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Assembly-govt standoff deepens

Parliament sessions in doubt • MPs refuse to withdraw grillings

BNK Padel Open a smashing success



KUWAIT: Bader Al-Kharafi poses for a group photo with winners of the BNK Padel Open. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Pages 14 & 15)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The standoff between the government and the National Assembly deepened on Sunday as MPs turned down a reported demand by the government to withdraw grillings against two ministers and a key panel reiterated it will not withdraw populist bills without pledges by the Cabinet to raise salaries. As a result, the Assembly's regular session on Tuesday and Wednesday remain in doubt as the government is likely to boycott them.

A senior opposition MP meanwhile said HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah should attend the Assembly sessions and carry out his constitutional and political responsibilities or resign. The standoff between the legislative and executive authorities began two weeks ago when the only two ministers attending the Assembly session walked out after MPs insisted to debate several populist draft legislations, including a draft law calling for the purchase of billions of dinars of loans owed by Kuwaiti citizens to local banks.

The government then boycotted another Assembly session and demanded that the draft laws be sent back to the Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee to allow the govern-

ment to express its viewpoint that such laws are costly to the state budget.

Meanwhile, two local newspapers said the Cabinet's regular weekly meeting on Monday is decisive and ministers may tender their resignations to the prime minister in protest against the alleged lack of cooperation by the National Assembly. The Cabinet is demanding the National Assembly should send the controversial populist draft legislations back to the Assembly committees for reconsideration and that two MPs who filed to grill Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Barrak Al-Sheetan should withdraw them.

The two lawmakers, Mubarak Al-Hajraf and Jenan Bushehri, said they will not withdraw the grillings and called on the ministers to face questioning in the Assembly over allegations of mismanagement and failure to run Kuwait's massive investments abroad. Hajraf said he will not accept to withdraw or even delay his grilling of the finance minister, saying he wants to expose crimes committed by the minister against public funds. Bushehri also insisted she will not withdraw the grilling.

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News in brief

New bus stop removed

KUWAIT: Less than a week after opening to much fanfare, a public transport bus stop was removed for violating electrical regulations, leading to criticism from social media users. Netizens called the removal "not understandable" after Hawally Governor Ali Salem Al-Asfar had assured during its inauguration that it was an exceptional bus stop and a first of its kind. The bus stop had air conditioning, automatic doors, charging ports for mobile phones and a surveillance camera. "How can the bus stop be removed after the Hawally governorate announced it cost around KD 5,000 to install. Who will be held accountable for the waste of public money?" netizens asked.

MoH cuts med profits by 5%

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi issued a decision to reduce the profit margin on medicines and food supplements at private health facilities in Kuwait by 5 percent.

13,000 deaths in a week

BEIJING: China reported nearly 13,000 COVID-related deaths in hospitals between Jan 13 and 19, after a top health official said the vast majority of the population had already been infected. The death toll came a week after China said nearly 60,000 people had died with COVID in hospitals in just over a month. China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention said in a statement on Saturday that 681 hospitalized patients had died of respiratory failure caused by coronavirus infection, and 11,977 had died of other diseases combined with an infection over the period. The figures do not include anyone who died at home. — AFP (See Page 6)

National Library marks centenary

KUWAIT: January 23 of the year 1923 marked the beginning of a century-long cultural journey of what began as a privately-owned library and ended up as Kuwait's national library. The library's founding fathers Abdulhameed Al-Sane and Sultan Al-Kulaib held a meeting during the reign of late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the attendance of a number of Kuwaiti intellectuals to discuss the details of their project.

A number of bibliophiles, enthralled by the notion of a privately owned library open to the public, donated a number of valuable books and agreed to supply the library with a diverse and riveting collection of magazine and newspaper issues. The library reached its final form in 1994 when late Amir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued a decree naming it the National Library of Kuwait.

The library's objectives include the documentation and preservation of national heritage, protection of intellectual property, developing national cadres of librarians and archivists and collaborating with various national libraries and research centers to further its growth. — KUNA (See Page 4)



The National Library of Kuwait.

US Lunar New Year shooting leaves 10 dead

MONTEREY PARK: Ten people have died and at least 10 others were wounded in a mass shooting at a dance club in a largely Asian city in southern California, police said Sunday, with the suspect still at large hours later. The gunman opened fire as the local community were celebrating Lunar New Year at the venue in Monterey Park, with witnesses saying he shot indiscriminately with a semi-automatic weapon.

Captain Andrew Meyer of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said officers had responded to emergency calls around 10:20 pm on Saturday (6:20 Sunday GMT) and found people pouring out of the premises. "The officers made entry to the location and located additional victims," he said. "The Monterey Park Fire Department responded to the scene and treated the injured and pronounced 10 of the victims deceased at the scene. There are at least 10 additional victims that were transported to numerous local hospitals and are listed in various conditions from stable to critical. The suspect fled the scene and remains outstanding."

Continued on Page 6



MONTEREY PARK, California: Police work near the scene of a mass shooting on Jan 22, 2023. — AFP

India blocks 'hostile' BBC docu on Modi

NEW DELHI: India's government said it has blocked videos and tweets sharing links to a BBC documentary about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role during deadly 2002 sectarian riots, calling it "hostile propa-

ganda and anti-India garbage". The British broadcaster's program alleges that the Hindu nationalist Modi, premier of Gujarat state at the time, ordered police to turn a blind eye to the orgy of violence there that left at least 1,000 people dead, most of them minority Muslims.

Kanchan Gupta, an adviser to the government, tweeted on Saturday that the Indian government used emergency powers under IT rules to block the documentary and its clips from being shared on social media. "Videos

sharing @BBCWorld hostile propaganda and anti-India garbage, disguised as 'documentary', on @YouTube and tweets sharing links to the BBC documentary have been blocked under India's sovereign laws and rules," he said.

Orders were also issued to Twitter to block over 50 tweets with links to YouTube videos. Both YouTube and Twitter have complied with the instructions, Gupta said. Neither firm was available for comment on Sunday. Several tweets with clips of the docu-

mentary, "India: The Modi Question", which has not been aired in the world's largest democracy, were still available on Sunday.

The 2002 riots in Gujarat began after 59 Hindu pilgrims were killed in a fire on a train. Thirty-one Muslims were convicted of criminal conspiracy and murder over that incident. The BBC documentary cited a previously classified British foreign ministry report quoting unnamed sources saying that Modi met senior police

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Local

Kuwait Air traffic normal, maritime operations resume

Kuwait weather to remain unstable till Monday

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti General Administration of Civil Aviation said on Sunday that air traffic at Kuwait International Airport is proceeding normally despite the fluctuations in weather conditions and the wave of fog that it is witnessing. The Director General for Air Navigation Affairs in Civil Aviation, Engineer Imad Al-Jalawi said in a statement to KUNA that the movement of aircraft was not affected by the current weather, stressing that an emergency plan was activated to deal with this situation. The Meteorological Department had stated that the weather on Sunday was unstable and there would be an opportunity for heavy fog starting tonight until the early morning hours of Monday.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Ports Corporation announced on Sunday the resumption of maritime traffic in the ports of Shuwaik, Shuaiba and Doha after it was temporarily suspended on Sunday

morning due to fluctuations in weather conditions.

The Corporation had announced in a press release that the navigation movement in those ports were stopped due to the low level of horizontal visibility and out of concern for the safety of maritime navigation, crews, and its port facilities.

Weather in Kuwait is forecast to remain unsteady in the coming hours with prevailing fog, thickening at night until Monday's early hours, the meteorological department said on Sunday. Amira Al-Azmi, the chief forecaster at the department, told KUNA that the country is affected extension of aerial high altitude, coupled with moderate moist winds. Horizontal visibility is forecast at less than 1,000 meters and may ebb in some regions. The visibility is expected to improve as of Wednesday night and the heat will range between 7-10 degrees minimum and 17-20 degrees maximum. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Thick fog lingers over high-rise buildings in Kuwait on early Monday. Weather in Kuwait is forecast to remain unsteady until Monday, the meteorological department said on Sunday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

France deploys Charles de Gaulle CSG in Indian Ocean

KUWAIT: Since November 15, 2022, as part of the ANTARES mission, France has been deploying its carrier strike group (CSG), including the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and its group of onboard aircraft as well as escort boats.

After a first phase of operations conducted in the Mediterranean Sea, the CSG crossed the Suez Canal in December 2022 to deploy in the Red Sea and then in the Indian Ocean. There, the CSG operates under the operational control of the French commander of the Indian Ocean maritime zone and commander of the French forces in the United Arab Emirates (Alindien Comfor Eau) based in Abu Dhabi.

Now in the West of Indo-Pacific, the carrier strike group participates in France's independent situation assessment and in strengthening ties and interoperability with our allies and strategic partners in the area, either neighboring nations or air and maritime forces involved in this competition area. Many operational cooperation are deployed in this area, such as with the United States or with India as part of the periodic air and sea exercise VARUNA. In this strategic area for international trade and energy supplies, which is also marked by many kinds of traffics and challenges to international law, the mobility and freedom of action of the naval air group underline the French will to contribute to regional security and to freedom of movement in common areas, particularly sea and air.

Endowed with a strong ability to react and adapt, the CSG, an aero-maritime force implemented by nearly 2,600 French and allied military, is able to deploy in all areas of major interest for France, EU and NATO according to the evolution of the geopolitical situation.

Note: This report is issued by The Embassy of France, Kuwait

Kuwait inflation climbed 3.15% in 2022

KUWAIT: The consumer prices on annual basis grew by 3.15 percent by the end of 2022 compared with the year before, according to the State of Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (KCSB). The bureau, in a report to KUNA issued on Sunday said that inflation rate rose 0.17 percent in December, on Monthly basis, due to increase of prices of all main groups that influence movement of the key indices particularly food and education.

Record number of the first group (Food and beverages) went up by 7.48 percent, compared to December 2021, while the price index of the second group (cigarettes and tobacco) rose slightly by 0.22 percent on an annual basis. The consumer price index (CPI) for the clothing group rose 5.35 percent on yearly basis, while rates of (housing services) rose by 1.44 percent. Moreover, infla-



KUWAIT: The consumer prices on annual basis grew by 3.15 percent by the end of 2022 compared with the year before, according to the State of Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (KCSB). —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

tion rate in the furnishing equipment household increased by 1.69 percent. The KCSB said the health index rose 2.63 percent while rates of transport moved up by 2.85 percent.

Communication rose by 1.0 percent, culture

and entertainment went up by 3.13 percent while education rose by 0.40 percent. Restaurants and hotel climbed on yearly basis in December by 3.51 percent, services and miscellaneous goods by 4.75 percent. —KUNA

Dr Al-Awadhi: Keep abreast of medical technology, research

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Saturday that it is essential to keep abreast of great advancement in technology, medical research and surgery by holding conferences to share expertise and knowledge.

The minister made the remark during the 18th conference of surgeries and Seventh Forum of the Board of General Surgery, held at the ministry today. He added that the conference reflected the State's eagerness to do everything in order to achieve prosperity in the country.

He noted that the three-day event is one of the most important gatherings that highlight general surgery and surgery of abdominal wall, metabolism, obesity, colon and others. The US embassy's Charge d'Affaires James Holtzner addressed the event by voicing pleasure to see this partnership and cooperation between the



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi during the 18th conference of surgeries and Seventh Forum of the Board of General Surgery. — KUNA

Kuwaiti health sector and world medical bodies, specifically American ones, to explore cutting-edge medical theories and surgical methods. He pointed out the strong relationship and partnership between both military medical and civilian sectors, along with economic cooperation between US manufacturers of surgical

tools and equipment and the Kuwaiti side in general. For his part, the conference's chairman and head of Kuwait Association of Surgeons, Dr Mousa Khorshid said the gathering attracted over 400 conferees, in addition to the participation of 200 doctors in a workshop on research. —KUNA

KFAS, Harvard lecturers hold medical workshop

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) has organized an intensive training workshop for workers in the Kuwaiti medical sector in cooperation with lecturers from Harvard University. The workshop was expected to prepare the participants for specialized medical research and enlighten them about the best ways to write medical researches as well as using quantitative statistics and analyzing their results.

The workshop was held from January 8 to 19 and was held at the KFAS headquarters. Harvard lecturers conducted the training program with the participation of Kuwaiti doctors and Kuwaiti dental doctors.

A number of distinguished researchers from other entities also participated in the workshop. Among them were researcher at the Dasman Diabetes Institute and the lecturer at Harvard university, Dr Hind Al-Qadri, the lecturer at Harvard university, Dr Khaled Al-Tabtabaei, and Dr Muhammad Al-Barjas from the Health Ministry.

Vice director for strategic programs at the KFAS, Dr Khawla Al-Shaiji said: "This scientific event organized by the KFAS seeks to focus on raising the capabilities of researchers and introducing Kuwaiti doctors to the basics of scientific research in all medical fields. Moreover, it also focuses on how to conduct research on topics that are commensurate with their specialties and touch on certain medical aspects, the results of which contribute to the development of the medical aspects."

"This training workshop enables them to develop realistic solutions to the problem that is raised through research, and to bridge a knowledge gap in various medical fields, in addition to enhancing their capabilities in the field of publishing



KUWAIT: The training workshop organized by KFAS in collaboration with lecturers from Harvard University.



research in international peer-reviewed journals," she added.

"Participating physicians were trained in this workshop to use advanced medical statistical software, through which they will be able to conduct medical digital statistics and evaluations with high efficiency. At the end of the workshop, the research presented was evaluated by a jury consisting of researchers from Kuwait University," she clarified.

This workshop was held within the framework of the KFAS's keenness to develop the capabilities and competencies of researchers, and to benefit from the expertise of leading international institutions, as well as its awareness of the importance of scientific research in all fields and disciplines. This will also help build a solid base for the system of science, technology, innovation, culture and scientific knowledge in society.



KU and MoI gear for GCC traffic week

KUWAIT: Based on Kuwait University's keenness to enhance cooperation with government agencies in Kuwait, Acting Secretary-General of Kuwait University Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri and the interior ministry, represented by the general traffic department, coordinated with the committee of the unified GCC traffic week under the slogan "Your Life is a Trust". The events will be organized at Kuwait University during from March 5 to 9.

A series of lectures and seminars will be held with the aim of media and security awareness for faculty members, students and university staff. The meeting was attended by a number of authorities, including the head of the 2023 GCC traffic week committee and head of Mubarak Al-Kabeer traffic department Ibrahim Al-Jalal, host committee head Yousef Al-Rebah, culture committee head Ali Bo Rubaya, acting head of KU public relations department Anoud Al-Rashidi and acting head of the university's security department Yousef Al-Khamees.

Dr Dhafiri expressed his happiness on the cooperation, which is for the interest of students and all those related to KU, as this cooperation is considered a national responsibility.

Local

Zain strategic partner of Kuwait Motor Show 2023

Company keen on supporting projects that push local economy wheel

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announced its strategic partnership with the 11th Kuwait Motor Show 2023, the nation's biggest gathering of automobile, ATV, and motorcycle dealerships. The show, which offers an exceptional platform for local dealerships to engage with the public, runs from 19-28 January at 360 Mall, and features over 30 global brands.

Zain continues to support this unique event as part of its strong belief in the vital role played by the Kuwaiti private sector's institutions in shouldering local projects that contribute to pushing the local economy wheel. This year, the event serves over 300,000 visitors, and features over 30 global brands showcasing over 80 vehicles.

With digital transformation sweeping over the world's industries, the automotive industry underwent significant changes, and technology has become an integral part of it. Today's vehicles feature the latest tech innovations like artificial intelligence, advanced communications, and more. The Kuwait Motor Show aims at showcasing the latest technologies in today's cars, and the role dealerships play to bring them to the local market.

The event offers motor enthusiasts with an opportunity to learn about the latest innovations from the world's biggest car manufacturers and exclusive offers from local dealerships, which are present at the event to connect directly with visitors. Zain is present at the Kuwait Motor Show via its own dedicated booth throughout ten days at 360 Mall, where the company offers a unique opportunity for visitors to experience virtual driving and compete for a chance to win valuable prizes.

The Kuwait Motor Show 2023 is the nation's biggest event of its kind. The show's last ten editions witnessed fantastic success, with hundreds of vehicles showcased from the world's biggest manufacturers, numerous exclusive offers from local dealerships, and hundreds of thousands of visitors.

Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in encouraging such initiatives that contribute to supporting Kuwait's national economy. The company's participation at this event further reflects its keenness in developing the various innovative efforts in the community, which bursts with dedicated talents who have vibrant ideas that offer viable solutions to market needs.



KUWAIT: Ambassadors and diplomats with Zain's team at the company's booth.

Al-Asfour elected chief of Arab Towns Organization

KUWAIT: Abdulrahman Al-Asfour was chosen as Secretary General of the Arab Towns Organization (ATO) during an urgent irregular meeting of the organization in Kuwait on Sunday. Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfouhi congratulated Al-Asfour during the meeting, wishing him the best of luck in his new post.



Abdulrahman Al-Asfour

Al-Asfour, on his part, said that the ATO—established in Kuwait in 1967—was an integral entity focusing on bolstering cooperation amongst Arab cities. He vowed to do his best during his tenure as Secretary General of the ATO. The ATO is a non-profit organization, which is keen on preserving the identity and culture of Arab cities in addition to finding means to continue the development of the Arab world in all aspects. —KUNA



Participants in the ATO session

Manpower completes 88,491 transactions online during 2022

KUWAIT: The official spokesperson and director of the Public Relations and Media Department of the Public Authority for Manpower, Aseel Al-Mazyed, announced Sunday, that the authority completed 88,491 transactions via the platform Our Pride is Individuals. Al-Mazyed said in a press statement that the transactions are divided into several categories, including the completion of the graduates' reward of 13,325 transactions, receiving a password of 45,241, unemployment insurance, the number of 2,622, in addition to 1,812 job opportunities transactions, 22,685 social transactions for graduates, and 236 registration of search allowance. She indicated that the (Our Pride) platform is the electronic platform concerned with providing several services, including guidance and employment for national workers, and a service for job seekers with the aim of obtaining suitable jobs for them in the private sector. —KUNA



Aseel Al-Mazyed

Outstanding Kuwaiti students fly to Tajikistan, Rwanda

KUWAIT: A delegation of outstanding Kuwaiti students has flown to Tajikistan and Rwanda, in line with 12th edition of the initiative launched by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). Speaking to KUNA on Sunday, Saleh Al-Taqi, head of KFAED marketing and exhibitions' department and supervisor of the journey, said the male and female students would visit some development projects carried out by the fund in Rwanda like Hospital Mumini and the integrated regional institute for applied arts.



They would be briefed on these projects and how to benefit from them economically and humanitarially, in addition to paying a visit to Rwanda's national museum, he added. He noted that the fund continues to raise awareness of Kuwaiti students on Kuwait's efforts made to achieve development in the developing countries.

Meanwhile, Fatma Al-Turkait, a senior official at the fund and responsible for female students during the trip, said they would visit some development projects and some historical areas in Tajikistan. She indicated that the fund organizes annually entertaining and cultural journeys to those outstanding students to the countries with which the fund deals. The fund launched the first trip in 2010, and the number of students benefited from the journeys has risen so far to 264. The students visited 15 countries, including Egypt, Jordan, China, Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco and others. —KUNA



Kuwait: Deputy Foreign Minister meets head of ICRC regional delegation.—KUNA

Deputy FM meets head of ICRC regional delegation

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi met Sunday Mamadou Sow, head of the Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). During the meeting, the two sides discussed some aspects of bilateral relations between Kuwait and the delegation, and means of promoting bilateral cooperation. —KUNA

Over 3,000 students' grievances rejected

KUWAIT: The education ministry has rejected all grievances submitted by 12th grade high schoolers in all departments regarding their grades during the midterm high school exams after they were carefully reviewed. The number of grievances submitted by students were approximately 3,207, sources at the education ministry revealed to Kuwait Times, noting that the ministry allows students to complain about the results of tests through its website for all subjects, provided that the number of subjects over which the student has objections does not exceed three.

"The Information Systems Center, led by Muhammad Al-Khaldi, made great efforts since the start of the opening of the grievances window last Wednesday to sort them out and send them to the concerned department for review, as the ministry has taken the required procedures in this aspect and worked on reviewing the students' answer sheets as well as making sure of the correction or the collection of grades and absence of errors. The revisions did not result in any error in the test papers or cheating records, which led to the rejection of all grievances," education ministry sources added.

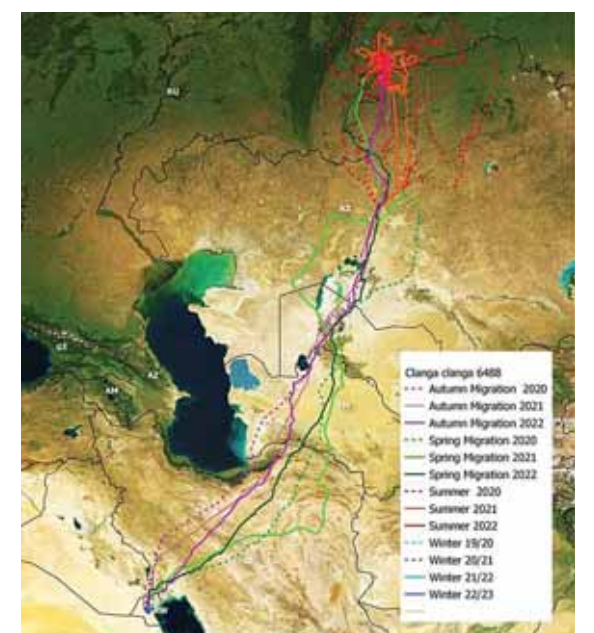
Kuwaiti Environmental Lens reports Greater Spotted Eagle's arrival

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Environmental Lens Team reported on Sunday arrival of the Greater Spotted Eagle from Russia to Al-Jahra Nature Reserve. Board member of the team, Omar Al-Sayed Omar, told KUNA that it is the first time Kuwait tracks an endangered bird and revealed that the spotted eagles migrate to Russia during their breeding season.

Omar said there was a DNA test on one of these eagles that revealed the bird was a female, adding that it might had nested in southern Russia. He added that with support of KFAS (Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences) and the Environment Public Authority, the team carried out this test on six eagles of the same species. —KUNA



Greater Spotted Eagle



Kuwaiti Environmental Lens announces Greater Spotted Eagle's arrival.

Local

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News in brief



Gold prices exceed \$1,926 per ounce

KUWAIT: Gold price in Kuwait has exceeded the \$1,926 per ounce barrier with a five percent increase since the beginning of the year. A report issued on Sunday by Dar Al-Sabaek Company pointed out that gold hovered at \$1,926 per ounce on Friday, as the fears of a global economic recession and the easing of the US interest rate hike had a direct impact on the rise gold prices, which is considered a "safe haven" during economic tensions. As for the local market, the report mentioned that the price for 24 carat gold reached KD 18.78 per gram and the 22 carat gold reached KD 17.02 per gram. Meanwhile Silver reached 279 per kilogram. —KUNA

US dollar stabilizes against dinar

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar stabilized today, Sunday, at 0.305, while the euro's exchange rate increased by 0.56 percent to the level of 0.331 dinars, compared to last Thursday's prices. The Central Bank of Kuwait stated in its daily bulletin on its website that the exchange rate of the British pound rose by 0.51 percent to the level of 0.378 dinars, while the Swiss franc fell by 0.52 percent to the level of 0.331 dinars, and the Japanese yen settled at 0.002 dinars. Central Bank of Kuwait are the average currency rates for the day and do not reflect the actual buying and selling prices. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Construction laborers work on a bridge project. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

National Library of Kuwait: A century-long cultural journey

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KUWAIT: January 23 of the year 1923 marked the beginning of a century-long cultural journey of what began as a privately owned library and ended up as the state's national library. Library founding fathers Abdulhameed Al-Sane and Sultan Al-Kulaib held a meeting during the reign of late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the attendance of a number of Kuwaiti intellectuals to discuss the nitty-gritty of their project.

The congregation designated Ibn Amer Divaniya as the library's headquarters, appointed Abdulhameed Al-Sane to oversee its establishment, assisted by Rajab Al-Refai as treasurer and Abdullah Al-Omran as librarian. A number of bibliophiles, enthralled by the notion of a privately owned library open to the public, donated a number of valuable books, and agreed to supply the library with a diverse and riveting collection of magazine and newspaper issues.

Speaking to KUNA, the library's General

Director Dr Sultan Al-Dehani, told the story of how the library braved through unyielding economic conditions and dwindling turnout over the years. The library went through a series of relocations and name changes in an attempt to adapt and remain standing, Al-Dehani explained, adding that it had done so through the efforts of Culture & Art philanthropists who refused to see its legacy diminished.

Moved by its literary and cultural significance, these people kept the library alive with generous donations, giving it a home and enriching its collection with valuable donations. The library arrived at its final destination in 1994 when late Amir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued a decree dubbing it The National Library of Kuwait. Its aims include the documentation and preservation of national heritage, protection of intellectual property, developing national cadres of librarians and archivists, and collaborating with various national libraries and research centers to further its growth. —KUNA

11 evacuated from Salmiya building after fire

KUWAIT: A fire broke out on the eighth floor of a nine-storey building in Salmiya and the central command center of the KFF sent fire squads to the scene from Al-Bedaa and Salmiya fire stations. "The Fire Force successfully evacuated 11 people from the building and sent them to the medical emergency care," the Public Relations department at the KFF announced on Sunday.





Six more classified docs found in Justice Dept search of Biden home

Sweden's NATO bid hit by repeated rows with Turkey

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PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz pose for a group picture with the members of their respective cabinets, prior to a cabinet meeting, as part of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Elysee Treaty, to seal reconciliation between France and West Germany, 18 years after the Second World War at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris on January 22, 2023. — AFP

France, Germany firm up ties as European 'driving force'

Ukraine conflict, climate and energy top key meeting's agenda

PARIS: Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz and France's President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday pledged to drive Europe forward together, as the German leader visited Paris to celebrate 60 years of post-war cooperation despite recent strains.

The historic partnership has been under pressure from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and broader tectonic shifts. But in a speech at the capital's Sorbonne University, Scholz said upholding strong ties was key for the continent. "The future, like the past, rests on cooperation between both our countries as the driving force of a united Europe," he said.

Macron said that "Germany and France, because they cleared the path to reconciliation, must become pioneers to relaunch Europe". He cited the need to "build a new energy model", encourage "innovation and the technologies of tomorrow", and ensure the European Union is "a geopolitical power in its own right, in defense, space and diplomacy". The two leaders were then to take part in a joint cabinet meeting.

The personal relationship between both men has been less than warm since Scholz assumed office in

late 2021. But "there are structural problems that go further than the personal relationship", said Jacob Ross, a researcher at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Berlin. The frictions are even felt by the public, with 36 percent of French respondents and 39 percent of Germans telling pollster Ipsos this week that relations were suffering.

Support for Ukraine

The 1963 Elysee Treaty signed between post-World War II leaders Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle provided for everything from military cooperation to youth exchanges. Since then, France and Germany have often built the foundation for joint crisis response in Europe, and other nations are looking to them again now.

Top issues to address include the Ukraine conflict, climate and energy, and European competitiveness faced with a new wave of "buy-American" subsidies in the United States. Scholz on Sunday pledged continued support to Kyiv after Russia invaded its pro-Western neighbor almost 11 months ago.

"We will continue to provide Ukraine with all the support it needs for as long as necessary. Together, as Europeans, to defend our European peace project," he said. But Germany is still undecided on whether to deliver — or allow allies to deliver — its Leopard 2 battle tanks to Kyiv.

The impression that "there is a united coalition, and that Germany is standing in the way is wrong", newly installed Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said Friday. France has been pressing Germany to move faster, dashing ahead on mobile artillery in April and light tanks this month.

Elsewhere, moves to jointly develop next-generation fighter jets and tanks are dragging, while France is absent from a 14-nation Sky Shield anti-missile initiative led by Germany. Ross suggested that part of the problem lies in France's clinging to a historic self-image as a sovereign, nuclear-armed power with a seat on the UN Security Council — in contrast to a Germany happy to leave defense questions primarily to the US in recent decades. There are early signs of change on both sides, with France re-energizing its NATO role since the Ukraine invasion

and Germany's 100-billion-euro (\$108 billion) revamp of its armed forces.

'Put to the test'

Away from defense, interlinked trade and energy conundrums are hitting both France and Germany. For Berlin, "things have got very complicated because Germany's economic and political model is being put to the test," said Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, a former French ambassador to Berlin.

Without cheap Russian gas or nuclear power, Berlin has been forced to turn back in part to coal as renewables still cannot yet make up the difference. France, by contrast, is scrambling to repair and replace its ageing nuclear reactor fleet.

Some in Berlin now fear China will follow Russia's invasion of Ukraine by making a grab for Taiwan — which it sees as a breakaway province — potentially severing Germany from a vital market. And leaders across Europe fear distortions in transatlantic trade from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which will pour billions of dollars into American-made, climate-friendly technologies. — AFP



KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (center) and his wife Olena (left) offer relatives their condolences during the funeral ceremony of Ukrainian Interior Minister Denys Monastyrsky and other employees of his department at the Ukrainian House in Kyiv on January 21, 2023. — AFP

Ukraine says 'global indecision killing more of our people'

KYIV: Ukraine on Saturday blasted the "global indecision" of its allies after Germany stalled on supplying its vaunted Leopard tanks to bolster Kyiv's fighting capacity in the nearly year-long war with Russia.

On Friday, some 50 nations agreed to provide Kyiv with billions of dollars' worth of military hardware, including armored vehicles and munitions needed to push back Russian forces. But German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said that despite heightened expectations, "We still cannot say when a decision will be taken, and what the decision will be, when it comes to the Leopard tank."

"Today's indecision is killing more of our people," Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted. "Every day of delay is the death of Ukrainians. Think faster," he said. In a joint statement Saturday, the foreign ministers of the three Baltic states urged Germany "to provide Leopard tanks to Ukraine now."

"This is needed to stop Russian aggression, help

Ukraine and restore peace in Europe quickly," said a message tweeted by Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics and his Estonian and Lithuanian counterparts. "Germany as the leading European power has special responsibility in this regard," they added. In Berlin, hundreds of people demonstrated outside the Federal Chancellery building calling for Germany to send tanks to Ukraine.

Growing pressure

Berlin has been hesitant to send the Leopards or allow other nations to transfer them to Kyiv. Reports earlier in the week indicated Germany would agree to do so only if the US provided its tanks as well. Washington has said providing its Abrams tanks to Ukraine is not feasible, citing difficulties in training and maintenance. But expectations had grown ahead of Friday's Ukraine Contact Group meeting of around 50 US-led countries that Germany would at least agree to let other countries operating Leopards transfer them to Kyiv's army.

The pleas came as the Russian army said its troops had launched an offensive in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, where fighting intensified this week after several months of an almost frozen front. In its daily report Saturday, Moscow's forces said they had carried out "offensive operations" in the region and claimed to have "taken more advantageous lines and positions". — AFP

Building collapse in war-damaged Syria city kills 16

ALEPPO: A building collapsed Sunday in Syria's war-damaged second city of Aleppo, killing 16 people including children, authorities and media reported. Much of Aleppo was destroyed during Syria's conflict that began nearly 12 years ago and left many of the remaining structures in a decrepit state.

"The number of victims of the residential building collapse... has risen to 16 dead", said state news agency SANA. Only one person had been rescued alive from the rubble of the five-storey building which was home to seven families, Syria's interior ministry said.

It was not immediately clear if anyone else had survived the tragedy in the city which was Syria's pre-war commercial hub. Earlier Sunday SANA gave an initial death toll of 10, which rose throughout the day as search operations continued.

A Kurdish news agency said five children were among the dead. The victims included Syrians who had been displaced during the country's years of fighting, a war monitor said. Locals told AFP that about 35 people lived in the building.

Video footage shared on state television showed dozens of rescue workers at the site, where some used their bare hands to dig into the grey rubble. Earth movers scooped up the pieces of building material, sending dust into the air.

SANA quoted a police source as saying earlier that the building, in Aleppo's Sheikh Maksoud neighborhood, had collapsed "due to a water leak" in the foundations. The neighborhood is predominantly inhabited by Syrian Kurds who are under the authority of the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, part of the Kurds' de facto army.

Aleppo itself is, however, under control of the government which took it back from rebels during devastating urban combat. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that among the victims were displaced people from Afrin, further north, where neighboring Turkey carried out an offensive in 2018.

Nearly half a million people have been killed in Syria's conflict which began in 2011 and displaced about half of the country's pre-war population. Many of those forced from their homes had to move into buildings that are structurally unsound, resulting in relatively frequent collapses. Last September, a building collapse in the Ferdaws neighborhood of Aleppo killed 10 people, including three children. A war-damaged block of flats also crumbled in the city in February 2019, leaving 11 people dead with four children among them. — AFP



ALEPPO: People watch as rescuers sift through the rubble of a building that collapsed in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, on January 22, 2023. — AFP

International

Sweden's NATO bid hit by repeated rows with Turkey

Far-right politician's embassy protest sparks new row

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's bid for NATO membership is facing a dead end because Ankara's demands to Stockholm to hand over Kurdish activists and prevent rallies attacking Turkey's leadership have strained ties.

The chances of this changing after Turkey's parliamentary elections due in mid-May are uncertain, said Paul Levin, director of Stockholm University's Institute for Turkish Studies. "We can now probably forget Turkish ratification before the elections, which seem to be scheduled for May 14," Levin told AFP. "What happens after that depends in part on who wins."

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's objections to Sweden's NATO membership rest largely on Stockholm's refusal to extradite Turkish nationals Ankara wants to prosecute for "terrorism". And Erdogan is running for re-election.

In December, Sweden extradited a member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to Turkey. He had been convicted in a Turkish court and denied asylum in Sweden. Erdogan wants more action from Stockholm against the PKK, listed as a terror group by Turkey and its Western allies. "On one hand, there is a Turkish president who has jailed thousands over alleged insults and who wants to divert attention from a poor economy in the months before an election," said Levin.

"On the other hand, there are groups in Sweden who are against NATO membership and PKK supporters worried about the government's pledges to go after" them, he said. Levin said these PKK supporters had realized they could provoke Erdogan "by insulting him and thereby stall the accession process".

Protests in Sweden

A protest by a far-right politician in front of the

Turkish embassy in Stockholm on Saturday — authorized by the police — has further strained relations. Rasmus Paludan is a Swedish-Danish activist who has already been convicted for racist abuse.

He provoked rioting in Sweden last year when he went on a tour of the country and publicly burned copies of the Holy Quran. On Saturday, he burned another copy of the Muslim holy book after a speech of almost an hour denouncing Islam.

Police based their decision to authorize the protest on the basis of Sweden's liberal constitution, which protects the right to demonstrate. Ankara summoned Sweden's ambassador to register its outrage, then cancelled a visit of Swedish Defence Minister Pal Jonson that had been scheduled for next Friday in Ankara — a rare high-level meeting.

Earlier this month, Ankara called in Sweden's ambassador after pro-Kurdish activists hung an effigy of Erdogan from its feet, explicitly comparing him to Benito Mussolini. Italy's Fascist dictator was left hanging upside down after his execution in the closing days of World War II.

Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson denounced it as an attempt to sabotage the country's NATO membership bid — but that sparked a backlash from some inside Sweden defending the right to freedom of expression.

'Islamist dictator'

Then last week, the leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats, Jimmie Akesson, whose party props up the Swedish government, denounced Erdogan as an "Islamist dictator". He urged Kristersson not to appease Turkey "because it is ultimately an anti-democratic system and a dictator we are dealing with", Akesson told Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter.

Swedish prime minister condemns Holy Quran burning

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's prime minister has condemned as "deeply disrespectful" the weekend burning of a copy of the Holy Quran in Stockholm, which has raised tensions with Turkey as the Nordic country courts Ankara over its NATO bid.

Far-right politician Rasmus Paludan set fire to a copy of the Muslim holy book on Saturday in front of Turkey's embassy in the Swedish capital. Furious that Paludan had been permitted by Swedish police to carry out the protest, Ankara cancelled a visit by Sweden's defense minister and summoned Stockholm's ambassador.

Late on Saturday, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson tweeted: "Freedom of expression is a fundamental part of democracy. But what is legal is not necessarily appropriate. Burning books that are holy to many is a deeply disrespectful act." "I want to express my sympathy for all Muslims who are offended by what has happened in Stockholm today."

Paludan's demonstration has further damaged relations as Stockholm tries to convince NATO member Turkey to approve Sweden and Finland joining the military alliance. Sweden's bid has been



Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson

stalled amid Ankara's demands that Stockholm hand over Kurdish activists and prevent rallies attacking Turkey's leadership.

Many Muslim countries said they were outraged by the burning of the Holy Quran on Saturday. Morocco said it was "astonished" the authorities had allowed it to take place "in front of the Swedish forces of order".

Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates also condemned it, as did the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Jakarta said "the act of blasphemy against the holy book has hurt and tarnished religious tolerance", adding that "freedom of expression must be exercised in a responsible manner". — AFP



ISTANBUL: Protesters demonstrate in front of the Consulate General of Sweden after Rasmus Paludan, leader of Danish far-right political party Hard Line and who also has Swedish citizenship burned a copy of the Holy Quran near the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm, in Istanbul, Turkey, on January 21, 2023. —AFP

Turkey is seeking the extradition of more Kurdish "terrorists" based in Sweden. Erdogan recently said there were as many as 130 there. Stockholm has made it clear that the courts have the final say, but that does not appear to have satisfied Ankara.

Jens Stoltenberg, the secretary general of NATO, who last spring was talking of a fast-track membership process of just a few weeks, told AFP in January he still thought it would happen in 2023,

even if he could not guarantee it. Both Turkey and Hungary were still to ratify the bid, he pointed out.

Both countries have maintained links with Russia since its invasion of Ukraine, with Ankara in particular adopting the role of mediator between the two sides. One spark of hope for Sweden is that Finland, which also launched its bid to join NATO following the Russian invasion, has made it clear that it does not want to enter the alliance without its "big brother". — AFP

Iran warns EU of 'reciprocal' response to Guards terror label vote

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday warned the European Union it would take "reciprocal" measures after the European Parliament voted to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist group. "The parliament (of Iran) is working to place elements of European countries' armies on the terrorist list," Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Twitter.

Members of the European Parliament voted on Wednesday to include the Guards on the 27-nation bloc's terror list in "light of its terrorist activity, the repression of protesters and its supplying of drones to Russia". The vote is non-binding but comes with EU foreign ministers already due to discuss tightening sanctions on the Islamic republic next week.

Amir-Abdollahian and Guards chief Major General Hossein Salami attended a closed-door parliament session on Sunday morning to discuss the European Parliament's move. "The European Parliament shot itself in the foot," Iran's top diplomat said, adding that the response would be "reciprocal".

Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf similarly announced on Sunday that the legislature "will retaliate immediately and decisively against any action that would mean putting the

Revolutionary Guards on the sanctions list or the list of terrorist groups". Ghalibaf, who is himself a former commander of the Guards air force, added that parliament would "recognise the armies of the European countries... as terrorist groups".

The Guards oversee the volunteer Basij paramilitary force, which has been deployed against protests since mid-September triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, after her arrest for allegedly violating Iran's dress code for women. Authorities in Iran say hundreds of people, including members of the security forces, have been killed and thousands arrested in the unrest. — AFP



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA) on January 22, 2023, shows Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) chief Hossein Salami (C), arriving at the parliament in the capital Tehran. — AFP

Assembly-govt standoff...

Continued from Page 1

Head of the financial committee MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and rapporteur of the committee MP Saleh Ashour on Sunday reiterated they will not withdraw the so-called populist bills with-

US Lunar New Year shooting...

Continued from Page 1

Police gave no description of the wanted man, and did not say what kind of gun he used. Sheriff's deputies were scouring the scene Sunday morning for clues and had established a security perimeter around the area, an AFP reporter said. A helicopter flew overhead, as television trucks set up to broadcast. At the entrance to Monterey Park, only a few miles from downtown Los Angeles, a banner celebrating the Lunar New Year remained in place.

Monterey Park is home to around 60,000 people, the majority of them Asian or Asian American. Meyer said detectives were also aware of another incident in the neighboring city of Alhambra. "We have investigators on scene trying to determine if there's a connection between these two incidents," he said. Media reports said an attempted shooting at a ballroom and dance studio in Alhambra had been thwarted, with the alleged gunman tackled and disarmed, and no injuries reported.

US President Joe Biden has been briefed about the killings in Monterey Park, and ordered the FBI to give "full support" to local authorities. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre tweeted. The shooting was the deadliest in the US since a shooter in Uvalde, Texas killed 22 people at an elementary school last May 24. Local resident Wong Wei told the Los Angeles

out clear pledges by the government to raise the salaries of Kuwaiti employees and pensions of retired citizens, in addition to commitment to improving the standard of living of citizens.

The National Assembly was elected on Sept 29 and began its term with strong relations with the government, with a majority of MPs welcoming the prime minister as a reformist. But relations were strained after MPs began advancing populist but expensive draft laws in a bid to fulfil pledges they made during the election campaign.

Times his friend had been at the Monterey Park dance club, and had been in the bathroom when the shooting erupted.

When she emerged, she saw a man carrying a long gun and firing indiscriminately, as well as the bodies of three people, two of them women and one person who he said was the boss of the club. The paper reported that Seung Won Choi, who owns a seafood barbecue restaurant near the scene, said three people had run into his restaurant and told him to lock the door. The three said there was a man with a semiautomatic gun who had multiple rounds of ammunition on him, and would reload every time he ran out, Choi told the paper.

Tens of thousands of people had gathered earlier in the day for the two-day Lunar New Year festival, which is one of the largest in Southern California. The second day of the festival, Sunday, was canceled after the attack. "My heart is broken for the victims, their families, and the people of my hometown Monterey Park who were impacted by the mass shooting," Representative Judy Chu, the first Chinese American woman elected to the US Congress and a former mayor of Monterey Park, said on Twitter.

Meyer said detectives did not know whether the suspect knew his victims or was targeting a particular group. "We will look at every angle," he said, adding that officers were reviewing surveillance footage. "It's just too early in the investigation to know whether this incident was a hate crime or not," he told reporters. The US Department of Justice said there were over 7,000 reported hate crimes in the United States in 2021, affecting more than 9,000 people. Two thirds of those were race-related, it said. — AFP

China logs nearly 13,000 COVID deaths in a week

BEIJING: China reported nearly 13,000 COVID-related deaths in hospitals between January 13 and 19, after a top health official said the vast majority of the population had already been infected. The death toll came a week after China said nearly 60,000 people had died with COVID in hospitals in just over a month - but there has been widespread skepticism over official data since Beijing abruptly axed anti-virus controls last month.

China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a statement on Saturday that 681 hospitalised patients had died of respiratory failure caused by coronavirus infection, and 11,977 had died of other diseases combined with an infection over the period. The figures do not include anyone who died at home. Airfinity, an independent forecasting firm, has estimated daily COVID deaths in China will peak at about 36,000 over the Lunar New Year holiday.

The firm also estimated that more than 600,000

people have died from the disease since China abandoned the zero-COVID policy in December. China has passed the peak period of COVID patients in fever clinics, emergency rooms and with critical conditions, Guo Yanhong, an official from the National Health Commission told a news conference on Thursday.

Tens of millions of people have travelled across the country in recent days for long-awaited reunions with families to mark Sunday's Lunar New Year, raising fears of fresh outbreaks. 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. President Xi Jinping Wednesday expressed concerns over the spread of the virus in rural China, much of which lacks medical resources.

But a top health official said China would not experience a second wave of infections in the months after the festive migration, because nearly 80 percent of the population had already been infected by the virus. "Although a large number of people travelling during the Spring Festival may promote the spread of the epidemic to a certain extent... the current wave of epidemic has already infected about 80 percent of the people in the country," Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist at the CDC, said in a post on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform on Saturday. — AFP

India blocks 'hostile' BBC...

Continued from Page 1

officers and "ordered them not to intervene" in the anti-Muslim violence by right-wing Hindu groups that followed.

The violence was "politically motivated" and the aim "was to purge Muslims from Hindu areas", the foreign ministry report said. The "systematic campaign of violence has all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing" and was impossible "without the climate of impunity created by the state Government... Narendra Modi is directly responsible," it concluded.

Modi, who ran Gujarat from 2001 until his election as prime minister in 2014, was briefly subject to a travel ban by the United States over the violence. A special investigative team appointed by the Indian Supreme Court to probe the role of Modi and others in the violence said in 2012 it did not find any evidence to prosecute the then chief minister.

Gupta said multiple ministries had examined the documentary and "found it casting aspersions on the authority and credibility of Supreme Court of India, sowing divisions among various Indian communities, and making unsubstantiated allegations". "Accordingly, @BBCWorld's vile propaganda was found to be undermining the sovereignty and integrity of India, and having the potential to adversely impact India's friendly relations with foreign countries as also public order within the country," he said. — AFP

International

Six more classified docs found in Justice Dept search of Biden home

US President downplays situation as 'innocent mistake'

WASHINGTON: Officials from the US Department of Justice found six more classified documents during a search of Joe Biden's family home in Delaware this week, the president's personal lawyer said in a statement Saturday.

The new disclosure served up another embarrassing twist for Biden in an affair dogging him just as he gets ready to declare whether he will run for another term in 2024. Biden insists he has done nothing wrong and has downplayed the situation as an innocent mistake.

Documents from his time as vice president and marked as classified first turned up in an office at a Biden-affiliated think tank in Washington last year, and then again at his home in Delaware. Altogether they are about a dozen documents. After the second find, the White House offered to let the Department of Justice search the Delaware home — the search was carried out on Friday and is now concluded, Biden attorney Bob Bauer said.

"DOJ took possession of materials it

deemed within the scope of its inquiry, including six items consisting of documents with classification markings and surrounding materials," Bauer said. The search lasted more than 12 hours and covered "all working, living and storage spaces in the home," Bauer said. "DOJ had full access to the President's home, including personally handwritten notes, files, papers, binders, memorabilia, to-do lists, schedules, and reminders going back decades," he said.

Some of the new papers seized were from Biden's time in the Senate and some were from his tenure as vice president, according to Bauer. Bauer said Biden's personal lawyers and White House counsel previously arranged with the Justice Department to be present during the inspection, and they agreed to not publicize news of the search in advance "in accordance with its standard procedures."

The White House has said the earlier batches of documents were turned over to the Justice Department and National

Archives, which handles presidential records, as soon as they were found.

On Thursday, Biden dismissed the furor over the discovery of the old classified documents. Asked by reporters during a trip to California about the issue, he said: "I think you're going to find there's nothing there. I have no regrets. I'm following what the lawyers have told me they want me to do. It's exactly what we're doing. There's no there there."

"We found a handful of documents... were filed in the wrong place. We immediately turned them over to the Archives and the Justice Department. We're fully cooperating and looking forward to getting this resolved quickly," he added.

Attorney General Merrick Garland earlier this month appointed a special counsel, former government lawyer Robert Hur, to act as special counsel for the investigation. Garland said the "extraordinary circumstances" of investigating a sitting president required him to take the extra step of bringing in an outside prosecutor. — AFP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on January 20, 2023, US President Joe Biden speaks while hosting bipartisan mayors attending the US Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

Explosion, gunfire near mayor's office in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU: A huge blast tore through buildings near the mayor's office in central Mogadishu on Sunday, with gunfire erupting afterwards in an attack claimed by Al-Shabaab, police and witnesses told AFP. "Terrorists blasted a vehicle loaded with explosives onto a perimeter wall of the Mogadishu mall which is next to the Banadir administration headquarters," police officer Abdullahi Mohamed said. Witnesses said the explosion damaged nearby buildings and gunfire could still be heard near the mayor's office.

"There is gunfire going on inside the vicinity of the main building but we don't know what is happening inside," a witness who runs a business near the offices said. "There are some casualties but the whole area is cordoned off and we have been asked to move away by the security forces." Another witness, Omar Nur, said he was inside the mall when the explosion went off and "was lucky to have escaped safely."

Al-Shabaab, a militant group allied with Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack via its communication channels, saying its fighters "made their way inside the targeted building after killing the security guards." The militants have been waging a bloody insurgency against the frail internationally backed central government for 15 years, carrying out attacks both in Somalia and neighboring countries.



MOGADISHU: Police officers take up positions outside of the Mayor's office where an ongoing gun battle erupted following a reported explosion, in Mogadishu, on January 22, 2023. — AFP

Major offensive

The latest attack comes days after seven soldiers were killed on Friday at a military camp in Galcad, a town in central Somalia about 375 kilometers (230 miles) north of the capital Mogadishu. The US military said on Saturday the attack — in the Somali town retaken by the army this week — involved more than 100 Al-Shabaab jihadists.

"The combined actions by partner forces on the ground and the collective self-defense strike is estimated to have resulted in three destroyed vehicles and approximately thirty al-Shabaab terrorists killed" the US military command for Africa

(AFRICOM) said in a statement.

In recent months, the Somali army and local clan militias have mounted a major offensive against the jihadist group, retaking swathes of territory in the center of the country in an operation backed by US air strikes and an African Union force. But despite the gains by the pro-government forces, the militants have continued to demonstrate the ability to strike back with lethal force against civilian and military targets. On Tuesday, Al-Shabaab launched a deadly attack on a military base in another part of central Somalia, just a day after the government claimed a "historic victory" over the jihadists. — AFP

Brazil's Lula sacks army commander after anti-government riots

BRASILIA: President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva sacked the commander of Brazil's army Saturday, two weeks after an election-denying mob loyal to his far-right predecessor ransacked the halls of power in Brasilia.

The veteran leftist's dismissal of Julio Cesar de Arruda came a day before Lula was to make his first trip abroad — to Argentina — as he moves to put the South American powerhouse back on the international stage. Arruda had only taken up the post on December 30, two days before the end of outgoing president Jair Bolsonaro's term, and was confirmed by Lula's administration in early January.

On January 8, Bolsonaro supporters ransacked the presidential palace, Supreme Court and Congress in Brasilia, breaking windows and furniture, destroying priceless works of art, and leaving graffiti messages calling for a military coup.

Lula has said he suspects security forces may have been involved in the riots, in which more than 2,000 people were arrested. The leftist president

announced a review of his immediate environment. Defense Minister Jose Mucio said Saturday evening after meeting with the president that Arruda was out as head of the army because of "a break in the level of confidence."

"We thought we needed to stop this in order to get over this episode," Mucio said, alluding to the attack in Brasilia. Mucio said Friday after a meeting with Lula and the chiefs of the three branches of the military that there was no direct armed forces involvement in the riots.

On Wednesday, the man named to be the new army chief, Tomas Ribeiro Paiva, until now the head of the southeastern army command, vowed that the military "will continue to guarantee democracy." And he suggested that the results of the October election in which Lula defeated Bolsonaro should be accepted.

On Sunday Lula will head to Argentina, the customary first stop for Brazilian presidents. Beyond tradition, however, the trip will also allow him to meet with a faithful ally, President Alberto Fernandez, as well as regional counterparts at the summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

"Everyone wants to talk to Brazil," Lula said this week in an interview with the Globo TV channel, promising to rebuild Brasilia's ties with the interna-



BRASILIA: This handout picture released by the Brazilian Presidency shows Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva shaking hands with the new Army commander, General Tomas Ribeiro Paiva, in Brasilia, on January 21, 2023. — AFP

national community after Bolsonaro's four years in office were marked by international isolation for the country. Latin America is only the initial phase of his international push, with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz paying a visit on January 30, and Lula headed to Washington to meet with his US counterpart Joe Biden on February 10. — AFP

White House chief of staff headed out?

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's chief of staff, Ron Klain, could soon step down after two years in the key, high-pressure White House post, US media reported Saturday. The New York Times said Klain has privately told colleagues since the midterm elections in November that after a grueling, uninterrupted stint at Biden's side, dating back to the 2020 campaign, he is ready to move on. The departure could come after Biden's State of the Union address, scheduled for February 7, the Times added.

Klain would be stepping down at an important point in the president's

term. Biden, 80, could announce in the coming weeks whether he will run for the White House again in 2024. His Republican rival Donald Trump, 76, has already done so.

The November midterms turned out less catastrophic than expected for the Democrats, who kept control of the Senate and lost many fewer seats than anticipated as they gave up the House of Representatives to the Republican Party.

Now Biden finds himself in a bind over classified documents from his time as Barack Obama's vice president that were found in a former office of Biden and at his family home in Delaware. They should have been turned over to the National Archives. Biden has downplayed the affair as a mere oversight.

White House chiefs of staff rarely stay in this position for four years. Four people held the job under Trump. Klain, 61, served as chief of



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on June 05, 2022, White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain walks on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

staff to Vice President Al Gore from 1995 to 1999, then to Biden between 2009 and 2011. During Obama's

tenure Klain served as coordinator of the White House response to the Ebola virus crisis. — AFP

Peru closes Machu Picchu as protesters arrested in Lima

LIMA: Peru closed the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu Saturday amid steady anti-government protests, stranding hundreds of tourists for hours, as authorities expelled protesters from a Lima university where they have been holed up as part of the crisis engulfing this divided country.

Protests demanding the resignation of Peruvian President Dina Boluarte have been ongoing since early December, leaving 46 people dead and prompting the government to impose a state of emergency in violence-hit areas.

This crisis triggered by the ouster of leftist Indigenous president Pedro Castillo last month stems largely from a gaping inequity between Peru's urban elite and poor rural Indigenous people in the Andean region who saw him as one of their own and working to make their lives better. Authorities announced Saturday yet another protester had died following demonstrations Friday in the town of Ilave in that Andean region in the south.

Video footage from Ilave that went viral on social media shows police shooting right at a crowd of Indigenous demonstrators in the town square. Enraged protesters responded by setting fire to a police station, local media reported. Clashes between police and the crowd in that town near Lake Titicaca and the border with Bolivia left 10 people injured, hospital officials said.

Prior to the closing of Machu Picchu, rail services to the site had already been suspended due to damage to the track by demonstrators. The only way to get up to the popular tourist site is by train. At least 400 people, including 300 foreigners, were stranded at the foot of the site, in the town of Aguas Calientes, and pleading to be evacuated. Rescue teams later evacuated 418 tourists, the Tourism Ministry said in a Twitter post accompanied by pictures of a train and seated travelers.

"The closure of the Inca trails network and the Machu Picchu citadel has been ordered due to the social situation and to preserve the safety of visitors," the Ministry of Culture said in a Saturday statement. Tourism is vital for Peru's economy, representing between three to four percent of the country's GDP.

'I'm worried'

In Lima, where two days of mass mobilization by demonstrators from the country's poor Andean region had seemingly concluded, the situation Saturday remained tense. As night fell hundreds more protesters gathered in the city, mainly around the Congress building.

During the day security forces used an armored vehicle to breach the gate of the University of San Marcos in the city's downtown, in an attempt to expel protesters who have been sleeping there. A large contingent of police searched occupants, sometimes forcing them to lie on the ground, AFP journalists observed.

Interior Minister Vicente Romero Canal N television that police intervened after university authorities said some of the squatters were committing crimes. He did not specify what these were. Around 200 people were arrested, said Alfonso Barrenechea, a spokesman for the prosecutor's office.

Protesters are trying to keep up pressure on the Peruvian government, defying a state of emergency that now covers almost one-third of the country. The European Union on Saturday condemned the chaos and the "very large number of casualties," calling for a peaceful political solution in Peru.

The protests were sparked when former president Castillo, a rural schoolteacher, was removed from office and arrested on December 7 after attempting to dissolve the country's legislature and rule by decree, amid multiple corruption investigations. Among the 46 dead since the protests began, 45 were protesters and one was a police officer. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2023



KUWAIT: An aerial view of Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

‘Quota system’ in Kuwait development projects leads to losses, risks: Analyst

‘Politics hampers country’s growth, not economy’

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Development projects in Kuwait suffer from several obstacles that prevent the country from enjoying improvement and growth, in addition to its effect on the economic situation of the country that could be very negative in the future if project development remains almost frozen. Kuwait Times spoke to economic analyst Hajjaj Bou Khaddour and discussed with him different aspects related to the country’s development projects and strategies.

Bou Khaddour said the main obstacles facing Kuwait is parliamentary and governmental performance that does not give priority to these projects due to the “quota” system they adopt, which means distributing money and power among them and to groups they belong to. “Not only the quota system does not benefit the development process, it can be considered one of the biggest enemies and barriers to the country’s development. It is a serious problem for any country to rely on this working system,” he said.

“This is because the government’s priorities go away from development to please their groups of people. All representatives have no expectations

and no work plan, which means their performance has nothing to do with development. Their only role is in consumption and depletion of resources, and they don’t care about the country’s economic situation,” Bou Khaddour charged, blaming Kuwaiti citizens. “The representatives in the parliament and government are the citizens’ choice; therefore, they bear the responsibility in the delay in the country’s development projects as well,” he said.

Bou Khaddour stressed the problem affecting the growth of development projects is primarily political. “The economic side in Kuwait has no problem financing projects, and the country does not have international debts, not to mention that these projects are very traditional and don’t have huge obstacles or need any new skills,” he said. “Therefore, the problem is not economic at all, but it is purely political, whether in the matter of hindering these projects from being completed or in the failure to hold accountable those responsible for the delays in implementing projects.”

Generating awareness

Bou Khaddour said authorities in Kuwait who are responsible for these development projects suf-

fer from a lack of confidence, marketing plans and awareness campaigns to defend their projects by highlighting the importance of these projects to citizens and officials. “As a result of this, Kuwaiti citizens are away from reality and don’t understand the danger of the consequences of not developing new projects in the country,” he said.

Regarding the most important development projects the country should focus on to speed up the development strategy, Bou Khaddour stressed the main obstacle is over outstanding projects for health, education, industry and complementary services of the oil industry. “Unfortunately, all the previous projects are not only not improving or being developed, but are also regressing. Meanwhile, we don’t deny that the health sector has witnessed a little improvement over the past



Hajjaj Bou Khaddour

years, but other projects are facing huge delays, most importantly education in the country,” he pointed out.

Risks and losses

Bou Khaddour said the absence of development projects in the country leads to big risks, costing the country millions in profits that could be earned over the years, in addition to the costs of project executions that will double if calculated since drafting the project until implementation, due to the delayed system Kuwait suffers from.

“In 1994, we had two main projects in Kuwait, the Fourth Oil Refinery and Northern Fields, and instead of them costing us at that time \$3 billion to \$4 billion, it costs the country more than \$20 billion for each project and the loss of more than \$150 billion in profits over the years as a result of delays,” he explained. “The same goes for the petrochemical industry – while Kuwait used to be one of the leading countries in this field, as a result of the way the parliament and the government dealt with the Dow project, we lost big investment, security and strategic opportunities to achieve great returns,” Bou Khaddour concluded.

Iran’s Raisi pledges to tackle inflation

TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Sunday set the tackling of galloping inflation and currency devaluation as priorities for the 2023-2024 budget presented to parliament.

The pledge came as the rial touched a new low. Addressing MPs, Raisi tried to reassure Iranians over the economy which faces a serious crisis due primarily to US sanctions, mainly on oil exports. These were reimposed after Washington’s withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018. Iran’s troubled currency fell to a record low against the US dollar on Saturday amid the country’s increasing isolation and possible Europe Union sanctions against Tehran’s Revolutionary Guards or some of its members.

“Transparency, improving people’s livelihoods... controlling inflation and costs and supporting the stock market” are the budget priorities for the year starting on March 21, Raisi said. At the end of December, the governor of the central bank resigned after the rial lost around 30 percent of its value in two months, falling from 330,000 to 430,000 per US dollar. On Sunday, the national currency traded at around 450,000 rials per dollar, a new all-time low.

At the same time, inflation reached 45 percent at the end of December. “Know that the prices of (foreign) currencies and gold, as well as the prices of many expensive things in the country will decrease,” the president promised, without explaining in detail the strategy of the government to achieve this. Iran’s economy has been subject to increasing pressure with fresh sanctions imposed by Western countries over the authorities response to protests sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini.

Iran has been gripped by the protests since the September 16 death in custody of Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian, for an alleged violation of the country’s strict dress code for women.



TEHRAN: Iranian MPs attend a parliament session during which the country’s president addressed lawmakers on his budget bill, on January 22, 2023. — AFP

Western countries have also imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic over providing Russia with drones they say are used in the Ukraine war. Tehran had repeatedly denied supplying weapons “to be used” in the war, but later admitted sending drones to Russia before the invasion began in February.

“The enemy is trying to impose difficult conditions and despair on the people” but “the government and parliament must give people hope,” Raisi said. He assured that the government has “a short and long-term strategy” to support activity in the sectors of housing, health, food and transport.

Parliament on Sunday approved the budget which relied on projected exports of 1.4 million barrels of crude per day at an average price of \$85 per barrel, state news agency IRNA reported. Iran’s troubled currency fell to a record low against the US dollar on Saturday amid the country’s increasing isolation and possible Europe Union sanctions against Tehran’s Revolutionary Guards or some of

its members. Ties between the EU and Tehran have deteriorated in recent months as efforts to revive nuclear talks have stalled. Iran has detained several European nationals and the bloc has become increasingly critical of the violent treatment of protesters and the use of executions.

The EU is discussing a fourth round of sanctions against Iran and diplomatic sources have said members of the Revolutionary Guards will be added to the bloc’s sanctions list next week. But some EU member states want to go further and classify the Guards as a whole as a terrorist organization. The dollar was selling for as much as 447,000 rials on Iran’s unofficial market on Saturday, compared with 430,500 the previous day, according to the foreign exchange site Bonbast.com. The rial has lost 29 percent of its value since nationwide protests following the death in police custody of a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman, Mahsa Amini, on Sept. 16. —AFP

Egypt releases two detained business tycoons

RIYADH: Two leading Egyptian businessmen have been released after some two years in pretrial detention on terrorism-related charges, their family said Saturday. “My father Safwan Thabet and my brother Seif al-Din Thabet are with us,” Safwan’s daughter Mariam wrote on social media, without specifying when the pair were released. Safwan Thabet, in his late 70s, is the founder and former CEO of household dairy brand Juhayna.

He was arrested in December 2020 and charged with joining and financing the banned Muslim Brotherhood, branded a terror group in 2013. His son Seif, in his early 40s, was arrested in February the following year. Philip Luther from rights group Amnesty International had said the pair were “being punished simply for daring to defy demands by Egyptian security officials to hand over their family’s assets in the company Juhayna”.

“They have shown rare courage in resisting the officials’ attempt to blackmail them,” Luther had said in a September 2021 statement. The Thabets’ prolonged pretrial detention including in solitary confinement – which Amnesty had said amounted to “torture” – drew international calls for their release. In October last year, as Egypt clinched a \$3 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, Washington-based human rights group the Freedom Initiative drew attention to their plight.

“Egypt’s political economy is still very much controlled to the benefit of a few state actors who are willing to detain, intimidate, and harass even the most beloved business icons,” the Freedom Initiative’s Allison McManus had said in a statement, referring to the Thabets. In fulfillment of its loan obligations, Cairo has pledged to privatize key state assets and increase transparency on state business dealings. Authorities released hundreds of political prisoners last year, though rights groups estimate some 60,000 remain in detention, many facing brutal conditions and overcrowded cells. —AFP

Business

Google cuts 12,000 jobs as tech woes bite again

'Changing economic reality' forces tech giant to enact massive restructuring

NEW YORK: Google's parent company Alphabet announced it will cut about 12,000 jobs globally, citing a changing economic reality as it became the latest US tech giant to enact large-scale restructuring.

The layoffs come a day after Microsoft said it would reduce staff numbers by 10,000 in the coming months, following similar cuts by Facebook owner Meta, Amazon and Twitter as the tech sector girds for economic downturn. The cuts follow a major hiring spree during the height of the coronavirus pandemic when companies scrambled to meet demand as people went online for work, school and entertainment.

"Over the past two years we've seen periods of dramatic growth," Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said in an email to employees. "To match and fuel that growth, we hired for a different economic reality than the one we face today."

A review is taking place to make sure that people and their roles are in line with the company's priorities, Pichai said, adding that the workforce would be reduced by around 12,000 positions.

Alphabet employed nearly 187,000 workers worldwide at the end of September 2022. The cuts represent a little over 6 percent of its total workforce. The cuts will be "across departments, func-

tions, levels of responsibility and regions," Pichai added. "The fact that these changes will impact the lives of Googlers weighs heavily on me, and I take full responsibility for the decisions that led us here."

'Unsustainable'

Pichai said that the cuts would "sharpen our focus" on priorities including artificial intelligence. "Being constrained in some areas allows us to bet big on others," he said. Google's world-dominating search engine has found itself under pressure with the emergence of ChatGPT, a Microsoft-backed chatbot that can generate elaborate, human-like content in just seconds. Microsoft has said the technology will be used to strengthen Bing, the longtime rival to Google search. Google has turned to founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, who have left their daily roles at the tech titan, for help responding to the threat posed by the chatbot, according to a New York Times report.

Brin and Page met with Google executives several times last month to brainstorm, the Times reported. Google declined to comment directly on the Times report. "We have long been focused on developing and deploying AI to improve people's lives," said Google spokesperson Lily Lin.

"We continue to test our AI technology internally to make sure it's helpful and safe, and we look forward to sharing more experiences externally soon."

Pichai announced severance packages for US employees, who will receive at least 16 weeks of salary, their 2022 bonus, paid vacations and six months of health coverage. He said he remained "optimistic about our ability to deliver on our mission, even on our toughest days." Wall Street welcomed the cuts: Alphabet shares ended the formal trading day up more than 5 percent to \$98.02.

This tracked the effect of job cuts on other tech giants, with Meta's share price up 35 percent since it announced 11,000 job cuts on November 9 and Amazon's stock was up 13 percent since 18,000 people were let go earlier this month. Analysts have said tech's big guns had previously overspent, not seeing a slowdown on the horizon. Daniel Ives of Wedbush Securities said the layoffs highlight a long period of irresponsible spending across a sector basking in "hypergrowth."

"The reality is tech stalwarts overhired at a pace that was unsustainable and now darker macro is forcing these layoffs across the tech space," he said. According to tech site Layoffs.fyi, nearly 194,000 industry employees have lost their jobs in the US



NEW DELHI, India: In this file photo taken on December 19, 2022, Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google Inc. speaks during an event in New Delhi. Google's parent company Alphabet announced about 12,000 job cuts globally on January 20, 2023, citing a changing "economic reality", becoming the latest US tech giant to enact large-scale restructuring. — AFP

since the beginning of 2022, not including those announced by Alphabet on Friday. — AFP

Musk unveils more costly subscription for ad-free Twitter

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter boss Elon Musk announced in a series of tweets Saturday that the company's subscription service would show less advertising to users, including an ad-free tier. The announcement comes as the social network has faced major economic uncertainty since its takeover by Musk in October. "Ads are too frequent on Twitter and too big. Taking steps to address both in coming weeks," Musk posted to his Twitter account Saturday.

And for those who choose it, "there

will be a higher priced subscription that allows zero ads," Musk added. That would be a radical change in business model from Twitter, which has so far relied on targeted advertising to generate revenue, before launching a paid subscription service in mid-December.

But advertising has been a question mark for Twitter lately, after Musk fired about half of the company's 7,500-strong workforce late last year. The move sparked concern that the company was insufficiently staffed to carry out content moderation and spooking governments and advertisers. Musk said his strategy was to massively reduce costs while building up revenue, and that a new subscription service called Twitter Blue, which grants users a sought-after blue verification tick for a fee, would help

reach that goal.

The service costs \$11 a month in the United States and is available on Apple's iOS and Google's Android mobile operating systems, according to a page on the company's website. Web subscriptions are also available for \$8 per month or, at a discount, \$84 per year. Twitter Blue is currently available in the United States, Canada, Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.

Musk-led Twitter has been riven by chaos, with mass layoffs, the return of banned accounts and the suspension of journalists critical of the South African-born billionaire. Musk's takeover also saw a surge in racist or hateful tweets, drawing scrutiny from regulators and chasing away big advertisers, Twitter's main source of revenue. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 19 JANUARY 2023

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	37,522	8,057.77	2.1%	-0.7%	1.4%	419,548,027	219,385,377	30,527	21.7	2.3	78.8%
Main Market	10,102	5,621.41	0.6%	0.4%	0.9%	443,858,933	57,152,292	18,524	42.9	1.4	21.2%
All Share	47,625	7,256.91	1.8%	-0.5%	1.3%	863,406,960	276,537,669	49,051	26.2	2.1	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	30,410	1,806.66	2.1%	0.7%	2.5%	182,428,693	125,160,736	11,422	23.5	2.3	63.85%
BASIC MATERIALS	757	843.44	0.7%	-2.5%	-1.5%	1,684,641	1,307,614	400	5.0	0.9	1.59%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	935	1,394.67	-1.6%	-6.2%	-1.9%	27,308,054	5,453,555	2,572	27.0	10.3	1.96%
CONSUMER STAPLES	150	493.31	2.6%	2.8%	4.7%	2,655,798	1,055,635	208	0.0	1.2	0.32%
ENERGY	232	1,114.22	-1.4%	-2.1%	-5.4%	5,674,656	246,740	192	9.8	1.1	0.49%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,401	1,259.06	1.8%	0.1%	1.8%	311,783,864	37,433,567	10,302	68.1	1.7	9.24%
HEALTH CARE	220	443.69	-3.9%	-3.9%	-3.9%	80	52,060	3	13.6	5.8	0.46%
INDUSTRIALS	3,416	967.76	-0.6%	-10.3%	-7.6%	119,870,720	65,034,404	12,098	30.3	1.4	7.17%
INSURANCE	637	1,549.93	-0.2%	-0.1%	-0.2%	4,353,106	585,418	165	9.5	1.0	1.34%
REAL ESTATE	2,537	1,175.53	-0.1%	-2.7%	-1.2%	172,267,953	20,086,952	6,001	19.9	1.2	5.33%
TECHNOLOGY	10	732.59	2.8%	5.2%	-0.3%	12,000	1,232	7	0.0	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,720	1,212.69	4.2%	2.6%	3.8%	32,396,579	19,637,008	5,356	13.6	2.1	7.81%
UTILITIES	199	476.32	-2.2%	-3.7%	-1.6%	2,970,816	534,754	325	14.9	1.7	0.42%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
STC	694	11.76%	13,929,731	9,195,299,701	3,255
TAHSSILAT	20.1	8.65%	2,511	48,471	3
UPAC	204	8.51%	11,375	2,199,535	10
KPROJ	116	8.41%	47,110,305	5,431,174,486	1,264
AAVAN	146	7.35%	79,065,462	11,289,791,844	1,087

Top Losers

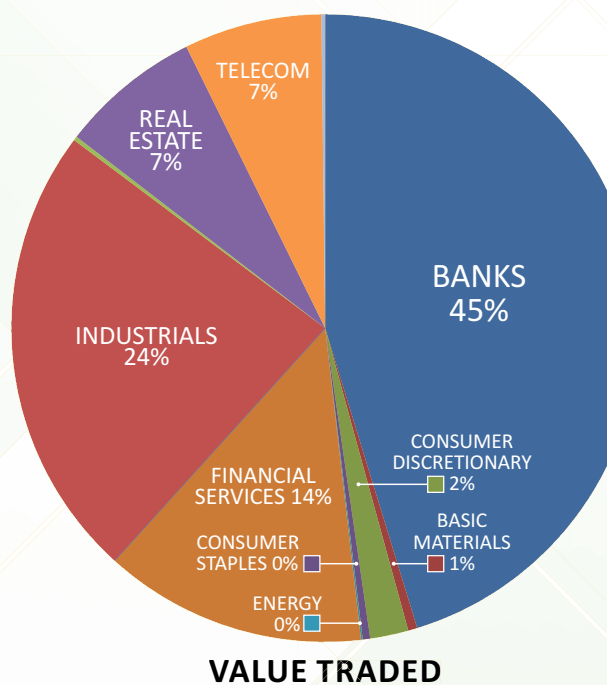
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GIH	390	-8.67%	210,798	83,645	65
UNICAP	55	-6.61%	1,463,443	81,872	164
MASHAER	52	-6.31%	329,244	17,766	59
MIDAN	650.0	-5.80%	80	52	3
WETHAQ	23.9	-5.53%	139,646	3,252	29

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	820	2.24%	107,353,457	86,950,897	5,544
AGLTY	584	-1.85%	97,406,299	56,899,928	9,890
NRE	101	-4.10%	93,385,794	9,641,822	2,714
AAVAN	146	7.35%	79,065,462	11,289,792	1,087
GFH	78	1.84%	52,230,357	4,019,803	1,351

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	820	2.24%	107,353,457	86,950,897	5,544
AGLTY	584	-1.85%	97,406,299	56,899,928	9,890
NBK	1,100	2.80%	19,849,185	21,515,766	2,059
AAVAN	146	7.35%	79,065,462	11,289,792	1,087
ZAIN	560	3.32%	18,128,734	10,088,796	1,937



Market Summary:

- Premier and Main Market's weekly volume and value increased by 13%, 26%, and 10%, and 23%, respectively. The significant increase is due to an increase in buying pressure.
- Premier and Main indexes managed to rebound from a critical support level. Currently, both are on the edge of overcoming tough resistance.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7256, with support levels at 7214, 7162, and 7105, and resistance at 7286. The Premier index closed at 8057, with support levels at 8013, 7977, and 7926, while resistance at 8064. The Main index closed at 5621, with support levels at 5616, 5601, and 5550, while resistance at 5641.

Business

US media rocked by layoffs amid economic downturn

Laid off journalists express anger, dismay, or gratitude to their colleagues

NEW YORK: From CNN to the Washington Post, US media are facing tough times, as a series of outlets have announced layoffs this winter amid fears of an economic downturn. Vox Media, owner of the Vox and The Verge websites as well as the landmark New York Magazine and its online platforms, announced Friday it was letting go seven percent of its staff. The news follows layoffs at CNN, NBC, MSNBC, BuzzFeed and other outlets.

In a memo to staff on Friday, Vox Media CEO Jim Bankoff announced "the difficult decision to eliminate roughly seven percent of our staff roles across departments due to the challenging economic environment impacting our business and industry." The memo, which was confirmed to AFP by Vox Media, said the affected employees were going to be notified of being let go within the next 15 minutes. That would mean some 130 out of the group's 1,900 staff.

Meghan McCarron, an award-winning journalist who spent more than nine years at Eater, a food website owned by Vox Media, tweeted Friday she was among those laid off while 37 weeks pregnant.

"My partner and I are so excited to become parents," McCarron posted. "I can't really process the amount of uncertainty we're now facing," she added. A Vox spokesperson told AFP they could not comment on specific cases, but that employees were offered "competitive severance packages," including extra severance pay for those with "a near-term upcoming parental leave planned."

Journalists who were laid off from other organizations in recent weeks have also taken to Twitter to express anger, dismay, or gratitude to their colleagues, while beginning to look for a new job.

"I'll be figuring out my next move. I'm a data reporter but I also write and produce," tweeted Emily Siegel, who was let go after five years as an

investigative reporter at NBC. "I'd love to keep doing this work. My (direct messages) are open."

'Under pressure for a long time'

While the media layoffs were not as dramatic as those rocking tech giants such as Microsoft and Google, which announced Friday it was cutting 12,000 more jobs, they were a consequence of falling advertising revenue amid a gloomy economic climate, said Chris Roush, dean of the School of Communications at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut. "For a lot of them, they grew and expanded on the expectation that they were going to be able to grow their audience, or either readers or viewers to a certain level," Roush told AFP. "And that just hasn't happened and is unlikely to happen given what's happening in the economy."

Newsroom employment has seen a steady decline in the United States, falling from 114,000 to 85,000 journalists between 2008 and 2020, according to a 2021 study by the Pew Research Center, with local media hit especially hard. "Journalism has been under pressure for a long time, and a number of companies seem to think this is an opportune time to reduce their labor costs - hurting both journalists and journalism," the Writers Guild of America, East said in a statement to AFP.

The union comprises journalists from NBC and MSNBC. The two outlets, which declined an AFP request for comment, bid farewell to some 75 employees, according to US media.

A similar announcement is dreaded at the Washington Post, where CEO Fred Ryan warned last month that "a number of positions" will be cut in the following weeks, adding that the layoffs would affect "a single digit percentage of our employee base" of some 2,500 people. Hires for other positions can continue, the paper said. The Washington Post Magazine, the paper's Sunday supplement which won two Pulitzer prizes, was



shut down in December as part of what executive editor Sally Buzbee described in a memo as the paper's "global and digital transformation."

And Vice Media CEO Nancy Dubuc announced to her staff Friday that the company is up for sale.

'Steep, secular decline'

In recent months, CNN has laid off an estimated several hundred workers out of a total of some 4,000 people, according to US media. CNN would not confirm those figures to AFP. The cuts took place as the company underwent a restructuring following a merger between Warner Media, which includes CNN and HBO Max, and Discovery. The merger resulted in the creation of the Warner Bros. Discovery mega conglomerate.

Following the merger, CNN's new parent company abruptly pulled the plug on the network's \$100 million streaming service CNN+. Naveen Sarma, a senior media analyst with S&P Global Rating, noted a "steep, secular decline" of traditional broadcast and cable television in the United States, leading to a dramatic drop in subscriptions to paid TV.

"That's a constant ongoing struggle for all these companies to come in," said Sarma. Roush of Quinnipiac University says the changes were especially painful for smaller media. "CNN, Washington Post, those are not going away, but a smaller company, they have bigger issues, because they're just smaller and not as well established as a media brand," he said. —AFP

Gulf Bank's MOU prepaid card attracts wide range of customers

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's MOUJ prepaid cashback card, the first of its kind to offer a cashback feature to its holders in the Middle East, continues to offer customers exclusive benefits and discounts, in addition to cashback of up to KD 600 annually. The MOUJ card allows its users to benefit from a wide range of benefits and noteworthy services, attracting a wide range of customers.

Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking Services, Mohammad Taqi, said, "Customer experience is always among our top priorities at Gulf Bank, and we are always keen to provide only the best and most innovative products to our customers. At Gulf Bank, we are very proud of our proactive approach in providing services that give back to our customers, benefiting them at every turn, and providing them with a distinctive, simple and swift banking experience that is unparalleled in terms of security and quality of service."

Taqi added: "Our keenness on innovation and excellence has always been an integral part of our daily operations at Gulf Bank, and we promise our customers even more developments that will bring

us closer to achieving our vision as the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future."

He pointed out that Gulf Bank's MOUJ prepaid cashback cardholders can also enjoy exclusive discounts in their favorite stores and restaurants with more than 850 outlets in Kuwait, in addition to discounts of up to 25 percent at more than 550 renowned restaurants and cafes in Kuwait. Cardholders can also avail instant discounts of up to 30 percent at more than 300 retail outlets across travel, entertainment, health, beauty, and lifestyle segments. The card is also equipped with fraud protection with Gulf Bank's 3D secure feature for a safer online shopping experience.

For a quicker and more convenient shopping experience, Gulf Bank's MOUJ Cashback Prepaid Card is also equipped with NFC technology, allowing cardholders to enjoy contactless transactions, without the hassle of inserting or swiping their cards at check-out.

He stated that the MOUJ prepaid cashback card was designed for all family members and youth, with parents or guardians having the option to control deposit amounts transferred to the card and the ability to monitor expenses. This feature can encourage debit cardholders to start shopping with their MOUJ Prepaid cashback card and benefit from cashback of up to KD 600 annually.

Gulf Bank was awarded with "Most Rewarding Prepaid Card in the Middle East and Africa" by

Mastercard for its MOUJ cashback prepaid card.

With the MOUJ Cashback Prepaid Card, cardholders can earn up to 5 percent cashback on all their purchases locally and internationally throughout the year. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti bank of the future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Mohammad Taqi



DAVOS: Christos Christou, Chief Compliance Officer of LuLu Financial Holdings, and Hazem Mulhim, Founder and CEO of Eastnets, discuss the role of compliance in achieving financial inclusion, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

LuLu Financial Holdings, Eastnets hold event in Davos

DAVOS: As the world's leaders, social scientists and business community converge on this year's World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting, the key theme of 'Cooperation in a fragmented world', has resonated with stakeholders of MENA's financial services sector.

Building upon this message, UAE-based LuLu Financial Holdings and Eastnets organized a special event around the role of fully compliant technologies in achieving financial inclusion. Speaking at the event, Adeb Alhamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, said that co-operation, or competition through collaboration requires the collective action of all stakeholders, including governments, fintechs and traditional players. He stressed on the role of fully compliant solutions in helping companies tap into each other's benefits, adding, "The foundation of interoperable solutions depends on fully compliant platforms that adhere to regulations and simplify processes for interconnected entities. The significance of such platforms is set to increase as consumer behavior undergoes further evolution and regulations are put in place to ensure proper data ownership."

The session also saw subject matter experts Hazem Mulhim, Founder and CEO of Eastnets, Christos Christou, Chief Compliance Officer of LuLu Financial Holdings, and Joel Lange, General Manager of Dow Jones Risk & Compliance, discuss the role of compliance in plugging gaps in financial services, especially cross-border remittances.

Christos said that the strategic role of compliant systems is gaining relevance, and that companies such as LuLu Financial Holdings are enabling platform-based services to fintechs and traditional players, that can bridge the gap between the underbanked and technologically advanced financial products.

Calling for inclusion to be responsible and sustainable, Hazem Mulhim said that access to digital financial services should create financial stability and not lead to a debt trap situation. "Financial inclusion needs to be supported by consumer needs & financial education and should be guarded against fraud, data privacy issues and financial crime."

The session was attended by dignitaries from the UAE government and financial services sector, including Abdulla Bin Touq Al-Marri, UAE Minister of Economy, MA Yusuf Ali, Chairman & Managing Director, LuLu Group International, Dr Shamsheer Vayalil, Founder & Chairman, Burjeel Holdings, Mark B'sser, Chairman, IMTF, Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO, E&E, and Brooks Entwistle, SVP, Ripple Services, among others.



LuLu Hypermarket, Talabat ink deal to offer home deliveries

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, signed a contract with Talabat, the premier home-delivery chain in the GCC, to facilitate the distribution of the hypermarket's products in Kuwait. The contract was signed on behalf of LuLu Hypermarket by Director Mohamed Haris, and for Talabat by Badder Al-Ghanim Managing Director - Kuwait, in the presence of senior officials of the two brands, at the LuLu Hypermarket head office in Al-Rai on 19 January.

In a statement released on the occasion, LuLu Hypermarket noted that the signing of the contract with Talabat will strengthen our efforts to provide customers



with the best shopping experience with high quality products, widest range of choices, and the most competitive prices. The cooperation with Talabat will also further our endeavor to make shopping for LuLu products easy, convenient and accessible to all, from anywhere in Kuwait.

The statement added that digital shopping and e-commerce is a fast growing platform in Kuwait, and more people than ever-before are now turning to online ordering of goods. Online buyers expect delivery of their purchases quickly and efficiently, and to their place of choice.

LuLu Hypermarket already has an online marketplace and delivery service. However, with the growing demand for online deliveries, it has become imperative for the hypermarket to choose a reliable partner to facilitate home-deliveries. Certainly it will be Talabat in Kuwait who is standing in the top most rank in home delivery services. The statement noted that the deal with Talabat will see more than 17,000 stock keeping units (SKUs) of the hypermarket's products being made available

ministry source reported Saturday.

Hours later, the director of the channel in France announced that it would have to shut down as a consequence. "The blocking of RT France accounts will lead to retaliatory measures against the French media in Russia," the TASS and RIA Novosti news agencies quoted the foreign ministry source as saying. The measures "will be remembered", the source said, accusing Paris of "terrorizing Russian journalists."

The channel's director in France, Xenia Fedorova announced in a statement posted on Twitter later Saturday that this had been the final blow. "After five

years of harassment, the authorities in power have achieved their goal: the closure of RT France," she wrote.

She denounced the French move as an "arbitrary measure" that amounted to censorship, adding that 123 employees were at risk of not being paid for January and could lose their jobs.

The accounts freeze was part of the latest European Union sanctions against Russia. On Friday, the unions of RT France-already banned from broadcasting-said their accounts had been frozen in the country. —AFP

Russia to retaliate after RT accounts frozen in France

MOSCOW: Moscow will retaliate against French media in Russia after the bank accounts of RT France, the French arm of its state broadcaster, were frozen, Russian news agencies quoting an anonymous foreign

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo taken on September 12, 2022 Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort attend the presentation of Addresses by both Houses of Parliament in Westminster Hall, inside the Palace of Westminster, central London, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II on September 8. The coronation weekend for King Charles III, that will take place on May 6, 2023, will feature a star-studded concert, nationwide "big lunch" and volunteering initiative as well as the traditional ceremony and royal processions, Buckingham Palace announced late on January 21, 2022. —AFP photos



In this file photo King Charles III (L) watches as the Lord Chamberlain Andrew Parker breaks his Wand of Office at the Committal Service for Queen Elizabeth II held at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle.



Britain's King Charles III unveils a plaque during a visit to the headquarters of cereal manufacturer Kellogg's marking its 100th anniversary in Manchester, north west England.

Processions, lunches and concert to crown King Charles III

The coronation weekend for King Charles III will feature a star-studded concert, nationwide "big lunch" and volunteering initiative as well as the traditional ceremony and royal processions, Buckingham Palace announced late Saturday.

The three days of ceremonial, celebratory and community events in early May will be a chance for "people to come together in celebration of the historic occasion", the palace said in an update on its much-anticipated plans.

The landmark long weekend looms with the monarchy still grappling with the fallout from the publication earlier this month of Prince Harry's scorching tell-all memoir "Spare", in which he made a series of incendiary claims against the family. It is unclear whether US-based Harry-Charles' younger son-and his American wife Meghan will attend the coronation, with a recent Sunday Times report claiming a reconciliation could still take place prior. Charles, 74, immediately became king when Queen Elizabeth died aged 96 on September 8 last year, ending her record-breaking 70-year reign after a year of declining health.

He also took over as head of state of 14 Commonwealth countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The coronation traditionally takes place some months after a new sovereign has ascended to the throne, following a period of national and royal mourning as well as intense preparation.

Processions

The country's first coronation since 1953, set to be watched worldwide and feature various global dignitaries, will begin with Charles' formal crowning at London's Westminster Abbey on Saturday May 6, in a tradition dating back more than 900 years. Buckingham Palace has previously said the service, to be conducted by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, will reflect the monarchy's historic traditions alongside its modern role.

"The Coronation is a solemn religious service, as well as an occasion for celebration and pageantry," it noted. Charles' wife, Queen Consort Camilla, 75, will also be crowned. The pair will arrive from the palace without other royals in "The King's Procession", before returning in a larger ceremonial entourage known as "The Coronation Procession" featuring other family members. Once back at the palace, the opening day will conclude with the royals appearing on the balcony overlooking The Mall where thousands of people are expected to gather.

'Special' concert

The next day will then see a "special coronation concert" staged at Windsor Castle, west of London, to be produced and broadcast live by the BBC and featuring "global music icons and contemporary stars". Several thousand pairs of tickets will be made available through a public ballot, while volunteers from char-

ities supported by Charles and Camilla will also be able to attend.

The concert will feature a "world-class orchestra" playing interpretations of musical favourites "fronted by some of the world's biggest entertainers, alongside performers from the world of dance". A "coronation choir", drawn from diverse community choirs and amateur singers nationwide—such as Refugee choirs, NHS choirs, LGBTQ+ singing groups and deaf signing choirs—will also make an exclusive appearance.

A "virtual choir" made up of singers from across the Commonwealth will also perform, while the castle's East Lawn will host a selection of spoken word sequences delivered by stars of stage and screen.

But the centrepiece of the evening event will be a "lighting up the nation" segment which will see iconic locations across the UK lit up using projections, lasers, drone displays and illuminations.

'Volunteering legacy'

Also on May 7, neighbours and communities will be invited to host thousands of "coronation big lunches", billed as a "nationwide act of celebration and friendship". "From a cup of tea with a neighbour to a street party, a coronation big lunch brings the celebrations to your neighbourhood," said the palace, which expects events in streets, gardens, parks and community spaces.

The scheme will be overseen and



Britain's King Charles III (C) and Britain's Camilla (C-R), Queen Consort, pose with England football manager Gareth Southgate (L) and children from St Peter's Primary School during their visit to Norbrook Community Centre in Wythenshawe.

organised by a team from the Eden Project, the eco-friendly visitor attraction in Cornwall, southwest England. Camilla has been patron of its annual "big lunch" initiative—which aims to boost community spirit, reduce loneliness and support charities and good causes—since 2013.

The final part of coronation weekend, dubbed "the big help out", will be held on Monday May 8 — designated a public holiday in the UK this year.

Organised by community forum The Together Coalition and partners including The Scouts, the Royal Voluntary Service and various faith groups, it will "highlight the positive impact volunteering has on communities across the nation". People will be encouraged to try volunteering for themselves and join initiatives in their local areas in a bid to create "a lasting volunteering legacy from the coronation weekend". —AFP

Sudan's prized gum trees ward off drought but workers wither

A vast belt of trees vital for global production of fizzy drinks helps Sudanese farmers adapt to climate change, but in the harsh drylands many are reluctant to take up the trade. Gum arabic, golden blobs of resin tapped from thorny acacia trees, is an emulsifying agent virtually irreplaceable for global industry. The ingredient is used in everything from soft drinks to chewing gum and pharmaceuticals.

Sudan, in northeastern Africa, is among the countries hardest hit by climate change but is also the world's largest



Gum arabic sap is pictured on the branch of an acacia tree.

producer of the raw gum. "It's an important tree to fight desertification as it is drought resistant-and also increases the soil fertility, essential to increasing crop production," said Fatma Ramly, coordinator of the Gum Arabic Farmers' Association, which counts seven million members.

To harvest the amber-coloured resin, farmers must suffer the same climatic extremes as their trees. "We work for hours on end under a burning sun," said Mohammed Moussa, who collects resin at the state-owned Demokaya research forest, about 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the North Kordofan state capital, El Obeid. Moussa faces a constant struggle with the shortage of water in largely desert Sudan. His earnings

from the trees barely "provide enough money to buy water to cover us until the autumn" rainy season.

'Laborious'

Recorded temperatures in Sudan's Kordofan region have increased by almost two degrees Celsius in less than three decades, more than double the global average, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

"Water scarcity is one of the key challenges for people" living in the acacia zone, said Madani Ismail, of the state-run Agricultural Research Corporation. Farmers also have to contend with wide fluctuations in the price of gum on world commodity markets.

Forty-five kilograms (100 pounds) of raw gum can fetch 22,000 to 25,000 Sudanese pounds (\$43), depending on the day's price. The return barely covers the cost of production for Abdelbaqi Ahmed, 52, who owns a 28-hectare (70-acre) plot of acacia trees in Botai, North Kordofan.

He cultivates other crops to help boost his income from the trees, whose bark he cuts with a "sunki"—a sharp blade attached to a long wooden shaft able to reach up high in the tree. "It is a laborious task," said Ahmed, who sometimes hires others to help with the tapping. "So it doesn't usually pay off." Others can't be bothered at all. Some cut down the trees for building materials or firewood. Many work in the nearby gold mines, like four of Ahmed's five sons. For Abdallah Babiker, who also works in Demokaya, it's the same. His three sons would rather prospect for gold than tend acacia trees. "They want work that earns more," said Babiker, 72.

Export leader

Since South Sudan broke away a decade ago, taking with it its large oil reserves, gum arabic has been one of Sudan's main foreign currency earners. Exports totalled 88,000 tonnes in 2021, earning \$110 million, according to central bank figures. That income has become all the more important since international donors cut aid following a 2021 military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. Sudanese exports account for 70 percent of global gum supplies, according to AFD, the French agency for development.

Their importance to the world economy earned them a special exemption from the US trade embargo imposed during the three-decade rule of now-ousted strongman Omar al-Bashir. Efforts have been made to counter deforestation by boosting farmers' incomes. "We have been trying to replant trees in areas that experienced deterioration, and to prevent the gum arabic belt from receding," Ramly said. Sudan's gum arabic belt covers about 500,000 square kilometres (193,000 square miles) from Gedaref in the east through Kordofan to Darfur on the border with Chad.



Sudanese men harvest gum arabic sap from an acacia tree, in the state-owned Demokaya research forest some 30km east of El-Obeid, the capital city of the central wilayet (state) of North Kordofan.



A Sudanese man shows a freshly harvested gum arabic sap on the tip of a "sunki", a long wooden handled-tool with a sharp metal edge, in the state-owned Demokaya research forest.

The FAO has launched a \$10 million project with Sudan's forestry authority to support farmers and protect the trees. Acacia boosts "soil moisture retention", which helps farmers' other crops, the FAO said.

The project, which seeks to reforest 125,000 hectares (310,000 acres), is part of the wider Great Green Wall proj-



Sudanese men harvest gum arabic sap. Gum arabic acacia trees are not only tapped to produce valuable sap, but also help farmers relying on increasingly erratic rainfall by boosting moisture for their crops, making the difference between a healthy harvest or failure.

ect, which aims to contain desert encroachment by planting trees from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa. The challenge now is to persuade young people that they can make a living in gum production. Almost "all of the people who are doing this job are over 60", Ramly said. Ismail agreed. "Young people... often see it as unrewarding," he said. —AFP

Ukraine directors bring horrors of Russian invasion to Sundance

Two new documentaries from Ukrainian filmmakers highlighting the carnage wrought on their country by Russian aggression—and the insidious effects of Kremlin propaganda—premiere at the Sundance film festival this week.

"20 Days In Mariupol," which screened Friday night, portrays in harrowing detail the arrival of war last year to a city that became one of the invasion's bloodiest battle sites, all captured by video journalists under siege.

And "Iron Butterflies," premiering Sunday, chronicles the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 by Russian-armed separatists in eastern Ukraine, and its foreshadowing of today's larger conflict. Director Mstyslav Chernov, a journalist who filmed the key port city of Mariupol as Russian troops advanced in February and March 2021, said he hopes releasing his footage as a documentary "hits deeper" and "harder" with audiences than brief newsreel clips can.

"It really gives an insight to not only fuller stories of people who are there, but also to how big scale the story is," he told AFP. "20 Days In Mariupol" offers a behind-the-scenes look at how Chernov risked his life to chronicle a Russian direct hit on a maternity hospital, which provoked outrage around the world.

The film recounts how Chernov and his team desperately tried to escape the city in order to transmit their shocking footage, even as Russian officials tried to dismiss the horrific incident as a hoax assembled using Ukrainian "actors." Mariupol "was the first insight of how different Russia's narrative about this war is to reality," said Chernov.

Russian officials "were saying that they're not targeting civilians." "You will see in the film me keep asking people, 'Russian Federation is not targeting civilians?' And you will see people reply, 'Well, they are.'" Moscow's weaponization of misinformation is

also central to "Iron Butterflies," which takes its name from the shrapnel within the Russian-made BUK missile that struck passenger plane MH17 in 2014, killing 298 people.

The movie combines newsreel and social media footage with intercepted military audio, to show how the Russian response went from claiming sep-

artists had downed a Ukrainian military aircraft, to blaming Kyiv for the civilian deaths. It also contrasts the findings of an exhaustive international probe into the incident, with Russia's claim of another hoax.

Director Roman Liubiyi said he tried to remain "scientific" and avoid becoming angry while editing

the film, because Russian propaganda is "built around emotional impact, emotional engagement." The film underlines how those convicted of murder in absentia by a Dutch tribunal at The Hague are highly unlikely to ever serve time in prison. "If the downing of a passenger plane doesn't have consequences for the murderers, then it's hard to imagine what's going to happen (in the future) — if the invasion will not have consequences," he said.

'Not enough'

A third film "Klondike," about a family living on the Russia-Ukraine border at the outbreak of violence in 2014, will receive a special encore at the high-profile festival in Utah, after winning Sundance's world cinema directing award last year.

Liubiyi said the strong Ukrainian showing can only boost the profile of his country's film industry overseas, but warned "the much, much harder question is how to achieve something right here and right now for the country, for defense."

The director hopes to use the publicity from Sundance to crowdfund a reconnaissance drone for filmmaker friends currently serving in the Ukrainian army. "I would like to use this moment to say as a Ukrainian citizen that we are really thankful for all the international community for helping us to defend (our country)," he said.

"But if you are asking 'Is it enough weapons?' Probably, unfortunately, it is still not enough." He spoke to AFP as top Ukrainian officials on Saturday slammed allies' "indecision," after Germany refused to supply tanks to bolster Kyiv in the nearly year-long war.

Liubiyi takes his film to the Berlin film festival next month. "For sure, international audiences get more and more tired from this topic," he said. "It's hard to keep this fire, this interest... (but) this fight is about our existence." —AFP



(L-R) Michael Gandolfini, Nicholas Braun, Emilia Jones, Susanna Fogel, Liza Koshy and Kyle Selig attend the New Yorker Studios celebrates "Cat Person" at a pre-event dinner during the 2023 Sundance Film Festival at Tupelo on January 21, 2023 in Park City, Utah. —AFP

'Pokemon Go' creator returns to 'real world' recipe for NBA game

Seven years ago the mobile game "Pokemon Go" took the world by storm, and now its creators are aiming to infuse the same "real-world" appeal into their new basketball game. While players of "Pokemon Go" were guided by their mobile phones to real-world locations to collect magical creatures, "NBA All-World" allows players to challenge each other to games in the street.

John Hanke, the boss of Niantic, which produces both games, stresses that just as with Pokemon, players of the NBA game will also require only a mobile phone — no expensive VR headsets or goggles. He is pushing this hybrid-style game as a "real-world metaverse", distinguishing it from the experience promoted by Microsoft and others of users sitting at home with masks strapped to their faces.

"I think it's important to support what we do in the real world as human beings, like going out to the restaurant, meeting our friends and not staying at home," he told AFP in an interview. "Putting on a VR headset by yourself, to me it's a very lonely and scary future. I hope that humanity doesn't go in that direction."

In "NBA All-World", released this week in France and next Tuesday globally, players choose their favourite NBA star as an avatar and get to meet and play others in the street. The social aspect of the game, Hanke said, made mobile phones the perfect device to play on. "It is mobile, low cost and almost everybody has one," he said.

Brand buy-in

Niantic is hoping to cash in with micro-transactions — players can spend small amounts on virtual items that allow them to move through the game faster or customise their avatars with sneakers from brands such as Adidas or Puma. Hanke concedes that the success of "Pokemon Go" has helped Niantic get high-level corporate partners onboard.

"The success of 'Pokemon Go' certainly helps us," he said. Now a cultural phenomenon with more than one billion downloads, "Pokemon Go" has generated roughly one billion dollars a year since its launch in July 2016, according to estimates from analytics firm Sensor Tower. But Niantic has been unable to produce another hit even approaching that level. And it has had notable flops.

It launched "Harry Potter: Wizards Unite" in 2019, only to shut it down in January last year because of a lack of interest. Like many other firms in the tech sector, Niantic also made swingeing cuts to its workforce last year, slashing eight percent of its staff and halting four video game projects.

With this in mind, Hanke is playing down any suggestion that his latest game could reach Pokemon levels of success. "Pokemon Go", as the very first game of its kind, I think took the world by surprise," the Niantic boss said.

"Maybe another game we create for the future will have the same kind of instant viral success, but that's probably not a realistic expectation because it's kind of an unusual case." —AFP



In this file photo taken on October 11, 1999 David Crosby (2nd from R) points to an audience member while posing for a photo with once and future bandmates Stephen Stills (R), Graham Nash (2nd from L) and Neil Young before a news conference in New York.



(L-R) In this file photo Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, David Crosby and Neil Young perform live for the first time since 1974 at the Palace of Auburn Hill, Michigan.



Musical greats (L-R) David Crosby, Carly Simon and Jimmy Webb perform during the TNT Master's Series Tribute to former Beach Boy Brian Wilson at Radio City Music Hall. —AFP photos

Folk-rock pioneer David Crosby dies at 81

David Crosby, the trailblazing singer-songwriter whose time with The Byrds and later Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young expanded rock's range, has died, his publicist said. He was 81. Citing a family member, his publicist confirmed the death to AFP but did not provide a cause. The singer's wife Jan Dance had earlier told entertainment outlet Variety that Crosby passed following a long illness.

"Although he is no longer here with us, his humanity and kind soul will continue to guide and inspire us. His legacy will continue to live on through his legendary music," read his wife's statement. "Peace, love, and harmony to all who knew David and those he touched. We will miss him dearly." The two-time Rock and Roll Hall of Famer — known as much for his alternative guitar tunings, lush harmonies and abstract lyrics as for his pacifist activism, brutal honesty and living dangerously — remained a prolific artist throughout his life.

Over the course of six decades in the music industry, the vocalist, guitarist and composer at the forefront of countercultural rock penned a rich array of heartfelt ballads and knife-edged bangers. Tributes quickly poured in honoring the beloved musician with a signature walrus mustache.

"I don't know what to say other than I'm heartbroken to hear about David Crosby," tweeted Brian Wilson, co-founder of the Beach Boys. "David was an unbelievable talent — such a great singer and songwriter. And a wonderful person." In a statement provided to AFP via a publicist, Stephen Stills said that while he and his former bandmate had their differences over the years — Crosby was notoriously headstrong — "I was happy to be at peace with him."



Claire Foy



(L-R) Sarah Polley, Jenny Slate, and Claire Foy attend the 28th Annual Critics Choice Awards at Fairmont Century Plaza on January 15, 2023 in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

"He was without question a giant of a musician, and his harmonic sensibilities were nothing short of genius," Stills said of Crosby. "The glue that held us together as our vocals soared, like Icarus, towards the sun." "I am deeply saddened at his passing and shall miss him beyond measure."

'Tremendous void'

Crosby first found fame as a member of The Byrds, who jumped into the public consciousness with their cover of Bob Dylan's "Mr Tambourine Man" before delivering classic hits including "Turn! Turn! Turn!" But the famously blunt Crosby had a number of run-ins with his bandmates and was fired in 1967. He struck up jam sessions with Stills, the artist who first found success with Buffalo Springfield.

Graham Nash joined the pair to form a supergroup that quickly jumped onto the charts with hits including "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" and "Our House," which Nash wrote while living with Joni Mitchell in Los Angeles' Laurel Canyon.

Neil Young eventually joined to form the best-known iteration of the group, producing some of the 1960s' top hits including "Ohio." Crosby's sparring with both Young and Nash was well-documented, but the latter was quick to react to news of his bandmate's death, expressing "deep and profound sadness" while praising his "beautiful music" and "incredible legacy."

"I know people tend to focus on how volatile our relationship has been at times, but what has always mattered to David and me more than anything was the pure joy of the music we created together, the sound we discovered with one another, and the deep

friendship we shared over all these many long years," Nash said in a statement. "David was fearless in life and in music." "He leaves behind a tremendous void as far as sheer personality and talent in this world."

'A true treasure'

For decades Crosby struggled with drug addiction and myriad health problems, but eventually got clean and got a liver transplant — keeping only his penchant for weed. He found a creative renaissance working with younger artists, including his son James. "Normally, as you get older, you sort of peter out. You write less," he told AFP during an interview in 2021.

But writing with peers "extended my life as a writer tremendously," he said. "I just love making music." Jason Isbell, who the artist collaborated with in his final decade, also voiced his sadness: "Grateful for the time we had with David Crosby. We'll miss him a lot." Crosby also helped Melissa Etheridge, the rocker who found fame in the 1990s, and her partner conceive their children via sperm donation.

"He gave me the gift of family," Etheridge tweeted upon news of Crosby's death. "His music and legacy will inspire many generations to come. A true treasure." In his twilight years Crosby became an avid tweeter, delighting fans with frenetic, often humorous missives, including reviews of their joints.

He loved answering fan questions, proclaiming his political opinions and skewering posts he thought were particularly dumb. On his last day active on the platform, January 18, Crosby responded to one user's tweet sorting out who's allowed into heaven. "I heard the place is overrated....cloudy," Crosby quipped. —AFP

American gets suspended sentence for stalking actress Claire Foy

An American man on Friday received a suspended jail term in the UK for stalking "The Crown" actress Claire Foy, on condition he returns to the United States. Justin Penrose was given a one year and 10 months jail term, suspended for two years, after he was found guilty late last year of stalking the 38-year-old actress.

Foy, who played a young Queen Elizabeth II in the hit Netflix series, described the effect on her of Penrose's campaign of harassment in a statement read by the judge at the Old Bailey court.

"I feel like the freedoms I enjoyed before Mr Penrose contacted me have now gone," she said. "I view the world in a much more fearful way."

In court Penrose, who has paranoid schizophrenia, admitted breaching a five-year stalking ban order imposed in July last year after he bombarded Foy with emails and arrived at her home.

Penrose breached the ban by sending Foy a

letter and parcel.

His sentence was suspended on condition he receives psychiatric treatment in the UK and cooperates with being repatriated to the United States, where he will live with his mother in Florida.

Judge David Aaronberg imposed a fresh restraining order banning Penrose from contacting Foy or going to certain London districts or close to any building where he believes Foy to be.

The judge said he was "troubled" that the convicted stalker may continue to be "infatuated" with Foy. The actress starred as the British monarch in the first two seasons of the popular series about the British royal family, winning an Emmy for her portrayal.

In 2021 she played an aristocrat caught up in a divorce scandal in "A Very British Scandal". She also appeared in "Wolf Hall", a television adaptation of Hilary Mantel's books.

Her latest film, "Women Talking" is about systemic sexual abuse in an ultraconservative religious colony. Penrose posed as a Hollywood producer to gain initial access to Foy. He then sent her graphic emails and also contacted her sister and ex-boyfriend. —AFP

Sports

Griezmann shines in Atletico romp as Sevilla snatch win

MADRID: Atletico Madrid produced one of their best performances of the season to defeat Real Valladolid 3-0 on Saturday, with Memphis Depay making his debut. Real Sociedad, third, continued their fine form with a 2-0 win at Rayo Vallecano, while struggling Sevilla snatched a 1-0 win over Cadiz with a late Ivan Rakitic penalty. Atletico's new Dutch forward Depay, signed from Barcelona on Friday, came off the bench in the second half but by then Antoine Griezmann's virtuoso display had the hosts in full control at the Metropolitano.

The French forward produced a sublime assist for Alvaro Morata to open the scoring and then struck the second himself. Mario Hermoso netted the third from the rebound after his header from Griezmann's free-kick was parried back into his path. Those three goals in an 11-minute spell in the first half wrapped up the points for fourth-placed Atletico.

Diego Simeone's team have endured a tough season both in the league and also in Europe, where they were eliminated, but earned a second win in seven league games to get heading back in the right direction. On Thursday they face rivals Real Madrid in the Copa del Rey quarterfinals, important both as a derby but also their last realistic chance of silverware this season.

"I'm very happy, very pleased with the team's performance," Griezmann told DAZN. "We have been doing well since the World Cup, playing with intensity, hard work, having chances up front, but we lacked a goal. That was largely my fault, because I was having chances but couldn't get it in. This goal will help me a lot mentally to get scoring again."

Invigorated by the cup draw and Depay's arrival, Atletico started brilliantly. Griezmann's stunning back-flick played in Morata, who cut inside and drilled

home at the near post. Five minutes later Griezmann doubled Atletico's lead, blasting home Nahuel Molina's cross. Hermoso's third sealed the win and Atletico spurned further chances to increase their winning margin. The victory brings Atletico within 10 points of leaders Barcelona, albeit having played two extra games. The Catalans host Getafe on Sunday, while second-placed Real Madrid travel to face Athletic Bilbao.

Real contenders

Real Sociedad beat Rayo Vallecano earlier Saturday to pull level on 38 points with Real Madrid. The visitors opened the scoring at Vallecas after 15 minutes when veteran playmaker David Silva set up Norwegian striker Alexander Sorloth, who prodded home. The striker now has five goals in his last five league games for the club.

Ander Barrenetxea doubled the Basque side's lead in the 36th minute flying in to convert a flicked-on corner. It was the 21-year-old forward's first start since a severe hamstring injury in January 2022. "This won't lead us to make the mistake of loosening up, there's a long way to go, we're not even at the half-way point yet," said coach Imanol Alguacil. "For now it's true that we've had a great start but we have to keep that going, otherwise it's not worth anything."

Sevilla climbed out of the relegation zone with a tight win over 19th place Cadiz at the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan. Their coach Jorge Sampaoli was sent off for dissent in the second half with the game goalless. Sevilla had chances but could not convert them, until Rakitic slotted home from the penalty spot with two minutes to go.

Cadiz defender Ivan Alejo conceded the spot kick



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Spanish forward Alvaro Morata challenges Real Valladolid's Spanish goalkeeper Jordi Masip at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium on Jan 21, 2023. —AFP

and was sent off when he handled a cross falling into the path of Lucas Ocampos, who returned from a loan at Ajax earlier this week. Thousands of Sevilla fans protested outside the stadium against the running of

the club before the match, although moving a point clear of the drop zone will brighten the mood a little. Earlier Espanyol earned a 1-0 win over Real Betis thanks to Martin Braithwaite's strike. —AFP

7-goal Cologne, 6-goal Wolfsburg claim big wins

BERLIN: Cologne fired in five first-half goals to embarrass Werder Bremen 7-1, jumping three places up the table to 10th. Former Borussia Dortmund striker Steffen Tigges and Tunisia international Elyes Skhiri scored twice each for Cologne, along with strikes from Linton Maina and Denis Huseinbasic and an own goal from Bremen's Marco Friedl.

Germany striker Niclas Füllkrug pulled one back for Bremen who have now lost three league matches on the trot for the first time since being promoted back to the Bundesliga this season. After the match, the Cologne fans were in full voice celebrating their biggest win in 40 years, singing "let's take the lederhosen off those Bavarians" ahead of Tuesday's meeting with Bayern.

Elsewhere, Danish forward Jonas Wind scored two

first-half goals as in-form Wolfsburg romped to a 6-0 hammering of high-flying Freiburg in the Bundesliga on Saturday. Visitors Freiburg were hoping to cut the gap to Bayern Munich to two points after the leaders' 1-1 draw at RB Leipzig on Friday. But they capitulated after falling behind to Patrick Wimmer's second-minute opener.

Wind scored twice in the space of nine minutes to put the home side three goals to the good at the break. Wolfsburg added three more in the second half, through Yannick Gerhardt, Ridle Baku and Luca Waldschmidt's late penalty, to move up to sixth place. Wolfsburg are now unbeaten in 10 matches, with five straight league wins, having started the season with four Bundesliga losses in their first seven games under new coach Niko Kovac. It was a dreadful restart to the season for Freiburg who had been Bayern's closest challengers before the winter break.

Eintracht Frankfurt took advantage of Freiburg's misfortune to climb into second place with a 3-0 home win over rock-bottom Schalke. Danish forward Jesper Lindstrom rocketed a strike high into the Schalke goal in the 27th minute for his seventh league goal of the campaign. Rafael Borre scored a second with less than

five minutes remaining, before Aurelio Buta made it three in the second minute of injury time. Schalke are now six points adrift of Stuttgart, who occupy the relegation play-off spot, after a ninth defeat in 10 Bundesliga outings.

Union Berlin fought back to win 3-1 at home against Hoffenheim and move into third, level on points with Frankfurt and fourth-placed Freiburg. The trio sit five points behind Bayern and one point clear of Leipzig. Union's American striker Jordan Siebatcheu missed a first-half penalty after Hoffenheim's Ihlas Bebou hand-balled in the box.

Bebou quickly took advantage himself, scoring just before half-time. Union center-back Danilo Doekhi equalized in the 73rd minute and found the net again one minute from the end of normal time, sending the home crowd into raptures. Young forward Jamie Leweling made sure of the victory in added time. Bochum piled more pressure on Hertha Berlin with a dominant 3-1 home victory to climb out of the bottom three and push their opponents into the drop zone. Bochum have notched three straight wins, while Hertha sit second-bottom, one point from safety. Stuttgart drew 1-1 at home with Mainz. —AFP

Algeria equal records, Mozambique join them in quarters

ALGIERS: Hosts Algeria equaled two African Nations Championship (CHAN) records as Hocine Dehiri goal gave them a 1-0 win over Mozambique on Saturday in a Group A final-round match. They became the third country after South Africa and Cameroon to qualify for the knockout phase by winning all three group matches, and the second after Cameroon to do so without conceding.

Coach and former star defender Madjid Bougherra called Algeria "efficient" after 1-0 wins

over Libya, Ethiopia and Mozambique before packed crowds at the 40,000-seat Stade Nelson Mandela. Algeria had already qualified for the quarterfinals while second-placed Mozambique held a three-point advantage over Ethiopia. Mozambique losing did not harm their qualification chances in the end as Libya put two earlier defeats behind them by coming from behind to beat Ethiopia 3-1 in the eastern city of Annaba.

Algeria topped the final standings with nine points followed by Mozambique (four), Libya (three) and Ethiopia (one). The hosts will play the Group B runners-up next Friday in Algiers while Mozambique face the Group C winners the following day in Constantine, another venue in the east of the country. Roared on by passionate supporters, Algeria put Mozambique under pressure from the kick-off and went ahead on seven minutes through a powerful Dehiri header off a corner.

There was a hold-up late in the opening half when concussed Mozambican goalkeeper Ivane Urrubal refused to leave the field for several minutes before medical staff persuaded him to do so. Fasiestencio Joao proved a capable replacement shot-stopper, making several reflex saves as Algeria sought the insurance of a second goal.

Ethiopia needed maximum points to have any chance of overtaking Mozambique and they went ahead on 39 minutes when Gatoch Panom converted a penalty. But the lead lasted just five minutes before Ali Arqoub equalized and early and late second-half goals from Abdulati al Abbasi and veteran Anis Saltou sealed victory for Libya. On Sunday, Group B reaches a climax with leaders Uganda facing bottom team the Ivory Coast and second-placed Senegal meeting two-time former champions the Democratic Republic of Congo. —AFP



NEW DELHI: Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn poses after winning against Denmark's Viktor Axelsen in the final of the Yonex Sunrise India Open 2023 on Jan 22, 2023. —AFP

Vitidsarn stuns Axelsen to clinch India Open title

NEW DELHI: Thailand's rising star Kunlavut Vitidsarn stunned top seed Viktor Axelsen to clinch the India Open badminton title with a 22-20, 10-21, 21-12 victory in the Sunday final. In the women's singles, South Korea's An Se-young beat world number one Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in New Delhi to avenge her loss at the Malaysia Open final last week. Vitidsarn's men's singles victory stood out as the 21-year-old former junior world champion got past the Danish ace and world number one for the first time in six attempts.

Vitidsarn, seeded eighth, proved his semi-final victory over Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia was not a flash in the pan as he made Axelsen work for every point and won most of the long rallies. "From my earlier losses against Viktor, I had learnt that if I could engage him in long rallies and take the match to the decider then I have a chance to win," said Vitidsarn, who lost the World Championships final to Axelsen last year. "The plan was adapting as we played along. I played without much pressure but the main plan was to attack. I gave it whatever I had."

Axelsen, who won the Malaysia open title, bounced back after a close opening game but Vitidsarn kept his calm to win his first major Super Series crown since he won the German Open (Super 300) last year. The 29-year-old Axelsen urged sports officials to keep players' health in mind when scheduling back-to-back tournaments in different time zones. —AFP

Duathlon tourney concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The third duathlon tournament held at Kuwait Motor City with a large number of participants concluded, as Huda Al-Saleh, Farah Mehrez, Abdelaziz Al-Ghamdi, Saud Al-Zaabi, Khaleefa Al-Naime, Abdullah Al-Shimmari, Usama Burahma and Abdelaziz Al-Hazeem won first places, while in the Gulf category, Abdelaziz Al-Duajj was first.

Kuwait Olympic committee member Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Nawaf attended the tournament activities and the closing ceremony. Chairman of Duathlon Federation and Club Rashid Al-Kandari said the event was very strong and participants of all age groups were keen on competing for top places. He said the presence of participants' families and fans made the event more enthusiastic and gave participants support to finish the race.



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 Rawda	25716707
	22517733

Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088

Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, Aalam Manaiah S/o Aalam Subbarayudu (old name), R/o. H.No.5/3, Eguva Reddy Palli (VII), T.Kammappalli Post, Pullampet Mandal, YSR Kadapa District, A.P, have Indian passport No.L5941032, have changed my name as Alam Manaiah S/o Alam Subbarayudu (new name) (C#0884) 22-1-23



Bader Al-Kharafi poses in a group photo with winners of BNK Padel Open. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Bader Al-Kharafi honors the champions Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi and Arturo Coello with Volvo cars.



Bader Al-Kharafi (left) and Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Muhammad Al-Abdullah (right) with the champions of BNK Padel Open.

BNK Padel Open a smashing success

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The BNK Padel Open finals concluded on Saturday with the participation of Kuwaiti, GCC and international players, including Juan Lebron, the world number one. The professional Spanish padel player is at the top of the World Padel Tour ranking.

During an interview with Emirati media figure Haitham Al-Hammadi, BNK Group Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi said the BNK Padel Open can see the success of the tournament from the turnout of Kuwaiti people attending the matches. "Although padel is new to Kuwait, the audience did not let us down, as attendance was huge. Even the Spanish players were surprised by the wonderful organization and attendees," he said.

Kharafi praised the efforts of the organizers, sponsors and BNK team, indicating the tournament would not have been successful without them. "I am grateful for the efforts of our team. It took us three to four months of continuous work to reach what we have accomplished today, and we will hopefully witness more annual tournaments. Kuwait and GCC

deserve the best," Kharafi added.

The finals took place at The Arena Kuwait on January 20 and 21, with the event broadcast on beIN SPORTS. The winning team received two Volvo cars with a total prize of KD 103,000, the highest in the Middle East.

In the pro GCC men's final, Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi and Arturo Coello emerged as champions, with Aziz Mayoof and Juan Lebron in second place. Winners in the pro GCC women's final were Fatma Al-Nabhani and Martita Ortega, with Mariam Al-Sarraj and Ariana Sanchez in second place. The champions of men's pro were Agustin Tapia and Arturo Coello, while Paquito Navarro and Juan Lebron stood second. Winners of women's pro were Ariana Sanchez and Paula Jose Maria, with Bea Gonzalez and Martita Ortega in second place.

Powered by Volvo Kuwait, the event was sponsored by Gulf Cable, National Investment Company, Boubyan Bank, SVN, Huawei, Gia, BackBurner, Padel IN, Floward, DISC clinic, Arkan Al-Kuwait Real Estate and Kuwait News and Kuwait Times as media sponsors.



Bader Al-Kharafi with his family.



Bader Al-Kharafi (right) with Khaled Falah, Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Aguilar and Ariana Sanchez.



Bader Al-Kharafi with Sheikh Talal Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



Bader Al-Kharafi (right) with UAE Ambassador Matar Al-Neyadi, Spanish Ambassador Miguel Aguilar and US Charge d'Affaires James Holtsnider.



Bader Al-Kharafi and Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Muhammad Al-Abdullah.



Bader Al-Kharafi with Arturo Coello.



Former Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudan and Chairperson of the women's sports committee and member of Kuwait Olympic Committee Fatma Hayat.

Sports



BNK Padel honors Boubyan Bank.



BNK Padel honors DISC clinic.



BNK Padel honors National Investment Company.



Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (center) with Abdullah Al-Roudhan and Meshal Al-Jarki.



Emirati media figure Haitham Al-Hammadi and Abdullah Al-Roudhan.



Madi Al-Khamis with Hamad Al-Mosawi.



Malik Marafie and Eduardo from the organizing committee.



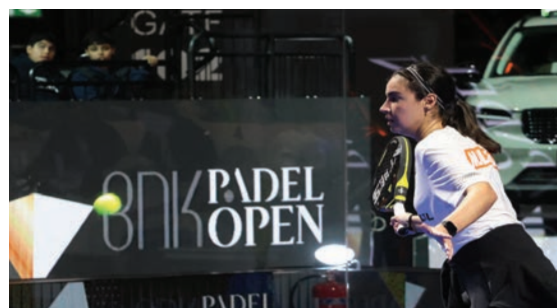
Nader Golsharifi with Hassan Al-Mousawi



Volvo team



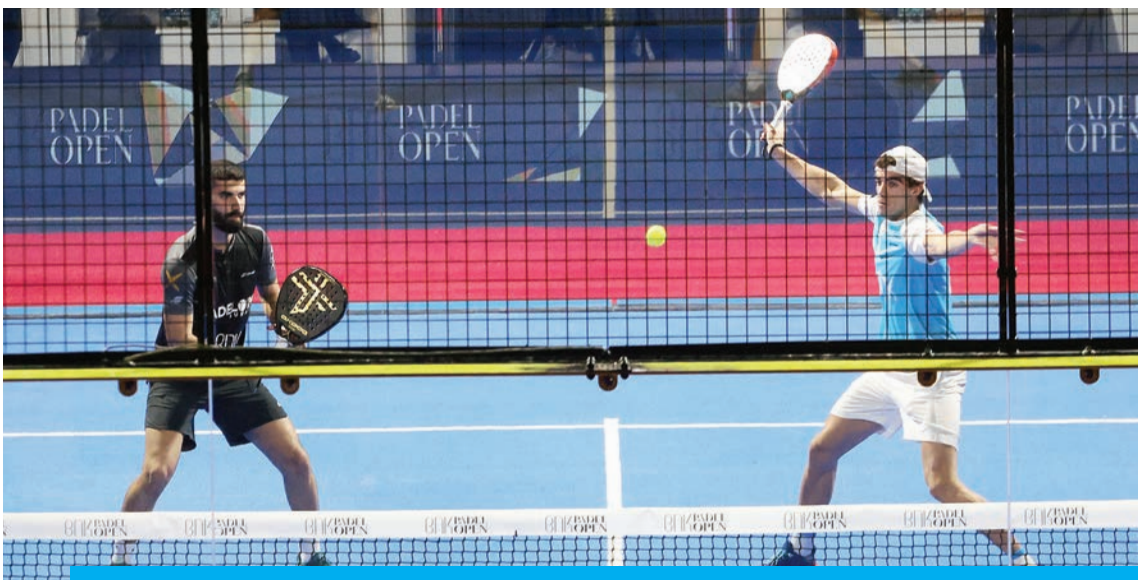
Fatma Al-Nabhani



Mariam Al-Sarraj



Winners of BNK Padel Open.



Kuwaiti padel player Aziz Mayoof playing with Spanish padel player Juan Lebron.





MELBOURNE: Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina hits a return against Poland's Iga Swiatek during their women's singles match of the Australian Open on Jan 22, 2023. — AFP

Swiatek, Gauff dumped out

Tsitsipas battles into Australian Open quarters

MELBOURNE: Stefanos Tsitsipas battled into the Australian Open's last eight on Sunday but women's top seed Iga Swiatek and a tearful Coco Gauff became the latest big-name victims. Swiatek's defeat to Elena Rybakina made it the first Grand Slam since the Open era began in 1968 to lose the top two seeds in both the men's and women's draws before the quarterfinals.

That left Greece's Tsitsipas as the highest remaining men's seed at three, and he avoided the fate of Rafael Nadal and Casper Ruud with a dogged victory over Jannik Sinner. Tsitsipas, who is pursuing a first major crown, defeated the Italian 15th seed 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-3 to set up a quarter-final with the unseeded Jiri Lehecka.

Czech world number 71 Lehecka defeated sixth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime in four sets in yet another surprise result. The 21-year-old Lehecka was knocked out in the first round at the four majors last year but was too hot for the Canadian, winning 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/3). Giant-killer

Sebastian Korda surged into a maiden Grand Slam quarter-final and faces 18th-seeded Karen Khachanov of Russia.

The American 29th seed came through a roller-coaster 10-point deciding tiebreak to beat 10th seed Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (10/7). Korda, whose father Petr won the title in 1998, produced one of the performances of his career to upset two-time Australian Open finalist Daniil Medvedev in the third round.

Coco's tears

The women's draw also has an unfamiliar look, after a day of shocks. Wimbledon champion Rybakina swept past the 2022 French and US Open winner Swiatek 6-4, 6-4 in 1hr 29min at a stunned Rod Laver Arena. Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina, seeded 22, moves on to a last-eight encounter with Jelena Ostapenko. World number one and hot favorite Swiatek admitted Rybakina deserved to win. She follows second seed Ons Jabeur out the

Melbourne exit door, the Tunisian having gone out in the second round in another surprise.

Latvian 17th seed Ostapenko provided the second upset of a crazy few minutes by knocking out seventh seed Gauff 7-5, 6-3 on neighboring Margaret Court Arena. The 18-year-old American broke down in tears during an emotional post-match press conference. She had been favorite to defeat Ostapenko, the 2017 French Open winner.

But the 25-year-old Ostapenko was always in control to ensure that Gauff must wait at least a little longer for a first major title. Gauff told reporters it was a "little bit frustrating", then her voice suddenly began to crack and the tears flowed. There were no tears for Jessica Pegula however, the American third seed powering into the last eight with a 7-5, 6-2 win over former French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková. Pegula, now the title favorite, faces two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka or unseeded Zhu Lin of China. — AFP

Depleted Celtics edge Raptors, 76ers beat Kings

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Celtics shook off the absence of injured Jayson Tatum and the early exits of Marcus Smart and Robert Williams to beat the Toronto Raptors 106-104 on Saturday and push their NBA winning streak to nine games. Jaylen Brown scored 27 points and Grant Williams added a career-high 25 for the Celtics, who improved their league-best record to 35-12. Coming off a gritty overtime win over the Golden State Warriors on Thursday, the Celtics trailed 85-81 going into the fourth quarter.

But they opened the final frame with a 9-0 run courtesy of three-pointers from Brown, Payton Pritchard and Grant Williams and stayed in front until Toronto tied it up at 103-103 on Gary Trent Jr.'s three-pointer with 2:23 to play. Pritchard, who

scored all of his 12 points in the fourth quarter, drained another three-pointer that proved to be enough after veteran Al Horford came up with a block and a steal in the final 10 seconds.

Malcolm Brogdon added 23 points off the bench for Boston, whose top scorer Tatum was sidelined with a sore left wrist. Grant Williams said Tatum's absence was no reason for the Celtics to surrender the mindset of an elite team gunning to get back to the NBA Finals for a second straight year after falling to Golden State in the title series.

The Philadelphia 76ers, playing without star center Joel Embiid and playmaker James Harden because of injury management, completed a perfect 5-0 road trip against Western Conference teams with a 129-127 victory over the Kings in Sacramento. The 76ers ended the Kings' six-game win streak, using a big third quarter to turn the tide after trailing by 21 on the way to a 10-point halftime deficit. Tyrese Maxey led the Sixers with 32 points and six assists. Domantas Sabonis had a near triple-double for Sacramento with 16 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists. — AFP

on a ten-yard touchdown pass.

But Mahomes was hurt when Jaguars linebacker Arden Key landed on him while he was going down under a tackle. Mahomes remained in the game for the rest of the drive, which ended in a Chiefs field goal, but then went to the locker-room and did not return for the rest of the half. Back-up quarterback Chad Henne, a former Jaguar, took over and he led the Chiefs to a 17-7 lead with a one-yard pass to Kelce after a 98 yard drive.

The Jags reduced the deficit before half-time with a field goal, but there was a major boost for Kansas City when Mahomes returned for the second half, albeit with a heavily strapped right ankle. A 50-yard field goal from Harrison Butker made it 20-10 and Travis Etienne ran in from four yards for a Jaguars touchdown but despite Mahomes still looking far from comfortable, the quarterback found Marquez Valdes-Scantling with a six yard pass to restore the ten-point advantage.

But with Jacksonville closing in on a touchdown with less than six minutes to go, receiver Jamal Agnew fumbled and the Chiefs recovered. The Jaguars defense forced the Chiefs to punt, only for Lawrence to throw an interception on the next drive with Jaylen Watson making a superb one-hand grab. Riley



TORONTO: Precious Achiuwa of the Toronto Raptors goes to the net between Jaylen Brown and Blake Griffin of the Boston Celtics at Scotiabank Arena on Jan 21, 2023. — AFP



KANSAS CITY: Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs slides after a run against Devin Lloyd #33 of the Jacksonville Jaguars at Arrowhead Stadium on Jan 21, 2023. — AFP

Patterson's 48-yard field goal gave Jacksonville the opportunity of an on-sides kick, but the Chiefs recovered the ball to secure the win. "Credit to the team, the offensive line did a great job in the second half protecting me, I got the ball in my hands quickly and guys made plays. — AFP



Erling Haaland

Haaland scores hat-trick as Man City tame Wolves

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland's fourth hat-trick in 19 Premier League appearances hauled Manchester City to within two points of leaders Arsenal with a 3-0 win over Wolves on Sunday. Pep Guardiola got the reaction he was hoping for from the English champions after questioning their hunger to retain the title after Thursday's 4-2 win over Tottenham.

The hosts had to come from 2-0 down in a dramatic second half against Spurs, but there was little mystery over the destination of the three points once Haaland had broken Wolves' resistance five minutes before half-time. Haaland's scoring rate has slowed marginally in recent weeks, but his header from Kevin De Bruyne's cross moved him level with the 23 league goals that saw Mohamed Salah and Son Heung-min share the Golden Boot with last season.

The 22-year-old took his tally to 30 goals in all competitions from the penalty spot early in the second half after Ilkay Gundogan had been upended by Ruben Neves. Wolves then gifted Haaland his hat-trick just four minutes later as goalkeeper Jose Sa presented the ball to Riyad Mahrez, who unselfishly squared for his teammate to roll into an unguarded net.

Guardiola quickly took the chance to give his star striker a rest as Haaland was replaced on the hour mark by Julian Alvarez to Wolves' relief. City should still have inflicted further punishment on Julen Lopetegui's men. Mahrez just failed to hold his run as he was flagged offside after dinking in De Bruyne's through ball before Gundogan headed a glorious chance over.

But three goals were more than enough for the three points to put pressure on Arsenal ahead of their clash at home to Manchester United later on Sunday. Just a second league defeat since Lopetegui took charge leaves Wolves still outside the relegation zone only on goal difference. Leeds edged one point clear of the bottom three, but remain without a league win since November after a 0-0 draw at home to Brentford. David Raya denied the in-form Wilfried Gnonto with the best save of the game to salvage the Bees a point that moves them above Liverpool into eighth. — AFP