so the championship could be "wrapped up in a civilized fashion that does honor to Iraq". — Agencies

Assembly panel to withdraw loans bill if govt hikes wages

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly financial and economic affairs committee is prepared to withdraw a controversial draft law to purchase bank loans of Kuwaiti citizens, which has strained relations with the government, if the government pledges to raise wages and improve the standard of living, head of the panel said. MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said the decision was taken at a meeting by the panel on Thursday, a move that could pave the way for renewed government-Assembly cooperation.

He said members of the committee agreed that if the government pledges in the next session on Jan 24 to "increase salaries, pensions of retired citizens and social aid for Kuwaiti divorcees and widows", the panel will withdraw the draft legislation in the same session. Muwaizri added the government should also pledge to improve the living conditions of citizens and halt rising prices. "Our hands are extended to the government. Make those pledges and we will withdraw the draft law," Muwaizri said.

The government has strongly rejected the draft legislation that requires the government to purchase billions of dinars of loans owed by over half a million Kuwaitis to local banks, write off interest and then deduct the principal of loans in easy monthly instalments. The government said the draft legislation is very expensive because the total amount of debt exceeds KD 14.6 billion. MPs insist the total value of consumer and personal loans is less than KD 2 billion and the cost of their purchase is manageable.

Deal signed to combat dust storms

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) signed an agreement with the UN Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) to finance the adaptation and resilience project for cross-border sand and dust storms coming from southern Iraq and address the dust problem affecting Kuwait and Gulf states. KISR's Director General Dr Manea Al-Sudairawi said in a statement on Thursday that the project will be implemented in two areas in the south of Iraqi territory, with an area

of 8,212 sq km, as they are major sources of dust storms.

Both regions were identified after scientific studies carried out by KISR were published in scientific journals, through which the locations and number of dust storms that reach Kuwait from 2020 until the end of 2022 were determined, Sudairawi added. The project aims to identify the causes of sand and dust storms from the climatic and geological aspects, protect and increase the skills of adaptation and resilience in storm areas and absorb their negative effects in order to reduce their occurrence, while achieving a set of sustainable development goals and produce measurement mechanisms and indicators to mitigate the effects of storms, he said.

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KUWAIT: Head of Office at UN-Habitat for Arab Gulf States Dr Ameerah Al-Hassan and KISR's Director General Dr Manea Al-Sudairawi sign an agreement on Jan 19, 2023. — KUNA

Palestinian freed after 40 years; 2 killed by Zionists

ARARA: An Arab citizen of the Zionist entity jailed for killing a Zionist soldier was released on Thursday after serving 40 years, officials said, with the Zionist entity warning it would not tolerate celebrations glorifying "terror". Maher Younis was released from Beersheba prison shortly after dawn, the Palestinian Prisoners Club said.

Younis was convicted in 1983 of the 1980 murder of Zionist soldier

Avraham Bromberg near Hadera, on his way home from the occupied Golan Heights. His death sentence was commuted to a 40-year jail term. Hundreds gathered outside Younis' family home in the northern village of Arara as the 62-year-old returned home, with a young woman in tears as she placed a garland of flowers around Younis' neck.

The celebrations took place despite warnings from Zionist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir that police would intervene if Palestinian flags or chants supporting Younis took place. Though there were no Palestinian flags visible, Younis was defiant.

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ARARA: Maher Younis is welcomed by friends and relatives following his release after 40 years in a Zionist prison on Jan 19, 2023. — AFP

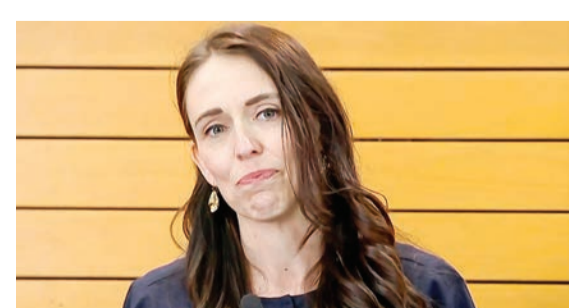
New Zealand PM Ardern announces shock resignation

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, a global figurehead of progressive politics, shocked the country Thursday by announcing she would resign from office in a matter of

weeks. The 42-year-old - who steered the country through natural disasters, the Covid pandemic, and its worst-ever terror attack - said she no longer had "enough in the tank".

"I am human. We give as much as we can for as long as we can and then it's time. And for me, it's time," she said at a meeting of members of her Labour Party. Ardern said she would step down no later than February 7, less than three years after winning a landslide election to secure her second term in office. Since that 2020 peak of

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New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern



British initiative mobilizes local ambition in climate change fight

Climate Change Champions: Supporting youth to create a greener, more sustainable world



KUWAIT: Participants attend workshops as part of the British Council's Climate Change Champions programme held in partnership with the ministry of education.

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: The British Council held a 5-day workshop as part of the Climate Change Champions, where young leaders from throughout Kuwait learned tips and tricks to create meaningful and lasting social action plans to tackle climate change

in Kuwait.

The event saw local participation from local companies and teachers and students on behalf of the education ministry on reducing the effects of carbon emissions in Kuwait through workshops that aimed to raise environmental awareness, which concluded with participants explaining their role in the initiative as well as their innovative ideas that could help Kuwait become a more environmentally friendly place.

"The broad theme of this week is around addressing climate change and developing small actions these groups can take that can grow and evolve and become sustainable over the next few years and make a real difference. We take them through a process to understand what they care about and where their energy comes from. Then, they move to working with each other. So, sharing ideas, understanding each other's needs, understanding their communities and what is it that people want and gets them attracted to get involved - they base their projects around that," said James Edelsten, consultant facilitator working for the British Council on this program.

"Over the next few weeks, they are going to be testing their ideas and learning from their experience, which they will be adopting before they present their final idea for their project at the end of March. The participants have been fantastic. We have seven project ideas. They are working across students, teachers, private sector and the community in small teams to work very effectively," he added.

"The entire world is aiming to stand against climate change and take steps to combat it. We need coordinated planning with the change that is occurring and we need to prioritize it in our strategic planning to achieve the highest level of culture locally in ways to handle climate change. It is expected that challenges could lead to disrupting work and changing the way citizens live their lives around the world," said Jenan Bahzad, member of Kuwait Environment Protection Society's administrative council as well as its program and activities manager.

"Many countries are already facing these challenges. Every season, we hear and see extreme weather events. Global climate change represents the most urgent issue in developing logical solutions. It is expected that climate change will affect infrastructure. In a previous experience in Kuwait in November 2018, rainfall exceeded the capacity of

the sewage network to absorb it," she said.

"The role of young people today will result in a great contribution in raising awareness and communicating the idea of climate change to several groups. The great and productive interaction with seven participating projects in today's exhibition is a good omen of what the youth will present after passing the trial period, as cooperation between the participants was motivated by the team of facilitators and mentors who worked in cooperation with experts, thanks to the cooperation and support of the British Council," Bahzad added.

"The event is the start of our Climate Change Champions project funded by the British Embassy. It brings together participants from different areas in Kuwait, from the education ministry, universities and civil society, so they can develop ideas on how they can raise awareness around climate change and the environment, as well as social action plans where they can put those ideas into practice," said Tony Skinner, Country Director at the British Council.

"I am absolutely delighted for what they have achieved in just five days. They have come together as individuals who did not know each other, and now they are all coalesced around ideas and projects they are clearly passionate about, and I believe they are going to be doing great things in Kuwait. We will be there to support them all the way along. I look forward to seeing how their projects develop over the coming months or years," he added.

"We are going to present a volunteer project. We are starting small and working our way up. Our main goal from our campaign is to raise environmental awareness and what we can do for this cause, because we believe if someone does not understand what or why they are doing something, they are simply not going to do it. If we do not know the consequences 20 years from now, no one is going to volunteer, so our job is to raise awareness," said Mohammed Al-Ali, a high school teacher at the education ministry.

"We are going to cooperate with the environmental authority to organize trips for students where we clean beaches, participate in making Kuwait greener, signifying a day for forestation, as well as an awareness campaign through our own mascot 'Raihan' who is an environmentally aware character and will better communicate with younger students in hope for a better future," Ali said. "Our ambition is that the future generations have complete awareness about the environment, and a bet-

ter future for the world as well. This is only the start, and I have seen great a response from people."

"Today we are presenting the projects we worked on throughout the week. We all had different groups and chose different ways to boost awareness. We all came from different places - some are teachers, some from the private sector and some from universities. So, it is a mix of the community who came together for this initiative," said Ghanima Al-Mutawaa, Marketing Manager of Seeds Company.

"Our company is a sustainable company. We are here to support the initiative. As a monitor, our part is to raise awareness about marine life with the support of the private sector. It was great to see the developments over the week. A lot of people became more aware of the climate problem, and they have also thought of great solutions to combat the problem," Mutawaa added.

Sahar Al-Fadhli, a mathematics teacher at the education ministry, said: "We are going to present a project about business in the private sector. In Kuwait, businessmen have a large impact, so we aim to encourage them to help with regards to sustaining the environment and for large businesses to help small businesses."

Mariam Jasim, a K-Tech student, said: "We started on Sunday with activities from facilitators at the British Council, who taught us about climate change and how to work in groups. We aimed at the private sector to help Kuwait become more green and more environmentally friendly. We focused on the problem of greenhouse gases, as we noticed there is not much participation from many companies, so we are here to help them through workshops on how they can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

The workshop witnessed great excitement by local participants, who are ready to join the British initiative for an eco-friendly Kuwait and a safer world. The Kuwait Climate Change Champions program is designed to develop and amplify support for climate change action and COP27 amongst young people and institutions in Kuwait while building a network of champions across the community.

The program works with young people to develop social leadership skills, skills to build and convene coalitions and to support the development of sustainable plans for social action to address the challenges of climate change. The program is supported by the British Embassy in Kuwait and launched in partnership with the ministry of education.

Restructuring of administrative responsibility-VIII

In my view

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi

Local@kuwaittimes.com

There is something called civil society in the state structure, and the civil society is varied with all types of voluntary work. I am here talking about purely voluntary work for which the volunteer does not get a salary or financial reward, as in a true civil society. As for my personal understanding of work for which money is paid, regardless of the nature of that money, these are jobs or certain duties with noble and humanitarian efforts that deserve appreciation, but they do not qualify for the work of a civil society with voluntary nature. So I do not think paid jobs are part of civil society; rather it is a job or practical duty or work for money, and not voluntary work.

It is also important to respect the human being's wish or need for a part-time job that brings an additional income in addition to their fixed income. There is no objection to that; rather I support the idea of someone improving their income in any way according to the law, be it through real estate or shares as an extra job or any other activities that brings money without any suspicion around it. I am naming things as they are and there is nothing wrong with that. But voluntary work has approaches that are different than working for money. It is not realistic to receive financial return, no matter its name - maybe paid travel - then call it voluntary work.

So it is important to call things as they are, and to have a clear official definition of voluntary work, as it is not realistic for someone who has a volunteer description and receives money for it. There is nothing wrong with that, as I said, and there is no objection over means of making a living, but we have to name things as they are. Here I believe it is important to categorize and organize jobs of the so-called civil society. For example, is it realistic to describe a person who runs for cooperative posts and receives a percentage according to the law from the returns as a volunteer?

Does a person who works in charity committees and receives a percentage from donations, under any name, or airline tickets, pocket money, rent allowance and other allowances, considered a volunteer? Can a person who works in a sports club and receives money or salary be described as a volunteer? Does a person who works in an NGO and travels at the cost of the organization, sometimes with very expensive first class tickets, be described as a volunteer?

The same goes for many others, so it is important, and to preserve the efforts of true volunteers, that there should be a clear legal definition and categorization that describes who is a volunteer, and what is the description of the person who receives money for what is supposed to be voluntary work, so things do not get mixed up.

It is also important for authorities concerned with civil society affairs not to issue approvals without thorough legal studies, and study the feasibility of the existence of establishments under the name of civil society and the means of its finances and principles, so that licenses of organizations that do not offer any benefit or there is no need for their existence or those that deviate from the required legal status are revoked.

King of Bhutan leaves Kuwait after private visit

KUWAIT: King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan and his accompanying delegation departed Kuwait following a private visit. The King of Bhutan was seen off by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Chief of the Accompanying Mission of Honor, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Abdullah Abulhassan. — KUNA



Najat Charity offers aid to 700 families, 750 orphans



Families at Jordanian refugee camps receive aid from the Warm and Peaceful campaign.



Al-Najat Charity's delegation head Ehab Al-Dabbous.

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Al-Najat Charity announced on Thursday it has provided aid to 700 families and 750 orphans in Jordanian refugee camps as part of its winter campaign named Warm and Peaceful. Al-Najat's head of delegation Ehab Al-Dabbous told KUNA that the campaign aims to assist

Syrian refugee families at Al-Dhalail, Al-Mufaraq and Al-Azraq camps, especially amid the current cold winter conditions. He stressed the importance of this aid in the present situation by providing families with blankets, clothes and food. — KUNA

Local

AI revolution elicits fears and hopes



Kuwait City imaged by artificial intelligence (AI).

KUWAIT: Artificial intelligence (AI) has been making headlines recently with different aspects of the technology used to review books and movies, make art and downright try to imitate humans. All things considered, should the human race fear AI or build hopes and dreams of a better future. Cue in the San Francisco-based artificial intelligence company OpenAI, which released the ChatGPT-3 bot in December, with millions of users already subscribing to the service.

The release of ChatGPT-3 attracted the attention of some notable figures, with billionaire Elon Musk commenting in a tweet: "ChatGPT is scary good. We are not far from dangerously strong AI." Speaking to KUNA from San Francisco, Mustafa Mousa - an AI expert - indicated that GPT in this particular chatbot stood for "generative pre-trained transformer", which enabled ChatGPT-3 to come up with complex answers to intricate questions.

ChatGPT-3 is not a new invention; chatbots existed priorly, but this new AI technology has tremendous capabilities, from simplifying very complex ideas to suggesting plans for holidays, recommending presents and so on, said Mousa. So far, ChatGPT-3 has learned 175 billion parameters of data, the most in Silicon Valley, California's high-tech region, he added. Mousa pointed out the company, which employs him, began to integrate ChatGPT-3 into its marketing and analytic coding schemes as well as other complicated tasks due to its deep learning capabilities.

Despite all the mind-blowing abilities, the chatbot has been banned from schools and universities in New York, as



A picture of a child made by AI.



Picture of a man made by AI.

it turned out that the technology was mischievously used to write essays and scientific papers, he noted. Currently, Mousa said, OpenAI is developing the fourth generation of ChatGPT, which would be far more superior than the current version.

Further elaborating on the abilities of AI to take over some human tasks, Khaled El-Bermawy, Digital Journalism Instructor at the American University in Cairo, claimed at one point AI might replace some editors and journalists at media institutes and newspapers. AI will easily handle news on the weather, currency exchange, shares and even sports games, said Bermawy, adding that graphics, data, and other information would be provided alongside.

More to the point made by Bermawy,

Forbes magazine predicted one billion jobs would be up for grabs for AI in the upcoming decade, which threatens the livelihood of 375 billion humans. Providing further forewarning, data analyst at the American University of Cairo Ahmad Esmat told KUNA ChatGPT might increase the problem of "deep-fakes", an AI technology that creates highly detailed but false images, audio and video content.

AI is not all evil and dubious; however, falling in the wrong hands, chaos might ensue, pointed out Esmat, warning that events such as the ongoing war between Russia and the Ukraine might possibly utilize AI technology to fake news stories and events. All said and done, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) took ChatGPT-3 for a spin, asking a query regarding



Picture of a group of people made by AI.

developing the competitiveness of news agencies. The answer came along generic lines of investing in technology, embracing social media, bolstering digital journalism, focusing on delivering news to portable devices, and so on.

It seems that nightmare scenarios of

machines taking over - featured in Hollywood films such as the "Terminator" and others - are far from being actualized, but bear in mind, all images of people and Kuwait tagged in this particular report are generated by a variety of AI applications. — KUNA

Kuwait supports Palestinian people, their just cause

NEW YORK: Kuwait reiterated its long-lasting support and solidarity and firm stance with the Palestinian people and their just cause of attaining their full legitimate political rights. This came in Kuwait's statement relayed by its Permanent Representative at the United Nations Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai at a Security Council session on Wednesday. The Zionist entity continues to breach international resolutions and commits blatant infringements of humanitarian laws, the UN charter, 1949 Geneva Conventions and numerous other resolutions, stated Bannai, underlining this has yet to incite a reaction from the Security Council as it had not attempted to address such infringements.

Bannai mentioned that while the world is only a few weeks into the new year, Palestinian people still experience escalation and provocation as a number of innocent people were killed and a minister of the Zionist occupation government stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound amidst heavy protection of occupation forces. Bannai renewed Kuwait's condemnation of such acts and

reaffirmed the necessity of enforcing principles of accountability.

Lately, Bannai expounded, the occupation government imposed sanctions on Palestinian people as a response to a general assembly decision calling on the International Court of Justice to provide consolatory opinion on the Zionist occupation of Palestinian lands. Bannai welcomed the response this prompted from a large number of member states and UN groups.

He said due to the Zionist entity's obstinacy, the world is farther than ever from a just solution, claiming that this is a systemic approach towards legitimizing occupation and undermining the two-state solution, and renewed call for immediate and urgent action. Bannai affirmed Kuwait's support to Palestine's bid for full UN membership, calling on states unwilling to recognize Palestine as an independent country to re-examine their stance. The Kuwaiti envoy asserted that occupation does not differ from one country to another, that the legitimate self-defense right doesn't either, nor does the application of international resolutions. — KUNA



Tariq Al-Bannai

KOC signs contract to study exploitation of renewable energy

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) signed on Thursday a consulting contract with Worley Consulting to conduct a detailed feasibility study for the exploitation of renewable energy in its fields. In a press statement, the KOC said that this step came in accordance with the roadmap

regarding the energy transition to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The electricity produced from the renewable energy stations to be established will be used to feed the company's fields and facilities by connecting them to the national electricity grid, it added.

The company also noted that the signing of the consulting contract took place during a meeting attended by the KOC's Director of Health, Safety and Environment Group Shamlan Al-Roumi and Director of the Innovation and Technology Group Hamad Al-Zaabi, in addition to representatives of the ministry of electricity, water and renewable energy. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) signed a contract with Worley Consulting. — KUNA

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Mild weather expected at the weekend

KUWAIT: Kuwait is expected to witness stable moderate weather conditions at the weekend, with mild temperatures of 18-20 degrees Celsius expected by day and cooler 8-11 degrees Celsius at night amid predominantly northwestern winds, according to a meteorologist.

Thursday's high temperatures were 17-19 degrees Celsius with light to moderate northwesterly wind at a speed of 12-38 km/h by day, while sea conditions were moderate with waves reaching 2-5 ft, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi told KUNA. By night, conditions were cold with low temperatures dropping to 8-10 degrees Celsius with light northwesterly to variable wind at speed of 8-30 km/h, with sea conditions moderate with waves reaching 1-4 ft, he said, predicting foggy conditions in some areas.

Friday's high temperatures will be 18-20 degrees Celsius with light to moderate northwesterly to variable winds at a speed of 8-28 km/h by day amid mild sea conditions with waves reaching 1-3 ft, Qarawi said. By night, conditions are expected to be cooler with low temperatures dropping to 7-10 degrees Celsius with light variable wind at a speed of 6-22 km/h. Sea conditions will be mild with waves reaching 1-2 ft and foggy conditions are expected in some areas, the meteorologist said.

Saturday's high temperatures will be 18-20 degrees Celsius with light variable wind at a speed of 6-22 km/h and scattered clouds by day, while sea conditions will be mild with waves reaching 1-2 ft. By night, conditions are expected to be cooler with low temperatures of 8-11 degrees Celsius with light variable wind at a speed of 6-22 km/h. Sea conditions will be mild with waves reaching 1-2 ft, he said, expecting foggy conditions in some areas. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Electricity pylons are seen against wisps of clouds. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Expert warns youth against searching for spouses online

Sociologist: Marriages through social network sites end in failure

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Traditionally, matchmaking was done through personal connections, with families relying on friends or relatives to introduce them to suitable partners for their children. However, recently, women and men are using TikTok as a platform to get married. The matchmaker (the host) goes live and women will ask for a list of characteristics they wish to see in their future husbands, then the host will match the women with "male followers".

Jamil Al-Marri, Sociologist and Family Consultant, told Kuwait Times that today's generation resorts to social media platforms because of their efficiency and quick "solutions". "The reason for the spread of this phenomenon of marriage proposals on social media is a large number of platforms that are easy to use, as it does not require effort or a specific place and time," he said.

Marri indicated a marriage that takes place through social networking platforms is a failed mar-

riage, affirming that a marriage is a covenant and strong bond that must be appropriate and meet correct means and conditions. "The main success of a marriage is making the right choice, and this cannot be accomplished from behind a screen. Everyone can hide their bad traits and they will not appear until after marriage," he said, adding most experts have emphasized the failure of these types of marriages.

Marri pointed out that ease of the matter is what prompted young men and women to resort to these sites, where social media platforms are like fast food - easy and uncomplicated. "The current generation always resorts to quick methods, rejecting complicated ways. Social sites allow them quick access to their goals with a feature of entertainment," he said.

The sociologist explained that most young people of the current generation, despite their knowledge and culture of the latest brands, fashion and cars, do not have the culture of how to raise a family. "They have knowledge of material aspects but not of how to form a healthy family. The reason for this lack of culture is a joint process by the family and society. Despite the abundance of information available on the Internet, there is no concept of the right choice in marriage. The right way to choose your partner is the first and most important basis for marriage. Our

youth is spoiled with luxuries and do not know the responsibility of marriage," Marri rued.

Marri noted that teaching the responsibility and the values of marriage is the parents' responsibility, in addition to not spoiling their children with servants, because a luxurious life makes children choose materialism over personality and morals, that are the future of a successful and long-lasting marriage.

According to the latest official statistics by the Public Authority for Civil Information, the figures indicate that number of unmarried females in Kuwait aged over 15 years is 415,107, of whom 162,233 are Kuwaitis. Unmarried females over the age of 30 who have never been married before number 172,880, of whom 30,624 are Kuwaitis. Women in the age group of 20 to 29 years who have never been married reached 140,815, of whom 65,614 are Kuwaitis.



Jamil Al-Marri



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DWC attends event marking air strikes to liberate Kuwait

KUWAIT: At the invitation of the volunteer women's development in Shamiya, the Diplomatic Women's Committee (DWC) attended a celebration at Shamiya Reserve to mark the anniversary of the start of air strikes to liberate Kuwait from the brutal aggression of Iraq. To maintain this glorious memory among the people of Kuwait, the women of Shamiya, despite the rain and cold, held a celebration to educate the attendees about the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and how the liberation took place.

The committee's advisor also briefed about the history and heritage of Shamiya area.

Adiba Al-Fahd, the most prominent member of the development team, spoke about how the Shamiya Reserve was established and the activities that young people and children practice while visiting the reserve. The ambassadors' wives were introduced to the agricultural system in the reserve and the plants that are grown under the supervision of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources.

At the end of the tour, a Kuwaiti breakfast was prepared by Muzna Al-Mutairi, while team members presented lemongrass produced by the reserve. Walid Al-Ansari, head of the volunteer teams, presented a memorial shield to the committee for their participation in the celebration of this day by spending a beautiful day in the rain.



German parliament recognizes Yazidi 'genocide' in Iraq

Tens of millions head home for China holidays as Xi flags COVID worry

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DAVOS, Switzerland: German climate activist of the "Fridays for Future" movement Luisa Neubauer (left), Ecuadorian environmental and human rights activist Helena Gualinga (second left), Ugandan climate justice activist Vanessa Nakate (second right) and Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg (right) pose with a letter to CEOs of fossil fuel companies during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos. —AFP

Thunberg: Davos elite 'fuelling destruction of planet'

'Climate change needs to get more attention, unfortunately, it is sliding down'

SWITZERLAND: Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg slammed business and political leaders attending the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday, saying it was "absurd" to listen to them while they fuelled "the destruction of the planet". Two days after police briefly detained her at a protest against a coal mine in Germany, Thunberg and other young campaigners took part in a debate on the sidelines of the summit of global investors, CEOs and political leaders in the Swiss Alps.

"We are right now in Davos where (there are) basically the people who are mostly fuelling the destruction of the planet," the 20-year-old said, explaining that the world should not rely on them "for solving our problems". She added that it was "absurd ... we seem to be listening to them rather than the people who are actually affected by the climate crisis".

"Without massive public pressure from the outside, these people are going to go as far as they possibly can... They will continue to throw people under the bus for their own gain," she said. The Swede spoke on the sidelines of the WEF with fellow activists Helena Gualinga of Ecuador, Vanessa Nakate of Uganda and Luisa Neubauer of Germany at a CNBC panel that included International Energy Agency head Fatih Birol.

The Swede made a splash when she attended the forum as a teenager in January 2020, warning that "our house is still on fire" and complaining that her demands had been "completely ignored". Then-US president Donald Trump used his speech at the same forum to bash "the perennial prophets of doom" as

Thunberg looked on stony-faced from the audience.

This week, she and Gualinga, Nakate and Neubauer launched an online petition demanding that energy firms stop any new oil, gas or coal extraction projects—or face possible legal action. More than 900,000 people had signed the petition by Thursday. "We are taking a very dangerous path. We are already seeing how people are suffering on the ground," Gualinga said. "It's completely insane that we are allowing this and we have people here in Davos that are enabling that, through government, through investing in fossil fuel and at some point there needs to be a stop. This is criminal behavior," she said.

Big Oil's 'big lie'

Birol, as head of a multilateral energy agency that advises mostly Western governments, said that his presence alongside activists was "a very important signal that I want to give the world". "We have to see that the climate change needs to get more attention. Unfortunately, the attention to climate change is sliding down," he said. The energy sector had to be transformed or "we have no chance whatsoever to reach our climate targets".

The IEA said in a report in October that the energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine was causing changes that could hasten the transition to a "more sustainable and secure energy system". Thunberg was among a

group of people hauled away by police on Tuesday during a protest near the German village of Luetzerath, which is being razed to make way for a coal mine expansion. They were not formally arrested.

Her actions were praised in Davos by former US vice president Al Gore, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work on climate change. "I agree with her efforts to stop that coal mine," Gore told a panel discussion on global warming, adding that young people around the world despaired of efforts by leaders to tackle the climate crisis. "We are not winning" the fight against global warming, he said.

Climate change is a major topic at the World Economic Forum, where businesses and governments have come under pressure to do more to ensure that the world meets the increasingly elusive goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. In a speech on Wednesday, United Nations chief Antonio Guterres drew a parallel between the actions of oil companies and those of tobacco firms, which were eventually hit by costly lawsuits over the harmful effects of cigarettes.

Guterres pointed to a study published in the journal Science last week that said ExxonMobil had dismissed the findings of its own scientists, who had accurately predicted global warming due to fossil fuels as far back as the late 1970s. "Someone in Big Oil peddled the big lie," he said. "And like the tobacco industry, those responsible must be held to account." —AFP

intelligence began investigating Peyman Kia. The pair have been held in custody since their arrest. Both denied the charges.

Peyman Kia was handed a life sentence for carrying out espionage "of the most serious category", judge Mans Wigen said, adding that he had abused the trust placed in him as an intelligence official to aid Russia, which poses "the biggest threat to Sweden". Despite a trove of evidence including USB sticks, laptops, hard discs and mobile phones, the court acknowledged that there was much it had not been able to ascertain. "After studying the evidence, it is clear that some pieces of the puzzle are missing and it has therefore not been possible to establish with certainty what has happened", it wrote in a statement.

Possible money motive

The court speculated that the brothers may have been motivated by money. Among other things, it found that Peyman Kia handled cash worth around 550,000 kronor (almost \$50,000) in 2016-2017, more than 80 percent of it in US dollars, which it said was likely payment from Russia for the classified documents. Much of the investigation and court hearing, and Thursday's full court ruling, was considered classified information and therefore not made available to the public.

The trial coincides with another spectacular spying

Arden showing a rare lapse of poise when she was unwittingly caught on microphone calling an opposition politician an "arrogant prick".

"This has been the most fulfilling five and a half years of my life. But it has also had its challenges," Arden, 42, said on Thursday. "I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple." She had been in office barely 18 months when a white supremacist gunman opened fire in two Christchurch mosques during Friday prayers, killing 51 Muslim worshippers and wounding another 40.

Her deft and compassionate response to the rampage of hate defined the charismatic centre-left leader's image around the world. When she donned a headscarf and comforted victims' families after the shooting, it resonated globally. She would later describe it as a spontaneous gesture of respect to the Muslim community.

Arden also won plaudits for decisive policy action, including swiftly enacted gun law reforms and a push to force social media giants to address online hate speech. The New Zealand public emphatically backed her performance, giving her a second three-year term in

London takes aim at public peeing with splash-back paint

LONDON: A central London district famous for its nightlife, but also home to thousands of residents, is trying out a novel way to tackle the persistent problem of public urination: so-called anti-pee paint. Officials in Soho—a warren of bars, restaurants, theatres and other entertainment venues as well as apartments and houses—are treating walls at nearly a dozen problem sites with the special spray-on liquid. The industrial strength "surface protection" creates a transparent water-repellent layer that splashes back urine when it hits, providing instant payback for offenders.

"It is very effective—the proof is in the pudding," local councillor Aicha Less told AFP, demonstrating the innovative invisible paint's splash-back ability with a bottle of water. Westminster City Council has launched the initiative following complaints from some of Soho's approximately 3,000 residents, as well as from workers and business operators. "Obviously pee isn't very pleasant and our residents are very upset," said Less, as a contractor finished spraying a brick wall on a quiet residential street.

"They step out their front door in the morning and you just get the stench of urine," she added. Locals are "entitled to live in a clean, safe environment". The council, which learned about the anti-pee paint after it was previously used by another local authority and in Germany, is aiming to treat walls at 10 Soho hotspots. Contractors erect signs at targeted sites saying they have been sprayed and the message: "This wall is not a urinal." Westminster spends nearly £1 million (\$1.24 million) annually on street cleaning, which includes hosing down peed-on sidewalks. It hopes this new strategy will lower that bill. "We'll see what impact it makes in, say, six months' time and if there is less of a stench in the air," said Less.

Although public urination can be a scourge in urban areas with busy nightlife worldwide, locals believe Soho is especially prone to the problem. The 0.25-square-mile (0.6-square kilometer) district in the heart of the UK capital boasts more than 400 premises licensed to sell alcohol, around a quarter of them late into the night, according to local resident Tim Lord. But that is accompanied by a dwindling number of permanent public toilets, said Lord, who chairs the Soho Society community group.

The area's two remaining underground toilets closed during the pandemic and are yet to reopen: there are rumors one is set to be sold and turned into a bar or other commercial venture. "So throughout the night, you could have thousands of people who've been drinking and certainly in the summer with the closed toilets, Soho smelled," said Lord. "If the pee paint works it will reduce the problem of smelly streets in the summer, in particular, so that's to be welcomed. We hope it works." Westminster City Council is also looking at handing out more fines for public urination, a criminal offence that could cost offenders £50 (\$62) or £80.

It has also rolled out temporary urinal stands in various Soho locations from Thursday to Sunday, when the area is busiest. But Lord argues the declining number of permanent public toilets in Soho is "very odd" given its nightlife, part of "a uniquely English problem" in need of reversing. "You don't have to travel very far in Europe or North America and you'll find perfectly clean, well-run public toilets," he said. "Soho is a really important historical part of London that was laid out in the 1650s and it goes back a long way, it's a conservation area. "We just wish our local council took care of it—it's a great place to live and a place that should be clean." —AFP

Swedish intelligence agent gets life for spying for Russia

STOCKHOLM: A former Swedish intelligence official was handed a life sentence on Thursday for spying for Russia's military intelligence service between 2011 and 2021, and his brother jailed for 10 years. Stockholm's district court found 42-year-old Peyman Kia, who served in Sweden's intelligence service Sapo and in military intelligence units, and his brother Payam, 35, guilty of "aggravated espionage".

The brothers, Swedish citizens of Iranian origin, had "together and in concertation, illegally and for the benefit of Russia and the GRU, acquired, transmitted and disclosed information whose disclosure to a foreign power could harm Sweden's security". The court found Peyman Kia guilty of gathering some 90 classified documents through his jobs. His brother was found guilty of planning the crime and managing contacts with the GRU, passing on about 45 of the classified documents.

They were arrested in 2021, several years after Sapo first suspected a mole in its organization and counter-

Jacinda Ardern leaves a legacy forged from crisis

WELLINGTON: Jacinda Ardern promised "relentless positivity" as New Zealand's prime minister, but in announcing her shock resignation on Thursday admitted the unrelenting demands of the job had finally worn her down. A fresh-faced Ardern was elected prime minister in 2017, and in a tumultuous first term faced New Zealand's worst terror attack, a deadly volcanic eruption, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Just 37 years old at the time, she became the country's youngest prime minister since 1856 and a global icon for progressive politics.

Ardern won a landslide second term in 2020, but her popularity has been on the slide as she battles declining trust in government, a deteriorating economic situation, and a resurgent conservative opposition. The stress has been evident in recent months —



STOCKHOLM: Judge Mans Wigen holds a press conference following the verdict in the case of two Swedish brothers charged with spying for Russia at the District Court in Stockholm, Sweden. —AFP

case believed to have benefited Russia involving a couple of Russian origin arrested last year at their home in a Stockholm suburb in a police helicopter raid at dawn. Moscow allegedly installed the couple, named by the Bellingcat investigative website as Sergei Skvortsov and Elena Koukova, as sleeper agents in the late 1990s. —AFP



AUCKLAND: In this file photo New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and partner Clarke Gayford pose with their baby daughter Neve Te Aroha Ardern Gayford outside the hospital in Auckland. —AFP

October 2020. Ardern's campaign pitch focused heavily on her government's success in containing the coronavirus. Life within New Zealand has largely returned to normal after a series of strict lockdowns. —AFP

International

German parliament recognizes Yazidi 'genocide' in Iraq

IS fighters had the intention of completely wiping out Yazidi community

BERLIN: Germany's lower house of parliament recognized on Thursday the 2014 massacre of Yazidis by Islamic State group jihadists in Iraq as a "genocide", and called for measures to assist the besieged minority. In a move hailed by Yazidi community representatives, deputies in the Bundestag passed the motion by the three parliamentary groups in Germany's ruling centre-left-led coalition and conservative MPs.

The chamber "recognizes the crimes against the Yazidi community as genocide, following the legal evaluations of investigators from the United Nations," the resolution said, after similar moves by countries including Australia, Belgium and the Netherlands. The text condemns "indescribable atrocities" and "tyrannical injustice" carried out by IS fighters "with the intention of completely wiping out the Yazidi community".

The motion urges the German judicial system to pursue further criminal cases against suspects in Germany and the government to increase financial support to collect evidence of crimes in Iraq and boost funding to help rebuild shattered Yazidi communities.

It also calls for Germany to establish a documentation centre for crimes against Yazidis to ensure a historical record and to press Baghdad to protect the minority group's rights. Islamic State jihadists in August 2014 massacred over 1,200 Yazidis, members of a Kurdish-speaking community in northwest Iraq that follows an ancient religion rooted in Zoroastrianism. IS sees them as "devil worshippers".

The Yazidi minority has been particularly persecuted by the jihadist group, which has also forced its women and girls into sexual slavery and enlisted boys as child soldiers. A special UN investigation team said

in May 2021 that it had collected "clear and convincing evidence" that IS had committed genocide against the Yazidis.

'Prevent future genocides'

Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock recalled speaking to Yazidi women in Iraq who had been raped and held captive by IS fighters and said the motion was being passed for them and "in the name of humanity". "We must call out these crimes by their name," she told the chamber. "We must ask what we can do to prevent future genocides."

Around two dozen Yazidi community representatives attended the debate at the glass-domed Reichstag parliament building in central Berlin. Mirza Dinnayi, head of Air Bridge Iraq, an NGO assisting victims of the massacre who live in Germany, told AFP the measure was "pioneering" for addressing "the consequences of the genocide".

He welcomed the inclusion of "practical steps the German government can take to support the Yazidi community in Iraq as well as the diaspora". Another Yazidi aid group, HAWAR.help, called the motion "more than a symbolic act".

"The survivors want nothing more than justice, for the world to see their suffering and for the perpetrators to be punished," it said. Derya Turk-Nachbaur, a deputy from the Social Democrats and one of the sponsors of the measure, noted there was "no statute of limitations on genocide". "It was impossible for us to close our eyes any longer to their suffering," she said of the Yazidis. "The indescribable atrocities of IS militias must not go unpunished-not in Iraq and not in Germany."



BERLIN: Atou Salo, a Yazidi refugee from Iraq who has been living in Germany for three years, walks past the Reichstag building that houses the Bundestag (lower house of parliament) in Berlin. —AFP

Green lawmaker Max Lucks said Germany was home to what is believed to be the world's largest Yazidi diaspora of about 150,000 people, meaning the

country had a particular responsibility to the community. "Their pain will never go away," he told the Bundestag. —AFP

Kyiv ups pressure on West for weapons

KYIV: Ukraine on Thursday intensified pressure on Western allies to provide heavier weapons and Leopard tanks to step up the fight against Russia ahead of a major donor meeting. The Kremlin swiftly warned against an "extremely dangerous" escalation if the West-long fearful of getting into a full-blown war with nuclear-armed Russia—sent longer range weapons to Kyiv. Addressing the annual World Economic Forum gathering in Davos, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky singled out Germany for its hesitance to supply its modern Leopard tanks—unless the United States also gives tanks. "There are times where we shouldn't hesitate," Zelensky said via video-link.

"When someone says 'I will give tanks if someone else will also share tanks'... I don't think this is the right strategy to go with," Zelensky's foreign and defense ministers subsequently echoed his plea, urging allies to "considerably" boost arms deliveries and calling on countries that have Leopard tanks, including Germany and Turkey, to send them. "We appeal to all partner states... to considerably reinforce their practical contribution," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said in a joint statement. Western partners fear that Ukraine could use long-range weapons to hit deep inside Russian territory or Crimea — a peninsula Moscow annexed in 2014 — despite Kyiv promising it would not do so.

'Whole new level'

In Moscow, the Kremlin warned of escalating the conflict to a "whole new level" if the West answers Ukraine's latest calls. "Potentially, this is extremely dangerous," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "It will mean bringing the conflict to a whole



KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (right) awards the President of the European Council Charles Michel with the Order of Merit title during the press conference following their talks in Kyiv Thursday. —AFP

new level, which, of course, will not bode well from the point of view of global and pan-European security," he added. The New York Times reported on Wednesday that the Biden administration is considering the potential of Ukraine using American-supplied weapons against Russian targets in Crimea.

On Friday, the United States is to convene a meeting of around 50 countries—including all 30 members of NATO—at the US military base of Ramstein in Germany to discuss military aid to Ukraine. "The main message there will be more support and more advanced support, heavier weapons, and more modern weapons, because this is a fight for our values," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said in Davos on Wednesday. Many Ukrainian allies have recently announced plans to step up their military support to Kyiv. Last weekend Britain became the first Western nation to pledge heavy tanks. —AFP

Iran impasse spells agony for families of 'hostages'

PARIS: The scaling back of contacts between Iran and the West over the crackdown on the protest movement has intensified the anxiety and uncertainty of the families whose loved ones are held by the Islamic republic. Iran is accused by campaigners of holding over two dozen foreign nationals, some for years on end, in a deliberate strategy of "hostage diplomacy" aimed at extracting concessions from the West.

In the past, many foreign passport holders finally won their release from Iranian jails following secret backroom negotiations that controversially often saw Iranians released abroad or assets unfrozen in exchange. But now with negotiations on reviving the 2015 deal on the Iranian nuclear program stalled and Iranian ambassadors regularly summoned in Europe over the protest crackdown, there is little room for such deal-making. The families back home, many of them of Iranian origin, are torn between admiration for the "Woman, life, freedom" protests and agonized uncertainty over the fate of their relatives.

One of those held is German-Iranian citizen Nahid Taghavi, 68, who was arrested in October 2020 and sentenced in 2021 to 10 years in prison on national security charges dismissed by her family. In poor health, she was granted four months out of prison last year, but ordered back to Tehran's Evin jail in November. "As an Iranian living abroad, I completely support the protests. But on a personal level I now have no idea what is going to happen in the next months and years in Nahid's case," her daughter Mariam Claren, who has led the campaign for



FRANCE: An undated photograph made available by the family of Bernard Phelan on January 18, 2023, shows French-Irish citizen Bernard Phelan in an undisclosed location. —AFP

her release, told AFP.

"The relationship between Iran and Germany is deteriorating. There has been no movement in the cases of my mother or other dual nationals." "But I do not want to limit it to our personal destiny. Something bigger is happening with the protests." Those held in similar circumstances include American, French, British, German, Austrian and Swedish citizens with the numbers in custody growing. US citizen Siamak Namazi, who is of Iranian descent and was arrested in October 2015, this week started a seven-day hunger strike in a bid for President Joe Biden to put greater priority on his case. "Nothing I say could possibly convey the agony of having to harden myself to this soul-crushing callousness and lawlessness," Namazi said in a statement released by his American lawyers. "How does one describe what it feels like to be stripped of your humanity and treated as some kind of extortionately priced item instead?" —AFP

Deal signed to combat...

Continued from Page 1

Annual losses resulting from sand and dust storms were estimated at KD 190 million, while the project, which will be implemented through the UN program at a value of KD 4 million, will target specific areas located 250 km north of the Kuwaiti border, Dr Sudairawi mentioned. He referred to the direct impact of those areas, which amounts to 40 percent of the total storms that Kuwait, southern Iraq and the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and parts of UAE are exposed to.

Dust storms caused the closure of ports and roads, causing huge economic losses, in addition to health and environmental damage, as cross-border sandstorms that lead to the accumulation of dust increased from 60 tons per square kilometer in 2006 to over 500 tons per square kilometer in 2022, he indicated. The project will work to stabilize the soil in the regions of northern Iraq and thus reduce cross-border dust, Sudairawi said, noting that building barriers inside the country without addressing the main source will not suffice, espe-

cially since the path of dust starts from those areas, passing through Kuwait to Qatar and UAE.

Groundbreaking infrastructure will be designed to rehabilitate areas affected by sand and dust storms and mitigate their harmful effects through several methods, he said. The project will be carried out through the use of heavy machinery such as excavators and soil dumpers to place a heavy clay layer, as the consistency of the clay layer when it rains gives an opportunity for natural plant growth and the cultivation of drought-resistant fungal trees in windbreaks to help stabilize the soil and increase plant density, Dr Sudairawi added.

Head of Office at UN-Habitat for Arab Gulf States Dr Ameera Al-Hassan said this agreement was a result of the deal signed with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), which aims to treat dust from its sources. Dr Hassan underlined the significance of the agreement, which addresses the problem from its sources in a sound scientific manner that will result in improving the public health of the population and dusty areas, as well as improving the economies of the affected countries. KFAED signed on Oct 27 with UN-Habitat a grant agreement worth KD 4 million (\$13.2 million) to finance the project for cross-border sand and dust storms between Iraq and Kuwait to reduce the chances of these storms. —KUNA

Muslim worshippers were killed and another 40 wounded. Later that year she was praised for her decisive leadership during the fatal White Island (also known as Whakaari) volcano eruption.

On Thursday she cited her government's actions on housing affordability, climate change and child poverty as further sources of pride. "And we've done that while responding to some of the biggest threats to the health and economic wellbeing of our nation arguably since World War II," Ardern said. Featured on the covers of British Vogue and Time magazine, there was a perception that Ardern was more popular abroad than she was at home.

At her peak she was a domestic force, but her government has been steadily sliding in the polls over the last year. "It's about time. She's wrecked the economy and food prices have skyrocketed," said Esther Hedges from Cambridge on New Zealand's north island. "I'm not

Palestinian freed after 40 years...

Continued from Page 1

"The authorities are trying to spoil the celebration," Younis told reporters. "The Palestinian flag is in our hearts and the homeland is in our minds. It is just an issue of appearances."

Younis is a member of the Zionist entity's Arab minority, many of whom identify as Palestinians. "After 40 years of captivity, his health is good and his nerves are solid," his brother Nader Younis said. His release comes two weeks after his cousin Karim Younis was freed after serving the same prison time for the same offense. When Karim was released, he said he was "proud" of his actions, and was welcomed by hundreds of celebrating supporters waving Palestinian flags.

The scenes sparked a backlash in the Zionist entity, and several high-ranking Palestinian officials from Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party had their Zionist entry permits revoked after attending the celebrations, sparking a diplomatic crisis. Ben-Gvir's office said the minister had "instructed police to act firmly and with determination against the phenomena of

terror and support for terror we saw the other week" during Karim's homecoming.

Meanwhile, Zionist troops killed two Palestinians Thursday in the flashpoint West Bank city of Jenin, the Palestinian health ministry said. The ministry said Jawad Farid Bawaqna was killed by a bullet to the chest, while Adham Mohammed Bassem Jabareen, 28, was hit in the upper abdomen by Zionist fire.

The Islamic Jihad militant group said Jabareen was a member. Bawaqna was a sports teacher and youth leader in Jenin refugee camp, the province's deputy governor said. There were conflicting reports on Bawaqna's age, with the health ministry saying he was 57, and the Palestinian official news agency Wafa reporting he was 58.

Farid Bawaqna, Jawad's son, said his father was shot dead while trying to move Jabareen's body. "My father called me from the top of the house, and told me to 'get down, there is a young man who was martyred at the door of the house, come so we can drag him,'" he told AFP. "We went down together, and pulled him... We dragged him about four to five meters and a bullet entered my father's body."

The deaths raise the number of Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank this month to 17, according to an AFP tally. The majority were killed by Zionist forces. —AFP

happy with her and I don't know anyone who is," the 65-year-old added. Christina Sayer, 38, said Ardern was "the best prime minister we have had". "I like the type of person she is and she cares about people. I'm sorry to see her go."

The stress of the job has been evident, with Ardern showing a rare lapse of poise last month when she was unwittingly caught cursing an opposition politician. New Zealand actor and Hollywood veteran Sam Neill said Ardern was frequently targeted by social media "bullies". "She deserved so much better," he said in an online statement.

New Zealand will choose its next prime minister in a general election held on Oct 14, Ardern announced. She said she would continue to serve as an MP until then. Her departure leaves a void at the top of the Labour party, with her deputy Grant Robertson swiftly ruling out a tilt at the leadership. Although recent polls indicate a cen-

ter-right coalition will likely win the election, Ardern said that was not the reason for her resignation. "I am not leaving because I believe we cannot win the next election, but because I believe we can and will," she said. "I am leaving because with such a privileged job comes a big responsibility. The responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead - and also when you're not."

Ardern was the second prime minister in the world to give birth while in office, after Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto in 1990. She said she was looking forward to spending more time with her daughter Neve, who is due to start school later this year, and finally getting married to her partner, TV personality Clarke Gayford. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese led international tributes to Ardern, saying she had "shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength". "She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities," Albanese said. —AFP

New Zealand PM Ardern announces...

Continued from Page 1

"Jacindamania", Ardern's government has struggled - its popularity hampered by soaring inflation, a looming recession and a resurgent conservative opposition.

"I believe that leading a country is the most privileged job anyone could ever have, but also one of the more challenging," Ardern said. "You cannot and should not do it unless you have a full tank, plus a bit in reserve for those unexpected challenges." Ardern won international acclaim for her empathetic handling of the 2019 Christchurch mosque massacre, in which 51

International

Tens of millions head home for China holidays as Xi flags COVID worry

Authorities predict more than 2 billion trips will be made

SHANGHAI: Tens of millions in China headed to their rural hometowns for Lunar New Year celebrations Thursday, though President Xi Jinping said he was "concerned" about the countryside's ability to weather a COVID surge. China's transport authorities have predicted that more than two billion trips will be made this month into February in one of the world's largest mass movements of people.

But the exodus from big cities hit hard by COVID is widely expected to cause a spike in cases in under-resourced rural areas. Officials have said that as of Wednesday, 480 million people have travelled across the country since January 7, a huge increase compared with the same period last year.

There were huge crowds on Thursday at central train stations in Beijing and Shanghai, where many travelers told AFP they were elated to be heading home—some for the first time in years. "I don't care anymore, that's how I feel," a Shanghai-based worker called Chen, heading home to the southeastern city of Wenzhou, told AFP.

"Last year I was so careful, and this year I feel much braver," she said. "I haven't been home for three years," said Ren, an agent representing social media influencers. "Because of COVID, my salary hasn't been that high, and sometimes I don't even get to go to work," he explained. "I wanted to be with my family. It doesn't matter if I have money or not, I want to go see them," Ren added.

"Something that I'll definitely do when I go home is give my mum and dad a hug." Others appeared more concerned about the coronavirus, with two young women in their 20s wearing hazmat suits. "We're a bit worried the virus will be more transmissible during the Chinese New Year travel rush," one said. "Since we're



SHENZHEN: This photo shows passengers arriving at Shenzhen North railway station during peak travel ahead of the Lunar New Year of the Rabbit, in China's southern Guangdong province.—AFP

going home, we're worried it'll affect our families, that's why we bought (hazmat suits)."

'Gloomy emotions'

China's leader has expressed similar concern about the impact of the outbreak on rural areas during the holidays. "Xi said he was primarily concerned about rural areas and rural residents after the country adjusted its COVID-19 response measures," state news

agency Xinhua reported Wednesday—a reference to the relaxing of China's strict virus curbs last month. He "stressed efforts to improve medical care for those most vulnerable to the virus in rural areas", Xinhua said.

"Epidemic prevention and control has entered a new stage, and we are still in a period that requires great efforts," Xi was reported as saying, stressing the need to "address the shortcomings in epidemic prevention and control in rural areas". After a grueling month in

which cases surged nationwide, the government said it would step up efforts to quell "gloomy emotions" online about the outbreak.

China's internet watchdog launched a campaign Wednesday to sponge out "fabricated patient experiences" online and "increase the rectification of epidemic-related online rumors". The goal of the campaign, the Cyberspace Administration of China said, was to weed out items that "mislead the public and cause social panic".

Lunar New Year peak

Airfinity, an independent forecasting firm, has estimated daily COVID deaths in China will peak at around 36,000 deaths per day over the Lunar New Year holiday. Before they were relaxed, China's hardline zero-COVID policies including long lockdowns hammered its economy and sent hundreds onto the streets in protest. Xi defended that strategy on Wednesday, insisting zero-COVID had been "the right choice" and had allowed the country to fight several outbreaks.

China on Saturday reported almost 60,000 COVID-related deaths in just over a month, the first major toll released by authorities since the restrictions were eased. But with mandatory testing scrapped last month, official statistics are no longer believed to accurately reflect the scale of the outbreak.

Airfinity also estimated that more than 600,000 people have died from the disease since China abandoned the zero-COVID policy. The Britain-based research firm has said its model is based on data from China's regional provinces before changes to reporting infections were implemented, combined with case growth rates from other former zero-COVID countries when they lifted restrictions.—AFP

Bangladesh bans top publisher from book fair

DHAKA: A leading Bangladeshi publisher known for its works by dissident writers said Thursday it had been banned from the country's leading book fair, in the latest government clampdown on its critics. The Ekushey Book Fair is organized by the Bangla Academy, the government's state-run literacy agency, and is a major event on the local cultural calendar.

Leading Bengali writers gather in the capital Dhaka each February to discuss their work, and millions of dollars' worth of books are sold at the month-long festival. Publishing house Adarsha had planned to exhibit, but chief executive Mahabubur Rahman said its titles critical of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government had fallen foul of censors. "The academy has blocked us from opening our stall in the fair and they did not even bother to inform us directly," Rahman told reporters at a press conference in Dhaka.

"When I contacted them in person, the organizers responded that three of the books we published contained criticism of the government, ruling party and its student wing." Organizers did not officially clarify the reason behind the ban, but a Bangla Academy official said some of Adarsha's books were "against the policy" of the academy. "Objections regarding some of their books were raised and we found that they conflict with our policy," book fair committee member A.K.M. Muzahidul Islam told The Daily Star newspaper.

"There are various statements against the government," he added. The ban prompted dismay on social media, with leading authors and Bangladeshi academics lending their support to the publishing house. "Banning a leading publisher that tries to accommodate dissenting voices without officially citing any reasons is clearly an authoritarian move," lawyer and rights activist Jyotirmoy Barua told AFP.

Western governments and the United Nations have expressed concern over the political climate in Bangladesh, where Hasina's party dominates the legislature and runs it virtually as a rubber stamp. Rights groups say her government has imposed severe restrictions on freedom of expression, including muzzling local media outlets. Washington leveled sanctions against top Bangladeshi security officers in 2021 over their roles in the extrajudicial killing of the ruling party's political opponents.—AFP

Turkey asks US for F-16 jets amid NATO, Congress rows

WASHINGTON: Turkey on Wednesday appealed to the United States to expedite F-16 jets, a sale some US officials hope could coax Ankara to lift objections to NATO expansion but is bitterly opposed by a key senator. Meeting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said he intended to discuss his country's request for modernized versions of the mainstay F-16 fighter jets. "As we said together before, this is not only for Turkey but also important for NATO and for the United States as well," Cavusoglu said.

"So we expect the approval in line with our joint strategic interests." The United States is finalizing a \$20 billion package for Turkey that is expected to include around 40 new F-16 fighter jets. The sale would be simultaneous with a deal for top-of-the-line F-35 jets for Greece, Turkey's historic rival with which tensions have risen sharply over disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. The United States has been looking for ways to persuade Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to lift objections to allowing Sweden and Finland into NATO.

The two Nordic nations shed their earlier hesitation

at formally entering the Western alliance following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But all NATO members must agree, and Erdogan has pushed Sweden and Finland to crack down on Kurdish militants who have moved to the two countries.

President Joe Biden has indicated support for selling F-16s to Turkey. Blinken in his meeting called Turkey a close ally and praised its role in negotiating with Ukraine and Russia to allow grain shipments from the key global breadbasket. But Senator Bob Menendez, a member of Biden's Democratic Party who heads the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has vowed to block any sale.

In a speech late last month, Menendez said that Erdogan's remarks threatening missiles on Athens were "totally unacceptable" and condemned a ban from politics of Istanbul's popular mayor, earlier seen as a top threat to Erdogan in May elections. "He might be doing it out of spite. Or he might be doing it because he is a thug," Menendez said of Erdogan. "But one thing is clear—the United States must take the Turkish president's actions seriously," he said, vowing to hold up the F-16s until Erdogan "halts his campaign of aggression across the entire region."

In a joint statement, Blinken and Cavusoglu said they "agreed on the importance of preserving stability and channels for communication" in the Eastern Mediterranean. State Department spokesman Ned Price, asked about Menendez's stance, acknowledged opposition from lawmakers when the administration shared its support for F-16 sales.



BATTAMBANG: Ukraine deminers pose for a picture during a technical training session on demining technologies in Battambang province on Thursday.—AFP

Ukrainian deminers learn from decades of Cambodian experience

BATTAMBANG: The baking sun beating down on them, a group of Ukrainian deminers watched intently as their Cambodian trainers swept through a dusty field in eastern Battambang province on Thursday, seeking to learn from decades of bitter experience. Cambodia is among the most heavily mined countries in the world, following 30 years of civil war which ended in 1998, with clearance work continuing to this day. The group of 15 Ukrainians is in the country for a week of training on how to use demining tools such as detectors, specialized machinery, and animals trained to sniff out the weapons and other unexploded ordnance.

Wearing white hard hats, protective body gear and clear plastic visors, the Ukrainians walked gingerly through a field littered with bright red warning signs demarcating danger zones. Ahead of them, Cambodian officials scanned the ground with olive-green wands, an urgent beeping sound accompanying each sweep. In December, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for long-term help in clearing his war-ravaged nation of mines and other unexploded ordnance, which he said now cover an area roughly the size of Cambodia.

Ukrainian Captain Arsenii Diadchenko said the Cambodians' technical skills and expertise would help to prevent more deaths in his country. "The training will be very helpful to clear our territory from Russian mines and Russian (unexploded ordnance)," he told reporters. "It will help them and their families to be safe."

'We think differently'

The use of anti-personnel landmines, designed specifically for use against humans, is prohibited under a 1997 international convention signed by more than 130 countries. Russia has not acceded to the convention. Russian troops have used at least seven types of landmines in Ukraine since the invasion, according to Human Rights Watch.

Even before the invasion, a 2019 United Nations report said that eastern Ukraine was among the most mined areas in the world. The training was organized by the Japanese government, in conjunction with the Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC). Oum Phumro, deputy director of the centre, said the training would be ongoing. "In Cambodia, we train them for one week and then we continue training them via online and preparing procedures for demining in Ukraine," he told reporters. Cambodia will send a team of up to four instructors to Poland to further train Ukrainian deminers later this year, he added. Almost 20,000 Cambodians have been killed by landmines, with around 45,000 people wounded, according to a 2019 report from an international munitions monitoring group.—AFP

But Price noted that Congress also was united on wanting to see a path forward on NATO. "There is strong support within the US Congress for Finland, Sweden, to become NATO's newest members," Price said. Still, Price acknowledged concerns with Turkey including on a potential offensive against Syrian Kurds, reconciliation with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad

US court asked to toss verdict in ex-cop's killing of black man

WASHINGTON: The police officer who killed African American George Floyd in 2020 asked an appeals court Wednesday to overturn his murder conviction, arguing that the extreme media attention and potential for riots had deprived him of a "fair" trial. Derek Chauvin, 46, was convicted of murder in Minnesota after a closely watched trial in 2021 and sentenced to 22 and a half years in prison. His lawyer William Mohrman pleaded with a panel of judges Wednesday to overturn the trial, in part because the hearings had not been moved despite threats of violence around the courthouse.

"The primary issue on this appeal is whether a criminal defendant can get a fair trial... in a courthouse that is surrounded by concrete block, barbed wire, two armored personnel carriers and a squad of National Guard troops, all of which are there... in the event that the jury acquits the defendant," Mohrman said. Whatever happens during the appeal, Chauvin will remain in prison. He pleaded guilty to violating George Floyd's civil rights before a federal judge in 2022 and received a 21-year prison sentence. Three other police officers, who remained passive during Floyd's death, received sentences ranging from two and a half to three and a half years in prison.

'Demonized'

On May 25, 2020, Chauvin, a white 19-year veteran of the Minneapolis police force, knelt on the neck of the Black man in his forties for nearly ten minutes, indifferent to his cries and to the warnings of distraught passersby. The scene, filmed and posted online, triggered mass demonstrations against racism and police violence in the United States and beyond.

During the local court trial, his lawyer pleaded that Floyd died of an overdose, combined with health problems, and had assured that Chauvin had made a justified use of force. Today, Chauvin is asking the court to throw out his conviction or at least his sentence, partly because the trial was held in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, which were still on edge less than a year after the tragedy.—AFP

and on domestic political freedoms.

"We remain deeply concerned by the continued judicial harassment of civil society, media, political and business leaders in Turkey," Price said. Turkey in 2019 was kicked out of the F-35 program after Erdogan went ahead with a major arms purchase from Russia, the key adversary of NATO.—AFP



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu at the State Department in Washington, DC.—AFP

Business

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 2023



BARCELONA: Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (C-R) and French President Emmanuel Macron (C-L) pose for a group picture during a visit of the Picasso Museum as part of the Franco-Spanish summit in Barcelona on January 19, 2023. Macron and Sanchez inked a Franco-Spanish friendship treaty in Barcelona, as Paris seeks Madrid's support for its uncompromising stance in a brewing trade dispute with Washington. —AFP

Macron, Sanchez agree joint approach to brewing trade dispute with US

France gripped by nationwide strikes and protests over pension reform drive

BARCELONA: French President Emmanuel Macron and Spain's Pedro Sanchez on Thursday joined forces to call for a "proactive" European response to a brewing trade dispute with Washington over alleged protectionism. Speaking in Barcelona following a Franco-Spanish summit, the two leaders said they had reached a common position on how to respond to Washington's massive investment plan to accelerate the US transition to green energy.

"We are both aware of the fact that we need to react in a very proactive way" to Washington's so-called Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Macron said after signing a friendship treaty with the Spanish prime minister. Europe fears that the plan, which will pour billions of dollars into climate-friendly technologies, will distort transatlantic trade to give American companies an unfair advantage.

"Europe is facing a critical moment because of the (Ukraine) war, but also because of trade deci-

sions being taken by Europe's allies such as the United States," said Sanchez. While Europe welcomed Washington's shift towards green energy, "we have to reach an agreement in which this commitment... does not mean the deindustrialisation of Europe," the Spanish leader said.

Macron, who has branded Washington's plan as "super aggressive", wants Brussels to follow suit with a similar initiative to avoid a flight of European companies relocating to take advantage of the US subsidies. Seeking Madrid's support for his stance was a central aim of Macron's Barcelona visit. He will meet German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Sunday to drum up further backing.

Macron defends pension reform

The high-profile meeting took place as France was gripped by nationwide strikes and protests over a controversial pension reform drive in which

Macron's government is seeking to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. Speaking during a joint news conference with Sanchez at the end of the summit, Macron said he hoped the demonstrations would take place "without excesses, violence or destruction". The deeply unpopular reform was "democratically proposed and approved", he insisted.

And he stressed the "determination" of his government to ensure that the reform was implemented in a way that was "above all fair and responsible". Amid warnings of a "hellish" day of protest and fears the mass mobilisation could turn ugly, the interior ministry said it had deployed 10,000 police officers across the country, more than a third of them in Paris. With tens of thousands of protesters marching in the streets and strikes that have disrupted public transport and shuttered schools across France, organisers are hoping the pressure will force the government to back down. —AFP

Indian tycoon Adani's firm seeks billions from investors

MUMBAI: Indian multimillionaire Gautam Adani's flagship conglomerate launched the country's biggest-ever secondary share sale on Thursday, as it seeks to bolster its balance sheet and broaden its shareholder base. Adani Enterprises will offer investors 200 billion rupees (\$2.5 billion) worth of new shares at a discount, as it looks to lower its ballooning debt and further fuel expansion.

It comes after the company's share price soared by over 1,000 percent in little more than two years. Adani, 60, is the world's third-richest person, with an estimated net worth of \$126 billion and interests ranging from Australian coal mines to India's busiest ports.

He currently owns 73 percent of Adani Enterprises. The pricing implies a discount of nine to 13 percent off Adani Enterprises' closing share price of 3,595.35 rupees on Wednesday, according to a prospectus filed with stock exchanges, with retail investors offered an extra two percent off. Unusually, applicants will only have to pay 50 percent upfront, with the rest due in instalments.



MUMBAI: Adani Enterprises Limited group board members (L-R) executive vice president Raghendra Pande, corporate finance head Anupam Misra (C) and head of finance of Adani airport holding ltd. Rakesh Tiwari attend a news conference to announce the company's forthcoming Follow-on Public Offering (FPO), in Mumbai on January 19, 2023. —AFP

"This allows us to further increase the participation of the average, normal Indian mom and dad as shareholders in Adani Enterprises," chief financial officer Jugeshinder Singh told a media brief-

ing. "It is one of the overarching goals of our founder, it is very important for him that the ability to create wealth reaches the remotest corner of India." —AFP

data operations into compliance. The breaches are similar to those explained in the regulator's action against Meta earlier in January.

But the earlier decision also accused the Meta platforms of breaking rules over the processing of personal data for the purpose of targeted advertising. In that instance the company, co-founded by social media magnate Mark Zuckerberg, was given only three months to respond to comply with the Irish regulator.

Meta announced its intention to appeal the 4 January decision, adding the regulatory ruling did not prevent targeted or personalised advertising. The DPC said its more recent fine was considerably less because of a 225 million euro fine imposed on WhatsApp for "for breaches of this and other transparency obligations over the same period of time".

Thursday's WhatsApp fine was also far lower because it did not relate to targeted advertising. The Irish regulator had fined Meta 405 million euros in September for failures in handling the data of minors, and 265 million euros in November for not sufficiently protecting users' data.

This latest round of fines follows the adoption of

three binding decisions by the European Data Protection Board (EDPB), the EU's data protection regulator, in early December. The Vienna-based privacy group NOYB, which brought the three complaints against Meta, had accused the social media behemoth of reinterpreting consent as a civil law contract, which stopped users from refusing targeted advertising.

In October 2021, the Irish authority had proposed a draft decision that validated the legal basis used by the group and suggested a fine of up to 36 million euros for Facebook and up to 23 million euros for Instagram, over their lack of transparency. France's CNIL regulator and other European bodies disagreed with the draft sanction, which they considered to be far too low.

They asked the EDPB to judge the dispute with the EU data regulator deciding in their favour. The EDPB has also asked the Irish regulator to investigate Meta's use of personal data. However in its statement the DPC pushed back saying the the EU body does not have the power to "direct an authority to engage in open-ended and speculative investigation". —AFP

Arab economies to register 5.4% growth in 2022

ABU DHABI: Head of the administrative council of the Arab Monetary Fund Dr Abdulrahman Al-Humaidi opened the eighth Council of Arab Finance Ministry undersecretaries in Abu Dhabi, with the participation of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in addition to the Arab Monetary Fund, which is the technical secretariat of the Council of Arab Finance Ministers.

The conference included many findings and analyses, including:

- Arab economies are estimated to record economic growth of 5.4 percent in 2022, driven by stimulus packages amounting to about \$400 billion during 2020-2022.

- The importance of improving public debt sustainability and providing sufficient fiscal space for social development expenditures.

- Enhancing the mobilization of domestic revenues to support inclusive and sustainable growth to meet the challenges in the Arab region.

- Sustainable financing tools are witnessing significant growth in response to the growing interest in environmental and social policy considerations and sustainable development goals.

- Reforming government institutions and companies enhances their role in achieving development goals.

"The relative improvement in global demand, high growth rates of the oil and gas sectors, as well as the continuation of Arab governments to adopt packages to support economic recovery, which amounted to about \$400 billion during the 2020-2022 period, in addition to the positive impact of the implementation of several economic reform programs, as well as future visions and strategies aimed at enhancing levels of economic diversification, reforming the business environment, encouraging the role of the private sector, supporting human capital and increasing the level of economic resilience in the face of shocks, enabled recovery opportunities during 2022," Humaidi said in his speech.

"The report presented by the International Monetary Fund on 'Enhancing the Mobilization of Domestic Revenues in the Arab Countries' showed that thanks to continuous efforts, some Arab countries were able to make remarkable progress in mobilizing domestic revenues before the spread of the COVID pandemic, which reflects the tax policy and revenue management reforms adopted by many of the countries, which enabled them to achieve long-term gains by maintaining revenue mobilization reforms over a relatively long period," he explained.

"The paper also showed that increasing revenues to support inclusive and sustainable growth has become a requirement in the Arab region, especially after the pandemic. The current global developments have also deepened these challenges, given the rise in food and energy prices and the increase in the public finance deficit in some Arab countries," Humaidi added. In conclusion, Humaidi appreciated the efforts of the UAE for the support it provides as the headquarters of the Arab Monetary Fund, which undoubtedly contributes to carrying out the tasks entrusted to it.

Meta slapped with €5.5m fine for EU data breach

DUBLIN: Social media giant Meta has been fined an additional 5.5 million euros (\$5.9 million) for breaches of EU data protection regulations by its instant messaging platform WhatsApp, Ireland's regulator announced Thursday.

The penalty follows a 390 million euro fine for Meta-owned media platforms Instagram and Facebook two weeks ago after they were found to have flouted the same EU rules. In its new decision, the Irish Data Protection Commission (DPC) found the group acted "in breach of its obligations in relation to transparency," the watchdog said in a statement.

In addition, Meta relied on an incorrect legal basis "for its processing of personal data for the purposes of service improvement and security," the DPC added, giving the group six months to bring its

Business

New leases to significantly expand UK offshore wind power

British government aiming for 50GW by end of the decade

LONDON: The UK on Thursday announced leases for six new offshore wind projects which aim to cement the country as one of the world's leading renewable energy generators in the offshore sector. The six new sites — three off the North Wales, Cumbria and Lancashire coast, and three in the North Sea off Yorkshire and Lincolnshire — will be able to power more than seven million homes by 2030.

They will generate eight gigawatts (GW) of renewable electricity. The UK currently boasts nearly 14GW of installed wind capacity across dozens of offshore sites, according to industry body RenewableUK. That places it second globally behind China, which generates 66GW.

The British government is aiming for 50GW by the end of the decade, as it bids to meet climate change targets agreed internationally. The Crown Estate, an independently managed portfolio of land, property and other assets belonging to the monarchy, struck the agreements as part of a fourth round of leasing deals for offshore wind, which first began in 2001.

The Estate, which owns and manages most of the seabed around the UK and awards rights to extract resources, said it has now sealed offshore wind deals totalling 41GW. Gus Jaspert, of the Estate, hailed the

latest agreements as “a significant milestone... demonstrating to the world that the UK offshore wind industry is growing at pace to help meet the climate challenge”.

Under the terms of the leases, which run for at least three years before the bidders eventually switch to paying rent, the projects will generate around £1 billion (\$1.24 billion) annually, according to the Estate. Its total net income is handed to the UK government under a centuries-old agreement, but the ruling monarch sees a slice of that returned through the Sovereign Grant.

It is set as equivalent to 15 percent of the profits of the Crown Estate, and goes towards funding the Royal Household. However, it was temporarily increased to 25 percent to cover the extensive updating work on Buckingham Palace, and totalled £86.3 million in 2021-22. Separately, Buckingham Palace said on Thursday King Charles III has asked for profits from the new wind farms to be used for the “wider public good” rather than as a funding boost for the grant. The Keeper of the Privy Purse, Michael Stevens, who manages the monarch's finances, has contacted Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and finance minister Jeremy Hunt to request “an appropriate reduction”, the palace added. — AFP



Dhaman signs MoU with ECG to promote trade and investment

KUWAIT: Kuwait-based Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) signed a Memo of Understanding (MoU) with Export Credit Greece (ECG) for bilateral cooperation and exchange of information to promote trade and investment between Kuwait and Greece. The MoU was signed by Director-General Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabeeh on behalf of the Corporation, and Greek Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy and Openness Konstantinos Fragkogiannis on behalf of ECG.

The corporation's director-general welcomed cooperation with the Greek agency, and the signing of the MoU, stressing Dhaman's willingness to strengthen its role in promoting foreign investments in Kuwait and Arab countries, and boosting the exports of Kuwait and Arab Member States Countries to different world countries worldwide.

Al-Sabeeh pointed out that the MoU aims at promoting and bolstering trade relations between Kuwait and Greece, exchanging information on existing, greenfield and potential foreign direct investment ventures, and exploring mutual opportunities in insurance, reinsurance and joint insurance services for export and investment.

He added that the MoU is also meant to exchange trade and credit information on Kuwaiti and Greek investment, trade and insurance agencies, and to share expertise and the best practices in commercial credit and political risk underwriting, risk management, country risk rating, and paid and recovered compensations claims and recoveries.

For his part, Greek Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy and Opening Openness Kostas Fragkogiannis welcomed the signing of the MoU with the Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation, stressing the significance of promoting trade and investment cooperation between Kuwait and Greece.

He said that the ECG was established on March 31, 2022, with the aim of promoting national exports and serving Greek exporters through the insurance of export credit and financial and consulting services and strengthening international partnerships. He added that the ECG seeks to build cooperation with other export credit guarantee agencies on the basis of mutual interest and for the benefit of its customers.

Fragkogiannis affirmed that the agency is eager to put the MoU in place, thus reflecting positively on bilateral cooperation in the areas of credit and political risk insurance trade, investment and insurance, pointing out mutual willingness to broaden the scope of cooperation in the future to include joint ventures in other Arab countries through joint credit insurance, parallel insurance, reinsurance or technical cooperation.



ACCRINGTON: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt (L) buy sweets during a visit to Accrington Market Hall on January 19, 2023. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 19 JANUARY 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,068	1,100	1,100	1,060	40	19,849,185	30	2.80%	2.04%	1,080	1,100	17.8	2.07	2.2%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	304	306	312	301	11	13,943,249	1	0.33%	-2.55%	303	310	16.1	1.40	2.2%	1.27
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	193	194	197	192	5	9,366,850	1	0.52%	-1.02%	194	198	35.0	0.62	2.0%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	221	230	231	221	10	5,376,686	9	4.07%	5.02%	225	230	22.8	0.83	2.1%	1.27
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	800	820	822	790	32	107,353,457	18	2.24%	-0.36%	815	825	27.5	3.36	1.3%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	776	809	809	775	34	4,193,922	32	4.12%	1.38%	803	813	52.0	3.17	0.6%	1.09
204	National Investments	Financial Services	235	240	249	234	15	6,346,708	2	0.84%	1.27%	237	244	17.7	0.98	18.8%	1.87
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	108	116	121	105	16	47,110,305	9.0	8.41%	3.57%	116	122	-	0.60	4.2%	0.98
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	71.0	70.7	71.4	69	2	4,076,025	0.3	0.43%	-5.61%	69.0	71.0	-	0.42	12.6%	1.23
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	108	107	109	106	3	30,298,997	-1	-0.93%	-0.93%	106	108	15.6	0.78	2.7%	1.09
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	828	831	839	812	27	1,904,049	3	0.36%	-2.00%	825	839	17.1	1.82	1.6%	1.03
501	National Industries	Financial Services	207	220	225	205	20	15,034,994	13	6.28%	1.38%	217	221	11.0	0.97	5.1%	1.50
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,181	1,172	1,193	1,158	35	287,637	-20	-1.68%	-3.54%	1,149	1,176	11.4	1.14	5.1%	1.02
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	777	779	799	774	25	1,675,518	8	1.04%	-2.63%	770	790	8.2	1.54	7.7%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	594	584	603	563	40	97,406,299	-11	-1.85%	-18.89%	582	625	38.6	1.08	2.8%	1.58
605	Zain	Telecommunications	542	560	564	541	23	18,128,734	18	3.32%	-0.53%	557	571	12.8	2.00	5.9%	0.77
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,539	3,500	3,539	3,450	89	950,672	30	0.86%	-0.57%	3,499	3,560	7.4	3.52	11.4%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	197	202	205	189	16	9,939,439	3	1.51%	-0.49%	195	206	-	0.84	0.0%	1.18
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,699	1,640	1,721	1,610	111	1,477,065	-59	-3.47%	-13.68%	1,571	1,645	12.4	9.64	2.8%	1.44
821	Warba Bank	Banking	233	238	241	233	8	13,378,717	4	1.71%	1.28%	229	240	24.0	1.30	0.0%	1.09
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	390	406	411	390	21	2,600,558	12	3.05%	3.31%	405	432	-	1.30	3.8%	0.48
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	364	357	370	354	16	3,472,100	-11	-2.99%	-3.51%	351	371	23.4	1.46	2.8%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	183	181	183	176	7	2,970,816	-4	-2.16%	-3.72%	179	182	14.8	1.67	10.0%	0.50
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,020	2,020	2,075	2,018	57	425,426	-2	-0.10%	-1.56%	2,020	2,070	21.4	6.59	3.2%	0.99
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	800	816	830	800	30	1,980,619	11	1.37%	1.37%	800	830	11.7	4.08	5.8%	0.49

* As of end of week closing

Business

The black hell of Albania's ageing oil fields and rusting storage tanks

Black gold has brought millions of dollars, but local residents have hardly benefited

ZHARREZ: The people of Zharrez in central Albania live amid a stinking apocalyptic landscape of leaking oil wells and rusting storage tanks, the soil blackened from spills of crude that seep into their water. "We all have health problems," said Milita Vrapa, one of 2,000 villagers who live cheek by jowl with the Balkan nation's largely unregulated oil industry.

"The air is very heavy. I often feel dizzy and nauseous with headaches and persistent fatigue," she said the 49-year-old mother as a ramshackle rig wheezed into life only four metres from her home. The water is undrinkable and the vegetables in her garden no longer grow, she said.

Abandoned wells and storage tanks and rusted and leaking pipelines litter the oil-rich Patos-Marinza area, where swamps and little lakes of black crude scar the landscape. Much of the equipment in the oil fields has not been maintained for nearly three decades.

Stinking air

"Black gold has brought millions of dollars out of the ground, but local residents have hardly benefited from it," said villager Marsilin Senka, while clutching his two-month-old baby, who has acute bronchitis. The air stinks from old wells that have been left open and crude left to rot in crumbling tanks and open-air pits. In summer some locals say it is unbreathable.

Zharrez alone has around a dozen wells run by state-owned Albpetrol—most half a century old—just a stone's throw from homes. Others in the area are operated by the Chinese Bankers Petroleum group.

"Pollution is not a priority for the oil companies," Senka added. "More than 18,000 square metres are heavily polluted by crude oil because infrastructure has been left abandoned for more than 25 years, with harmful effects on the environment and the health of the inhabitants," said Qani Rredhi, the head of the village's environmental group.

Even human rights groups have condemned the

situation, with the Albanian Helsinki Committee saying in its latest report that "the proximity of residential areas and greenhouses to oil fields and old wells... and the lack of safety and rehabilitation measures are of great concern."

Illness

Locals say the oil fields may be responsible for myriad health problems affecting residents. "The number of inhabitants who complain of respiratory problems, high concentrations of carbon dioxide in the blood or who suffer from illnesses linked to industrial activities is very high," said Adriatik Golemi, another local environmentalist. Under the communist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha people were mostly prevented from living in the area.

But following the fall of his regime, authorities tolerated the return of small numbers of impoverished residents and others settling in the area. Environmental groups have also linked the pollution to cancers which have claimed the lives of several locals.

However, Fatjon Shehu—the head of the village health centre—said it was difficult to establish a link in the absence of proper studies, especially with the rise in respiratory illness caused by COVID-19. Beyond the health problems, locals also complain about the risk of injury or death from accidents connected to the industry.

Drownings

"Three years ago, a woman drowned in an oil pit while going after her chickens," Golemi told AFP, saying the village has at least five similar areas where oil is stored in pits. There have also been "cases of livestock and birds drowning in the oil", added Redhi, who also complained of the "strong gas fumes" spewing from abandoned wells.

Despite the damage the oil industry causes, Albania only produces 4.6 million barrels of crude a



ZHARREZ: Workers work on an old oil well in the village of Zharrez, near the city of Fier, about 120 km south of Tirana. More than 18 thousand square meters of land are contaminated with crude oil in this locality, as a result of the abandonment and degradation of the old oil infrastructure. —AFP

year, which is used to make bitumen for roads. It does however have large reserves estimated at nearly three billion barrels, although it has to import all its petrol since its only refinery was closed in 2019.

Shell has since announced a "significant discovery of light crude" at Shpirag in southern Albania. The country's Ministry of Energy said the authorities were determined to solve the environmental problems posed by the oil industry. "The companies working in the Patos-Marinza oil fields are putting in place action plans for the rehabilitation of all the

dilapidated infrastructure," told AFP. But locals want action now. Artemisa Vrapa, Milita's 16-year-old daughter, said the situation was unacceptable.

"We should not only think about the economy and the extraction of oil, but about saving lives, saving our environment and our planet," Vrapa told AFP. Meanwhile, the rickety rig next to their home has been broken down for a week and oil worker Kadri Shahu, 58, is trying to repair it. Without performance bonuses, his 540-euro-a-month salary is not enough to feed his family of six. —AFP

News in brief

Norway interest rate on hold

OSLO: After five straight rises, Norway went against the global grain Thursday in leaving its benchmark interest rate on hold at 2.75 percent, while hinting March may see a fresh rise. "The future policy rate path will depend on economic developments. The policy rate will most likely be raised in March," said central bank governor Ida Wolden Bache. Though, in common with many of its neighbours, inflation is running well above target, Norway's economy has shown signs of slowing, raising the need for a more gradual tweaking of rates. "We maintain our view that we will see another 25bp rate hike in March, taking the policy rate to 3.00 percent," said Marius Gonsholt Hov, economist with Handelsbanken. "But that is also the peak, in our view, although risks are probably skewed to the upside," Hov added. Most Norwegian economists had expected Thursday's decision, although international counterparts had been betting on a small rise. As inflation began to bare its teeth, the Norwegian central bank, Norges Bank, was one of the first to begin raising rates in September 2021. Its key indicator rate now stands at its highest level since 2009.

Investors ready to 'flood' Ukraine

DAVOS: The head of US private equity firm BlackRock said Thursday that Western investors will be "flooding" Ukraine post-war and the country could become "a beacon to the rest of the world of the power of capitalism". Larry Fink, one of the world's most influential investors, told a Ukraine-themed event in Davos that he estimated the country would need \$750 billion in reconstruction funds and aid "if the war stopped relatively soon". "I do believe, emotionally, those who truly believe in a capitalistic system will be flooding Ukraine with capital," Fink added. "And I'm not talking about philanthropy. There's going to be a lot of philanthropy. I'm truly talking about if we can rebuild Ukraine, it can be a beacon to the rest of the world of the power of capitalism," he said. He said he had spoken to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to express his firm's interest in taking part in reconstruction efforts. Fink said he had told Zelensky that "if you hire us, that we're not going to be creating new oligarchs, but we're creating a new Ukraine."

UK shoemaker down at heel

LONDON: Shares in Dr Martens tumbled Thursday after the iconic British bootmaker issued a fresh profit warning alongside weaker-than-expected festive sales. The group lowered its full-year guidance for both revenue and earnings in a trading update, blaming "significant operational issues" and "unseasonably warm weather" in the United States. Revenues rose three percent at constant currency to £335.9 million (\$414.2 million) in the three months to the end of December from a year earlier. The gloomy news sent Dr Martens shares plunging more than 25 percent to 155.70 pence. This has followed big falls already since a stock market floatation in 2021 at 370 pence per share. Chief executive Kenny Wilson insisted that demand remained "resilient" despite "challenging conditions". Dr Martens had already warned in November that its performance was marred by the cost-of-living crisis, as consumers tightened their belts in the face of decades-high inflation. "Dr Martens has been caught seriously on the back foot with operational problems at its new distribution centre in Los Angeles, piling yet more problems on the beleaguered bootmaker," said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter.

Stocks slide on returning recession fears

LONDON: Stock markets mostly slid and other major assets including the dollar and oil weakened Thursday after disappointing US data renewed worries about possible global recession this year.

The optimism that flowed through trading floors since the start of the year has taken a knock this week, hit in large part by weak US economic data and earnings.

The downbeat mood offset hopes that China's economy would enjoy a strong recovery this year as it moves away from its zero-COVID policy. "An overnight sell-off in the US has soured sentiment," noted AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

"Weak US retail sales suggested consumers' resilience may have been pushed beyond break-

ing point." Mould added that Microsoft's plan to slash 10,000 jobs "and a series of weak earnings reports also didn't help the market's mood".

European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde on Thursday insisted that the eurozone economy would fare "a lot better" this year than initially feared. The economic "news has become much more positive in the last few weeks", Lagarde told an audience at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Elsewhere, the New Zealand dollar and country's stock market suffered minor losses after Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's shock announcement that she would step down next month, saying she no longer has "enough in the tank". Expectations that US interest rates would not rise as much as previously feared weighed on the US dollar. The yen bounced back strongly after Wednesday's slump that had been triggered by a Bank of Japan decision not to tweak monetary policy.

Several Federal Reserve officials have warned that the US central bank would continue to tighten its own policy until inflation is brought down from multi-decade highs.

KUFPEC awarded new exploration license in Norway

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company k.s.c.c. (KUFPEC), through its Norwegian

subsidiary KUFPEC Norway AS, has been awarded the new exploration license PL 1174S by the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MPE) as part of the exploration bid rounds known as Awards in Predefined Areas (APA 2022). KUFPEC was awarded a 20% working interest in the license along with Equinor, the operator, with 60% and Petro 20%.

KUFPEC CEO Mohammad Salem Al-Haimer stated that this nearfield exploration acreage has the

US stocks retreat as BoJ decision weighs on yen

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks tumbled Wednesday as traders weighed the latest US data showing slowing economic activity, while the yen retreated after the Bank of Japan decided against further tweaking monetary policy.

Major indices in New York had opened higher following US data showing a surprisingly big drop in December retail sales and a decline in wholesale prices. The reports added to expectations of an upcoming pivot by the Federal Reserve away from aggressive interest rate hikes, boosting sentiment.

But stocks went negative soon after the open, adding to losses in the afternoon. The S&P 500 finished down 1.6 percent. "It seems like we got a little overbought," said Maris Ogg of Tower Bridge Advisors. Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA Research, said the US data had also "highlighted recession risks."

But hopes for China's recovery continued to provide much-needed support, with Vice Premier Liu He telling the World Economic Forum that growth would likely rebound this year as the country reopens after zero-COVID. His comments came after data showed the Chinese economy expanded last year at its slowest pace since 1976 — excluding pandemic-hit 2020 — but still beat forecasts. The news added to hopes for a global recovery after last year's pain caused by rising prices, interest rate hikes, China's economic woes, war in Ukraine and a spike in energy costs that the conflict sparked.



NEW YORK: A hot dog cart stands near the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Wall Street in New York City on January 18, 2023. Wall Street stocks climbed early, on easing worries about further Federal Reserve moves to aggressively counter inflation following the latest US economic data. —AFP

After five straight rises, Norway left its benchmark interest rate on hold at 2.75 percent Thursday, but hinted at a fresh rise in March.

Worries about recession weighed also on oil prices, despite hopes for a spike in demand as China reopens to the world. —AFP

potential to add production and utilize full capacity on Sleipner field.

The work program, over 7 years of exploration phases, covers seismic reprocessing of existing Multi Client 3D seismic data in the first 2 years of the study phase and making a decision to drill or drop prior to entering the next 2-year phase with drilling and exploration well. Further, the concession agreement will soon be signed between the JV partners and the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MPE).



TOKYO: Pedestrians look at electronic sign boards showing the Japanese yen's rate against the US Dollar (L) and the closing numbers of the Tokyo Stocks Exchange (R), along a street in downtown Tokyo. —AFP

Dollar falls against euro

In foreign exchange, the yen pulled back against the dollar. Traders had been keenly anticipating the Bank of Japan decision after it last month shocked markets by announcing a tweak that allowed its tightly controlled bond yields to move in a wider bracket.

The move in December sent the yen soaring, and while the bank held firm Wednesday, there is a growing expectation that officials

will eventually move away from the policy of buying up bonds to keep yields in check.

"Speculation will remain that it will eventually review its policy," Takahide Kiuchi, executive economist at Nomura Research Institute and a former BoJ policy board member, told AFP. Shares in tech giant Microsoft slumped 1.9 percent after it confirmed it would cut 10,000 jobs due to the poor economic outlook. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Sustainable influencers take on fast fashion

Sustainable influencer Masego Morgan was shocked when a fast fashion giant offered her \$1,000 for a single social media post to promote its brand. Not only had the South African social media star never been offered that kind of money, the company represents exactly what she is against: overconsumption of cheap, planet-harming clothing made by underpaid workers. And she's not alone. Former "Love Island" contestant and sustainable fashion influencer Brett Staniland said he was offered close to \$5,500 (5,076 euros) for a post for a major fast fashion brand, the kind of money most small or sustainable brands simply can't compete with.

shouldn't necessarily compete with (fast fashion) in their way... their model is already unsustainable," said Morgan, whose TikTok and Instagram pages are full of playful posts bursting with upcycled and handmade items, many of which she features more than once.

'Mending is revolutionary'

Morgan started borrowing thrifted clothes from her stylish Japanese mother, who used to tell her that "mending is a revolutionary act", and encouraged her to repair clothes instead of buying new ones. The 26-year-old, who posts much of her content from her Cape Town kitchen, said she tries to hold corpora-

and affiliate links. And the more followers they have, the more they can charge brands.

Social media has helped boost fashion sales, with global consumption of clothing, footwear and accessories doubling since 2000, according to the Hot or Cool Institute think tank. But that has come at a steep price for the planet. The clothing industry accounted for an estimated two percent of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2019 — about the same as the airline industry—according to the World Resources Institute (WRI).

Those emissions could increase by 55 percent by the end of the decade, it added. They would need to decrease by 45 percent to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius as outlined in the Paris Agreement. The environmental footprint of fashion production and consumption needs to be reduced by 60 percent in high-income countries to limit global warming, according to the Hot or Cool report. As well as decarbonizing the fashion industry, their advice is to buy no more than five new items a year and wear clothes for longer.

'Up against it'

Exposing the harmful impact of fast fashion corporations is at the core of Venetia La Manna's content. The 33-year-old influencer has garnered a massive following online, with some 6.5 million views on TikTok and Instagram for her "Recipe for Disaster" series about the social and environmental damage done by companies like Adidas, Amazon and Nike. She makes a decent living and works with resale sites like Vestiaire Collective, eBay and Depop. But it's not always easy competing with influencers that have the backing of fast fashion.

"We're up against it in terms of money and power," she told AFP from London. "In the past five years, I really do feel like this issue is on the map. It used to be that plastic and food were the main focus in



conversations about our environment, but now fashion is really being talked about," said La Manna.

The secondhand apparel market is booming and is expected to hit \$218 billion by 2026, up from \$96 billion in 2021. This is partly driven by an increasing number of resale and clothing rental firms catering to a growing class of conscious consumers. "Love Island" star Staniland is hopeful that good-for-the-planet businesses will continue to grow on social media.

And he's notched up a few wins. The 29-year-old was instrumental in getting the show to switch their sponsor from fast fashion companies to eBay. But for now, it can be an uphill battle. Like most sustainable influencers, Staniland has to rely on multiple income streams. After turning down the \$5,550 from a fast fashion giant, he worked with an underwear brand he believes in, ONE Essentials, but still needs his modeling to pay the bills. — AFP

Our bad fashion habits—and how we might change them—in numbers

The fashion industry is estimated to contribute upwards of two percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and is on track to get even worse if there isn't major change. Here are some key figures on how fashion is affecting the planet and how consumers can make a difference.

7 to 10

The average number of times a garment is worn before it is discarded, according to the Ellen Macarthur Foundation.

5

The maximum number of new items we should be buying every year if we are to reach the 1.5 degree Celsius global warming limit set out by the UN, according to the Hot or Cool institute think tank.

Around 30 percent

The percentage of donated clothes that ends up in landfills or incinerators abroad, according to Hot or Cool. They can also end up undercutting local vendors if they flood the market.

1 second

The equivalent of a lorry load of clothes is incinerated or buried in a landfill every second, the Ellen Macarthur Foundation reckons.

100 billion

The number of new clothing items produced each year, according to the Clean Clothes Campaign.

1 percent

Less than one percent of the material used to produce clothing is actually recycled into new clothing, according to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Many fast fashion firms say they can recycle old garments into new, but the reality is the fabric quality is mostly not fit to make garments that can be sold.

30 degrees Celsius

The recommended temperature at which clothes should be washed in order to increase their lifespan.

20 / 20 / 20

On average, the fashion consumption of the richest 20 percent of the world's population causes 20 times higher emissions than that of the poorest 20 percent, say Hot or Cool.

2023

This year France will pass a decree requiring every item of clothing sold in the country to carry a label detailing its precise climate impact. The EU is expected to follow suit.

8 times

The secondhand clothing market is growing eight times faster than the overall apparel market, according to online consignment shop thredUP.

Double

In the last 15 years, clothing production has roughly doubled, the Ellen Macarthur Foundation estimated, but over the same period we used those clothes almost 40 percent less.

40 percent

The percentage of global consumers that belong to Gen-Z—those born between 1997 and 2012 — according to McKinsey & Company. Gen-Z is both a part of the problem and solution when it comes to fast fashion: they make up a huge portion of consumers, but are also calling for more sustainable fashion. — AFP



South African influencer Masego Morgan poses for portraits at a Vintage shop in Simon's Town. — AFP photos



Content creators like Morgan and Staniland are promoting sustainable fashion online, where fast fashion corporations with deep pockets have helped flood Instagram, TikTok and YouTube with sponsored posts encouraging viewers to buy more stuff—largely at the expense of the planet. This growing army of influencers are seeking to expose the environmental damage caused by huge fashion firms like Shein, H&M and Zara.

They also encourage climate-conscious fashion choices—what Morgan calls "mindful consumption"—asking people to buy less, or if you do have to buy, best if it's second-hand or ultra-sustainable. "We

tions to account instead of making people feel guilty about their choices. Influencers like her are "agents of change", said Simone Cipriani, the chair of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion and founder of the Ethical Fashion Initiative.

"They counter the negative influence of another kind of thing that you find on social media... overconsumption." Social media has become enormously important for fashion brands, which can reach millions via influencers who show off their clothing in things like #outfitoftheday posts. A mainstream influencer in a Western country can easily make six figures a year through sponsored content

Finnish fur farm horror caught on video as industry fights ban

Obese, infection-ridden foxes trapped in small cages; cubs feeding on their dead siblings: footage filmed by an animal rights group paints a shocking picture of fur farming in Finland. With nearly a million pelts produced annually, Finland is Europe's leading producer of certified fox fur, second in the world after China. But the new footage highlights the controversy over the Nordic country's fur industry, which is fighting calls to have it outlawed.

"Fur farming should have been banned in Finland by now and I think it is shameful that this has not yet been done", Left Alliance MP Mai Kivela told AFP. In December, a European Citizens Initiative calling for an EU-wide ban on the fur industry reached one million signatures, the number required to trigger a response from the Commission.

The initiative urges the EU to follow a growing number of member states in outlawing the practice, which it considers "inherently cruel". Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Social Democratic Party decided in 2020 to support a ban, following in the footsteps of the Left Alliance and Greens. But those favoring an outright ban are still in the minority in Finland's parliament, as the 360-million-euro export industry is considered vital to some rural areas.

'Downright appalling'

Finnish animal rights group Oikeutta Elaimille (Justice for Animals) shared unpublished footage with AFP it said was filmed undercover inside six different Finnish fur farms in 2022. The Finnish Fur Breeders' Association FIFUR, which certifies farms to ensure animal health, confirmed to AFP that they had approved four of the farms identified by the activists. AFP has published videos and pictures from these four certified farms. The footage reveals the conditions in which the foxes live, trapped inside small, wire mesh cages. In the video, they can be seen suffering from eye disease and infections in ears and tails.

"The conditions of the animals in these farms are downright appalling," activist Kristo Muurimaa told AFP. The foxes are unable to fulfill their natural behavioral needs in the cramped cages, exposing them "to various behavioral disorders" such as compulsive pacing back and forth,

Muurimaa said. Oikeutta Elaimille also said the foxes were "over-bred to huge sizes", leading to health issues such as warped skin and painful eye infections.

Some of the foxes in the footage are so fat they do not even resemble foxes. The footage also shows young cubs eating their dead siblings. Finland's animal protection law "is lagging far behind European standards", Muurimaa argued, and the problems are widespread. "All Finnish fur farms are more or less the same from an animal point of view," Muurimaa said.



Two foxes with overgrown skins and one of them with an eye infection are pictured in a cage in Lapua, Finland. — AFP photos

'False picture'

FIFUR condemned unauthorized filming at the farms as "illegal trespassing" and told AFP the footage did not represent reality. "They give a completely false picture of fur farming, a one-sided sample," said Olli-Pekka Nissinen, a spokesman for the association that represents most fur producers in Finland. FIFUR said they showed the footage to the producers but "they cannot recognize their animals from it except maybe one silver fox".

However, to investigate the claims, FIFUR veterinarians "will still be visiting farms in the coming days". "These four farms are well-managed, certified fur farms where the producers take care of their animals," Nissinen insisted. The FIFUR certification process includes regular audit visits every year. "Animals are generally in good condition," Nissinen said. "In general, if a farm has five or ten

thousand animals" there may "always be animals who have sudden eye infections or ear infections" that the producers treat, said Nissinen. But certification statistics show that "injuries and mortality are quite low".

Calls to ban

Several European countries, including Austria and the UK, have already banned fur farming, and the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred more countries to follow suit. During the pandemic, France, the Netherlands and Estonia introduced new

bans, while Denmark ordered a cull of the country's entire farmed mink population after COVID outbreaks.

In 2021, Austria and the Netherlands urged the EU to end fur farming, a call supported by Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Slovakia. But the breeders' association in Finland says any EU ban would be against the bloc's rules. "The ban on fur farming and fur trading is contrary to the EU treaties and the four freedoms," Nissinen said—a reference to the free movement of goods, people, services and capital that form the bedrock of the EU's founding treaty. The fur farming industry was very important for rural Finland, employing around 3,000 people, he noted. "We are just like any other countryside livestock sector that deals with farm animals." — AFP



A fox cub eats a dismembered skull in a cage in Kaustinen, Finland.



A white fox with an ear infection is pictured in Naerpio.



A fox jumps back and forth in a small cage in Naerpio, Finland.



In this file photo Albanian singer Dua Lipa attends The 2019 Met Gala Celebrating Camp: Notes on Fashion at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. — AFP photos



In this file photo Swiss tennis player Roger Federer attends the Costume Institute Benefit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Dua Lipa, Federer to host Karl Lagerfeld-themed Met Gala

Pop phenom Dua Lipa and tennis legend Roger Federer will be among the hosts of this year's Met Gala, whose theme will be "In honor of Karl." The dress code pays homage to the late Karl Lagerfeld, a top designer for decades who helmed major houses including Chanel, Fendi, Balmain and Chloe, as well as his own eponymous label. The glamorous night, which sees the entertainment world's brightest stars parade through New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in extravagant outfits, will as usual be accompanied by an exhibit at the museum's Costume Institute.

This year it will feature the show "Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty," which is set to include some 150 pieces of his design as well as sketches from the German designer. Along with Lipa and Federer, Penelope Cruz and Michaela Coel will join Vogue Editor-in-Chief Anna Wintour in hosting the May 1 gala, one of the season's premiere events.

The Costume Institute relies on the Met Gala to fund its work including exhibitions and acquisitions. The gala was first held in 1948 and for decades was reserved for New York high society. High priestess of fashion Wintour took over the show in 1995, transforming the party into a catwalk for the rich and famous and social media extravaganza. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



This photograph shows people eating ice cream next to a large cat statue at an ice cream shop in Hanoi, ahead of the lunar new year. — AFP photos



This photograph shows a man riding a bicycle past a cat statue at Thong Nhat Park in Hanoi, ahead of the lunar new year.



This photograph shows workers decorating cat figures at a building entrance in Hanoi, ahead of the lunar new year.



This photograph shows man gilding a cat figurine at a factory in Hanoi, ahead of the lunar new year.



This photograph shows the workers planting flowers in front of a cat statue by Hoan Kiem lake in Hanoi, ahead of the lunar new year.



This photograph shows a shopkeeper at a stall that is selling cat images ahead of the lunar new year at a market in the old quarters of Hanoi.

WHY VIETNAM IS CELEBRATING THE YEAR OF THE CAT, NOT THE RABBIT

As China gears up to welcome the Year of the Rabbit, Lunar New Year looks slightly different in Vietnam, where the Year of the Cat is about to begin. Across the country, streets are decked out with statues of felines and shops are stocked full of cat-themed decorations, popular gifts during Vietnamese New Year, known as Tet.

Vietnam and neighboring China share

10 of the zodiac calendar's 12 signs—the rat, tiger, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. But the Vietnamese honor the cat instead of the rabbit, and the buffalo instead of the ox. There are a host of theories to explain why the Vietnamese plumped for the cat. Nguyen Hieu Tin, an expert on traditional Vietnamese culture, said the answer may lie in the rice fields prized by farmers.

"Rice is a huge part of Vietnam's agriculture, but with the threat of many rats in the fields, the cats (which can hunt them) are a popular animal for the Vietnamese," he told AFP. "Another explanation is that the Vietnamese don't want to observe two years with a similar animal. They see the mouse and the rabbit as being closely linked," Tin said.

There is also a theory that the

Vietnamese made their own interpretation of the Chinese word for rabbit, "mao". In Vietnamese, this sounds like "meo", which means cat. The Year of the Cat is believed to bring good luck and smooth sailing in Vietnam. Hoang Thi Huong Giang, an office worker in Hanoi, a city filled with traditional orange kumquat trees and pink blossoms ahead of Tet, said she had never paid attention to the reasons that

Vietnamese honored a different zodiac animal to the rest of the world.

But she believes that those who were born in the Year of the Cat, like her, have things easier than most. "It seems to be true that those who are born in the Year of the Cat are often more active, hard-working and easy to get on with," Giang said proudly. — AFP

Let's-a-go (to Hollywood)! First US 'Super Mario' theme park to open

Nintendo's first theme park outside of its native Japan will open in California next month, just weeks before Mario gets the big-screen treatment in a major new Hollywood film. Super Nintendo World will be part of Universal Studios Hollywood—an amusement park that is traditionally home to rides based on film and TV franchises from "Waterworld" to "Harry Potter." But with the video game industry now eclipsing movies in size, and theme parks using increasingly interactive technology to immerse guests, bosses of the two companies have joined forces to capitalize on the platform-hopping plumber's global popularity.

The new Nintendo attraction will largely mirror the design of its recently opened, slightly larger sister park in Osaka, including a "Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge" ride that uses augmented reality goggles. Visitors race along a real-life track surrounded by actual set pieces, but can aim and shoot virtual shells at computerized villains they see displayed on their head-mounted, individual visors.

'Ultimate playground'

There are also a number of mini-games in which visitors with interactive wristbands can accrue coins and stamps, to qualify for a "final showdown" with the



Guests walk towards the entrance during a preview of Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios.

evil Bowser Jr. "It's kind of the ultimate playground," said Jon Corfino, vice president of Universal Creative. "We are known for our film franchises, which are terrific, and they're very immersive. Games are a different thing. "How we even engage with entertainment is evolving in and of itself... entertainment is not static."

Nintendo fans have already begun flocking to the Los Angeles amusement park, where word quickly spread last week that the new attraction was admit-

ting visitors for a "soft opening" to iron out any final technical glitches. "Being here, it's like my childhood in real life," said Carlos Moctezuma, who wore a Mario outfit to the park. "I've known Mario since I was in second grade. That was one of my first games on the Game Boy," said his partner Lexsi Houseman, dressed as Luigi. "It's a dream come true," she added.

Star-studded cast

The official launch of Super Nintendo

World is set for February 17, when visitors surrounded by mechanical Yoshis, Piranha Plants and Goombas from the beloved gaming franchise will be greeted by actors dressed as Mario, Luigi and Princess Peach. A third Nintendo theme park will follow in Orlando. Meanwhile, Universal Pictures—the Hollywood film studio that shares its parent company with the theme park—will release "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" in April.

The film features US actor Chris Pratt as the voice of Italian plumber Mario—a casting choice which has sparked controversy and criticism on social media, but only drawn more attention to the nostalgia-laden movie. A starry voice cast also includes Anya Taylor-Joy as Princess Peach, Jack Black as Bowser, and Seth Rogen as Donkey Kong.

It will be Hollywood's second attempt to bring Nintendo's most famous characters to the big screen, after a widely panned 1993 live-action movie. The first "Super Mario Bros" game came out in 1985 for Nintendo's NES console. The platform game, in which Mario runs and jumps past obstacles to collect coins and save Princess Peach from the evil Koopa turtles, was based on the "Mario Bros" arcade game released earlier. — AFP



Guests explore during a preview of Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios.



Mario and Luigi wave to the guests during a preview of Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios.



Guests take pictures with Princess Peach during a preview of Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios.



Kim Kardashian buys pendant worn by Princess Diana

American reality television star and social media colossus Kim Kardashian has purchased the Attallah Cross, the amethyst and diamond pendant famously worn on several occasions by Princess Diana, according to the auction house Sotheby's. The piece, made in the 1920s by the British jeweler Garrard, sold for 163,800 pounds (\$202,300) during the auction house's "Royal and Noble" sale in London on Wednesday.

The pendant—which Diana notably wore to a 1987 charity gala—fetched more than twice the pre-auction minimum estimate, with Sotheby's confirming it was bought by a representative on behalf of Kardashian. "Jewelry owned or worn by the late Princess Diana very rarely comes on to the market, especially a piece such as the Attallah Cross, which is so colorful, bold and distinctive," Sotheby's Kristian Spofforth said before the sale.

"To some extent, this unusual pendant is symbolic of the princess's growing self-assurance in her sartorial and jewelry choices, at that particular moment in her life." The pendant will not be the first piece of fashion history to cross paths with Kardashian. Last year, the 42-year-old made headlines for attending the Met Gala in the very dress worn by Marilyn Monroe when she serenaded then-president John F. Kennedy on his birthday in 1962. Kardashian was initially accused of having damaged the screen legend's gown, but Los Angeles-based museum Ripley's Believe It or Not!, which owns the piece, denied the allegations. — AFP



Saudi camel-whisperers use 'special language' to train herd

The cries of camel herder Hamad Al-Marri mean nothing to the untrained ear, but his animals respond instantly, gathering behind him to walk together across the Saudi desert. The mode of communication, known as Alheda'a, was inscribed last month on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage, highlighting the deep traditional connection between camels and inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula.



Camels are pictured during the annual King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Rumah desert, northeast of the Saudi capital Riyadh.

A skilled camel herder can use his voice alone to soothe an animal, make it kneel and even signal a change in direction as they trudge together through the desert sands, said the UN cultural agency. "There is a special language between the owner of a camel and his camel," explained 36-year-old Marri, a civil servant who owns 100 camels, grazing them 150 kilometers (about 90 miles) northeast of the capital Riyadh. "The camels know the tone of their

owner's voice and respond to him immediately, and if someone else calls them, they will not respond to him." Dubbed the "ships of the desert", camels have long been a crucial mode of transportation in Saudi Arabia, conferring status on their owners and fuelling the rise of a lucrative camel-breeding industry.

There are "many rock carvings that show painted camels and tell the story of the camel, whether they have been used in war or trade," said Jasser Al-Harbash, CEO of the Saudi Heritage Commission. The point of pursuing the UNESCO listing was to "protect" Alheda'a and "provide an opportunity for its development", he said, without elaborating. The bid was submitted jointly with neighboring

Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

'They know their name'

Alheda'a can be deployed for a range of tasks: bringing together a scattered herd threatened by a coming sandstorm, for example, or soothing camels as they drink water. "Herders train their camels to recognize the difference between right and left, to open their mouths when asked, and to kneel down to be ridden," according to UNESCO's description of the practice. "It is transmitted within families and communities, with children accompanying adult family members on daily trips."

Saudi herder Mansour Al-Qatula learned about Alheda'a in just this way,



Saudi herder Mansour Al-Qatula is pictured next to his animals during the annual King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Rumah desert, northeast of the Saudi capital Riyadh.—AFP photos

watching his father and grandfathers while he was a young boy. He told AFP he intended to pass it on to his three children. "We have inherited the care of camels (in my family) for more than 200 years," he said. "Now my children love it, and they constantly ask to come here, and their voices are known as well."

Earlier this month, Qatula brought his camels to the seventh edition of the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival, which aims to promote the camel as an essential component of Saudi heritage. Participants in the beauty contest competed for prizes totaling 350 million riyals (\$93 million).

The dromedaries were judged on attributes including their lips, necks, humps and coloring. During a break in the action, Qatula explained how Alheda'a allows herders to bond with their charges. "The owner of the camels calls his camels with special names, and through repetition, they know their name and respond to it," he said, as one of his camels let out a cry of her own. "Look," he said, laughing as he stroked the animal. "She feels the same way." — AFP



Camels are pictured during the annual King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Rumah desert



A Saudi camel herder leads his animals during the annual King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Rumah desert, northeast of the Saudi capital Riyadh.



Camels are pictured during the annual King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Rumah desert.

Tiny beetle causes 'Christmas Eye' agony in Australia

A rare and agonizing affliction dubbed "Christmas Eye", caused by the toxic secretions of a tiny native beetle, has re-emerged to torment residents in a remote part of southeastern Australia. The poorly researched eye condition sounds like a minor symptom of holiday season excess, but experts have said the excruciating pain was often likened to giving birth. One of the most unusual aspects of Christmas Eye is that it is typically only found in Australia's Albury-Wodonga region, about 300 kilo-



This undated handout shows a sample of a native species of orthoperus beetle is typically only found in Australia's Albury-Wodonga region about 300 kilometers (186 miles) northeast of Melbourne.—AFP

meters (186 miles) northeast of Melbourne.

It is also known as "Albury-Wodonga syndrome" and "Harvester's Keratitis" because of its link to farming work. Rob Holloway, an optometrist in the region, said Christmas Eye appeared in the Australian summer, "hence the name", and was often easy to diagnose. "The pain level is generally what diagnoses it straight away," he told AFP. "It's etched in their memory. The common response is 'You poor bastard'." Wodonga optometrist Kelly Gibbons said she had heard people "compare it to childbirth". "These people are in abject misery," she told national broadcaster ABC. Holloway said Christmas Eye was caused by the native species of orthoperus beetles, which measure less than 1 millimeter in length. The beetles squirt a toxic compound when crushed—for example, by someone rubbing their eye. "The insect has a component called pederin, which is a blistering agent," Holloway said.

"This gets secreted on to the eye surface, and it makes the surface of the eye blister and fall off." There has been a recent spike in cases throughout Albury-Wodonga, Holloway said, which was possibly linked to heavy downpours in winter and spring. "This year has been weird. We had none at all until the week before Christmas, but since then we were inundated for probably a fortnight," he said. "Since Christmas we've seen 25 to 30 cases. In a normal year you might get 10.—AFP

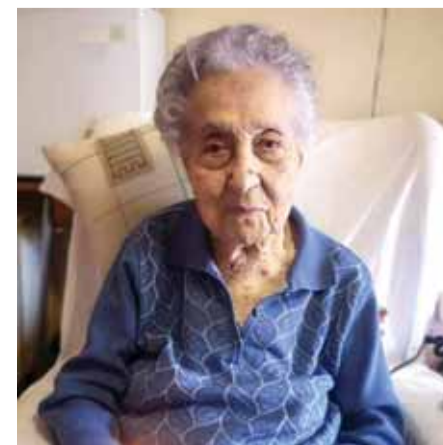
Spanish woman tipped as 'world's oldest person' at 115

A Spanish great-grandmother who was born in the United States has likely become the world's oldest living person at 115, a Guinness World Records consultant said Wednesday. Maria Branyas Morera is believed to have assumed the title following the death on Tuesday of French nun Lucile Randon aged 118, senior consultant for gerontology Robert D. Young said. Guinness World Records must still make the official decision after carrying out document checks and interviewing Branyas Morera's family, added Young, who is also the director of the Gerontology Research Group's supercentenarian research database.

"We know what is likely, but it's not confirmed at this time," he wrote in an email sent to AFP. Branyas Morera, who has lived through the 1918 flu, two world wars and Spain's civil war, was not available for interviews. The Santa Maria del Tura nursing home in the town of Olot in northeastern Spain, where Branyas Morera has lived for the past two decades, said it would hold a "small celebration" behind closed doors in the coming days to mark "this very special event".

"She is in good health and remains surprised and grateful for the interest that has been generated," it added in a statement. Branyas Morera's youngest daughter, 78-year-old Rosa Moret, attributed her mother's longevity to "genetics". "She has never gone to the hospital, she has never broken any bones, she is fine, she has no pain," Moret told regional Catalan television on Wednesday.

Branyas Morera was born in San



Maria Branyas Morera

Francisco on March 4, 1907 shortly after her family moved to the United States from Mexico. The entire family decided to return to their native Spain in 1915 as World War I was under way, which complicated the ship voyage across the Atlantic. The crossing was also marked by tragedy—her father died from tuberculosis towards the end of the voyage, and his coffin was thrown into the sea.

Branyas Morera and her mother settled in Barcelona. In 1931 — five years before the start of Spain's 1936-39 civil war—she married a doctor. The couple lived together for four decades until her husband died aged 72. She has had three children, including one who has already died, 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Just weeks after ringing in her 113th birthday, Branyas Morera got COVID-19 and was confined to her room at her care home in Olot but made a full recovery. "I haven't done anything extraordinary, the only thing I did was live," she told Barcelona-based daily newspaper La Vanguardia in 2019. — AFP

Sports

Adams game-winner gives Memphis 11th straight win, Denver down Wolves

Two competitive teams playing pretty high-level basketball

LOS ANGELES: Steven Adams grabbed the first game-winning basket of his career as the Memphis Grizzlies rolled to a franchise record-equaling 11th straight victory on Wednesday with a 115-114 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers. New Zealand international Adams was on hand to tip-in at the basket after an attempted layup by Ja Morant with just under 17 seconds remaining of a thrilling battle at the FedExForum in Memphis.

Memphis small forward Dillon Brooks then conjured a crucial block to thwart Cavs point guard Darius Garland's attempt at a buzzer-beating three-pointer. "We've got a bunch of dogs over here who are ready to play every single night," Brooks said afterwards. Memphis's 11th straight victory equaled the team's longest win streak set last season and leaves them with 31 wins and 13 defeats in the Western Conference, just behind leaders Denver (32-13). The outcome of a see-saw game was in the balance until the final seconds of a contest that saw the lead change hands no fewer than 16 times.

Memphis looked to be cruising towards another blowout after opening up a 19-point lead in the second quarter. Cleveland hit back however to reel in the Memphis lead, and appeared poised for an upset victory after Evan Mobley's hook shot put the Cavs up 114-111 with just over a minute remaining.

Adams 'hyped'

Two Morant free throws got the Grizzlies to 114-113 however, and when Cleveland coughed up a costly turnover for a five-second time violation, Morant drove forward to set up the layup for Adams' winning rebound—the first game-winner of the Kiwi's nine-season NBA career. "That was his first game-winner, he's definitely hyped," Memphis coach Taylor Jenkins

said of Adams. "There was a lot going on in that game. Two competitive teams playing pretty high-level basketball, definitely ebbs and flows, highs and lows, but in the end we made the plays." Desmond Bane led the Grizzlies scoring with 25 points while Morant added 24 with eight assists. Jaren Jackson Jr posted 15 points while Adams finished with a 13-point, 10-rebound double-double.

Elsewhere Wednesday, Nikola Jokic posted a 31-point triple double as Denver ensured they remained on top of the West with a 122-118 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves. The Nuggets' eighth consecutive victory went down to the wire, however, with Minnesota leading by five points at 118-113 with just under three minutes remaining at Denver's Ball Arena.

But the Nuggets finished strong with a 9-0 run to keep their winning streak intact. "We love it, we know we can improve, and we can see we have ups and downs in a game," Jokic said of Denver's form. "Fourth quarter is the winning time and I'm just glad we always deliver when we need it."

In Los Angeles, LeBron James delivered another high-scoring performance but it was not enough to stop the Lakers slipping to a 116-111 defeat to the Sacramento Kings. James, who is on pace to overtake Kareem Abdul-Jabbar next month as the NBA's all-time leading points scorer, finished with 32 points, eight rebounds and nine assists.

But the Lakers slid to their 25th defeat of the season after a solid Kings performance that saw De'Aaron Fox score 31 points. In Dallas, Dejounte Murray scored 30 points as the Atlanta Hawks swept to an impressive 130-122 win on the road over the Mavericks.

Dallas star Luka Doncic matched Murray's 30-point tally but the Mavs were unable to contain a bal-



MEMPHIS: Dillon Brooks #24 of the Memphis Grizzlies drives to the basket against the Cleveland Cavaliers at FedExForum in Memphis, Tennessee. —AFP

anced Atlanta offensive display which remarkably saw eight of their nine players finish in double figures. John Collins had 19 points while Trae Young added 18 points with 12 assists for Atlanta.

"We're playing for 48 minutes now and not just for 24 or 30 or whatever," Murray said after Atlanta's

fourth straight win. In New Orleans, Bam Adebayo's 26 points helped the Miami Heat to a 124-98 win over the Pelicans.

Jimmy Butler chipped in with 18 points while Tyler Herro added 14 as Miami improved to 25-21 to remain in the Eastern Conference playoff hunt. —AFP

Top India wrestlers to boycott competitions over alleged abuse

NEW DELHI: Top Indian wrestlers, including Olympic medallists and Commonwealth Games champions, announced a boycott of international competitions Thursday after one of them accused their federation chief and several coaches of sexually harassing athletes.

Dozens of wrestlers—both male and female—along with coaches and trainees mounted a second day of protests in New Delhi. "All the women here at the protest, every one of them has been through something, some incident or the other has happened with every one of us," said triple Commonwealth Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat, one of India's most decorated women wrestlers.

"None of the athletes from this protest will participate in any national or international competitions until this is sorted," she added. At a similar protest on Wednesday she accused Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh—who is an MP for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party—and several trainers of abuse.

"Women wrestlers have been sexually harassed at national camps by coaches and also the WFI president," Phogat said. "I know at least 10 to 20 girls in the national camp who have come and told me their stories," she told reporters.

The allegations come months after the coach of the country's national cycling team was sacked following sexual harassment charges. India is a deeply hierarchical society and Phogat said many wrestlers were intimidated into not coming forward because of their humble origins.

"They are scared because of their family background. They can't fight them because they are powerful." "Wrestling is our only livelihood and they are

Farrell omits Carbery from Ireland Six Nations squad

DUBLIN: Joey Carbery, widely seen for a long time to be the natural successor to Johnny Sexton as Ireland's fly-half, was not included in the Six Nations squad unveiled by head coach Andy Farrell on Thursday. Ireland captain Sexton has been named despite recovering from a cheekbone injury, with Ross Byrne and Carbery's Munster teammate Jack Crowley named as his understudies.

Crowley impressed when he started last November's Test against Australia after Sexton had to withdraw at the last minute—and Byrne came on to seal the 13-10 victory. That rounded off a year which saw Ireland rise to number one on the back of a sequence of strong results with the highlight a historic Test series win in New Zealand.

Sexton is expected to be fit to lead the world-ranked number one side away to Wales on February 4. Farrell, though, held out some hope for Carbery to regain his place over the duration of a tournament that is the last major test for European teams before the Rugby World Cup in France later this year.

Farrell will be seeking to lead the Irish to at least their first appearance in a semi-final of the global showpiece. "While there are a few players carrying knocks and others that have missed out on selection for the start of the tournament, they will have the opportunity to push their case playing for their provinces in the URC over the coming weeks," said Farrell in an Irish Rugby Football Union statement.

"No doubt we will need to call upon the wider group as the tournament progresses." Pivotal prop



NEW DELHI: (L-R) Indian wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Anshu Malik, Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik along with others wrestlers take part in an ongoing protest against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), in New Delhi on January 19, 2023, following allegations of sexual harassment to athletes by members of the WFI. —AFP

not letting us do it. Our only option is to die. So might as well do good before dying," she added. She did not state whether she was a victim herself.

'Ready to be hanged'

Phogat was joined in her protests by Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia. Punia, who is male, said Thursday: "The things that we faced, we don't want the future wrestlers of this country to face, that is why we are here protesting." Malik earlier tweeted: "Athletes work hard to win medals for the country, but the federation has done nothing but let us down."

Tadhg Furlong has also been named despite carrying a calf injury but centre Robbie Henshaw misses out due to a wrist injury.

Veterans Keith Earls, capped 98 times, and Conor Murray, who has a century of appearances, are called up by Farrell even though they were both dropped for Munster's Champions Cup clash with Northampton last weekend. Wing James Lowe, who recently returned to New Zealand for personal reasons, is also included. The only uncapped player in the 37-man squad is centre Jamie Osborne. The Irish follow up a week after playing the Welsh by hosting last year's Grand Slam-winning side France. The Irish have lost to the French in their previous two meetings but will be bidding to record a record 13th successive home win over Fabien Galthie's side.

Squad

Backs: Bunde Aki (Connacht), Ross Byrne (Leinster), Craig Casey (Munster), Jack Crowley (Munster), Keith Earls (Munster), Jamison Gibson-Park (Leinster), Mack Hansen (Connacht), Hugo Keenan (Leinster), Jordan Larmour (Leinster), James Lowe (Leinster), Stuart McCloskey (Ulster), Conor Murray (Munster), Jimmy O'Brien (Leinster), Jamie Osborne (Leinster), Garry Ringrose (Leinster), Johnny Sexton (Leinster, capt), Jacob Stockdale (Ulster).

Forwards: Ryan Baird (Leinster), Finlay Bealham (Connacht), Tadhg Beirne (Munster), Jack Conan (Leinster), Gavin Coombes (Munster), Caelan Doris (Leinster), Tadhg Furlong (Leinster), Cian Healy (Leinster), Iain Henderson (Ulster), Rob Herring (Ulster), Ronan Kelleher (Leinster), Dave Kilcoyne (Munster), Joe McCarthy (Leinster), Peter O'Mahony (Munster), Tom O'Toole (Ulster), Andrew Porter (Leinster), Cian Prendergast (Connacht), James Ryan (Leinster), Dan Sheehan (Leinster), Josh van der Flier (Leinster)

Coach: Andy Farrell (ENG). —AFP

India's #MeToo movement gathered momentum in 2018 after a Bollywood actress accused a senior actor of sexual harassment. Soon after, women from other backgrounds came forward with multiple allegations, including against a former government minister, but activists say there has been little fundamental change.

According to local media reports, Singh denied the allegations, saying he was "ready to be hanged" if even a single woman wrestler proved the sexual harassment charge. India's sports ministry has asked the federation to respond to the allegations within 72 hours, reports said. —AFP

LIV Golf announce US broadcast deal

MIAMI: The Saudi-backed LIV Golf tour announced its first broadcast deal in the United States on Thursday, penning a 'multi-year' agreement with The CW Network, the tour said in a statement. LIV's debut season in 2022 did not have a broadcast partner in the US with tournaments only being shown on their own website and YouTube channel.

While the deal is not with one of the top networks for live sport in the US, securing a television deal in the States was one of the prime goals for the tour which has signed up a number of top players but has faced criticism from human rights campaigners and legal battles with the PGA Tour.

"This is a momentous day for LIV Golf as this partnership is about more than just media rights. The CW will provide accessibility for our fans and maximum exposure for our athletes and partners as their reach includes more than 120 million households across the United States," said LIV CEO Greg Norman.

"We're very proud to note how consequential it is that a league that has only existed for one year has secured a full broadcast deal in its debut full league season." The CW is 75% owned by Nexstar Media Group, which owns a host of local channels across the United States, but the channel is not known for showing live sports.

"For The CW, our partnership with LIV Golf marks a significant milestone in our goal to re-engineer the network with quality, diversified programming for our viewers, advertisers and CW affiliates. This also marks the first time in The CW's 17-year history that the network is the exclusive broadcast home for live mainstream sports," said Dennis Miller, President, The CW Network. —AFP



Rashid Al-Kandari

Kuwait Motor Town to host third Duathlon tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Motor Town will host the third Duathlon Championship on Friday, organized by Kuwait Triathlon Club and Federation for men, women, uniformed and Gulf nationals for 5 km running, 20 km cycling followed by 2 km running. For the disabled, it will be 2.5 km running, 7.5 km cycling then 2.5 km running.

In the children's category of 6-7 years, it will be 300 meters of running, 600m cycling, then 300m running. The 8-9-years-olds will have 500m running, then 1000m cycling, followed by 500m running. For 10-11 years: 1 km running, then 2 km cycling and finally 1 km running. For 12-13 years: 2 km running, then 6 km cycling and 2 km running. 14-15 years: 2.5 km running, then 7.5 km cycling and finally 2.5 km running.

Federation President Rashid Al-Kandari met Kuwait Fire Force Chief Khalid Al-Mikrad and discussed cooperation between KFF and KTC, which includes firemen with the uniformed men in the club's events. Kandari said everything is ready for the tournament, and expected it to be an exciting event, as a large number of men and women, children and uniformed personnel will participate. He said the club is keen on organizing such events to allow athletes to compete for top places, while at the same time discover the talented and skilled among them at an early age to establish the sport on solid grounds to represent Kuwait internationally.

Springboks' Mapimpi handed two-week ban for eye contact

PARIS: The Sharks' Springboks Rugby World Cup winner Makazole Mapimpi has been banned for two weeks for making "reckless" contact with the eye of Bordeaux-Begles' Maxime Lucu last weekend, the Champions Cup organisers announced on Thursday.

Mapimpi, 32, was cited after his team's win in Durban at the weekend with the sanction handed down following Wednesday's independent disciplinary hearing. "The committee upheld the citing complaint, finding that Mapimpi had made reckless contact with Lucu's eye area which warranted a red card and it determined that the offence was at the low end of World Rugby's sanctions and four weeks was selected as the appropriate entry point," European Professional Club Rugby (EPCR) said.

"Due to the player's clear disciplinary record, it was decided to grant him the full 50% mitigation and the committee therefore reduced the sanction by two weeks before imposing a two-week suspension. "Mapimpi is free to play on Monday, 30 January and both he and EPCR have the right to appeal the decision," it added. Sharks became the first South African side to reach the Champions Cup last 16 as they eased past Bordeaux-Begles 32-3 in Durban. —AFP

Sports

Olise's wonder-strike forces Man Utd to settle for Palace draw

LONDON: Erik ten Hag criticised Manchester United's lack of killer instinct after Michael Olise's superb stoppage-time free-kick rescued a 1-1 draw for Crystal Palace on Wednesday. Ten Hag's side led through Bruno Fernandes' first half strike at Selhurst Park as they looked to record their longest winning streak in 14 years.

But Olise halted United's run at nine successive victories in all competitions when he smashed a breathtaking set-piece past David de Gea in the final seconds. It was a major blow for United, who had hoped to climb to second place in the Premier League and put pressure on leaders Arsenal ahead of their visit to the Emirates Stadium on Sunday.

"When you're winning with two minutes to go and Palace don't create anything except one from a corner and one from the free-kick, you don't expect to drop points," Ten Hag said. "We have to invest more to get that second goal and then not be in that situation that a lucky moment costs you."

"In the second half we had a lot of space to kill them and go for the second goal. I never saw we really went for the second goal. It's difficult to say why. I have to criticise my team. Go for the second." Having beaten City 2-1 in the Manchester derby on Saturday, United left freezing south London disappointed not to make it 10 in a row.

Instead, United moved up to third, level on points with champions Manchester City and eight adrift of Mikel Arteta's table-toppers. City would go three points clear of United if they beat Tottenham on Thursday. United, who haven't won the title since 2013, can still put a little pressure on Arsenal if they beat the Gunners in north London.

"We have to take the lesson. You can't change it (the end of the winning run). We're looking forward," Ten Hag said. "Look to Arsenal and make a proper plan. The players have to make sure they're ready." Palace beat United on the final day of last season at the dismal culmination of Ralf Rangnick's lacklustre reign as interim boss.

United have been revitalised by Ten Hag in the intervening eight months and the contrast between the two eras was immediately evident. Ten Hag's team went close to an early opener when Luke Shaw fizzed a half-volley just wide of the far post from Aaron Wan-Bissaka's pass.

Wout Weghorst was making his United debut following his arrival on loan from Burnley after his spell at Besiktas was cut short. The Netherlands striker's only sight of goal in his 70-minute appearance was a header onto the roof of the net from Shaw's cross.

United frustrated

After being panned back, Palace threatened when Odsonne Edouard's 25-yard blast was brilliantly tipped onto the bar by David de Gea. United were unfazed and took the lead in clinical fashion after 44 minutes. Fernandes scored United's controversial equaliser in the Manchester derby on Saturday, with Marcus Rashford clearly offside before the Portugal midfielder netted.

There were no doubts about this one as Christian Eriksen swept into the Palace area and cut his pass back to the unmarked Fernandes, who took a touch before shooting powerfully past Vicente Guaita from 12 yards.

United maintained control for much of the second half, aided by an influential display from Brazil



LONDON: Crystal Palace's French midfielder Michael Olise (unseen) shoots a penalty kick and scores his team first goal past Manchester United's Spanish goalkeeper David de Gea (C) during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Manchester United. —AFP

midfielder Casemiro, who was so unruffled he even posed for a selfie with a pitch-invading fan. Stewards were slow to react to the supporter, who stood next to Casemiro for several seconds and was almost off the pitch again before he was finally intercepted by security.

But, to Ten Hag's chagrin, United faded in the closing stages. Marc Guehi's header almost brought an equaliser as De Gea palmed it away. And Palace snatched their leveller at the death when Olise bent a sublime free-kick over the wall and in off the bar from 30 yards. —AFP

Madande gives Zimbabwe dramatic ODI victory

HARARE: Clive Madande struck a four off the final ball of a rain-interrupted one-day international thriller in Harare on Wednesday to give Zimbabwe a three-wicket victory over Ireland. The home side needed 13 runs from their last over under the DLS system to win and, boosted by a six from Ryan Burl, reduced the target to four runs with one Graham Hume delivery left.

By scooping the ball over deep midwicket, wicketkeeper Madande joined Burl (59) and Sikandar Raza (43) as stars of a brave fightback by Zimbabwe after Ireland posted 288-4 in 50 overs. Zimbabwe scored 214-7 in reply as a three-match ODI series began, following a 2-1 win by the hosts in a three-match Twenty20 series.

Burl was run out seeking a second run off the second ball of the final over and Raza was caught earlier having miscued an attempted shot over long on. "I am ecstatic about Clive," said Burl. "When batting with him, I kept telling him to be the guy that is going to be there until the end, and win it for your country."

"As to my good form, there is no secret," he said of a knock that included two sixes and six fours. "I'm just concentrating on putting my head down and doing the right things." Harare-born former England Test batsman Gary Ballance contributed 23 to the Zimbabwe total before being caught at short third man attempting a pull shot off a back-of-a-length ball.

Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie struck 121 before retiring hurt. Zimbabwe won the toss, opted to field and, initially, the decision paid off as openers Paul Stirling (13) and Stephen Doherty (3) were dismissed with 25 runs on the board.



HARARE: Ireland's Harry Tector (top) takes a catch over teammate Ireland's Tyrone Kane (bottom) to dismiss Zimbabwe's Craig Ervine (not in picture) during the first one day international cricket match between Zimbabwe and Ireland at the Harare Sports Club in Harare. —AFP

The match then underwent a dramatic change as Balbirnie and Harry Tector (101 not out) put on 212 for the third wicket — 16 runs short of the Irish record. Balbirnie faced 137 balls and hit three sixes and 13 fours before top-edging a Brad Evans beamer into the grill of his helmet, forcing him to quit.

The captain was able to walk off the field and an Irish official, who requested anonymity, said the centurion "was not seriously injured and would be okay". "We attach no blame to him (Evans). It was not a deliberate act-just a ball that was not ideally

delivered. These things happen in cricket."

Tector reached his century with two runs from a cover drive off the fourth ball of the final over. His total included one six and eight fours off 109 deliveries. "Hey, what have we got to do to win a game," said Tector. "It was a fantastic game. Sikandar and Ryan-the way they played took the game away from us."

Fast medium pacer Victor Nyauchi was the most successful of the Zimbabwe bowlers, taking two wickets for 65 runs. The ODI series continues on Saturday and concludes on Monday. —AFP

again and then we will be under more pressure to act in the Bundesliga than if we were to win," Nagelsmann said on Friday.

"So it's an important game." The match pits Germany's two most in-form sides against each other in what has emerged as perhaps the biggest rivalry in the Bundesliga in recent seasons. Six of the teams' 12 league clashes against each other have come with the sides sitting first and second on the ladder.

While Bayern have lost only once in all competitions and are strong favourites for both the title and Friday's clash, RB have lost just twice since local Leipzig lad Marco Rose took over as head coach in September.

The Red Bulls' record at home is even more imposing, with six wins and one draw from seven league matches this season. Bayern have won five, drawn two and lost one of their eight games away from home. Neither side will be at full strength however, with several key players missing.

Bayern captain and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer and defender Lucas Hernandez both suffered long-term injuries, while forward Sadio Mane will not be back until at least February. Leipzig captain and goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi is also out long-term, while France forward Christopher Nkunku will not be back in time to face Bayern.

Leipzig will however welcome back winger Timo Werner, who missed the World Cup with an ankle injury. In an interview published Wednesday with Germany's Sportbild, Werner said Leipzig could "increase the pressure on Bayern, especially as we still have the return fixture".

"Before the winter break we were at eye level with Bayern, in terms of the quality of our play," Werner however said his side needed to reach Bayern-like levels of consistency should they mount a realistic challenge for the title this season.

"A win would point us in the right direction, but what is more important than beating Bayern is to be

Betis knocked out on penalties

MADRID: Holders Real Betis crashed out of the Copa del Rey in the last 16 on Wednesday after losing 4-2 on penalties to Osasuna despite twice leading in a tie that finished 2-2 after extra time. Portugal midfielder William Carvalho put Betis ahead at home just past the hour but Osasuna forced an additional 30 minutes when David Garcia equalised in stoppage time.

Betis went back in front through Youssouf Sabaly but Ruben Garcia levelled before Sergio Canales and Guido Rodriguez both missed for Manuel Pellegrini's side in the shootout. Alvaro Morata struck before Marcos Llorente added a late second as Atletico beat second-tier Levante 2-0, providing Diego Simeone's team some respite from their stumbling run in La Liga.

Edinson Cavani scored twice as last year's runners-up Valencia strolled to a 4-0 win at second-division Gijon. Justin Kluivert and Samuel Lino were also on target for the visitors. Athletic Bilbao won 1-0 at home to Espanyol courtesy of a strike from veteran defender Oscar de Marcos.

Barcelona, the record 31-time winners, take on third-tier Ceuta on the coast of North Africa on Thursday, while Real Madrid go to Villarreal. The quarter-final draw takes place on Friday with the ties scheduled for January 24-26. —AFP

consistent afterwards. "The title will be decided in games against teams with other things to worry about."

One to watch

Borussia Dortmund striker Sebastian Haller is likely to make his first competitive appearance for the club at home to Augsburg on Thursday after fighting back from testicular cancer. Haller was diagnosed mere days after signing for Dortmund in the summer of 2022 and spent the rest of the year receiving treatment, including four rounds of chemotherapy and two operations.

After coming on as a late substitute in a friendly against Fortuna Duesseldorf in January, Haller said he wanted to "give the coach no option" but to pick him. He made good on that promise in his next hit out, scoring three goals in eight minutes when subbed on at half-time in a friendly against Basel on Friday, proving that his return to the field was more than just sentimental. Dortmund re-start the season nine points adrift of league leaders Bayern in sixth place. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

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

Change of Name

I, SAIFUDDIN holder of Passport No. Z4825362 do hereby change my name to SAIFUDDIN (as Given name) NASIR (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SAIFUDDIN NASIR and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2834)

I, BURHANUDDIN holder of Passport No. Z4827273 do hereby change my name to BURHANUDDIN (as Given name) GOTHA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name BURHANUDDIN GOTHA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2837) - 18-01-2023

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988

Iraq beat Oman 3-2 in thriller



BASRA: Iraq's Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani (second left) celebrates with the national football team as they lift the trophy after winning the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 25) final against Oman at Basra International Stadium on Jan 19, 2023. — AFP

BASRA: Iraq defeated Oman in the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 25) tournament in Basra on Thursday. Iraqi midfielder Ibrahim Bayesh scored a goal in the 24th minute to put Iraq up 1-0. This remained the

score until 10 minutes into injury time, when Omani midfielder Salaah Al-Yahyaie scored in a penalty kick to tie the game and send it into overtime.

Iraqi midfielder Amjad Attwan then scored a pen-

alty in the 116th minute, followed by Omani striker Omar Al-Malki scoring a header three minutes later. At 122 minutes in - two minutes into injury time following overtime - Iraqi defender Manaf Younis scored the

final goal, as Iraq won 3-2. The Arabian Gulf Cup is held every four years. Bahrain won the last tournament in 2019. Oman has won twice - in 2009 and 2017. Iraq also won in 1979, 1984 and 1988. — Agencies

Ronaldo scores twice in Saudi reunion with Messi

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo recovered from a punch in the face to score twice against Paris Saint-Germain on Thursday in a lively reunion with his great rival Lionel Messi that demonstrated the financial firepower of the resource-rich Gulf. Ronaldo, 37, was decked by PSG 'keeper Keylor Navas's flailing fist but he drilled the resulting penalty and then added another in a 5-4 exhibition defeat, his first appearance since moving to Saudi Arabia in a deal said to total more than 400 million euros.

For Qatar-owned PSG, Messi and Kylian Mbappe both scored and Neymar missed a penalty before they withdrew on the hour-mark alongside Ronaldo, who was representing a composite Saudi side, to leave the world's four best-paid players watching from the bench in Riyadh. Hundreds of millions of euros worth of footballers were on view for the exhibition game in the Saudi capital, which comes just weeks after neighboring Qatar spent lavishly on the first World Cup on Arab soil, won by Messi's Argentina.

Among the packed crowd at the 69,000-seat King Fahd Stadium was a Saudi real estate mogul who paid \$2.6 million at auction for a ticket giving him dressing-room access to the players. After

Ronaldo led out the Riyadh Season Team, drawn from his new club Al Nassr and Saudi rivals Al Hilal, to flame-throwers and tickertape, Messi opened the scoring after just three minutes when he was fed by the livewire Mbappe.

Ronaldo's first touch in Saudi football was a throw-in but he had a shot saved and a penalty appeal waved away before Navas caught him flush on the cheekbone as they challenged for a high ball. Ronaldo, still rubbing the red mark on his face and grimacing, fired past Navas to make it 1-1 on 34 minutes.

Five minutes later, PSG's Juan Bernat was given a straight red card for a foul on Salem Al-Dawsari - Saudi Arabia's match-winner in their famous group-stage World Cup victory over Argentina. Messi, perhaps irritated by the intensity of the mid-season friendly, aimed a reproachful look at Ronaldo, his sparring partner in their days playing for Barcelona and Real Madrid.

PSG were soon back in front thanks to Marquinhos's delicate finish before Neymar missed his spot-kick, shooting tamely after a trademark stutter run-up. Minutes later, Ronaldo hit his second equalizer deep into first-half injury time, heading against the post and then burying the rebound to make it 2-2 at half-time. Mbappe put PSG back in front shortly after the break, turning his marker inside-out and laying on an easy finish for Sergio Ramos, before Hyun-soo Jang found a third equalizer for the hosts.

But Mbappe thumped home a penalty and Hugo Ekitike scored to make it 5-3 before Brazilian striker Talisca grabbed the Riyadh team's fourth goal at the



RIYADH: PSG players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Riyadh Season Cup football match against the Riyadh All-Stars at King Fahd Stadium on Jan 19, 2023. — AFP

death. It was the first outing in oil-rich Saudi for Ronaldo, who will make his Saudi Pro League debut for Al Nassr on Sunday after signing for more than 200 million euros, according to a source close to the club.

The veteran Portuguese star will be paid an additional 200 million euros, the source told AFP, to be an ambassador for Saudi Arabia's expected 2030 World Cup joint hosting bid with Egypt and Greece. — AFP

Dzeko-inspired Inter win Milan derby Super Cup

RIYADH: Inter Milan retained the Italian Super Cup on Wednesday after Edin Dzeko inspired his team to a 3-0 victory over local rivals AC Milan. The damage was done in the opening 21 minutes in Riyadh thanks to Dzeko, who played a defence-splitting pass for Federico Dimarco's 10th-minute opener and doubled Inter's lead 11 minutes later.

Lautaro Martinez then added a brilliantly taken third in the 77th minute to underline Inter's superiority on a night in which Milan simply didn't show up. Inter claim the Italian season's first trophy as they did last year when they beat Juventus.

"We put in a great performance, the boys were brilliant from the first minute until the final whistle," Dzeko told Mediaset. "We won the Super Cup last season so we knew how great it is to win it... I'm really happy that we're bringing home another trophy, and I hope there will be more in the future."

Without the raucous soundtrack of a packed San

Siro, Wednesday's match in Saudi Arabia was an unusual Milan derby but that won't stop Inter fans claiming local bragging rights as well as the Super Cup for the seventh time.

Both teams are trailing way behind Napoli in what is beginning to look like a one-team title charge but Inter appeared a class above uninspired Italian champions Milan who barely laid a glove on Simone Inzaghi's side.

"We weren't up to the task in the first half, we made too many mistakes and from there it was difficult to turn the match around," Milan coach Stefano Pioli told Mediaset. "The defeat hurts because it was a trophy we wanted to win, but the rest of the season is still there for us. We just need to get back to playing the way we know how."

Milan continued their sluggish start to the new year and Dzeko punished them by helping Inter to a two-goal half-time lead which was more than deserved. The 36-year-old beautifully sent Nicolo Barella scampering in behind Milan's defence, allowing the Italy midfielder to roll a low pass which compatriot Dimarco had no problems tucking away.

Dzeko then punished sloppy Milan defending of a free-kick by charging through onto Alessandro Bastoni's drilled long pass, cutting inside Sandro Tonali and driving home a fine strike from a tight angle.

Milan huffed and puffed in the second half but the



RIYADH: Inter Milan's players lift the trophy to celebrate winning the Italian SuperCup football match between AC Milan and Inter Milan, at the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh on January 18, 2023. — AFP

closest they came to getting back into the game was the underwhelming Rafael Leao smashing over the bar three minutes after the break. And Martinez made absolutely sure Inzaghi would claim his fourth Super

Cup as a coach when the Argentina forward span a bamboozled Fikayo Tomori and controlled Milan Skrinjar's long pass before tucking home a beautiful finish with the outside of his right foot. — AFP