



Established 1961

ISSUE NO: 18949
16 PAGES, 150 FILS

The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

RAJAB 5, 1444 AH
FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2023



2 Indian Embassy celebrates 74th Republic Day



3 Using Ozempic for weight loss is unhealthy: Doctor



5 Beirut blast victims' relatives rally for embattled probe judge



16 Sabalenka, Rybakina in Australian Open final



Amiri order to accept government resignation

Government to continue as caretaker until new Cabinet is formed

B Izzak

KUWAIT: An Amiri order was issued on Thursday to accept the resignation of the government just three months after its formation as a result of disputes with the National Assembly. The order also asked the government to act as a caretaker government to run day-to-day urgent matters until a new Cabinet is formed.

The government submitted its resignation on Monday following a standoff with MPs who insisted

to debate populist draft legislation that the government sees very expensive for public funds. One of the legislation requires the government to purchase billions of dinars of bank loans owed by over a half a million Kuwaiti citizens to local banks.

The government said the draft law is very costly because it deals with over KD 14 billion of personal, consumer and housing loans. MPs insisted that the cost was magnified because housing loans are not included and the value of personal and consumer loans is under KD 2 billion.

The dispute between the two authorities became public after two ministers attending the assembly session on January 10 walked out of the session after MPs rejected their request to return populist draft legislation to the assembly's financial and economic affairs committee for reconsideration.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who has been delegated some powers of HH the Amir, is expected to begin customary consultations with current and former assembly speakers and prime ministers. After that, he can either

rename Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah or another personality to form the new Cabinet.

Kuwait has been rocked by continued political crises between the National Assembly and various government for most of the past two decades during which the Assembly was repeatedly dissolved and many Cabinets formed. But the country breathed a sigh of relief following the September parliamentary election when MPs and the government appeared to be on good terms and very cooperative.

KIA boosts its ownership in Mercedes-Benz

KUWAIT: Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) increased its ownership in Mercedes-Benz Group AG via a disclosure on January 19, 2023. KIA's ownership increased to 5.33 percent (voting rights) from 4.24 percent. The Mercedes-Benz Group AG (former Daimler AG) is a major European automobile company.

There are 823 million outstanding Daimler Truck Holding AG shares that are held around the globe. Daimler Truck Holding was part of Daimler AG from November 2019 to December 2021. The Mercedes-Benz Group (at 30.01 percent) is the largest individual shareholder of Daimler Truck Holding AG. Other major shareholders include Chinese BAIC Group (at 6.49 percent), the Chinese investor Li Shufu (at 6.3 percent), the Daimler Pension Trust e.V. (at 4.99 percent), and the Kuwait Investment Authority (at 5.01 percent). Li Shufu holds his shares in Daimler Truck Holding AG through Tenacious3 Prospect Investment Limited. On January 20, 2023, there were more than 910 thousand Daimler Truck Holding shareholders. - Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute.

Zionist raid in West Bank kills 10 Palestinians

JENIN, Palestinian Territories: Zionist forces in a West Bank raid killed ten Palestinians Thursday, officials in the occupied territory said. The bloodiest day in the West Bank in years erupted during a raid on the crowded refugee camp in the northern city of Jenin, where gunshots rang through the streets and smoke billowed from burning street barricades.

The Palestinian health ministry said the death toll from the clashes rose to ten, including a woman, and that 20 people were wounded before the Zionist forces withdrew mid-morning. Since its records began in 2005, the United Nations has never recorded such a high death toll in a single operation in the West Bank.

Continued on Page 6



JENIN, Palestinian Territories: An elderly Palestinian man mourns the death of 10 reported victims killed during a Zionist raid on the West Bank's Jenin refugee camp. —AFP

Kuwait Airways to take over T4

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways will acquire the Terminal 4 (T4) after renting it out for about KD 1 million annually, said Kuwait Airways Chairman Captain Ali Al-Dukhan Al-Dukhan. Addressing a press conference, he said T4 is currently operated by a Korean company.

Kuwait's national airline will then move to T4 after the Korean compa-

ny's contract ends in 2013. Al-Dukhan said that he hopes the investment returns of the T4 building will bring Kuwait Airways closer to reaching the expected breakeven point in 2024.

KAC losses dropped from KD 107 million in 2019 to about KD 55 million in 2022, Al-Dukhan said. Revenues climbed by 10 percent compared to 2019 and 115 percent compared to 2021. The profit margin also improved by 40 percent compared to 2019 and 37 percent compared to 2021. Passenger traffic at T4 grew by 26 percent during 2022 compared to 2019 and to 229 percent compared to 2021. (See Page 8)



KUWAIT: Ali Al-Dukhan (right) and Basem Muthafar during the press conference on Thursday.

UAE astronaut says not required to fast on ISS

HOUSTON: Emirati astronaut Sultan Al-Neyadi said Wednesday that he will not be required to fast during Ramadan while on his upcoming space mission. The 41-year-old will become the first Arab astronaut to spend six months in space when he blasts off for the International Space Station (ISS) next month aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

Neyadi, NASA's Stephen Bowen and Warren Hoburg and Russia's Andrey Fedyaev are scheduled to fly to the ISS on February 26 as members of SpaceX Dragon Crew-6. Asked at a press conference Wednesday how he will observe the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims typically fast from dawn to

Continued on Page 6

8 dead after ship sinks near Japan

BEIJING: Eight people are dead, including six Chinese nationals, after a ship sank in waters off the coast of Japan, a Chinese diplomat and the Japanese coast guard said Thursday. The Jin Tian, carrying crew from China and Myanmar, sent a distress signal on Tuesday evening from a position around 110 kilometers (68 miles) west of the remote and uninhabited Danjo Islands in far southwestern Japan.

The ship's captain used a satellite

phone to tell the South Korean coast guard that he and the crew would abandon the sinking ship in the early hours of Wednesday morning, the Jeju coast guard said.

Multiple vessels and aircraft from Japan's coast guard and military were also involved in the search, which retrieved 13 crew members. Three private ships in the area also helped to pick up five of the stranded crew members, Japan's coast guard said.

China's consul general in the city of Fukuoka, Lu Guijun, told state broadcaster CGTN Thursday that of the 13 people found, "eight have been confirmed dead, of whom six are Chinese".

"Five of them-including four Chinese crew members-are not in

Continued on Page 6



JEJU, South Korea: This handout photo taken on January 25, 2023 and provided by the Korea Coast Guard shows coast guard members searching for missing people after a Hong Kong cargo ship sank off South Korea's southern island of Jeju. —AFP



Local

Indian Embassy celebrates Republic Day

Ambassador-designate hails strong Kuwait-India bilateral ties



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika addresses the gathering during the Republic Day celebration at Indian Embassy, Kuwait on Thursday.



Bhangra dance performance



Bharatanatyam performance



The crowd attend the event.



Students singing patriotic song.

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait on Thursday celebrated India's 74th Republic Day, one of the most significant days on India's national calendar. Braving the cold morning weather, hundreds of Indian nationals gathered at the Indian Embassy premises to mark the event as they could join the celebration for the first time in four years without the fear of the COVID pandemic and restrictions.

The celebrations commenced at 9 am with Indian Ambassador-designate Dr Adarsh Swaika paying floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, which was

followed by unfurling of the national flag and singing of the Indian national anthem. On the occasion, Dr Swaika read out Indian President Droupadi Murmu's address to the nation on the occasion of Republic Day.

In his address on the occasion, the ambassador extended greetings to all Indians in Kuwait. He reiterated the well-acknowledged hard-work and contribution of the Indian community and commended various Indian association for their efforts in organizing cultural and sports events in the country.

Talking about the deep-rooted bilateral relations between Kuwait and India, the ambassador-

designate said: "The bilateral relations between India and Kuwait continue to be very good because the leadership of both countries attaches high importance to the relationship." These strong relations are reflected in the continuing people-to-people contacts and high-level bilateral engagements at various levels between the friendly countries, he added.

Addressing the community members, Dr Swaika assured the embassy's help to the Indian nationals in Kuwait. "The embassy is always ready to offer every possible assistance to the Indian nationals here. We have 24/7 dedicated WhatsApp numbers

for the assistance of the community and you can reach us anytime. We also have the mechanism of weekly open house where I will be personally present and we can find solutions to your unresolved issues," the ambassador-designate added.

The cultural programs presented by Indian students and various socio-cultural groups focusing on patriotism and unity in diversity added a dash of color to the Republic Day celebrations. Performances of the South Indian classical dance Bharatanatyam, Gujarat's Garba folk dance and the Punjabi Bhangra folk dance enthralled the large crowd present on the occasion.

Contractors union: New law may directly affect economy

KUWAIT: The contractors union said that the bill suggesting the establishment of companies responsible for the creation and economic development of cities or residential areas may be disadvantageous for local and international contracting and construction companies.

The bill was introduced by the National Assembly in an attempt to address housing issues in the country. The union said the bill could restrict contractors' activities because it gives the Public Authority for Housing Welfare the right to veto any decision made by the contractor running a construction project. The bill also doesn't specify a mechanism for forming the administrative council, the number of its members or the mechanism for investor representation which could take away from the announced goal of the bill, which is to give the private sector a more active role in development.

"We believe that we are facing a pivotal

stage to solve the housing crisis, which must be matched by sustainable solutions to the issue, and serious work to meet the multiplying housing demands, which will undoubtedly increase in the coming years, provided that these solutions are integrated solutions and stem from comprehensive and radical reforms," the union said in a press statement.

The union indicated that the main problem in Kuwait does not lie in the lack of laws, but rather in their shortcomings and the way they are implemented.

"We find it necessary to emphasize a set of matters that must be taken into account in the event of the approval of this law, and perhaps the most important of them is to address the issue of financing projects done in partnership between the public and private sectors, and that the lack of a clear mechanism for providing cash liquidity to the contracted private company. These issues will negatively affect the quality of the project and will discourage local and international companies from participating. If they are not addressed, the bill will fail just as previous bill have failed when companies couldn't acquire the funding needed for completing projects," the statement added.

The union emphasized the need for allowing contracted companies to conduct their

own feasibility studies, rather than leave that in the hands of the Public Authority for Housing Affairs.

Another issue raised by the union is that according to the bill, the time frame and residential density for each project will be pre-allocated by the authority. "We believe that it is necessary to give the contracted company the time and technical flexibility in order for projects to be attractive to foreign investors," the union said.

The union indicated that one of the most important objectives of this law is to transfer administrative and financial burdens from the public sector to the private sector.

"We believe that the role of the Housing Authority should be limited to supervision and oversight, and that it should not interfere in the core work of the company. Moreover, the company should be free to provide proposals, opinions and ideas that will undoubtedly form an attractive factor for those who deserve housing care," the statement added. The union affirmed its support for any project or law that provides housing care for citizens, stressing that this will not be achieved except by liberating the largest possible number of lands ready for use and enacting complementary laws through the mortgage law and the real estate developer.

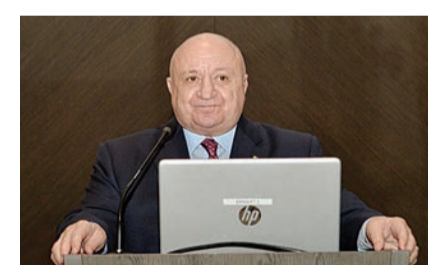


Jazeera Airways, Georgia Tourism hold roadshow

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways partnered with the Georgian National Tourism Administration and Convention Bureau of Georgia to organize a roadshow promoting travel and tourism to Georgia. The event was attended by Konstantin Zhgenti, Ambassador of Georgia to Kuwait, local travel agents and Jazeera Airways business partners from Kuwait.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador Zhgenti said: "We welcome further development of all kinds of friendly relations between Kuwait and Georgia. Mostly important are people to people relations and economic and business cooperation. Direct flights between Kuwait and Georgia helped to develop our relations in this. Jazeera is the leader in this sphere. Tourism is also very important field in our cooperation and this event shows how aviation and tourism can cooperate successfully in this. I am pleased that Georgia is very popular touristic destination in Kuwait and hope that more and more Kuwaitis with support of Georgian tourist authorities visit Georgia in future."

A visa free destination for Kuwaiti citizens, Georgia offers a rich culture, dense history and diverse landscapes making it ideal for both history and culture lovers. It also offers adventure sports for thrill seekers and green valleys for those that enjoy relaxing scenic views making it the perfect place



Konstantin Zhgenti

for individuals and families, both in summer as well as winter.

Jazeera Airways operates direct flights from Kuwait to Tbilisi, Georgia. While Tbilisi boasts great culture and food, there are also several other cities in Georgia that are a must visit such as Kakheti, Kudaisi and Gadauri.

The flight duration is just under two and half hours, making it a convenient destination to plan a quick getaway from Kuwait. Bharathan Ravindran, VP - Sales for Jazeera Airways added: "In 2018, Jazeera Airways launched direct flights to the Georgian capital Tbilisi, addressing a growing demand for direct connectivity to this top leisure destination. It has been great to see the success of this route with travellers from Kuwait. We continuously aim to strengthen our network of trade partners and agents while promoting our different destinations and it is a pleasure to host this roadshow in cooperation with the Georgian National Tourism Administration and Convention Bureau of Georgia."

Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low cost carrier, serves 55+ destinations across the Middle East, Central & South Asia, North Africa and Europe.



Officials with the members of the Emergency Medical Department.

160,000 medical emergency cases reported in 2022

KUWAIT: The head of the medical emergency administration at the Ministry of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Shalti stated that 160,000 emergency medical cases were recorded during 2022. He also informed that 270 new ambulance vehicles would be added to their fleet.

"The Emergency Medical Department dealt with 160,000 cases during 2022 of which 125,000 were transferred to hospitals, including 87,000 urgent cases and 38,000 non-emer-

gency cases, in addition to dealing with 9,000 road accident cases during the year 2022, including deaths and injuries as well as multiple disabilities," Al-Shalti clarified.

"Despite many repeated warnings, deaths were reported due to suffocation in deserts during camping season due to smoke inhalation from charcoal burning in closed places. These disasters can be prevented," he said.

He stated that the total number of paramedics working in the Al-Sabah Medical District reached 256 employees in six ambulance centers in the region. About the addition of the new ambulance vehicles, he said: "The specifications and applications for these vehicles have been completed and the administrative procedures have been initiated."

"These numbers represent about 30 to 50

percent increase in the current ambulance fleet. We are in the stage of preparing air ambulance and air evacuation contracts, as the extension of the air ambulance contract is subject to evaluation towards development. The MoH is also looking forward to the entry of qualified paramedics into the labor market to keep pace with the increasing demand and expansion of new ambulance centers," he added.

Al-Shalti concluded by congratulating the heroes of medical emergencies, explaining that this honor is a motivation, encouragement, and a call for achievements. This will also send evaluation and planning reports, noting that a number of emergency medical technicians dealt with more than 300 cases during the past year, which is considered a qualitative distinction when it comes to dealing with emergency cases.

Local

Using Ozempic for weight loss is unhealthy: Doctor

KDA head warns against using diabetes drug by obese people

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: There has recently been a surging demand for Ozempic—which helps people with diabetes keep blood sugar levels in check—leading to a shortage. The popularity of the drug is not because of rising rate of diabetes, doctors say, but because of its weight loss benefits.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Dr Waleed Al-Dahi, consultant endocrinologist and head of the Kuwaiti Diabetes Association, said that using diabetes injection medication is now a trend in Kuwait for obese people. "Everyone is looking for a solution

to lose weight quickly without the supervision of specialists, although using diabetes medications without a prescription is against the law, as these injections are not used in all cases," he said.

He indicated that these medications are being sold illegally on social media platforms and inside clinics without supervision, noting that some clinics are selling the injections at 3-4 times their real price. The cost of an injection is KD 36, said Al-Dahi, but it is sold at the clinic for KD 100. "We do not know whether a single needle is used for more than one patient or not, and this will pose a danger to the patient. This phenomenon is unhealthy and alarming. The only correct way to lose weight is to adopt healthy eating habits."

Al-Dahi stressed that diabetes injection medications are considered safe, but they must be taken at specific doses. Therefore, the patient needs to be under the supervision of a specialist doctor. Patients who don't have diabetes could get side effects as a result of the injections. Al-Dahi pointed out digestive problems is one dangerous symptom. These injections could also put people who suffer from kidney and thyroid problems at risk. "People who use those injections must check the family health his-

tory of cancer. The injections may also lead to an inflammation in the pancreas. Those who use the needles for weight loss will gain back more weight once they stop taking them," he said.

Ozempic is an FDA-approved prescription medication for the treatment of type 2 diabetes in adults. It helps improve blood sugar levels in diabetes patients and is proven to lower hemoglobin A1C, a measure for blood glucose over time, according to research cited on Ozempic's site. It is currently under review by the FDA as a once-a-week shot to help people lose weight when used in combination with diet and exercise.



Dr Waleed Al-Dahi

Contractors union: New law may directly affect economy

KUWAIT: The contractors union said that the bill suggesting the establishment of companies responsible for the creation and economic development of cities or residential areas may be disadvantageous for local and international contracting and construction companies.

The bill was introduced by the National Assembly in an attempt to address housing issues in the country. The union said the bill could restrict contractors' activities because it gives The Public Authority for Housing Welfare the right to veto any decision made by the contractor running a construction project. The bill also doesn't specify a mechanism for forming the administrative council, the number of its members or the mechanism for investor representation which could take away from the announced goal of the bill, which is to give the private sector a more active role in development.

"We believe that we are facing a pivotal stage to solve the housing crisis, which must be matched by sustainable solutions to the issue, and serious work to meet the multiplying housing demands, which will undoubtedly increase in the coming years, provided that these solutions are integrated solutions and stem from comprehensive and radical reforms," the union said in a press statement. The union indicated that the main problem in Kuwait does not lie in the lack of laws, but rather in their shortcomings and the way they are implemented.

"We find it necessary to emphasize a set of matters that must be taken into account in the event of the approval of this law, and perhaps the most important of them is to address the issue of financing projects done in partnership between the public and private sectors, and that the lack of a clear mechanism for providing cash liquidity to the contracted private company. These issues will negatively affect the quality of the project and will discourage local and international companies from participating. If they are not addressed, the bill will fail just as previous bill have failed when companies couldn't acquire the funding needed for completing projects," the statement added.

The union emphasized the need for allowing contracted companies to conduct their own feasibility studies, rather than leave that in the hands of the Public Authority for Housing Affairs.

Another issue raised by the union is that according to the bill, the time frame and residential density for each project will be pre-allocated by the authority. "We believe that it is necessary to give the contracted company the time and technical flexibility in order for projects to be attractive to foreign investors," the union said.

The union indicated that one of the most important objectives of this law is to transfer administrative and financial burdens from the public sector to the private sector.



Three with huge quantity of drugs arrested

KUWAIT: The anti-drug administration has nabbed a gang of three people in different areas with possession of five kilograms of hashish, 15,000 Lyrica pills, a kilo of chemical marijuana and 100 grams of methamphetamine. It also seized some money from them.

The operation is part of the continuous national campaign against drug-menace as directed by Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled who wanted to intensify inspection campaigns on drug smugglers and drug users. The suspects admitted their crime and said they intended to sell the illegal items. They were sent to the concerned departments to take legal procedures against them. The administration reiterated that campaigns will continue in combating drug-smugglers and traders of illegal substances and will not stop its campaigns until the menace is completely stamped out.

Kuwait's social policies to focus on women, children

KUWAIT: Kuwait's social policy will give priority to the empowerment of women, supporting early-childhood and developing the education and health sectors, said Dr Khaled Mahdi, general secretary of the Higher Council for Planning and Development on Thursday.

The lecture, titled "International Experiences in Building Social Policies to Enhance Economic Growth" was organized by the Kuwait Center for Public Policies. It explored modern mechanisms for creating social policies which achieve social welfare and how to sustain it, with a focus on inclusion and empowerment. The lecture also discussed the concepts of equality, justice and equal opportunities, as well as how to protect low-income groups, using Canada and Denmark as examples.

MoCI halts visitors for 262 services available on Sahel

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mazen Al-Nahedh announced on Thursday the suspension of receiving auditors for 262 government services available on the unified government mobile application for electronic services, Sahel, by government agencies participating in the application.

"The suspension came based on the success of the application in being the basic building block in achiev-

ing the goals of digital transformation in accordance with the national development plan - Kuwait Vision 2035, as the number of application users exceeded one million who completed 8,609,927 services, received 29,285,335 notifications and 17,615,700 statements," Al-Nahedh said.

"The number of entities participating in the application is 28, providing 277 services, leaving approximately 400 e-services with the entities participating in the application, which have not been converted into Sahel application," he added.

"This step comes as a continuation of reaping the fruits of success and in support of the launch of this application in completing transactions without reviewing government agencies as this will have a significant impact in directing different segments of society to electronically



Dr Khaled Mahdi (left) and Francois Farah

assume the establishment of controls in society that prevent exploitation at the expense of the group," Farah added that Arab countries need to focus on caring for youth when developing integrated social policies. He said that the policies associated with them are long-term meaning that it could take a long time to reap their benefits.

completing transactions," he clarified. "Completion of government transactions electronically reduces pressure on government agencies and prevents waste of labor energies in completing transactions manually, in addition to the side benefits that will be achieved such as reducing traffic congestion and directing the work energies of government agencies to other works for optimal benefit," he concluded. —KUNA



Mazen Al-Nahedh

Medical conferences will raise level of service: Official

KUWAIT: The remarkable development that Kuwait is witnessing in all fields, specifically in the health sector, is the result of constant efforts to provide the best service and healthcare, including holding specialized medical conferences as well as attracting expertise from all over the world, said Dr Meshal Al-Kanderi, assistant undersecretary for dental affairs at the Health Ministry. The remarks came during his opening speech at the first "Orthopedic Surgery" conference held on Thursday.

"Specialization is of paramount importance in raising the level of health service, especially with regard to orthopedic surgery due to its therapeutic importance and the need to provide it at the required speed," Dr Al-Kanderi said. The conference will discuss the rapid development around the world in the field of orthopedic surgery, finding opportunities for joint cooperation between various agencies, utilizing available human and financial resources efficiently, and improving the level of service provided in this important field, "which will lead patients and auditors to feel the high level, quality and development of health services," he clarified.

The conference will last for three days and will witness the review of 47 scientific lectures, three training



Dr Meshal Al-Kanderi talks to participants during the conference.

surgical workshops, and live streamed surgical operations accompanied by discussions. "The rapid progress in various medical sciences requires organizing more conferences and scientific workshops. Such events reflect positively on the level of medical services, especially surgical specialties related to improving the quality of life for humans, such as orthopedic surgery in its various specialties," said Dr Owayed Al-Mutairi, president of the

Orthopedic Surgery Association in Kuwait. The conference will include three panel discussions with participation from orthopedic graduate students. Participants will receive at least 20 approved medical training hours at the end of the conference. Al-Mutairi said the number of registered in the conference exceeded 300 participants from various medical specialties and scientific levels.



Higher education heads eye shared plan for GCC

KUWAIT: The Committee of Presidents and Directors of Universities and Higher Education Institutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries concluded the work of its twenty-fifth meeting on Thursday. Kuwait University was represented by the Acting Director of Kuwait University Prof Dr Suad Muhammad Al-Fadhli

and the Acting Vice President for Planning, Dr Huda Mahmoud Abdullah in the meeting.

The final program included holding a meeting for directors and presidents of universities, consisting of a presentation of the guide for e-learning. It also witnessed the inauguration of the GCC database "Jisr".

During the meeting, the committee followed up on the implementation of the decisions of the 24th meeting and concluded with a number of recommendations. It also decided to implement a number of initiatives adopted by KU. The committee will form a team made up of Kuwait University, Jeddah University, Gulf University for Science and Technology, and Taif University to present a unified academic program related to future technologies.

Kuwait University was also assigned to develop programs of cooperation and academic student research partnerships between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and other groups. It will develop a shared plan with GCC countries and other groups to determine a unified approach.

The committee recommended that Kuwait University will be preparing a unified guidance program designated for integrated education by college professors to be presented for the electronic learning committee in universities and higher education council in GCC countries. The committee will give their observations before submitting them to the higher education and scientific ministers' committee in the GCC.



Panel formed to fix roads and infrastructure

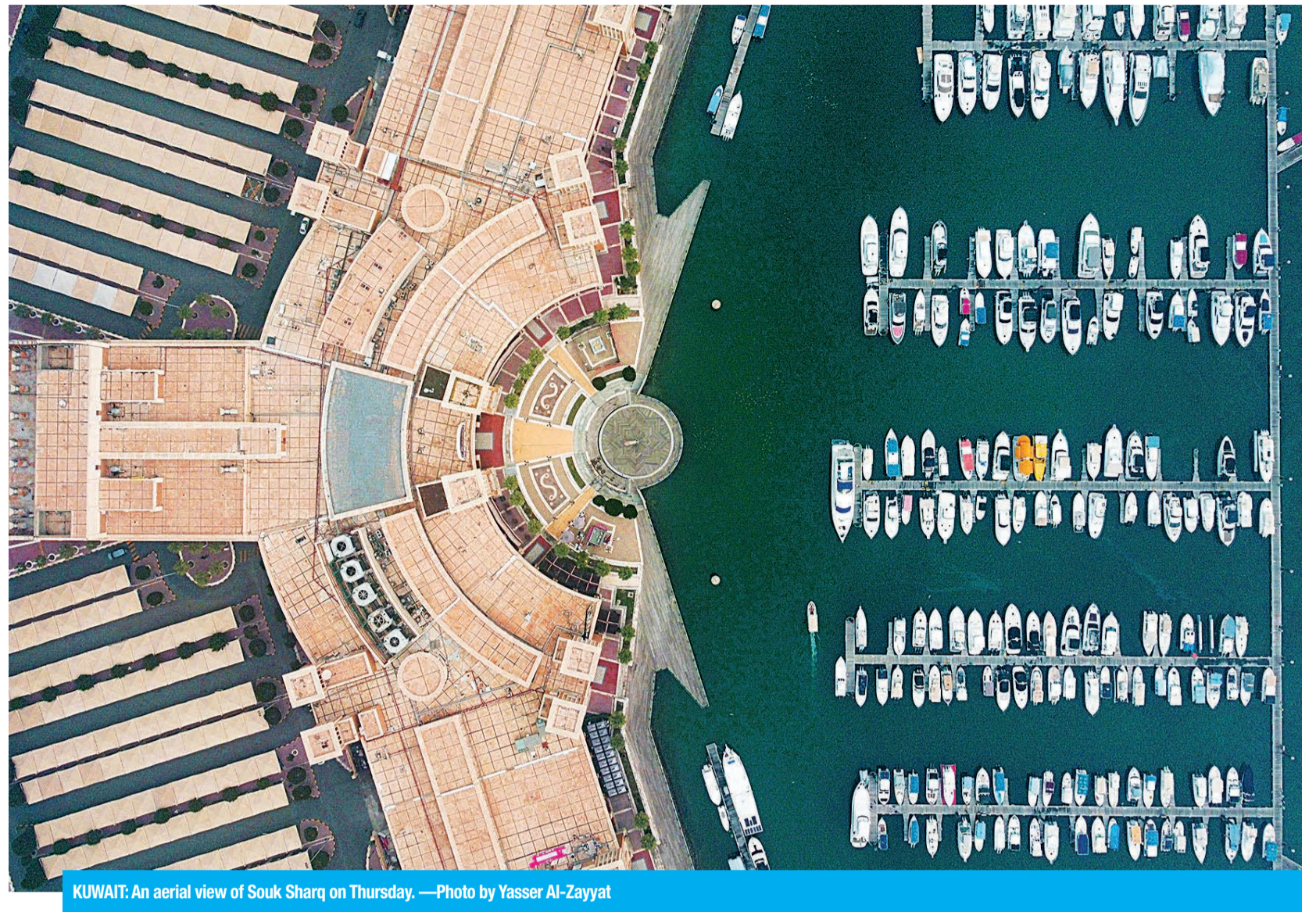
KUWAIT: Public Works Minister Amani Bugammaz issued a decision to form a supreme technical consultancy committee headed by her, which includes a number of government bodies to support the ministry's efforts to repair roads and infrastructure. The decision stipulated the formation of the committee from several government agencies such as Kuwait University, Ministry of Defense, fatwa and legislation department and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation.

The decision also indicated the objectives of the committee's work in providing the necessary advice and technical support to the ministry and the Public Authority for Roads and Transport with regards to implementing its plans in repairing roads and infrastructure.

The committee is also specialized in reviewing contracts being implemented, evaluating companies executing these contracts and consulting offices, as well as making observations, reviewing contractual documents, technical specifications and reviewing notes. Moreover, it will also provide technical and advisory support regarding the monitoring system, quality control, performance and efficiency of laboratories, as well as examination of asphalt plants and operations sites for projects affiliated with the sectors of the ministry and the authority.

The committee will also work on reviewing the mechanism of issuing contracts, maintaining roads, submitting the necessary proposals and recommendations regarding timeframes, as well as work to reduce the time period for the documentary cycle for issuing contracts. The implementation has allowed members of the committee to form technical panels to achieve its missions for a renewable period of six months.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: An aerial view of Souk Sharq on Thursday. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti, Italian oil & gas majors to explore joint opportunities

30 Italian, 25 Kuwaiti firms to attend business forum in Kuwait on Jan 30, 31

KUWAIT: In line with the excellent relations between Italy and Kuwait, the representatives of around 30 Italian companies working in the Oil & Gas sector will come to Kuwait on the 30th and 31st of January, for a visit organized by the Italian Embassy in Kuwait and the Italian export credit agency (SACE).

The companies, together with SACE, the Italian Embassy, the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) and the General Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria) will meet representatives of around 25 public and private Kuwaiti institutions to discuss new opportunities of cooperation in the field of oil &

gas, with a view to renewable energy, hydrogen and carbon capture technologies.

The first day (30th January) will be dedicated to meetings at the Headquarters of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and at the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), while the following day will be dedicated to presentations of the Kuwaiti economic environment, given by renowned Consulting and Law firms and to business-to-business meetings, between the Italian and the Kuwaiti companies, at the Sheraton - Four Points hotel.

This event comes three years after the last similar

visit to Kuwait of Italian Oil & Gas companies and the signing of a \$ 600-million push-facility agreement, between the Italian export credit agency (SACE) and the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), aimed at strengthening its business relations with Italian companies, through the organization of business-matching meetings. Data from Italian Statistics Institution (ISTAT) show that, in the months January-August 2022, Italian exports to Kuwait have more than doubled, compared to the same period of 2021, reaching \$1.5 billion (+150 percent), highlighting the huge opportunities the booming trade partnership has to offer to Italian and Kuwaiti companies.



Scan & Subscribe
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Tel: 24833199 Ext:220

Kuwait, Pakistan to celebrate 60th anniversary of ties

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Pakistan are celebrating 60 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, a bond that has only grown stronger with the passage of time.

Mujahid Iqbal, Managing Editor of Contemporary Japan magazine and Marketing Director at ALC International Group Company met the Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait Malik Muhammad Farooq. Issues of mutual interest between Pakistan and Kuwait, tourism, and diplomatic ties with the Kuwait government were discussed during the courtesy visit.

Ambassador Farooq praised the special issue on Japan and showed keen interest to publish a magazine on the 60th anniversary of Pakistan-Kuwait diplomatic relations too. Head of Chancery and Third Secretary Tehreem Ilyas also attended the meeting.

The Ambassador said very soon a delegation from the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) comprising manufacturers and businessmen will visit Kuwait. "I hope Kuwaiti businesspeople and Pakistanis along with their sponsors will visit too," he said.

The delegation includes Sialkot sports goods manufacturers, including FIFA World Cup football manufacturers, leather goods manufacturers, surgical instrument manufacturers, etc. In this regard, Farooq held a meeting with prominent Pakistani businessmen in



KUWAIT: Ambassador Malik Muhammad Farooq (left) and Mujahid Iqbal.

Kuwait for the promotion of the exhibition by the trade delegation from Pakistan, which will be held at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

It was reaffirmed that relevant businessmen in Kuwait would be engaged to ensure maximum participation in the exhibition and build links with concerned businessmen in Pakistan. The ambassador expressed his gratitude for the welcoming response by the participating community members and hoped the embassy will work in collaboration with all stakeholders to boost bilateral economic ties.

PAAET accepts 183 applicants for firefighting course

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has announced that it has accepted 183 applicants for the firefighting training course for the second training year 2022-23.

"The number of applicants who have passed the physical fitness tests, the medical examination, and the personal interview for the secondary certificate holders of the fire sergeant course

reached 88 trainees, and the holders of the ninth grade certificate in the course of a firefighting corporal who passed the physical fitness tests, the medical examination, and the personal interview, which totaled 95 trainees," PAAET announced.

"New trainees in firefighting courses must visit the Firefighters Preparation Center in Kabd area to complete the admission procedures as per the following dates:

Fire engine operator sergeant course is on Monday corresponding to 1/30/2023 at 9.30 am and the firefighting sergeant's course is on Tuesday corresponding to 31/1/2023 at 9.30 am. PAAET called on all accepted students to adhere to the review dates," PAAET clarified.



India showcases military might in Republic Day parade

Deadly Russian missiles hit Ukraine energy infrastructure

Page 7

Page 6



BEIRUT, Lebanon: Relatives of victims killed in the 2020 Beirut port explosion, rally outside the palace of justice in the Lebanese capital, to support the judge investigating the disaster, on Thursday, after he was charged by the country's top prosecutor in the highly political case. —AFP

Beirut blast victims' relatives rally for embattled probe judge

'We had faith in justice, but the mask has now fallen'

BEIRUT: Families of the victims of the deadly 2020 Beirut port explosion rallied Thursday to support the judge who has resumed work on the politically-charged case in a daring challenge to Lebanon's entrenched ruling elite. Experts have warned that the battle between investigative judge Tarek Bitar and top prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat, who has charged him with insubordination, will be a critical test for the faltering justice system of the crisis-hit Mediterranean nation.

Bitar this week defied Lebanon's ruling class to charge several powerful figures—including Oueidat, the prosecutor general-in connection to the blast, and revived a probe that was suspended for over a year amid vehement political and legal pushback. Oueidat in turn charged Bitar for insubordination and for "usurping power", ordered the release of all those detained in the case, and slapped a travel ban on them and the judge.

Bitar was called for questioning on Thursday, a summons he did not attend. Security was tight at the palace of justice in Beirut, where dozens of family members of the victims gathered "to support the

investigation" led by Bitar, some carrying posters of those who died. "We had faith in justice, but the mask has now fallen," said protester Abdo Matta, 54, who lost his son in the explosion. "We will never stop, we want to know who killed our children."

One of history's biggest non-nuclear explosions, the August 4, 2020 blast destroyed much of Beirut's port and surrounding areas, killing more than 215 people and injuring over 6,500. Authorities said hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer haphazardly stocked in a port warehouse since 2014 had caught fire, causing the explosion.

'Legal hysteria'

No official has been held accountable, and relatives of the victims and rights groups have blamed the disaster on a political class widely seen as inept. Lawmaker Melhem Khalaf, who represents 1,400 people affected by the blast, said he will meet Thursday with the justice minister and the chief of the Supreme Judicial Council, which is set to convene later in the day. Khalaf called on the justice minister to "find solutions" so that the probe can

proceed, describing the situation as "judicial and legal hysteria".

Bitar was forced to suspend his probe for 13 months after a barrage of lawsuits, mainly from politicians he had summoned on charges of negligence. Lebanon has a history of political assassinations, and authorities are now "entirely responsible for the judge's safety," the families warned, referring to the move against him as a "coup d'etat". A defiant Bitar told AFP Wednesday he will not step down from this case, adding that the chief prosecutor "has no authority" to intervene.

The judicial arm-wrestling between Bitar and Oueidat risks deepening Lebanon's mounting woes, and some warn it may be the last nail in the coffin of a notoriously politicized justice system. "The future of this case is fraught with danger," said legal expert Paul Morcos. The complex case is subject to "immense political pressure that Lebanon's justice system cannot surmount, creating this huge rift," he added.

'Total collapse'

The powerful Iran-backed movement Hezbollah has

repeatedly called for Bitar's dismissal, and this week expressed support for Oueidat. Hezbollah lawmaker Ibrahim Al Moussawi described Oueidat's decision as "a step in the right direction to restore confidence in judges and the judiciary after it was destroyed by some of its members." But Samy Gemayel, a lawmaker opposed to Hezbollah, warned the judicial battle "could lead to the total collapse of the justice system", and called on citizens to defend Lebanon against "a mafia and an armed militia".

Among those ordered released by Oueidat were dual American-Lebanese citizen Ziad Al-Ouf, who his lawyer Sakher Al-Hashem said had already "arrived in the United States, and will not return to Lebanon". A judicial official said that the United States had lobbied for his release.

On Wednesday, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to "urgently pass a resolution to create an impartial fact-finding mission" into the port explosion. "The Lebanese authorities have repeatedly obstructed the domestic investigation into the explosion," the joint statement said. —AFP



TEHRAN, Iran: Iranian shoppers walk through the bazaar of Tajrish in northern Tehran. —AFP

Iran minister urges tolerance for women over headscarves

TEHRAN: An Iranian minister has called for greater tolerance towards women not wearing mandatory headscarves, amid months of protests triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, media reported Thursday. Tourism and Heritage Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami, speaking after a government meeting on Wednesday, referred to the fact that increasing numbers of women were being seen without wearing a hijab since the September 16 death of Amini. "Closed-mindedness unfortunately exists in the country, but we can no longer be hard on the people," Zarghami said, the ISNA news agency and several newspapers reported. "To develop tourism and improve social life, you have to open up space, understand the people and not be strict with them," he added.

Zarghami said he advised a "man who behaves

harshly" towards a woman not wearing headscarf to "close his eyes if looking at her excites him". Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died in custody after being arrested by morality police for allegedly breaching the country's strict dress code. Zarghami was strongly criticized by ultra-conservatives in October after reportedly criticizing the morality police.

Since the outbreak of the protests, the morality police unit charged with enforcing the hijab rules has been less visible and women have taken to the streets without mandatory headscarves. But authorities signaled less tolerance since the start of the year, with police warning that women must wear headscarves even in cars.

Earlier this month, the prosecutor general issued a directive in which "police were ordered to firmly punish any hijab violations", and that courts should sentence and fine violators, with "additional penalties such as exile, bans on practicing certain professions and closing workplaces". Iran says hundreds of people, including security personnel, have been killed and thousands arrested in connection with the protests, which they generally describe as "riots". —AFP

Migrants in Morocco limbo as they cling to Europe dreams

CASABLANCA, Morocco: Oumar left home in Guinea five years ago in search of a better life in Europe, but today he inhabits a daily purgatory of hunger, cold and police violence in Morocco. "Just surviving every day is a battle," said the 25-year-old. "It's exhausting not eating enough, not sleeping under a roof, not feeling safe, experiencing racism." He spends his nights camped out on the pavement outside a Casablanca bus station, the makeshift home of hundreds of sub-Saharan Africans whose dreams of reaching Europe are on hold in Morocco. "We get chased away early in the morning by the police. Then we wander around and come back to the same place at the end of the day," said Oumar.

Like the other migrants interviewed in this report, Oumar's name has been changed.

He has tried several times to reach Spanish territory from Morocco but has so far been unsuccessful. Oumar sits killing time opposite the Oulad Ziane bus station with a few dozen, mostly Guinean migrants. Some cook in a makeshift kitchen while others lie exhausted on the pavement. Someone has hung clothes and blankets on a nearby wall to dry. Bakary, also from Guinea, said he had been living here for three years.

"This is our sad reality but nobody wants to see it," the 18-year-old said. The migrants set up this makeshift camp on the edge of the coastal port city of 4.2 million people because of its proximity to the bus station, a major transport hub. Today, the down-at-heel neighborhood sees repeated flare-ups with the authorities. This month, six migrants were arrested following clashes during a police operation to evict people camping on the site of a tramway extension. —AFP

Myanmar opium farming booming after coup: UN

BANGKOK, Thailand: Opium poppy production in Myanmar ramped up dramatically following the 2021 military coup, the UN's drugs office said Thursday, as political and economic turmoil drove farmers to cultivate the crop. The country's economy has been paralyzed following the military power grab in February 2021 and subsequent fighting between the junta and anti-coup rebels.

The area of land used for opium poppy cultivation expanded by a third to just over 40,000 hectares in 2021-22 — the first full growing season since the coup-according to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report released Thursday. The potential output also shot up by nearly 90 percent compared with the previous year, to 790 tons. The results show that there is a "significant expansion" of Myanmar's opium economy, the UNODC report said.

"Economic, security and governance disruptions that followed the military takeover of February 2021 have converged, and farmers... have had little option but to move back to opium," UNODC regional representative Jeremy Douglas said. "The growth we are witnessing in the drug business is directly connected to the crisis the country is facing." The report, based on satellite imagery and fieldwork, said the downward trend in opium production seen from 2014 to 2020 had gone into reverse.

The UNODC estimates Myanmar's opium economy is worth around \$2 billion—the equivalent of up to three percent of the country's GDP in 2021. Despite the spike in production, farm gate prices for opium have also soared to around \$280 a kilo, the report said—a 69 percent rise on the previous year. This compares with a farm gate price of around \$203 in Afghanistan, the world's leading opium producer.

But the report said higher incomes from opium are not translating into greater buying power for farmers, because of higher petrol and fertilizer prices as a result of the Ukraine war. A combination of the pandemic and the aftermath of the coup hammered Myanmar's economy with an 18 percent contraction in 2021, according to the World Bank. —AFP

International

India showcases military might in Republic Day parade

The parade was held in the revamped colonial-era boulevard

NEW DELHI: India showcased its military might with tanks and flyovers by roaring fighter jets in the heart of New Delhi Thursday to mark its annual Republic Day. The yearly parade is a tightly choreographed spectacle of motorbike stunts, traditional dance and camel-mounted soldiers at a time when the emergent Asian power faces onerous security challenges. Republic Day marks the adoption of India's post-independence constitution and Thursday's event is the latest of several ceremonies commemorating 75 years since the end of British colonial rule last August.

For the first time the parade was held in the revamped colonial-era boulevard that hosts India's most important government buildings, following years of renovations at the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist government. "We will move together to fulfill the dreams of the heroes of our freedom movement," Modi wrote on Twitter to mark the occasion.

India has benefitted in recent years from an increasing economic heft and diplomatic clout

that has raised its position in global affairs. However, Modi's government is grappling with the urgent task of overhauling its outdated armed forces. Its military establishment is also fretting over a growing assertiveness by China along its vast Himalayan frontier, which in 2019 sparked a lingering diplomatic freeze after a deadly high-altitude confrontation between troops of both countries.

India unveiled its first locally built aircraft carrier last year as part of government efforts to build an indigenous defense industry and reduce reliance on Russia, historically its most important arms supplier. An effort to reform military recruitment to trim down India's bloated defense payroll stalled last year after a backlash from aspiring soldiers, who burned train carriages and clashed with police in heated protests. The parade's guest of honor, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, is the first major world leader to visit India in a year the government is eagerly preparing to host the G20 summit for the first time. —AFP



NEW DELHI: This handout photograph taken on Thursday and released by the Indian Press Information Bureau (PIB) shows (from left to right) India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and India's President Droupadi Murmu attending the Republic Day parade in New Delhi. —AFP



SYDNEY: People hold a banner as they take part in the annual "Invasion Day" protest march through the streets of Sydney on Australia Day on Thursday. —AFP

'Invasion Day' rallies mark divisive national holiday in Australia

SYDNEY: Thousands protested Australia's increasingly divisive national day Thursday as the public debates whether the country's Indigenous population should be recognized in the constitution. Australia Day on January 26 has traditionally celebrated the arrival of European settlers at Sydney Harbor in 1788, and has typically been observed with beach parties and backyard barbecues. But in recent years, it has also become a day of national protest, with some Australians calling it "Invasion Day" and saying it was the start of a cultural genocide by European colonizers. Indigenous activist Paul Silva, speaking to a crowd of thousands at an Invasion Day rally in central Sydney, said the national holiday should be abolished.

"They invaded our lands, killing our extended families, turning our warriors into slaves," he said, as the crowd shouted "shame" in response. "How can this day be celebrated?" Indigenous poet Lizzie Jarrett said Sydney was "ground zero for a genocide

of First Nations people". "You think we're angry? Wouldn't you be angry?" she asked the crowd. Ethan Lyons, 17, said he wanted to acknowledge the "beautiful land" of Indigenous Australians. "We also have to acknowledge the almost 250 years of ongoing theft and destruction," he told the crowd.

Similar rallies took place in major cities across Australia. At a lively protest in Hobart, the capital of the island state of Tasmania, demonstrators carried flags declaring "Stolen Land" and "We are still here". The demonstrations have an added significance this year as Australia's centre-left government pushes to change the country's constitution to better recognize Indigenous Australians.

There is currently no mention of Indigenous Australians in the constitution, adopted in 1901. They were banned from voting in some states and territories until the 1960s. The public will vote on the change—called the Indigenous Voice to Parliament—in a binding referendum later this year. It aims to give Indigenous Australians a greater say in national policy-making as they battle poorer health, lower incomes and higher barriers to education. The Voice proposal has been politically divisive, with several conservative figures deriding it as unneeded and a waste of time. But Indigenous lawyer Noel Pearson said the Voice was "the most important question" currently facing Australia. —AFP

'Long march' helps India's Rahul Gandhi shed playboy image

NEW DELHI: Five months spent traversing his country on foot helped the scion of India's most famous dynasty shed his playboy image—but the road to reviving his dismal political fortunes will be a tougher journey. Rahul Gandhi has for years struggled to challenge the electoral juggernaut of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) holds a near-monopoly on power through nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority. Modi has revealed in casting his chief opponent, dubbed an "empty suit" in leaked US embassy cables from 2005, as an out-of-touch princeling more interested in luxury and self-indulgence than fighting to helm the world's biggest democracy.

His Congress party, a once-mighty force with a proud role in ending British colonial rule 75 years ago, is now a shadow of its former self, plagued by infighting and defections. But a decision to invoke one of India's best-known protest traditions, flanked

by ordinary people, has given him an air of authority that had so far eluded him in public life.

"Rightly or wrongly, the BJP's campaign of him being an incompetent person was the dominant perception—he has managed to change that," independent political analyst Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Junior told AFP. Since his long trek began on India's southernmost tip last September, Gandhi has struck a chord with fiery speeches and affectionate interactions with the thousands of bystanders that have lined streets to watch his procession.

The campaign harkens back to the famous 1930 trek by Rahul's unrelated namesake Mahatma Gandhi, whose march to protest a salt tax imposed by British rulers was a seminal moment in India's independence struggle. It has bypassed the country's traditional media in an effort to reach the public directly, with an in-house social media apparatus and interviews with online influencers. Footage of Gandhi on the road shows him with a newly commanding posture, sporting an unkempt salt-and-pepper beard grown during the march and trailed by smiling children. His 3,500-kilometre (2,175-mile) journey—not all by foot—concludes on Monday in the frosty Himalayan foothills of Kashmir, after months spent finessing both his common touch and a voter pitch capitalizing on widespread economic insecurity. —AFP



HYDERABAD: In this file photo India's Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi (center) takes part in the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' march on the outskirts of Hyderabad. —AFP

UAE astronaut says not required...

Continued from Page 1

sunset, Neyadi said his situation falls under an exception. "I'm in... the definition of a traveler, and we can actually break fast," Neyadi said. "It's not compulsory." "Actually fasting is not compulsory if you're... feeling not well," he said.

"So in that regard, anything that can jeopardize the mission, or maybe put the crew members in a risk, we're actually allowed to eat sufficient food," Neyadi will be the second national from the oil-rich United Arab Emirates to voyage to space. In September 2019, Hazzaa Al-Mansoori spent eight days on the ISS.

The NASA astronauts and Russian cosmonaut were also asked at the Johnson Space center Wednesday whether any of the political tensions on Earth, over Ukraine for example, spilled over into space. "I've been working and training with cosmonauts for over 20 years now and it's always been amazing," said NASA's Bowen, a veteran of three space shuttle missions.

"Once you get to space, it's just one crew, one vehicle and we all have the same goal," Fedyaev pointed to the "very long history" of space cooperation between Russia and the United States. "The life

of people in space on the International Space Station is really setting a very good example for how people should be living on Earth," the Russian cosmonaut said.

NASA officials said they expect the members of SpaceX Dragon Crew-6 to have a five-day handover with the four members of Dragon Crew-5, who have been on the ISS since October. Also currently aboard the ISS are three astronauts whose return vehicle, a Soyuz crew capsule, was damaged by a strike from a tiny meteoroid in December. Russia plans to send an empty spacecraft to the ISS on February 20 to bring home the trio-Russian cosmonauts Dmitry Petelin and Sergei Prokopyev and NASA astronaut Frank Rubio. Their Soyuz MS-22 crew capsule sprang a radiator coolant leak after the meteoroid strike. MS-22 flew Petelin, Prokopyev and Rubio to the ISS in September after taking off from the Russian-operated Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

They were scheduled to return home in the same spacecraft in March, but their stay on the ISS will now be extended by several extra months.

Russia has been using the aging but reliable Soyuz capsules to ferry astronauts into space since the 1960s. Space has remained a rare venue of cooperation between Moscow and Washington since the start of the Russian offensive in Ukraine.

The ISS was launched in 1998 at a time of increased US-Russia cooperation following the Cold War "Space Race." —AFP

sions visited the Nagasaki coast guard, the Fukuoka consulate said, where they laid flowers for the dead crew members and expressed their condolences.

They also visited survivors, conveying a message from China's ambassador to Japan, Kong Xuanyou, while providing clothing, food and drinks, the consulate said. The accident came as a cold snap hit much of Asia, with daytime temperatures on some Japanese islands nearest the rescue site reaching just three degrees Celsius (37 degrees Fahrenheit). The 6,651-tonne Jin Tian is registered in Hong Kong, Japan's coast guard said. In 2020, a cargo ship with 43 crew and 6,000 cattle on board sank off southwestern Japan after being caught in a typhoon. Two crew survived. —AFP

Zionist raid in West Bank kills...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Foreign Ministry expressed the State of Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation of the brutal aggression of the Zionist occupation forces against the city of Jenin. In a statement Thursday, the ministry affirmed that this aggression is a flagrant violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy and international law, calling on the international community to take swift and effective action to stop these ongoing Zionist violations and to provide full protection for the brotherly Palestinian people.

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf Thursday denounced, in the strongest possible terms, Zionist occupation authorities' continued and recurrent incursions into Palestinian cities, including Jenin.

In a press statement, Al-Hajraf restated the Gulf bloc's unrelenting support for the Palestinian cause, calling on the international community to intervene urgently to stop this atrocious and continued crime against Palestinian people, and to provide international protection for them.

Palestinian health minister Mai Al-Kaila charged that "occupation forces stormed Jenin Government Hospital and intentionally fired tear gas canisters at the pediatric department in the hospital".

The Zionist military denied its forces entered the hospital. "But the activity was not far away from the hospital and it is possible some tear gas entered through an open window," a spokesman said.

Wisam Bakr, director of the Jenin health facility, said Zionist forces fired near the hospital but did not echo the health minister's allegations that the building or pediatric ward were specifically targeted.

'Hit in the neck'

Among those confirmed dead was Majeda Obeid, 61, who lived some meters (yards) from the house targeted by the Zionist forces. Her daughter, Kefiyat Obeid, told AFP that her mother was shot as she peered out her window at the clashes.

"After she finished her prayers, she stopped for a

moment to look and, as she stood up, she was hit in the neck by a bullet and she fell against the wall and then to the floor," the 26-year-old told AFP, as bloodstains soaked into the rug of their home. The military said the incursion targeted Palestinians from the Islamic Jihad militant group who were allegedly behind attacks on Zionist soldiers and civilians and, according to Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, were planning "to conduct a terror attack in Zionist entity". Three Palestinians were shot in a firefight.

There were no casualties among the Zionist forces, the military said.

Jenin resident Umm Youssef Al-Sawalmi said homes were hit during the raid. "Windows, doors, walls and even the refrigerator, everything was damaged by the bullets" fired by Zionist forces, she told AFP.

Islamic Jihad spokesman Tariq Salmi vowed that "the resistance is everywhere and ready and willing for the next confrontation". The latest deaths bring the number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank so far this year to 30, including fighters and civilians, most of whom were shot by Zionist forces. Saleh Al-Arouri, deputy leader of Palestinian militant group Hamas which rules Gaza, vowed that Zionist entity "will pay the price for the Jenin massacre".

'Bloody massacre'

The Arab League held "the Zionist government led by (Benjamin) Netanyahu fully responsible for committing the horrific bloody massacre" and called for international action. The mounting toll follows the deadliest year in the Palestinian territory recorded by the UN. At least 26 Zionists and 200 Palestinians were killed across Zionist entity and the Palestinian territories in 2022, the majority in the West Bank, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

Zionists has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967. UN peace envoy Tor Wennesland said he was "deeply alarmed and saddened by the continuing cycle of violence in the occupied West Bank". Thousands flocked to funerals in Jenin, as the Palestinian presidency announced three days of official mourning. It charged that Thursday's raid on Jenin was happening "under international silence".

"This is what encourages the occupation government to commit massacres against our people in full view of the world," said Nabil Abu Rudeinah, spokesman for Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas. —AFP

8 dead after ship sinks...

Continued from Page 1

life-threatening conditions," he added. "We express our deepest condolences to the unfortunate victims." The Japanese coast guard later confirmed the toll given by Lu, adding that the other two dead crew members were from Myanmar. Nine more people remained missing, it said—four from China and five from Myanmar. Officials from local Chinese mis-

International

Deadly Russian missiles hit Ukraine energy infrastructure

‘The most difficult situation is currently in the regions of Kyiv, Odessa and Vinnytsia’

KYIV: Russian forces fired dozens of missiles at Ukraine on Thursday in a blistering wave of strikes targeting energy infrastructure, a day after Germany and the United States pledged heavy tanks for Kyiv. The latest wave of attacks came as the Kremlin said Moscow perceived the tank deliveries “as direct involvement in the conflict” and Ukraine conceded it was facing mounting pressure from Russian troops on the eastern front. On a road near the eastern frontline city of Bakhmut, a team of medics welcomed the long-awaited promise of heavy tanks.

“This should have happened sooner, and in bigger quantities,” a doctor called Liza told AFP, adding that she was “very thankful.” On Wednesday, the United States announced it will provide 31 Abrams tanks to help Ukraine repel Russia’s invasion, mirroring a similar move by Germany. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said on Thursday that Leopard tanks pledged by Berlin will arrive in “late March, early April.”

Training of Ukrainian troops on German Marder infantry fighting vehicles will start in the next few days, he added, and “a little later” for the Ukrainian soldiers who will be trained on the Leopard. In Kyiv, the Ukrainian army said its forces had destroyed 47 out of the 55 missiles launched by Russia in a new wave of attacks on Thursday. Russian missiles killed one person and wounded two more in the capital, said Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko. The 55-year-old man was killed by fragments of a missile that was shot down by Ukrainian air defense systems, city officials said.

Emergency shutdowns

Since October, Russia has been launching regular mass strikes against energy infrastructure across Ukraine, with temperatures currently near zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit). Energy



KYIV, Ukraine: Workers repair power lines following a Russian missile strike on the industrial zone of Kyiv on Thursday, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Minister German Galushchenko accused Russia of seeking to “create a systemic failure in Ukraine’s energy system.” “Emergency shutdowns have been introduced. The most difficult situation is currently in the regions of Kyiv, Odessa and Vinnytsia,” Galushchenko added after the latest strikes.

In the southern region of Odessa on the Black Sea, “such a situation may last for several days until

the damaged power facilities are restored,” energy provider DTEK said. The attacks delayed the visit of French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, who arrived in Odessa to discuss aid with Ukraine’s top diplomat Dmytro Kuleba. Ukraine’s air force also said Thursday its units shot down all 24 Iranian-made drones launched by Russian forces from near southern Ukraine. By announcing heavy tank deliveries,

the United States and Germany swept aside long-standing misgivings and signaled a new surge of Western support for a counteroffensive against the Russian invasion.

‘Intensifying’ Donetsk front

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz gave the green light to Germany sending 14 Leopard 2 tanks—a decision that opens the floodgates to several other European countries armed with Leopards to send their own contributions. Although Western countries have already sent Ukraine everything from artillery to Patriot anti-missile defense systems, tanks were long considered a step too far, risking a widening backlash from Russia.

But with Ukraine gearing up for a counteroffensive to push back increasingly entrenched Russians in the east and south, the allies are now scrambling to send the powerful weapon. After a series of battlefield setbacks, Russia has claimed gains on the eastern front, where Ukraine conceded that its troops had pulled out of the town of Soledar in the Donetsk region.

Russian forces and units with the Wagner mercenary group claimed two weeks ago they had captured the small salt-mining town. On Wednesday, Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Ganna Malyar said Moscow was also intensifying pressure along the eastern front, in the fight for nearby Bakhmut.

“The enemy is throwing a significant number of personnel, weapons and military equipment into the battle, trying to break through our defenses,” Malyar said. The US-based Institute for the Study of War said Russia was engaging in “spoiling attacks across most of the frontline in Ukraine in order to disperse and distract Ukrainian forces.” Those measures, it said, were in order to “set conditions to launch a decisive offensive operation” in the eastern Lugansk region.—AFP



UNITED STATES: Chunli Zhao, the man who is accused of shooting dead seven people in Half Moon Bay, California, appears for his arraignment at the San Mateo Criminal Court in Redwood City, California. — AFP

California farm shooting suspect could face death penalty: Prosecutor

LOS ANGELES: The man accused of killing seven fellow farmworkers and wounding another in California could face the death penalty if convicted of multiple murder charges, a prosecutor said Wednesday, as the suspect appeared in court for the first time. Zhao Chunli, 66, was arrested Monday in Half Moon Bay, south of San Francisco, shortly after twin attacks at farms that left five men and two women dead. Zhao appeared in court in nearby Redwood City on Wednesday wearing orange jail clothing.

He faces seven counts of murder, one of attempted murder and what prosecutors called a special circumstance allegation of multiple murder. A Mandarin language translator was on hand for a hearing in which his attorney requested the formal arraignment be postponed. San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Susan Jakubowski remanded Zhao in custody and ordered that he appear in court on February 16.

‘Workplace violence’

San Mateo County District Attorney Stephen Wagstaffe told the San Francisco Chronicle that the special circumstance allegation “makes him eligible for the punishment of life without parole or death.” “That decision will be made down the road after the full investigation is completed and we learn everything we can about Mr. Zhao,” Wagstaffe added in an email to the paper. San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus said Tuesday that it appeared the suspect had known the victims.

“All the evidence we have points to this being an instance of workplace violence,” she said. Zhao is believed to have used a legally-purchased semi-automatic pistol in the rampage. The suspect is a Chinese national who has lived in the Half Moon Bay area for at least a decade, including for seven years at the mushroom farm where the killing spree began, the San Jose Mercury reported.

The paper cited Captain Eamonn Allen saying the sheriff’s department was working to support the suspect’s wife. “They lived on the property together, so there’s a very real concern of retribution or backlash on her,” Allen said.

Charging documents and information from the coroner reveal five of the dead had Chinese names, with two of them being aged in their 70s. There was no immediate reply to AFP queries to Chinese consulates in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Mexico’s consulate in San Francisco confirmed two of the dead were Mexican men. Another Mexican man survived the attack and is in hospital in Palo Alto, the consulate told AFP.

The Half Moon Bay attacks came on the heels of another deadly rampage in California on Saturday in which an elderly Asian gunman killed 11 people at a dance club in Monterey Park, near Los Angeles. He shot himself dead the following morning as police moved in. US Vice President Kamala Harris was expected in Monterey Park on Wednesday, where her office said she would meet with families of some of the victims. A vigil was also expected later in the day.—AFP

Hands off our public holiday, cry angry Danes

COPENHAGEN: The Danish government’s plan to abolish a public holiday to help fund the defense budget amid the war in Ukraine is putting Denmark’s cherished welfare model at risk, the country’s biggest trade union warned. “It’s a big threat to the Danish model”, said Lizette Risgaard, the head of the FH union which has 1.3 million members in a country of 5.9 million inhabitants. “Politicians should stay out of labor market issues. If they go through with this they’ll be imposing their will and violate our agreements”, she thundered in an interview with AFP on Wednesday.

The left-right government coalition in power since December, headed by Social Democratic Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, plans to scrap the religious holiday known as “Great Prayer Day”, observed since the 17th century. Initially introduced as a day of prayer, fasting and penitence, it falls on the fourth Friday after Easter and is now a common date for confirmations. But the government wants to get rid of it and use the money to raise the defense budget to NATO’s target of two percent of GDP by 2030, instead of 2033 as previously planned.

The government insists the accelerated calendar is necessary due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The move is expected to provide an extra three billion kroner (\$440 million) to state coffers. The cancelled holiday would entail an additional 7.4 hours of labor per worker, according to the government.

“I don’t think it’s a problem to have to work an extra day”, Frederiksen said. “We are facing enormous expenditures for defense and security, health care, psychiatry and the green transition,” she said, presenting the new government’s program to parliament.

Danes will have to work an extra day, which their employers will have to pay them for. But the public holiday and the wages paid to both those who work that day and those who are off, are already enshrined in the country’s sacred collective wage agreements.

Overwhelming opposition

“It’s a public holiday. And of course, they can say ‘OK, we want to abolish it’”, said Risgaard. “But then they are going against what we have agreed upon in negotiations: to have the right to be with your family that day. In our collective wage agreements, there are

Teacher shot by 6-year-old to sue school over inaction

WASHINGTON: An American elementary school teacher shot by her six-year-old student plans to file a lawsuit against school authorities saying they ignored multiple warnings over the threat, her lawyer said Wednesday. Attorney Diane Toscano said administrators at the Richneck Elementary School in Newport News, Virginia were warned three times on January 6 by her client Abigail Zwerner and other teachers that the boy could have a gun and was threatening others. Zwerner survived the shooting, but was seriously injured. That morning Zwerner, 25, told school administrators that the boy, who has not been identified, had threatened to beat up another child. “But the school administration could not be bothered,” Toscano said. An hour later another teacher told them that the boy apparently brought a gun to school but she did not see it in his school bag, and that he might have it in his pockets.

A third teacher then reported that another student said while crying that he had seen the gun and been threatened with it. Still no action was taken, and a school employee was denied permission to physically search the boy. An administrator said the boy “has little

600 different ways of defining wages when someone works that day,” she said.

A recent poll by the Epinion institute indicated an overwhelming majority of Danes opposed the move, which was not mentioned during last autumn’s election campaign. Only 17 percent supported the plan, while 75 percent were against it. “They’re interfering with the Danish model,” Pernille Holm, a physiotherapist in her 30s, told AFP on Thursday.

“We have a way of doing things here in Denmark. We (negotiate) with our employer. And the unions negotiate our rights as workers. The government should not be able to do anything without including these two parts,” she insisted.



COPENHAGEN: Picture taken on June 26, 2020 shows Lizette Risgaard, head of the main organization of the trade union movement. — AFP

Deja vu

An online petition started by FH has garnered almost half a million signatures. Only the three governmental parties, which hold a majority in parliament, support the measure. The Lutheran Church and organizations representing military employees have also protested vehemently.

“I am furious that they are using the military this way by saying that the money from the public holiday will go to increasing the budget,” the head of the main union representing military personnel, Jesper Korsgaard Hansen, told tabloid BT. In parliament, the nine opposition parties ranging from the extreme left to the extreme right say they will refuse to take part in any new defense policy agreement until the government withdraws its plan. For Danes, there is a sense of deja vu. Ten years ago, a Social Democratic government tried to abolish the same public holiday but gave up amid a national outcry.—AFP

pockets” and that the issue could be left until the school day ends. “Tragically almost an hour later, violence struck at Richneck Elementary School. Abby Zwerner was shot in front of those horrified kids,” said Toscano.

“This tragedy was entirely preventable if the school administrators responsible for school safety had done their part and taken action when they had knowledge of imminent danger,” she said. Zwerner survived being shot in the chest and is now recuperating at home, but faces more surgery. Later Wednesday, Newport News authorities announced the decision to fire school district superintendent George Parker III “based on the future trajectory and needs of our school division.”

The school board stressed that the “decision was made without cause as Dr. Parker is a capable division leader” and thanked him for his service. The case stunned much of the nation, given the age of the boy, even as the United States faces increasing numbers of school shootings. The boy apparently removed his mother’s gun from a closet. His parents issued a statement last week praising Zwerner and claiming that the gun had been secured.

They said the boy suffers from “an acute disability” and was under a special school care plan that usually involved a member of the family accompanying him to school and class. “The week of the shooting was the first week when we were not in class with him,” they said. Because of his age, charges are not likely. His parents could, however, face charges for allowing the child access to a gun.—AFP

EU looks to boost returns of migrants denied asylum

STOCKHOLM: EU interior ministers on Thursday discussed how to return irregular migrants to their home countries more effectively—with some arguing for limiting visas to uncooperative nations. “Returning those who have been denied asylum in Europe is a really important issue,” said Maria Malmer Stenergard, migration minister for Sweden, which hosted the meeting as current holder of the EU presidency.

European Commission statistics show that in 2021, out of 340,500 orders for migrants to be returned to their countries of origin, only 21 percent were carried out. “We have a very low return rate,” noted EU home affairs commissioner Ylva Johansson. “We can do significant progress here to increase the numbers of returns and have it more effective and quicker,” she said. The Swedish EU presidency believes cooperation could be improved with countries outside the EU whose citizens make up significant numbers of irregular migrants. Malmer Stenergard said it was “crucial” that EU member states use the full weight of their governments—including leveraging development aid—to press third countries on the returns issue. The EU funds various reintegration programs in countries that readmit their citizens who have been denied asylum in Europe.

These are separate from deportations or forced returns based on a court or administrative order, which are often carried out under escort and typically do not include in-country assistance. The EU has had a mechanism in place since 2020 to use visa issuance as a lever against countries that refuse to take back their nationals or decline to issue them with the necessary travel papers.

But so far that measure has only been applied to Gambia, for whose citizens getting a Schengen visa is more difficult and costly. The commission in 2021 proposed the mechanism be extended to Bangladesh and Iraq, but that has not happened. Johansson said after a November visit to Bangladesh that the threat of the visa sanction has prompted Dhaka to become more “politically open” to accepting irregular migrants back from Europe.

EU leaders in December 2021 called for “all relevant tools” to be used to push migrant-originating countries to cooperate on readmissions, including access to development aid, trade and visas. France backed a carrot-and-stick approach, with its junior minister for citizen affairs, Sonia Backes, saying in Stockholm that first “constructive dialogue” should be used. That “should then be hardened by restrictive measures if results aren’t met,” she said.

Germany however has reservations about that approach. German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said accords signed, especially with countries in north Africa, “on one hand allowed legal paths (for migration), and on the other, effective returns”.

Austria backs fence

The overall tone on migration has hardened in Europe since 2015–2016, when it took in over a million asylum-seekers, most of them Syrians fleeing the war in their country.

The bloc in 2016 struck a deal with Turkey for it to prevent much of the onward passage of irregular migrants into Europe. Austria is backing the construction of a fence along the border of EU member Bulgaria with Turkey to further reduce the flow of asylum-seekers. Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said on Monday, during a visit to that border region, that the fence would cost around two billion euros and he called on the European Commission to fund it.—AFP

Business

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2023

Kuwait Airways losses drop by KD 52m

KAC will acquire T4 building next August

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways will acquire the "T4" building after renting it out for about KD 1 million annually, said Captain Ali Al-Dukhan, chairman of the board of directors at Kuwait Airways Company (KAC) during a press conference held by the company to announce its 2022 financial results. The terminal (T4) is currently operated by a Korean company until August 2023. Kuwait's national airline will then move to "T4" after the Korean company's contract ends, said Al-Dukhan. He added that he hopes the investment returns of the T4 building will bring Kuwait Airways closer to reaching the expected break-even point in 2024.

KAC losses dropped from KD 107m in 2019 to about KD 55m in 2022, Al-Dukhan announced. Revenues, on the other hand, climbed by 10 percent compared to 2019 and 115 percent compared to 2021. The profit margin also improved by 40 percent compared to 2019 and 37 percent compared to 2021. Passenger traffic at "T4" grew by 26 percent during 2022 compared to 2019 and to 229 percent compared to 2021.

Kuwait Airways received three new aircrafts in 2022: One Airbus "A320NEO" and two Airbus "A330NEO", added Al-Dukhan. The airlines also launched new destinations, including Manchester, Madrid, Casablanca, Trabzon, Mykonos, Kuala Lumpur and Hyderabad. It was also committed to flight departure timings 86 percent of the time, achieving third place in the Middle East and North Africa. KAC plans to achieve a commitment of up to 90 percent and will soon be flying to new destinations: Athens, Antalya, Taif, Qassim, Al-Ula,

Barcelona, Budapest and Berlin. Al-Dukhan expected a growth in passenger traffic by nearly 4.5 million passengers in 2023 and an increase in operations by more than 30 percent.

Soaring fuel prices cost KAC about KD 130m annually. The company plans to tackle that, said Al-Dukhan, by asking the government to obtain higher discounts. Adding new aircrafts to the company's fleet in 2024 will also save 50 percent of the fuel costs. One of the most important achievements made by KAC in 2022 was the restructuring of the aircraft deal with "Airbus," as it raised the volume of a previous order from "Airbus" from 28 to 31 aircrafts in a deal worth \$3bn.

Other achievements include: The completion of the maintenance contract with Air France and Rolls-Royce, the approval of the establishment of the Kuwait Airways Training Academy, the signing of a mutual business partnership with Air Europe and Eta Airlines and transporting 14,000 passengers to Doha to attend the 2022 World Cup matches in Qatar. Al-Dukhan said the company also trained 100 high school students and university students and graduates, participated in the Balsam project with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, donated 100 wheelchairs to the Ministry of Health and took part in the design and construction of the "Kuwaitia Tower" that took place on Al-Hilali Street.

Regarding the deal of selling "Alafco" assets, in which Kuwait Airways owns nine percent of its capital, Al-Dukhan said that Kuwait Airways first opposed the deal, but Alafco's largest owners decided to go with it. Al-Dukhan said the procedures through which the deal was completed were "deficient". KAC is working to reduce its expenses



(From left) Basem Muthafar, Captain Ali Al-Dukhan and Maen Razouqi.

related to aircrafts and manpower, said Maen Razouqi, the CEO of Kuwait Airways, pointing out that the company was surprised in 2022 that fuel prices grew by about 30 percent. The increase in the discount rate during the past year from 1.5 to 3.5 percent also raises the cost of services that other companies provide to KAC such as operational services, maintenance or spare parts.

Razouqi said that while the company is looking to reach the break-even point in 2024 and start positive results in 2025, it is facing a delay in

receiving new aircrafts ranging between four and six months. The delay raises costs, especially since the new "NEO" aircraft reduces fuel costs by 15 percent compared to current aircrafts. Razouqi added that the company is currently working on preparing its strategy for the year 2030, to be completed during the first quarter of this year, revealing that it sold one of its Boeing 777 aircrafts, which will go to its new owner in less than a month. Kuwait Airways also expects to sell three Airbus 340 aircrafts by the middle of next summer.

US growth slows in 2022 as downturn fears loom

WASHINGTON: The US economy grew at a slower pace in 2022 but performed better than expected in the final months of last year, the Commerce Department said Thursday, as recession fears loomed. Economic activity has been moderating as the US central bank hiked the benchmark lending rate seven times last year, in hopes of cooling demand and reining in costs as inflation surged.

The property sector has slumped, followed by declines in manufacturing and retail sales. Against this backdrop, the world's largest economy expanded 2.1 percent for all of 2022, down from the figure in 2021, according to Commerce Department data.

"The increase in real GDP in 2022 primarily reflected increases in consumer spending, exports," and certain forms of investment, said the department in a statement. For the October to December period, US gross domestic product exceeded expectations to rise at an annual rate of 2.9 percent.

This was slightly below the 3.2 percent jump in the third quarter last year, and marks a second straight quarter of growth after two rounds of contraction.

Slowing 'sharply'

While the economy grew strongly in the fourth quarter, most of the advance took place early on and a repeat performance in early 2023 is unlikely, said Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics. Household spending and business investment remained positive in the final months last year but slowed, added Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics.

Inventories and net trade may have helped growth, but analysts caution that this cannot be relied upon in the new year. Meanwhile, residential investment continued contracting, falling for a seventh consecutive month in the longest streak since the housing crisis, said Klachkin.

The interest-sensitive housing sector has been



ARCADIA: People shop during Black Friday in Santa Anita within the city of Arcadia, California. The US economy grew at a slower pace in 2022, the Commerce Department said. —AFP

reeling as the Federal Reserve hiked rates, with mortgage rates remaining high and weighing on affordability. "Looking ahead, recent data suggest that the pace of expansion could slow sharply in the first quarter, as the effects of restrictive monetary policy take hold," Farooqi said.

A separate Commerce Department report released Thursday showed orders for big-ticket US manufactured goods were stronger than expected in December, though data indicated a weak ending to 2022 for business investment and equipment spending, she added. A slowdown would be welcome news to the Fed and could open doors to a slower pace of rate increases ahead.

Growth engine to weaken

While unexpectedly resilient consumer spending supported growth last year, there are signs that this key engine is weakening as households draw down on their savings from the pandemic period. This could point to more subdued expenditures ahead, economists say.

"Consumer spending — the economy's main growth engine — is expected to weaken as income growth softens and households can no longer rely on excess savings to maintain their desired pace of spending," Klachkin added. "The economy is currently close to full employment so job growth is bound to slow," he said. The US could enter a recession in the second quarter as consumers limit their expenditures and businesses become more reluctant to hire and invest, Oxford Economics expects. But others believe the country may yet avoid a recession, if the labor market remains strong and household balance sheets are healthy.

Even if households are eating into their funds due to inflation, "they're coming from a very high point," and this should alleviate or prevent a protracted downturn, according to Moody's Analytics economist Matt Colyar. Large-scale layoffs also appear hard to imagine for now as issues with labor supply is keeping firms hiring. "It's believable that the softness we're seeing stays relatively contained," Colyar said. —AFP

IBM to cut 3,900 jobs

NEW YORK: IBM will slash some 3,900 jobs, slightly more than one percent of its workforce, related to businesses it has divested, a source close to the matter told AFP on Wednesday. The computing company based in New York state did not talk of job cuts in its quarterly earnings report published Wednesday, however, nor in a call with analysts to discuss the financial results.

IBM said it would take a one-time \$300 million charge in its first quarter this year, which the source said was related to the layoffs. This cost is "entirely related" to the spin-off of Kyndryl and the disposal of health data and analysis businesses, an IBM spokesperson told AFP.

"It is not an action based on 2022 performance or 2023 expectations," the spokesperson added. The more than century old technology firm reported profit of \$2.9 billion in the final three months of last year, some 17 percent higher than the same period in 2021 despite revenue remaining flat at \$16.7 billion.

"Clients in all geographies increasingly embraced our hybrid cloud and AI solutions as technology remains a differentiating force in today's business environment," IBM chief executive officer Arvind Krishna said in an earnings release.

The company founded in 1911 announced late last year that it will invest \$20 billion in semiconductors, quantum computing and other cutting-edge technology in New York state. Krishna unveiled the spending, which will take place over a decade, in a speech alongside US President Joe Biden in the tech giant's Poughkeepsie facility.

Biden hailed the pledge from the "iconic American company" as another sign that his strategy of rebuilding the US innovative edge is working. The Democratic president has made a priority of encouraging growth in high-tech manufacturing, hoping to rebuild domestic supply chains in crucial components such as microchips that for years have been left to foreign companies based as far away as Taiwan. —AFP

Tesla reports record profits

NEW YORK: Tesla reported another round of record quarterly profits Wednesday while confirming its long-term growth outlook in spite of concerns about rising competition and macroeconomic headwinds. Elon Musk's electric vehicle (EV) company reported fourth-quarter profits of \$3.7 billion, up 59 percent from the year-ago period as revenues jumped 37 percent to \$24.3 billion.

The results were fueled by a 31 percent rise in vehicle deliveries compared with the year-ago period. The EV giant, which startled investors earlier this month by announcing vehicle price cuts in the United States and Europe, acknowledged challenges such as rising interest rates and an "uncertain macroeconomic environment."

Tesla said it was accelerating its "cost reduction roadmap," while working to ramp up production. "In any scenario, we are prepared for short-term

uncertainty," said Tesla, while adding that its "relentless cost control and cost innovation" will allow it to navigate 2023 better than rivals.

The recent US and European price cuts—which followed similar actions last year in China—have prompted debate among analysts on whether they are a sign of weakness, or a shrewd tactic to increase market share.

Musk touted the move in a conference call Wednesday, saying Tesla has seen increased orders since it was announced. "Price really matters," the billionaire said. "These price changes really make a difference for the average consumer."

The company has described its long-term plan as seeking to chalk up production growth of 50 percent per year, on average. Tesla's earnings report Wednesday reasserted that long-term forecast, but said it would likely only produce 1.8 million vehicles in 2023, about 31 percent above the 2022 production. It also predicted a 37 percent growth in deliveries, at 1.3 million.

Musk has noted that Tesla's output has been constrained by economy-wide supply chain and raw material shortages, but said Wednesday that output

could reach two million in 2023 if there is a "smooth year" free of disruptive surprises.

Tesla confirmed plans to launch production of its Cybertruck in 2023 at its massive Texas plant. Musk said the volumes of the Cybertruck would not be significant in 2023, but would be meaningful in 2024.

CFRA Research analyst Garrett Nelson described Tesla's guidance as "mixed," with 2023 volumes shy of estimates but the confirmation of Cybertruck production "a big positive." Shares of Tesla have fallen about 50 percent from their year-ago level, reflecting worries about the introduction of EVs from other automakers, the drag from a slowing economy and anxiety that Musk's other pursuits such as running Twitter are hindering the company.

Musk's \$44 billion acquisition of Twitter was just one of the myriad controversies surrounding the unpredictable billionaire. But he defended the deal on Wednesday, saying his large Twitter following "speaks for itself" and benefits Tesla.

Musk has been in court this week addressing another thorny matter: a lawsuit filed by investors



Elon Musk

who argue that Musk's statements in 2018 about potentially taking Tesla private were fraudulent and responsible for their losses. Musk testified that a 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. Shares of Tesla jumped 4.6 percent to \$151.02 in after-hours trading Wednesday. —AFP

Business

UK cost-of-living crisis pushes mothers to the brink

UK is in the midst of the biggest surge in prices in decades

LONDON: At an east London church on a bitterly cold winter's day, Beattine Wester-Okiya picks her way through boxes of donated baby clothes, toys and other assorted items destined for local people battered by the UK's cost-of-living crisis. It's the frontline of something the special needs nurse could never have imagined before — dire poverty in a developed Western nation.

"I've never seen anything like this in my life here in the UK," Wester-Okiya, who came to Britain 40 years ago from Malaysia, told AFP. It's a similar story of economic hardship 140 kilometres north (85 miles) north in the central English city of Coventry.

In a huge warehouse, employees of the charity Feed the Hungry pack emergency food supplies not just for children in Nicaragua, Ukraine and Africa but also families just a few miles down the road. Britain is in the midst of the biggest surge in prices in decades, from fuel and heating to food and housing costs.

The crisis has put food banks that have already become a feature of modern British life under even greater pressure, prompting a drive to branch out into offering other services from baby clothes to help applying for welfare payments.

'Suicidal mums'

"We have suicidal mums... we have kids who just managed to come through the pandemic only to find this terrible cost-of-living crisis," said Wester-Okiya.

"Broken mums, broken homes, broken families. The mums are depressed, the kids are crying all the time."

For the past two-and-a-half years the Hackney Children & Baby Bank has been flat out coordinating help for the needy.

Set up during the pandemic, it has repeatedly swung into action to deal with crisis after crisis, from migrants who have arrived in small boats with nothing to homeless Afghans and Ukrainians. But many of those in need of help now are people from the UK who've never before faced such economic pain.

"We're no longer talking of just migrants, we are talking of middle-class people having to sell their house, people like teachers," said Wester-Okiya.

Faced with a constantly growing crisis — the UK now has more than 2,500 food banks — the baby bank has expanded its operations to include older children too. Toiletries are in particularly high demand.

"One teen, 14 years old, wrote a terrible poem about how she's bullied because she's not able to



COVENTRY: A worker at The Halo Centre, the central distribution point for donated items to be distributed to the Coventry Foodbank network of 14 sites across the city, collates food items into parcels that will be provided to people with a food-bank voucher, in Coventry. — AFP

wash," said Wester-Okiya, adding how the girl described her mother cutting a bar of soap into four and giving each family member a small piece.

Next meal

In Coventry, a city once home to a thriving car manufacturing industry, the "crazy" cost of everything has led single mother-of-four Hannah Simpson to visit a food bank for the first time.

Simpson, 29, whose youngest is just 12 months old, has been skipping meals to make sure her children can eat. But that has inevitably taken its toll, leaving her feeling "tired and drained".

"I try and hide my struggles from them... but my daughter did say to school the other day, 'I'm worried because mummy hasn't been eating dinner with us and there's not enough food to go round'," she said.

"It's a lot of stress. I've got four children, I've got to manage, keep on top of and I've got to worry where I'm going to get our next meal from."

A 50-year-old woman who gave her name as Tracy said the food bank has been a "lifesaver" since she began coming in November. "My cupboards were completely bare, I've been having one meal a day, just waiting until my tea every day," she said.

Faced with a crisis that is only getting worse, Feed

the Hungry, which runs Coventry's 14 food banks as well as its international operation, has launched a range of projects aimed at helping people to cope long term. A project to teach people to cook and make the best of what they have available is under development.

'Sold everything'

A "Pathfinder" project offers people the chance to buy food worth £25 (\$30) for a small fee, giving them back some choice and "dignity" while at the same time offering them help to access grants and unclaimed welfare payments.

"It's working, the only issue that we have is that demand far outstrips what we can actually deliver," said project manager Hugh McNeill.

People who come through the charity's doors have "no financial resilience whatsoever, they've borrowed and they've sold everything they've got", he added.

"You can go right round the country and it's exactly the same in every city and every town."

For Wester-Okiya, hopes of building resilience are a long way off. "My phone never stops," she said, waving a smartphone buzzing constantly with messages and pleas for help. "I've lived here for 40 years and as a nurse I interact a lot with families but last year was terrible and I fear for the next three months." —AFP

US firm make bid for bankrupt UK car battery firm

LONDON: US firm Recharge Industries on Wednesday said it was making a cash bid for Britishvolt, a UK firm behind a planned gigafactory for electric vehicle batteries that declared bankruptcy last week. The start-up, championed by former prime minister Boris Johnson to help drive a greener economy, had been developing the multi-billion-pound project in Blyth, north-east England.

However, the company, once valued at \$1 billion, last week fell into administration, a process whereby a troubled company brings in outside expertise to try and salvage parts of the business. Recharge Industries said the bid would include purchasing the entire site and facilities, "and offers a vision to retain current Britishvolt staff."

"We have made a non-binding cash offer," said David Collard, CEO of Scale Facilitation, the investment firm that owns Recharge Industries. "There will be roles for remaining employees within Britishvolt and also supporting our Australian facility in the interim remotely from the UK," he added.

Financial firm EY said it would oversee Britishvolt's administration, confirming that a formal application for the process had been submitted. The "majority" of its 300 staff have been made redundant "with immediate effect", it added.

Britishvolt had been in emergency fundraising talks since the end of last year, despite the promise of government financial support and in the wake of funding by metals giant Glencore and British luxury car firm Aston Martin. Britishvolt had hoped to produce 300,000 electric vehicle batteries a year at Blyth. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 26 JANUARY 2023

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

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,095	1,101	1,115	1,092	23	12,022,092	1	0.09%	2.13%	1,100	1,113	18.4	2.14	2.2%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	307	319	321	307	14	22,469,717	13	4.25%	1.59%	316	321	16.7	1.45	2.1%	1.27
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	195	203	210	195	15	99,423,827	9	4.64%	3.57%	203	209	36.9	0.65	1.9%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	228	226	232	225	7	4,466,028	-4	-1.74%	3.20%	225	230	22.6	0.82	2.1%	1.28
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	820	833	853	819	34	87,026,114	13	1.59%	1.22%	825	840	28.1	3.44	1.3%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	805	802	815	802	13	3,669,731	-7	-0.87%	0.50%	797	803	52.6	3.20	0.6%	1.09
204	National Investments	Financial Services	238	246	256	237	19	5,961,361	6	2.50%	3.80%	244	248	18.2	1.01	18.2%	1.88
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	116	114	120	113	7	18,298,337	-2.0	-1.72%	1.79%	110	122	NULL	0.58	4.4%	1.00
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	70.9	71.0	71.9	70	2	3,761,658	0.3	0.42%	-5.21%	71.0	72.8	NULL	0.42	12.6%	1.23
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	108	110	112	107	5	71,930,616	3	2.80%	1.85%	108	111	16.1	0.81	2.6%	1.09
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	840	833	865	830	35	1,064,519	2	0.24%	-1.77%	825	839	17.3	1.84	1.6%	1.03
501	National Industries	Financial Services	221	215	227	214	13	17,325,054	-5	-2.27%	-0.92%	215	221	10.9	0.96	5.1%	1.50
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,172	1,225	1,250	1,155	95	1,022,865	53	4.52%	0.82%	1,202	1,226	11.8	1.18	4.9%	1.01
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	780	796	805	780	25	988,471	17	2.18%	-0.50%	790	813	8.3	1.57	7.5%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	588	594	618	584	34	52,576,891	10	1.71%	-17.50%	593	625	39.4	1.11	2.8%	1.55
605	Zain	Telecommunications	560	561	572	556	16	13,111,291	1	0.18%	-0.36%	557	571	13.0	2.03	5.9%	0.77
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,528	3,424	3,528	3,405	123	564,035	-76	-2.17%	-2.73%	3,400	3,499	7.3	3.51	11.5%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	203	215	220	202	18	17,881,399	13	6.44%	5.91%	210	217	NULL	0.90	0.0%	1.19
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,640	1,640	1,650	1,625	25	1,782,381	0	0.00%	-13.68%	1,571	1,645	12.5	9.67	2.8%	1.41
821	Warba Bank	Banking	238	242	247	237	10	13,732,566	4	1.68%	2.98%	240	249	24.6	1.34	0.0%	1.10
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	403	409	420	401	19	2,674,808	3	0.74%	4.07%	405	432	NULL	1.31	3.8%	0.49
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	361	364	375	355	20	5,215,940	7	1.96%	-1.62%	358	371	23.5	1.47	2.8%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	181	182	187	180	7	4,276,915	1	0.55%	-3.19%	182	186	15.0	1.69	9.9%	0.49
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,025	2,036	2,090	2,005	85	564,495	16	0.79%	-0.78%	2,032	2,070	21.2	6.53	3.2%	0.98
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	820	834	839	814	25	3,269,374	18	2.21%	3.60%	830	850	12.1	4.21	5.7%	0.49

* As of end of week closing

Business

Boeing reports quarterly loss but reaffirms 2023 targets

Finishes 2022 with positive free cash flow for the first time since 2018

NEW YORK: Persistent supply chain woes and staffing issues led to another quarterly loss at Boeing, but the company on Wednesday confirmed its 2023 outlook amid strong aviation demand. Boeing said its commercial plane business was dented by "abnormal costs," while labor instability and supply chain disruption weighed on its defense, space and security unit.

The company's \$634 million loss for the quarter ending December 31 was smaller than the \$4.1 billion loss in the same period last year. Revenues rose 35 percent to \$20 billion, but came in below analyst forecasts. The aviation giant, which has been beset in recent years with production problems and certification delays following the 737 MAX crashes, nevertheless finished 2022 with positive free cash flow for the first time since 2018 as it reaffirmed 2023 targets. "We had a solid fourth quarter, and 2022 proved to be an important year in our recovery," said Boeing Chief Executive Dave Calhoun.

He told analysts the company expects more announcements akin to large orders unveiled in 2022 with United Airlines and Delta Air Lines. "There are some big interests in aviation," Calhoun said. "I'd say the majority now are outside the US as opposed to inside the US and we're considering really big things."

Nervousness about the near-term economic outlook also doesn't affect those plans, he said. "Recessions don't seem to get in the way because remember, we're competing for deliveries out four and five years from now, so they're not really computing recession into that," he said.

'Bumpy' 2023

Boeing has said it expects to return to a level of

financial strength comparable to its pre-pandemic state around the 2025-26 timeframe. The company's turnaround has been aided by robust demand for commercial planes as airlines struggle to meet pent-up demand for flying and replace older planes with newer jets that burn less energy and release fewer carbon emissions.

But efforts to ramp up output have been hindered by snags in garnering key parts and materials, including delays in receiving engines from key suppliers. In an interview with CNBC, Calhoun said suppliers have made progress in hiring more staff but are still working through the process to be able to increase output.

"You have to train," Calhoun told the network. "Every one of these products are pretty sophisticated." He predicted that 2023 would remain "bumpy" as far as the supply chain, but said the ramp-up was aided by shared knowledge that demand for aviation remains strong.

Boeing has resumed deliveries of the 787 Dreamliner after a lengthy halt, and confirmed it would increase production in 2023 from the current "low" level. The company expects to deliver 70-80 Dreamliners in 2023, up from 31 last year. Boeing is also eyeing 400-450 deliveries of 737s, compared with 387 in 2022.

Breakthrough in China?

A key unknown facing the company is the degree to which it can expect bankable revenues from China after a lengthy pause in deliveries of 737 MAX planes while the country maintained strict Covid-19 policies. Boeing executives have previously suggested the suspension was a reflection at least in part of the tense state of US-China relations.



RENTON: A Boeing logo hangs on the side of a construction hangar, where Boeing 737 MAX airliners are built, in Renton, Washington. Boeing has reported a fourth-quarter loss of \$634 million on January 25, 2023, as elevated operating and supply chain costs offset a December uptick in commercial plane deliveries. —AFP

China was the last major market to clear the MAX to return to service after a global grounding following two fatal crashes. Earlier this month, a 737 MAX operated by China Southern Airlines undertook the first flight by a MAX plane in the country since March 2019.

Calhoun told CNBC that he expects progress over the next six months in moving the 100 MAX planes already in China back into the air, but that he wouldn't engage in a "guessing game" about when deliveries of new planes could resume.

The Boeing CEO said he was "optimistic and constructive" around the market given the reopening Chinese economy, but that he didn't have "rose colored glasses on." CFRA Research analyst Colin Scarola, who has a "strong buy" recommendation on Boeing with a \$255 price target, expects supply chain problems to ease in the second half of 2023 and predicted that China's shift on Covid-19 "will boost 737 demand as well as aid the supply chain." Shares of Boeing finished 0.3 percent higher at \$212.68 after a rollercoaster session. —AFP

Adani exploring legal action over fraud claims

MUMBAI: An Indian conglomerate owned by Asia's richest man Gautam Adani said Thursday it was exploring legal action against a US investment firm that accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud. Hindenburg Research this week alleged that Adani Group had used undisclosed related-party transactions and earnings manipulation to "maintain the appearance of financial health and solvency" of its listed business units.

Wednesday saw a major sell-off of Adani shares, wiping \$6 billion from the net worth of its 60-year-old founder and knocking him down one place to fourth on Forbes' real-time global rich list. Adani Group hit back on Thursday against Hindenburg's "maliciously mischievous" report and said it was the victim of a reckless reputational attack just as it was preparing for a major fundraising round.

"The volatility in Indian stock markets created by the report is of great concern and has led to unwanted anguish for Indian citizens," Adani legal chief Jatin Jalundhwal said in a statement.

Hindenburg's announcement that it had taken a short position in the group's companies was proof that the company had a vested interest in driving down share prices through the release of its report, he added. "We are evaluating the relevant provisions under US and Indian laws for remedial and punitive action."

Adani's sprawling business empire has interests ranging from Australian coal mines to India's biggest ports and the combined market cap of its seven listed companies exceeds \$218 billion. Shares in its business units have soared up to 2,000 percent in the past three years, adding more than \$100 billion to its founder's net worth and vaulting him up the ranks of the world's richest people.

Adani—now with an estimated fortune of around \$120 billion—is considered a close supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

'Fear of reprisal'

Hindenburg's report accused Adani Group of engaging in a "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades". It claimed Adani's elder brother Vinod managed "a vast labyrinth of offshore shell entities" in tax havens including Mauritius, Cyprus and several Caribbean islands.

The report said a pattern of "government leniency towards the group" stretching back decades had left investors, journalists, citizens and politicians unwilling to challenge the group's conduct "for fear of reprisal".

Its allegations come ahead of an ambitious \$2.5 billion follow-on public offer—India's biggest-ever—due to open for bids on Friday and aimed at bolstering the business empire's balance sheet. Shares in flagship Adani Enterprises fell as much as three percent on Wednesday, before recovering to trade 1.07 percent lower at the close in Mumbai.

Indian markets were closed Thursday for India's national Republic Day holiday. —AFP

Toyota to replace Akio Toyoda as president, CEO

TOKYO: Toyota named Koji Sato president and CEO on Thursday, in a surprise reshuffle that sees third-generation chief executive Akio Toyoda step aside to become board chairman of the world's top-selling automaker. The Japanese automaker said Sato, 53, would also become operating officer when the changes to its executive structure take effect on April 1.

Sato—previously chief branding officer, and president of Toyota's luxury Lexus brand—is taking the helm at a time of major upheaval for the industry, with electric vehicles now centre-stage. He is the same age as Toyoda was in 2009 when he became the company's youngest president, after the global financial crash.

"He has youth, and like-minded colleagues—I expect this team to go beyond the limits that I cannot break through," Toyoda told reporters. "To promote change in an era in which the future is unpredictable, the head of management must continue to stand on the front lines. For that, stamina, energy and passion are indispensable."

Toyoda, 66, is the grandson of company founder Kiichiro Toyoda. His father Shoichiro Toyoda also led Toyota, in the 1980s and '90s. He is known as a charismatic leader, having steered the group

Philippines economy grows 7.6% despite inflation threat

MANILA: The Philippines' economic growth beat expectations last year, expanding to its fastest pace in 46 years on the back of strong consumer spending despite rising inflation, officials said Thursday. Gross domestic product expanded 7.6 percent in 2022, the state statistics agency said in a briefing, faster than the pandemic-blighted 5.7 percent output in 2021.

The reading topped the government's target of 6.5-7.5 percent expansion. "There was so much pent-up demand... and that significantly improved economic activities," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said in a briefing.

"We are confident that we will remain in our high growth trajectory," he added. The full-year print was also the Philippines' best economic performance since 1976, according to official data. Growth in the last three months of the year also beat expectations, expanding 7.2 percent against a

Pakistani rupee plunges to all-time low against dollar

KARACHI: The Pakistani rupee dived to an historic low against the US dollar on Thursday after an exchange cap was lifted as Islamabad campaigns to unlock a vital bailout from the IMF. Pakistan is in dire economic straits, with shrivelling foreign exchange reserves only enough to pay for around three weeks of imports amid an endless effort to service external debt.

The rupee shed 24.11 in the official interbank market on Thursday, falling as low as 255.43

through a quality-control scandal that saw him apologise before the US Congress, and supply chain chaos caused by Japan's 2011 quake and tsunami. More recently, he has worked to strengthen Toyota's ambitions in the key electric vehicle sector.

The company pioneered hybrid cars, but some critics say it has been slow to make the shift to battery-powered engines even as demand soars for low-emission automobiles. In December 2021, Toyota hiked its electric vehicle sales goal by 75 percent and said it planned to roll out 30 battery-powered electric models by the turn of the decade.

'I love making cars'

Sato has worked for Toyota since graduating with a bachelor's in mechanical engineering in 1992. "I'm an engineer and have long been engaged with developing cars. I love making cars," Sato said. Toyoda will replace 76-year-old Takeshi Uchiyamada as board chair. Uchiyamada was chief engineer of the team that developed the hugely popular Prius, the world's first mass-produced hybrid model.

Born in the city of Nagoya where Toyota is based, as a child Toyoda wanted to become a taxi driver. He is a passionate motorsports fan and has even competed in races himself—using the pseudonym "Morizo", so as not to draw attention from his day job as a chief executive. Although the Toyodas own just a small percentage of Toyota's stock, several subsidiaries are run by extended family members in a complex cross-ownership system. In November, Toyota left its annual net profit forecast unchanged as a weaker yen offset a global chip shortage and

6.6 percent median estimate in a Bloomberg survey of economists.

"The improvements in labour market conditions, increased tourism, revenge and holiday spending, and resumption of face-to-face classes supported growth in the quarter," Balisacan said. Agricultural production, however, grew just half a percent last year, barely contributing to the overall output.

Consumer spending weathered rising inflation as pent-up demand to spend in restaurants and entertainment as well as more jobs fuelled domestic demand, Balisacan said. "Clearly, if not for the high inflation and elevated prices during this period, growth could have been higher," Balisacan said.

Inflation hit 8.1 percent in December, the fastest in 14 years, prompting the central bank to aggressively raise interest rates. Inflation stood at 5.8 percent for the full year, above the bank's target. Balisacan said keeping commodity prices in check and ensuring food security are at the top of the government's priorities "as global and domestic headwinds persist".

Officials are aiming for growth of 6-7 percent this year amid fears of a global economic slowdown. "That is a very respectable growth for the Philippine economy if we achieve that." The higher

rupees to the dollar, according to multiple sources. The 9.6 percent decline of the rupee is the second-biggest drop in a single session, brokerage Topline Securities said.

The previous official low of 240 rupees was recorded in July 2022, when Pakistan's long-struggling economy was further weakened by political chaos and devastating floods. In 2019, the government of former prime minister Imran Khan brokered a multi-billion dollar loan package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But the economy slid backwards when Khan reneged on his promise to cut subsidies and market interventions that had cushioned the cost-of-living crisis. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who ousted Khan in a no-confidence vote last spring, has also been reluctant to meet loan conditions



TOKYO: President of Japanese automaker Toyota, Akio Toyoda, gesturing at a briefing on electric vehicle battery strategies at the company's showroom in Tokyo. —AFP

supply-chain disruptions that have repeatedly forced it to slash production targets.

Semiconductors are an essential component of modern cars, and the pandemic-triggered chip drought has pummeled Toyota and its rivals worldwide. But in January, it set a production target for 2023 of 10.6 million vehicles in the Toyota and Lexus brands—above recent years, including even the 9.05 million units in pre-pandemic 2019.

Still, it warned there was a risk production would come in up to 10 percent lower because of ongoing parts shortages. —AFP



MANILA: A vendor sells clothes to customers in the Divisoria district of Manila on January 26, 2023. The Philippines' economic growth beat expectations last year, fuelled by strong consumer spending. —AFP

than expected growth could give the central bank "space to tightening policy further", ING senior economist Nicholas Mapa said. "Inflation, although close to peak, remains well-above target and could prove to be sticky over the coming months," Mapa said. —AFP

amid falling popularity.

Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan President Zafar Paracha told AFP the cap was lifted on Wednesday "in consultation with the state bank". Mohammad Sohail, the CEO of Topline Securities, told AFP: "Inflation is bound to rise further."

Pakistan is drastically short on forex reserves owing to persistently rising demand for the dollar. Thousands of shipping containers packed with raw materials for industry, foodstuffs, and medical equipment are being held up at Karachi port because banks have refused to guarantee importers' dollar transactions.

Pakistan also suffered from a nationwide electricity outage earlier this week, linked to a cost-cutting measure, estimated to have cost the textile industry alone \$70 million. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Asteroid to come 'extraordinarily close' to Earth: NASA

A truck-sized asteroid will pass near Earth on Thursday in one of the closest approaches to our planet ever recorded, NASA said, emphasizing that it poses no danger. Asteroid 2023 BU, which was recently discovered by an amateur astronomer, will zoom by the southern tip of South America at around 4:27 pm PST on Thursday (0027 GMT Friday), according to NASA.

It will pass just 2,200 miles (3,600 kilometers) from Earth's surface, much closer than many geostationary satellites orbiting the planet. But there is no risk that the asteroid will hit Earth, NASA said in a

statement on Wednesday.

Even if it did, the asteroid measuring 3.5-8.5 meters (11-28 feet) across would largely disintegrate in the Earth's atmosphere, potentially just resulting in a few small meteorites. It was discovered on Saturday from an observatory in Crimea by amateur astronomer Gennadiy Borisov, who previously spotted an interstellar comet in 2019. Dozens of observations were then carried out by observatories across the world. NASA's Scout impact hazard assessment system quickly determined that the asteroid would miss Earth, the US space agency said.

"Despite the very few observations, it was nonetheless able to predict that the asteroid would make an extraordinarily close approach with Earth," said NASA's Davide Farnocchia who helped develop Scout. "In fact, this is one of the closest approaches by a known near-Earth object ever recorded." The asteroid will come so close that its trajectory around the Sun will be significantly altered. Previously it took the asteroid 359 days to complete its orbit around the Sun, but after this close call with Earth, it will now take 425, NASA said. —AFP



Panic! at the Disco is ending after nearly two decades

Panic! at the Disco, the emo-pop band that began in 2004, is ending its run after seven albums and nearly two decades. Brendon Urie, the band's frontman and last remaining original member, made the announcement on Instagram Tuesday. The post said the band's upcoming European tour for the 2022 album Viva Las Vengeance will be its last. "Growing

up in Vegas I could've never imagined where this life would take me," Urie wrote. "But sometimes a journey must end for a new one to begin."

In the post, he also announced that his wife is pregnant with their first child. "I am going to bring this chapter of my life to an end and put my focus and energy on my family," Urie wrote. By the time Urie made this announcement, Panic! at the Disco had been a solo project for years. The last album with all of the band's original members was Too Weird to Live, Too Rare to Die! in 2013. More than a dozen of Panic! at the Disco's songs have made the Billboard Hot 100 songs, with two - "High Hopes" at No. 4 in 2019 and "I Write Sins Not Tragedies" at No. 7 in 2006 - making it into the top 10. — www.wsiu.org

French pop queen Aya Nakamura in court for domestic violence

French-Malian megastar Aya Nakamura appeared in court Thursday over allegations of mutual domestic violence with her ex Vladimir Boudnikoff, just a day before her new album is released. "As everyone knows, today we have a rather unusual defendant," the presiding judge said as proceedings began in the criminal court in Rosny-sous-Bois, just outside Paris. The 27-year-old singer and Boudnikoff, with whom she has a young daughter, sat side by side in the packed courtroom.

Police were called to Boudnikoff's Rosny-sous-Bois home twice on the night of August 6-7 last year, ultimately detaining the pair. Nakamura-born Aya Danioko in Mali-said she had been attacked by her ex, a source familiar with the case told AFP. "It didn't really come to blows," the source added, saying both suffered "scratches" while Boudnikoff had "held her down on the ground".

"We did some stupid things that night" but "nothing serious" happened, Boudnikoff wrote on Instagram following the altercation. The court hearing against both for domestic violence was delayed from the original November date.

Nakamura is one of the biggest-selling francophone artists in the world, with 2018 sensation "Djadja" racking up over 900 million views on YouTube. She has been hailed for rapping and singing about

women's empowerment and black identity, mixing French, slang, Arabic and her family's native Bambara language. "Her music manages to reach the whole country, from the housing projects to detached homes, from middle-class school gates to village halls," daily Le Monde wrote in a recent profile. Her latest album, named DNK for the consonants of her family name, will be released on Friday. —AFP



In this file photo French-Malian singer Aya Nakamura (right) and her partner Vladimir Boudnikoff arrive for the screening of the film 'Armageddon Time' during the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Out of Nile, into tile: Young Egyptians battle plastic plague

Entrepreneurial young Egyptians are helping combat their country's huge plastic waste problem by recycling junk-food wrappers, water bottles and similar garbage that usually ends up in landfills or the Nile. At a factory on the outskirts of Cairo, run by their startup TileGreen, noisy machines gobble up huge amounts of plastic scraps of all colors, shred them and turn them into a thick liquid.



Plastic waste is heated to be melted at a workshop of the startup company "TileGreen", where it is recycled into eco-friendly interlocking tiles.

The sludge-made from all kinds of plastic, even single-use shopping bags-is then molded into dark, compact bricks that are used as outdoor pavers for walkways and garages. "They're twice as strong as concrete," boasts co-founder Khaled Raafat, 24, slamming one onto the floor for emphasis.

Each tile takes about "125 plastic bags out of the environment", says his business partner Amr Shalan, 26, raising his voice above the din of the machines.

Raafat said the company uses even low-grade plastics and products "made of many different layers of plastic and aluminum that are nearly impossible to separate and recycle sustainably".

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, is also the biggest plastic polluter in the Middle East and Africa, according to a multinational study reported by Science magazine. The country generates more than three million tons of plastic waste per year, much of which piles up in streets and illegal landfills or finds its way into the Nile and the



A worker carries a bucket of plastic waste at a workshop of the startup company "TileGreen", where it is recycled into eco-friendly interlocking tiles used in outdoor walkways, in the Ashir min Ramadan (10th of Ramadan) industrial city. — AFP photos

Mediterranean Sea. Microplastics in the water concentrate in marine life, threatening the health of people who consume seafood and fish caught in Africa's mighty waterway-mirroring what has become a worldwide environmental scourge.

'Their children's future'

TileGreen, launched in 2021, aims to "recycle three billion to five billion plastic bags by 2025", said Shalan. The start-up

last year started selling its outdoor tiles, of which it has produced some 40,000 so far, and plans to expand into other products usually made from cement. Egypt, a country of 104 million, has pledged to more than halve its annual consumption of single-use plastics by 2030 and to build multiple new waste management plants.

For now, however, more than two thirds of Egypt's waste is "inadequately managed", according to the World Bank-driving an ecological hazard environmental groups have been trying to tackle. On



2020 study by a group of Danish and UK-based scientists published in the journal Toxics. Off the port city of Alexandria, further north, microplastics were detected in 92 percent of fish caught, said a study last year by researchers at Egypt's National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries. VeryNile, started five years ago with a series of volunteer clean-up events, buys "between 10 and 12 tons of plastic a month" from 65 fishermen, paying them 14 Egyptian pounds (about 50 US cents) per kilogram, Fawzy said.

a battle against a global scourge. Less than 10 percent of the world's plastic is recycled, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD said last year that annual production of fossil-fuel-based plastics is set to top 1.2 billion tons by 2060, with waste exceeding one billion tons.

In Egypt, activists have hailed what they see as a youth-led push for sustainability that has created demand for environmentally-minded solutions and products. But while the change is welcome,



A worker shreds plastic waste to be recycled into eco-friendly interlocking tiles used in outdoor walkways at a workshop of the startup company "TileGreen".

'Good step forward'

VeryNile then compresses high-value plastic like water bottles and sends it to a recycling plant to be made into pellets. Low-quality plastics such as food wrappers are incinerated to power a cement factory which, Fawzy said, keeps "the environment clean with air filters and a sensitive monitoring system."

"We can't clean up the environment in one spot just to pollute elsewhere," he said. The Egyptian programs are part of

they say it remains insufficient.

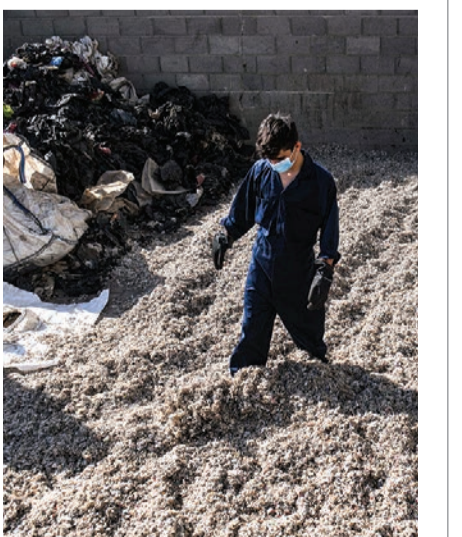
"What these initiatives have done is find a way to create a value chain, and there's clearly demand," said Mohamed Kamal, co-director of environmental group Greenish. "Anything that captures value from waste in Egypt is a good step forward. But it's not solving the problem. It can only scratch the surface." — AFP



A worker dumps plastic waste out of a mixer before it is to be recycled into eco-friendly interlocking tiles.



Workers dump plastic waste into a mixer before it is to be recycled into eco-friendly interlocking tiles.



Workers sort through shredded plastic waste at a workshop of the startup company "TileGreen", where it is recycled into eco-friendly interlocking tiles used in outdoor walkways.

Amsterdam unveils its largest bike garage

It's underwater. Plagued by ever-shrinking space to park its hundreds of thousands of bicycles, Amsterdam opened Wednesday the first of its largest-ever bicycle parking complexes, built underwater in a pioneering engineering project. The shelter is constructed beneath the Open Haven Front, an access tributary to the city's IJ river, and will be followed by another next to the IJ itself that will open in February.

They will have a combined capacity for 11,000 bikes in the cycling-mad Dutch capital. "Together the shelters will be the largest in the city," the Amsterdam municipality said, with the Open Haven Front storage able to take 7,000 bicycles and the IJ-side site around 4,000. Construction started in 2019 and involved draining part of the Open Haven Front next to Amsterdam Central Station.

A time-lapse video posted by the Amsterdam municipality showed how the water was pumped out, the structure built and the area eventually reflooded. "We have a lot of knowledge and expertise when it comes to water," Dutch deputy infrastructure minister Vivianne Heijnen told AFP at the opening ceremony. —AFP

Influencer Andrew Tate says Romania case against him empty

Romanian prosecutors on Wednesday further questioned divisive influencer Andrew Tate over alleged human trafficking and rape, with the British-American national denouncing the case brought against him as void. "There's no evidence in my file, because I've done nothing wrong. Everybody knows I'm innocent," Tate, surrounded by a slew of reporters, shouted after the hearing by Romania's anti-organized crime and terrorism directorate (DIICOT) ended.

"The matrix is trying to frame me, but God knows the truth," he said. Former kickboxer Tate, his younger brother and two Romanian women are under investigation for allegedly "forming an organized criminal group, human trafficking and rape". They are accused of coercing women into "forced labor... and pornographic acts" for "substantial financial benefits". All four were arrested at the end of December. Tate, 36, and his brother Tristan, 34, deny all accusations.

The Tate brothers both claimed their innocence on Wednesday, with Tristan saying DIICOT prosecutors "have nothing against me". Last week, a



Tristan Tate, brother of British-US former professional kickboxer and controversial influencer Andrew Tate (not in picture) talks to media as he leaves Romania's anti-organized crime and terrorism directorate (DIICOT), after a digital investigation of devices, where his presence was required, in Bucharest, Romania.

Bucharest court extended their detention until February 27, a decision which they are appealing. Their detention could be extended to a maximum of 180 days, pending possible indictment. "They want the truth to come out quickly," said Eugen Vidineac, who repre-

sents the Tate brothers, adding that they had provided detailed statements and collaborated.

On Tuesday Andrew Tate-whose Twitter handle "Cobratate" currently has 4.8 million followers-said "a political operation designed to degrade" his influ-

ence and an "unjust imprisonment" had been used to "silence empowering people", implying he was among them. He also deplored the poor conditions of his detention, tweeting that "cockroaches, lice and bedbugs" are his "only friends at night". According to prosecutors, a human trafficking network set up by the suspects had been operating since 2019 and recruited "several victims, including minors... for the purpose of sexual exploitation".

The potential victims were tricked by the Tate brothers, who feigned affection, before being forced into prostitution and the production of pornographic films, prosecutors said. In 2016, Tate appeared on the "Big Brother" reality television show in Britain but was removed after a video emerged showing him attacking a woman. He then turned to social media platforms to promote his divisive views before being banned for misogynistic remarks and hate speech. Tate was allowed back on Twitter after the billionaire Elon Musk bought the company. — AFP

GOLD MINES, TRASH AND MEMORIES: SOWETO'S URBAN HIKE



This aerial view shows hikers walking amongst mine dumps during a guided hike along the Ndofaya trail in Soweto.



The guide of the Ndofaya trail, Masike Lebele (right), addresses a group of hikers in Soweto.



Hikers cross a field during a guided hike of the Ndofaya trail in Soweto.

Soweto is full of gritty urban landscapes and alleys which evoke its history as one of apartheid's battlegrounds. Yet there is also a gentler, folksier side to the vast Johannesburg township, and one that local entrepreneurs are portraying to curious tourists. Every Sunday morning, Masike Lebele takes about 20 hikers for a walk in his childhood neighborhood, opening their eyes to a vista where countryside, abandoned gold mines, trash and deep-rooted folk beliefs all co-exist.

"This was my playground," said Lebele, a wiry 40-year-old who wore a leopard-print shirt and a floppy hat. "I

was adventurous as a kid," he said, his eyes sharp and wearing a smile. "We used to be little hunter-gatherers here," he said, pointing to a dam by an abandoned gold mine. "We learned to swim here." The starting point for his walk is a "shebeen"-a local tavern set up in a house that belonged to his grandmother. A recent hike on the six-and-a-half-kilometer (four-mile) route began in the early morning.

For safety, a dozen friends accompanied the group. Walkers crossed a street littered with rubbish and old tyres, where fresh fruit and snacks vendors had set up their stalls. "This is where Soweto

starts," said Lufuno Matidza, the elegant partner of the guide, wearing futuristic glasses, large earrings and bright pink lipstick. In the distance rose the silhouette of Johannesburg's skyscrapers-another world. A wasteland dotted with reeds descended towards a stream. "Sangomas"-a Zulu word for traditional healers-"consider this first portion a holy land," said Masike, asking hikers to speak softly.

'Untold stories of Soweto'

A naked man sat quietly in the stream and six others in robes sang melodies. A little further on, three women wrapped in

shawls had lit colored candles, which melted on a rock. The silence was broken by a cry. "What's that?" an anxious walker asked. "It's a person roaring, reaching out to the ancestors," Matidza answered laconically, without breaking her stride. The walk wove its way through a mountain of gold-colored mine tailings, sometimes streaked with a chemical blue color.

More than a century of plundering the earth for gold has left a strange but compelling legacy in Soweto. Pollution from mine dumps is common, and erosion has created unstable galleries of compacted sand, spectacular but crumbly.

supports a flourishing tourism industry, boasting tours of museums, shebeens and a street where two Nobel winners-Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu-used to live. But nearly 30 years after the advent of democracy, the township is plagued by ills, ranging from poverty and unemployment to substance abuse and crime.

Christo Welgemoed, 62, who lives just 11 kilometers (six miles) from Soweto, said the hike was horizon-broadening. "Had I not heard of this hike on a local post, I would never have come here," he told AFP. "We usually go into nature, streams, mountains and so



This aerial view shows hikers descending from the top of a mine dump during a guided hike of the Ndofaya trail in Soweto.



This aerial view shows hikers gathering around the guide of the Ndofaya trail, Masike Lebele (center), as they rest during a guided hike of the Ndofaya trail in Soweto.— AFP photos

"Gold is always here," said Lebele, who said he was deeply attached to the seemingly desolate landscape. At the exit of the ochre galleries was a plateau of yellow sand.

"This is where we became kung fu masters. Each group we came across we fought," the tattooed Lebele recalled. The heights of the dumped spoil give a spectacular view of Soweto, divided by streets into grids of small homes. "This is our home," said Matidza.

As the cradle of apartheid, Soweto

forth, (but) this is more of a cultural experience than normal."

Noreen Wahome, 29, a Kenyan living in Johannesburg, said she came on the walk out of her love for the "untold stories of Soweto". Lebele said his Soweto Ndofaya Hike was booked for weeks ahead. "People just think that mine dumps are a place of danger but... these are places of fun and exploring," he said. — AFP



ELIE SAAB'S SPRING COUTURE IN PARIS DREAMS OF THAI ESCAPE

Elie Saab whisked his guests away to Thailand for a Paris fashion Week couture show Wednesday that gleamed with gold and intricate silk embroidery. Sheer diaphanous cloth floated around the runway in Le Marais' Carreau du Temple amid wafting perfume, as "Emily in Paris" star Paul Forman and socialite Olivia Palermo posed for the cameras.

Haute couture is an artisanal tradition invented by English designer Charles Frederick Worth in the 1870s. It involves intricate, time-consuming sewing, use of unusual fabrics and luxurious embellishments such as rare feathers and semi-precious stone beading - and is exorbitantly priced.

— www.gulftoday.ae



Lebanese designer Elie Saab acknowledges the audience after the presentation of his Haute-Couture Spring-Summer 2023-2024 collection during Paris Fashion Week in Paris.



Models present creations from Elie Saab Haute-Couture Spring-Summer 2023-2024 collection during Paris Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP photos

'SAC ICONIQUE': HOW FRANCE WANTS YOU TO SAY 'IT-BAG'

A commission that seeks to act as a guardian of the French language has published a string of recommendations for translations of shopping and style terms, to replace widely-used English ones. Perhaps inspired by this month's Paris Fashion Week, the non-binding recommendations from the Commission for Enrichment of the French Language were published in Wednesday's Official

Journal. Instead of an "it-bag"-defined as "a handbag in the latest fashion or that stands for a brand"-ministries and businesses are encouraged to write "sac iconique".

An "it-boy" or "it-girl" can now safely be described as an "icone de la mode" and a "must-have" transforms into an "incontournable", while "try before you buy" becomes "essayer-acheter". There are also more baffling business terms

that may be unfamiliar to many native English speakers, like "digital native vertical brand" ("marque integree nee en ligne").

Set up in 2015, the Commission for Enrichment of the French Language aims to "provide French vocabulary appropriate to the need for communication that is clear and accessible to the greatest number of people", it said in the introduction to its 2021 annual report. Led by a member

of the Academie Francaise-founded in 1635 under King Louis XIII to guard "pure" French-the Commission says it "recalls to a broad audience the importance of having and using French vocabulary so as to keep our language functional".

Given the dominance of English in global business and technology, its terms are the most frequently targeted for translation into the language of Moliere. "These days there's no invention, innovation or

discovery that doesn't have its corresponding term, increasingly often in English," the Commission said in its report. "The flow of new concepts that must be defined and named in French is therefore continuous." The report cited fields including hydrogen power, the Covid-19 pandemic and malicious digital activities as recent areas to which its 20-odd expert groups have turned their attention. — AFP

Sports

Sixers hold off Simmons and Nets, Lillard sinks 60 points

Jordan Poole hit a go-ahead layup to give Warriors a thrilling 122-120 victory over Grizzlies

LOS ANGELES: The Philadelphia 76ers won their grudge match against Ben Simmons and the Brooklyn Nets 137-133 on Wednesday as Damian Lillard erupted for 60 points in Portland's victory over Utah.

After an acrimonious split from Philadelphia last year, Simmons returned to his former home to face a hostile reception from the Sixers crowd. The game marked the first time that Simmons has faced former team-mate Joel Embiid since his trade to Brooklyn last February that sent James Harden to Philadelphia.

Simmons left Philadelphia last year after locker-room tensions with Embiid, and the lingering bad blood was evident from the outset. The high-scoring first quarter was dogged by trash-talking as the sides scored 41 points apiece and gave up a combined 13 fouls.

Despite his team coming away with the win, Sixers coach Doc Rivers was unhappy with Philadelphia's "emotional" approach to the game. "There's a difference between intensity, playing with emotion and being too emotional," Rivers said afterwards.

"I thought our side honestly were on the wrong side of that a lot tonight. We have to be better at handling our emotions." Tyrese Maxey led the Sixers' scoring with 27 points, while Embiid finished with 26 and Harden 23. Seth Curry led Brooklyn's scorers with 32 points while Kyrie Irving added 30. Simmons was restricted to 12 points.

In Portland, Lillard bagged the fourth 60-point performance of his career as the Trail Blazers won a thrilling shoot-out with the Utah Jazz 134-124.

Lillard nailed nine three-pointers while shooting 21 of 29 from the field as Portland improved to 23-25 in the Western Conference standings.

"That was incredible," Blazers coach Chauncey Billups said of Lillard's performance. "You don't get to see that very often." Lillard is one of only six players in NBA history with multiple 60-point games. Wilt Chamberlain holds the record with 32 60-pointers, while Kobe Bryant achieved the feat six times.

The other players on the list are Michael Jordan (5), Elgin Baylor (4) and Harden (4). "Even when things weren't going our way, I always felt I could get us back in the game," Lillard said afterwards. "When you get in that type of zone you feel like you can control the outcome."

Elsewhere Wednesday, Jordan Poole hit a go-ahead layup with 2.4 seconds remaining to give the NBA champion Golden State Warriors a thrilling 122-120 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies in San Francisco. A frenzied clash between the two Western Conference rivals saw Stephen Curry ejected for only the third time in his career.

Curry was tossed out of the game with 1min 14 remaining after throwing his mouthguard in frustration after a rushed three-point attempt by Poole. However Poole made up for it with his game-winning layup to seal victory in a see-saw clash that saw no fewer than 24 lead changes.

Despite the ejection, Curry led the Warriors' scoring with 34 points, making 10 of 19 from the field. Klay Thompson added 24 points while Poole finished with 21 points. Ja Morant led the Memphis scoring with 29 points.



PORTLAND: Anfernee Simons #1 of the Portland Trail Blazers drives to the basket during the game against the Utah Jazz on January 25, 2023 at the Moda Center Arena in Portland, Oregon. —AFP

In Los Angeles meanwhile, Anthony Davis returned from a 20-game injury absence for the Lakers with 21 points in their 113-104 win over the San Antonio Spurs. LeBron James added 20 points while Patrick Beverley chipped in with 18.

In other games on Wednesday, Giannis Antetokounmpo's 33-point haul helped the

Milwaukee Bucks score a 107-99 victory over the Western Conference-leading Denver Nuggets. Antetokounmpo delivered a dominant display which also included 14 rebounds and three steals as the Bucks took full advantage of the absence of Nikola Jokic to defeat Denver. Aaron Gordon led the Nuggets' scoring with 26 points. — AFP

UK opposed to Russia athletes at Paris Olympics

LONDON: Moves to reintegrate Russian athletes for next year's Paris Olympics were strongly criticised by the British government on Thursday. Culture Secretary Michelle Donelan described plans by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to provide a pathway for Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete under a neutral flag as "a world away from the reality of war being felt by the Ukrainian people."

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the IOC advised international sports federations last February to exclude athletes from their competitions. However, on Wednesday, the IOC said in a press release that "no athlete should be prevented from competing just because of their passport."

The British government has offered military and humanitarian support to Ukraine since the invasion began. Donelan said they would now work with "like-minded countries" to oppose the reintegration of Russian athletes.

"I want to be clear that this position from the IOC is a world away from the reality of war being felt by the Ukrainian people - and IOC president (Thomas) Bach's own words less than a year ago where he strongly condemned Russia for breaking the Olympic Truce and urged it to 'give peace a chance,'" Donelan said. —AFP

Ryder, Rai, Grant lead at Torrey Pines

SAN DIEGO: England's Aaron Rai posted a birdie-birdie finish to join a three-way tie at the top of the leaderboard after Wednesday's opening round of the PGA Tour's Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines in California. The 27-year-old from Wolverhampton took advantage of benign golf conditions on the North Course to fire an eight-under-par 64 and finish the day alongside Americans Sam Ryder and Brent Grant.

Teeing off on the back nine, Rai made three birdies before the turn and then reeled off five birdies down the stretch to complete a bogey-free round. Grant meanwhile made nine birdies and one bogey for his eighth under. Ryder's bogey-free round comprised six birdies and a brilliant opening eagle three on the par-five 10th hole.

"Definitely played great all around," Rai said afterwards. "Really drove it great off the tee, which is probably the most important thing. As soon as you miss the fairway here with anything more than a short iron it is very, very difficult."

"So that was key today, drove it very well. Hit a lot of real good iron shots and made a few putts around the turn there, so all in all a very good round." Ryder said his opening eagle had laid the foundation for his low score.

"It was pretty stress-free, it was fun," Ryder said. "Always nice to get off to a good start in the round where you don't feel like you're kind of pressing or anything." The trio are one shot clear of Brendan Steele, who fired a seven-under-par 65, and two in front of a cluster of seven players on six under. —AFP



Sarah Al-Hubail and Jamal Buhassan with participants.



Participants in action.

Second stage of 'March of Gratitude' to conclude Saturday

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The first stage of the Gulf Initiative of bicycles being held under the theme "March of Gratitude" as riders covered more than 90 km,

while the second stage will still start from the seaside Shaab area towards Sahara Complex in Subhan, then they will head towards Safir Fintas covering a total distance of 70 km, while the initiative's activities will be conclude on Saturday.

Former Bahrain Member of Parliament Jamal Buhassan lauded the idea of the Gulf Initiative adding "this initiative is considered one of the joint Gulf initiatives that strengthens brotherly ties and integration that is built on love between all GCC citizens, and this comes through having such events." He wished the initiative success as well as all joint Gulf activities."

Buhassan said the sport activities between GCC citizens is one of the most important fields that bring brothers together, adding that the Gulf Initiative include several humanitarian messages and we are proud to spread such noble values.

Chairwoman of the organizing committee Sarah Al-Hubail thanked all supporters and sponsors, and hoped for more participation from the GCC in future events. Bader Al-Esaa who is known by Bunabil character said the "idea of organizing the initiative is a beautiful one and relies on challenging the body, and who can challenge his abilities, as he is able to do all what he wants."



Over 100 riders to partake in show jumping championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait International show jumping championship continues at Kuwait riding center with more than 100 riders and 150 horses with the support of Public Authority for Sport (PAS) and

Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC).

Referee Ali Al-Shareef from Jordan said the participating horses are tested before the start of the championship, to make sure they are fit for the competition, as far as striding, lack of cuts, vaccinations and make sure the passport belongs to the actual horse.

Dr Ahmad Al-Jassasi from Oman, who is the foreign commissioned vet for the tournament said, all horses must be tested, and to make sure the horse's passport is valid.

He said the horse's examination is done in the presence of a committee formed by Kuwait Equestrian Federation with consultation with the



International Federation, adding that the horse's trot will be tested to make sure about its readiness.

He said 122 horses were registered and two were disqualified and another two were placed under observation.

South Africa seek to avoid WCup embarrassment

BLOEMFONTEIN: South Africa go into a one-day international series against England in Bloemfontein on Friday needing a strong performance to ensure automatic qualification for the Cricket World Cup later this year. The three-match series is part of the International Cricket Council's World Cup Super League, from which the top eight teams will qualify for the World Cup in India in October and November.

South Africa need to win at least three of their remaining five fixtures - they also have to play two matches against the Netherlands - to climb above West Indies, who are currently in eighth place after completing their programme.

But Sri Lanka could also leapfrog the West Indies if they win at least two matches in their final series in New Zealand in March. South Africa can guarantee qualification by winning all five of their remaining games. Teams that fail to win a World Cup place automatically will have to play in a qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe in June and July.

The England ODI series comes at a time of transition for South Africa, following the resignation of Mark Boucher as head coach. Rob Walter, the new white ball coach, is completing his commitments with Central Districts in New Zealand and Shukri Conrad, appointed as Test coach, will stand in for the matches against England.

Conrad said he was in close contact with Walter. "We share similar ideas. We are in conversation literally every day." The South African selectors ignored calls for a shake-up in an under-performing 50-overs team, and have not injected new blood into their squad for the England series.

"It is a very settled squad," said Conrad. "They

understand what is required in this series." But it seems likely that there could be fresh thinking when Walter takes over next month. Walter showed in his first coaching role in New Zealand that he is willing to take tough action, after being appointed in charge of an Otago team that had failed to play to its potential.

"I had to take some tough decisions and it led to the departure of some senior players," he told South Africa's Rapport newspaper. One possibility could be a return to international cricket for former captain Faf du Plessis, 38, who hit the first century in South Africa's SA20 competition on Tuesday night.

But Walter, who worked with Du Plessis when he was head coach of the Titans franchise before moving to New Zealand in 2016, said his first task would be to talk to South African white-ball captain Temba Bavuma. Eight of England's squad have been playing in the SA20 competition, including captain Jos Buttler, who is the leading run-scorer, and fast bowler Jofra Archer, who has shown good form in five matches for the MI Cape Town team. —AFP

Sports

Dembele fires Barca past Real Sociedad to Copa semis

‘There are a lot of games that we can put to bed earlier’

BARCELONA: Ousmane Dembele's strike, capping a brilliant individual display, helped Barcelona beat Real Sociedad 1-0 on Wednesday, and reach the Copa del Rey semi-finals. The French forward struck in the 52nd minute to power the record 31-time cup-winners through against 10-man La Real, who had Brais Mendez sent off late in the first half.

Barcelona have enjoyed a strong start to 2023, winning the Spanish Super Cup and moving three points clear of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga, and continued it in a pulsating cup clash. Imanol Alguacil's Real Sociedad have thrilled in the league, sitting third, but were missing veteran playmaker David Silva and Mikel Merino through injury.

Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez, on his 43rd birthday, guided his team to a nervy victory, thanks to Dembele. The coach defended Dembele when taking over at Barcelona in November 2021, saying that with hard work he could be the best winger in the world.

“The most important thing is having the mentality that you will make the difference at Barcelona,” Xavi told reporters on Wednesday. “For me, Dembele is still one of the best in the world in his position. I am happy for him because he's a good guy and a good professional.”

“He has turned things around and that is not easy at Barca.” The Catalans came out of the blocks quickly and Robert Lewandowski had an effort blocked after the electric Dembele found him. At the other end Takefusa Kubo crashed a shot against the crossbar, as the game ebbed and flowed in entertaining fashion.

Barcelona fans frequently showed their ire towards referee Jesus Gil Manzano in the first half—he

was the official who sent off Lewandowski against Osasuna in November, resulting in a ban which the Pole is still serving in La Liga. However it was Real Sociedad midfielder Mendez who was sent off at Camp Nou on Wednesday, just before half-time. The Spaniard lunged in on Sergio Busquets, catching his compatriot with his studs above the ankle.

Decisive Dembele

Early in the second half, Barcelona broke the deadlock when Jules Kounde slid Dembele in down the right wing and he drove into the box and lashed the ball past Alex Remiro at the near post. It was the French forward's third goal in six games and another sign of his superb form under Xavi.

“It's hard to stop a player at such a level, in form and having a day like this,” said Alguacil. “We made things too easy for him in the first half ... I think we were afraid. If you give half a metre to Dembele, you're screwed.”

Now that Dembele has found a coach who believes in him—and signed a new deal last summer—he has become vital at Barcelona. “(Dembele) had a great game, we know what a great player he is,” Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo told Movistar.

“He helps us with goals, he's taking good decisions, that's the most important thing, something that maybe was tricky for him at the beginning.” Real Sociedad, despite their numerical disadvantage, battled well and should have levelled when Alexander Sorloth fired over from only a couple of yards out.

The Norwegian striker had netted five goals in his previous six games and looked aghast at his miss. Gavi struck the bar after more good work by Dembele as Barcelona tried and failed to seal the



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Pedri vies with Real Sociedad's Spanish midfielder Pablo Marin (L) during the Copa del Rey (King's Cup), quarter final football match between FC Barcelona and Real Sociedad. —AFP

win with a second goal. “There are a lot of games that we can put to bed earlier, we will try to work on that,” said Barcelona defender Alejandro Balde. “We are in very good form and we just have to kill off these situations.”

Barcelona survived two late scares after Marc-Andre ter Stegen gave the ball away but then saved

from Robert Navarro and produced another fine stop to deny Jon Ander Olasagasti. Elsewhere Osasuna earned a 2-1 win over Sevilla in extra-time to reach the semis for the first time since 2005, when they finished as runners-up to Real Betis. On Thursday Real Madrid host Atletico Madrid and Valencia welcome Athletic Club in the other quarter-finals. — AFP

City face Arsenal showdown, Reds eye revenge in FA Cup

LONDON: Manchester City and Arsenal take a break from an intense Premier League title race this weekend-only to face each other in a heavyweight FA Cup clash at the Etihad. Holders Liverpool will look to avenge their chastening recent defeat at Brighton, while Harry Kane could become Tottenham's all-time top scorer. AFP Sport picks out some of the highlights ahead of this weekend's FA Cup fourth-round ties.

Man City aim to halt Arsenal's momentum

Unexpectedly trailing in Arsenal's wake in the Premier League, Manchester City have the chance to slow the leaders' momentum in their first meeting this season. City are five points behind Arsenal, who have a game in hand, but the champions still have to play the Gunners twice in the league, making their FA Cup showdown a tantalising appetiser ahead of the main course. Arsenal are riding high after victo-

ries over Tottenham and Manchester United in the league, while City stayed in touch after responding to a blast from Pep Guardiola by beating Tottenham and Wolves. “At half-time the other day, Pep told us what he wanted, what he wasn't happy with. As players we were not at our best and we had to correct that,” City defender John Stones said of his side's fightback from two goals down to defeat Tottenham 4-2. It would be a major statement of intent from Arsenal if they are able to put Guardiola in another grumpy mood with a victory at the Etihad Stadium.

Fatigued Liverpool on revenge mission

Jürgen Klopp said he “couldn't remember a worse game” than Liverpool's woeful 3-0 defeat at Brighton, a performance so wretched that Jordan Henderson labelled it a “really low point” in an already traumatic season for the Reds. It is safe to say Liverpool's trip to the Amex Stadium on January 14 left some painful scars on Klopp and company. But the FA Cup offers them an unexpected chance to erase those bitter memories and get their campaign back on track. Liverpool return to Brighton languishing ninth in the Premier League, 10 points adrift of the top four. It is a remarkable fall from grace after they came within a whisker of winning an unprecedented quadruple last season.

city derby with Hertha Berlin.

“33 points halfway through (the season), that's exceptional. We have the derby coming up on Sunday, we have to be ready again.” Union took advantage of a 1-1 draw between Freiburg and Eintracht Frankfurt, both of whom could have joined the Berliners in equal second with a win.

Frankfurt's France striker Randal Kolo Muani scored just before halftime for a 1-0 lead, but Freiburg local boy Matthias Ginter equalised for the home side two minutes after halftime. Also on Wednesday night, Bayer Leverkusen won their fifth-straight Bundesliga game, beating Bochum at home ahead of Sunday's blockbuster clash against Dortmund.

Leverkusen took the lead early through an eighth-minute penalty to Edmond Tapsoba. A second-half goal by Czech striker Adam Hložek, set up by teenage midfielder Florian Wirtz on his return to the starting XI from an ACL tear, saw the home side claim all three points. Elsewhere, Augsburg lifted themselves out of the relegation playoff places with a narrow 1-0 win over Borussia Mönchengladbach.

Earlier on Wednesday, American striker Gio Reyna scored a last-gasp winner in Borussia Dortmund's 2-1 victory over Mainz, securing the

Admitting Liverpool are still mentally fatigued from their bid for sporting immortality, Spain midfielder Thiago Alcantara said: “It is not just about physical stuff, it is something psychological because we were so close to winning everything and we just touched it but sadly it went away.”

Kane eyes Spurs record

Harry Kane would love the chance to become Tottenham's record goalscorer at Preston on Saturday. Kane drew level with Jimmy Greaves on 266 Spurs goals when he netted with a superb strike in the team's Premier League win at Fulham on Monday.

Greaves' tally had stood untouched since 1970, but the England captain is now on the verge of sole possession of the record. With fifth-placed Tottenham in the midst of a fight to climb back into the Premier League's top four, Antonio Conte could rest his stars against second-tier Preston.

But, mindful of Tottenham's surprise defeat at Middlesbrough in the FA Cup fifth round last season, Kane is keen to play. “The FA Cup is important for us. It was disappointing to lose to Middlesbrough. We will see what the manager says but I will be ready,” said Kane, who is still looking to win the first major trophy of his career. — AFP



MAINZ: Mainz' Danish forward Marcus Ingvartsen vies for the ball with Dortmund's German midfielder Emre Can during the German first division Bundesliga football match. — AFP

three points deep into injury-time. The 20-year-old US international Reyna also scored the fourth in Dortmund's 4-3 home win over Augsburg on Sunday. On Wednesday he tapped in a header with a minute of injury time remaining, sinking a dogged Mainz. — AFP

Milan title defence crumbling as Napoli host rivals Roma

MILAN: With 86 minutes gone of their last Serie A home match AC Milan's title defence was very much alive, two goals to the good against Roma and set to maintain the five-point gap separating the champions and league leaders Napoli.

Less than three weeks later and their hopes of retaining the Scudetto are hanging by a thread after a sudden slump which has allowed Napoli to charge 12 clear almost completely unopposed, and led to them being knocked out of the Italian Cup and losing the Super Cup to Inter Milan.

Two quickfire goals from Roger Ibanez and Tammy Abraham snatched a shock draw for a dismal Roma that night at the San Siro, and since then Milan have looked a shadow of the team who last year snatched the title from neighbours Inter.

The partying which exploded last Spring in celebration of Milan's first league crown since 2011 felt like a distant memory on Tuesday night when Lazio demolished Stefano Pioli's side 4-0 and moved a point behind them in third place.

Pioli all-but conceded the title after a miserable display in Rome, admitting that “right now a lot of things aren't working” as previously reliable performers either get injured or underwhelm on the field. Director Paolo Maldini insisted on Tuesday that the season “doesn't seem like a huge disaster” but the Milan icon has been criticised for flop summer signings including Belgium attacker Charles De Ketelaere and Sergino Dest, whose display on Tuesday at left-back in place of injured Theo Hernandez was calamitous. — AFP

Today's matches on TV

SPANISH LEAGUE		
UD Almeria v RCD Espanyol	23:00	
beIN Sports Connect		
FRENCH LEAGUE		
FC Lorient v Stade Rennais	23:00	
beIN Sports Connect		

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
Adalya	22517144

Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, **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

FOR RENT

Annex for rent in Salmiya, Amman street. Two rooms, one bathroom, one kitchen. — KD 140

Whatsapp
98935143

REQUIRED

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Control Technician
3-years Experience | 3. Plumber
2-years Experience |
| 2. Water Cooled Chiller Technician
5-years Experience | 4. Electrical Technician
3-years Experience, IIT Certification |

Contact No: 69993209

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL HOTLINE 128

Automated enquiry about the Civild card is 1889988

Sabalenka, Rybakina in Australian Open final

24-year-old Sabalenka will be contesting her first Grand Slam final



MELBOURNE: Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka hits a return against Poland's Magda Linette during their women's singles semi-final match on day eleven of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina will clash in what promises to be a bruising Australian Open final on Saturday after both won in straight sets in the last four. Big-serving Wimbledon champion Rybakina defeated two-time Melbourne winner Victoria Azarenka 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 at a blustery and chilly Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne on Thursday.

Powerful Belarusian Sabalenka then marched into the championship match with a 7-6 (7/1), 6-2 win over unseeded Magda Linette. The 24-year-old Sabalenka will be contesting her first Grand Slam final. The fifth seed has battled nerves in big matches previously and worked with a sports psychologist, but said after dismissing the Pole that both were a thing of the past.

"I realised that nobody (other) than me will help, you know?" she told reporters. "On the pre-season I spoke to my psychologist, saying: 'I feel like I have to deal with that by myself because every time hoping that someone will fix my problem, it's not fixing my problem.'

"I just have to take this responsibility and I just have to deal with that." Whatever she is doing, it is working: Sabalenka has been in the form of her life since arriving in Australia. She won the Adelaide International warm-up tournament and has now extended her unbeaten streak to 10 matches, not

losing a single set in any of them.

And yet it was 30-year-old Linette, contesting her first major semi-final, who was out of the gate fastest, breaking to love in the opening game and holding for an early lead. Sabalenka was being made to work hard and showed all her new-found patience to get back on terms with a break of her own, to love, for 2-2 and the set went to a tiebreak.

Sabalenka timed her moment perfectly to up the aggression, and the decibel level, racing to 4-0 with a scream. An ace that barely clipped the line stretched it to 5-0 and she closed out comfortably after 51 minutes, having smacked 20 winners to just seven from Linette.

"I would say that I didn't start really well," admitted Sabalenka. "And then on the tiebreak I kind of found my rhythm and just started trusting myself, started going for the shots. It was great tennis from me in the tiebreak."

Sabalenka showed no sign of letting up in the second set, breaking Linette and with a scream of "Come on!" holding for a 3-1 advantage. A second break took her within sight of the finish line, which she raced across in 1hr 33min.

Missed opportunities

Reigning Wimbledon champion Rybakina, 23, said she hoped she had made her watching family proud

after another impressive display. The Moscow-born Kazakh prevailed in 1hr 41min against the 2012 and 2013 champion Azarenka of Belarus to account for a third major winner in as many matches. The 22nd seed Rybakina had already defeated reigning French and US Open champion Iga Swiatek in the fourth round and 2017 Roland Garros winner Jelena Ostapenko in the quarter-finals. Rybakina said her semi-final triumph was even more special because she had her sister and parents all watching at Melbourne Park for the first time.

"I'm super happy that we can spend evenings together and they can watch me live," said Rybakina, whose parents were not there to see her win Wimbledon last year. "For sure it's great for them. I didn't even talk with them yet. I'm sure they're happy. They don't see me often playing live, so I think this time, it's a big result already. "No matter how I play in the final, I think they're very proud and happy."

Azarenka, 33, was left to rue missed opportunities as her dream of a third Australian Open crown dissolved. "Right now especially it's kind of hard to digest," she said. "I'm proud of myself how I fought and I tried. "Tennis-wise I felt like I just wasn't there, especially in the important moments when I kept creating those opportunities for me. Just couldn't convert them." — AFP

Record EPL spending fuels transfer market recovery

LAUSANNE: Record spending by English Premier League clubs fuelled a recovery in the international transfer market in 2022 with a total outlay of some \$6.5 billion, according to a report published by FIFA on Thursday. The figure represents an increase on the last two years as football recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but is still below the levels of 2019 (\$7.35 billion), just before the health crisis, the sport's world governing body said in its Global Transfer Report.

The report only takes into account international transfers, in which over 20,000 were recorded and fewer than three thousand involved a fee. English clubs' spending "reached a record high of almost \$2.2 billion", the report said, with six of the 10 biggest international transfers involving moves to Premier League sides.

Among those moves were Liverpool's signing of Darwin Nunez from Benfica — for an initial 75 million euros (\$82m) plus 25 million in potential bonuses — and Luis Diaz from Porto as well as Manchester United's purchases of Casemiro and Antony from Real Madrid and Ajax respectively.

There was also Erling Haaland's switch from Borussia Dortmund to Manchester City and Newcastle United's signing of Alexander Isak from Real Sociedad. French clubs brought in the most money, although the total amount recouped of \$740.3 million was still down on 2019 figures of over \$900 million.

Meanwhile, the continuing growth of women's football was reflected by a 19 percent increase in the number of international transfers to a total of 1,555. Only a small number involved a fee but spending on international transfers rose to \$3.3 million, which FIFA said was 62 percent higher than the previous year.

Leading the biggest moves in the women's game was Keira Walsh's transfer from Manchester City to Barcelona, the fee for which was reported as being around 350,000 euros. "All of this reflects the impressive strides being taken as more and more female players continue to turn professional," said Emilio Garcia Silvero, FIFA's chief legal and compliance officer. — AFP

Rashford stars as Man Utd crush Forest

NOTTINGHAM: Marcus Rashford scored a dazzling solo goal as Manchester United beat Nottingham Forest 3-0 in the first leg of their League Cup semi-final on Wednesday to virtually book a place at Wembley next month.

The England man, enjoying a purple patch following the World Cup, netted his 18th goal of the season in the sixth minute to silence an expectant crowd at the City Ground.

New United loan signing Wout Weghorst scored his first goal for the club just before half-time, to put the visitors in total control, and Bruno Fernandes added gloss to the scoreline late on.

Erik ten Hag's men are hot favourites to reach Wembley as they seek to end their six-year trophy drought, with either Newcastle or Southampton lying in wait. "I'm happy with the performance and I think over 90 minutes we controlled it," Ten Hag told Sky Sports. But he highlighted a disallowed Forest goal in the first half, warning his side could not afford to let opponents back into the match when they were in charge.

The Dutchman was careful to avoid any hint of complacency ahead of the second leg at Old Trafford

on February 1. "We have to play one game and we have to do the same. We have to prepare, we have to make a good game plan and the players have to be focused," he said.

Former Ajax boss Ten Hag has revitalised United in his first season in charge but will be desperate to win silverware to appease the hungry fans. Brazil midfielder Casemiro was back in the United starting line-up after being suspended for Sunday's 3-2 Premier League defeat at leaders Arsenal, which left United fourth in the table.

Forest, with new boy Danilo in the starting line-up, came into the match full of confidence after just one defeat in their past seven Premier League matches had lifted them to 13th in the table.

But the visitors took control immediately and opened the scoring in style, Rashford picked up the ball in his own half and raced down the left, cutting into the box between Joe Worrall and Remo Freuler before beating Wayne Hennessey at his near post with a powerful left-footed shot. It was his 10th goal in 10 games since returning from Qatar last month.

Brazil winger Antony went close to making it 2-0 minutes later as United threatened to overwhelm the home team. Forest, who have won the League Cup four times in their history, thought they had equalised midway through the first half when Sam Surridge produced a fine finish after a rampaging run through the middle by Morgan Gibbs-White.

But the goal was ruled out by VAR for a tight off-side against Surridge. Gustavo Scarpa stung David de Gea's hands with an audacious volley as Forest increasingly came into the game, with Gibbs-White



NOTTINGHAM: Manchester United's English striker Marcus Rashford (C) fights for the ball with Nottingham Forest's Swiss midfielder Remo Marco Freuler during the English League Cup semi-final first-leg football match between Nottingham Forest and Manchester United. — AFP

and Brennan Johnson a threat.

But five-time winners United doubled their lead just before half-time, with Dutch forward Weghorst reacting smartly to fire home with the outside of his right foot after Hennessey had denied Antony. United were largely untroubled in the second half, coming agonisingly close to extending their lead when Christian Eriksen rattled the crossbar from the edge of the box in the 54th minute. — AFP