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Crown Prince handed govt resignation

Kuwaitization to continue despite resignation of Cabinet



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives on Tuesday HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, who handed HH the Crown Prince the resignation of his government in writing. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah handed the government's resignation letter to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday. The government had said the resignation was due to a dispute with the National Assembly.

The Cabinet also did not attend a regular Assembly session on Tuesday, leading Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun to adjourn the session. Although 39 MPs attended, Saadoun halted the session after he was informed by the Cabinet that it was not attending. Under Kuwaiti law, the attendance of at least one minister is essential to convene the Assembly.

But MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said there is no article in the law that requires the attendance of ministers to convene Assembly sessions. He called on Saadoun to convene the sessions even if ministers do not attend. MPs had insisted on passing a number of populist draft legislation, including one calling to purchase billions of loans of Kuwaiti citizens, while the government rejected debating them because they were too costly for the state's finances.

MP Alia Al-Khaled said Kuwait is passing through its worst conditions as the budget and state finances are in a bad situation. She called on the prime minister to form a strong team of Cabinet ministers if he is renamed by HH the Amir to form the next government.

Meanwhile, the government's resignation will not hinder work being done to fulfill the promises officials have made regarding Kuwaitization of jobs and the reevaluation of residency affairs, government sources told Kuwait Times. The resigned government will remain in place to deal with urgent matters, sources said, as implementing decisions it previously made is still within its power.

The Cabinet has informed all ministries to proceed with their plans until the fate of the current government is settled, either by rejecting its resignation or accepting it and appointing a new government," sources revealed to Kuwait Times.

Sources added expat teachers and administrators of the education ministry's termination lists have been informed so that they can continue working in their positions until the end of the current academic year.

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News in brief

Stem cell transplants rising

KUWAIT: Kuwait ranks second in the Gulf in stem cell transplants for children. Up to 33 transplant operations for children have been conducted within the framework of this program in patients suffering from cancer and immune deficiencies as well as blood and hereditary diseases. Among the 33 operations, 29 cases had been with donated organs. — KUNA (See Page 4)

Nod to new area names

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality has approved in principle a request presented by the housing authority to rename some areas of Kuwait and referred it to the Municipal Council. South Saad Al-Abdullah will be renamed Nawaf Al-Ahmad City; South Sabah Al-Ahmad (Istiqlal); blocks 1 and 2 of South Khaitan (Al-Tahrir); Northwest Sulaibikhat (Al-Boom); East Sabah Al-Ahmad (Al-Khuzami); West Abdullah Mubarak (Al-Majd); low-cost housing area will be renamed Al-Liwan; East Taima (Al-Danah); South Abdullah Mubarak (Al-Soor); and South Qairawan (Al-Nuwair).

Jordan king meets Zionist PM

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Tuesday hosted Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Amman in a rare meeting after years of strained relations between the two leaders. The royal palace said they discussed the situation in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound and "the importance of respecting the historical and legal status quo". Netanyahu's office said he discussed "regional issues" and bilateral ties with the Jordanian king. — AFP

Beirut blast judge takes aim at top

BEIRUT: Lebanon's judge Tarek Bitar, who is investigating the deadly 2020 Beirut port blast, has charged Lebanon's top prosecutor and seven others with probable intent to murder, arson and other crimes, an official said Tuesday. Bitar had sparked surprise in Lebanon a day before when he charged eight top security and judicial officials, among them Prosecutor General Ghassan Oueidat, reviving a probe that was suspended for over a

year amid vehement political and legal pushback.

The more than one dozen senior officials now in his sights over the disaster also include the head of General Security, Abbas Ibrahim, and State Security agency chief Tony Saliba, summoning them for questioning next month. The Beirut port blast of Aug 4, 2020 - one of history's biggest non-nuclear explosions - destroyed most of Beirut port and swathes of the capital, killing more than 215 people and injuring over 6,500.

Authorities said the mega-explosion was sparked by a fire in a port-side warehouse, where a vast stockpile of the volatile industrial chemical ammonium nitrate had been haphazardly stored for years.

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BEIRUT: In this file photo taken on Aug 4, 2020, a wounded man lies on the ground in front of billowing smoke at the scene of a massive explosion that hit Beirut's port. — AFP

Grief grips Asian Americans after mass shootings

MONTEREY PARK, California: Asian Americans were reeling Tuesday after two mass shootings in California targeting members of their community

left 18 people dead - with the alleged gunmen in both cases being older men of Asian descent. The killings came in a span of just 48 hours - so close together that California governor Gavin Newsom was at a hospital meeting with victims of the first when he was pulled away to be briefed about the second. "Tragedy upon tragedy," he tweeted.

The carnage prompted President Joe Biden to renew calls for Congress to act quickly on an assault weapons ban. A group of senators on Monday reintroduced a federal assault weapons ban and legislation that would raise the minimum

purchase age for assault weapons to 21. China's foreign ministry called for its citizens in the United States to "pay close attention to the local security situation" and "avoid going to places where people gather" in the wake of the killings.

Investigators were still probing the motives behind the two incidents, which stood out among the scourge of mass shootings in America both for the community impacted - gun violence is usually seen as rare among Asians and Asian Americans - and for the age of the suspects, 67 and 72.

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Egypt finds 'complete' Roman city

CAIRO: Egyptian archaeologists said Tuesday they had discovered an 1,800-year-old "complete residential city from the Roman-era" in the heart of the southern city of Luxor. The city, dating to the second and third centuries, is the "oldest and most important city found on the eastern bank of Luxor," according to Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

Archaeologists discovered "a number of residential buildings", as well as "two pigeon towers" - a structure used

to house pigeons or doves - and a "number of metal workshops", Waziri said in a statement. Inside the workshops, researchers found a collection of pots, tools and "bronze and copper Roman coins".

It is a rare archaeological find in Egypt, where excavations - including on Luxor's west bank, where the famous Valley of the Queens and Valley of the Kings lie - are most commonly of temples and tombs. In April 2021, authorities announced the discovery of a 3,000-year-old "lost golden city" on Luxor's west bank, with the archaeological team calling it "the largest" ancient city ever uncovered in Egypt. Egypt has unveiled several major archaeological discoveries in recent years.

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LUXOR: Handout picture released on Jan 24, 2023 shows a view of an excavation of an 1,800-year-old "complete residential city from the Roman-era" in the heart of Luxor. — AFP



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Local

Planning body reviews progress of 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals

Draft report to focus on Kuwait's efforts in realizing five goals



KUWAIT: The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development meets on Tuesday.



Dr Khaled Mahdi

KUWAIT: The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development held on Tuesday a meeting of the permanent national guidance committee to discuss the execution of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals. The meeting was attended by committee members as well as private, public and civil society entities.

Dr Khaled Mahdi, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, stressed the importance of the meeting, during which the committee completed the first draft of the second voluntary report on measuring the progress

Kuwait has made in fulfilling its 2023 sustainable development goals. The report, he explained, will focus on Kuwait's efforts towards the five goals of sustainable development identified by the United Nations General Assembly.

The goals include those related to clean water and sanitation, clean and affordable energy, industry, innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities and communities, and partnerships to achieve these goals. The work Kuwait has done in navigating the health crisis and resulting damages, as well as the solutions that were put forward to deal with its implications will also be show-

cased. The report will highlight, in addition, the most prominent accomplishments made by the country in other sustainable development goals.

"The report will also discuss the obvious development made in the procedures pertaining to data collection and revision and the role of the Central Statistical Bureau in this matter," Mahdi said. All stakeholders will review the first draft and submit their comments to the committee, he added.

Monyah Al-Qabandi, director of the Central Statistical Bureau, announced the administration has finished building the official website for

sustainable development in Kuwait and will launch it soon. The cooperation of official entities with the administration through sharing up-to-date data in relation to the goals is necessary for successfully completing the report, said Qabandi.

She hoped those entities that have not supplied the administration with the needed information will do so soon. The committee submitted its first voluntary report in 2019, which received positive feedback. The second voluntary report on measuring progress in the sustainable development goals will be submitted in July 2023.

OPIWC: Impossible examination in oil sector

KUWAIT: Difficult hiring exams in the oil sector put recent Kuwaiti graduates applying for jobs in the field at a disadvantage, said Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, general secretary for the Oil and Petrochemicals Industry Workers Community (OPIWC).

Al-Otaibi criticized the high cut-off scores and the extremely challenging questions that make it near impossible for students to pass. He added that attracting and retaining young Kuwaiti talent in the field was of high importance.

"It is necessary that the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) coordinates with Higher Education and Applied Education to increase the number of seats for Kuwaiti students in oil-related programs according to the needs of the sector," he added. "The KPC must take responsibility by hiring all graduates of oil-related majors, including those who graduated from certificate programs and engineers, especially since the Civil Service Commission has explicitly declared they won't be hired in government sectors."

Al-Otaibi said the KPC must develop a fair solution to address the challenges faced by Kuwaiti recent graduates. But he also had some suggestions, such as allowing applicants to retake the exams as many times as needed, writing easier exams, and reducing the score cutoffs "so that the largest possible number of successful applicants are accepted to fill the vacancies in Kuwait's oil companies."

He added that tackling this problem will ensure recent graduates "are not victims to the technical difficulties Kuwait University had recently announced."

Municipality to absorb Kuwait City hygiene workers

KUWAIT: Hygiene worker contracts in Kuwait City could be handled directly by the Kuwait Municipality, Alyaa Al-Faresi, municipality council member, suggested. The suggestion was among five others she put forward in an effort to tackle the declining levels of cleanliness across the country, she said.

"In the past, especially in the 80s, hygiene workers across Kuwait were all employees at the Kuwait Municipality, and not hired through special contracts as it is the case now."

Al-Faresi added that the workers should be under the responsibility of the Director of the Department of Cleaning and Road Occupations within the municipality. Other suggestions included that current contracts for hygiene workers would not be renewed after they expire. She said Kuwait City workers should also wear light blue uniforms with the municipality's logo in order to differentiate them from workers in other governorates and must be provided with the latest machinery and tools needed to do their jobs, as well as training in hygiene techniques and solid waste management.



KUWAIT: An artist's impressions of "Souq Nuwair"

Social affairs ministry to launch Souq Nuwair

KUWAIT: The social affairs ministry will launch a new farmers' market called "Souq Nuwair", voluntarily designed by architect Zain Al-Barjas. Social Affairs Minister May Al-Baghlly approved the adoption of the project in coordination with the Head of the Cooperatives Union Ali Al-Fahad. The market aims to create a sales platform for farmers in a modern and beautiful look, taking close care to making facilities as aesthetically pleasing as possible. The market will launch in its new look on Feb 10 at Nuzha Park and will be moved to other areas in all governorates of Kuwait.



BEIRUT: Meeting of the leaders of Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies. —KUNA

Red Crescent, Red Cross chiefs coordinate plans

BEIRUT: Leaders of Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies in the Middle East and North Africa discussed Tuesday coordinating efforts to face humanitarian challenges weighing down on the region. Deputy Chief of The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Asia and the Pacific and General Secretary of Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society Maha Al-Barjas spoke to KUNA on the sidelines of the meeting and discussed the rapidly changing humanitarian situation, mounting crises and increase of humanitarian needs.

She said that there is a rapid change in the humanitarian scene, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, which confirms the need for concerted efforts by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to adopt proactive plans by expanding the scope of their efforts to meet humanitarian necessities. "Lebanon as well as the Palestinian territories are

witnessing a deteriorating humanitarian situation. Yemen is also going through one of the worst humanitarian crises in history. Similarly, the crisis of the displaced and the Syrian refugees requires us to consult and coordinate with each other to meet the humanitarian requirements," she said.

She stressed the importance of adopting strategies to ensure a speedy response. For emergencies and building international and local companies, "because the crises facing us cannot be handled by any agency or organization individually," Al-Barjas touched on the most important challenges facing the region, which are represented by the continuing consequences of the COVID-19, cholera and dengue fever, putting pressure on the health sector. This is in addition to the effects resulting from climate change and the ongoing conflicts.

Among the challenges is the continuation of the crisis of refugees and displaced persons and relief work to deliver humanitarian aid to them, she pointed out.

She said these multiple crises in the region underscore the necessity of unifying efforts to ratify preventive plans, approve strategies guaranteeing quick response to emerging cases and building international partnerships. —AFP

Kuwait's charity body IICO, UNHCR ink agreement

KUWAIT: Kuwait's International Charity Organization (IICO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees signed an agreement Tuesday to provide humanitarian supplies for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and hosting community.

Directive Manager of IICO Bader Al-Sumait said in a speech delivered during the signing that the organization seeks to ease suffering of the Rohingya people through sustainable development solutions in the fields of agricultural, livestock and fish production, at a cost of about \$500,000 about (kd 152,000). "About one million of displaced people from this Muslim minority living in Cox's City depend entirely on humanitarian aid to obtain protection, food, water, shelter and health services", Al-Sumait added.

The supportive plans and humanitarian aid do not cover only food and shelter but also includes sustainable development plans, he explained. "Sustainable activities might change, in a better way, the circumstances of these communities, mainly in education, economic empowerment, and building abilities, Al-Sumait said.

He indicated that the IICO has cooperation and partnership agreements with 13 agencies, organizations and international networks, of which 12 are effective partnerships through joint projects or studies that are being worked on. —KUNA

Local

Australia working to reduce trade barriers with Kuwait: Ambassador

‘Kuwait, Australia to mark 50th anniversary of establishment of relations in 2024’

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Australian Embassy to Kuwait held a press roundtable on Monday to discuss diplomatic relations between the two countries. “Australia and Kuwait enjoy a friendly and cooperative relationship. Our ties are warm and strong, characterized by a 60-year food security partnership, future-focused investment cooperation and people-to-people links fostered by a thriving education relationship,” Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait Melissa Kelly said.

The ambassador said she is looking forward to working on reducing trade barriers in commercially relevant sectors, improving connections between business people in both countries and encouraging new investment in Australia. “The volume of two-way merchandise trade exchange between Kuwait and Australia is estimated at around 800 million Australian dollars, while Kuwait’s investments in Australia are estimated at over 12 billion Australian dollars.”

Kelly affirmed her keenness to also build cooperation on climate technology and renewable energy, with more technology-focused research collaboration, bringing the food security partnership into the future, as well as building cultural collaboration between the two countries, including bringing the best creative Australian artists to Kuwait.

Kelly indicated there will be an increased tempo of high-level visits between Australia and Kuwait at both official and ministerial levels. “As we move towards

the 50th anniversary of Australia and Kuwait’s bilateral relations, which we will celebrate in 2024, more in-person meetings will only serve to multiply the opportunities that already exist to build relations,” she said. The ambassador stated she looks forward to progressing the Australia-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Agreement that has been under negotiations for a long time, assuring that the benefits can be huge.

Meanwhile, Kelly expressed pride to be the first woman Australia has appointed as ambassador to Kuwait, noting that this reflects the high priority Australia places on gender equality and its belief that diversity in leadership makes for stronger teams. “I am motivated and inspired by the women I have met in Kuwait from a variety of sectors, making incredible contributions to the country. I met women who work in business, government and civil societies; I was impressed and influenced. We are going on a journey in gender equality in Australia as well, so I wanted to link with women here to address and learn from each other,” she said.

On the education level, Kelly revealed that there are 2,000 Kuwaiti graduates from Australia, and cur-



Melissa Kelly



KUWAIT: Australian Ambassador Melissa Kelly addresses the press conference on Tuesday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

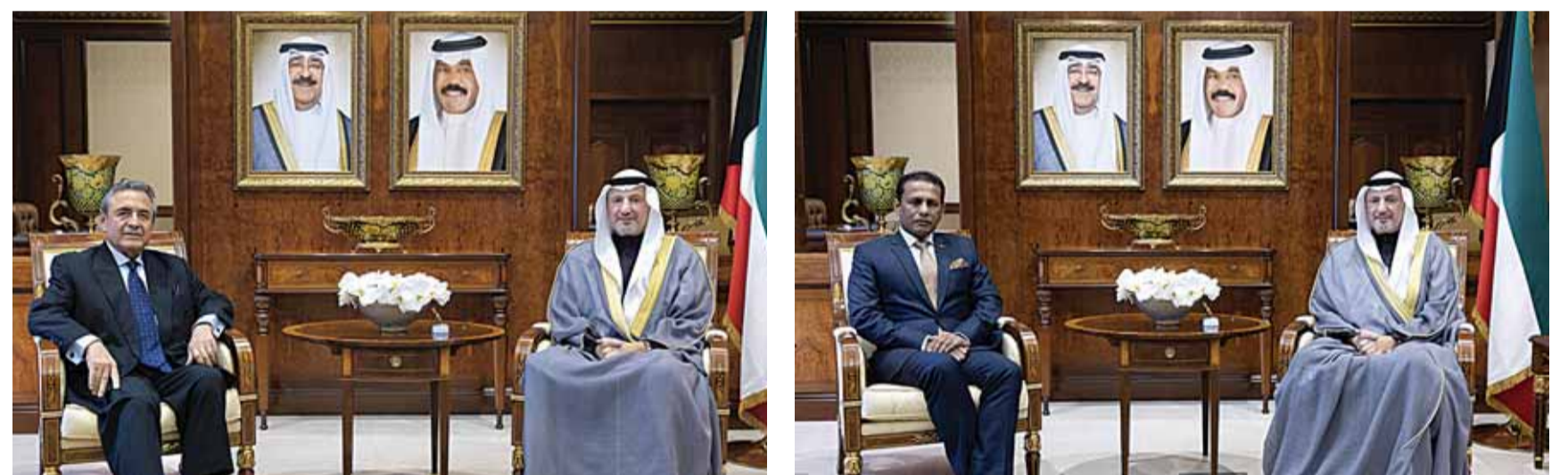
rently, 700 students are enrolled in Australian institutions. Regarding visas, she pointed out the Australian eVisa is processed online. “It is quick and easy - you have to fill a form and submit your biometrics. People should try to plan for their travel two months earlier.”

On health, she said that there is joint research on diabetes with Dasman Diabetes Institute, going on for years, to benefit people of Kuwait who suffer from diabetes. Regarding live sheep exports, Kelly

said in 2022, the Australian government committed to phasing out the export of live sheep from Australia by sea. Implementation of the phase-out will happen in the current term of the government, which is set to end in 2025 as new elections will be held at that time. “I am very proud of the role Australia has played in ensuring the food security of Kuwait over a long period, and I want to support the continuation of this relationship,” Kelly assured.

Kuwait FM receives credentials of Peru, Sri Lanka envoys

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday credentials of Peru’s Ambassador to the country Carlos Manuel Alfredo Velasco Mendiola. During the reception, the minister wished success to the new envoy in his mission, and further prosperity and progress to the distinguished ties between the two countries. Latest developments in Peru were also discussed. Sheikh Salem then received credentials of Sri Lanka’s Ambassador to Kuwait Kaandeepan Balasubramaniam. During the reception, the minister wished success to the new envoy in his mission, and further prosperity and progress to the distinguished ties between the two countries. Latest developments in Sri Lanka were also discussed. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Peru’s Ambassador to the country Carlos Manuel Alfredo Velasco Mendiola (left) and Sri Lanka’s Ambassador to Kuwait Kaandeepan Balasubramaniam on Tuesday. —KUNA



Deputy Foreign Minister discusses with the Omani ambassador



Deputy Foreign Minister discusses with the Qatari ambassador

Deputy FM meets Omani, Qatari ambassadors

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi met Tuesday, with the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Kuwait, Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi, where they discussed aspects of the distinguished brotherly relations. Al-Otaibi also met with the Ambassador of the state of Qatar to Kuwait Ali Al Mahmoud, where they discussed a number of aspects of brotherly relations. —KUNA

Culture Council to participate in Cairo Book Fair

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) will participate in the 54th round of the Cairo International Book Fair presented by the General Egyptian Book Organization. The fair will kick off its activi-

871 housing units get electricity connection

KUWAIT: Vice director for execution affairs at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare Rashed Al-Enezi said that 871 new residential units in the south Abdullah Al-Mubarak project were provided with electricity connection with a voltage of 132 KV. 23 substations will provide the electricity supply to these units and the connection was given before the completion of the contractual date.

“This work comes in line with the Foundation’s plan to deliver electricity to existing projects and plots owned by citizens. The project was completed following extensive effort and coordination with the Electricity and Water Ministry to supply electricity to these plots to help the citizens who live there,” Al-Enezi said.

“The authority will complete the operation of 47



substations which will feed electricity lines in 1,673 plots coinciding with the delivery of power by the Ministry of Electricity and Water to the two main substations (A & D). The work of the remaining stations will be completed before their contractual date on June 14, 2023,” he added.

Al-Enezi appreciated the efforts of specialists in the ministry and the exemplary cooperation they extended during the execution of the project.

Farwaniya store closed for violation; 7 notices issued

KUWAIT: The audit and municipality service administration has concluded an inspection campaign in Farwaniya which resulted in the suspension of a store and issuance of seven notices for violations.

Acting vice director of the administration in Farwaniya governorate, Nasser Al-Rashidi said: “The violations consisted of adding an advertisement without a license, non-compliance with the requirements on the basis of which the license was issued, not displaying the license at a prominent place and employing workers with expired health certificate. The officials issued six warnings as well.”

Al-Rashidi called on shopowners to abide by the requirements and regulations stipulated by the municipality to avoid violations and penalties that sometimes lead to administrative closure.

ties on Wednesday.

The exhibition titled “Together We Read, Think, Innovate,” will continue until Feb 6, said NCCAL in a statement. Salah Jaheen, Egyptian poet and playwright, will be the exhibition’s featured personality and Kamel Kilani, prominent Egyptian children’s book author, was selected to be the featured personality for the children’s book exhibition. “Our participation in the exhibition comes to showcase Kuwait’s culture and its keenness to support Arabic culture and benefit readers and researchers through cultural publications and scientific studies.



The Cairo International Book Fair is considered one of the largest and most important Arabic book exhibitions regionally and globally,” said NCCAL.

The council will participate in two sections of the exhibition: The first will be located in the main hall, and the second will be designated for selling the council’s periodic publications such as, “Almasrah Alalami,” “Aalam Elfikr,” “Aalam Almarifah,” “Al-Arabi” magazine, “Al-Arabi Al-Sagheer” magazine, as well as publications related to research and planning and the special traditional series “From the Arab Heritage”. —KUNA

MoH, pharmacist society to update regulations

KUWAIT: The Health Ministry is working with the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society to update the laws regulating the pharmacy profession and the circulation of medicines, said Dr Buthayna Al-Mudhaf, under-secretary for general health affairs at the ministry.

The updates are meant to empower Kuwaiti pharmacists and raise industry standards, said Al-Mudhaf while attending an awards ceremony organized by the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society for pharmacists participating in scientific conferences.

The Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society has reportedly been requesting an update to the laws regulating pharmacists since at least October 2021 in order to match the profession’s widening scope of work, a trend seen not only in Kuwait but across the world. The society has been in talks with the health ministry to make the necessary changes.

Showcasing the talents of Kuwaiti pharmacists, Dr Ali Hadi, general secretary of the Kuwait Pharmaceutical Society, said they recently participated in the Saudi International Pharmaceutical Sciences Meeting and Workshops (SIPHA) held in Saudi Arabia earlier this month. The conference discussed the role of pharmacy in economic diversification, the sharing of scientific technologies and the development of laboratory research in the pharmaceutical sector.

He added that Kuwait University pharmacy students who presented their research at SIPHA were ranked among the top ten participating Arab universities.

“The participation of pharmacists in scientific conferences is a cause for pride because of their achievements in exceptional scientific research,” said Head of the society Abdullah Al-Enezi.

Pharmacists have also recently attended, said Hadi, the Dubai International Pharmaceuticals and Technologies Conference and Exhibition (DUPHAT), a leading educational and networking platform for the sector in the Middle East and North Africa region. Al-Enezi said the society will continuously support pharmacists in all aspects to ensure high quality.

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Martyr's Bureau declares activities on National Days

KUWAIT: The Martyr's Bureau at the Amiri Diwan announced Tuesday its activities related to the National Days that will start on January 31. Speaking at a news conference, director general of the bureau Salah Al-Oufan said this year's varied program will include musical, artistic and sports activities after a four-year suspension due to the COVID-19.



Salah Al-Oufan

The musical arts, which will be held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center on February 14-15 titled the "birds of house", will come to immortalize Kuwait's martyrs, he said. He went on to say that a two-day martyrs' football championship will be held for youths on January 31 at Yarmouk Club to boost morale of this segment.

In addition, there will be the 19th martyr's cultural competition for photography for those aged 14 and above on February 1 and will last until March 31, he said. He expressed thanks to the political leadership represented in His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and all the bureau's staff for making a success of this event.

Meanwhile, Dr Rashid Al-Bukhaili, dean of Higher Institute of Musical Arts, said the festival coincides with the National Days celebrations. Ninety percent of symphony Orchestra team which will present this performance is from the institute, he said. Chairperson of Kuwait Photography Society Dr Suad Al-Hamar said the Martyr's Bureau provides a chance to citizens and expats to participate in photography competition. The Martyr's Bureau was established on June 19 in 1991 by an Amiri decree No 38, in recognition of heroic action of martyrs and in coronation of the epic battle made by Kuwaitis. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A thick fog blankets Jaber International Stadium as visibility in Kuwait dropped on Tuesday. Kuwait is predicted to witness cold weather with foggy conditions and light scattered showers, according to meteorologist Amira Al-Azmi. Temperatures are expected to drop to 8-11 degrees Celsius while the high temperatures might reach 17-20 degrees Celsius. —KUNA

Kuwait second in Gulf in stem cell transplants for children

33 transplant operations for children conducted since 2020



KUWAIT: Participants of the second stem cell transplantation conference. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait ranks second at the Gulf level in stem cell transplants for children. Under the framework of the stem cell transplant program, which started in 2020, up to 33 transplant operations for children had been conducted, said Dr Meshaal Al-Kandari, the assistant undersecretary for dentistry, in a statement he addressed on behalf of the minister of health at the inauguration of the second stem cell transplantation conference, organized by the National Bank Hospital.

Dr Al-Kandari said he was proud of using stem cell treatment in cases suffering from cancer and immunity deficiency as well as blood and hereditary diseases. The head of the children's blood diseases ward at the hospital, Dr Sondos Al-Sharida, said in her statement that the conferees would examine latest innovations in stem cell transplanting, adding that participants would visit the stem cell transplant division. She said among the 33 conducted operations, 29 of the cases had been donated organs.

She stated that these efforts culminated in obtaining recognition from the International Center for Blood



Dr Meshaal Al-Kandari



Dr Sondos Al-Sharida

and Marrow Transplantation as key members of this scientific center and the European Commission for Marrow and Blood Transplantation and the expansion of the stem cell transplantation system for children in the country. —KUNA

Kuwait branch of the International Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers.

Fidaa Al-Shahwan, head of the technological engineering department at the authority, said the forum aims to enhance the role of the culture of cybersecurity in line with the speed of technological development. She added that the forum intends to engage and encourage those interested in learning about the latest technological advances in the field of cybersecurity and provide them with the skills needed to achieve the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

"The forum will shed light on the latest cybersecurity threats related to systems and processes. The forum will also include panel discussions and workshops presented by cybersecurity specialists in order to clarify how to benefit from the resources and assistance programs available in various disciplines and dedicated to providing protection in different work environments," said Shahwan.

PAAET to hold cybersecurity forum Feb 15-16

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training is organizing a forum titled "Cybersecurity ... Challenges and Solutions" in cooperation with the Gulf University for Science and Technology, the authority announced Sunday. The two-day forum will be held at the authority's headquarters on Feb 15-16 under the sponsorship of Education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Adwani. The forum is also sponsored by the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority and the

ICSK to hold 18th super mega carnival

KUWAIT: The Indian Community School, Kuwait is celebrating the 18th super mega carnival on Friday 27th January 2023. The celebration attracts a huge number of Indians in Kuwait. The festivity will be at full swing throughout the day from 9 am to 9 pm. One of the biggest festivals in town is back and it's time to rejoice with your loved ones, create special moments and emotions in your lives, add structure to your social lives and connect with people from different backgrounds.

The super mega carnival guarantees a wide variety of programs that entertains people of all age groups. It offers unlimited entertainment throughout the day with eminent artists performing live dance, music, art, magic shows and much more that keeps the people off their feet. Comedy extravaganza by the famous comedian and the winner of the

Indian Television Academy Award in 2019, Kiku Sharda, impressive illusions by Parsun, laser dance, tanaura - Egyptian dance, mesmerizing songs by Ruth Ann Toby, Lambadi folk dance, whistle performance, Arabic dance, Bollywood Garba, Hariyanvi dance, Bollywood fusion, Gujarati folk dance, Western fusion dance, Bollywood dance by Renegades Dance Academy, Zero gravity dance, Rajasthani dance, Gujarati dandiya dance, Zumba dance, Punjabi dance, tiger dance and flamingo dance will amuse everyone and create a mood of gala in the campus.

To add competitive spirit, we have 'Family Fashionista' (fashion show competition) and "mehandi contest". The registration for the competitions is open. The food courts offer multiple cuisines and vast variety of mouth-watering dishes for the visitors throughout the day. Tambola, a popular numbers game, is the centre of attraction in the carnival. The super mega carnival focuses on creating a 'students' welfare fund', a philanthropic activity to help the underprivileged students. The welfare fund is used for the endowment scheme for the economically backward students of the school to help them to continue their studies and pursue their dreams.



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Europe's JUICE spacecraft ready to explore Jupiter's icy moons

First European space mission to venture into outer solar system

TOULOUSE, France: Europe's JUICE spacecraft is all ready to embark on an eight-year odyssey through the Solar System to find out whether the oceans hidden under the surface of Jupiter's icy moons have the potential to host extraterrestrial life. For now, the Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer (JUICE) is in a white room of its manufacturer Airbus in the southwestern French city of Toulouse. But its days on this planet are numbered.

Soon the spacecraft will be put in a container, wings carefully folded away, ahead of travelling to Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana off the coast of South America in early February. From there, one of Europe's most ambitious space missions ever is scheduled to launch in April. The scientists and engineers in Toulouse who have spent years working on the project are clearly emotional at the thought of saying goodbye to what they call "the beast".

They finally unveiled the six-ton spacecraft to journalists on Friday - showing off its 10 scientific instruments, antenna 2.5 m in diameter for communicating with Earth, and vast array of solar panels which still need to be tested one last time. As a parting gift, a commemorative plaque was mounted on the back of the spacecraft in tribute to Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei, who was the first to spot Jupiter and its largest moons in 1610.

Volcanic Io and its icy siblings Europa, Ganymede and Callisto were "the first moons discovered outside of our own", said Cyril Cavel, the Airbus project manager for JUICE. Cavel carried a copy of Galileo's "Sidereus Nuncius", the first treatise based on observations made through a telescope. More than 400 years later, JUICE will give a far clearer image of Europa, Ganymede and Callisto, before becoming the first spacecraft to orbit around one of Jupiter's moons.

Earth is 'like a catapult'

It will be the first European space mission that ventures into the outer solar system, which begins beyond Mars. Jupiter is more than 600 million km from Earth and JUICE will take a circuitous path before its scheduled arrival in July 2031. The spacecraft will travel a total of two billion kilometers, using the gravity of Earth - then Venus - for a boost along the way. "It's like a catapult that gives us momentum to Jupiter," said Nicolas Altobelli, JUICE project scientist at the European Space Agency (ESA).

The extra travel time will allow JUICE's solar panels - which cover an area of 85 sq m, the largest ever built for an interplanetary spacecraft - to soak up as much power as possible. It will need that power once it crosses the "frost line" between Mars and Jupiter, when temperatures could drop to minus 220 degrees Celsius. Then JUICE will need to carefully hit the brakes so it can slip into Jupiter's orbit. For that part, it's on its own.

"We will follow the maneuver from Earth without being able to do anything - if it fails, the mission is lost," Cavel said. From Jupiter's orbit, the satellite will make 35 flybys of Europa, Ganymede and Callisto. Then it will enter the orbit of Ganymede, the largest of the three, before eventually falling to its surface.

Not looking for 'big fish'

JUICE's ice-penetrating cameras, sensors, spectrometers and radars will probe the moons to determine whether they could be habitable to past or present life. It will not be looking at the frozen surface of the moons but 10-15 km below, where vast liquid oceans flow. This extreme environment could be home to bacteria and single-celled organisms.

But the mission will not be able to detect "big fish, or creatures," ESA director-general Josef Aschbacher said. Instead it will look for conditions capable of supporting life, including liquid water and



TOULOUSE: The ESA's (European Space Agency) 'JUICE' probe is unveiled for the media on Jan 20, 2023, a few days ahead of its departure to Kourou space center. —AFP

a source of energy, which could come from the tidal effect Jupiter's gravity has on its moons. Measuring magnetic signals could determine whether water on Ganymede is in contact with its rocky core, which would allow chemical elements necessary for life "to be dissolved into the water," Altobelli said.

NASA's Clipper mission is planned to launch in

2024 on its own quest to study Europa. If one of the moons prove to be a particularly good candidate to host life, the "logical next step" would be to send a spacecraft to land on the surface, Cavel said. He added that he was moved at the thought that JUICE "will end its life on the surface of Ganymede". —AFP

Finland says must consider joining NATO without Sweden

HELSINKI: Finland said for the first time Tuesday that it had to consider joining NATO without Sweden, whose bid appeared to grind to a halt as Ankara blasted Stockholm over anti-Turkey protests. Finland - which shares a 1,300-kilometre (800-mile) border with Russia - and Sweden applied to join NATO last year after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, ending decades-long policies of military non-alignment.

"We have to assess the situation, whether something has happened that in the longer term would prevent Sweden from going ahead," Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto told broadcaster Yle. He added however that it was "too early to take a position on that now" and that a joint application remained the "first option".

Sweden's Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom told media on Tuesday that he was "in contact with Finland to find out what this really means". Haavisto later clarified his comments at a press conference, saying he did not want to "speculate" on Finland joining alone "as both countries seem to be making progress", and emphasizing their commitment to a joint application. But "of course, somewhere in the back of our minds, we are thinking about different worlds where some countries would be permanently barred from membership", he said.

The Danish-Swedish far-right politician Rasmus Paludan set fire to a copy of the Holy Quran on Saturday in front of Turkey's embassy in the Swedish capital, angering Ankara and Muslim countries around the world. "Sweden should not expect support from us for NATO," Turkey's President

Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Monday.

"It is clear that those who caused such a disgrace in front of our country's embassy can no longer expect any benevolence from us regarding their application for NATO membership," Erdogan said. Swedish leaders have roundly condemned the Holy Quran burning but defended their country's broad definition of free speech.

The incident came just weeks after a support group for armed Kurdish groups in Syria, the Rojava Committee, hung an effigy of Erdogan by the ankles in front of Stockholm City Hall, sparking outrage in Ankara.

Haavisto said the anti-Turkey protests had "clearly put a brake on the progress" of the applications by Finland and Sweden to join the trans-Atlantic military alliance. "My own assessment is that there will be a delay, which will certainly last until the Turkish elections in mid-May", Haavisto said.

'Plan B' out in the open

Turkey has indicated in recent months that it has no major objections to Finland's entry into NATO. Helsinki had refused until now to speculate on the option of joining without Sweden, emphasizing the benefits of joint membership with its close neighbor.

But "frustration has grown in various corners of Helsinki", and "for the first time it was said out loud that there are other possibilities", Matti Pesu, a researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, told AFP. "There has been a change" in the Finnish position, he said. "These Plan Bs are being said out loud."

Haavisto also accused the protesters of "playing with the security of Finland and Sweden", with actions that "are clearly intended to provoke Turkey". "We are on a very dangerous path because the protests are clearly delaying Turkey's willingness and ability to get this matter through parliament," he said. — AFP

The defense ministry announced the resignation of Shapovalov, who was in charge of the army's logistical support, on the heels of accusations it was signing food contracts at inflated prices. Local media reports last week accused the ministry of having signed a deal at prices "two to three times higher" than current rates for basic foodstuffs. In a statement, the ministry insisted the accusations were "unfounded and baseless" but said Shapovalov's departure would "preserve the trust of society and international partners".

Tymoshenko, who has worked with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy since his election in 2019 and oversaw regional policy, also announced his resignation Tuesday. He posted a photo of himself holding a handwritten resignation letter, thanking the president for the "opportunity to do good deeds every day and every minute".

Tymoshenko was implicated in several scandals during his tenure, including in October last year when he was accused of using a car donated to Ukraine for humanitarian purposes. The dismissal of Symonenko, a deputy prosecutor general, comes after media reports that he spent a holiday in Spain this winter, reportedly using a car belonging to a Ukrainian businessman. — AFP

Several top Ukraine officials quit amid corruption claims

KYIV: Several senior Ukrainian officials announced their resignations Tuesday as the defense ministry was shaken by accusations of food procurement fraud, in the country's largest corruption scandal since the start of Russia's invasion.

Ukraine has a history of endemic corruption, including among the political elite, but efforts to stamp out graft have been overshadowed by Moscow's full-scale war that began in February. Kyiv's Western allies, which have allocated billions of dollars in financial and military support, have been pushing for anti-corruption reforms for years, sometimes as a precondition for aid.

Ukraine's deputy defense minister Vyacheslav Shapovalov, the deputy head of the presidential administration Kyrylo Tymoshenko and deputy prosecutor general Oleksiy Symonenko were among the officials who stood down.

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International

France repatriates more women, children from Syrian jihadist camp

Rights groups denounced harrowing conditions at Al-Hol camp

PARIS: France Tuesday repatriated 15 women and 32 children held in a prison camp for suspected jihadists in Syria, the foreign ministry said, in the third major return of French citizens from the country.

Rights groups have been pressing for years for France to take back the wives and children of alleged Islamic State group fighters held in the camps, since the jihadist movement was ousted from its self-declared "caliphate" in 2019. But the government refused a blanket repatriation, saying the return of potentially radicalized IS family members would pose security risks in France, which has seen a wave of jihadist attacks since 2015.

Instead, it said individual cases would be examined, leading to the first group repatriation of 16 mothers and 35 children from Syria in July 2022, and a further 55 in October. The women and children returned to France on Tuesday were at the Roj camp in northeast Syria under Kurdish administration, near the Turkish and Iraqi borders.

They were placed with social services and the mothers will be brought before judicial authorities, the foreign ministry said, thanking "the local administration in northeastern Syria for its cooperation, which made this operation possible".

Lawyer Marie Dose, who represents relatives of those held in several camps in Syria, has said 150 French women and children were living in these camps before Tuesday's transfer. Contacted by AFP, the French foreign ministry declined to say how many more women or children might be returned.

'Must be repatriated'

Tuesday's operation came after the United Nations Committee Against Torture last week said that in

refusing to repatriate women and minors in Syria, France was violating the UN Convention against torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.

In a version of a ruling dated November 16, 2022, shared by Dose, the committee said that "not taking all reasonable measures in its power to repatriate the plaintiffs' relatives would constitute a violation by a member state of articles two and 16 of the convention". French families have been held in the Roj and Al-Hol camps in Kurdish-held territory. Rights groups have denounced harrowing sanitary conditions, malnutrition and overcrowding at the Al-Hol camp in particular.

Dose said the latest arrivals showed that "France is, and always has been, able to repatriate children and their mothers". "There are still some orphans and several mothers who are asking to be repatriated with their children, including a woman with a disability," she said, without providing a number.

Martin Pradel, another lawyer representing the relatives of French children in the camps, said "too many children" had still not been returned, "despite their country being condemned" for abandoning them. "It's snowing in Syria. Some children are sleeping in tents," he said. "They must urgently all be repatriated."

'Share this burden'

In the past decade, thousands of extremists in Europe travelled to Syria to become IS fighters, often taking their families to live in the "caliphate" the group set up in territory seized in Iraq and Syria. Since the insurgents were defeated by US-backed Kurdish-led forces in 2019, the return of family members of suspected fighters who were captured or



AL-HOL CAMP: In this file photo taken on August 26, 2022 a picture shows the Kurdish-run Al-Hol camp, which holds relatives of suspected Islamic State (IS) group fighters in the northeastern Hasakeh governorate, during a security operation by the Kurdish Asayish security forces and the special forces of the Syrian Democratic Forces. — AFP

killed has been a thorny issue for Western nations.

Several European countries, such as Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, have recovered many of their citizens from the Syria camps. In September last year, the head of the US armed forces' Central Command urged nations to repatriate citizens from Al-Hol, which holds around 55,000 people — mostly women and children.

But France has been much more reticent, despite a condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights in September over its refusal to repatriate two women detained in Syria, citing the safety and healthcare threats at the Kurdish-run camps that put their lives in danger. Many of the women returned to France have been charged with terrorism crimes and imprisoned. — AFP

UN Palestinian refugee agency seeks \$1.6 billion

GENEVA: The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, appealed Tuesday for \$1.6 billion for its work in 2023, as it struggles to overcome chronic budget shortfalls. UNRWA — which provides services to nearly six million Palestinians registered in the Palestinian territories, including Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem, as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria — warned that "compounding challenges" had placed it under "immense strain".

The agency, which counts nearly 30,000 staff — most of them Palestinian refugees — runs more than 700 schools that offer education to half a million children, and provides health, sanitation and social services, including food and cash assistance. Out of the \$1.6 billion requested, UNRWA said \$848 million was needed for such core services. It said another \$781.6 million was needed for emergency operations.

UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said the agency played "an indispensable role" for millions of Palestinian refugees. "We work to maintain the delivery of basic serv-



RAFAH: Palestinians carry bags of flour received as aid to poor families, at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) distribution center, in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip, on January 22, 2023. — AFP

ices in an incredibly difficult financial and political context," he said in a statement.

The agency warned that most Palestinian refugees now live below the poverty line and a growing number are dependent on UNRWA for assistance, sometimes for their "sheer survival". Lazzarini said he had just returned from a trip to Syria where he had "witnessed firsthand indescribable suffering and despair".

That situation, he said, was "sadly mirrored in other places like Lebanon and

Gaza where Palestine refugees are hitting rock bottom. Many told me that all they asked for was a life of dignity; that's not much to ask for."

UNRWA has long faced chronic budget shortfalls, which worsened dramatically in 2018 when former US president Donald Trump cut support to the agency. His administration branded UNRWA "irredeemably flawed," siding with Zionist criticisms of the agency founded in 1949, a year after Zionist entity's creation. — AFP

Climate change increases human trafficking risks

VIENNA: Evidence is emerging that climate-related disasters are becoming a cause of human trafficking as criminal gangs exploit a growing number of uprooted people, the UN said Tuesday. The continuing war in Ukraine is also another risk factor for increased human trafficking, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report.

"Climate change is increasing vulnerability to trafficking," the UNODC report said. "While a systematic global analysis of the impact of climate change in trafficking in persons is missing, community level studies in different parts of the world point at weather induced disasters as root causes for trafficking in persons," it said.

The report is based on data from 141 countries collected from 2017 to 2020, and the analysis of 800 court cases. The impact of climate change "disproportionally" affected poor farming, fishing and other communi-

ties mainly relying on the extraction of natural resources for their livelihoods, the report said.

Once "deprived of their means of subsistence and forced to flee their community," people were becoming easy prey for traffickers, Fabrizio Sarrica, the report's main author told a press briefing. In 2021 alone, climate-related disasters internally displaced more than 23.7 million people, while many others fled their countries altogether.

As entire regions of the world are at risk of becoming "increasingly uninhabitable," millions will face "high risk of exploitation along migration routes," the UN report said. The UN drugs agency noted that an increase in cases of human trafficking had been observed in Bangladesh and the Philippines after devastating cyclones and typhoons displaced millions. Droughts and floods in Ghana, and the Caribbean region — subject to hurricanes and rising sea levels — were also forcing many to migrate.

While most of the victims of trafficking resulting from conflicts originated from Africa and the Middle East, a potentially "dangerous" situation is simultaneously building up in Ukraine as millions flee the war-torn country. — AFP

Crown Prince handed govt...

Continued from Page 1

The ministry, they said, has communicated with the finance ministry to secure the funds needed for the employees' severance packages, which will be paid in August.

Grief grips Asian Americans after...

Continued from Page 1

The nonpartisan Violence Project says 79 percent of mass shooters from 1966-2020 were under the age of 45. It says a mere 6.4 percent of mass shooters in that time are Asian.

The Monday bloodshed occurred at two farms around Half Moon Bay, a coastal community south of San Francisco. San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus said seven people were killed and one wounded in the shootings, and that 67-year-old Half Moon Bay resident named Chunli Zhao had been taken into custody. Reports said the dead were Chinese farmworkers, and that Zhao had worked at one of the farms.

Corpus said deputies had been dispatched to two nurseries around Half Moon Bay, a rural spot known for surfing contests and a pumpkin festival, around mid-afternoon on Monday. Four people were dead at one of them and one was critically wounded, while three more fatally wounded victims were found at a second location. Corpus said children were present at one of the sites. "It was in the afternoon when kids were out of school and for children to witness it is unspeakable," she said.

Corpus said Zhou then drove to a sheriff's

Kuwait Municipality will also put in place its second phase of expat layoffs before the end of June, with plans to proceed with the third and final phase before the end of this year, sources added. The Public Authority for Housing Welfare is also expected to announce the dismissal of all its expat employees soon. The health ministry informed its expatriate employees regarding the bonus clause to lay them off, sources added, indicating that the decision of the ministry does not include employees who are bedoons or children of Kuwaiti women.

substation in Half Moon Bay, where ABC7 crews captured dramatic footage of him being pulled to the ground by armed officers. "Zhao was taken into custody without incident and a semi-automatic handgun was located in his vehicle," Corpus said.

That tragedy unfolded as detectives in southern California were still probing what drove 72-year-old Huu Can Tran to shoot dead 11 people gathered for Lunar New Year at a suburban dance hall on Saturday night. He then drove to a second nearby dance hall, but was tackled and disarmed by an employee there in a move officials have credited with saving lives.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said Tran, who had been arrested in 1994 for unlawful possession of a firearm, fired 42 rounds in the attack in Monterey Park. "What drove a madman to do this?" he said. Luna confirmed officers had been told Tran may have been known to some of his victims. Information about Tran remained unclear. CNN reported that, according to his marriage license, he had immigrated from China; while the New York Times cited immigration documents saying he was a naturalized US citizen of Vietnamese origin.

The family of one of his victims, 65-year-old My Nhan said the tragedy was "still sinking in". "She spent so many years going to the dance studio in Monterey Park on weekends," a statement said. "It's what she loved to do. But unfairly, Saturday was her last dance." — AFP

Beirut blast judge takes...

Continued from Page 1

Relatives of the dead have been holding monthly vigils, seeking justice and accountability over the disaster which they blame on the crisis-torn country's entrenched ruling class, which is widely deemed inept and corrupt. A US State Department spokesperson said Tuesday that "we support and urge Lebanese authorities to complete a swift and transparent investigation into the horrific explosion at the Port of Beirut".

Lebanese state institutions have been reluctant to cooperate with the probe, which began the same month as the explosion. The prosecution service rejected the resumption of the probe, according to a document seen by AFP Tuesday. "We were only informed of Bitar's decision through the media," Oueidat, the top prosecutor, told AFP. "Since he considers that the general prosecution doesn't exist, we will also act like he doesn't exist."

Bitar's probe has been met with strong opposition from government figures and the powerful Shiite Hezbollah movement, which has accused him of political bias. Iran-backed Hezbollah and its ally Amal called for demonstrations to demand his dis-

missal in Oct 2021, when a gun battle broke out at a Beirut rally and seven people were killed.

"Port investigation: Tarek Bitar was gone mad," ran the headline of the pro-Hezbollah daily Al-Akhbar, which also accused him of acting "on the basis of American orders and with European judicial support". Bitar last week met with two French magistrates, who came to Beirut as part of the country's own investigation into the explosion that killed and injured French nationals.

The judge was forced to suspend his probe for more than a year after a barrage of lawsuits, mainly from politicians he had summoned on charges of negligence. In total, Bitar now plans to question 14 suspects next month, including five officials whom he indicted earlier - among them ex-prime minister Hassan Diab and former ministers. According to the unnamed judicial official, Oueidat had in 2019 overseen a security services investigation into cracks in the warehouse where the ammonium nitrate was stored.

In Feb 2021, Bitar's predecessor as lead judge was removed from the case after he had charged several high-level politicians. The interior ministry has also failed to execute arrest warrants issued by Bitar, further undermining his quest for accountability. Rights group Amnesty International charged Monday that "Lebanese authorities have shamelessly and systematically obstructed the pursuit of justice" and called on them to "ensure that the domestic investigation can proceed without political interference". — AFP

vital tourism industry after years of political unrest, as well as after the COVID pandemic.

The government's plans - the crowning jewel of which is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids in Giza - aim to draw in 30 million tourists a year by 2028, up from 13 million before the pandemic. The country of 104 million inhabitants is suffering from a severe economic crisis, and Egypt's tourism industry accounts for 10 percent of GDP and some two million jobs. — AFP

Egypt finds 'complete'...

Continued from Page 1

Critics say the flurry of excavations has prioritized finds shown to grab media attention over hard academic research. But the discoveries have been a key component of Egypt's attempts to revive its

International

Start training Ukrainians to use Leopard tanks, Germany says

Poland says ready to deliver 14 Leopard tanks to Kyiv

BERLIN: Germany said Tuesday that allies could start training Ukrainian forces to use the Leopard battle tanks desperately sought by Kyiv to repel Russian troops, provoking a defiant response from the Kremlin.

Berlin stopped short of granting permission for the tanks to be sent to Ukraine, but underscored that the pending decision was imminent. Poland sought to push Germany to speed up its decision, with Warsaw putting forward a formal application for the transfer of the German-made armament from its stocks to Ukraine.

But in Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was battling a deepening corruption scandal within his government, sacking several officials over graft while others resigned. Ukraine has been urging Germany for weeks to allow the export of powerful German-made Leopard tanks, but Berlin has so far declined to give the green light.

A US-led meeting of Kyiv's allies in Germany last week failed to yield a decision despite a growing clamor from several European countries ready to export the tanks. Defense Minister Boris Pistorius indicated Tuesday that a decision could be imminent, saying he had "expressly encouraged partner countries that have Leopard tanks that are ready for deployment to train Ukrainian forces on these tanks".

"I expect a decision to be made shortly," he added ahead of a meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in Berlin. Stoltenberg welcomed the "clear message" from the minister, "because after a decision has been taken on the delivery on battle tanks, it will take some time to... make them ready" and to train Ukrainian soldiers to use them. "We must provide heavier and more advanced systems to Ukraine, and we must do it faster," Stoltenberg said, adding that he expected a decision by Berlin "soon".

Moscow shows no signs of changing course in its invasion, he added, noting that Russia has mobilized over 200,000 troops and is acquiring new weapons from

countries like North Korea or Iran. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the delivery of the tanks would "bring nothing good to the future relationship" between Berlin and Moscow. "They will leave a lasting mark," he warned.

Mounting pressure

Pistorius had emphasized earlier that Berlin was not opposed to Leopard deliveries but had simply not made a decision yet. "We are supporting Ukraine not to lose this war, to win it against Russia," he said in an interview with the ZDF broadcaster. Pistorius also defended Chancellor Olaf Scholz against accusations of dithering on whether to approve the delivery of Leopards. "Taking the lead does not mean blindly going ahead," he said. "And if the decision takes another day or two, then that's just the way it is."

Pistorius, who took office only last week at a crucial time for the German defense ministry, also insisted there was no division among Ukraine's Western allies. Observers would be "well advised not to wantonly conjure up this supposed division within NATO," he said.

While scores of nations have pledged military hardware for Ukraine, Kyiv is clamoring for the more powerful Leopard tanks, seen as key to punching through enemy lines. The tanks are used by several EU nations but these countries require Berlin's permission to send the German-made armaments on to Ukraine under Germany's war weapons control act.

Polish request

Poland, one of the loudest voices calling for permission to send the tanks, had said this month it was ready to deliver 14 Leopard tanks to Kyiv within the framework of an international coalition of countries.

"The Germans have already received our request for consent to send Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine," Defense

was," he said, adding that he felt "a little safer".

Wall of omerta

The Cosa Nostra, immortalized in the Godfather movies, had already changed from the ruthless organization that three decades ago murdered judges and set off deadly car bombs in Italy's major cities. Those acts of violence triggered a years-long crackdown by the state, and experts say the Mafia has now been eclipsed by other groups in Italy, notably the 'Ndrangheta in the southern region of Calabria. But it was strong enough to keep Messina Denaro protected for 30 years on the run.

The culture of 'omerta' — the protective silence that surrounds the Mafia — was evident to journalists covering the aftermath of his arrest, which occurred as he visited a health clinic in Palermo. "The mafia bases all its strength on fear, and so people are scared of exposing themselves. They don't want to be mixed up in it, they don't want to risk anything and prefer to turn away — without realizing that this is something that affects everybody," Cimarosa said.

His father Lorenzo had married into the Messina Denaro family, marrying the mob boss's cousin — Cimarosa's mother — and "helping" them, including "supporting them financially", Cimarosa said. But after being arrested, Lorenzo agreed to work with the authorities, and "broke a

tions, and at a time when Biden's Republican predecessor Donald Trump is being investigated for his mishandling of hundreds of classified files.

November 9, 2022

The Department of Justice begins investigating Biden's handling of classified documents.

December 20, 2022

Biden's personal lawyers find more documents in the garage of his family home in Wilmington, Delaware, where the 80-year-old president often spends weekends. The attorneys inform the Justice Department and hand over the documents. The White House has yet to make a public statement on either of the discoveries.

January 9, 2023

The White House confirms for the first time, reacting to media reports, that secret papers were found in Biden's office, but makes no mention of those found in his home in Wilmington.

January 10, 2023

At a news conference in Mexico, where Biden is on an official visit, the president says he was "surprised" to learn about the classified document discoveries and does not know what is in them.

January 12, 2023

The White House confirms that a "small number" of classified documents were found in storage areas and in the library of Biden's Wilmington home. Facing an uproar in opposition

then drove to another dance studio where police say only the "heroic" actions of a young man who wrestled the weapon off him prevented another slaughter. Hours later, Tran shot himself dead as police moved in on his white van.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said Monday that Tran, who had been arrested in 1994 for unlawful possession of a firearm, had fired 42 rounds in the attack. But, he said, much was still unknown. "We still don't have a motive, but we want to know the motive behind this tragic event," he told reporters. "What drove a madman to do this? We don't know. But we intend to find out."

Detectives were looking Monday at Tran's previous connections to the two dance studios, with personal relationships a key area of interest, the Los Angeles Times reported. Monterey Park resident Chester Hong



BERLIN: Germany's new Defense Minister Boris Pistorius (right) and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg give a joint press conference following talks on January 24, 2023 at the Defense Ministry in Berlin. —AFP

Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said on Twitter on Tuesday. "I am also calling on the German side to join our coalition of countries supporting Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks," he added.

As Ukraine marked 11 months since the start of the war on Tuesday, Zelensky urged his troops to keep up the fight against Russia. "Today is exactly 11 months of full-scale war. The 335th day," Zelensky said. "A day that we will pass in the same way as the 334th, uniting all our forces for the sake of one thing — victory. For the sake

of Ukraine's victory."

But the comments came with Zelensky battling a widening corruption scandal that has felled several senior officials. A number of senior Ukrainian officials resigned after the defense ministry was accused of signing food contracts at inflated prices, while several more — including four deputy ministers — were dismissed. Among them is a deputy defense minister, two deputy ministers of development of communities and territories, and a deputy minister of social policy. —AFP

Cousin of Sicilian mob boss fights 'Mafia mentality'

CASTELVETRANO: As the son of a mafioso turned state witness and a cousin of captured Cosa Nostra boss Matteo Messina Denaro, Giuseppe Cimarosa has seen the Sicilian Mafia and its intimidation tactics up close.

But while many in Messina Denaro's hometown of Castelvetroano stayed silent following his arrest last week after 30 years on the run, Cimarosa organized a demonstration against the Mafia in front of the mobster's ancestral home.

"Now the real battle is cultural. Now you have to change people's mentality," the 40-year-old riding instructor told AFP at his stables in the town in western Sicily, where the mob boss was born and reigned with terror. "Now the enemy is no longer the Mafia but the Mafia-like behavior or simply a way of thinking that unfortunately is still rampant. We must start with teaching in schools, and then the state has to support those who, like me, rebel."

Cimarosa was disappointed that the turnout at last week's small protest was not higher, but he himself breathed a sigh of relief at Messina Denaro's arrest. "The Mafia is not as unbeatable as it thought it



CASTELVETRANO: Anti-mafia activist Giuseppe Cimarosa, who is related to arrested mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro through his mother, is pictured at his stud farm in Castelvetroano, Sicily, on January 20, 2023. —AFP

wall of omerta that until then was very strong".

Threats

For Cimarosa, his mother and brother, the betrayal — as his father's collaboration was seen — created a "stigma for me, for my family, that has been difficult to shake off". They declined government protection, with Cimarosa insisting he would not give up his identity "because of a criminal who I neither know or have ever met".

"We never received explicit threats.

But some things happened that made me think they could be messages," he said. "Years ago, I found one of my horses dead... and then shortly after my father's death his tomb was destroyed twice."

He admits to thinking "practically every day" about leaving Sicily. "However, I stayed because I believe that this is my mission. Because it would have been too easy to say what I said far away," he said. "My words have more value if I say them from Castelvetroano." —AFP

Biden's secret documents: The drip, drip of revelations

WASHINGTON: The first secret documents turned up in Joe Biden's former private office and home back in November, but it was January before the White House publicly admitted the embarrassing discovery — under pressure from a steady drip of media revelations.

Since then, searches of the president's home have uncovered several more sets of classified files in a snowballing affair threatening to overshadow the Democrat's expected announcement that he will seek a second term in 2024. Here is a timeline of developments in the saga:

November 2, 2022

While emptying an office that Biden used occasionally between 2017 — after the end of his term as Barack Obama's vice-president — and the launch of his 2020 campaign, Biden's personal lawyers find "a small number of documents" marked as classified in a locked closet. The following day, the documents are handed over to the National Archives, as US presidents and vice presidents are required to do when they leave office.

The White House makes no public announcement of the discovery, which comes a week before critical midterm elec-

US police focus on jealousy as Lunar New Year shooting motive

MONTEREY PARK: Detectives probing why an elderly Asian immigrant shot dead 11 people as they celebrated Lunar New Year at a dance hall in California are examining whether jealousy or a personal dispute was behind the tragedy, a report said Monday.

Huu Can Tran, 72, used a semi-automatic pistol in a rampage in the Los Angeles suburb of Monterey Park on Saturday night, killing men and women in their 50s, 60s and 70s. One person was shot in the parking lot. He

ranks, US Attorney General Merrick Garland names Robert Hur, a Trump appointee, as special counsel to investigate the matter. Biden's spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre tells the press that the search of his Wilmington home concluded the night before, on January 11.

January 14, 2023

In a new twist, the White House says a lawyer found five additional pages of classified material in Biden's home in Delaware — just a day earlier, on January 13. The total number of documents found in Biden's home and his Washington office has become unclear at this stage — with the White House referring variably to documents, pages or "items" — and no details have been released on their level of classification.

January 19, 2023

Traveling in California, Biden downplays the furor over the documents, declaring that "there's nothing there" and that he has "no regrets."

January 21, 2023

The president's personal attorney, Bob Bauer, announces that six more classified documents have been found at Biden's Delaware home. Unlike previous discoveries, the latest search was conducted by the US Department of Justice — at the president's invitation, according to his lawyers — and lasted from 9:45 am to 10:30 pm. The latest find included documents dating back to Biden's tenure as vice president from 2009 to 2017, but also to his decades-long career in the Senate. —AFP

told AFP on Sunday he believed a domestic dispute over an invitation to a Lunar New Year eve party could be at the root of the attack.

"The wife (was) invited to join the party (but) the husband cannot be invited," he said. "And the husband may be upset and jealous." Luna confirmed officers had been told Tran may have been known to some of his victims, but said there was currently no evidence he was related to any.

'Hostile'

On Monday a picture began to emerge of a man who, according to his marriage license, had immigrated from China, and who had been a regular at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio in the past. Tran's ex-wife told CNN the couple had met there two decades ago when he offered to give her informal lessons. —AFP

Top Indian university bans screening of BBC series on PM Modi

NEW DELHI: A top Indian university has banned the screening of a BBC documentary about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role during deadly 2002 sectarian riots, after his government attempted to block its spread online.

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

Students at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi had planned to screen the documentary on Tuesday, defying efforts by Indian authorities to restrict its showing. But a memo from the university's registrar late on Monday ordered students to cancel the event and warned it would take "strict disciplinary action" if its edict was disobeyed. "Such an unauthorized activity may disturb peace and harmony of the university campus," it said. Modi's government has been accused of stifling dissent by free-speech activists and opposition leaders for years. On Saturday it used emergency powers under India's controversial information technology laws to block the documentary from being shared on social media.

Government adviser Kanchan Gupta slammed the series as "hostile propaganda and anti-India garbage" disguised as a documentary. India's order to social media platforms to block links to the documentary "flagrantly contradicts the country's stated commitment to democratic ideals", Beh Lih Yi of the Committee to Protect Journalists said in a statement on Monday.

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 two-part BBC documentary cited a previously classified British foreign ministry report quoting unnamed sources saying that Modi met senior police officers and "ordered them not to intervene" in the attacks on Muslims that followed.

It also said the violence was "politically motivated" and the aim "was to purge Muslims from Hindu areas". The riots were impossible "without the climate of impunity created by the state Government... Narendra Modi is directly responsible," it concluded. Modi ran Gujarat from 2001 until his election as prime minister in 2014 and briefly faced a travel ban by the United States over the violence. An investigation 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 him. —AFP



MONTEREY PARK: People pay their respects in front of a makeshift memorial for victims of a mass shooting outside the Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Monterey Park, California on January 23, 2023. —AFP

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2023

Business

Eurostar recovery hampered by post-Brexit passport checks

Some services run one-third empty; plan to expand network suffers setback

BRUSSELS: Cross-Channel train operator Eurostar complained Tuesday that slower post-Brexit passport checks for travelers are forcing it to run some services almost one-third empty.

The Eurostar Group now includes the Eurostar service from France and Belgium to London and the Thalys services linking Cologne, Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris. On Tuesday, the group unveiled a new joint logo that will adorn trains on both route networks, along with an ambitious plan to grow to 30 million passengers a year by 2030.

But the cross-Channel route from Paris and from Amsterdam to London is still being held back by the consequences of Brexit, with travelers facing longer passport checks. British visitors must now have their documents stamped as they arrive and leave the EU, slowing their passage even with UK border points in European stations. EU citizens, meanwhile, have to show they comply with British migration rules.

"We cannot offer enough seats because of these station bottlenecks," said Gwendoline Cazenave, chief executive of the joint group since October last year. In 2019, before the twin travel crises of Brexit and the COVID pandemic, the Eurostar and Thalys routes carried 19 million passengers a year.

In 2022, passengers had returned but numbers transported were still lower: the Eurostar cross-Channel service carried 8.3 million passengers and the Thalys high-speed continental service 6.5 million. "We haven't been able to return to 2019 levels of service because the border crossing is too slow,"

Cazenave said.

Today there are 14 return trips per day between Paris and London, for example. In 2019 there were between 17 and 18. And now these smaller number of trains are running part-full.

Profitable again

Cazenave said there were not enough border staff to check passports and that she was concerned about the future introduction of a new digital Entry/Exit System (EES) for the Schengen travel area, expected to start this year. "We used to ask clients to arrive half an hour before the train, now it's an hour," she said.

In peak hours, Eurostar must cap capacity at 700 of the 870 available seats on a train to allow the passengers to board on time, to take account of the time needed for them to clear passport checks.

In Amsterdam, Eurostar can only embark 250 passengers on a cross-Channel service, with another 175 boarding en route in Rotterdam. The group is concerned that when the EES entry system for the Schengen passport area comes into use then passenger flow will be slowed still further.

Eurostar almost went bankrupt in 2021 and Thalys also sought help from its shareholders.

The new combined group has a debt of 850 million pounds (960 million euros, \$1 billion), according to Cazenave. Travelers have returned since early 2022 and she said the group had returned to an operating profit in the second half of last year.



BRUSSELS: This picture shows a Thalys train in the Bruxelles-Midi train station in Brussels, on January 24, 2023. —AFP

Eurostar Group is a holding company based in Brussels, owned 55.75 percent by French state-owned SNCF Voyageurs, 19.31 percent by a Quebec

public investment bank, 18.5 percent by Belgian operator SNCB and 6.44 percent by US-based Federated Hermes Infrastructure. —AFP

Power returns to Pakistan a day after huge outage

ISLAMABAD: The national power grid was restored in Pakistan, the energy minister said on Tuesday, a day after a nationwide breakdown left most of the country's 220 million people without electricity and caused tens of millions of dollars in industry losses. The outage started around 7.30 am (0230 GMT) on Monday, a failure linked to a cost-cutting measure as Pakistan grapples with an economic crisis.

Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan said the grid was repaired at around 5.15 am (0015 GMT) but load-shedding would continue over the next two days as coal and nuclear plants were brought back online. "There is a need to invest in the energy sector, especially to improve the distribution system, which has long been neglected," he told reporters in Islamabad.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed "sincere regrets for the inconvenience our citizens suffered". An inquiry is under way and "responsibility will be fixed", he said on Twitter. Electricity returned to urban centres overnight, including the mega cities of Karachi and Lahore. Secretary general of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association Shahid Sattar estimated losses of \$70 million to the sector, Pakistan's largest exporter and a crucial booster of foreign exchange reserves.

Around 90 percent of factories were shut down on Monday, with natural gas supplies too "patchy" to stand in, he said. "Each time there is a power cut



MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan: Vendors warm themselves as they light a bonfire at a market during a nationwide power outage, in Muzaffarabad on January 23, 2023. —AFP

the mill has to be restarted from scratch, which takes up a lot of time and resources," he told AFP.

"We can't pick up from where we stopped. All that thread that's in the middle of being dyed and treated, et cetera, cannot be used again. So we face massive losses that way."

Khan pledged that industries would be guarded from the load-shedding anticipated in the coming days. The economy is already hobbled by rampant inflation, a falling rupee and severely low foreign exchange reserves, with the power cut piling extra pressure on small businesses.

Water disruption

Pakistan's power system is complex and precari-

ous, and problems can quickly cascade. Khan earlier said a variation in frequency on the national grid caused the initial breakdown, as power generation units were turned on early Monday morning.

The units are temporarily switched off on winter nights to save fuel, he had told reporters. Localised power cuts and load-shedding are daily occurrences in Pakistan, and hospitals, factories and government institutions are often kept running by private generators. But the machines are beyond the means of most citizens and small businesses.

In Karachi, hundreds of water pumps were also offline during the power cut, heaping more problems on the more than 15 million residents of Pakistan's largest city. —AFP

Swatch upbeat as China alters COVID policy

GENEVA: Swiss watch giant Swatch said Tuesday that its revenue growth was limited by China's zero-COVID policy in 2022 but it anticipates strong sales this year following the lifting of restrictions. Swatch, which also owns the luxury brands Tissot, Longines and Omega, posted net sales of 7.5 billion Swiss francs (\$8.2 billion) last year, up 4.6 percent from 2021 at constant exchange rates.

But China's COVID lockdowns caused a sales shortfall of more than 700 million Swiss francs, the maker of colorful watches said in a earnings statement. The company posted a net profit of 823 million Swiss francs (\$894 million) last year, up 6.3 percent from 2021. "Consistent double-digit sales growth in Europe, America, the Middle East and most of the Asian markets was severely dampened by the significant decline in sales in China," the statement said.

"First the lockdowns, and then the massive COVID wave after the measures were lifted, led to shortfalls of over 30 percent in this (fourth quarter)," it said. But the group said it expects "strong" sales growth in all regions and segments this year after the end of China's COVID measures, which has already led to a recovery in consumption in the key market. "The sales growth in January in China reinforces the group's expectation to aim for a record year in 2023," it said. —AFP

Cable sabotage cuts all traffic from busy Paris station

PARIS: One of the busiest train stations in Paris suffered a total traffic shutdown on Tuesday after vandals triggered a major signal malfunction by setting cables on fire. All traffic from Gare de l'Est, which serves routes to Germany, eastern France and is a key local train commuter hub, was cut for the entire day, operator SNCF said.

A fire broke out at a signals point at around 3:00 am (0200 GMT) ahead of the morning rush in what was first thought to be an accident, but subsequently turned out to be arson, it said.

"This was a fire started deliberately," a spokeswoman for SNCF told AFP. There was no immediate indication over who the perpetrators were or what their intention was in targeting a small but crucial piece of infrastructure. The SNCF spokeswoman said traffic was cancelled for all of Tuesday, after officials had earlier expressed hope that services could resume around 10:00 am.

"It's an act of deliberate vandalism," Anne-Marie Palmier, head of SNCF's Paris region network, told reporters at the station. The operator had filed a criminal complaint with police, she said.

The fire was discovered near the regional station of Vaires, east of Paris, where 48 cables were damaged after their protective casing was forced open, she said.



PARIS: Passengers wait in the main hall during a total traffic shutdown at the Gare de l'Est train station in Paris on January 24, 2023. — AFP

'Impact on people's lives'

A railway agent discovered the fire and called police at 4.30 am. The cables' function was to transmit data to signaling posts. "Safety conditions can no longer be guaranteed," she said. Around a dozen network specialists were on site to repair the damage, SNCF said. Fast TGV trains to the eastern French cities of Colmar, Nancy and Reims as well as Frankfurt and Stuttgart in Germany, and to Luxembourg were among those cancelled.

Some TGV departures, however, were diverted to the nearby Gare de Nord station, SNCF said.

Passengers unable to travel were invited to re-book their journeys or get the ticket price reimbursed.

Transport Minister Clement Beaune told FranceInfo radio that "sadly, we regularly see acts of vandalism directed at cables". Such acts "must be severely punished because we can see the impact they have on people's daily lives", he said.

The Gare de l'Est is the fifth-busiest station in the French capital, after Gare Saint-Lazare, Gare du Nord, Gare de Lyon and Gare Montparnasse. Nearly 28 million people used Gare de l'Est last year, according to SNCF data. — AFP

Musk tells jury buying Tesla at \$420 a share was no joke

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk on Monday told jurors that his 2018 tweet about taking Tesla private at \$420 a share was no joke and that Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund was serious about helping him do it. The Tesla chief returned to the witness stand to answer questions from lawyers for angry investors who accuse him of costing them millions of dollars with a pair of allegedly false tweets about having the funding secured to buy them out.

A lawyer for the plaintiffs focused on Musk's buy-out figure of 420, a number that is also a popular rallying code for marijuana, which Musk uses. "420 was not chosen because of a joke; it was chosen because there was a 20 percent premium over the stock price," Musk said when asked if he was having a laugh when he made the tweet.

Musk added, however, that there was "some karma around 420", though "I should question whether that is good or bad karma at this point." The case revolves around a pair of tweets in which Musk said "funding secured" for a project to buy out the publicly-traded electric automaker, then in a second tweet added that "investor support is confirmed." The tweets sent the Tesla share price on a rollercoaster ride and Musk was sued by shareholders who say the tycoon acted recklessly in an effort to squeeze investors who had bet, or "gone short," against the company. Musk referred to short sellers as "evil" at the trial. —AFP

Business

Hopes grow that eurozone will dodge recession this winter

Europe benefits from lower inflation

FRANKFURT: Europe's economy grew in January for the first time since June, a closely watched survey showed Tuesday, raising hopes that the eurozone will avoid a recession this winter. Europe has benefited from lower inflation, improved supply chains and the recent reopening of China's COVID-scarred economy, leading to increased optimism for 2023.

The outlook for the single currency area is significantly brighter than it was a few months ago, when panic set in over the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine on Europe's economy. The S&P Global Flash Eurozone purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 50.2 in January from 49.3 in December. A figure higher than 50 indicates growth.

"This was the third successive increase and, as such, provides more evidence that the region has so far avoided the sharp downturn that we and many others had predicted," Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at Capital Economics, said in a note. Almost all experts warned last year that the eurozone would enter a recession—two consecutive quarters in which the economy shrinks—in the final three months of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023.

Those fears are receding, but Europe still faces challenges ahead. Demand for goods and services continued to weaken, industrial orders fell in January—although less sharply than in December—and the impact of more interest rates hikes could still be felt. European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde on Monday showed no signs of moving away from more rate hikes, insisting they must continue rising at a "steady pace" in order to avoid inflation becoming entrenched.

Inflation in the single currency area remains high at 9.2 percent, but has fallen for two months in a row, boosted by the slowdown in the rate of energy price rises.

'Welcome news'

Last week Lagarde said she expected the eurozone economy to fare "a lot better" than initially feared, with expectations of "a small contraction" instead of a recession. "The survey undoubtedly brings welcome good news to suggest that any downturn is likely to be far less severe than previously feared and that a recession may well be avoided altogether," said Chris Williamson, S&P's chief business economist.

The economy has been helped by concerns easing over the impact of soaring energy bills, thanks to mild winter weather and generous government support on the continent. But Williamson warned that the region was "by no means out of the woods yet". The EU's economy commissioner Paolo Gentiloni last week said there was an expectation of "subdued growth" for the rest of 2023.

"The war in Ukraine of course continues to cloud the outlook. And while high storage levels and lower demand have helped to bring energy prices down, the crisis is certainly not over," Gentiloni added.

The European Union's statistics agency will publish growth data for 2022's fourth quarter next Tuesday.

The single currency area's largest economy, Germany, benefited from the easing of supply chain pressure which helped manufacturing, S&P said,



BRUSSELS, Belgium: (Left to right) President of the Eurogroup Paschal Donohoe, European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde and Spanish Finance Minister Nadia Calvino pose for a family photo during a Eurogroup meeting at the EU headquarters in Brussels in this file photo. —AFP

and reported improvement with the composite PMI rising from 49.0 in December to 49.7 in January.

But output in France, where activity is driven by domestic consumers and services, fell for a third

consecutive month after a sharper drop in services activity. S&P said output for the rest of the eurozone, which comprises 20 countries after Croatia joined in January, also returned to growth. —AFP

US stocks rally tested by deluge of mixed earnings

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks were mostly lower early Tuesday following two strong sessions as markets digested a trove of mixed earnings from industrial heavyweights. The results included a drop in profits from conglomerate 3M, pointing to weak demand in consumer-facing markets, and an upbeat report from defense contractor Raytheon Technologies, which has benefited from the comeback in its aerospace business.

About 25 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.3 percent at 33,540.14. The broad-based S&P 500 slipped 0.2 percent to 4,012.20, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index added 0.1 percent at 11,369.84.

Tuesday's early losses suggest nervousness "that the stock market has gotten ahead of itself and is due for a pullback," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. But he added: "We can't put an eventual rebound try past the market, which has defied bearish expectations all year, bouncing back from bouts of weakness, catalyzed by the hope that the economy will achieve a soft landing."

Trading on a handful of large stocks including Visa and Wells Fargo was briefly halted early Tuesday due to an apparent technology glitch. But the stocks were trading normally soon after the open.

With China's economy reopening from strict lockdowns, coupled with easing energy prices, there is hope that a severe downturn can be averted even if inflation remains stubbornly high and inter-



est rates look set to keep on rising, albeit at a slower pace. The eurozone economy grew in January for the first time in six months, a closely watched survey showed Tuesday, raising hopes that Europe will avoid a recession this winter.

The S&P Global Flash Eurozone purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 50.2 in January from 49.3 in December. A figure above 50 indicates growth. At the same time, heavy fallout from lingering high energy costs was further evidenced Tuesday with data showing UK government debt ballooning further in December as it subsidises gas and electricity bills for households and businesses.

"Lower energy prices are helping consumer confidence rebound," noted Susannah Streeter, senior

investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. "It's another positive sign for companies fearing the effects of well-flagged interest rate rises, indicating that consumers are showing resilience, but they are still likely to stay cautious."

Tokyo stocks led gains in another day thinned by the Lunar New Year break, with sentiment boosted once more by a surge Monday on Wall Street.

Tech firms provided the support in New York as traders gear up for the release of earnings from big-ticket firms including Microsoft and Intel. Hopes that the Federal Reserve will slow down its pace of interest rate hikes have also given investors optimism that the US economy could avert a recession, or at least suffer only a mild contraction. —AFP

Interest rates need to rise at 'steady pace': ECB chief

FRANKFURT: European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde said Monday that interest rates need to continue rising at a "steady pace" in order to avoid inflation becoming entrenched. While energy prices have recently come down, Lagarde said underlying inflation continues to rise.

"It is vital that inflation rates above the ECB's two-percent target do not become entrenched in the economy," she said at an event hosted by the operator of the Frankfurt stock exchange.

In less than six months the ECB has raised its key policy rates by 2.5 percentage points, the fastest increase in its history. "ECB interest rates will still have to rise significantly at a steady pace to reach levels that are sufficiently restrictive, and stay at those levels for as long as necessary" to bring inflation down, Lagarde added.

"We must bring inflation down. And we will deliver on this goal," she vowed. ECB policymakers are expected to raise rates at their meetings in February and March. "We will stay the course to ensure the timely return of inflation to our target," said Lagarde. —AFP

El Salvador repays \$800 million bond

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador: El Salvador has repaid an \$800 million bond maturing this week, President Nayib Bukele announced on Monday, taking aim at critics who said the country would default.

He said the media had created "the narrative that El Salvador was broke and going to default."

"In the past year, almost every legacy international news outlet said that because of our '#Bitcoin bet', El Salvador was going to default on its debt by January 2023 (since we had an 800 million dollar bond maturing today)," Bukele tweeted. "Well, we just paid in full, 800 million dollars plus interest," he said.

The president did not specify how much the country paid in principal and how much in interest.

However, part of the \$800 million debt that had to be settled in January was repurchased by the Salvadoran state in two operations carried out in the second half of 2022 in order to reduce the amount of payment. In these operations, El Salvador repurchased almost \$200 million debt. According to finance ministry figures, El Salvador had to pay some \$604.1 million principal for the bond due in January, plus some \$23 million in interest.

Bukele has been much criticized for his decision in September 2021 to make El Salvador the first country to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender, alongside the US dollar. At the time, the cryptocurrency was trading at about \$44,000. It hit a record of \$67,734 in November 2021 but has since fallen and is now trading at about \$23,000. Finance Minister Alejandro Zelaya also referred to the bond repayment.

"El Salvador meets its debt obligations," Zelaya said. El Salvador's public debt exceeds 80 percent of its GDP, according to official calculations. Part of the debt El Salvador is repaying was issued during the governments of the right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance (1989-2004) and during the term of leftist president Mauricio Funes (2009-2014). —AFP



BEIRUT: An empty restaurant in Beirut.

Beirut restaurants charge in dollars as pound sinks

BEIRUT: Imagine ordering a coffee for one price, then three hours later being charged more for the same hot drink. You'd think it was a scam but it's an unfortunate reality for Lebanese living through an unprecedented currency crisis.

A customer at Goro, a restaurant in Beirut's Gemmayzeh neighborhood, experienced precisely this feeling while visiting one of the popular haunts of Beirut nightlife and dining.

Within three hours, the price of his coffee jumped by 9,000 Lebanese pounds, the equivalent of \$0.18 on the parallel market, where the national currency topped the symbolic 50,000 mark on Thursday, the first time such an unwelcome milestone has been reached. "Ordered my first coffee at 10.30am, the second one at 1pm. The Lebanese Lira lost value during that time, resulting in two different

charges", he wrote in a tweet on Friday, widely shared on social media. The sudden increase is due to the restaurant pricing its menu in dollars.

Customers can pay the bill in dollars or in the local currency, but at the parallel market rate, which remains highly volatile and can undergo sudden changes in mere hours. Once pegged at 1,500 against the US currency, the Lebanese pound has now lost 97 per cent of its value since the start of the crisis caused by a drastic shortage of dollars, which plunged 80 per cent of the population into poverty and led the country to the verge of financial collapse. More and more restaurants have switched to the dollar instead of the Lebanese pound, which is gradually disappearing from menus.

Restaurateurs say they have no choice. "Because of the volatility of the Lebanese pound, our suppliers are only accepting dollars," said Kamal Darwich, a manager at Onno in Beirut.

He said the price increases also covered rocketing expenses such as gas and electricity, as restaurants have to rely on expensive private generator suppliers in the near absence of state electricity. Salaries, however, are not entirely in dollars but are paid as a mix of both currencies. —Agencies

Ford to axe 3,200 jobs in Germany

DETROIT: US auto giant Ford is planning to axe 3,200 jobs in Germany, a union said Monday, adding it was extremely concerned about the future of the company's sites in Europe's top economy.

The news came amid fears in the EU that companies could shift their operations to the United States because of the recently passed landmark Inflation Reduction Act that offers tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries. A spokesman for the IG Metall union told AFP the cuts will be mainly in Cologne, where Ford has a major plant, but all sites across Germany are threatened.

"We at IG Metall are extremely concerned about the future of the German development divisions and, as a whole, about the future of the German Ford sites," said a statement from the union after an extraordinary meeting with management. As well as the Cologne site, Ford has a development centre in nearby Merkenich.

The carmaker did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The development centre has "successfully designed models for the European market, which often brought global success for the company," said IG Metall, which represents workers in the key electrical and metal sectors.

Ford's German workers can continue to develop successful electric models for Europe if given the chance, the union said. But the US company risks "taking the axe to its own future" with the planned cuts, IG Metall said, urging the carmaker to reconsider the move.

Just last year, Ford had said it would make a major investment in Germany in a bid to make all of its passenger vehicles sold in Europe electric by 2030. —AFP

Business

British borrowing balloons on gas and electricity subsidies

UK to offer £600m in pollution-cutting support for steelmakers

LONDON: The UK government's debt almost tripled last month as it subsidizes gas and electricity bills to protect Britons from high energy costs following producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Public sector net borrowing hit £27.4 billion (\$33.9 billion) in December, up £16.7 billion from a year earlier, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement on Tuesday.

That was the highest monthly December figure since comparable records began in 1993, and was far greater than expectations of £17 billion. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's energy support schemes for businesses and individuals added almost £7 billion to borrowing.

Interest payments soared to £17.3 billion, which was the second highest month on record and followed £8.7 billion a year earlier. The Bank of England has embarked upon a series of aggressive interest rate hikes to cool sky-high inflation, but this has also ramped up the cost of state borrowing. The BoE in December hiked its interest rate by half a point to 3.5 percent, the highest level in 14 years.

It began tightening monetary policy in December 2021, when the key rate stood at a record-low 0.1 percent. UK annual

inflation slowed to 10.5 percent in December, but remains close to historically high levels, fuelling a cost-of-living crisis and mass strikes by tens of thousands of public and private-sector workers.

The government believes the economy has already entered recession on fallout from rampant consumer price increases. Separately Tuesday, a survey showed UK private sector business activity suffered its biggest drop in two years this month, underlining the threat of a prolonged downturn.

The composite purchasing managers' index (PMI) hit 47.8 for January from 49.0 in December, compilers S&P Global and the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply said in a statement. The reading fell further below the key 50 level signaling a deepening contraction.

Meanwhile, Britain will offer grants to help its two largest steelmakers replace dirty blast furnaces with less carbon-intensive technology, media reported Monday. The BBC reported that grants worth £600 million (\$744 million) will "likely" be unveiled this week for Chinese-owned British Steel and Indian-owned Tata Steel UK, to help slash damaging emissions, cut fuel bills and protect thousands of jobs.

The announcement will depend on when the firms accept the offers, The Guardian newspaper noted. British Steel and Tata Steel operate Britain's four remaining steel blast furnaces.

However, London reportedly wants the pair to switch to electric arc furnaces, which the BBC reports could recycle the scrap steel Britain produces and be powered by electricity from renewable sources. A government spokesman declined to comment on the reports but stressed it was committed to helping the industry.

"The government recognizes the vital role that steel plays within the UK economy, supporting local jobs and economic growth," said a spokesperson for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. It remained "committed to securing a sustainable and competitive future for the UK steel sector". Business Secretary Grant Shapps "considers the success of the steel sector a priority and continues to work closely with industry to achieve this", the spokesperson noted.

Sky News had reported Friday that the government was mulling a £300-million rescue plan for British Steel. The package would reportedly hinge on its



MORECAMBE, UK: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks during a Q&A session at The Platform in Morecambe in Lancashire, northwest England. — AFP

Chinese owner, giant Jingye Group, investing at least £1 billion and vowing to protect jobs. The broadcaster cited Treasury documents which warned that British Steel's collapse could cost the taxpayer up to £1 billion.

Meanwhile, Tata Steel had threat-

ened last July to shut its Port Talbot plant in Wales unless it receives British government aid to help decarbonize production. Port Talbot — Britain's largest steelmaking site — employs around half Tata's UK workforce of 8,000. — AFP



Mohammed Al-Qattan with Al-Danah winner

Gulf Bank deposits KD 1.5 million in Al-Asfour's account

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced the winner of Al-Danah millionaire account's KD 1.5 million grand prize, Moza Abdulwahab Ali Al-Asfour, on Thursday 19th of January, amid a wide audience and on Gulf Bank's communication channels and 360 Radio FM. The draw announcement was held under the supervision and presence of representatives from both the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young. Following the completion of the grand prize's receiving and depositing procedure, Moza Al-Asfour expressed her joy and happiness at the event and gave her special thanks and appreciation to Gulf Bank.

The generational teacher, who is now retired after many years of educating children, expressed her strong loyalty to Gulf Bank, stating that she opened her first Gulf Bank account more than 40 years ago, and that Gulf Bank has always been distinguished with its customer services— whether through its branches or exceptional products.

Al-Asfour added: "The joy I felt from winning this time was completely different, and I am always convinced that Gulf Bank rewards its customers for their loyalty. For a long time, I have been advising my children and grandchildren to save their money in Gulf Bank; specifically in the Al-Danah account, which is the best savings account in Kuwait."

The General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, Mohammed Al-Qattan said: "We congratulate Moza Al-Asfour, who won Al-Danah millionaire account's KD 1.5 million grand prize. At Gulf Bank we are keen on providing an exceptional and distinctive banking experience to our customers. This is in parallel with our social role in rewarding our savers and encouraging a culture of saving. Through the monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual draws, we motivate customers to maintain the habit of saving, and encourage others to follow in their footsteps."

He continued: "As part of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, we are working to provide the best services and products to raise customer satisfaction levels, by launching simple, sophisticated and innovative products and services that meet the requirements and needs of various groups: with the aim of consolidating Gulf Bank's position as Kuwait's leading bank of the future. Last Thursday, the lucky winner of Al-Danah millionaire account's KD 1.5 million grand prize was announced following the premiere of Gulf Bank's comedic play, "A Successful Deposit." Al-Danah millionaire, the most popular savings and draws account in Kuwait, continues to make millionaires since its beginnings in 1998. Gulf Bank is proud to add two new millionaires to the list every year, where the first winner of the KD 1 million prize was announced in the semi-annual draw last July.

For the 17th consecutive year, Al-Danah millionaire Account is proud to grant two millionaires with KD 1,500,000 and KD 1,000,000 cash prizes, two winners with the KD 100,000 cash prize each and 10 winners with the KD 1,000 monthly prize each.

The next draw to win the KD 1 million prize will be held on the 13th of July 2023, and the deadline to participate in the semi-annual draw ends on the 31st of March 2023. The next KD 1.5 million grand prize draw is set to happen on the 18th of January, and the last date to deposit and qualify for the draw is the 30th of September 2023.



Lexus hosts Kuwaiti artist Reem Al-Bader for L-Finesse Art Gallery

KUWAIT: With a long-term objective of supporting Kuwaiti talents and empowering the youth for the future, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Est Co and Lexus has hosted popular Kuwaiti artist Reem Al-Bader for L-Finesse Art Gallery to feature her most exquisite painting collection.

The opening ceremony of the event was attended by chief guest Ambassador of Japan to the state of Kuwait Morino Yasunari, along with Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, Board of Director at Al-Sayer Holding, Bengt Shultz, Chief Operating Officer, Mahmoud Abou-Zahr, Senior Business Director Lexus Division, Bedour Al-Sayer, Marketing Manager - Lexus Kuwait, senior Management members, valued Lexus customers, representatives from the press and media.

About Reem Al-Bader

Reem Al-Bader is a Kuwaiti artist and creator raised in an environment that truly cherishes art, which is clearly reflected in her work. Her brush portrays the beauty of cultures in a way that transcends reality. Reem also uses drawing to therapize and teach through connecting feelings with colors.

She started her artistic journey at the Formative Arts Institute in Kuwait and participated in numerous exhibitions with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, and was one of the founders of the local brand "Fann". Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer commented, "At Lexus, we are delighted to break new grounds to empower extraordinary talents from Kuwait and benefit them to elevate their potential to new heights. We will continue our endeavors associating with the aspiring youth and individual with distinct skills for Lexus brand as it aims to be more than the leading luxury car brand, and to inspire innovative lifestyle."

According to Mahmoud Abou-Zahr "We welcome Reem Al-Bader to our L-Finesse Lexus boutique to display her exceptional work in the field of arts. Lexus being the



KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Est Co and Lexus host popular Kuwaiti artist Reem Al-Bader for L-Finesse Art Gallery to feature her most exquisite painting collection.

leading luxury brand in the region has a no compromise philosophy when it comes to design, look and feel, hospitality etc. Lexus has taken bold steps during the past decade to transform the designs of cars to a whole new level to be captivating from all angles, for example LS 500 is a great piece of art."

Globally Lexus International partners with top-of-the-line judges and mentors to nurture creators from around the World for Lexus Design Award. Launched in 2013, the Lexus Design Award is an international competition for up-and-coming creators from around the world. The award seeks to contribute to society by supporting designers and creators whose work shows potential to shape a better future.

Artist Reem expressed her sincere appreciation towards Lexus brand for the inspirational efforts in the field of design and arts acknowledging the true spirit of attention to detailing in addition to 'Omotenashi' way of Japanese hospitality.

"I personally believe that art & Lexus have more opportunities together. I am excited to see the reaction of customers in this unique event viewing my art collection surrounded in L-finesse. I believe L-finesse is a great choice to

connect with an audience passionate about arts and lifestyle, located in one of the most modern shopping destinations Assima Mall," said Reem Al-Bader.

L-Finesse Art Gallery

Bedour Al-Sayer, Marketing Manager - Lexus Kuwait said, "The most distinguished paintings will be displayed at L-finesse and available to be viewed by guests online. The event will last for 1 week from 24-31 January 2023 and customers while visiting L-finesse will have the opportunity to view the beauty of the paintings up close as well as explore the world of Lexus, Japanese craftsmanship, all to offer guests Lexus brand promise of 'experience amazing'."

Lexus L-finesse design seeks to give physical form to the Lexus experience. It dynamically unites the seemingly contradictory elements of "leading-edge" and "finesse" through the seamless anticipation of customer needs and desires that is central to Lexus's design philosophy. Lexus designed products display "Incisive Simplicity" yet at the same time, "Intriguing Elegance" They are modern and striking yet warm and humanized.

Mughal Mahal enchants with new restaurant Exotica

KUWAIT: Mughal Mahal, the 'numero uno' when it comes to Indian fine-dining restaurants in Kuwait, has added yet another jewel to its crown with the launch of a new concept in casual dining at its newest branch, Exotica. Located in Salmiya Terrace Mall, Exotica is a refreshing new take on casual dining, with the best quality of food and service one can experience in a casual ambience.

Serving the finest Indian cuisine to its patrons over the past four decades, the Mughal Mahal brand has become synonymous with quality, value and service. Based on demand by discerning customers, the newly opened branch offers traditional dishes that have undergone exquisite improvisation in terms of texture, flavor and combinations to come up with exotic and enticing new fusion fare. The new menu will not only wow guests with the creative variety of its offerings but also surprise them with the taste.

Among the new selections on the menu are Pesto Hummus



and Tikka Bites, as well as traditional mouth-watering delicacies, such as White Butter Chicken and Curried lamb Chops, now offered alongside Chicken Tikka Pizza, Bruschetta, Pan-Seared Chicken and Butter Chicken Penne Pasta.

One thing is for sure, Mughal Mahal will never fail to impress you with their quality and taste, and now with a newly added variety of options, guests are in for a veritable feast. Exotica has taken some of the most popular dishes guests ask for and turned them into delicious delicacies that will leave them asking for more. The well-crafted and eclectic selections on the menu are the handiwork of an experienced team of chefs who have wielded their culinary expertise to perfection.

Over the years, the Mughal Mahal has developed a vast fol-



lowing of food connoisseurs with their delectable and quality Indian cuisine that has popularized Indian food and made it a cuisine of choice in the country. Their multiple branches, located all over Kuwait, cater to both citizens and expatriates and makes the brand the most popular Indian restaurant chain in Kuwait.

Bringing the best out of Indian Mughlai cuisine and using the finest and freshest ingredients and spices, the Mughal Mahal offers a wide variety of dishes that will surely excite the palate of discerning diners with their taste and flavor. The opening of Exotica as the newest addition to the Mughal Mahal brand is rekindling the passion for Indian food in the country. As always, the Mughal Mahal experience never fails to amaze guests, who will surely return for more.



British actor Rizwan Ahmed (L) and US actress Allison Williams announce the nominees for Best Picture during the 95th Academy Awards nominations announcement at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills, California, on January 24, 2023. — AFP photos



British actor Rizwan Ahmed (L) and US actress Allison Williams (C) are welcomed by Janet Yang, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, during the 95th Academy Awards nominations announcement at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater.

'EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE' TOPS OSCAR NOMS WITH 11

Surreal sci-fi "Everything Everywhere All at Once" topped the Oscar nominations Tuesday with 11, as Hollywood formally kicked off the race to the all-important Academy Awards. It was followed by German anti-war movie "All Quiet on the Western Front" and Irish black comedy "The Banshees of Inisherin," which each received nine nominations from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

As expected, Academy voters also rewarded blockbusters such as Tom Cruise's "Top Gun: Maverick" and "Avatar: The Way of Water" for helping to bring audiences back to movie theaters after the pandemic. Both were nominated for best picture, Tinseltown's most coveted prize, although another crowd-pleaser—"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever"—missed out.

The remaining best picture slots went to rock-and-roll biopic "Elvis," Steven Spielberg's quasi-memoir "The Fabelmans," Cate Blanchett's latest tour-de-force "Tar," Cannes festival winner "Triangle of Sadness" and literary adaptation "Women Talking."

Absurdist indie film "Everything Everywhere All at Once" portrays a Chinese-American immigrant family undergoing a tax audit, who are quickly drawn into an inter-dimensional battle to save the multiverse from a powerful villain. It became a huge word of mouth hit and has grossed over \$100 million worldwide.

The film earned four acting nominations for its cast, including best supporting actor for Ke Huy Quan—who appeared as a child in "Indiana Jones and The Temple of Doom" almost four decades ago—and best lead actress for Michelle Yeoh.

Yeoh becomes just the second Asian woman ever nominated for lead actress in 95 years of Oscars history, and will compete with double Oscar-winner Blanchett for the prize. But there was controversy elsewhere in the lead actress category, as no Black women were nominated, despite Viola Davis ("The Woman King") and Danielle Deadwyler ("Till") having been seen as frontrunners.

Instead the remaining slots went to Ana de Armas ("Blonde"), Michelle Williams ("The Fabelmans") and Andrea Riseborough for tiny indie film "To Leslie," which mounted an unusual, late celebrity-backed campaign for its star.

International voters

In the other individual categories, Brendan Fraser ("The Whale"), Colin Farrell ("The Banshees of Inisherin") and Austin Butler ("Elvis") are clear favorites for best actor. The remaining nominations went to Paul Mescal in "Aftersun" and Bill

Nighy in "Living." In the best supporting actress category, Angela Bassett became the first star in a Marvel superhero movie to ever earn an Oscar acting nomination with "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever."

Spielberg made the best director short-list, but no women were nominated in the category, sparking quick social media backlash. Speaking before the nominations, Variety senior awards editor Clayton Davis told AFP this was one of the more unpredictable Oscars races, in part due to the recent massive growth in the number of international Academy voters.

Those members have been credited with surprises such as South Korea's "Parasite" winning best picture in 2020. This year they got behind "All Quiet on the Western Front," which is distributed by Netflix. The World War I drama "All Quiet on the Western Front" has built major momentum, scooping a massive 14 nods last week for Britain's BAFTAs.

'Saved movies'

Actors Riz Ahmed ("Sound of Metal") and Allison Williams ("Girls") unveiled the Oscar nominations early on Tuesday

morning from Los Angeles. Television ratings for award shows including the Oscars have trended downwards, as Academy voters in recent years have veered toward honoring lesser-known indie hits like "Nomadland" and "CODA."

Many in the industry were hoping for a healthy spread of nominations among 2022's crowd-pleasing sequels, which were sorely needed as giants such as Cineworld, the world's second biggest cinema chain, filed for bankruptcy protection.

Oscar nominees in main categories

Here are the nominees in key categories for the 95th Academy Awards, to be handed out in Los Angeles on March 12. Multiverse sci-fi smash "Everything Everywhere All at Once" topped the list with 11 nominations, followed by Irish dark comedy "The Banshees of Inisherin" and World War I flick "All Quiet on the Western Front" at nine.

Best picture

"All Quiet on the Western Front"
"Avatar: The Way of Water"
"The Banshees of Inisherin"
"Elvis"
"Everything Everywhere All at Once"
"The Fabelmans"
"Tar"
"Top Gun: Maverick"
"Triangle of Sadness"
"Women Talking"

Best director

Martin McDonagh, "The Banshees of Inisherin"
Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, "Everything Everywhere All at Once"
Steven Spielberg, "The Fabelmans"
Todd Field, "Tar"
Ruben Ostlund, "Triangle of Sadness"

Best actor

Austin Butler, "Elvis"
Colin Farrell, "The Banshees of Inisherin"
Brendan Fraser, "The Whale"
Paul Mescal, "Aftersun"
Bill Nighy, "Living"

Best actress

Cate Blanchett, "Tar"
Ana de Armas, "Blonde"
Andrea Riseborough, "To Leslie"
Michelle Williams, "The Fabelmans"
Michelle Yeoh, "Everything Everywhere All at Once"

Best supporting actor

Brendan Gleeson, "The Banshees of Inisherin"
Brian Tyree Henry, "Causeway"
Judd Hirsch, "The Fabelmans"
Barry Keoghan, "The Banshees of Inisherin"
Ke Huy Quan, "Everything Everywhere All at Once"

Best supporting actress

Angela Bassett, "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever"
Hong Chau, "The Whale"
Kerry Condon, "The Banshees of Inisherin"
Jamie Lee Curtis, "Everything Everywhere All at Once"
Stephanie Hsu, "Everything Everywhere All at Once"

Best international feature film

"All Quiet on the Western Front" (Germany)
"Argentina, 1985" (Argentina)
"Close" (Belgium)
"EO" (Poland)
"The Quiet Girl" (Ireland)

Best animated feature

"Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio"
"Marcel the Shell With Shoes On"
"Puss in Boots: The Last Wish"
"The Sea Beast"
"Turning Red"

Best documentary feature

"All That Breathes"
"All the Beauty and the Bloodshed"
"Fire of Love"
"A House Made of Splinters"
"Navalny"
Films with seven or more nominations
"Everything Everywhere All at Once" - 11
"All Quiet on the Western Front" - 9
"The Banshees of Inisherin" - 9
"Elvis" - 8
"The Fabelmans" - 7. — AFP



US actor Tom Cruise arrives in a helicopter to the world premiere of "Top Gun: Maverick!" aboard the USS Midway in San Diego, California.

James Cameron's sci-fi epic "Avatar: The Way of Water," which sailed past the \$2 billion mark globally last weekend, earned four nominations including best picture, production design, sound and visual effects.

"Top Gun: Maverick," Cruise's long-awaited sequel to his huge 1986 hit which came out in May during highly uncertain times for movie theaters and earned around \$1.5 billion, received six-best picture, editing, song, sound, visual effects and adapted screenplay.

"That's the one that feels like it could actually win best picture," said Davis, before the announcement. "What better story the day after the Oscars air, than that the movie that saved movies was named the best movie? That's a good story to tell." — AFP

Main line-up at Berlin film festival

The 73rd Berlinale, Europe's first major film festival of the year, starts next month with new movies from around the world screening in the main showcase. Eighteen pictures will vie for the Golden and Silver Bear prizes at the 11-day event beginning on February 16, with a jury led by US actor Kristen Stewart.

Fifteen of the features in the main showcase are world premieres and one is a feature debut. Six of the movies in competition are by women and three of the directors identify as non-binary. The Berlinale Special section features other notable films that will have gala screenings.

Here are their titles, directors and production countries.

Main competition

"20.000 especies de abejas" (20,000 Species of Bees), Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren (Spain)
"Bai Ta Zhi Guang" (The Shadowless Tower), Zhang Lu (China)
"Bis ans Ende der Nacht" (Till the End of the Night), Christoph Hochhaeusler (Germany)
"BlackBerry", Matt Johnson (Canada)
"Disco Boy", Giacomo Abbruzzese with Franz Rogowski (France/Italy/Poland/Belgium)

"Le grand chariot" (The Plough), Philippe Garrel with Louis Garrel, Esther Garrel, Lena Garrel (France/Switzerland)
"Ingeborg Bachmann - Reise in die Wueste" (Ingeborg Bachmann - Journey into the Desert), Margarethe von Trotta with Vicky Krieps (Switzerland/Austria/Germany/Luxembourg)
"Irgendwann werden wir uns alles erzahlen" (Someday We'll Tell Each Other Everything), Emily Atef (Germany)
"Limbo", Ivan Sen with Simon Baker and Rob Collins (Australia)
"Mal Viver" (Bad Living), Joao Canijo (Portugal/France)

"Manodrome", John Trengove with Jesse Eisenberg, Adrien Brody, Odessa Young (Britain/US)
"Music", Angela Schanelec (Germany/France/Serbia)
"Past Lives", Celine Song (US)
"Roter Himmel" (Afire), Christian Petzold with Thomas Schubert, Paula Beer (Germany)
"Sur l'Adamant" (On the Adamant), Nicolas Philibert, (France/Japan)
"The Survival of Kindness", Rolf de Heer (Australia)
"Suzume", Makoto Shinkai (Japan)
"Totem", Lila Aviles

(Mexico/Denmark/France)

Berlinale Special

"Golda", Guy Nattiv with Helen Mirren, Camille Cottin, Liev Schreiber (Britain)
"Kiss the Future", Nenad Cicin-Sain (US/Ireland)
"L'ultima notte di Amore" (Last Night of Amore), Andrea Di Stefano (Italy)
"Seneca" (Seneca - On the Creation of Earthquakes), Robert Schwentke with John Malkovich, Louis Hofmann, Geraldine Chaplin (Germany/Morocco)
"She Came to Me", Rebecca Miller with Peter Dinklage, Marisa Tomei, Joanna

Kulig, Brian d'Arcy James, Anne Hathaway (US)
"Sonne und Beton" (Sun and Concrete), David Wnendt (Germany)
"Superpower" Sean Penn, Aaron Kaufman with Sean Penn, Volodymyr Zelensky (US)
"TAR", Todd Field with Cate Blanchett, Nina Hoss, Noemie Merlant (US)
Untitled Boris Becker Documentary by Alex Gibney with Boris Becker (Britain/US). — AFP



A craftswoman works on the production of a Berlinale Bear trophy of the upcoming 73rd International Film Festival Berlinale at the Noack foundry in Berlin.



Berlinale Executive Director Mariette Rissenbeek (R), Berlinale Artistic Director Carlo Chatrian (L) and fine art foundry co-leader Hermann Noack (C) pose behind Berlinale Bear trophies of the upcoming 73rd International Film Festival Berlinale that are produced at the Noack foundry in Berlin. — AFP photos

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In this picture taken on January 7, 2023, embroiderers of Shanagar, a luxury Mumbai-based hand-embroidery atelier, work on a design for French couturier Julien Fournie, at a production facility in Mumbai. — AFP photos



An embroiderer of Shanagar works on a design.

THE MUMBAI ATELIER THAT'S THE SECRET WORKSHOP OF TOP FRENCH FASHION

Sitting in a lotus position, four men weave glittering beads through gold thread on an organza sheet, carefully constructing a wedding dress that will soon wow crowds at Paris Fashion Week. For once, the French couturier behind the design, Julien Fournie, is determined to put these craftsmen in the spotlight: his new collection, showing in Paris on Tuesday, is entirely made with fabrics from Mumbai.

He says a sort of "design imperialism" means that French fashion houses often play down the fact that their fabrics are made outside France. "The houses which don't admit it are perhaps afraid of losing their clientele," Fournie told AFP. But that is absurd, he continued.



Chetan Desai, director of Shanagar, a luxury Mumbai-based hand-embroidery atelier, shows their work during an interview with AFP in Mumbai.

"India is number one in the world in embroidery. It's ancestral. They've been dressing maharajas in gold-embroidered outfits since the 16th century." Fournie works with a company called Creations By Shanagar (meaning "to adorn" in Sanskrit),

housed in a non-descript beige building near Mumbai's international airport.

Dozens of men in grey polo shirts sit cross-legged on cushions, heads bent over large sheaths of fabric. There is silence but for the clicking of needles and beads, the whirl of ceiling fans, and the occasional plane overhead.

'A lot of fantasy'

For decades, they have played an essential but unsung role in the fashion industries of Europe, Japan and the United States. "I like working with Julien because he is another master craftsperson who knows his subject very well," said director Chetan Desai, 55.

"He has a lot of fantasy. He comes up with his own concepts and I have to translate those ideas into embroidery. It has been a very challenging experience and at the same time, it has been very fruitful," he added. Back in France, Fournie sends the compliments back. "What they know how to do better than anyone is to embroider

with degraded gold thread, passing it through transparent beads to create colour gradients. It's unprecedented," he said.

It gives silk an aged, elegant look for wedding dresses that "shine, but not too much". "Haute couture customers don't want to look like a Christmas tree," he added. "I've worked with great French embroiderers and each time it's complicated. Everyone wants to put in their own ideas and you never get exactly what you want."

Star clients

Desai's father set up Creations By Shanagar in the 1960s as a workshop for handloomed and embroidered saris. In the 1990s, Desai looked further afield to France, partnering with Franco-Tunisian designer Azzedine Alaïa on dresses that ultimately graced the likes of Naomi Campbell. He does not divulge the current clients on his books but his past roster gives a sense of the high demand. They include Jean Paul Gaultier, Yohji Yamamoto and Donna Karan.

Even Hollywood came knocking, with Shanagar helping design Nicole Kidman's costumes for the 2001 hit "Moulin Rouge!". The atelier attracts workers from across India, such as Biswajit Patra, 31, who has been working here since he was 16.

"I learned the trade in my village near Kolkata because my father was doing the same job and my brother and sister are also doing this job," he said. Among their unique ideas is a way of rolling up pieces of tulle to make embroidered flowers.

"They have a range of techniques that we don't have here," said Jean-Paul Cauvin, director of Fournie's house in France. One of the most delicate jobs is preparing the fabric once it arrives from India and heads for the workshop where it will be assembled into the dresses.

It is Fournie himself who irons out the fabric. "Sixty percent of haute couture is ironing," he said with a smile. — AFP



Julien Fournie works on an embroidered dress at his studio, ahead of the Spring-Summer 2023 Haute Couture Fashion Week, in Paris.



French fashion designer Julien Fournie (L) works on an embroidered dress at his studio.



An embroiderer of Shanagar works on a design for French couturier Julien Fournie, at a production facility in Mumbai.

Indian designer evokes mysteries of the 'Cosmos' in Paris

For a man with seemingly infinite creative ambitions, it is fitting that Indian designer Rahul Mishra's latest Paris haute couture collection attempts to encapsulate the entire universe. Monday's Fashion Week debut of "Cosmos" became the latest showcase for one of Asia's leading stylists, whose works have been modelled by Michelle

Yeoh, Viola Davis and other top film stars.

Mishra invited AFP to tour his frenetic workshop on the urban fringes of New Delhi several times over the collection's production, from its initial sketchbook concepts to his last-minute agonies over sudden revisions.

His long and laborious journey reflects a desire to evoke the boundless mysteries of life, told through his trademark embroidered flourishes of animal contours and luminous details. "This is actually the true cosmos in its ultimate manifestation," Mishra, 43, told AFP this month while proudly unveiling one of the more than two dozen gowns he was about to send to Paris.

"It justifies the name of the collection." The gown's flowing pleated silhouette is alive with intricately embroidered depic-

tions of the animal kingdom, where schools of fish rub shoulders with the night sky's constellations. Mishra has spent months engrossed in every microscopic detail of the piece, but even in the frenzied final week before its Paris debut, he was compelled to make a major conceptual change.

"It looks dramatic, it takes too much attention," he says as he agonises over a bold decision to pin two giant golden fish ornaments to the gown's bust, wondering if it upsets the delicate harmony he has cultivated. Mishra often defers to the expertise of his team and solicits their opinion but they share his taste for the flamboyant and give a resounding vote of approval to the new look.

'It has to be spectacular'

"The more we try to know about cosmos, the less we know; the more we try

to know about ourselves, the more remains to discover—this is the true meaning of cosmos," Mishra said of his artistic vision. The theme is well-suited to a designer whose creations fuse together as many materials, textures and patterns as the laws of physics allow.

"We work like an art studio that tries to mix mediums, to assemble ideas, to create a new expression that is not necessarily just fashion," he said. "Our dresses are full of life—they are growing, expanding, they are reaching for something in an ever-expanding universe."

The collection's more extravagant pieces reflect Mishra's preoccupation with the natural world and include a sequined gown with translucent veils, modelled on the pulsing movements of a jellyfish. Other eye-catching works feature elegant embroidery of pink-tinged leaves, golden ladybird brooches, or frilly bustiers with

blue sequins and marine life motifs to elicit the ocean's depths.

Mishra's intention to portray a fantasy journey to "something that doesn't exist" have this time led him out of his tradition-



Indian fashion designer Rahul Mishra stands beside his new collection at his workshop in Noida. For a man with seemingly infinite creative ambitions, it is fitting that Indian designer Rahul Mishra's latest Paris haute couture collection attempts to encapsulate the entire universe.



Rahul Mishra (C) sits with the men working on his designs at a workshop in Noida.



A collection of dresses designed by Indian fashion designer Rahul Mishra is pictured at his workshop. — AFP photos

al obsessions and into the urban environment. On an ankle-length coat, uncharacteristically monochrome against the designer's usual colour bursts, skyscrapers float upside down on a ruffled hem against speckled silver stars to channel the magic of cities at night.

Flamboyant even by the standards of the Parisian runway, Mishra abhors any suggestion of aesthetic restraint. "It has to be spectacular, otherwise why would you create something?" he said. "There are already so many beautiful clothes in the world." — AFP

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Chefs compete in the 2023 Bocuse d'Or cooking competition at the SIRHA (Salon International de la Restauration, de l'Hotellerie et de l'Alimentation) in the Eurexpo exhibition hall in Chassieu, near Lyon, central-eastern France.



Danish chef Brian Mark Hansen (C) celebrates with his team on the podium after winning the 2023 Bocuse d'Or cooking competition at the SIRHA. —AFP photos

Denmark wins global culinary showdown



French chef Nais Pirollet competes in the 2023 Bocuse d'Or cooking competition.

Denmark's ode to the humble squash helped propel the Nordic nation to victory Monday in prestigious culinary competition the Bocuse d'or, beating host and defending champion France.

With foghorns and firecrackers, a passionate Danish crowd cheered on chef Brian Mark Hansen, 41, as he steered Denmark to its third victory in the gastronomy equivalent of the World Cup.

"These Danes are crazy, hey? That's the Vikings," said Hansen, a chef in a Michelin-starred restaurant in Copenhagen. "I have dreamed of this for 20 years."

After national selections in some 60 countries, the two-day final in Lyon pitted 24 chefs against each other in the competition set up by French "Nouvelle Cuisine" pioneer Paul Bocuse in 1983. Norway came second and Hungary third.

Long known for their hearty meat-and-potatoes fare, Danish chefs have taken the culinary world by storm in recent years, racking up Michelin stars and global awards.

Scandinavian contestants have finished at least in the top three every time in the biennial event going back to 1991. France has seven titles, but this year chef Nais Pirollet, 25, the only woman in the competition, finished fifth.

"There is no sadness, it is a victory to be here," she said.

Training for the competition is intense, "a bit like a fighter pilot or Formula 1 driver," said last year's winner Davy Tissot, president of the 2023 jury.

Finland's 25-year-old candidate Johan Kurkela has been known to train for 10 hours straight locked in a basement. Meanwhile, Pirollet trained daily for five-and-a-half hours nonstop to replicate competition conditions.

Simplicity

Denmark got the most jury votes in both categories. The first, "Feed the kids," aimed to highlight the importance of nutrition in children's diets, using the squash. From butternut to spaghetti squash, seeds and all, the chefs had to use their imagination to highlight the humble dish — a fruit often mistaken for a vegetable — resulting in an explosion of orange creations.



Danish chef Brian Mark Hansen (C-R) celebrates with his team on the podium after winning the 2023 Bocuse d'Or cooking competition with second and third placed teams.

Simplicity "is the hardest thing to do," said Tissot. "I want to taste the squash. I also wanted to be transported into a universe which I might not know," said three-star chef Dominique Crenn, honorary president of the grand final.

For the main dish, the chefs had to mesmerise with monkfish, pulling out all the stops when it came to presentation. Mauritian chef Kritesh Halkory — one of only two candidates from Africa — used a massive sea urchin shell as a gravy boat. —AFP



US supporters cheer for their team.



Chinese chef Nick Yuli Lin (C) competes in the 2023 Bocuse d'Or competition.



An Iraqi youth (R) buys freshly-baked loaves at a bakery for Samoon bread in Al-Rashid street, in Iraq's capital Baghdad. —AFP photos



A staff member mans the oven at a bakery for Samoon bread.

Iraqis chow down on diamond shaped 'samoon' bread

It is ubiquitous in Iraq—a diamond-shaped bread known as "samoon" which provides an inexpensive companion to almost any meal served up on tables across the country. Abu Sajjad, a bakery owner in central Baghdad, said he takes a fresh batch out of the oven every 45 seconds. The small, crunchy loaves can accompany dishes from meat to rice, and can be found on tables in even the most far-flung villages.

Some Iraqis like to eat them on the go after cracking them open and adding fillings like falafel and vegetables. Part of their popularity lies in their simplicity—and affordability. "I sell eight pieces of samoon for 1,000 dinars (\$0.70)," said 43-year-old Abu Sajjad, who has owned the bakery since 2005.

His son Sajjad, who is in his twenties, mixes flour, yeast and water, and sometimes a pinch of salt, then lets a machine knead the dough for 10 minutes. After letting it rest, he shapes lumps of dough into diamond-shaped loaves that leave his brick oven with a crunchy crust on the outside and steaming hot on the inside.

The bakery sells 10,000 samoon pieces "on a normal day",

while on Fridays, the Islamic day of rest, "we can go up to 12,000", Sajjad, the son, said. Their busy shop sits on Baghdad's Al-Rashid Street among dilapidated 19th century houses, while a host of restaurants make up their main customers.

Recent commodity price hikes have seen the cost of flour imported from Turkey increase. But Abu Sajjad said he had "lowered the weight of each samoon from 120 to 100 grammes" instead of raising prices. According to author Nawal Nasrallah, the name samoon came from a Turkish term whose roots derive from the Greek word for bread. While noting possible earlier versions of the loaves, she said "it seems that the diamond shape was developed by the early 20th century Iraqi bakers", writing in her cookbook and history of Iraqi cuisine, "Delights from the Garden of Eden".

With lunchtime fast approaching, Karim, a regular customer at the bakery, was among those stocking up. "We Iraqis love samoon. We were born with it, we are used to it—and we like it hot," the 41-year-old said while biting into a freshly baked loaf. —AFP

How three dust specks reveal an asteroid's secrets

The specks are tiny. No, really tiny. Smaller than the diameter of a hair. But they hold billions of years of history that reveal some of the secrets of asteroids. The three minute particles from an asteroid called Itokawa show some of these space rocks are vastly older than was thought, and are much tougher.

And that could mean we need bolder ways to prevent catastrophic collisions with Earth, according to research published Tuesday. The three samples were collected in 2005 from the peanut-shaped Itokawa, some 300 million kilometres (186 million miles) from Earth.

It took the Japanese spacecraft Hayabusa five years to return them to Earth, along with hundreds of other particles from Itokawa, and scientists have been analysing them for clues ever since. Fred Jourdan, professor at Curtin University's School of Earth and Planetary Sciences, wanted to see what the specks could reveal about the age of rubble-pile asteroids like Itokawa.

These form when solid asteroids collide and the resulting fragments assemble into new structures. Solid asteroids are thought to have a lifespan of several hundred million years, and are gradually ground down by constant collisions.

But rubble-pile asteroids have a very different structure, composed of rocks, dust, pebbles and a void, and held together by the gravitational pull of their various components. "It's like a giant space cushion, and cushions are good at absorbing shock," Jourdan said.

To find out just how good, the team analysed crystal structures in the samples, looking for deformations caused

by the impact that created Itokawa. And they dated the samples by measuring the decay of potassium into argon.

The methods suggest Itokawa was formed by an asteroid collision at least 4.2 billion years ago, ten times older than solid asteroids of similar size are predicted to be. "We were really surprised," said Jourdan. "I mean that's really, really old, and I'm sure some of my colleagues are not even going to believe it."

Rubble-pile asteroids are so resilient to the constant battering they face that they are likely to be much more abundant than previously assumed, the research published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences concludes.

That might mean we need new ways to tackle such asteroids on a collision course with Earth, Jourdan said. NASA's recent DART test showed asteroids like Itokawa can be nudged off course, but that would likely require a lead time of several years.

An asteroid just weeks from colliding with Earth would require a different approach, and Jourdan argues a nuclear blast might be needed. "It's not 'Armageddon'-style," blowing it up, he hastens to add, referring to the 1998 sci-fi movie.

"The shockwave should push the asteroid out of the way." It is a far-reaching conclusion to draw from such tiny specks of dust, but each particle is analysed at the atomic level. "We can get big stories like that out of (something) very, very small, because those machines, what they're doing, is the measuring and counting of atoms," Jourdan said. "Every grain has its own story to tell." —AFP

Sports

Banchero and Isaac shine as Magic end Boston win streak

MIAMI: Number one draft pick Paolo Banchero scored 23 points as the Orlando Magic ended the injury-depleted Boston Celtics' nine-game winning streak with an upset 113-98 victory on Monday. Orlando, languishing three places off the bottom of the Eastern Conference with a 17-29 record prior to Monday's game, took full advantage of Boston's injury crisis to complete a deserved win at the Amway Center in Florida.

The league-leading Celtics were missing key defensive figures Marcus Smart and Robert Williams due to injury and their absence proved crucial as a fired-up Orlando stormed to victory. The 20-year-old Banchero showed a maturity beyond his tender years to orchestrate Orlando's win, which saw five Magic players reach double-digit totals, with Wendell Carter Jr posting 21 points and Germany's Franz Wagner 15.

"Anytime you get to play a championship-level team, a team that's been to the finals, and has been where you want to be, you want to put out your best effort and get the win," Banchero said afterwards. "That's my mentality, and that's our team's mentality, and we were able to do that. I just wanted to be decisive with my moves, when I decided to attack, when I decided to shoot - not force anything and let the game come to me. Be aggressive and decisive, and live with the results."

Arguably the most impressive contribution came in the form of a 10-minute cameo from Jonathan Isaac, making his first appearance in an NBA game since August 2020 following more than two years dominated by injuries. Isaac finished with 10 points, three rebounds and two steals during his encouraging return to the hardwood.

"It felt fantastic, just to touch the floor - I feel so grateful," Isaac said afterwards. "I feel good, I'm grateful to be with the Magic, plus to get a win - I couldn't be happier." Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown led the Boston scoring with 26 points each, while Derrick White added 11 and Sam Hauser 13 off the bench.

'Good to be out there'

In other games on Monday, Giannis Antetokounmpo and Khris Middleton returned from injury with a vengeance as the Milwaukee Bucks arrested their current slump in form with a ruthless 150-130 pounding of the Detroit Pistons. Antetokounmpo had missed the last five Bucks games with a lingering knee injury, a spell that saw Milwaukee lose three games. Middleton meanwhile had not played since mid-December.

But Antetokounmpo showed no sign of ring-rust as he led a comprehensive rout, scoring 29 points with 12 rebounds and four assists. Brook Lopez added 21 points while Middleton added eight points on his return. "It feels good to be out there with the team again, play, run up and down, make some plays," Antetokounmpo said. "Never take it for granted. Definitely just miss it - miss being around my teammates, miss playing basketball. I just missed being out there and competing."

The game was effectively over after the first quarter, with Milwaukee pouring in an astonishing 49 points in the opening period to take a 25-point lead into the second quarter. Milwaukee improved to 30-17 in the Eastern Conference standings, in third place behind Boston and Philadelphia. Detroit remain root-



ORLANDO: Jayson Tatum of the Boston Celtics drives on Paolo Banchero of the Orlando Magic during a game at Amway Center on Jan 23, 2023. — AFP

ed to the bottom of the table on 12-37.

In other games on Monday, a Memphis Grizzlies side missing star Ja Morant crashed to a third straight loss in a 133-100 mauling by the Sacramento Kings in California. Trey Lyles (24 points) led the scoring for Sacramento, whose balanced offensive unit had six players in double digits, with Harrison Barnes and Keegan Murray adding 20 apiece.

Memphis have lost all three games on their Western Conference road trip, with Monday's loss following defeats to the Los Angeles Lakers on Friday and the Phoenix Suns on Sunday. In Portland, Damian Lillard finished with 37 points and 12 assists as the Trail Blazers blew out the San Antonio Spurs 147-127. Anfernee Simons (26 points) and Jusuf Nurkic (25) also posted big totals. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after victory against Australia's Alex De Minaur on Jan 23, 2023. — AFP

'Machine' Djokovic sparks injury debate after masterclass

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic's seemingly remarkable recovery at the Australian Open prompted debate on Tuesday and raised the question: When is an injury not an injury? The 35-year-old Serb was battling a left hamstring problem before the Grand Slam began last week as he chases a record-equaling 22nd major crown. The red-hot favorite has required medical treatment during matches, worn heavy strapping and said a few days ago that he was not able to practice.

It appeared the injury could even torpedo his tournament altogether. And yet there he was on Monday, the strapping still there but the former world number one moving freely to sweep past home hope Alex de Minaur 6-2, 6-1, 6-2 and into the last eight. It was an ominous warning of intent from Djokovic and he said afterwards that the hamstring was so improved that "I didn't feel any pain".

He thanked his medical team and said he had been popping anti-inflammatories, something he does not like to do. "It's been honestly exhausting to be involved in a lot of different treatments and machines and stuff that we do," he said. At his post-match press conference, De Minaur - who noted how well Djokovic was able to move around the court - was asked about his opponent's hamstring and all the fuss around it.

"It's the only thing everyone's been talking about," said the 23-year-old. "Today I was out there on court against him. Either I'm not a good enough tennis player to expose that or... it looked good to me." The Australian subsequently took to Twitter on Tuesday to hit out at headlines which took his comments as casting doubt on how injured Djokovic really was. Speaking to Serbian media at Melbourne Park, Djokovic said suggestions that he had overblown or even faked the injury only motivated him more.

'Banged up'

Djokovic's left leg stirred wider discussion about how common it is for tennis players to compete with an injury and why a player would want to exaggerate or even fake being hurt. Aside from Djokovic, injuries have hampered a number of players in Melbourne, including on Tuesday Sebastian Korda, who retired hurt from his quarterfinal against Karen Khachanov.

World number nine Taylor Fritz tweeted that 80 percent of players "are always dealing w something (severity levels differ) but everyone is honestly always a little banged-up". "The media is only ever focusing on the top guys so their issues get more attention," the American said. "Also some players are more vocal talking about injuries than others. I don't think people fake injuries, I do think sometimes players stretch the severity of the injury because it depressurizes them and helps them play better." — AFP

Kuwaiti women win bronze at ISSF World Cup

RABAT: Kuwaiti Shahad and Sara Al-Hawal alongside Hajer Abdulmalik won a bronze medal in the women's trap team event at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Rabat that ended on Monday. Subsequently, the men's trap team, consisting of Khaled Al-Mudhaf, Naser Al-Miqled and Yousef Al-Rashidi, came fourth in their event, which saw USA first and Kazakhstan second. The bronze medal for Kuwait, as the global tournament drew to a close, is added to a silver earlier won in the men's skeet teams. — KUNA

Shiffrin earns record 83rd World Cup win

PLAN DE CORONES, Italy: Mikaela Shiffrin became the woman with the most alpine skiing World Cup wins after claiming Tuesday's giant slalom in Kronplatz to take her tally of victories to 83. American star Shiffrin broke the record she shared with compatriot Lindsey Vonn after clocking a combined time of two minutes, 0.61 seconds over two runs in the Italian Dolomites.

She made skiing history after beating giant slalom world champion Lara Gut-Behrami by 0.45sec, with home hope Federica Brignone completing the podium 1.43sec off the pace. After moving ahead of Vonn with her 18th giant slalom

Thailand, Cambodia brawl over kickboxing event name at Games

BANGKOK: Thailand will boycott a kickboxing event at the upcoming Southeast Asian Games in Cambodia, officials confirmed Tuesday, in a bitter row with the hosts over what to call the sport: Muay Thai or Kun Khmer. Thai officials are angry at plans by Cambodia to refer to the event - which they regard as their national sport - on the official program as Kun Khmer instead of Muay Thai.

While the name Muay Thai may be better known around the world, Cambodian officials insist the sport originated from their Khmer culture. The event is one of a series of combat sports at the 11-country regional games, alongside regular kickboxing, karate, taekwondo, kun bokator and vovinam. The games are due to get underway in May, with

Gatland wants review of Wales' 60-cap rule

LONDON: Wales head coach Warren Gatland said on Monday he would like the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) to look again at the 60-cap selection rule following concerns it could harm the national team amid fears of a player exodus. The rule was introduced in 2017, with players who signed contracts with clubs outside Wales deemed ineligible for international selection unless they had made 60 Test appearances or more.

Debate around the issue has intensified following



World Cup win it is now only a matter of time before the 27-year-old breaks the overall record of 86 held by Ingemar Stenmark.

Swedish legend Stenmark dominated the men's slalom and giant slalom disciplines for a decade from 1975 before retiring in 1989, but barring physical problems he will surely be outdone by Shiffrin. She will have a chance to draw one closer to Stenmark at Kronplatz on Wednesday with another giant slalom race. There are also two races this weekend at Spindleruv Mlyn in the slalom discipline from which 51 of her World Cup wins have come before the World Championships in Courchevel and Meribel next month.

Shiffrin's historic triumph also allowed her to move top of the giant slalom standings, 49 points ahead of Italian Marta Bassino who finished 10th. She extended her lead over closest rival Petra Vlhova at the top of the overall standings to 556, as a fifth crystal globe looks increasingly likely. — AFP



KRONPLATZ, Italy: Race winner USA's Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates on the podium after competing in the Women's Giant Slalom on Jan 24, 2023. — AFP

Cambodia hosting for the first time in 60 years.

Charoen Wattanasin, vice-chairman of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand, said the International Olympic Committee had not endorsed the term Kun Khmer. "They are violating international regulations for sports competitions," he told AFP. "The Thai Boxing Association won't be sending athletes to compete."

Cambodian sports officials are refusing to back down. "We are the host country so we have the right to change it to Kun Khmer as the sport has its origin in Khmer and it is our culture," Vath Chamroeun, secretary-general of the Cambodian Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee, told AFP. "We have to satisfy our people." He said Cambodia would retaliate and not send fighters to Thailand when it hosts the 2025 games. The sport will be called Muay Thai at that event.

The International Federation of Muay Thai Associations (IFMA) condemned the Cambodian move. "Kun Khmer is not Muay Thai, like judo is not karate. There might be similarities but Kun Khmer has no recognized federation." IFMA gener-

al recruitment freeze for Wales' four professional teams - Cardiff, the Dragons, the Ospreys and the Scarlets. A new financial deal between the regions and the WRU has still to be signed off in writing, but the governing body had announced a "verbal agreement" in December. This has led to concerns more players could follow the example of Dragons and Wales lock Will Rowlands, who is set to join French side Racing 92 when his current club contract expires at the end of the season.

As things stand, Rowlands would be ineligible to represent Wales at the Rugby World Cup later this year, unless he receives special dispensation from the Welsh game's Professional Rugby Board. "I think it (the 60-cap rule) is definitely something we need to talk about," Gatland told reporters. "We need to be pragmatic, and it would be disappointing if some players miss out on the World Cup. Why

shoot ourselves in the foot if we don't need to?"

"I can't blame players for exploring the options because there is a certain level of uncertainty in Welsh rugby at the moment, particularly for those who are out of contract. They need to think about their own personal situation, and that is perfectly understandable from my point of view. I would love to make sure we keep our top players in Wales."

Gatland has recently returned for his second spell as Wales coach, with his first match back in charge the visit of world top-ranked Ireland to Cardiff for a Six Nations opener on Feb 4. His first stint in charge, from 2007-19, yielded four Six Nations titles, including three Grand Slams, and also saw Wales reach two World Cup semifinals. "I think that one of the things we've done in the past is work incredibly hard as a group, and we will continue to do that," he said. — AFP

Sports

Kane sinks Fulham to become Tottenham joint record scorer

LONDON: Antonio Conte vowed to "win something" with Harry Kane after the striker became Tottenham's joint record scorer as his 266th goal for the club sealed a vital 1-0 win against Fulham on Monday. England captain Kane netted on the stroke of half-time with a clinical strike from the edge of the penalty area at Craven Cottage.

Jimmy Greaves' Tottenham record had stood since 1970, but Kane's first goal in his last three appearances gave him a share of the historic milestone. Kane played despite being ill with a fever and Tottenham boss Conte admitted he is desperate to reward the selfless star with silverware. Without a major trophy for club and country, Kane has been linked with Manchester United.

But Conte said: "Today he was amazing. I think he scored a fantastic goal, the execution, to control the ball, then to kick it in that way, only a world-class striker can score this goal. About the spirit that I spoke before, I want to underline Harry played with a fever and he was not so good, but he wanted to play because he understood the moment."

"He understood he is a point of reference for us. For sure, I would like to help him and me, also his team-mates, to try to do something important, to win something with Tottenham because he loves Tottenham. Tottenham is in his heart and it should be good if together we were able to win something, because then it is important to have this record, but I think it could be more important if you win a trophy."

Kane could break Greaves' record in Tottenham's next match in the FA Cup fourth round at second tier Preston on Saturday. It is only a matter of time before Kane takes sole possession of Tottenham's most hallowed record. That remarkable achievement

would have seemed impossible during a difficult start to his career that featured several failed loan spells before he finally emerged as a star.

Greaves, who died aged 81 in 2021, is regarded as one of the most natural goal scorers in football history. A member of England's 1966 World Cup-winning squad, who netted 44 times for his country, Greaves is the highest scorer in English top-flight history with 357 goals. For Kane to be alongside such a legendary player is a tribute to his predatory instincts and his perseverance. The 29-year-old is now one short of becoming the third player to net 200 Premier League goals, after Alan Shearer (260) and Wayne Rooney (208).

'Good answer'

Kane also drew level with Rooney as England's joint record goalscorer after bagging his 53rd international goal in the World Cup quarter-final defeat against France in December. Thanks to Kane's 18th goal in all competitions this season, fifth placed Tottenham closed the gap on fourth placed Manchester United to three points. It was a much-needed result after successive defeats against Manchester City and Arsenal damaged Tottenham's bid to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish.

Conte's team had conceded 21 goals in their previous 10 league matches. So, while Kane rightly took the spotlight, Conte was just as pleased by his players' defensive resilience. "It was a big win. I had a good answer from my players. I asked them for solidity of the last season and the will and desire to fight and to be resilient," Conte said.

Failing to turn their first half pressure into goals proved fatal for Fulham as Kane entered the



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane vies with Fulham's English-born US defender Antonee Robinson at Craven Cottage on Jan 23, 2023. — AFP

record books in first half stoppage-time. Turning on the edge of the Fulham area, Kane worked a yard of space before curling a superb strike past Bernd Leno. The record-equaling goal was met with sarcastic chants of 'one-season wonder'

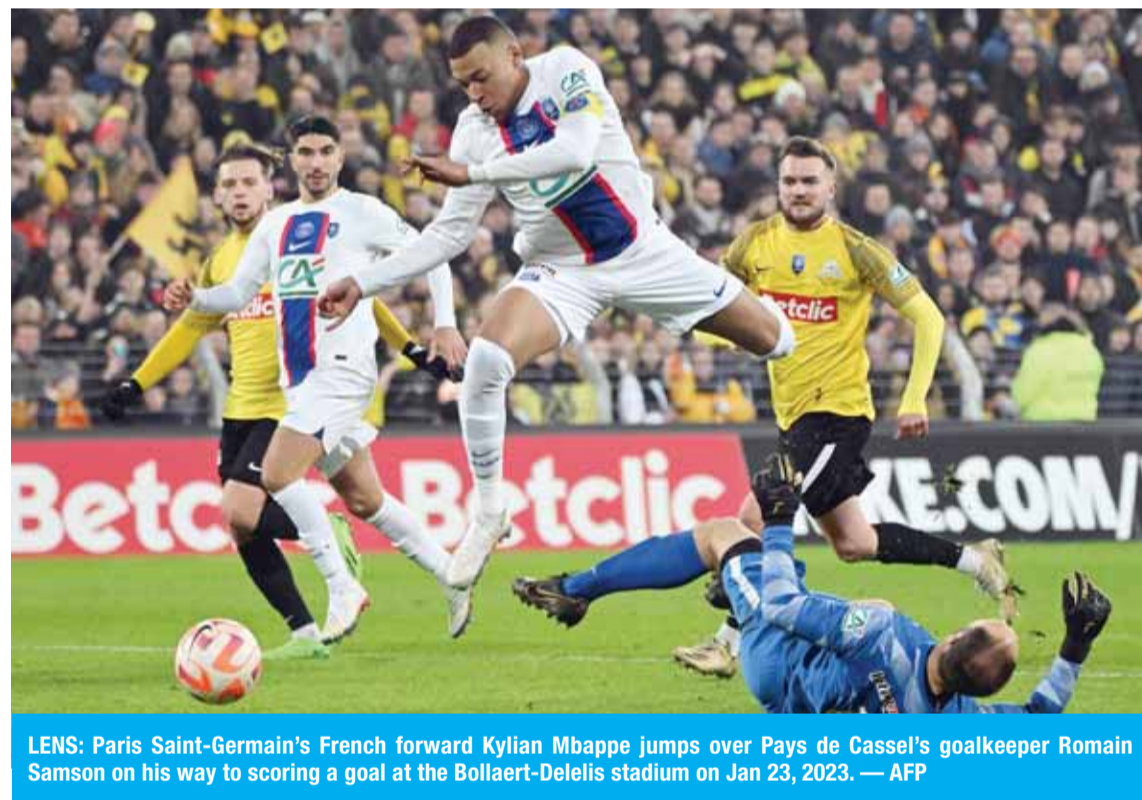
from Tottenham fans, who recalled the doubting response to his first prolific season for the club. Kane almost had the outright record in the second half, but Leno tipped over his close-range header. — AFP

Mbappe scores five in PSG rout of amateur minnows

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe became the first Paris Saint-Germain player to score five times in one match as the Ligue 1 giants crushed sixth-tier amateur minnows Pays de Cassel 7-0 in the French Cup on Monday. Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick in France's defeat by Argentina in the World Cup final just over a month ago, netted a hat-trick in the first half here as PSG led 4-0 at the break against their regional league opponents.

He struck twice more after the restart, with Neymar and Carlos Soler scoring PSG's other goals in the last-32 tie. The Qatar-owned club, who have won the French Cup 14 times, more than any other team, will now play away to bitter rivals Marseille in the last 16 early next month. That match is scheduled for the week beginning February 6, just a week before PSG host Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie.

"Once we scored the first goal it became harder for our opponents," PSG boss Christophe Galtier told reporters. "The opponents we'll face over the next weeks are of a different quality," he added. Mbappe was given the captain's armband while Neymar also started, but Lionel Messi was rested, allowed to sit out this tie played before a full house at the 38,000-seat Stade Bollaert-Delelis in Lens.



LENS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe jumps over Pays de Cassel's goalkeeper Romain Samson on his way to scoring a goal at the Bollaert-Delelis stadium on Jan 23, 2023. — AFP

Pays de Cassel are a tiny club representing a handful of villages inland from the port town of Dunkirk in France's far north, but their remarkable run to this stage of the tournament stoked the interest of the whole region. They performed admirably

in the early stages against the Ligue 1 leaders, but their resistance was broken just before the half-hour mark when Mbappe turned in a Nuno Mendes cutback, the ball taking a crucial deflection on its way in. — AFP

Ten-man Inter slip to defeat against Empoli

MILAN: Inter Milan missed the chance to go second in Serie A when they slipped to a 1-0 defeat at home to Empoli on Monday. Inter, who had won their last nine league games against Empoli, began the day in third but their hopes of climbing above city rivals AC Milan into second were hampered five minutes before half-time when Milan Skriniar was dismissed for a second yellow card.

The Slovak defender, who has been linked with a move to Paris Saint-Germain, was booked for obstruction in the 25th minute before being shown the red card for a nasty tackle. The only goal came after 66 minutes when Nedin Bajrami provided the assist for 19-year-old Tommaso Baldanzi to fire home off his left foot for his third goal of the season.

Inter battled hard to retrieve the game with Simone Inzaghi throwing both Edin Dzeko and Romelu Lukaku into the fray. They came close on several occasions and had a header rebound off the bar but less than a week after lifting the Italian Super Cup in style with a 3-0 win over AC Milan, Inter may have kissed goodbye to the Scudetto. Inter remain third, a point behind AC Milan who play at Lazio on Tuesday, and level on points with Roma. Napoli are the runaway leaders, 12 points clear at the top.

In Monday's other game Bologna were held to a 1-1 draw by bottom side Cremonese. The visitors took the lead through a David Okereke penalty five minutes after the break. But Cremonese were denied their first win of the season when Vlad Chiriches scored an own goal five minutes later. On Sunday, Juventus played out a thrilling 3-3 draw with Atalanta in their first match since being slapped with a massive points deduction for illicit transfer activity. Roma took their place in Serie A's Champions League positions following a 2-0 win at Spezia. — AFP



MILAN: Empoli's Italian midfielder Tommaso Baldanzi celebrates after opening the scoring against Inter Milan on Jan 23, 2023 at the Giuseppa-Meazza (San Siro) stadium. — AFP

Madagascar hammer Sudan to reach last 8

ALGIERS: Debutants Madagascar swept into the African Nations Championship (CHAN) quarterfinals on Monday with a 3-0 drubbing of Sudan in Algeria. The Indian Ocean islanders also beat Ghana last week, and topping Group C earned them a last-eight showdown against Mozambique on Saturday. Ghana progressed as runners-up and will face the Group E winners - Cameroon or Niger - in another fixture on Saturday.

Tokinantenaina Randriatsiferana put Madagascar 1-0 up after 13 minutes on a chilly night in the eastern city of Constantine, beating goalkeeper Mohamed Mustafa at his near post with a low shot. Solomampionona Razafindranaivo doubled the lead on the half-hour with the goal of the match - a superb lofted shot with the side of his foot over Mustafa.

Lalaina Rafanomezantsoa completed the rout three minutes later with a simple tap-in off a low cross after Mustafa had been rounded. This is the second time Madagascar have made an instant impact in a CAF tournament after debuting in the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) four years ago and reaching the quarter-finals in Egypt. The CAN is open to home and foreign-based players while the CHAN is confined to footballers with clubs in their country of birth.

But despite the restrictions, CHAN matches are classified as full internationals with results counting toward the FIFA world rankings. On Tuesday, the last two quarter-finals places will be filled after an Oran double-header in which Mali face Mauritania in Group D and Cameroon meet Niger in Group E. — AFP

Today's match on TV

ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP

Nottingham Forest FC v Manchester United 23:00

beIN Sports HD 1 English
beIN Sports Connect
beIN Sports 1 HD Premium

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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

Change of Name

I, PRIYANKA, holder of Passport No. V6131741, do hereby change my name to PRIYANKA (as Given name) UMMAT (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name PRIYANKA UMMAT and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2838) - 25-01-2023

I, SAYRA, holder of Passport No. L5934531, do hereby change my name to SAYRA (as Given name) TALIB (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SAYRA TALIB and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#0885) 24-1-23

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Tsitsipas powers into semis

Impressive Greek to face Khachanov • Azarenka sets up Rybakina semifinal



MELBOURNE: Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates victory against Czech Republic's Jiri Lehecka on day nine of the Australian Open on Jan 24, 2023. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Stefanos Tsitsipas closed in on a first Grand Slam title by reaching the Australian Open semi-finals on Tuesday in impressive fashion, as Victoria Azarenka also powered into the last four. Tsitsipas was a convincing 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 winner over unseeded Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic and faces Karen Khachanov next.

The 24-year-old Tsitsipas is the highest remaining seed left at three and with Melbourne's large Greek community roaring him on, his title charge is gathering pace. "I'm feeling great with my tennis. I don't think I felt so good in a long time," said Tsitsipas, after making the Australian Open semi-finals for a fourth time. "I'm a different player, playing different. My mentality is different."

Tsitsipas, who will become world number one should he win the title, was pretty much in control throughout against the 71st-ranked Lehecka. But he did lose his cool at one point in the third set, smacking the ball into the wall after losing a point as a ball

boy went to collect it nearby. "What I did, definitely I'm not happy about that. I shouldn't have done it," Tsitsipas said about the incident.

The other quarterfinal at Rod Laver Arena between Russia's Khachanov and Sebastian Korda had been warming up nicely until the American hurt his wrist. The 18th seed went through when Korda retired in the third set, down 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 3-0. The 22-year-old Korda, who had been attempting to emulate his father Petr's Australian Open victory in 1998, said afterwards that he could barely hold the racquet.

He said he first felt the injury while playing the Adelaide International this month, where he made the final and forced a championship point before being beaten by Novak Djokovic. But it had not bothered him in the opening four rounds at Melbourne Park until he hit a return in the second set. "Volleying was almost impossible for me, so it was a little tough," he said. For Khachanov it is a

second consecutive Grand Slam semifinal, having reached the last four at the 2022 US Open.

Nine-time Melbourne champion Djokovic is still on the scene, with a quarterfinal against Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev on Wednesday. The other quarterfinal is an all-American clash between Ben Shelton and Tommy Paul.

'It's my weapon'

Azarenka is back in the last four in Melbourne for the first time since she won the tournament in 2013 and will face big-serving Elena Rybakina. The Belarusian Azarenka, who also triumphed in 2012, secured an impressive straight-sets victory over Jessica Pegula. Third seed Pegula was hotly tipped to win the title but the American simply had no answers to Azarenka's pounding forehand groundstrokes.

The 33-year-old Azarenka rolled back the years in a surprisingly one-sided quarterfinal to triumph

6-4, 6-1. "Well, it hurts to beat her because I always want her to do well," the 24th seed said of Pegula, a close friend and practice partner. Asked how her young son Leo would receive his mum's latest achievement, Azarenka said: "He's more worried about his football and when we're going to play again. "He definitely wants his mum to be home."

Leo will have to wait at least a few more days because Azarenka faces Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina on Thursday for a place in the final. Rybakina blasted her way into the semi-finals with a ruthless 6-2, 6-4 win over Jelena Ostapenko. The 23-year-old Rybakina sent down 11 aces to blow former French Open champion Ostapenko off court in 79 minutes. The 22nd seed has blasted 35 aces so far, more than any other woman at the tournament. Ominously, she said her serve is better now than when she won Wimbledon last year. "I gained even more power. It's my weapon on the court and of course we are trying to work on it," she said. — AFP

Hamilton opens up about racial abuse at school

LONDON: Lewis Hamilton has spoken about how he had bananas thrown at him and was repeatedly called the N-word during a "traumatizing" school career. The seven-time Formula One world champion, who grew up in a town near London, detailed the racial abuse in the On Purpose podcast, released on Monday. The 38-year-old, who is preparing for his 17th season in F1, said: "For me, school was the most traumatizing and most difficult part of my life."

"I was already being bullied at the age of six. At that particular school I was one of three kids of color and just bigger, stronger, bullying kids were throwing me around a lot of the time. "And the constant jabs, the things that are either thrown at you, like bananas, or people that would use the N-word just so relaxed. People calling you half-caste and not knowing where you fit in. That for me was difficult."

"In my (secondary) school there were six or seven black kids out of 1,200 kids and three of us were put outside the headmasters' office all the time." The

British driver said he felt the system was against him, adding that he suppressed "a lot of things". "I didn't feel I could go home and tell my parents that these kids kept calling me the N-word, or I got bullied or beaten up at school today," he said. "I didn't want my dad to think I was not strong."

Hamilton remains F1's only black driver. He has established Mission 44, which aims to enhance the lives of people from under-represented groups, and Ignite, a joint enterprise with his Mercedes team to improve diversity in motor racing. The British driver, who finished sixth in the 2022 standings, is entering the final year of his huge deal with Mercedes but it is anticipated that he will sign a new multi-year contract.

Looking ahead to life after F1, Hamilton added in the podcast, which was recorded in November: "It is going to be really, really hard when I stop racing. I have been doing it for 30 years. When you stop, what is going to match that? "Nothing is going to match being in a stadium, being at a race, being at the pinnacle of the sport and being at the front of the grid or coming through the grid and that emotion that I get with that."

"When I do stop there will be a big hole so I am trying to focus and find things that can replace that and be just as rewarding." Hamilton will unveil his new Mercedes at the team's launch at Silverstone on February 15 ahead of the first round of the new season in Bahrain on March 5. — AFP

Lampard sacked as manager of troubled Everton

LONDON: Frank Lampard was sacked as Everton manager on Monday after less than a year in charge at the struggling Premier League club. Lampard was hired by Everton to replace Rafael Benitez in January 2022, but the former Chelsea boss leaves with the team languishing 19th in the table. Everton fell to a damaging 2-0 defeat at relegation rivals West Ham on Saturday - a ninth loss in their past 12 Premier League matches which left them level on points with bottom club Southampton.

Everton owner Farhad Moshiri had previously offered public backing for Lampard. But the tame surrender at West Ham proved the final straw for Moshiri, who was at the game to watch Everton for the first time in 14 months. After several hours of reports that Lampard had been sacked, Everton finally confirmed the 44-year-old's departure on Monday evening.

"Everton Football Club can confirm that Frank Lampard has left his post as senior men's first team manager today," a club statement said. "Everyone at Everton would like to thank Frank and his coaching staff for their service during what has been a challenging 12 months. Frank and his team's commitment and dedication have been exemplary throughout their time at the club, but recent results and the current league position meant this difficult decision had to be taken. "We wish Frank and all his backroom team well for their future in the game. The club has started the process to secure a new manager and will provide updates on the appointment in due course."

Paul Tait and Leighton Baines will take training until a new manager is appointed, with Everton's next game against Premier League leaders Arsenal on Feb 4. Everton felt compelled to act over Lampard's future as they fight to avoid playing outside the top flight for the first time since 1954. Lampard arrived at Everton 12 months ago with the team languishing in 16th place and the former Chelsea and England midfielder initially looked a shrewd appointment, helping the Merseyside club avoid relegation.



Frank Lampard

Fan fury

Fueled by fervent backing from their fans at Goodison Park, the Toffees beat the drop by winning three of their last six league matches, including a dramatic 3-2 success against Crystal Palace that preserved their top-tier status. But Everton are now looking for their eighth permanent manager in less than seven years after Lampard failed to build on the momentum from that successful end to last term.

In a sign of the turmoil enveloping Everton, club directors were earlier this month ordered to stay away from Goodison Park due to perceived security risks. Lampard won only 12 of his 44 matches in charge of Everton in all competitions. Former Burnley boss Sean Dyche, ex-Leeds coach Marcelo Bielsa and West Ham's former Everton manager David Moyes are among the potential candidates to replace Lampard, according to bookmakers.

Al-Itihad boss Nuno Espirito Santo, formerly of Wolves, and ex-Everton striker Wayne Rooney, now in charge of MLS side DC United, have also been mooted as possible contenders. Hampered by the sale of Brazil forward Richarlison to Tottenham in the close season, Everton managed only three wins in 20 league games this term against a backdrop of mounting fan fury. There have been widespread protests against the board and Lampard at recent games. Supporters staged a sit-in demonstration after the recent loss to Southampton, with Everton defender Yerry Mina and team-mate Anthony Gordon confronted by fans when they left Goodison Park in their cars. — AFP



SAO PAULO: Second-placed Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates with fans after the Formula One Brazil Grand Prix in this Nov 13, 2022 file photo. — AFP