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Pakistan mosque blast kills 61

Amir sends condolences • More than 150 wounded • Police among dead



PESHAWAR: Security officials inspect the site of a mosque blast inside the police headquarters on Jan 30, 2023. — AFP

PESHAWAR: Police were among 61 people killed and 150 wounded in a blast at a mosque inside a highly sensitive Pakistan police headquarters on Monday, prompting the government to put the country on high alert. The attack happened during afternoon prayers in the provincial capital of Peshawar, close to former tribal areas along the Afghan border where militancy has been steadily rising.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed his condolences on Monday over the victims of the suicide bombing. In a cable he sent to Pakistani President Arif Alvi, HH the Amir underlined Kuwait's vehement condemnation of this "act of terrorism", wishing a speedy recovery for those wounded in the attack. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Pakistani president.

A frantic rescue mission was underway at the mosque, which had an entire wall and some of its roof blown out. "Many policemen are buried under the rubble," said Peshawar police chief Muhammad Ijaz Khan, who estimated between 300 and 400 officers usually attended prayers at the mosque. "Efforts are being made to get them out safely," he added. Bloodied survivors emerged limping from the wreckage, while bodies were ferried away in

ambulances. "It's an emergency situation," Muhammad Asim Khan, a spokesman for the main hospital in Peshawar, told AFP.

The death toll continued to rise as more bodies were pulled from the debris, rising to 61 killed with more than 150 wounded. As darkness fell, at least four men were still trapped in the wreckage, visible through cracks in the concrete. "We have given them oxygen so that they don't have problems in breathing," said Bilal Ahmad Faizi, a spokesperson for the rescue organization 1122. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack, amid a worsening security situation in the country.

The police headquarters in Peshawar is in one of the most tightly controlled areas of the city, housing intelligence and counter-terrorism bureaus, and is next door to the regional secretariat. Provinces around the country announced they were on high alert after the blast, with checkpoints ramped up and extra security forces deployed, while in the capital Islamabad snipers were deployed on buildings and at city entrance points.

"Terrorists want to create fear by targeting those who perform the duty of defending Pakistan," said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a statement. "Those fighting against Pakistan will be wiped out from the face of earth."

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COVID still global emergency; kids behind in learning

GENEVA/PARIS: Three years to the day after the World Health Organization sounded the highest level of global alert over COVID-19, it said on Monday the pandemic remains an international emergency. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus reached that conclusion following the recommendations of the United Nations health agency's emergency committee, which on Friday held its 14th meeting since the start of the crisis.

The WHO first declared a so-called public health emergency of international concern (PHE-IC) - its highest possible level of global alert - on Jan 30, 2020, over what was then called the novel coronavirus. When it sounded the alarm, fewer than 100 cases and no deaths had been detected outside China. Since then, more than 752 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported to the WHO, including more than 6.8 million deaths, though the true numbers are thought to be far higher.

Meanwhile, school-aged students lost more than a third of a year's worth of learning early on in the pandemic and have still not caught up, posing "a real problem for this generation", researchers warned on Monday. The COVID-19 pandemic caused one of history's greatest disruptions to education, with 95 percent of students worldwide affected by school closures, and online teaching becoming far more common.

Addressing the WHO's executive board in Geneva on Monday, Tedros acknowledged that "as we enter the fourth year of the pandemic, there is no doubt we are in a far better situation now than we were a year ago, when the Omicron wave was at its peak".

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Manila plans labor talks with Kuwait as Marcos visits wake

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr asked if there are "weaknesses" in the labor agreement between the Philippines and Kuwait following the brutal murder of an overseas Filipino worker in Kuwait. He said a bilateral meeting is being scheduled with Kuwait to check the present agreement between the two countries.

"We are also scheduling bilateral meetings with Kuwait to look at the agreement that we have to see

if there are weaknesses in the agreement that allow this to happen and to make sure that those weaknesses are remedied," Marcos said after visiting Julebee Ranara's wake. "We hope this will never happen again to anyone of our countrymen," he added.

Marcos also guaranteed to the bereaved family that the government would attend to all their needs, including scholarships for the children. "She sacrificed and worked abroad because she had dreams for her family. But now that your daughter is gone, we'll help you fulfill her dreams," Marcos said.

Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Secretary Susan Ople said the DMW did not see the need to implement a deployment ban to Kuwait following Ranara's death. "If you impose a deployment ban, you are sending a message that Kuwait is

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LAS PINAS, Philippines: President Marcos comforts a grieving relative of slain overseas Filipino worker Julebee Ranara during a visit to her wake on Jan 30, 2023.

MPs ask about Turkey drones, Egypt deposits

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari on Monday sent a series of questions about a deal Kuwait recently signed to purchase an unspecified number of drones from Turkey, focusing on transparency and the procedures adopted in the purchase. The lawmaker wondered how the deal was completed at a time when

there is no defense minister after his resignation, no chief of staff or his deputy and an acting air force chief.

Kuwait signed the \$370 million deal with Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones, according to the Turkish manufacturer. Baykar said in a statement last week that negotiations with Kuwait's defense ministry over the deal have been ongoing since 2019 and the fighter drone held a successful demo flight in Kuwait. During the event, the drone demonstrated its technical capabilities to operate in difficult geographical and climatic conditions, including high temperatures and sandstorms, Baykar said.

The lawmaker asked about the number of companies invited to participate in the deal and if proper procedures were followed in announcing the deal. He also asked if the tenders law was applied to the deal,

especially announcing those who were qualified to participate in the deal, adding if the supreme defense council met to review the offers. Kandari also asked if the drone had been tested under Kuwait's climatic conditions and if officials from the defense ministry visited the manufacturer's plant.

Meanwhile, MP Osama Al-Shaheen asked Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid about total Kuwaiti deposits in Egypt. The lawmaker said Kuwait had maintained a deposit of \$3 billion in Egypt between 1990 and 2020, in addition to a deposit of \$4 billion at the Egyptian central bank, half of which matured in September and the second half will mature in April this year. Shaheen asked if Kuwait plans to send more funds to Egypt due to pressure by the International Monetary Fund on Gulf states to aid Egypt. He also inquired if any returns were made on the deposits.

Blinken urges calm as Mideast conflict flares

JERUSALEM: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Monday for "urgent steps" to calm spiraling violence in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, after high-level talks in Jerusalem. Washington's top diplomat travelled to Jerusalem on the second leg of his Middle East tour, after meeting

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and foreign minister in Cairo.

The Zionist entity is reeling from an attack Friday that killed seven civilians outside a synagogue in annexed east Jerusalem, a day after the deadliest army raid in years in the occupied West Bank claimed 10 Palestinian lives. Following talks with Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Blinken urged "all sides now to take urgent steps to restore calm, to deescalate". "We want to make sure that there's an environment in which we can, I hope, at some point, create the conditions

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CAIRO: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi at Al-Ittihadiya presidential palace on Jan 30, 2023. — AFP



Field drills to help hone skills of National Guard: Sheikh Faisal



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah watching the Lion of the Island 5 training exercises on Monday. —KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed Monday the importance of field training exercises in honing the expertise of the Guard's personnel by instilling the spirit of competition among them in implementing military and security plans, maintain the country's security and protect its capabilities.

The National Guard said in a statement that Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah witnessed the Lion of the Island 5 exercise which was carried out by the National Guard at the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Camp

in the presence of the Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General Engineer Hashim Al-Rifai and senior leaders. The exercise, which keeps pace with the latest training developments, refines the experiences of the Guard and raises their levels in implementing military and security plans.

The exercise witnessed the application of a scenario of several training hypotheses to deal with riot dispersal, protection of personalities, isolation, cordoning off and storming a building, cleansing it and detecting and disposing explo-

sives. The exercise also included practical exercises on how to deal with car accidents and water-logging, rescue stranded people and a gas leak inside a facility.

The Guard fire brigades dealt with the hypothesis of a fire, in addition to carrying out accurate shooting from fixed and mobile positions. The exercise aims to train the Guard's forces to protect vital facilities and infrastructure of Kuwait and activate its role in assigning equipment in case of emergencies based on the protocols signed with various state agencies. —KUNA

Municipal Council approves entrance and exit in Dhajeej

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council approved the request of the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport to create an entrance and exit for the Jaber Al-Ahmad Circuit site in the Dhajeej area from Road (6.5). Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmed Al-Manfouhi presented five projects during the 12th regular session of this year which come within the government's work program.

"The first project includes a cultural center for entertainment at Abdullah Al-Ahmad street which will be executed in five phases at a cost of up to KD 500 million. In support of the vision of New Kuwait 2035, the Kuwait Municipality, in cooperation with an international office, has prepared the initial designs for the project, obtained the approval for studies on traffic system and determined the feasibility of the project and its social and environmental impact," Al-Manfouhi said.

"In view of the importance of the project, the



Ahmed Al-Manfouhi

Municipality decided to invite investors wishing to participate in designing, licensing, constructing, maintaining and managing it. The Municipality will call for potential investors to invest in the project in accordance with the rules and regulations mentioned in the qualification brochure. Those who are qualified will be asked to submit their bid, including their technical and economic feasibility studies that meet the conditions contained in the bidding prerequisites," he clarified.

"The second project is to develop Sulaibikhat Bay, but there are some obstacles with the Supreme Council for the Environment on one of its main articles, indicating that the Municipality is working to find solutions to those hurdles and then put it up with the same mechanism that is being implemented in the Abdullah Al-Ahmad project," he indicated.

"As for the third project, the economic zone in Abdali, aims to support investment initiatives that will work on boosting local and domestic products, as there are detailed building regulations listed and



Municipal Council meeting. —KUNA photos

are now being worked on. For the fourth project, it will work on ending the phenomenon of residential investment in private residential areas, as procedures are being coordinated to end it," he added.

"As for the last project, it is related to the development of Jahra waterfront to create a new identity for Kuwaiti society, and it is in the process of tendering the project now," he concluded.

ChatGPT downsides could outweigh benefits: Teachers

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Cheating at schools and colleges has become easier than ever through ChatGPT, the newest tool developed by Open AI. Although the bot can be useful for students and teachers, it is also a potential source of trouble in the educational field. With easy and free access to ChatGPT, students can quickly find answers to their homework and exam questions, write research papers and fulfill other school requirements. This affects students at different levels as it brings down their motivation to put personal effort in their work and discourages critical and analytical thinking skills.

Teachers at different grade levels already have concerns about students' unethical use of the bot. "With ChatGPT, it will just do everything for them. It is going to make children lazier. It is going to mean that children are not as able to answer questions and investigate things, and that is the same thing in home and class requirements," Emma, an elementary teacher at a private school told Kuwait Times.

Cheating through ChatGPT hinders students' personal development and independence. Regardless of how little students have absorbed from the learning material, they are still able to complete their work by relying on the conclusions that artificial intelligence provides. "If the majority is using this tool, I will not be able to distinguish between gifted students and those who need more help, which is unfair. Moreover, this might affect the trust between teachers and students. As a teacher myself, I would not be able to trust the Sarah Khaled said.

ChatGPT's downsides can go beyond the circle of academics and approach the relationship between teachers and students. According to another high school teacher, Ghadeer Ghafour, the bot can make it even harder for teachers to do their part at work. Students may find attendance at school unnecessary and boring due to having easy access to all the answers, which eliminates the need to put any effort into researching and memorizing. "Students will no longer concentrate in the classroom and will rely heavily on ChatGPT during their exam," said Ghafour. She also worries about the lack of interaction between teachers and students which creates a gap between them and causes students to lose interest in education.

In my view

Arabizing medicine is a civilized necessity

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com



The countries of the entire world are interested in teaching their children science in a way that enables them to comprehend and excel in it. Science students worldwide receive lessons in their native language for a simple reason, which is because the mother tongue is the gateway for information to enter their minds easily.

Our Arab nation faced great challenges, and maybe the biggest challenge was the wall built by colonialists to become a barrier between our language and sciences. History stands witness to the Arab nation's creativity in medicine and sciences, and we have countless examples of that, as who doesn't know Ibn Al-Nafis, Al-Kindi, Ibn Al-Haytham and many others.

If we compare old innovations with what our Arab nations suffer from today, after they came under siege, we will discover the bitter truth - that we will remain behind in scientific aspects as long as knowledge and science are taught to our children in a language other than their mother tongue.

I sometimes meet individuals whose minds are under control of Western culture, and find them in firm belief that medicine and sciences can be taught only in English, but they get surprised when I tell them the entire world does not have a country that speaks a language other than their own. They become more surprised when they realize that countries like Malta, Chile, Myanmar and tens of others, large and small, teach medicine in their language. They become more amazed and some start demanding our language right lost since many decades.

Arab researchers proved in published papers, which are available for those who wish to see them, that Arab doctors and scientists face difficulty in understanding scientific material entirely, and find more difficulty in writing research papers and scientific studies, so their production is weak and their publications are very limited.

It is really strange to see the Zionist entity teaching its students science and medicine in Hebrew, so the Zionist entity is active in the field of scientific research and publishes more than what the entire Arab nation publishes (6,000 scientific papers for each one million Zionist entity residents compared to 1,000 papers for the same number of Arabs).

We must differentiate between learning a foreign language and learning in a foreign language. Our youth must learn a foreign language or more to be in touch with the world, but to deprive our language from scientific dealings and deprive our children from the correct understanding and imaginative creativity linked to the native language is a major sin. Our scientists are paying the price and their ability to compete with the world is limited compared to scientists worldwide. They are infected with a mental disability that keeps them from scientific creativity due to their deprivation from thinking in their mother tongue.

I found in the Arab Doctors Union members of the Arabization committee a high spirit and unprecedented enthusiasm. All of them are experts, who firmly realized there is no hope from our Arab nation in the field of medical or scientific production if our language is not at the forefront in universities, institutes and laboratories. All what Arab doctors hope for is to find leaders of this nation who defend our children's right to understand science correctly, leaders who defend our nation's rights and fend off intruders who live among us and fight our language and culture.

It is our language's right to be the means of science to enlighten the minds of our children and open the road for medical and scientific innovations to become true additions to the world like their colleagues in other countries.



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Local

Kuwaiti cyclist to tour Arab world, 'put humanity back' in the sport

Al-Khamees working to bridge the gap between cyclists in the region



KUWAIT: Cyclist Abdelrahman Al-Khamees during the interview in Kuwait Times office. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Al-Khamees cycling with friends near Jaber Cultural Center, Kuwait.



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Cyclist Abdelrahman Al-Khamees, a young Kuwaiti with big dreams, wants to change the cycling scene in Kuwait and around the world. Khamees is planning to tour several Arab countries to shed light on Arab cyclists and mark their presence on the global cycling stage. Speaking to Kuwait Times, Khamees revealed his journey will start next week in Saudi Arabia, then Oman, Egypt and Morocco, and finally Tunisia.

"I created a project called meet the rider and the whole idea was to put humanity back in cycling. I wanted to introduce Arab cyclists to the world. I interviewed around nine cyclists in Kuwait and they opened up," he said. Khamees created his blog 'Paperclip' to bring people together and share stories on how cycling can change lives. "I started a cycling blog in September 2021 to share my experience and use my platform for good. Not only to shed light on myself, but also on the community and pass the help I received from people. The idea of the name paperclip

is bridging the gap between communities," he said.

Khamees left Kuwait in 2013 to study in the United States, where he bought his first bike. "I did not know anything about bikes. I hate driving cars. I like to experience the world around me; driving insulates you and separates you from nature. I wanted to feel the air, rain, cold and heat. In Portland, they say that walking is too slow, driving is too fast; riding is just right," he said. "When I was 21, I met many amazing people who offered to help improve my knowledge about bikes. I accepted the offer, and within four years, I went from not knowing how to shift a gear to building my own bike."

Cycling helped Al-Khamees lose 92 kilograms. "I weighed over 150 kilograms. Over four years, I lost more than half of my body weight. The longest ride I'd done was from Portland, Oregon, to the Pacific Coast and back, around 410 kilometers. It took about five hours," he said. "I got into groups and went on crazy rides early in the morning and would not come back until late in the evening. They were using roads to go to

nature though forests and follow historical trails," he said.

The groups would travel on those trails to relive history on bikes and "go to places that you never knew existed". For example, they travelled on the Oregon Trail, recalled Khamees, which was laid by fur traders and trappers from 1811 to 1840 and was only passable on foot or on horseback. "We used to pack water filters, emergency food and blankets. Knowing those people opened a magical gate for me mentally," he said.

When Khamees came back to Kuwait, he discovered a cycling community with over 300 riders, but there was a huge gap between them. "I want to bridge the gap and show the world that we have famous experienced riders in our Arab world, and that is what I'm doing by spending money to make a cycling guide, collect data, interview riders and reach out to companies for support," he told Kuwait Times.

Khamees indicated he has faced many issues and challenges. For one, people in Kuwait don't take his project seriously, leaving him hanging with proposals he spent hours working on. He



Abdelrahman Al-Khamees with fellow cyclists.

called on concerned institutions to pay attention to the youth and support local talents. "My project will benefit the peo-

ple. I hope riders also reach out (to me). I have a huge plan to launch an annual magazine to tell stories of Arab cyclists."



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KUWAIT: (Left to right) Dr Nadine Tarcha and Dr Jasem Al-Hashel.



A group photo during the media roundtable. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

News in brief

KNPC exports first fuel shipment to Europe

KUWAIT: The first shipment of modified diesel fuel from the Ahmadi Refinery was exported to the European market onboard the (POLAR ACE) tanker, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) said on Monday. KNPC indicated via Twitter that the shipment amounted to 38,000 tons and was modified to fit the standards of the cold environment in Europe. The exportation process was carried out in collaboration with the international marketing sector at the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. — KUNA

Fire in Hawally building

KUWAIT: A person was suffocated after a fire broke out in Hawally. "Fire squads from Hawally and Salmiya stations were sent to the location. The fire appeared to have erupted on the fourth floor of a six-storey building and smoke was spreading in the building," the public relations department at the Kuwait Fire Force announced. Firefighters started evacuating the building immediately and managed to combat the fire. The person who was suffocated was sent to emergency medical aid.



Pfizer hosts media roundtable to raise awareness about migraine

Migraine second most prevalent disease in Kuwait; higher prevalence rate among females

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Emphasizing the need to raise awareness about migraine, Pfizer hosted a media roundtable alongside leading healthcare professional Dr Jasem Al-Hashel to highlight the difference between a headache and a migraine, understand migraine causes and triggers and how to manage them, and recognize when to see a neurologist.

A common misconception about migraine can be deduced when having severe cases of headaches. A migraine is not just a bad headache. It is a debilitating neurological disease that leads to an intense headache which may be accompanied by other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, visual problems, or increased sensitivity to light or sound.

Migraines might range in the period. Some typically last between four hours and three days, while other people experience migraines several times a week. Some might only experience attacks every few years. Patients who experience headaches for fifteen days or more every month, eight of these being migraines, suffer from chronic migraines.

Although migraines are not life-threatening, they can negatively affect the quality of people's physical and mental lives, as they interfere significantly with occupational, educational, familial, and social responsibilities. According to a study conducted by Global Burden of Disease, migraine is the second most prevalent disease in Kuwait, with a higher prevalence rate in females than males by 1.8 times.

Dr Jasem Al-Hashel, Consultant Neurologist, Neurology Department at Ibn Sina Hospital, Associate Professor of Neurology, Faculty of Medicine at Kuwait University, President at Kuwait Neurology Society and Vice President of Pan Arab Union of Neurosciences (PAUNS) in Kuwait, commented "Around 81 percent of the migraine cases in Kuwait fall under the age range of 20-54. While the causes of migraine are not fully clear, we know that genetic and environmental factors play a role, and often run in families."

He revealed that migraines are a very common disease among people in Kuwait, affecting 23 per-

cent of the population and mostly affect women due to hormones factor, adding "It is considered to be the third highest disabling disease in the world, which causes disability and decrease of the functionality of people and the quality of their health."

Dr Al-Hashel indicated that the disease is severe and usually associated with nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, or voice sensitivity and it may be tiring and the person may not perform his practical duty, which requires immediate treatment or continuous preventive treatment.

Considering migraine causes, he indicated that migraine mostly affects doctors and medical students more than others because of tension, which is also triggered when exposed to psychological pressures due to life changes or certain events, changing sleep schedules, dehydration, where the patient must drink between 3-4 liters per day.

"Some foodstuffs will also cause migraine such as dark chocolate, especially black, Monosodium glutamate (MSG) a flavor enhancer often added to noodles, chips, chocolate, and nut salt, as well as caffeine in tea and coffee, aged cheeses, using screens for long periods, staying up late, changing the biological clock, soft drinks, weather changes where patients with migraine feel it before it happens," he continued.

Dr Al-Hashel stated that recently there was a major shift in the treatment of migraine compared to previous years, stating that there is more than 90 percent of the causes that are genetic and usually transmitted from the mother side, where studies have found that there are more than 35 genes known to cause migraine, noting "We cannot prevent migration from happening, but we can decrease the number of attacks by adjusting lifestyle to avoid triggers."

On the other hand, Dr Al-Hashel informed that headache diagnosis is very important, as there are more than 2,000 types of headaches, so it is necessary to know and diagnose because some of them may be associated with serious diseases.

"People experience the familiar pain of headaches for a wide variety of reasons, but what



Dr Jasem Al-Hashel

people do not know is that there is a difference between normal headaches and migraines. In some cases, headache may be dangerous if it hits a person for the first time and strongly or if it is accompanied by vomiting, fever, movement weakness, numbness, or if it comes for the first time during pregnancy," he underlined.

Dr Al-Hashel discussed the issue of children's migraine, saying that after the COVID-19 pandemic, parents started to have a problem keeping screens away from their children.

Regarding Pfizer's oral treatment for migraine, Dr Nadine Tarcha, Gulf Medical Director, Pfizer, stated "this medication is an innovative dual-acting oral migraine treatment which is approved for the acute treatment of migraine in Kuwait. It brings us closer to our goal of helping patients suffering from this debilitating neurological disease, many of whom do not have satisfactory treatment options today."

Dr Tarcha indicated that earlier in 2022, Pfizer announced the acquisition of Biohaven, and with this acquisition, Pfizer believes there is an opportunity to change the paradigm in migraine treatment and potentially establish a new standard of care, adding "in particular, it reinforces Pfizer Internal Medicine's mission of bringing breakthroughs to the health challenges that affect millions of patients impacted by migraine."

ICSK celebrates 18th super mega carnival

KUWAIT: The Indian Community School, Kuwait hosted the 18th super mega carnival on Friday 27th January 2023 from 9 am to 9 pm with great ardor and exuberance. The fun-filled extravaganza attracted a lot of people from the Indian expatriate community. Morino Yasunari, the Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait, was the chief guest. Kiku Sharda, the famous comedian and the winner of the Indian Television Academy Award in 2019, was the guest of honor.

The chief guest was received by the Board of Trustees and the principal. The students welcomed the chief guest in traditional Japanese attire, Kimono and by displaying the moves in karate, Japanese martial arts.

The inaugural ceremony started with the Islamic prayer by Master Ahmed Shoukath followed by the prayer song by the school choir of ICSK Junior. The gathering rose and honored the national anthems of Kuwait and Japan.

Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK, who has always been the torchbearer of the school, delivered the welcome address. He expressed his excitement of hosting the super mega carnival. He highlighted the importance of taking the nature's energy in a positive way, which will ultimately bring success to all. He concluded his speech by welcoming all the guests, the Board of Trustees, the sponsors, parents, staff and students to the celebration.

Chief guest Morino Yasunari inaugurated the celebration by autographing on the logo of the carnival. He appreciated the organizing brilliance of the super mega carnival and valued the motto of conducting such a mega event. He stressed on the importance of thinking about other people. He asked everyone to find ways to help each other as it will help in bringing peace and harmony all over the world. He concluded his speech by expressing his gratitude for inviting him as the chief guest.

Kiku Sharda, the guest of honor, entertained the audience with his jokes. He expressed his joy of being a part of such a great event. He officially released the 18th



super mega carnival souvenir. This was followed by mesmerizing dance performances by the students of ICSK Junior. The school honored the chief guest and the guest of honor by presenting a token of love. Shaik Abdul Rahiman, Honorary Chairman of the Board of Trustees, presented the mementos to them. Mementos were presented to the Mega, Platinum, Gold and Silver sponsors as a mark of gratitude.

The students of ICSK Junior presented a marvelous display of Indo-Japanese culture in the form of a procession. The procession included various dance forms, art and march band. They also presented a tableau which represented a combination of Chettiar golu dolls and Japanese traditional dolls.

Shaik Abdul Rahiman, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Azharuddin Amer Mohammed, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Vinukumar Nair, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dr Achuthan Madhav, Principal of Jabriya Indian School, Dr Anis Ahmed, Principal of Salmiya Indian Model School, Dr Prasanth Vasudev, Principal of Gulf Indian School, Radhakrishnan C, Principal of United

Indian School, Sabahat Khan, Principal of Kuwait Indian School, Anita Sadanand, Principal of New Indian School, Gangadhar Shirsath, Principal of ICSK Khaitan, Rajesh Nair, Principal of ICSK Amman, Sheeja C, Principal of ICSK Junior, Vice Principals from different branches of ICSK also graced the occasion. Shirley Dennis, Principal of Indian School of Excellence, delivered the vote of thanks.

The school ground pulsated with scintillating music, dance and a lively crowd. Comedy extravaganza by the famous comedian and the winner of the Indian Television Academy Award in 2019, Kiku Sharda, impressive illusions by Parsun, melodious rendition of Bollywood, Arabic and Western Music by Shoab Ahmad and Ruth Ann Toby, Laser dance, Tanoura - Egyptian dance, Lambadi folk dance, whistle performance, Arabic dance, Bollywood Garba, Hariyanvi dance, Bollywood fusion dance, Gujarati folk dance, Western fusion dance, Bollywood dance by Renegades Dance Academy, Zero Gravity Dance, Rajasthani Dance, Gujarati Dandiya Dance, Zumba dance, Punjabi dance, Tiger dance, Flamingo dance amused the boisterous crowd.

The mega raffle draw, the jumbo event of the super mega carnival was held at 4 pm and 7.30 pm. The first prize, 50 gram gold, was won by Abdul Malik with coupon No 24591, the second prize, 10 gram gold, was won by Rohit Ratan with coupon No 67322 and the third prize, KD 125 gift voucher was won by Kavya Kumari with coupon No 53660. Lucky draws were also taken for the other 47 exciting prizes.

'Nuwair' flowers adorn Kuwait gardens, streets

KUWAIT: The gardens, streets and squares of Kuwait are adorned with bright yellow flowers of the newer color in a scene that causes happiness and joy in the hearts of the onlookers and makes them feel comfortable. And serenity coincides with the national celebrations in the month of February. The omnipresence of daisy flowers known locally as 'Nuwair' has become increasingly conspicuous during winter in Kuwait as many regard them as lively emblems of serenity and happiness.

'Nuwair' flowers filled close clusters covering the land of the country with their beautiful yellow color. It was called the Nuwair because it is like the sun in its splendor and brilliance. It is one of the beautiful annual plants that bloom in the months of January and February, as its flowers open at sunrise and then close when the sun rises.

According to Kuwaiti astronomer and historian Adel Al-Saadoun, the



'Nuwair' is not a particular species of flowers, but a class of indigenous, desert plants spherical in shape, illuminating rays of yellow reminiscent of sunshine. It is with the onset of spring that flowers known locally as "Al-Hanwa", "Al-Houthan", "Al-Zamlouk", "Al-Marar", "Al-Atheed" and "Crow man" fully blossom. "Al-Hanwa", a species of flowers that thrives during the months of January and February, is renowned for its orange scent that can only be sensed in proximity to the flower, Al-Saadoun had described. Meanwhile, "Al-Houthan", is a species of flowers that contains five round petals that are fragmented into three parts, he said. Moreover, the astronomer depicted the "Al-Marar" as being 25 centimeters in length with leaves resembling spoons that are yellowish in color with black shades in the middle. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The omnipresence of daisy flowers locally known as 'Nuwair' has become increasingly conspicuous during wintertime. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh



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Sunak marks 100 days as British prime minister

LONDON: On reaching 100 days in 10 Downing Street this week, Rishi Sunak will double the duration of Liz Truss's brutally short term as British prime minister. But having stabilised panicky financial markets after the calamitous Truss tenure, the Conservative leader has little to celebrate.

Double-digit inflation is fuelling a winter of misery for many in Sunak's Britain. On Wednesday, the day before his mini-anniversary, up to half a million workers will escalate a rolling series of strikes to shut down schools, railways and other public sectors.

Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer has been portraying the wealthy premier as "weak" and out of touch, as

both parties gear up for an election likely next year. "Is he starting to wonder if this job is just too big for him?" he told the diminutive Sunak in parliament last Wednesday.

The Labour leader was merciless as he ran the rule over Britain's state of permacrisis since Brexit and the Covid pandemic, and "sleaze" among the Conservatives. Ambulance drivers have also been striking, joining nurses on their first-ever walkout. But Sunak is adamant that unions' pay demands will only fuel the decades-high inflation.

"Being an effective manager of public money and public services is not a sin," senior minister Michael Gove said, rejecting criticism that Sunak is an uninspiring leader after Boris Johnson, who preceded Truss. "It is the case that first

of all we have to bring the stability-and we have-and now we have set out areas where we are performing," he told Sky News on Sunday.

Sunak faces a mountainous challenge as he bids to emulate Conservative leader John Major's surprise win over Labour in 1992. Outside Number 10 in October, he promised "integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level"-in pointed contrast to his two predecessors.

But Sunak has been forced on the defensive by the tax affairs of the Conservative chairman Nadhim Zahawi, who until this weekend sat in the cabinet. Starmer on Saturday accused Sunak's Tories of "moral bankruptcy", as less well-off voters are forced this winter to choose

between eating and heating.

Sunak had sought to buy time by launching an internal inquiry into Zahawi, who admitted to being "careless" with his own taxes and had to pay a seven-figure sum to the UK's tax agency-when he was finance minister in charge of the same agency.

The inquiry's report was issued Sunday, making uncomfortable reading for both Zahawi and Sunak, who bowed to the inevitable and fired the Iraqi-born politician. Sunak, a practising Hindu who at 42 is Britain's youngest leader since 1812, has brought a smooth-talking, technocratic approach to the premiership borne of his lucrative years in private finance. —AFP



Combination of pictures shows Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and Britain's outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson. —AFP

Johnson: Putin threatened to lob missile at me

LONDON: Former UK prime minister Boris Johnson has claimed President Vladimir Putin threatened to target him with a missile attack before ordering Russian forces into Ukraine. The apparent threat-denied by the Kremlin-came in a telephone call just ahead of the February 24 invasion, according to a BBC documentary to be broadcast on Monday.

Johnson and other Western leaders had been hurrying to Kyiv to show support for Ukraine and try to deter a Russian attack. "He sort of threatened me at one point and said, 'Boris, I don't want to hurt you, but with a missile, it would only take a minute', or something like that," Johnson quoted Putin as saying.

The Kremlin on Monday, however, dismissed the accusation as a "lie". "What Mr Johnson said is not true. More precisely it's a lie," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "Moreover, this is either a conscious lie-then you need to ask Mr Johnson for what purpose he chose this version of events-or it was unintentional and in fact he didn't understand what President Putin was talking to him about." Johnson emerged as one of the most impassioned Western backers of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

'Playing along'

But prior to the invasion, he says he told Putin that there was no imminent prospect of Ukraine joining NATO, while warning him that any invasion would mean "more NATO, not less NATO" on Russia's borders. "He said, 'Boris, you say that Ukraine is not going to join NATO any time soon."

"What is any time soon?" And I said, 'well it's not going to join NATO for the foreseeable future. You know that perfectly well.'" On the missile threat, Johnson added: "I think from the very relaxed tone that he was taking, the sort of air of detachment that he seemed to have, he was just playing along with my attempts to get him to negotiate."

The BBC documentary charts the growing divide between the Russian leader and the West in the years before the invasion of Ukraine. It also features Zelenskyy reflecting on his thwarted ambitions to join NATO prior to Russia's attack.

"If you know that tomorrow Russia will occupy Ukraine, why don't you give me something today I can stop it with?" he says. "Or if you can't give it to me, then stop it yourself." —AFP

Ten dead in new toll after fresh Syria strikes

BEIRUT: A total of 10 people were killed in a series of drone strikes targeting pro-Iran factions in eastern Syria, including three dead in strikes on Monday, a war monitor said. A pro-Iran commander was among the three killed in the drone strikes Monday, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said, adding that they had been inspecting the site of strikes that had killed seven others the previous evening.

"A commander in an Iran-backed group and two of his companions, all of them non-Syrian, were killed this morning after renewed drone strikes," the Observatory said Monday. Pro-Iran factions, including Iraqi groups as well as Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah, have a major presence around the Iraq-Syria border, and are heavily deployed south and west of the Euphrates in Syria's Deir Ezzor province.

The commander's pick-up truck was targeted while he was inspecting the site of the Sunday evening strike that destroyed a convoy of six refrigerated trucks transporting Iranian weapons to Syria from Iraq.

The convoy was struck in the Albu Kamal border region, said the Observatory, which has a wide network of sources inside Syria. The seven killed Sunday were truck drivers and their assistants, all of them non-Syrians, the Observatory said, adding that they were "killed as a result of unidentified aircraft targeting a convoy of Iran-backed groups". The monitor could not verify the identities of the victims.

An Iraqi border official however told AFP that the vehicles targeted in Sunday's attack were Iraqi trucks. But the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorised to speak to the press, said that the trucks were not transporting Iraqi goods and had crossed illegally into Syria. "Iraq does not export anything to Syria," he said Monday. No country claimed the assault, but Israel has carried out hundreds of air and missile strikes against Iran-backed and government forces in Syria, where the US military is also active.

"The trucks were transporting Iranian weapons," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman had told AFP Sunday. Tehran provides military support to its ally Damascus in Syria's civil war, including through armed factions. The strikes hit a convoy of trucks, but also the headquarters of Iran-backed groups in the area, activist Omar Abu Layla, who heads the Deir Ezzor 24 media outlet, told AFP Monday. "There was heavy damage in the area that was struck," he said.

A pro-Syrian government radio station had reported Sunday that "unidentified war planes targeted, in a number of raids, six refrigerated trucks", without providing further details. The Syrian government did not immediately comment on the strikes. —AFP



Safwan is now Cura Health

A Fresh New Identity Reflecting a Renewed Commitment to Improving People's Health and Promoting Wellness

Safwan Trading & Contracting Co., a subsidiary of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW), one of the largest retail and distribution companies in the Middle East, has undergone a significant transformation with the launch of its new identity, Cura Health Co. K.S.C.C.. This change in name represents a shift in focus from illnesses to wellness, and from treatment to prevention and cure. The rebranding of the company, from Safwan to Cura Health, marks the first step in a broader strategy that aims to more accurately reflect the company's core values and positioning as a leading pharmaceutical distributor in Kuwait. The new identity represents a renewed commitment to improving people's health and promoting wellness.

The Decision to Rebrand
Last year, the Safwan Board of Directors decided to adapt the company's business strategy to meet the evolving needs of customers and healthcare providers. This strategic shift resulted in the emergence of a revitalized brand, better equipped to satisfy the changing demands of the market.

Cura Health Chairman and CEO, Mr. Faisal Ali Al Mutawa, said, "We are relentless in our pursuit of excellence, forming strategic alliances with the industry's top pharmaceutical companies and key players in Kuwait's healthcare sector. This has enabled us to attain a commanding position in the Kuwaiti market. Our success is firmly grounded in our steadfast adherence to our core values, which have been the driving force behind our ongoing development and expansion. With this in mind, we are proud to unveil a new brand identity that embodies our progress and transformation from a traditional distributor to a cutting-edge, forward-thinking leader in Kuwait's healthcare industry, fully aligned with the latest advancements in the global scene."

He added, "We respect our legacy and will continue to uphold our principles and values, and will constantly strive to evolve and improve our role in enhancing people's lives by providing access to the best pharmaceutical products and services in Kuwait."

Why Cura Health?
Cura Health Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Dina Younan, said, "Our new name, Cura Health, symbolizes our dedication to making a significant impact on the lives of those we serve. We are proud of our roots and the legacy of our former name, Safwan, but as we continue to evolve and expand, we wanted a brand that better represents our holistic approach to wellness. We are more than just a provider of products and services, we are dedicated to preventing illness and promoting

overall health and well-being. With a positive and optimistic brand tone, Cura Health is committed to enhancing the quality of life for the people of Kuwait."

New Brand, New Mission
With the new name came a new mission: promoting wellness. Cura Health will always strive to make the highest quality products from the most reputable pharmaceutical companies in the world readily available to our customers. Our strong partnerships with retail partners and the implementation of cutting-edge technologies ensure that our products are easily accessible when needed. We also prioritize transparency and education, providing our customers with accurate and up-to-date information on every product, enabling them to make informed decisions about their healthcare options.

A Roster of Leading World-Class Products
Cura Health, is a leading provider of pharmaceutical, medical equipment, and consumer retail distribution services in Kuwait. With a strong portfolio of reputable brands such as Pfizer, Novartis, Boehringer Ingelheim, Novo Nordisk, Merck, Viatris, GlaxoSmithKline, L'Oréal, Johnson & Johnson, Galderma, Pierre Fabre, Haleon, and others, the company has a proven track record of driving growth and innovation in the healthcare industry in Kuwait. With its unparalleled supply chain capabilities, Cura Health is able to secure the latest and most advanced pharmaceutical products as soon as they are authorized for use. The company offers a wide range of products and services, including pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, skin and hair care products, cosmetics, and veterinary medicine, to local pharmacies, hospitals, and laboratories. Cura Health is also the primary supplier to the Ministry of Health and private hospitals in the country.



"We are relentless in our pursuit of excellence, forming strategic alliances with the industry's top pharmaceutical companies and key players in Kuwait's healthcare sector. This has enabled us to attain a commanding position in the Kuwaiti market."



"We are more than just a provider of products and services, we are dedicated to preventing illness and promoting overall health and well-being. With a positive and optimistic brand tone, Cura Health is committed to enhancing the quality of life for the people of Kuwait."

Cura Health Co. K.S.C.C. is a subsidiary of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co.



International

Turkey's opposition pledges to undo Erdogan's legacy

Constitutional changes can be ratified by 400 votes in the 600-seat parliament

ANKARA: Turkey's opposition vowed on Monday to crimp the president's powers and broadly expand democratic rights if they seize power in May 14 presidential and parliamentary polls. The six parties that are united against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also pledged to agree on February 13 to a joint candidate for the crucial vote-widely seen as Turkey's most consequential in generations. The opposition's long-awaited election programme aims to roll back many of the powers Erdogan has amassed over his two-decade rule.

It limits the president to a seven-year term and makes a powerful new prime minister accountable to parliament. "We will shift to a strengthened parliamentary system," the programme says. "We will put an end to the president's power to issue decrees."

Erdogan began his rule in 2003 as prime minister and was elected president-at the time a more ceremonial post-when his mandates ran out in 2014. He then rammed through constitutional changes in 2017 that eliminated the premiership and created a powerful new executive that allowed the president to effectively rule by decree. The opposition pledged to change the constitution back to the way things worked throughout most of Turkey's post-Ottoman history.

Constitutional referendum

Constitutional changes can be ratified by 400 votes in the 600-seat parliament. They can also be put up for a national vote if the opposition gathers the 360 votes needed to trigger a constitutional referendum. The opposition's pledge to

rewrite the constitution adds particular importance to the parliamentary vote.

Erdogan briefly lost control of parliament during his second decade in power and now relies on support from a far-right party that has seen its support slip in the past year. Opinion polls point to a tightly contested election that is too close to call.

The opposition pledged to "urgently" amend the constitution and "put an end to the vague and arbitrary restriction of the freedoms of assembly and demonstration". "We will strengthen the freedoms of thought, opinion and expression," it added.

Erdogan unleashed sweeping purges after a failed 2016 coup attempt that curbed many of the freedoms enjoyed under his more prosperous and publicly popular first years of rule. Analysts estimate that 90 percent of Turkey's media are now under government or its business allies' control.

Thousands of activists-many of them Kurds-are languishing in prison on terror-related charges that rights groups believe Erdogan is using to crack down on political dissent.

EU membership

The programme was unveiled at a ceremony attended by cheering crowds thirsting for a chance to reverse Erdogan's transformation of Turkey into a more religiously conservative country that was slowly losing support from the West.

Some of the biggest applause came from promises to crack down on corruption and restore the strength of Turkey's traditional institutions-including its state media. The opposition vowed to make Turkey's TRT national broadcaster and Anadolu state news agency abide by "the principles of



ANKARA: Heads of Republican People's Party (CHP) Kemal Kilicdaroglu, IYI Party Meral Aksener, Felicity Party (Saadet) Temel Karamollaoğlu, Democratic Party (DP) Gultekin Uysal, Future Party (Gelecek) Ahmet Davutoglu and Democracy and Progress (DEVA) Party Ali Babacan, belonging to the Turkish opposition alliance called National Alliance arrive to present their programme in Ankara. —AFP

independence and impartiality".

Its foreign policy section stressed the importance of restoring "mutual trust" with the United States and achieving Turkey's stalled goal of gaining "full membership in the European Union". It made no direct mention of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We will maintain relations with the Russian Federation with an understanding that both par-

ties are equal and strengthened by balanced and constructive dialogue at the institutional level," the programme said. Erdogan's refusal to join Western sanctions on Moscow has turned Turkey into a key route for Russia to access Western goods and services. The resulting boom in bilateral trade has added to Erdogan's tensions with Washington and the European Union. —AFP

Manhunt as gunmen kill 8 at birthday party in S Africa

GQEBERHA: Police in South Africa on Monday launched a manhunt after gunmen opened fire on a birthday party in the southern port city of Gqeberha, killing eight. Three people were wounded in the shooting, which occurred on Sunday evening in a township of the city, previously known as Port Elizabeth.

The birthday celebrant and house owner was among those killed, police said. "There was a birthday celebration at the house, and the next minute people from outside came in and started shooting randomly," police spokeswoman Priscilla Naidu told AFP. The motive of the attack was unknown, and the victims were yet to be named.

Dozens of onlookers gathered outside the brown low-cost government-funded unit on Monday morning. A barbecue grill, trays and empty packets of charcoal were lined against an outside wall, in a stark reminder of the celebratory mood that had filled the house the day before. Mandla Booi, 55, a neighbour of the deceased, said he had made a lucky escape, as he had left the party just minutes before the shooting started.

"I passed through here yesterday and saw people enjoying themselves," he told AFP, adding he



GQEBERHA: Bystanders wait behind a police tape marking the scene of a mass shooting in Gqeberha, South Africa. —AFP

spotted a friend who invited him to join the party. He "didn't stay long," he said. "It was less than 20 minutes (later) when I heard there was a shooting".

Shootings are common in South Africa, which has one of the world's highest murder rates, fuelled by gang violence and alcohol. Many people have licensed fire arms for personal protection, yet there are many more illegal guns in circulation.

In November, six people were killed in a shooting at a house in Gqeberha's New Brighton township that police at the time said was a suspected

drug den. And nearly two dozen people were shot dead in a string of shootings at separate bars in working class suburbs of Johannesburg and in the eastern city of Pietermaritzburg.

The country, often described as one of the most dangerous in the world outside a war zone, has experienced a surge in violent crime over the past year. Between July and September, it recorded more than 7,000 killings. Authorities have been accused of failing to ensure safety and secure justice for the victims. —AFP

S African judge in Zuma graft trial recuses himself

JOHANNESBURG: A South African judge presiding over Jacob Zuma's arms corruption trial recused himself on Monday in the latest twist in the years-long case. Judge Piet Koen last year dismissed Zuma's bid to force out the prosecutor, Billy Downer, whom he accused of leaking confidential medical documents to the media.

In December the Constitutional Court backed Koen's decision, concluding that Zuma's application to remove Downer had no reasonable prospects of success.

The decision by the top court cleared one of the last legal hurdles for the long-running trial to get underway. The situation has been further complicated, however, by a bid by Zuma to force Downer out through a private prosecution. On Monday Koen said he had decided "to recuse myself from the trial" to avoid any risk of compromising the perception of justice.

His rejection of Zuma's bid to oust Downer could have been held against him in the future, "when the issue of whether Mr Zuma has received a constitutionally fair trial will arise for determination," Koen said. —AFP

Pakistan mosque blast kills 61...

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Officers said the blast came from the second row of worshippers, with bomb disposal teams probing the possibility of a suicide attack. Shahid Ali, a policeman who survived, said the explosion took place seconds after the imam started prayers. "I saw black smoke rising to the sky. I ran out to save my life," the 47-year-old told AFP. "The screams of the people are still echoing in my mind," he added. "People were screaming for help."

The drastic security breach came on the day United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan had been due to visit Islamabad, although the trip was cancelled at the last minute due to bad weather. Pakistan is also preparing to host an International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation on Tuesday as it works towards unlocking a vital bailout loan to prevent a looming

default. United States Secretary of States Antony Blinken extended his condolences while describing it as a "horrific attack".

The security situation in Pakistan - once plagued by bombings until a major military crackdown that began in 2014 largely restored order - has deteriorated since the return of the Afghan Taleban in Kabul. Islamabad has accused the new rulers of failing to secure their mountainous border, allowing militants to travel back and forth without being detected. The biggest threat comes from a resurgent Pakistani Taleban, a separate movement from the Afghan Taliban but with a similar ideology, which has sharply increased low casualty attacks on police and security forces.

Meanwhile, the regional chapter of the Islamic State - whose numbers were bolstered by prison breaks in Afghanistan in 2021 - claimed an attack last year on a minority Shiite mosque in Peshawar that killed 64, Pakistan's deadliest terror attack since 2018. Detectives said the bomber was an Afghan exile who had returned home to train for the attack. In the south of the country, authorities say the porous border with Afghanistan has also helped aid a separatist movement in Balochistan. — AFP

Wafa. The US embassy declined to comment. Blinken's long-planned visit has taken on a new urgency amid the spiraling violence.

The fatal east Jerusalem shooting was preceded by the Zionist forces' deadliest operation in the West Bank in years. Ten people were killed Thursday in the densely populated Jenin refugee camp. The military later hit sites in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip in response to rocket fire from the Palestinian enclave. The latest bloodshed has heightened international concern, with Pope Francis on Sunday deploring the "death spiral". French President Emmanuel Macron urged all parties to avoid feeding a "spiral of violence" and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called for "maximum responsibility" on all sides.

Blinken on Monday met Sisi and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. Blinken commended Sisi for "Egypt's important role in promoting stability in the region" and "discussed ongoing efforts to deescalate tensions between (Zionists) and Palestinians," said the State Department. The diplomats and intelligence services of Egypt - a major recipient of US military aid - are regularly called upon to intercede between Zionists and Palestinians. — AFP

COVID still global emergency; kids...

Continued from Page 1

But, he added, "since the beginning of December, weekly reported deaths have been rising". "In the past eight weeks, more than 170,000 people have lost their lives to COVID-19."

Weekly death rates had dropped from more than 70,000 per week at the start of 2022 to below 10,000 in October. But they began swiftly rising again in early December, driven especially by a dramatic outbreak in China, after Beijing lifted its tight COVID restrictions. In mid-January, almost 40,000 COVID weekly deaths were reported - more than half of them in China.

Back in 2020, when the global crisis was also concentrated in China, WHO's declaration of a PHEIC failed to elicit the urgent global response required. It was only after Tedros described the worsening COVID situation as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, that many countries realized the danger. Three years later, WHO said on Monday that the emergency committee deemed the pandemic is "probably at a transition point".

Tedros "appreciates the advice of the committee to navigate this transition carefully and mitigate the potential negative consequences", it said. But Tedros

reiterated his concern over a dramatic drop in surveillance of the virus through testing and sequencing. He also voiced disappointment that many vulnerable people remain un- or under-vaccinated and lack access to the drugs needed to treat severe COVID disease. "We can't control the virus but we can do more to address the vulnerabilities in populations and health systems," he said. "That means vaccinating 100 percent of the most at-risk groups. It means increasing access to testing and early antiviral use."

To find out how much the pandemic upheaval affected students, a European team carried out the largest review of research on the subject yet conducted. They analyzed 42 studies published between March 2020 and August 2022 across 15 countries, including several European and South American nations as well as the United States, South Africa and Australia. The study found that children aged between five and 18 had lost the equivalent of 35 percent of a normal year's worth of education.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds were disproportionately affected, as were those in poorer countries, according to the study in the journal Nature Human Behaviour. "The learning crisis is an equality crisis," said the study's lead author Bastian Betthausen, a researcher at France's Sciences Po university. The researchers also found larger "learning deficits" for maths than for reading. "This may be due to parents being better able to help their children with reading compared to maths exercises," Betthausen told a press briefing. — AFP

Blinken urges calm as Mideast...

Continued from Page 1

where we can start to restore a sense of security for (Zionists) and Palestinians alike," he said.

In the latest bloodshed, Zionist troops Monday killed a Palestinian driver in the West Bank, officials on both sides said. Since the start of the year, the conflict has claimed the lives of 35 Palestinian adults and children. The United States has historically taken a lead on Middle East diplomacy, and Egypt, which has relations with the Zionist entity, has long served as a mediator in the conflict.

Blinken envoy will also travel to Ramallah in the West Bank for talks with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas met with CIA chief William Burns in Ramallah late Sunday to discuss the "dangerous developments", said the official Palestinian news agency

Manila plans labor talks with Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

not suitable for workers," she said at a separate press conference. The DMW also lodged an order for the preventive suspension of the employer of Ranara. The charred remains of Ranara, 35, were discovered in the Salmi desert last week. It was reported she was pregnant and had been subjected to blunt-force trauma. The 17-year-old son of her employer was arrested by police.

On Sunday, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received

Charge D'Affaires of the Philippines Embassy in Kuwait Jose Cabrera at his office to express heartfelt condolences for the death of Ranara. Sheikh Salem condemned "the regrettable and despicable crime", saying it runs counter to the humane nature of the Kuwaiti people. Renewing condolences to the Filipino government, people and the family of the victim, he affirmed that "justice will be served in this case with full credibility and transparency".

The minister reaffirmed commitment of Kuwait to protect and care for the safety and rights of all expatriate workers on its land, including the Filipino community, as per the provisions of its national laws and international norms. He appreciated the role of the Filipino community in all sectors of the state, expressing hope that "this individual act would not affect the friendship between the peoples of Kuwait and Philippines". — Agencies

International

PM Modi pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi on 75th death anniversary

Modi has refrained from commenting on efforts by Hindu nationalists to honour Godse

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom movement leader shot dead at point-blank range by a Hindu zealot 75 years ago. "I bow to Babu on his punya tithi (death anniversary) and recall his profound thoughts," Modi tweeted ahead of taking part in a ceremony in New Delhi.

"I also pay homage to all those who have been martyred in the service of our nation. Their sacrifices will never be forgotten and will keep strengthening our resolve to work for a developed India," he added. The death anniversary of Gandhi, who is widely known in India as Babu (father), is also observed as Martyrs' Day in the country.

Gandhi was assassinated at a multi-faith prayer meeting in January 1948 by Nathuram Godse, a religious zealot irked by Gandhi's conciliatory gestures towards the country's Muslim minority. Modi has regularly paid respects to Gandhi, often visiting his spiritual retreat with foreign dignitaries including former US president Donald Trump, and speaking about his legacy. But Modi has refrained from commenting on efforts by Hindu nationalists to rehabilitate and honour Godse, who was executed in 1949. Some have conducted reenactments of the assassination using an effigy of Gandhi.

Modi's government has also championed the work

of Hindu ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who is known as Godse's mentor. Gandhi's great-grandson Tushar Gandhi told AFP last week that under Modi, Godse's views are seeing a worrying resonance in India.

"That whole philosophy has now captured India and Indian hearts, the ideology of hate, the ideology of polarisation, the ideology of divisions," he told AFP at his Mumbai home. "There is no denying that in his heart, he (Modi) also knows what he is doing is lighting a fire that will one day consume India itself," Tushar said.

Tushar, 63, attributes this tectonic shift to the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Modi took office in 2014 and Tushar says his government is to blame for undermining the secular and multicultural traditions that his namesake sought to protect.

Today, Gandhi's assassin is revered by many Hindu nationalists who have pushed for a re-evaluation of his decision to murder a man synonymous with non-violence. A temple dedicated to Godse was built near New Delhi in 2015, the year after Modi's election, and activists have campaigned to honour him by renaming an Indian city after him.

Godse was a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a still-prominent Hindu

far-right group whose members conduct paramilitary drills and prayer meetings. The RSS has long distanced itself from Godse's actions but remains a potent force, founding Modi's party decades ago to

battle for Hindu causes in the political realm. Modi has regularly paid respect to Gandhi's legacy but has refrained from weighing in on the campaign to rehabilitate his killer. — AFP



NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays his respect at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial at Rajghat on Gandhi's death anniversary in New Delhi on January 30, 2023. — AFP

Gandhi's killer a hero to diehard Hindu nationalists

MEERUT: Hindu fundamentalist Ashok Sharma has devoted his life to championing the deeds of an Indian "patriot": Not revered independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, but the man who shot him dead. Sharma is the custodian of a temple dedicated to Nathuram Godse, who 75 years ago this Monday on January 30, 1948, gunned down a figure celebrated the world over as an apostle of non-violent struggle.

For generations, the young religious zealot-hunged the following year was roundly despised as the archvillain of India's long struggle to free itself from British colonial rule. But since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi nearly a decade ago, an alternate history forged in Hindu nationalist ideology has left Sharma no longer a "lone warrior" in worshipping the assassin. "I was ostracised by everyone, including my family and friends... but today I command respect for being Godse's disciple," he told AFP at his shrine in the bustling city of Meerut, a couple of hours from New Delhi by car.

"There is a wind of change in the country and people have understood that Godse was the real patriot and Gandhi a traitor," Sharma established his unremarkable temple complex in 2015, a year after Modi took office, after several unsuccessful attempts under previous governments that saw him briefly jailed and his property seized. Its inauguration was met with outrage and hand-wringing in the press, renewed in 2019 when it marked the anniversary of Gandhi's death with a staged re-enactment of the killing using an effigy that spouted fake blood. Now the humble shrine, featuring small ceramic busts of Godse and his chief accomplice Narayan Apte, is visited by droves of people—some out of curiosity, but most to pay their respects.

'Cannot stop this storm'

Sharma and his followers hold daily prayers in front of the Godse idol, chanting religious sermons that accuse Gandhi of betraying the nation despite his role in mobilising the mass protests that brought India's

independence. In their view, Gandhi failed to stop Britain's colony from being partitioned into the separate nations of India and Pakistan, thwarting it from becoming a state governed by ancient Hindu scriptures.

"It is because of Gandhi and his ideology that India was divided and Hindus had to bow before Muslims and outsiders," said Abhishek Agarwal, like Sharma a member of the century-old radical Hindu Mahasabha group. Agarwal said that Godse was denigrated by post-independence secular politicians in a conspiracy to suppress Hindu beliefs and impose democracy, a concept he claims is alien to local historical tradition. "But now Gandhi is exposed and Godse's word is spreading far and wide. The secular leaders cannot stop this storm and there will be a time when Gandhi's name will be wiped out from the pious land," he told AFP.



MEERUT: In this photograph taken on January 23, 2023, Hindu fundamentalist and priest Ashok Sharma sits in front of the statues of Mahatma Gandhi's assassins Nathuram Godse (L) and Narayan Apte at Godse temple in Meerut. Sharma has devoted his life to championing the deeds of an Indian "patriot" — not revered independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, but the man who shot him dead. — AFP

NATO asks S Korea to 'step up' military support for Ukraine

SEOUL: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg asked South Korea on Monday to "step up" military support for Ukraine, suggesting it reconsider its policy of not exporting weapons to countries in conflict.

Stoltenberg is in Seoul on the first leg of his Asia trip, which will also take in Japan, as part of a drive to boost ties with the region's democratic allies in the face of the Ukraine conflict and growing competition from China. He met top South Korean officials Sunday, and on Monday urged Seoul to do more to help Kyiv, saying there was an "urgent need for more ammunition". He told AFP that while South Korea and Japan were "providing significant economic support to Ukraine", regional allies needed to recognise that global "security is interconnected".

Were Russian President Vladimir Putin to win the war, it would "send a very dangerous message to authoritarian leaders all over the world", he said during an interview in Seoul, with "direct consequences" for security and stability in Asia.

He pointed to North Korea "providing rockets and missiles to the Wagner group"—something that

Pyongyang has angrily denied, with state media saying Monday that Stoltenberg's Asia trip was bringing the region "close to the extreme security crisis".

'They need weapons'

South Korea has provided non-lethal and humanitarian aid to Kyiv, and since the invasion has signed deals to sell hundreds of tanks to European countries, including NATO-member Poland. But Seoul has long-standing policies against the export of weapons to governments in active conflict, which it has said makes it difficult to provide arms directly to Ukraine.

Stoltenberg said Germany and Norway, among others, had similar policies in place that were revised after Putin invaded Ukraine in February last year. "If we believe in freedom, democracy, if we don't want autocracy and tyranny to win then they need weapons," he said, speaking at the Chey Institute in Seoul.

South Korea opened its first diplomatic mission to NATO last year. President Yoon Suk-yeol, who met with Stoltenberg, said the NATO chief had "expressed appreciation for Korea's continued support" on the Ukraine conflict, according to a readout released by Yoon's office.

"President Yoon wrapped up the meeting by saying that he would continue to play a possible role in cooperation with the international community to help the people of Ukraine," it added. Stoltenberg told AFP that his visit to Seoul and Tokyo was "not about expanding NATO into the Asia-Pacific" but it was crucial that democratic allies cooperated more. "Cyber is a global threat, terrorism has been a global threat for many decades, space is becoming more and more contested, which is truly global," he said.

Regional security issues also affect Europe, he added. "The nuclear programmes of North Korea are also NATO's problem, because stability in this region matters for us." "And then, of course, China, with heavy investments in new modern nuclear capabilities, long-range missiles, of course behaviour in the South China Sea—all of this matters also for NATO allies.

"So this idea that we can have a kind of regional security doesn't apply any longer. Security is global. And that is something also NATO has to take into account." — AFP

Patriot or traitor?

Godse was born in a small Indian village in 1910, the son of a postal worker, and at a very young age joined the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a still-prominent Hindu revivalist outfit whose members conduct paramilitary drills and prayer meetings. He was 37 years old when he shot Gandhi at point-blank range as the latter emerged from a multi-faith prayer meeting in New Delhi. At the time, authorities briefly banned the RSS—despite its leaders claiming that Godse left the organisation before the crime—but reversed course not long before the killer was executed alongside an accomplice.

Today, the RSS has continued relevance as the ideological fountainhead of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which it founded to champion Hindu causes in the political realm. Decades before he became India's leader, Prime Minister Modi's first role in public life was as an RSS cadre.

'Our hate will devour us'

Modi has regularly paid respect to Gandhi as one of the 20th century's most venerated figures, visiting his spiritual retreat and speaking movingly about his ideals and legacy. He has refrained from weighing in on efforts by nationalist activists to rehabilitate the legacy of Gandhi's assassin—to the disappointment of Sharma and his acolytes. But he has also never explicitly denounced Godse or his ideology, and his government has championed the work of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an important Hindu ideologue who served as Godse's mentor and was tried alongside him but acquitted as a co-conspirator in the assassination.

Modi has proved adept at channelling India's growing tide of Hindu nationalism after coming to power in 2014, invoking the glorious past of India's majority religion and promising to end its "persecution". His departure from the secular values of his predecessors has been watched with dismay by Gandhi's great-grandson Tushar, an author living in Mumbai.

Tushar told AFP that Godse's veneration was the direct result of an ideology espoused by Modi's government that risked sowing the "seeds of our destruction". "For too long we've been too diplomatic and a bit generous in equating it as nationalism. It's not nationalism, it is fanaticism," he said.—AFP

China's Sichuan province to scrap three-child limit

BEIJING: Southwest China's Sichuan province will lift its three-child birth limit and remove restrictions on single parents as the world's most populous nation faces a looming demographic crisis. China's population shrank last year for the first time in more than six decades, official data released this month showed, and the nation of 1.4 billion has seen birth rates plunge to record lows as its workforce ages. China ended its strict "one-child policy" — imposed in the 1980s out of fears of overpopulation — in 2016 and began allowing couples to have three children in 2021. But that has failed to reverse the demographic decline.

Faced with falling birth rates, authorities in Sichuan on Monday said they would remove the limit on the number of children a family can have and lift a ban on single women registering a birth. The Sichuan Provincial Health Commission said the new rules would take effect on February 15. Out-of-wedlock births are frowned upon in China, with the National Health Commission saying in 2017 that they were "against the public order and against good morals". The last time China's population declined was in 1960, as the country battled the worst famine in its modern history, caused by the disastrous Mao Zedong agricultural policy known as the Great Leap Forward.

The population stood at around 1,411,750,000 at the end of 2022, Beijing's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported recently, a decrease of 850,000 from the end of the previous year. Many point to the soaring cost of living — as well as a growing number of women in the workforce and seeking higher education — as being behind the slowdown. Many local authorities have already launched measures to encourage couples to have children. The southern megacity of Shenzhen, for example, now offers birth bonuses of up to 10,000 yuan (around \$1,500) and pays allowances until the child is three years old. — AFP

News in brief

Uzbekistan gas explosion

TASHKENT: A gas explosion tore through a flat in Uzbekistan killing at least five people, officials said Monday, as residents facing a brutal energy crisis resort to makeshift heat sources. Gas and electricity shortages in the Central Asian country have led to the sacking of a slew of senior officials this month, as Uzbekistan struggles under historically low temperatures. The resource rich ex-Soviet nation is plagued by ageing energy infrastructure, which regularly leads to deadly incidents. The emergency ministry said the explosion on Sunday damaged a four-storey building in the city of Nukus, the administrative centre of the autonomous Karakalpakstan region, which last summer saw deadly protests over self-determination. The ministry said rescue workers pulled five bodies from the rubble and that an injured five-year-old girl was taken to hospital. The blast was triggered by an "air-gas mixture" in an apartment on the top floor, it added.

Russian spies detained

LJUBLJANA: Slovenian authorities said on Monday the EU country's intelligence services had detained two suspected spies, with media reports saying they were allegedly working for Russia. The Ljubljana Public Prosecution confirmed two men had been detained in December suspected of spying for a foreign country, but did not give more details since the investigation was still under way. "The court has ordered a criminal investigation that is still being carried out against the two suspects who were detained on December 5," public prosecutor Katarina Bergant told AFP. The detainees are members of the Russian military intelligence organisation GRU and had false identities, Slovenian daily Delo said. The two had registered a real estate and antiques business in Ljubljana as a cover-up, with one of them holding Argentine citizenship, it added. Last April, Slovenia, a member of the European Union and NATO, expelled 33 Russians working in the country's Ljubljana embassy following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Azerbaijan suspends embassy work

BAKU: Azerbaijan said on Monday it was suspending work at its embassy in Iran, days after a gunman stormed the mission, killing one guard and wounding two others. Iran has said the attack on Friday was motivated by personal reasons but Baku labelled it an act of terrorism. "The operation of Azerbaijan's embassy in Iran has been temporarily suspended following the evacuation of its staff and their family members from Iran," Azerbaijani foreign ministry spokesman Ayxan Hacizada told AFP. "That doesn't mean that diplomatic ties had been severed," he said, adding that Baku's consulate general in the Iranian city of Tabriz was "up and running". In a phone call on Saturday with his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said he hoped "this violent act of terror would be thoroughly investigated". Tehran's police said the attacker, who was arrested, was an Iranian man married to an Azerbaijani woman.

Two dead after Japan avalanche

TOKYO: Two men have been confirmed dead after their bodies were recovered following an avalanche in Japan, police said Monday, a day after the off-piste accident in the central region of Nagano. Japanese authorities declined to identify the pair, but US ski magazine Mountain Gazette reported that one of the dead was American professional skier Kyle Smaine. Two men who were travelling with Smaine posted Instagram updates saying he had been killed in the avalanche. Emergency rescue teams "confirmed the death of the two men", a local police spokesman told AFP. Their identities or nationalities would be released after thorough ID checks, he added. The missing two had been outside the patrolled areas of a ski resort in Otari village along with several other skiers and snowboarders when the avalanche took place on Sunday. — AFP



SEOUL: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg speaks during a conversation at Chey Institute in Seoul on January 30, 2023. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2023

Fight climate change without hurting growth: UAE's oil chief

Energy transition must make the planet wealthier and healthier: Al-Jaber

ABU DHABI: The fight against global warming should not be at the expense of economic growth, the United Arab Emirates' oil chief who will lead this year's UN climate talks said on Monday.

Sultan Al-Jaber, the UAE's special envoy for climate change and CEO of oil giant ADNOC, said the energy transition needed to make the planet "wealthier and healthier". "We need to hold back the global rise in temperatures to 1.5 degrees (Celsius), without slowing economic growth," he told a graduation ceremony at the Mohamed Bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence.

"We need to drive an inclusive energy transition that leaves no one behind, especially in the Global South. We need to make our planet wealthier and healthier at the same time." Al-Jaber's appointment as president of COP28 has been criticized by activists who said it threatens the "legitimacy" of the global forum against climate change. The minister of industry and advanced technology is a veteran of COP meetings and heads a leading renewable energy company. His appointment was welcomed by US climate envoy John Kerry.

On Monday, France's economy minister urged delegates to get behind Al-Jaber and focus on "concrete decisions". "Don't misunderstand the challenge of COP28," Bruno Le Maire said in Abu Dhabi. "The challenge of COP28 is not to know who is in charge of the COP. The key challenge of the COP28 are the

results, the concrete decisions."

'Single winner'

The French minister, who also visited Qatar as part of his trip to the Gulf, said he had been reassured by Al-Jaber and members of the UAE government regarding their approach to the climate conference.

"I think all the participants to the COP28 should ... try to support the efforts of the presidency of COP28 so that at the end of COP28 the single winner will be our planet." The last UN climate talks, in Egypt in November, ended with a landmark deal to create a "loss and damage" fund to cover the costs that developing countries face from climate-linked natural disasters and impacts like rising sea levels.

But observers were left disappointed that little progress was made on reducing planet-heating emissions from fossil fuels. The UAE, one of the world's biggest oil producers, argues that crude remains indispensable to the global economy and is needed to finance the energy transition.

The Gulf monarchy is pushing the merits of carbon capture-removing carbon dioxide as fuel is burned, or from the air. It is also spending billions to develop enough renewable energy to cover half of its needs by 2050, when it is targeting net-zero domestic carbon emissions-which do not include pollution from exported oil. — AFP



ABU DHABI: UAE Minister of State and the CEO of Abu Dhabi's state-run Abu Dhabi National Oil Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber, talks during the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week's opening ceremony, in Abu Dhabi.

Adani fails to stem stock rout at business empire

MUMBAI: Gautam Adani's vast Indian business empire lost billions more dollars in value on Monday after its rejection of claims of widespread fraud failed to reassure investors. The slump was sparked by a report by US investment group Hindenburg Research that last week alleged a "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades".

The three-day selloff has now erased a total of about \$68 billion in the conglomerate's market value, according to Bloomberg News. Adani Total Gas and Adani Green Energy both plunged another 20 percent on Monday and saw trading halted, after suffering the same fate Friday.

Adani Transmission ended 14.91 percent lower, although the group's flagship Adani Enterprises was 4.21 percent higher. The fire sale has seen school-dropout-turned-tycoon Adani, who is viewed as close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, tumble from third on the Forbes real-time rich list.

On Monday the 60-year-old was eighth in the ranking, which put his wealth at \$88.2 billion, down from almost \$130 billion before the allegations. He maintained his crown as Asia's richest man, although volatile trading earlier in the day saw him briefly overtaken by fellow Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani.

Adani's conglomerate said it was the victim of a "maliciously mischievous" reputational attack and on Sunday issued a 413-page statement that it said rebutted Hindenburg's claims. Dubbing Hindenburg the "Madoffs of Manhattan"—a reference to crooked financier Bernie Madoff—the statement said the researchers' allegations were "nothing but a lie". "This is not merely an unwarranted attack on any specific company but a calculated attack on India, the independence, integrity and quality of Indian institutions, and the growth story and ambition of India," it said.

Who is Adani and why is his company tanking?

MUMBAI: The business empire of Gautam Adani has shed tens of billions of dollars in value on the back of a report alleging accounting fraud that the Indian tycoon's firm has strenuously rejected.

Who is Gautam Adani?

Adani, 60, is a publicity-shy school dropout of humble origins who rose to become the world's third-richest man with a fortune-untill last week-of around \$130 billion. Moving to Mumbai in his teens to work sorting diamonds, he formed his own import-export business. His big break came in 1995 when he acquired a shipping port just as India's economy was opening up.

What does his empire do?

Today Adani Group does everything from power generation and coal mining to cement, media and food. Its seven listed units had market value in January of around \$220 billion. Critics say Adani's closeness to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a fellow native of Gujarat state, has brought his group an unfair advantage in winning business.



Gautam Adani

But the response failed to stem intense selling pressure across most of Adani's listed companies, while Hindenburg accused the group of "systematically looting the nation". The allegations came as Adani seeks to raise an ambitious \$2.5 billion via a stock sale, and despite Monday's rise Adani Enterprises shares remained well below the 3,112-3,276 rupees price range set for the offer-making them cheaper to buy in the market.

Investors had subscribed for only three percent of the follow-on public offer (FPO), which is due to close on Tuesday, at the end of its second day of bidding on Monday. But Abu Dhabi-based International Holding Company (IHC) gave the group a vote of confidence, saying it would buy one-sixth of the shares on offer, paying \$400 million to do so. Hindenburg said in response to Adani's statement that "India's future is being held back by the Adani Group, which has draped itself in the Indian flag while systematically looting the nation".

"In terms of substance, Adani's '413-page' response only included about 30 pages focused on issues related to our report," it said. "The remainder of the response consisted of 330 pages of court records, along with 53 pages of high-level financials, general information, and details on irrelevant corporate initiatives, such as how it encourages female entrepreneurship and the production of safe vegetables." —AFP

On the back of eye-watering rises in the share prices of his firms, Adani became Asia's richest man. Globally only Elon Musk and Bernard Arnault and family were wealthier, according to Forbes.

What has been alleged?

On January 24, Hindenburg Research—an activist US investment group that bets on stocks falling—accused Adani Group of committing "a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades". Hindenburg's two-year investigation also found that elder brother Vinod Adani, "through several close associates, manages a vast labyrinth of offshore shell entities".

"We believe the Adani Group has been able to operate a large, flagrant fraud in broad daylight in large part because investors, journalists, citizens and even politicians have been afraid to speak out for fear of reprisal," it said.

What has been the result?

The report has sparked a huge sell-off in shares in Adani's firms, wiping out more than \$68 billion in market value, according to Bloomberg News. Trading in some stocks was temporarily halted. Adani's personal wealth has dived by around \$40 billion and he has tumbled down the real-time Forbes rich list to number eight. The timing was also terrible, coming just as Adani Group is seeking to raise \$2.5 billion to strengthen its finances with a sale of shares that is due to expire on Tuesday. —AFP

Kuwait's money supply increased 0.5% in December

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait announced Monday an increase in broad money supply (M2) by about 0.5 percent during December. The broad supply monthly growth reached KD 38.4 billion (about \$126.7 billion). Statistical tables shared by the bank's economic research department with KUNA showed that Kuwaiti dinar private sector deposits in local banks rose by 0.3 percent last December to reach KD 34.9 billion (\$115 billion). It added that private sector deposits in foreign currencies increased by 3.7 percent, to reach KD 1.7 billion (about \$5.6 billion).

It explained that the total assets of local banks increased by 0.9 percent, to record KD 85 billion (about \$280.5 billion), while the net foreign assets of local banks rose 3.3 percent to KD 10.8 billion (about \$35.6 billion). It stated that time deposits with the Central Bank have increased last December by about 15.5 percent, to reach KD 1.3 billion (about \$4.2 billion), while the balances of cash credit facilities



(loans) increased by about 0.2 percent to KD 52.4 billion (about \$172.9 billion). It indicated that the average interest rates on treasury bonds of one year maturity remained last December at 4.5 percent. The financing of Kuwaiti imports increased by 90.6 percent to KD 1.1 billion (about \$3.6 billion), while the average exchange rate of the US dollar decreased against the dinar.

The money supply in its narrow sense means the volume of current operations and includes paper and metal currencies that people trade in their daily dealings and money deposited in banks in the form of current accounts or demand deposits. — KUNA

Saudi to invest \$266bn in 'cleaner' energy: Minister

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia plans to invest more than \$266 billion to produce cleaner electricity and expand its power grid, the kingdom's energy minister said Monday.

Speaking at a forum organized by Saudi oil giant Aramco, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said the world's biggest crude exporter was also looking to become a global leader in hydrogen production. "We are introducing over a trillion riyals (\$266 billion) worth of investment by 2030 to address our plans to achieve cleaner forms of electricity within the kingdom as well as expanding and modernizing the power trans-

mission and distribution grid," he said. "On the hydrogen front, we are determined to be the leading exporter as well as availing clean hydrogen for local usages in heavy industries to produce green products," he told the seventh annual IKTVA forum in Dhahran in a speech.

The kingdom would also double down on carbon capture solutions. "We are no longer going to build any future power generation without carbon capture," the Saudi minister said.

Despite its goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2060, Saudi Arabia remains hugely dependent on crude oil exports that have powered its growth for decades, raising doubts about its potential for an economic makeover any time soon. Soaring crude prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine allowed the kingdom to post in 2022 its first budget surplus in nine years, giving it the financial firepower for economic development. —AFP

ECB poised to hike rates again, but outlook brightens

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is expected to push on with its inflation fight Thursday with a fresh rate hike, even as signs grow the eurozone might have passed the worst of an economic shock. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent energy and food costs soaring across the single currency area, the ECB embarked on the most aggressive cycle of monetary policy tightening in its history.

Since July, it has lifted interest rates by 2.5 percentage points to tame consumer price growth—which peaked at 10.6 percent in October, over five times the bank's target. While still high, inflation has started slowing, fuelling hopes that the Frankfurt-based institution's efforts are bearing fruit.

A flurry of recent data, including a key survey showing Europe's economy has started growing again, have even raised hopes that the eurozone will avoid a sharp downturn. But ECB president Christine

Lagarde has repeatedly stressed rates will continue to rise at a steady pace, and the bank is expected to agree on a 50-basis point hike Thursday. That would be the same as the increase when the governing council last met in December, but below two massive hikes of 75 basis points at its two prior meetings.

"The reason for a 50 (basis point) rate hike is clear: the ECB's job is far from done," said ING economist Carsten Brzeski.

Still, recent, less gloomy data has given cause for hope that Russia's efforts to strangle crucial gas supplies to Europe may not trigger the economic shock once feared. As Moscow slashed deliveries following its invasion of Ukraine, European governments rolled out relief measures to cushion consumers and businesses from surging prices, and rushed to fill up storage facilities.

Wholesale gas prices have been easing while relatively mild winter weather has meant supplies have not been used up as quickly as expected. The closely watched S&P Global Flash Eurozone purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose above 50 in January.

That reading indicates growth, and fuelled optimism that slowing inflation and easing supply chain problems, as well as the reopening of China's economy, may offset the fallout from Ukraine. —AFP

Business

Emirates announces 'milestone' sustainable aviation fuel flight

Dubai-based airline successfully flies Boeing 777 powered by SAF

DUBAI: Emirates said it successfully flew a Boeing 777 powered by sustainable aviation fuel on Monday, as the Middle East's largest airline aims to halve its jet fuel consumption. The Dubai-based carrier has used sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) since 2017, but said its test flight was "the first in the Middle East and North Africa to be powered by 100 percent SAF" in one of the plane's two engines.

"This flight is a milestone moment," said Emirate's chief operating officer Adel Al-Redha. Currently, a maximum of 50 percent SAF blended with kerosene can be used in commercial jet engines. SAFs are made from sustainable biomass, recycled food oils, as well as

captured CO2 or green hydrogen converted into synthetic fuels.

"If by 2030, we get 50 percent of the fuel from SAF, it could be quite a very good achievement," Al Redha told AFP. "But that will depend on the ability of the companies to produce it and to deliver it... but equally also to bring it at a price that is affordable."

Monday's flight took off from Dubai International Airport and flew for more than hour over the city's coastline, Emirates said. The SAF that was used in one engine "closely replicates the properties of conventional jet fuel", Emirates said, noting conventional jet fuel was used to run the second engine.

SAF may result in reductions of CO2 emissions by as much as 80 percent over their entire cycle of use. But they currently account for less than 0.1 percent of jet fuel consumed and are two to four times more expensive. "If it is very expensive that could be an obstacle for airlines or companies to use it," Al-Redha said. Monday's demonstration came as the UAE plans to host this year's UN climate talks in November.

One of the world's biggest oil producers, the UAE is spending billions to develop enough renewable energy to cover half of its needs by 2050, and is targeting net-zero domestic carbon emissions by that year. — AFP



Emirates SAF demonstration flight.

France braces for new strikes against pension reform

PARIS: France braced Monday for another day of mass protests and strikes over proposed pension reforms championed by President Emmanuel Macron, with the government and its left-wing opponents trading blame for the expected disruption. Around 1.1 million people took to the streets for the first strike day on January 19, according to official statistics, the biggest demonstrations since the last major round of pension reform under right-wing president Nicolas Sarkozy in 2010.

A police source told AFP that security forces were expecting similarly sized crowds on Tuesday in 240 demonstrations around the country, in addition to mass strike disruption to transport, education and other services. With unions warning more stoppages are to come, the strikes represent a major test for Macron as he seeks to implement a showcase policy of his second term in office.

The president's ministers and their opponents are desperately seeking to sway public opinion ahead of what is expected to be a bitter and costly standoff if more strikes are called over the next month.

Senior hard-left MP Mathilde Panot from the France Unbowed (LFI) party accused Macron and his ministers of being responsible for the stoppages that are to cripple public transport and other services.

"They're the ones who want to wreak havoc on the country," she told BFM TV while also criticizing comments by Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin over the weekend as a "provocation." Darmanin, a close Macron ally, said Saturday that left-wing political parties were "only looking to screw up the country" and were defending "idleness and champagne socialism."

Macron's reputation

The most controversial part of the proposed reform is hiking the minimum retirement age to 64 from its current level of 62, which is the lowest level in any major European economy. Macron made the change part of this re-election manifesto in April last year and he insists it is needed to guarantee the future financing of the pension system, which is forecast to tip into deficit in the next few years.

Opponents point out that the system is currently balanced and that the head of the independent

Pensions Advisory Council recently told parliament that "pension spending is not out of control, it's relatively contained." For pro-business Macron, who has repeatedly told French people they "need to work more", failure to succeed with a signature proposal would severely undermine his credibility for the remainder of his second and last term in office, analysts say.

The government headed by Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has signalled there is wiggle room on some measures as parliamentary committees started examining the draft law on Monday.

Conditions could be improved for people who started working very young, as well as for mothers who interrupted their careers to look after their children and for people who invested in further education, Borne has suggested. But the headline age limit of 64 is not up for discussion, she said Sunday, calling it "non-negotiable." Laurent Berger, head of the CFDT union, warned that the Borne "cannot remain deaf to this formidable mobilization."

"Listen, listen, listen to this discontent," he told France 2 TV. Macron has so far commented relatively little on the tensions, seeking to stay above the fray of daily debate. Darmanin's intervention has not helped reduce strains, with the tough-talking minister telling the Le Parisien daily Saturday the left were defending an idea of a "society without work and effort".

Parliamentary battle

Most Paris metro and suburban rail services will be severely restricted on Tuesday, said operator RATP, while intercity travel will be badly disrupted with just one high speed TGV in three, according to SNCF. Air travel is less badly affected with Air France saying it would cancel one in 10 short and medium haul services while adding long-haul would be unaffected.

Only minor disruption is expected on international Thalys and Eurostar train services. Macron and his allies are also facing struggles in parliament as well as on the street. The left-wing opposition has submitted more than 7,000 amendments to the draft legislation in a bid to slow its path through parliament. Macron's centrist allies, short of an absolute majority in parliament, will need votes from conservatives to get their pensions plan approved.

A new poll by the OpinionWay survey group, published on Monday in Les Echos newspaper, showed that 61 percent of French people supported the protest movement, a rise of 3.0 percentage points from January 12. Darmanin said 11,000 police, including 4,000 in Paris, would be deployed on Tuesday across France to ensure demonstrations passed peacefully. — AFP



PARIS: In this file photo, commuters get into a bus near the Gare Montparnasse railway station during a strike in Paris. — AFP

Markets struggle before interest rate decisions

LONDON: Stock markets wavered on Monday as central banks will lift interest rates again later this week in their battle against high inflation. Wall Street opened in the red while Paris and Frankfurt were down in afternoon deals. London was up 0.1 percent while Shanghai and Tokyo finished higher as mainland Chinese markets reopened from holidays.

The US Federal Reserve is forecast Wednesday to lift interest rates by just 25 basis points, down from a half-point hike last month, which followed four straight 75-point increases. The Bank of England and the European Central Bank will then unveil their latest decisions one day later, with more hikes on the radar.

"Stocks were on the back foot ... as attention shifts to this week's vital Federal Reserve meeting, as well as supporting acts in the shape of ECB and BoE," said Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson.

The central bank meetings come as a string of

recent data suggests that last year's monetary tightening campaign by policymakers is beginning to kick in, with price rises beginning to slow from their multi-decade highs. But there remains trepidation on trading floors that economies could still slip into recession, while a mixed earnings season so far has also caused concern about company profits.

Official data showed that the economies of Germany and Sweden unexpectedly shrank in the last quarter of 2022. In London on Monday, shares in gambling firm 888 tanked by almost 27 percent after chief executive Itai Pazner resigned amid news of a probe into Middle East operations.

The company added in a statement that it has suspended VIP activities in the region pending the outcome of its internal investigation.

"Gambling stocks are under enough regulatory scrutiny as it is without inviting reasons for further attention and yet that's exactly what 888 has done," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

"News it is suspending VIP accounts in the Middle East over best practices not being followed over money laundering is incredibly damaging," Mould said. "Combine that with the announcement of CEO Itai Pazner's immediate departure and the market is likely to draw its own conclusions," he added. — AFP

German economy contracts, fuelling recession fears

BERLIN: Germany's economy unexpectedly shrank at the end of 2022 due to the fallout from the war in Ukraine, official data showed Monday, adding to worries it could be on the brink of recession. Europe's top economy contracted 0.2 percent in the October to December period compared to the previous quarter, according to preliminary figures from statistics authority Destatis. Analysts from financial data firm Factset had been expecting zero growth, while Destatis said earlier this month the economy stagnated in the fourth quarter. For the whole of 2022, the German economy grew 1.8 percent, the data showed, a revision from an earlier figure of 1.9 percent.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and subsequent move to slash crucial gas supplies, triggered an energy crisis in industrial powerhouse Germany, and sent food and electricity costs soaring. But after massive government interventions, signs had improved recently and expectations grew that the German economy might avoid a

Top Republican to meet Biden on US debt default

WASHINGTON: House speaker Kevin McCarthy said he would meet Wednesday with Joe Biden to discuss avoiding a US debt default, but warned the president must rethink his refusal to consider spending cuts in exchange for raising the borrowing limit. "I want to find a reasonable and a responsible way that we can lift the debt ceiling," while controlling what he called runaway spending by Congress, the Republican leader told CBS Sunday show "Face the Nation."

The talks will be McCarthy's first with the president since he became speaker of the House of Representatives this month after Republicans won control of the chamber.

The raising of the national debt limit—which allows the government to pay for spending already incurred—is often routine. But members of the new House Republican majority have threatened to block the usual rubber-stamping of that increase above the current \$31.4 trillion. Biden says the matter is non-negotiable, accusing the Republicans of taking "the economy hostage" in order to push a purely political debate on government spending.

Reflecting the White House's refusal even to frame Wednesday's meeting as a negotiation, Biden's official agenda said merely that he would discuss "a range of issues" with the Republican speaker.

Raising the debt ceiling "is an obligation of this country and its leaders to avoid economic chaos," White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said recently. "Congress has always done it, and the president expects them to do their duty once again."

recession after all. Monday's disappointing data, however, dented those hopes.

"Recession fears are back," said ING economist Carsten Brzeski. "The warmer winter weather, along with implemented and announced government fiscal stimulus packages, have prevented the economy from falling off a cliff, but a technical recession is still a likely outcome." A technical recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of contraction.

Crisis hitting households

Franziska Palmas, senior Europe economist at Capital Economics, said the data "pours cold water on the recent optimism about the prospects for the eurozone and suggests that a technical recession in both Germany and the eurozone as a whole is more likely than not after all".

Germany was, however, likely to avoid a "deep downturn," she said. "That's thanks to generous government energy support, the recent fall in gas prices, and backlogs of orders supporting activity in some industrial sectors," Palmas said. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Berlin raced to find new energy sources, and unveiled a 200-billion-euro (\$218-billion) support package to cushion consumers and businesses, including a cap on electricity and gas prices.

Destatis said that a fall in consumer spending, which supported the economy in the first three quarters of 2022, had hit GDP in the final months of the year. This suggests the energy crisis was starting to hit household incomes, Palmas said. The government has nevertheless struck a more optimistic tone lately, with an official forecast last week predicting that Germany would dodge a recession with growth of 0.2 percent for 2023 as a whole.

A few months earlier, they had predicted it would contract by 0.4 percent. Earlier this month, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Germany would avoid a painful recession this year. Lower energy prices have also helped bring down inflation from a peak of 10.4 percent in October, with officials expecting the trend to continue. — AFP

"That is not negotiable." That sets the stage for a high-stakes clash in the weeks or months ahead. A US debt default could trigger a global financial crisis, sending borrowing costs up and undermining the role of the dollar as an international reserve currency, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has warned.

To provide time for the two parties to find a solution and avoid a default, the Treasury Department on January 19 began taking "extraordinary measures" to help temporarily reduce the amount of outstanding debt subject to the limit. Absent an agreement, Yellen said, default could come as early as June. But while McCarthy expressed confidence "there will not be a default," he argued Democrats were guilty of historically high spending levels during the first two years of the Biden administration. "We can't continue down this path," he said on CBS.

'Give us an option'

A Democratic congressman, Adam Smith of Washington state, pushed back, saying Republicans had failed to clarify where exactly they would cut spending. "Right now, Republicans don't have a plan," he said on "Fox News Sunday." "Their plan, as led by the extremists in their party, is to complain about spending, not raise the debt ceiling but not actually offer a plan that says, 'This is where we're going to cut.'" He added: "Give us an option and then we can argue about that."

But McCarthy voiced optimism that a deal can be reached to avert default. "I want to sit down together (with Biden), work out an agreement that we can move forward to put us on a path to balance," the speaker said. He added: "I think the president will be willing to make an agreement together." Jean-Pierre has said the meeting Wednesday would also cover the president's plan to cut the US budget deficit "by making the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share," rather than, as some Republicans propose, cutting politically sensitive social spending. — AFP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on November 29, 2022, US House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy speaks to the media following a meeting with US President Joe Biden at the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

Business

KAMCO Invest GCC Projects Market 2022

Total projects awarded in Kuwait during 2022 reached \$2.8 billion

GCC project awards reach second-lowest since 2005



Sources : MEED Projects, Kamco Invest Research

KUWAIT: GCC project awards contracted during 2022 as global economic challenges mounted. The decline of GCC contract awards was affected by high inflation and continuing supply chain problems mainly due to China's intermittent COVID-19 restrictions which are now lifted. In addition, the increase in benchmark rates by global and regional central banks to combat runaway inflation also impacted project funding in the GCC. The decline in 2022 also reflected limited big-ticket projects outside the Saudi project market. Total value of GCC contracts awarded declined by 18.7 percent y-o-y during 2022 to \$93.6 billion as compared to \$115.2 billion in awards during 2021.

This was the lowest project awards since 2005, barring the pandemic induced decline in 2020. All GCC countries, barring Saudi Arabia, witnessed a y-o-y decline in their aggregate 2022 value of projects awarded. In addition, total value of project awards was above the \$100 billion mark every year for the last decade with the exception of the pandemic year (2020) and 2022. Saudi Arabia remained the largest projects market in the GCC during 2022 recording a total of \$54.2 billion worth of contracts awarded as compared to \$53.9 billion in 2021.

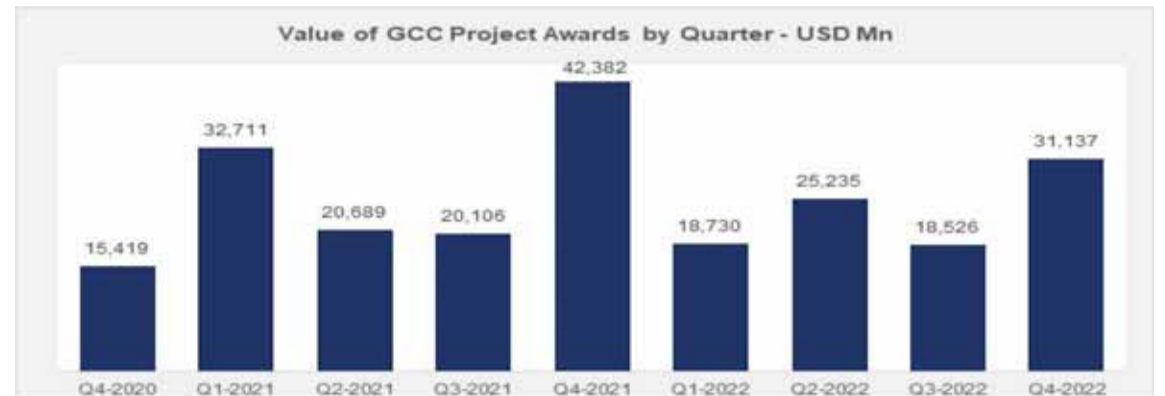
The UAE ranked second recording total contract awards of \$19.2 billion vs \$25.9 billion during 2021. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar accounted for

a combined 93.6 percent of the total value of contracts awarded in the GCC during the year. Similarly, Oman witnessed new projects awards drop of 27.1 percent y-o-y to reach \$2.2 billion while the aggregate value of contracts awarded in Bahrain reached \$996 million in 2022 as compared to \$2.7 billion during 2021. In terms of sector classification, the construction sector witnessed the biggest increase in the value of projects awarded during the year recording \$3.2 billion y-o-y increase in new contract awards to reach a total of \$34.3 billion during 2022.

Kuwait

Total projects awarded in Kuwait during 2022 reached \$2.8 billion vs \$5.2 billion in 2021. Aggregate value of contracts awarded reached their highest in eleven quarters during Q4-2022 at \$1.3 billion registering an increase of 687.7 percent q-o-q as compared to a y-o-y dip of 13.9 percent. Aggregate Q3-2022 value of contracts awarded in Kuwait reached their lowest in over 19 quarters at \$162 million contributing to the yearly overall fall of value of contracts awarded in the country.

In terms of sectors, Kuwait's transport sector received the majority of the value of contracts awarded in the country during the year at \$1.1 billion up from \$299 million in 2021. Comparatively,



Sources : MEED Projects, Kamco Invest Research

aggregate projects awarded in the construction sector, the largest sector by value of contracts awarded in the previous year, fell 67.3 percent to reach \$839 million down from \$2.6 billion in 2021. The decline in projects awarded for the construction sector was accompanied by a similar decrease in the aggregate value of projects awarded in the oil sector which declined by 63.4 percent y-o-y to reach \$372 million down from \$1 billion in 2021.

On the other hand, according to MEED Projects there has been a total of \$102 million worth of water projects in the sector in 2022 as compared to no projects awarded in the sector in Kuwait during 2021. GCC Project Pipeline Growth is expected to be strong in the GCC projects market during 2023. According to MEED Projects, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, the two biggest contract markets in the region, could witness a growth of up to 20 percent each in 2023.

Moreover, MEED expects Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain to witness sharper increases than KSA and UAE. On the other hand, Qatar is the only country which is expected to see a dip in contract awards during 2023 as the country re-evaluates its project awards after the World Cup. In terms of GCC projects market pipeline, according to MEED Projects estimates, Saudi Arabia has the most dominant projects market with more than

\$1.2 trillion worth of known, planned and un-awarded contracts in the pipeline. UAE and Oman follow as the second and third countries with the biggest projects pipeline in the region at \$473.8 billion and \$169.8 billion of known, planned and un-awarded projects, respectively. Comparatively, Kuwait projects in the pipeline are valued at \$156.2 billion according to MEED Projects. In terms of sectors of future projects in the pipeline, around 58 percent of the GCC's future projects in the pipeline are in the construction sector with the transport and chemical sectors following as distant second and third representing 12 percent and 8 percent respectively.

The growth in the GCC construction sector was mainly driven by the jump in total value of contracts awarded in Saudi Arabia's Construction sector. The Saudi construction sector comprised 59.2 percent of the total value of projects awarded in the construction sector in the GCC during the year. The outlook for 2023 remains bright for the GCC projects market with more than \$110 billion worth of projects already in the tender stage, according to MEED Projects, that would mostly translate into awards. Near-term forecast also remains positive for the region mainly driven by Saudi Arabia's Construction sector mostly related to the NEOM mega projects.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches 'Heart to Heart' jewellery collection

KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest global jewelry retailer with a strong retail network of over 300 outlets spread across 10 countries, has launched a special collection of diamond and 18K gold jewelry named 'Heart to Heart' to celebrate the season of love. The 'Heart to Heart' jewelry collection showcases exclusive heart-shaped jewelry that will cater to the increasing demand for such jewelry during this period. With over 150 designs symbolizing love in various ways, this unique jewelry collection serves as a perfect gift to express love to dear ones. With prices starting from just KD 75, there is something to fit everyone's budget. To make the occasion more special, customers can also get a free Anne Klein or Coach watch with this limited-edition diamond jewelry.

Apart from pendants in diamonds and 18k, customers can also choose heart-shaped, beautifully crafted bangles, bracelets and rings to gift their loved ones. Additionally, the brand has also launched heart-shaped solitaire rings, which are available in different centre stone sizes and specifications. The diamond jewelry featured in the collection includes designs studded predominantly with red and multi-colored stones as well. This offer will be available across all outlets of Malabar Gold & Diamonds until



14th February, 2023. Customers can also buy this unique collection online through www.malabar-goldanddiamonds.com. 'It is the season of love and there is no gift more thoughtful than jewelry to be given to your loved ones as it is the most preferred gift by women and its charm lasts for a lifetime. Additionally, the special 'Heart to Heart' collection we have launched in diamond and 18k gold jewelry are classic designs that can be used at any point in time, serving as an heirloom that can be passed onto generations and an ideal investment as well,' said

Sham Lal Ahamed, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

'Love needs no reason' is the key message of the campaign, with all communication reflecting the concept that although there may be a million reasons to love someone, there needn't be any particular reason to make them feel special. Apart from these, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also showcases an incredible collection of unique designs in gold and diamond jewelry to suit the tastes and budgets of its different customers.



Ali Al-Habshi receiving the award

UPayments receives Global Economics Award

KUWAIT: Unlocking a new achievement towards a thriving Fintech industry, UPayments is recognized as the "Most Innovative Online Payment Solutions Provider in Kuwait" by The Global Economics Awards, organized by The Global Economics Ltd, the leading UK-based financial publication. The awards ceremony was held on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, at Shangri-La Hotel - Dubai, UAE.

Speaking on this occasion, Ali Al-Habshi, Founder & COO of UPayments, expressed his happiness for receiving one of the most prestigious awards in the economics industry. Al-Habshi added that "I am proudly representing a team of dedicated professionals who worked hard to help businesses grow through providing hassle-free and innovative payment solutions.

Al-Habshi described receiving this award as "an inspiring moment for all those who keep trying to reshape the economic future and to provide more tech-based solutions in the digital payment market." UPayments is a leading payment service provider, established in Kuwait in 2016 to offer online invoicing systems, an ecommerce platform, rent collection solutions, and a payment gateway, using the most innovative tech solutions. In 2022, UPayments was recognized as one of the Top 25 FinTech Companies in the Middle East by Forbes Middle East.

In 2021, UPayments was the First Licensed Payments Provider by The Central Bank of Kuwait, providing services through its website and app with over 150,000 downloads. As part of its expansion strategy, UPayments is currently operating in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia with plans to start operating in Qatar and Bahrain this year. The Global Economics Awards aim to accelerate excellence and innovation in the world of economics by motivating the confidence of business enterprises and recognizing the achievements of businesses who have made significant contributions to the global economy.



Toyota showcases pioneering hydrogen FCEV technology

KUWAIT: Toyota's environmentally friendly mobility solutions were in the spotlight recently during the World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi, where the hydrogen-powered Toyota Mirai Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) and a Fuel Cell Forklift developed by Toyota Industries Corporation was on display throughout the three-day event. Both products utilize innovative hydrogen FCEV technology to deliver efficient performance with zero emissions, playing an important role in Toyota's multiple pathway approach toward carbon neutrality.

Toyota began work on its hydrogen FCEV technology in 1992, which converts hydrogen and oxygen into electricity to power an electric motor and produces only water as a by-product. The company's commitment to continually refining this technology can be seen in the groundbreaking Toyota Mirai, which offers best-in-class efficiency with zero emissions. The pioneering FCEV delivers a class-leading cruising range of 650 km and can be refueled in under five minutes,

ensuring drivers enjoy the same levels of performance and convenience associated with a traditionally-powered vehicle.

The versatility of the Toyota Fuel Cell System has enabled a wide range of applications in areas such as trucks, buses, boats, and stationary generators, including the FC Forklift. This innovative solution has a refueling time of just 2-3 minutes, helping to ensure around-the-clock availability and making the FC Forklift especially well-suited to multi-shift operations where trucks are constantly in use.

Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, comments: "We are pleased to showcase two of our hydrogen-powered mobility solutions at the World Future Energy Summit, a highly significant platform that contributes to a more sustainable tomorrow. With a refueling time of less than five minutes, Toyota's zero-emission hydrogen FCEV technology combines greater convenience with enhanced sustainability and is one of many promising solutions we have been exploring as part of our drive for carbon neutrality. I would like to extend my gratitude to the organizers of this important and timely event, the goals of which align closely with Toyota's ongoing drive for sustainability."

Recognized as one of the world's most influential gatherings for the energy industry, the World Future Energy Summit brings together key stakeholders with

the goal of accelerating the transition toward cleaner sources of energy. Toyota's participation comes as part of its long-term commitment to developing carbon neutral mobility solutions. The company successfully launched the Prius - the world's first mass-produced Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV) - in 1997 and continues to explore diverse technology options to meet the diverse needs of users across the globe. Today, Toyota offers a full lineup of sustainable mobility solutions including HEVs, Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), and FCEVs, and has sold more than 22 million electrified vehicles across the globe.

Fujita explained: "At Toyota, we recognize that carbon neutrality is a goal with multiple pathways; there is no single best solution for all use cases in all parts of the world. By focusing on the development of diverse electrified powertrain options, we are contributing to greater choices for drivers that will increase the adoption of eco-friendly vehicles. We will continue to seek out new technologies that can accelerate the journey toward a carbon-neutral society where people can enjoy happier, healthier, and more sustainable lives."

The hydrogen-powered Toyota Mirai FCEV and Toyota FC Forklift were on display at the World Future Energy Summit 2023, which took place at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) from 16 - 18 January.

Lifestyle | Features

NORTHERN IRELAND JOURNEYS FROM BUILDING SHIPS TO SCREEN HITS

For much of the last century Belfast's dockyards dominated global ship-building but now the harbor that built Titanic is the launchpad for some of the world's biggest TV and film releases. A string of major recent cinematic and streaming projects made in the UK province have earned it a growing international reputation for television and cinema production. Industry insiders say Northern

filmed there. Amazon Prime's "Blade Runner 2099" series, based on Ridley Scott's 1982 sci fi original, is due to start filming in the province later this year.

Meanwhile, homegrown series and films including Kenneth Branagh's "Belfast" and Lisa McGee's TV comedy "Derry Girls" have also won international acclaim. Richard Williams, the chief executive of Northern Ireland Screen, which

now house the Titanic Studios—among Europe's largest—and the newer Harbor Studios, offered the huge spaces needed by blockbuster filmmakers. "That was very attractive to certain types of early films that needed large-build spaces," Williams explained. He added that there were obvious parallels between film production and the heavy industries that once dominated the docks. "There is a huge amount of craft involved. There's a huge amount of construction involved. Doing things on time and on budget are just as important," he noted.

The UK government offers tax breaks to the industry, which in return trains and maintains a growing multi-skilled workforce. Offering the latest studio technology to production companies is seen as a key plank in Northern Ireland's economic plans. In a sign of its ambitions, Belfast's Ulster University has partnered with the harbor to deliver the next generation of film and TV production through its new Studio Ulster project.

The 25-million-pound (\$31-million) complex will include large-scale virtual production stages with in-camera visual effects, a motion capture stage, a 3D scanning stage and a research and development smart stage to support research. Declan Keeney, director of the university's Ulster Screen Academy, noted it will help quadruple the number of large-scale studios in Northern Ireland.

Comparing them to lighthouses that "draw people to them", they put the province "at the very front end, the cutting edge of technology for film and TV". "We have a thriving sector here of people, enthusiastic people, who see the potential to work in this space," Keeney said.

The university and academy are already a "talent pipeline" into the creative industries, with 900 students studying 3D



Titanic Studios, in the shadow of the Harland and Wolff shipyard, are pictured in Belfast in Northern Ireland.—AFP photos



Northern Ireland Screen CEO Richard Williams poses for a photograph outside Titanic Studios, in the shadow of the Harland and Wolff shipyard, in Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Ireland is increasingly likely to be known globally as the backdrop to "Game of Thrones" rather than for the decades of sectarian violence that plagued it until the signing of 1998 peace accords.

Since the seminal HBO series, which ended in 2019, the region has provided locations and studio space for Netflix film "The School for Good and Evil" and the historical action feature "The Northman", both released in 2022. Fantasy blockbuster "Dungeons and Dragons", which is due for release in March, was similarly

promotes the industry's growth, said success is changing perceptions and helping the province grow in confidence. "There's probably a higher percentage of people in the world who only know about Northern Ireland from 'Game of Thrones' than there are that know about us because of our challenged history," Williams told AFP. "Northern Ireland still needs to build up its confidence."

'Cutting edge'
Belfast's once-mighty shipyards, which

skills, aspects of media production and other related disciplines.

'Screen tourism'

Northern Ireland's small size and varied locations have also proven a draw for production companies, according to Naomi Liston, the location manager for "The Northman" and "Game of Thrones". "What is absolutely key about Northern Ireland is that from our studio base we can be up at the north coast, which is one of the most famous beauty spots in the UK and Europe, in under an hour," she told AFP. "That makes great production sense. And that saves money—you're not travelling crews and having to accommodate them somewhere else."

The TV and film success has spilled into the tourism sector. At the height of "Game of Thrones" popularity in 2018,

Northern Ireland's tourism office said the show accounted for 350,000 visitors. That contributed over 50 million pounds to the local economy, it estimated. Flip Robinson, a former "Game of Thrones" body double and extra, now runs guided visits of locations from the show. "We knew that it was going to bring tourists and that was the great thing that we were excited about, plus showcasing our amazing scenery that we've got here to the world," he said. Robinson, from County Antrim, which includes Belfast and the famous northeastern coast, hopes the benefits of the film industry's growing success will ripple widely. "People are just all delighted to get involved in it," he said. "I'm in the area of screen tourism, so it's fantastic."—AFP

Ryan Reynolds says Wrexham football adventure is 'greatest experience'

Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds has hailed his involvement with non-league side Wrexham as the "greatest experience" of his life after he jetted in to watch his team in the FA Cup. Reynolds and fellow actor Rob McElhenney took over the National League side in 2020 and Reynolds spoke of his affection for the club ahead of their fourth-round match against Sheffield United at the Racecourse Ground on Sunday.

"Genuinely speaking it has been the greatest experience of my entire life," Reynolds told the BBC on Sunday. "This adventure has been unlike anything else. I love it because it's a project that's going to be multi-decades. I met a supporter the other day whose grandfather's ashes were scattered across the pitch. I look at this place as like a church. "In Canada, where I am from, people are obsessed with this club. It's been pretty remarkable. We've sold something like 24,000 jerseys and so many of them went to North America. We can't get them anymore. I can't get one."

"The part I find most gratifying is the support from the community outside the club. The fact Wrexham have become a

tourist destination for so many folks and they are showing up here. There is something special about this town." Wrexham, in Wales, have been on an upwards trajectory ever since the high-profile takeover, reaching the National League play-offs last season and finishing as FA Trophy runners-up.

This weekend's FA Cup tie is a break from Wrexham's main goal of winning promotion back to the fourth tier after a 15-year absence. Phil Parkinson's side sit top of the fifth-tier National League, level on points with Notts County. Sunday's game against second-tier Sheffield United ended in a 3-3 draw, with Wrexham denied a famous victory when the visitors scored deep into stoppage time.

Reynolds celebrated the Welsh club's goals wildly but they now face a replay. "When @RMcElhenney and I got into this it all felt so impossible," Reynolds tweeted after the dramatic match. "But impossible is @Wrexham_AFC's favorite color. That was one of the most exciting things I've EVER seen. Thank you each and every Wrexham supporter who came out and aimed your heart at that pitch tonight."—AFP



US actor and Wrexham owner Ryan Reynolds (left) reacts during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Wrexham and Sheffield United at the Racecourse Ground Stadium in Wrexham, north Wales.—AFP photos

'Avatar' sequel now ranks fourth all-time in global sales

"Avatar: The Way of Water" continued to dominate the box-office charts, taking in an estimated \$15.7 million this weekend in North American theaters to make it the fourth-leading global grosser of all time. The Disney/20thCentury sci-fi film, directed by James Cameron, "has been #1 for 7 straight weeks... a feat that hasn't been accomplished" since Cameron issued the original "Avatar" in 2009, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said on Twitter. Heavy results from theaters around the world—including \$237 million in ticket sales in China—helped boost "The Way of Water"

to fourth place globally all-time at \$2.117 billion, unadjusted for inflation.

That means Cameron now has his name on three of the four top grossers ever: the original "Avatar," "Titanic" and "The Way of Water" ("Avengers: Endgame" from Disney and Marvel sneaks in at second). In second place for



Moviegoers pose for pictures in front of a poster of the Bollywood movie 'Pathaan' outside a cinema hall in Prayagraj.—AFP photos

Shah Rukh Khan's 'Pathaan' smashes Indian box office records

Superstar Shah Rukh Khan's new film "Pathaan" has smashed Indian box office records following its release last week, bringing hope to Bollywood after a spate of weak showings. "Pathaan" recorded the highest-ever box office collections for a Hindi film for its opening and second day in India, and raked in 2.5 billion rupees (\$30 million) in its first five days, trade analyst Taran Adarsh tweeted Sunday. Its international ticket sales soared past one billion rupees (\$13.7 million) in just three days, according to Yash Raj Films, which produced the movie.

It comes after glitzy Hindi-language Bollywood films struggled at the box office following the reopening of Indian cinemas about a year ago after a pandemic hiatus. "The unprecedented celebratory success of 'Pathaan' I think speaks volumes about where we are headed as the Hindi movie industry," movie theatre chain owner

Akshaye Rathi told AFP on Monday. "Here we are back to the old school way of celebrating cinema in theatres as a community viewing experience."

The release of "Pathaan", 57-year-old Khan's first movie in four years, had been highly anticipated. Khan, popularly known as "King Khan", has a huge fan following around the world. The film also features Bollywood heart-throb Deepika Padukone and action hero John Abraham. Videos shared on social media showed fans in Indian cinemas dancing and cheering during the film.

In recent months, "Pathaan" and other Bollywood films—particularly those starring actors from India's Muslim minority such as Khan—have been criticized by Hindu right-wingers on social media, with activists calling for boycotts. Hardline Hindu groups had called for "Pathaan" to be banned because Padukone wore a saffron-colored bikini—a colour associated with their religion—in one of the film's songs. Last year, films from southern India, such as Telugu-language "RRR", dominated box office takings. "RRR" has also been feted internationally, winning a Golden Globe for best song and scoring an Oscar nomination in the same category.—AFP

Barrett Strong, singer and writer of Motown hits, dies at 81

Barrett Strong, who sang Motown's first hit, "Money (That's What I Want)," and co-wrote R&B classics sung by The Temptations and Marvin Gaye, has died at 81, the Motown Museum in Detroit said Sunday. "It is with great sadness that we share the passing of legendary (Motown) singer and songwriter Barrett Strong," the museum said on Twitter. Strong won a Grammy Award for best R&B song in 1972 for "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone"—sung by The Temptations—with Motown Records producer Norman Whitfield.

He also partnered with Whitfield on some of Motown's greatest hits, including "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," made famous by Marvin Gaye and Gladys Knight and the Pips; Edwin Starr's "Where I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)"; and The Temptations' "Just My Imagination (Running Away with Me)." Born in 1941 in Mississippi and raised in Detroit, Strong's ethereal voice was noticed by singer Jackie Wilson, who introduced him to Motown founder Berry Gordy, the Motown Museum said.



Strong released his first single, "Let's Rock," in 1959 on Gordy's Tamla Records, and later that year wrote "Money." The song reached number two on the US R&B charts and number 23 on the Billboard Hot 100, and was later ranked 288 on Rolling Stone magazine's "500 Greatest Songs of All Time."

He left Motown in 1972 and continued to release music for the labels Epic, Capitol and others through the 1970s and 80s. In a statement issued Sunday, Gordy said Strong was "not only a great singer and piano player," but he and Whitfield "created an incredible body of work."

"Their hit songs were revolutionary in sound and captured the spirit of the times," Gordy said in the statement, as reported by Billboard. "Barrett is an original member of the Motown Family and will be missed by all of us." Billboard reported that Strong died on Sunday in Detroit, but no cause of death was given.

Folk singer Billy Bragg on Sunday shared a tribute to Strong on Twitter, alongside a video clip of The Temptations' "Just My Imagination." "Last night - or was it the night before? - the opening riff of this tune was threaded through my dreams," he wrote. "3 mins and 48 secs of perfection."—AFP



Man Called Otto."

Scary-doll thriller "M3GAN" from Universal and Blumhouse Productions took in \$6.4 million to place fourth. It has an android doll, created as a companion to a young orphan, turning steadily creepier. And Yash Raj Films' new action thriller "Pathaan" placed fifth at \$5.9 million, an impressive North American total for a Hindi-language film. It stars Shah Rukh Khan, known as the "King of Bollywood," in a story about spies, rogue agents and a deadly lab-generated virus.

Rounding out the top 10 were:
"Missing" (\$5.7 million)
"Plane" (\$3.9 million)
"Infinity Pool" (\$2.7 million)
"Left Behind: Rise of the Antichrist" (\$2.3 million)
"The Wandering Earth 2" (\$1.4 million)—AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Spanish producer Alex de la Iglesia (center) and his wife, Spanish actor and producer Carolina Bang (right) pose with jury member beside member of the Youth award jury Florian Schillinger (left) and the Great East Region - Youth Jury trophy for the film "La pieta" by Spanish actor and director Eduardo Casanova during the closing ceremony of the 30th Gerardmer Fantastic Film Festival in Gerardmer, northeastern France. — AFP photos



Spanish producer Alex de la Iglesia (right) and his wife, Spanish actor and producer Carolina Bang (left), pose with the Grand Prize award and Great East Region - Youth Jury trophies they received on behalf of Spanish actor and director Eduardo Casanova for "La pieta".



French director Gonzague Legout poses with his Short film award trophy for his film "Il y a beaucoup de lumiere ici".

CASANOVA'S 'LA PIETA' DRAMA WINS FRENCH HORROR ACCOLADE



Director Ann Oren poses with her Jury Prize trophy for her film "Piaffe" after the closing ceremony of the 30th Gerardmer Fantastic Film Festival in Gerardmer.

Spanish director Eduardo Casanova on Sunday saw his "La Pieta" drama about a toxic mother-son relationship take top prize at France's Gerardmer international horror and science fiction film festival. The film, set in 2011, depicts the bond between the mother, Libertad, and her son Mateo as an analogy for the relationship between the people of North Korea and its government. The odd couple's story is upended when Mateo is diagnosed with brain cancer.

"La Pieta" (piety) is 31-year-old Casanova's follow-up to his controversial 2017 noir offering "Skins". Casanova took the Grand Prize along with the youth jury accolade. Jury prizes also went to "Piaffe", the debut effort of director Ann

Oren, and "La Montagne" (The Mountain) by French director Thomas Salvador, who also carried off the critics' award.

To mark the 30th edition of the festival the US director Chloe Okuno was awarded a special accolade for "Watcher" about an American woman in Bucharest who suspects a stranger watching her from across her street could be a serial killer. The festival also feted Jaume Balaguer, who presented his work "Venus", a three-time jury prize winner. South Korea's Kim Jee-woon, a grand prize winner in 2004 for "A Tale of Two Sisters", was also invited to give a masterclass on film production. — AFP



French director Thomas Salvador poses with his Critics Award and Jury Prize trophies for his film "La montagne".



French director Thomas Salvador (fourth left) pose with members of the feature film jury (From left) French actor Pierre Rochefort, French songwriter and singer Catherine Ringer, French rapper and actor Gringe, French-Argentinean actor Berenice Bejo, French director, screenwriter and producer Michel Hazanavicius, French screenwriter, director and actress Anne Le Ny, French director, screenwriter and writer Sebastien Marnier, and French actor Pierre Deladonchamps during the closing ceremony of the 30th Gerardmer Fantastic Film Festival in Gerardmer.



Member of the feature film jury French actor Pierre Rochefort announces the winner of the Jury Prize award.



French director Thomas Salvador speaks on stage after winning the Critics Award for his film "La montagne".



Member of the feature film jury French screenwriter, director and actress Anne Le Ny announces a prize on stage.



French director Gonzague Legout (third left) poses with his wife, French producer Christina Vieira (fourth left), and jury members (from left) French screenwriter Frederique Moreau, French actress Lou Lampros, French director Francois Descaques, French actor Jules Benchetrit, and French magician David Jarre, after winning the Short Film Grand Prize for his film "Il y a beaucoup de lumiere ici".



Members of the feature film jury French director, screenwriter and writer Sebastien Marnier (left) and French actor Pierre Deladonchamps (right) announce the winner of the Jury Prize award during the closing ceremony.

Unscheduled stop: Baby born aboard high-speed train in France

Travelers on a high-speed rail service train in France experienced an unusual delay at a sta-

tion at the weekend-while a fellow passenger gave birth to a baby boy, local media reported. The pregnant woman began to feel contractions shortly after taking her seat on the Paris-Strasbourg train, run by German rail operator Deutsche Bahn. She alerted staff and the train was held at the Lorraine TGV station in the eastern French town of Louvigny to allow a medical team on board which then delivered the baby, the Republican Lorrain said.

The other passengers were asked for patience during the birth of the

baby boy, Felix, which took just over 80 minutes. Felix was "a little premature", the paper noted. Mother and baby were taken to a nearby hospital by the local firefighter service, which reported later that both were doing well. The Republican Lorrain said that everybody was now wondering whether the German rail operator would send a birth gift, or grant its youngest passenger free trips on the network. —AFP

Top Iran filmmaker banned from travel after backing protests

Iranian authorities have imposed a travel ban on leading filmmaker Masud Kimiai, local media reported Monday, after he expressed support for protests that have gripped the Islamic republic for months. Iran has seen a wave of demonstrations that erupted after the September 16 death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, an ethnic Kurd, following her arrest for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code for women. "The filmmaker, who wanted to go to the Netherlands on Sunday evening to participate in the Rotterdam film festival, was banned from leaving the airport," the local Tehran daily Hamsahri said on its website.

In a video on September 22, days after the protests broke out, Kimiai had said he was "standing with the people". Kimiai, 81, is considered a pioneer of modern Iranian cinema, having gained acclaim with his 1969 film "Qeysar", which was released 10 years before the Islamic revolution. The filmmaker was due to travel to the Netherlands for the

screening of his latest film, "Killing the Traitor", a historical melodrama set in 1950s Iran.

The 2022 film, described as a "sepia-tinted melodrama" on the Rotterdam festival's website, tackles the period when then-prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh nationalized Iran's oil industry. Mossadegh was ousted in a 1953 coup orchestrated by London and Washington. Several high-profile Iranian filmmakers and actors have been questioned or arrested by the authorities after expressing support for the wave of protests. —AFP





New tiger goes on the loose in Johannesburg

A tiger escaped from a private property in Johannesburg on Monday, just weeks after another went on the loose near the city, reigniting calls for stricter regulations on keeping wild animals. A private security firm in the north-eastern suburb of Edenvale said the runaway animal was recaptured hours after it was spotted roaming the area. "It has been taken to a safe sanctuary," Gary Wilson of security firm S.W.A.T. said, adding the tiger was "in good condition".

It was not immediately clear who the big cat belonged to and exactly where it had escaped from. Security cameras footage circulating on social media showed the tiger - believed to be a nine-month-old female - roaming around a parked car in what appeared to be the backyard of a house in the early hours of the morning. Earlier this month, another tiger had escaped from an exotic farm near Johannesburg.

That animal, a female Bengal tiger named Sheba, roamed the countryside for four days, attacking a man and killing several animals before it was euthanized. Tigers are not native to South Africa but there are no laws banning owning them as pets. Rearing the big cats has become a flourishing industry in the country, where they are kept as pets or bred for commercial export.

Smaragda Louw, director of non-profit organization Ban Animal Trading, said the new incident showed it was too easy to own wild animals and stricter rules were needed. "What we need to look at are the laws. We know that they are completely outdated," she told AFP. —AFP

World champion says Rubik's Cube and violin go hand in hand

A University of Michigan student is one of the world's foremost "speedcubers," a person capable of quickly solving a Rubik's Cube. He also is an accomplished violinist. Stanley Chapel says the two fields go hand in hand. Not only does Chapel say he has equal interest in both, but the 21-year-old says the violin has aided in his speedcubing success.

"Repetition, breaking things down into their smallest fundamental elements, all of these different things that we use to improve at an instrument, and being able to take these into the world of cubing has certainly been a huge help to my progression," said Chapel, a junior majoring in violin performance at the university's school of music, theater and dance.

Chapel, who grew up in Ann Arbor not far from the Michigan campus, solved his first 3x3 Rubik's Cube as a 14-year-old. Five weeks later, Chapel entered his first competition, solving the cube in an average of 22 seconds. Fast-forward a year to 2017 in Paris, with Chapel placing fifth in both the 4x4 blindfolded and 5x5 blindfolded categories at the World Cube Association World Championship. At the 2019 world championship in Melbourne, Australia, the recent high school graduate won both events.

Factoring in the time it takes for him to review the cube before placing the blindfold over his eyes, Chapel can solve one



University of Michigan student Stanley Chapel solves a Rubik's Cube while blindfolded, Wednesday, in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



University of Michigan student Stanley Chapel performs one of Johann Sebastian Bach's violin sonatas from memory.



Stanley Chapel explains how he studies the Rubik's Cube before solving the cube while blindfolded.— AFP photos

in around 17 seconds. "The deeper I go into the realm of cubing technique, the more I find interest in pushing the boundaries of what's possible there," he said. Chapel has certain inherent abilities: He is capable of remembering and applying thousands of algorithms to solve a Rubik's Cube and performing one of Johann Sebastian Bach's violin sonatas from memory.

But he also spends hours upon hours honing his craft, including doing regular

hand stretches that help Chapel avoid the kinds of aches and pains that come with the frequent and frenetic turning of the cube's sides. Chapel says years of playing the violin also has contributed to him having "very, very fine motor control already built up."

Later this year, Chapel intends to defend his world titles in South Korea. Since the 2021 event was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chapel is the reigning champion in both heading into

the 2023 event in Seoul. Once he's done with school, though, Chapel isn't sure how speedcubing fits into his future plans. "I guess it's cool to know that nobody is able to do this," he said. "But, at the same time, giving myself a little bit of a reality check, it's like, 'How much does that actually matter?'" "It's not going to pay the bills when I'm older," Chapel said, laughing. — AFP



Results released in girl's request for DNA evidence of Santa

The Rhode Island Department of Health says it was not able "to definitively confirm or refute the presence of Santa" in a young girl's home after she requested to have a partially eaten cookie and a couple of gnawed-on

carrot sticks tested for DNA to see if Santa Claus is real.

The department tweeted on Monday that "we all agree that something magical may be at play." The department said it found no complete matches to anyone in the Combined DNA Index System but said there was a partial match "to a 1947 case centered around 34th Street in New York City," referring to the movie "Miracle on 34th Street." It said it would need more DNA samples "from other known Santa encounters to make a definitive match."

The "good news" is that the lab did find the presence of DNA closely matching Rangifer tarandus, known as reindeer, when testing the carrots, the department said. The girl, a Cumberland resident, had sent the cookie and carrot sticks to the town's police department to ask if they can be tested for DNA, Chief Matthew Benson said on Friday. Benson forwarded the "evidence" to the state's Department of Health-Forensic Sciences unit for analysis. — AP

THE SIMOF 2023



Models present creations by Pilar Rubio during the Simof 2023 (International Flamenco Fashion Show) in Sevilla.



Models present creations by Maricruz Montecarlo during the Simof 2023 (International Flamenco Fashion Show) in Sevilla.



Sports

Morant triple-double fuels Grizzlies, Bucks' Antetokounmpo scores 50

LOS ANGELES: Ja Morant posted a triple-double as the Memphis Grizzlies halted their slide with a come-from-behind victory over Indiana on Sunday as Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 50 points in Milwaukee's NBA win over New Orleans. The Bucks were already on their way to a blowout when Antetokounmpo drained a wide-open three-pointer with 1:38 to play to take his tally to 50 points in Milwaukee's 135-110 victory over the Pelicans.

It was one of two wire-to-wire victories on the night, with the Cleveland Cavaliers leading all the way in a 122-99 rout of the short-handed Los Angeles Clippers. Morant scored 27 points, pulled down 10 rebounds and handed out 15 assists as the Grizzlies got back in the win column after dropping five straight on the road. "We needed it," Morant said. The hangover from that disastrous trip was apparent in the Grizzlies' sluggish start. They trailed by as many as 19 and were down 12 at halftime after Indiana's reserves outscored the Grizzlies bench 30-5 in the first half.

A 20-5 scoring run in the third quarter saw Memphis pull level. After the Pacers reeled off five straight points the Grizzlies responded with an 18-6 run to grab a 12-point advantage, never trailing in the fourth quarter. Benedict Mathurin, the sixth pick in the 2022 draft, led the Pacers with 27 points and eight rebounds. Jaren Jackson Jr added 28 points for the Grizzlies, who are two games behind the Denver Nuggets at the top of the Western Conference.

"We had to lock in," Morant said in a post-game television interview. "We were playing with energy, but I thought we were giving up on some plays. They were scoring a little too easily. We had to turn it around."

In Milwaukee, two-time NBA Most Valuable

Player Antetokounmpo delivered a ruthlessly efficient performance connected on 20 of his 26 shot attempts, including three of four from three-point range, his 50 points in just 30 minutes on the floor putting him just five off the career high he set earlier this month in a win over the Washington Wizards.

He added 13 rebounds as the Bucks notched a fourth straight victory. "I think 50 on 26 (shots) is impressive," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. Jrue Holiday scored 17 and Brook Lopez added 15 for the Bucks, who have hit the 130 point mark in five of their last seven games. Antetokounmpo signalled his intentions early, scoring 29 points in the first half as the Bucks overwhelmed a Pelicans team missing top scorers Zion Williamson, Brandon Ingram and CJ McCollum.

In Cleveland, the Cavaliers welcomed Donovan Mitchell back from a two-game injury absence with an emphatic 122-99 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers, whose five-game winning streak crashed to a halt with Kawhi Leonard and Paul George sitting out on the second night of a back-to-back. As the Cavs celebrated Turkish Heritage Night, Turkish forward Cedi Osman came off the bench to lead Cleveland with 29 points, matching his career high.

Hornets sting Clippers

Osman connected on 11 of his 13 attempts, including all seven of his shots from three-point range. "Tonight we took serious and we played a great game," Osman said, little more than a week after the Cavs were embarrassed by a Golden State Warriors team playing without its regular starters.

In the day's only other game, the Charlotte



MEMPHIS: Ja Morant of the Memphis Grizzlies goes to the basket during the second half against the Indiana Pacers at FedExForum on Jan 29, 2023. —AFP

Hornets cooled off the Miami Heat, rallying for a 122-117 victory that ended Miami's three-game winning streak. The Heat were a team on the rise after a week that included an impressive victory over Eastern Conference leaders Boston on Tuesday. They led by as many as 13 points in the third quarter, but the Hornets, led by 31 points

from Terry Rozier and with 27 from P.J. Washington managed to turn the tide.

Jimmy Butler led the Heat with 28 points, connecting on 11 of 14 shots from the floor with seven rebounds. But the Heat's defense wasn't up to the task in the fourth quarter, when Charlotte's LaMelo Ball scored 13 of his 19 points. —AFP

F1 tensions with FIA surface over 'inflated tag' row

PARIS: Formula One is never more than a chicane away from an unseemly spat as last week's surfacing of tensions between the sport's custodians the FIA and its owners Liberty Media demonstrated. F1 is basking in a resurgence of popularity, fueled by the exploits of its leading actors Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen, adrenaline-sapping wheel-to-wheel racing, and an expanding fanbase driven in part by the success of Netflix's fly-on-the-pitlane-wall series "Drive To Survive".

Yet purported Saudi interest in adding F1 to its growing sport-portfolio beyond LIV Golf and the Premier League has triggered a row that threatens to act as a damaging backdrop to the 2023 season just weeks away from the opening race in Bahrain. It was a tweet from FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem on Monday that ignited Liberty Media's indignation.

'Unacceptable'

Ben Sulayem described as "an inflated price tag being put on F1" a report in Bloomberg that Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) had tried and failed to buy F1 for \$20 billion. Despite respected F1 media outlet motorsport.com suggesting a Saudi bid was "wide off the mark", Ben Sulayem's intervention sparked an angry response from Liberty Media. The Colorado-based company, which took over the sports' commercial rights holder for \$4.4 billion in 2017, called Ben Sulayem's comments "unacceptable".

A letter seen by various media to the FIA said the remarks "overstep the bounds of both the FIA's remit and its contractual rights". It came with a threat - that the FIA "may be liable" for any damage to Liberty's value. One senior paddock source quoted by motorsport.com suggested the letter spelt "open warfare" between the sport's rulers and its commercial rights holder.

In his Twitter posts Ben Sulayem, a former rally driver who succeeded Jean Todt as president of the FIA in 2021, wrote that "any potential buyer is advised to apply common sense, consider the greater good of the sport and come with a clear, sustainable plan - not just a lot of money". He added: "It is our duty to consider what the future impact will be for promoters in terms of increased hosting fees and other commercial costs (in the event of any such sale)." —AFP

Denmark beat France to retain handball crown

STOCKHOLM: Denmark won the men's world handball championship on Sunday, beating France 34-29 in the final in Stockholm, thus securing an unprecedented threepeat in the event. The Danish victory over the Olympic champions gives them a record three consecutive victories in the leading international handball event, which is held every two years. While the French got the deficit down to 31-29 at one point, the Danish emerged victorious in the Swedish capital. —AFP



STOCKHOLM: Denmark's team celebrates with the trophy during the victory ceremony of the Men's IHF World Handball Championship final match on Jan 29, 2023. —AFP

Judges hail showjumping championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait succeeded in organizing the international showjumping championship, which concluded Saturday at Kuwait Riding Center in Subhan. The excellent organization of the 2-star category championship in which riders from Kuwait, Hungary, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Jordan and Britain participated left a good impression on the ability of the Kuwait Federation headed by Masoud Jouhar Hayat to organize such international activities in Kuwait.

Head of the judges committee

Kuwait's Sharon Al-Quoud said Kuwait's organization of the tournament was outstanding and successful, as Kuwait riders had total control over the results in all runs during the tournament's three days, crowned at the end by Ali Al-Kharafi winning the 154 cm grand prize round, as he competed with Kuwait's Abdullah Al-Awadhi. Kuwaiti riders won the top five places in this round.

"The showjumping sport is improving and there are tracks ready to host major international championships. There is a large base of young riders and there is major support from the federation," Quoud said. Judge Ali Al-Shareef from Jordan said Kuwait succeeded in organizing an international tournament with large participation of international riders. He said what distinguishes Kuwait is the presence of many young riders who have a bright future. He said Kuwait also



KUWAIT: Judges of the showjumping tournament.

has an elite group of international judges who compete with international judges, not only in the Middle East but at the global level. Kuwait

will host a 3-star category international championship on Thursday as part of the Arab league that qualifies for the world championship.

Prajnesh wins Kuwait tennis championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Men's Tennis Championship concluded on Saturday in the presence of President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which was held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex with the

participation of 41 players from 19 countries. The final match was attended by Kuwait Tennis Federation Secretary General Faleh Al-Otaibi.

The singles first place was won by India's Prajnesh Gunneswaran, while second place went to Khumoyun Sutanor from Uzbekistan. The doubles match was won by Dax Donders and Sidane Pontjodikromo from Holland, while second place went Igor Duden and Artem Podorozhnyi from Ukraine. The matches were under the supervision of the International Tennis Federation and referee Dr Ashraf Hammoudah.



KUWAIT: President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber (left) and Secretary General Faleh Al-Otaibi (right) with the winners.

Pitch 'shocker' as India level T20 series with win

LUCKNOW: Skipper Hardik Pandya on Sunday blasted the Lucknow pitch as a "shocker" after India edged New Zealand by six wickets in a low-scoring second Twenty20 international to level the series at 1-1. India restricted New Zealand, who won the opener of the three-match series, to just 99-8 with Yuzvendra Chahal leading the spin charge on a viciously turning pitch.

India then lost regular wickets as the Kiwi

bowlers took it into the final over but Suryakumar Yadav hit an unbeaten 26 and along with Pandya (15 not out) anchored the tricky run chase to achieve the target with one ball to spare. "To be honest, it was a shocker of a wicket," Pandya said. "I don't mind difficult wickets. I am all up for that, but somewhere down the line the curators or the grounds that we are going to play in should make sure they prepare the pitches earlier."

The series moves on to the decider in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. The match witnessed 30 overs of spin without a six being hit in either innings. The Kiwis just used 2.5 of overs from their fast bowlers. Spinners Michael Bracewell and Ish Sodhi took a wicket each.

"We bowled 17 overs of spin, definitely something different," said New Zealand skip-

per Mitchell Santner. "With the bounce out there, it looked challenging." Chahal, a leg-spinner who came in as the only change in the team from the opening loss, bowled the fourth over of the innings and started with a wicket maiden. He bowled just two overs for four runs and a wicket but it set the tone for his fellow bowlers, with left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh taking two.

New Zealand opener Finn Allen attempted to take on the Indian bowling with two straight boundaries in the third over after they elected to bat first, but was bowled by Chahal as he tried a reverse sweep. The reverse sweep also proved to be the undoing of the next two batsmen, with Devon Conway caught behind off Washington Sundar and then Glenn Phillips bowled by Deepak Hooda. —AFP



LUCKNOW: India's Ishan Kishan gets run out during the second Twenty20 international cricket match against New Zealand at the Ekana Cricket Stadium on Jan 29, 2023. —AFP

Sports

Real Madrid, Barcelona to meet in Copa del Rey semis

Remiro rocks boat as Madrid drop points in title race

MADRID: Real Madrid will take on Clasico rivals Barcelona in the Copa del Rey semifinals while Athletic Bilbao will face Osasuna following Monday's draw. The reigning Spanish champions will host Barca before visiting the Camp Nou, in the only round of Spain's national knockout competition held over two legs. Carlo Ancelotti's side reached the last four after overcoming local rivals Atletico Madrid 3-1 in extra time in the quarterfinals, while Barcelona defeated Real Sociedad 1-0.

Athletic Bilbao - who have reached the Copa del Rey semi-finals for four seasons running - gained their place in the final four with a 3-1 victory over Valencia in the last round. Their opponents Osasuna knocked out Sevilla in the quarterfinals with a 2-1 win after extra time.

Real Madrid's trip to Morocco next week to compete in the FIFA Club World Cup will clash with the usual date for the semifinal first legs and forced a rescheduled calendar. The first legs will be played on February 28 and March 1, while the return fixtures will be held between April 4 and 6. Seville's La Cartuja stadium is due to host the final on May 6.

Meanwhile, Real Sociedad goalkeeper Alex Remiro made a string of fine saves to frustrate Real Madrid in a 0-0 draw Sunday, leaving Barcelona five points clear at the top of La Liga. After the Catalans beat Girona on Saturday Madrid needed to win to stay three points behind their rivals in the title race, but Remiro ensured otherwise, keeping third-place La Real on the champions' tail.

Vinicius Junior had three good chances repelled by Remiro among other Madrid openings, as Carlo Ancelotti's side sparkled but failed to find the goal their performance deserved. The draw continues a mixed start to 2023 for Real Madrid, slipping further behind Barcelona in the league and losing against them in the Spanish Super Cup final, but reaching the Copa del Rey semis on Thursday with an extra-time win over Atletico Madrid.

"It was a very nice game for those watching, it's just a shame that we had the clearest chances and we didn't put them away, the draw is a pity," Madrid defender Nacho told Movistar. "Remiro and La Real are having a brilliant season, they are a great team and they showed it here. 'Not winning leaves a bad taste in the mouth for us, but the (season) goes on, there's a long way to go.'"

Real Sociedad, still without playmakers David Silva and Mikel Merino, threatened on the break but the hosts controlled the game at the Santiago Bernabeu. Madrid constructed some slick moves in the first half, with Brazilian wingers Vinicius and Rodrygo incessant threats. The former curled inches wide after a sensational nutmeg on Igor Zubeldia, while the latter teed up Karim Benzema with a backheel, but Remiro saved comfortably.

Ancelotti started with Eduardo Camavinga playing out of position at left-back because of injuries elsewhere, and the former Rennes midfielder thrived. Rodrygo's superb dribbling gave Aihen Munoz a constant headache on Madrid's right flank as the hosts dominated. Vinicius should have opened the scoring before the break but his shot was well kept out by Remiro, the visitors' last line of defence.

Remiro made another smart save from the Brazilian winger early in the second half with his leg to keep his team level, while Fede Valverde hammered a shot wide from distance as Madrid flowed forward. Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois was called into serious action for the first time after an hour when Takefusa Kubo broke free on the right, but the Belgian got down well to deny him.

Unbeatable Remiro

Vinicius was foiled once more by the excellent Remiro, who pushed away the Brazilian's attempted lob after cleverly accelerating into the box. Ancelotti threw on Luka Modric and Marco Asensio in the final stages, in



MADRID: Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Rodrygo vies with Real Sociedad's Spanish midfielder Igor Zubeldia at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium on Jan 29, 2023. —AFP

search of the winning goal Madrid craved but could not find. Remiro was booked for time-wasting in stoppage time as he eked out every second at a goal kick to clinch a hard-fought point for Real Sociedad, still three points behind Madrid.

Despite the result, the manner of the performance

encouraged Ancelotti. "We played a complete game, the team is improving, growing, physically they are a lot better," Ancelotti told Movistar. "We did well with and without the ball, pressing high. It was a complete performance, but we didn't score. 'It's a draw that leaves me satisfied because the team played very well.'" —AFP

Ten-man PSG held as dogged Reims strike late

PARIS: On-loan Arsenal striker Folarin Balogun ran through to score a remarkable 96th-minute equalizer as Reims held 10-man Ligue 1 leaders Paris Saint-Germain to a 1-1 draw on Sunday. It looked like Neymar's strike early in the second half would be enough for PSG to take all three points despite substitute Marco Verratti being sent off shortly after that goal.

But an impressive Reims side got the draw they richly deserved when Balogun broke away to fire home right at the death. The result sees the club coached by 30-year-old Belgian-born Englishman Will Still extend their unbeaten run to 14 games between league and cup. They remain in mid-table but have now drawn with the Parisians twice this season, their collective strength allowing a team of hungry young players to hold their own against

PSG's superstars.

PSG have now dropped points in three of their four league games in 2023, and while they remain three points clear of Lens at the top of the table, their form is a concern with the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie against Bayern Munich now little over two weeks away. "Overall we obviously can't be satisfied with our performance. It is not a question of being worried but we need to get back to winning ways quickly and play much more as a team than we are at the moment," coach Christophe Galtier told broadcaster Amazon Prime.

"To concede a goal after 95 minutes with the number of experienced players we have - it is damaging for us in terms of the points dropped but it is also very surprising," Galtier fielded Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar all together in his starting line-up for the first time since the World Cup as PSG took to the field wearing their fourth kit with players' names in Mandarin to mark the Lunar New Year. In fact PSG lined up in a 4-2-4 formation at the start with Carlos Soler joining the superstar attacking trio and playing on the right wing.



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine forward Lionel Messi shoots and misses a goal opportunity during a match against Reims at the Parc des Princes stadium on Jan 29, 2023. —AFP

Yet they sorely missed Verratti in midfield with the Italian left on the bench in the first half as Reims looked the more dangerous side. He came on at the break and they took the lead in the 51st minute

as a Messi shot came off Achraf Hakimi and fell to Neymar, who duly converted his 17th goal of the season. However, PSG were reduced to 10 men shortly after amid much confusion. —AFP

Simeone continues Napoli title march as Milan crumble

MILAN: Giovanni Simeone ensured Napoli continued their march towards a first Serie A title in over three decades with the decisive goal in a 2-1 win over Roma which pushed his team 13 points clear of the chasing pack. Substitute Simeone rifled home a wonderful finish at the end of a long passing move with four minutes remaining at the bouncing Stadio Maradona to see off a spirited Roma team who thought they had escaped with a point when Stephan El Shaarawy levelled in the 75th minute.

However Luciano Spalletti's side are now 13 points clear of Inter Milan, the closest challengers after champions AC Milan were humbled 5-2 by Sassuolo to leave their title defense in tatters. Home fans hoping for an end to their 33-year wait for the Scudetto let out a powerful roar of joy and relief at the final whistle after coming through a hard-fought contest with fierce rivals Roma thanks to Simeone's fifth goal after coming off the bench this season. "I tried to give everything I had. I did the best thing possible today which was get the winner. I am so

happy," said Simeone.

Roma can consider themselves unfortunate to leave Naples with nothing after impressing despite the backroom drama involving want-away star Nicolo Zaniolo poisoning their pre-match preparation. Jose Mourinho's team sit sixth, a point behind the Champions League positions and Milan who have been dumped down to fifth following their humiliating defeat and Lazio's 1-1 draw with Fiorentina.

"There are some matches where you lose but come away feeling better about the team. That's my feeling today," said Mourinho to DAZN. "Sometimes football is unfair. Sometimes the team who deserves more loses." Victor Osimhen was Napoli's other scorer, almost bringing the house down in the 17th minute when he brilliantly chested down Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's cross, took another touch with his thigh before lashing in without the ball touching the floor. His 14th league strike of the campaign was one of the goals of the season and a blistering opener to an enthralling encounter which ended with Napoli taking yet another step towards glory.

Everything that could go wrong for troubled Milan did at a gloriously sunny San Siro, with two goals ruled out for off-side and a shocking defensive display condemning them to another heavy loss after also being hammered by Lazio and Inter Milan in the last 10 days. —AFP

Wrexham denied Hollywood ending in FA Cup thriller

WREXHAM: Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds watched on in anguish as his Wrexham side conceded deep into stoppage time to draw 3-3 against Championship promotion hopefuls Sheffield United in the FA Cup fourth round on Sunday. Reynolds and fellow actor Rob McElhenney took over the National League side in 2020.

The American celebrated the Welsh club's three goals wildly in the stands, but they will need to win a replay to reach the last 16 of the FA Cup for the first time since 1997. Wrexham could not have got off to a worse start as Oli McBurnie headed the Blades in front after 61 seconds. Sheffield United look set for a return to the Premier League next season but they were rocked by a pulsating atmosphere inside the Racecourse Ground.

The home side struck twice in 11 minutes early in the second half to turn the tie around as James Jones

and Thomas O'Connor scored from set-pieces. Oli Norwood looked to have ended the Wrexham dream with a composed finish to equalize. But a red card for Daniel Jebbison for an off-the-ball incident handed the hosts 20 minutes with an extra man to find the winner. They seemed set for a Hollywood ending when top scorer Paul Mullin steered home in the 86th minute.

However, there was a final late twist in the plot as John Egan forced home a corner in the 95th minute to force a replay. Mullin said he was "very disappointed" to concede so near the end of the match. "If we just hold on against 10 men then we are through," he told the BBC. "I thought we were the better team throughout the game, creating chances and looking dangerous on the break. We limited them to not many chances in open play."

"I'm so proud of everyone. We've worked so hard to get here. We came into the game thinking we could win and we had a game plan. Unfortunately it hasn't quite paid off but I think when the dust settles tomorrow we'll be proud of it." Stoke progressed to the last 16 with a 3-1 win over Stevenage. —AFP

Dortmund beat Leverkusen as Haller starts

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund surged to within three points of Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich with a 2-0 win at Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday as Sebastian Haller made his first start since undergoing treatment for testicular cancer. Haller, making his third Dortmund appearance after returning to the team earlier this month, was crucial in both goals.

The Ivory Coast striker let the ball run through his legs for Karim Adeyemi's first-half goal, before pressuring Leverkusen's Edmond Tapsoba into an own goal in the second period. Speaking after the match, Dortmund coach Edin Terzic told broadcaster DAZN "the way he (Haller) kept the ball alive, kept the defense busy and kept things calm, was really, really good."

Leverkusen started the match by consistently finding space around Dortmund's center-backs as teenage midfielder Florian Wirtz, just back from an ACL tear, pulled the strings. Wirtz found Moussa Diaby in the penalty box and the French forward unleashed a right-footed shot that forced Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel into an acrobatic save. Dortmund gained composure and began troubling Leverkusen on the counter, with Jude Bellingham, who missed the midweek win over Mainz due to suspension, once again the vital cog in the build-up to his team's opener.

He picked out Germany midfielder Julian Brandt, who delivered a low cross that Haller dummed to allow Adeyemi to score. After the game, Adeyemi revealed he told Haller to "let the ball through", adding: "I was a bit surprised that he let it through as I didn't say it that loud, but he did a top job." The goal was Adeyemi's first in the Bundesliga since arriving in the summer from Red Bull Salzburg, where he scored 23 times in all competitions last season.

Leverkusen continued to press high hoping for an equalizer, but Dortmund scored again on the counter in the 53rd minute. Bellingham was crucial once more, driving a low cross to winger Marius Wolf, who returned the ball into a crowded area. Under pressure from the advancing Haller and Bellingham, Leverkusen's Tapsoba sent the ball into his own net to double the visitors' lead. —AFP

Today's matches

ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP

Newcastle United v Southampton 23:00

beIN Sports HD 1 English

beIN Sports Connect

beIN Sports 1 HD Premium

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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

Change of Name

I, GURBAX RAM S/o SURJAN DASS R/o Talwandi Goni, Hoshiarpur, Punjab, India, have changed my name GURBAX RAM to GURBAKHASH SINGH, Passport No. J3507741, (C#2844) - 31-01-2023

I, Hojafa, holder of passport no P6320762 do hereby change my name to Huzaifa (as given name) Bohra (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Huzaifa Bohra and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C #2843) 30-1-23

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Chiefs and Eagles set up showdown



KANSAS CITY: Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs throws an incomplete pass against the Cincinnati Bengals during the fourth quarter in the AFC Championship Game at GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium on Jan 29, 2023. — AFP

MIAMI: The Kansas City Chiefs will meet the Philadelphia Eagles in the Super Bowl after the two top seeds won their Conference Championships in contrasting style on Sunday. While the Eagles had it easy against injury-hit San Francisco 49ers, winning 31-7, the Chiefs needed a field goal three seconds from the end to beat the Cincinnati Bengals 23-20.

The wins set up what should be an enthralling contest between two of the most exciting and entertaining quarterbacks in the NFL with the Chiefs' Patrick Mahomes up against Philadelphia's Jalen Hurts. The February 12 clash in Arizona will also pit Chiefs coach Andy Reid against the team where he spent 14 seasons as head coach.

"I had a great time there, 14 years there, a pretty long time. I am happy for them, happy for the city, they are passionate and love football and I can't wait until Kansas City and Philly clash, it is going to be awesome, what a great Super Bowl it is going to be," he said.

The Eagles sealed the franchise's fourth Super Bowl appearance - and second in five years - with

an emphatic victory in the NFC Championship game at Lincoln Financial Field. The 49ers' hopes of victory were upended after a disastrous first half that saw starting quarterback Brock Purdy - himself the team's third choice signal-caller - injured on the team's opening drive. Back-up Josh Johnson - the fourth choice Niners quarterback - also departed injured in the third quarter.

All of Philadelphia's touchdowns came via their ground game, with running back Miles Sanders scoring twice, Boston Scott adding a third before quarterback Jalen Hurts burrowed over in the third quarter. The Eagles piled up 148 rushing yards throughout from 44 carries. "I've dreamed about this, and all the guys on this team have dreamt about this their entire lives," Eagles head coach Nick Sirianni said afterwards. "To be able to do this together with a bunch of men that love each other, that are connected to each other and would do anything for each other - it's pretty sweet."

Harrison Butker converted the 45-yard game winner for the Chiefs, after a costly penalty against

the Bengals, to grab the victory after Cincinnati - who had won their last ten games - had threatened another comeback win. Chiefs quarterback Mahomes came into the game still nursing an ankle injury picked up in last week's divisional round win over the Jacksonville Jaguars, while his favored target, tight-end Travis Kelce, had been dealing with a back injury picked up at practice on Friday.

While the quarterback was less mobile than usual and ended the game limping at times, he was able to deliver the key plays down the stretch. Indeed, any serious concerns the Chiefs had about their two key players eased in the second quarter when Mahomes rolled right and found Kelce with a 14-yard touchdown pass to make it 13-3 for Kansas City.

The Cincinnati offense sprung into life after the interval and tied up the score at 13-13 when Burrow went deep with a 27-yard touchdown pass to Tee Higgins. Marquez Valdes-Scantling then kept a Chiefs drive alive with a smart reach-out for a first down and the receiver finished off the 11-play, 77-yard drive, collecting a 19 yard pass down the mid-

dle from Mahomes.

But the Bengals again showed their resilience and after a Mahomes fumble led to a turnover, Burrow led the Bengals down the field on a drive that featured a brilliant 35-yard pass to Ja'marr Chase and Samaje Perine rushed up the middle for a two-yard touchdown to make it 20-20. The Chiefs got the ball for the final time with 30 seconds left and with the pressure on, at third and four, Mahomes used his legs to make first down but after he ran out of bounds he was barged to the ground by Joseph Ossai.

The resulting 15-yard penalty for unnecessary roughness took the Chiefs within field goal distance and Butker kept his cool to set off the party at an ice-cold Arrowhead Stadium. The Chiefs will hope Mahomes can use the two weeks before the Super Bowl to get himself fully healthy, but the quarterback said he had no choice but to push himself through pain at the end. "At some points in games, you've got to just put it all on the line," he said. "I knew I was going to get there somehow." — AFP

GOAT? 'Monster' Djokovic may have settled the debate

MELBOURNE: In drawing level with Rafael Nadal's record 22 Grand Slam titles, Novak Djokovic reignited the debate about who is the greatest men's tennis player of all time. For some, the Serb settled it with his record-extending 10th Australian Open crown. Certainly his vanquished opponent on Rod Laver Arena thinks so. "He's the greatest that has ever held a tennis racquet, for sure," said Stefanos Tsitsipas after losing 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5).

It seems inevitable that Djokovic, who returned to world number one with his dominant victory in Sunday's final, will win more Slams. At 35 he is a year younger than great rival Nadal and except for hamstring trouble early on in Melbourne, he appears to be in excellent physical shape. In contrast, Nadal's battered body broke down again at the Australian Open and he limped out with defeat in the second round, his title defense over and the Spaniard in pain with a hip injury.

Roger Federer, the third of the "Big Three" who have dominated men's tennis for the past 15 years, retired last year with 20 Grand Slam titles. Federer will always be the "people's champion" in the eyes of many because of the graceful way he played, but it is Djokovic who looks primed to pull away with the record number of men's major crowns.

Djokovic seems to thrive on pain and feed off adversity. Two years ago he won in Australia despite tearing stomach muscles, this year it was a hamstring that did not allow him to practice between matches. If not



MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic takes a selfie on Jan 30, 2023 with the Norman Brooks Challenge Cup next to the boat sheds on the Yarra River, the same spot of his first Australian Open trophy celebrations. — AFP

for Djokovic's vaccine status, which saw him deported from Australia a year ago and prevented him competing at the US Open, he may well have already been on 23 or 24 Slam wins.

"Haha, I told you. We created a monster... Sat on my couch and enjoyed the entire show. Soak it all in," Nick Kyrgios, beaten by Djokovic in the Wimbledon final last year, tweeted on Sunday. Nadal, at 36, may be able to recover from his latest injury and even find the will to achieve another triumph on the clay of Roland Garros in May. But he is a new dad and as the calls grow from family and friends to stop punishing his body, he could bow out sooner rather than later. There is a theory that he could call it quits at this year's French Open. It is his favorite tournament

and a 15th title there would provide a story-book ending.

Djokovic only appears to be getting better with age and the "Next Gen" of young talent are still unable to get near him over five sets. His coach, Goran Ivanisevic, believes there are a few more years at the top - and more Slams - to come. "Definitely two, three more years," Ivanisevic told reporters after Sunday's final. "The way he's taking care of his body, the way he approaches everything, the food, it's amazing. It's unbelievable the level." Some tennis fans will always take convincing to accept Djokovic as the greatest, despite what the number of Grand Slam titles says. He polarizes opinion, whereas Federer and Nadal are universally loved for how they are on and off the court. — AFP

McIlroy comes out on top of bitter rival Reed in Dubai

DUBAI: Rory McIlroy prevailed in a nail-biting finish over Patrick Reed, the man he "prefers not to acknowledge" after a spat between the two, in the rain-delayed \$9 million Dubai Desert Classic on Monday. It was the first time McIlroy has won the first start of his new season and is his 15th DP World Tour victory in 231 starts. It was also his third Dubai Desert Classic victory in 13 appearances.

He will remain world number one, after Spaniard Jon Rahm failed to win the Farmers Insurance Open on the

PGA Tour on Saturday. McIlroy and Reed went into the tournament after a row when Reed reportedly threw a tee towards McIlroy on the practice range in Dubai. The two have been at odds since McIlroy criticized players, including Reed, who joined the rival Saudi-backed LIV Golf circuit.

McIlroy, who lost this tournament last year on the final hole when his second shot found the water and he ended up making a bogey, had fallen behind Reed after a bogey on the 15th hole. However, the Northern Irishman made amends with birdies on the 17th and 18th in a round of four-under par 68. McIlroy finished on 19-under par, while Reed, starting the day four shots behind the Northern Irishman, made a crucial bogey on the 16th and a par on the drivable par-4 17th hole in his round of 65. — AFP



DUBAI: Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland lifts the trophy after winning the final round of the Dubai Desert Classic 2023 Golf Championship at the Emirates Golf Club on Jan 30, 2023. — AFP