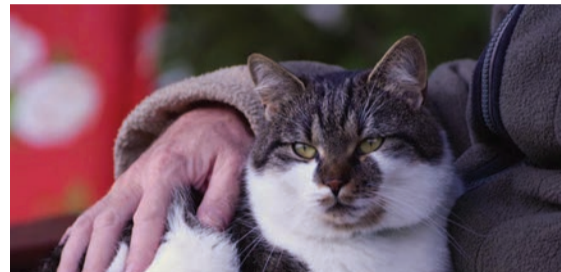


3 Cats can improve mental health of owners: Studies



5 Macron and Sunak agree UK-France migrant deal



8 Zain, Huawei join forces to accelerate development of green 5G networks

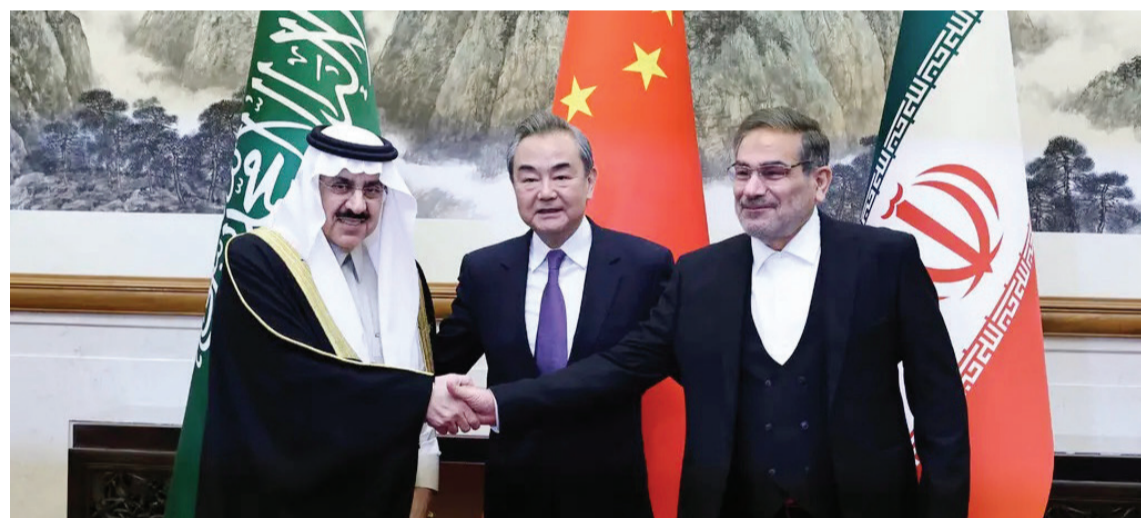


16 Salah misses penalty as Bournemouth shock Liverpool



Saudi, Iran to restore ties in major step for Mideast

Kuwait welcomes resumption of diplomatic relations



BEIJING: Saudi National Security Advisor and Minister of State Musaad bin Mohammed Al-Aiban (left) shakes hands with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani (right) as Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party Wang Yi (center) looks on during a meeting on March 10, 2023.

TEHRAN: Regional powerhouses Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed Friday to restore ties and reopen diplomatic missions in a surprise, Chinese-brokered announcement that could have wide-ranging implications across the Middle East. In a trilateral statement, Iran and Saudi Arabia said they would reopen embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation deals signed more than 20 years ago.

Kuwait welcomed Friday the Saudi-Iranian agreement to resume diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors, according to a statement by the foreign ministry. The ministry stated that Kuwait welcomes the Saudi-Iranian-Chinese statement on a Saudi-Iranian agreement to resume diplomatic relations, reopen their embassies within a maximum period of two months, exchange ambassadors and activate the signed cooperation agreements.

It commended the initiative of the friendly President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping to host and sponsor the Saudi-Iranian bilateral talks to reach this constructive agreement and the efforts made by the sisterly Republic of Iraq and Sultanate of Oman in hosting the several rounds of dialogue

that took place between both sides in 2021 and 2022.

It affirmed Kuwait's support for this agreement, hoping that it would contribute to strengthening the pillars of security and stability in the region, in building trust and developing friendly relations between both countries in a way that serves the interest of the countries of the region and the whole world.

Riyadh cut ties after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in 2016 following the Saudi execution of revered Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr - just one in a series of flashpoints between the two longstanding rivals. Friday's announcement, which follows five days of previously unannounced talks in Beijing and several rounds of dialogue in Iraq and Oman, caps a broader realignment and efforts to ease tensions in the region.

"Following talks, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have agreed to resume diplomatic relations and reopen embassies and missions within two months," said the joint statement, which was published by both countries' official media. The detente between Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, and Iran, a pariah for Western

Continued on Page 6

News in brief

Iran to buy Russian jets

TEHRAN: Iran has finalized a deal to buy Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets from Russia, state media reported. In a statement to the UN, Tehran said it began approaching "countries to buy fighter jets" to replenish its fleet in the wake of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. "Russia announced it was ready to sell them" after the expiry in Oct 2020 of restrictions on Iran purchasing conventional weapons under UN Resolution 2231, said the statement carried late Friday by the official IRNA news agency. — AFP

Tunisia to restore Syria ties

TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied has said he plans to restore diplomatic relations with Syria, more than a decade after they were broken off in protest of Damascus' repression of political opponents. "Nothing can justify the absence of a Tunisian ambassador in Damascus and an ambassador from Syria in Tunis," Saied said during a sit-down with Tunisian foreign minister Nabil Ammar on Friday. He went on to say that the "question of the regime in Syria concerns only the Syrians", rejecting any interference in the affairs and "choices" of others. — AFP

Meta working on Twitter rival

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook owner Meta is working on a new "text sharing" social media network, it said Friday, in a project seen as a potential rival to embattled Twitter. "We're exploring a standalone, decentralized social network for sharing text updates," Meta, which also owns Instagram, said in a short emailed statement. Media reports said Meta's new app would use technology to allow it to be interoperable with niche network Mastodon and other platforms - enabling users to broadcast posts to people on other networks. — AFP

Yemen rivals discuss prisoner swap in Geneva

GENEVA: Representatives of Yemen's government and Iran-backed Houthi rebels kicked off talks in Geneva on Saturday for an exchange of prisoners, with the UN urging both sides to engage in "serious" discussions. The new round of closed-door negotiations amid years of civil war are being overseen by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

BBC shows in chaos as Lineker taken off air

LONDON: The BBC's sport service was in meltdown on Saturday after pundits and commentators refused to work in support of presenter Gary Lineker, who was forced to "step back" after accusing the government of using Nazi-era rhetoric. Match of the Day presenter Lineker, England's fourth

"I hope the parties are ready to engage in serious and forthcoming discussions to agree on releasing as many detainees as possible," UN special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg said in a statement. The talks, reportedly set to last 11 days, mark the seventh meeting aimed at implementing an agreement on prisoner exchanges reached in Stockholm five years ago, the UN said.

Under that deal, the sides agreed "to release all prisoners, detainees, missing persons, arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared persons, and those under house arrest", held in connection with Yemen's nearly decade-long conflict, "without any exceptions or conditions". The ICRC noted in a statement to AFP that past meetings mediated by Grundberg's

most prolific goalscorer, sparked an impartiality row by criticizing the British government's new policy on tackling illegal immigration.

The 62-year-old compared the language used to launch the new policy to that of Nazi-era Germany on Twitter, which the BBC said on Friday was a "breach of our guidelines". "The BBC has decided that he will step back from presenting Match of the Day until we've got an agreed and clear position on his use of social media," the broadcaster said in a statement. Lineker is a freelance broadcaster for the BBC, not a permanent member of staff, and is not responsible for news or political content so does

Continued on Page 6

office had "resulted in the release of prisoners on both sides". "In 2020, more than 1,050 detainees were released and provided with transportation to their region of origin or home country following an agreement reached by the sides," it said.

The latest meeting comes almost a year after the Houthis said they had agreed to a prisoner swap that would see 1,400 rebels freed in exchange for 823 pro-government fighters - including 16 Saudis and three Sudanese nationals. But the warring parties have since held a series of talks in the Jordanian capital Amman that did not result in any developments.

"The ICRC is committed to supporting the implementation of future detainee releases and

Continued on Page 6

Biden scraps Trump Air Force One paint job

WASHINGTON: The US Air Force on Friday unveiled a new color scheme for Air Force One, discarding the palette chosen by Donald Trump for the presidential aircraft. President Joe Biden is sticking with a classic blue-and-white color scheme for the jets, which are under construction, retaining a design that dates to John F. Kennedy's administration six decades ago.

Former president Trump, who left office in Jan 2021, wanted a bolder red, white and blue design, and kept a scale model bearing those colors on a coffee

table in the Oval Office. Trump's design called for a deep red stripe down the middle of the aircraft and a dark blue underbelly. The colors presented challenges to engineers, however, and a Friday statement from the secretary of the Air Force cited possible delays and tests to deal with "the added heat" from the darker shade of blue.

The new Air Force One aircraft will instead closely resemble the aging current one, although the light blue will be a "more modern tone" than the existing robin's egg blue, and there will be no polished metal on the fuselage "because modern commercial aircraft skin alloys don't allow for it," it said. The replacement aircraft are projected to be delivered in 2027 and 2028, so the winner of the 2024 elections will be the first to take off in the new jets. —AFP



Handout image released on March 10, 2023 shows a rendering of the livery design for the "Next Air Force One" selected by US President Joe Biden. — AFP



LEICESTER: In this file photo taken on March 21, 2021, BBC TV presenter Gary Lineker prepares to broadcast at King Power Stadium. — AFP



Local

Kuwait calls for global action to counter media rhetoric of hatred

Tackle factors that feed Islamophobia: Counselor Ammash



VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and permanent representative at the IAEA Talal Al-Fassam.—KUNA

Kuwait call to press Zionists on IAEA rules

VIENNA: Kuwait on Friday called on the international community to pressure Zionist entity into admitting to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty, and subject all its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguarded systems similar to the rest of the countries in the region.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and permanent representative at the IAEA Talal Al-Fassam, delivered a speech mentioning this topic before the Board of Governors of the Agency during the round of discussions, entitled "Zionist Entity's Nuclear Capabilities." Mentioning that applying the IAEA safeguarded system to all nuclear activities and facilities in the region is of utmost importance as it has a major impact on the security and stability of the international community.

Ambassador Al-Fassam also mentioned, the resolution adopted annually by the IAEA, "Application of Agency Safeguards in the Middle East", refers to the urgent needs of all countries in the region to accept the safeguarding application on all nuclear facilities as all states are party to the treaty except the Zionist entity. He also mentioned that unfortunately despite 28 years since the resolution was issued "we still hear arguments that the agency is not the appropriate forum for this issue", while steps to enable the Agency to apply or establish a zone free of nuclear weapons is continuously rejected. —KUNA



KUWAIT: UN Executive Director of UN Women Sima Bahous (left) and State Minister for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Al-Baghli.—KUNA

UN official hails Kuwait's women empowerment efforts

NEW YORK: UN Executive Director of UN Women Sima Bahous lauded the efforts of the State of Kuwait to empower women and develop their rights in various areas. Meeting with Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs, Community Development, State Minister for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Al-Baghli, the UN official spoke highly of Kuwait's effective participation in the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

For her part, the minister, speaking to KUNA following the meeting held late Thursday, said that ways of promoting cooperation between both sides in the fields of women's empowerment and rights protection were discussed. She added that they had underlined the significance of developing women's status and fostering their participation in various sectors, along with the crucial role of women in sustainable development and peace-building.

Al-Baghli noted that they had also touched upon Kuwaiti women's accomplishments in both public and private sectors, given that they are considered to be a considerable element of development in the country's future development blueprint, known as New Kuwait 2035. —KUNA

NEW YORK: Kuwait has affirmed necessity of taking international-level steps to counter media rhetoric of hatred and tackle factors that feed Islamophobia. Abdulaziz Ammash, the counselor of the Kuwait permanent mission at the UN, said that a serious move must be examined vis-a-vis misleading messages by some media outlets, based on pre-judgments that lack evidences toward Islam.

He was addressing a session of the UN General Assembly for discussing Islamophobia. "With mounting patterns of hatred and incitement against Muslims, this session certainly constitutes an opportunity for boosting the international humanitarian dialogue, based on dissemination of the culture of co-existence, tolerance and peace at various levels," he said. Counselor Ammash noted that the meeting coincided with the first anniversary of

the UNGA's adoption of the Resolution 254/76, themed "the international day for combating the phenomenon of Islamophobia."

He has affirmed that incidents of fomenting hatred against Muslims have been increasing, alluding in particular to burning copies of the Quran in Copenhagen, the Hague and Stockholm. Such acts must be condemned at the international level, Counselor Ammash said, urging the UN to establish a body for monitoring these practices. Moreover, he called for encouraging activities aimed at boosting dialogue and mutual respect among peoples of diverse creeds and cultures. Furthermore, he drew attention of the conferees to the basic value of Islam, moderation, also praising efforts by the UN officials for boosting religious tolerance. —KUNA



NEW YORK: Counselor of the Kuwait permanent mission at UN Abdulaziz Ammash addresses the UN session.—KUNA

Sheikha Amthal to attend Jordanian royal wedding



AMMAN: Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrives at the Kingdom of Jordan on Saturday. (Right) Sheikha Amthal leaves Kuwait for Jordan —KUNA



KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah, Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived in the Kingdom of Jordan on Saturday to attend the wedding party of Princess Iman bint Abdullah II. Sheikha Amthal, President

of Kuwait Voluntary Work Center (KVWC), was welcomed by Charge d'Affaires of Kuwait Embassy in Jordan Dr Mubarak Al-Hajeri and the diplomatic staff of the Embassy. —KUNA

Expert: 10% of Kuwait population suffers from IBS

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Gastroenterologist Dr Wafa Al-Hashash said around 10 percent of Kuwait's population suffers from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which is around 450,000 persons. She said 65 percent of IBS patients are affected with small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), adding studies indicate that women are more prone to be affected with IBS than men.

Dr Hashash said IBS is a chronic but not infectious disease, adding that symptoms include abdominal pain, cramping, diarrhea, constipation, bloating and flatulence, similar to SIBO symptoms, which is diagnosed by the hydrogen and methane breathing test with 83 percent accuracy. She said IBS is diagnosed by following the Rome criteria, which is group of symptoms, in addition to laboratory tests of blood and stool, in addition to x-ray, lactose intolerance and SIBO test, along with endoscopy of the digestive system, stomach and colon.

Dr Hashash said most groups that are likely to get IBS are those under 40 years old and family history, in addition to having depression and anxiety. As for those who may be affected with SIBO, she said they include those who underwent abdominal surgeries such as gastric sleeve and bypass, have peptic ulcer, intestine adhesions, diabetes and coeliac condition that prompts the immune system to attack the patient's tissue when eating items containing gluten, such as wheat and



Dr Wafa Al-Hashash

barley, Crohn's disease (a type of inflammatory bowel disease) and other diseases that affect bowel movement.

Dr Hashash said IBS treatment is a complicated and complex process and includes changing the nutritional system by taking lots of liquids and practicing sport. As for medicinal treatment, it is up to the doctor, who relies on the health condition and symptoms of the patient. SIBO treatment on the other hand depends on treating the main cause, then treatment with antibiotics to reduce the number of harmful bacteria, in addition to food support, because one of SIBO's complications is malnutrition and inefficient absorption of nutrients accompanied with weight loss.

Dr Hashash recommended that when having abdominal symptoms such as pain, bloating, change in the bathroom habits including having diarrhea and constipation, a gastroenterologist should be consulted.



CMA Kuwait to hold financial inclusion survey

KUWAIT: The Capitals Markets Authority (CMA), Kuwait has asked all those interested to participate in its Financial Inclusion Survey. A statement by the authority said this move is based on its belief in the importance of financial inclusion in our contemporary lives and its inte-

gral role in reaching sustainable development, which represents a decisive tool to achieve economic and social stability and tackle the financial, social, health and environmental challenges human societies are facing today.

It also goes along with the authority's adoption of quality initiatives in its coming strategy concerned with financial sustainability and inclusion, including plans to strengthen financial culture to boost financial inclusion and investment awareness to empower various social groups, in addition to investors in stock markets access financial services including those presented by the authority and its partners in the organization of capital markets.

KPRA to hold education tech conference

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Public Relations Association (KPRA) will organize the third edition of education technology award and confer-

ence on Monday. In a press statement, secretary of the association Mohamad Al-Yasin said the conference would be held under the patronage of Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Hamad Al-Adwani.

The conference, held in cooperation with Kuwait Information Technology Society, Library & Information Association of Kuwait, Gulf University for Science and Technology and Kuwait College for Science and Technology as well as other bodies,

Kuwait to host Arab information ministers' meeting

KUWAIT: Kuwait will host the 16th regular session of the Executive Office of the Arab Information Ministers Council on March 12-16. Nawar Murad, the official spokesperson of the Ministry of Information, said in a statement on Saturday that the session of the Iraq-chaired bureau, would be attended by representatives of organizations and federations, involved in the media, under the umbrella of the Arab League.

Murad indicated that the conferees would follow up on implementation of resolutions issued by the Arab Information Council during the 52nd session, held in Cairo in September 2022. They will address a host of issues namely, "challenges caused by the social media." She added that the Permanent Arab Information Committee would simultaneously hold the 98th session, along with the 24th meeting of the permanent experts tasked with following up on the media role in confronting terrorism.

The permanent committee and the executive bureau will discuss the 2023 media distinctiveness award on the environmental media under the title, "climatic change and the future," under the State of Kuwait aegis. At the end of the executive office meetings that will coincide with the 28th session of Kuwait's Al-Qurain Cultural Event, a grand theatrical show will be presented, chronicling major historic events in Kuwait. —KUNA



Nawar Murad

aims at highlighting modern scientific efforts in education technology, he stated.

Featuring some academics and specialists at Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, the conference further seeks to contribute to raising the quality of scientific research, keeping pace with the requirements in the academic field or scientific production, and setting general frameworks that help address educational issues objectively and transparently, he made clear. —KUNA

Local

Sports an integral part of healthy lifestyle: Official

MoH's school programs for mental health holds walking marathon



KUWAIT: Children participating in the marathon. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Sports is an integral part of healthy lifestyle that should be an approach for a better life, acting head of the dental department Dr Jaber Taqi said Saturday. Speaking while launching a walking marathon organized by school programs for dental health under the patronage of Minister of Health Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Al-Taqi said all participants in the marathon are winners as it enhances public health and fitness.

Walking ensures effective flow of blood and oxygen inside the whole body, and this helps strengthens heart and blood vessels, he stressed. The dental department seeks to disseminate awareness messages during its varied and effective publications to reach the largest segment of the society, he affirmed.

Meanwhile, Dr Aisha Al-Sumait, an official at the Ministry of Health, said the marathon aims at enhancing self-confidence, referring that 172,000 requests out of a 192,000 total have been accepted for this activity. There is a mobile medical unit for check-ups and registering appoint-



Dr. Aisha Al-Sumait, an official at the Ministry of Health.

ments on the sidelines of the activity, she noted. She lauded the partnership between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education over 40 years. Al-Sumait stressed the need to pay attention to pre-



Head of the dental department Dr. Jaber Taqi

vention to maintain dental health and prevent chronic non-communicable diseases. She indicated that the cost of dental treatment ranks fifth among the most expensive diseases in the world. —KUNA

Kuwait, Russia mark 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties

By Nikolay Makarov
Ambassador of Russia in Kuwait

As we mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Kuwait, it is an occasion to celebrate the time-proven, strong and fruitful ties binding our two countries and peoples. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Kuwait was the first country in the Arabian Gulf region to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow. As for historical retrospective, Russian-Kuwaiti relations go back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when Russian naval vessels Varyag, Askold and Boyarin enjoyed a warm welcome when landed on the shores of Kuwait.

Our friendship has been proven along decades and is based on mutual respect, shared interests and common understandings as regard the supremacy of international law, principles of non-confrontation and strive to peaceful settlement of conflicts and crises. We appreciate Kuwait's remarkable humanitarian and charitable efforts highly recognized by the UN and international community. Kuwait's leading global humanitarian role was once again proven just recently, when it was among the first countries to provide aid to the people of Turkey and Syria affected by devastating earthquake. It is also worth mentioning that our cooperation in the

framework of regional and international organizations, particularly during Kuwait's tenure in the UN Security Council, contributed to tackling global challenges and further advance peace, stability, and development in the world.

Shared vision and understanding of basic principles of international law, which is another aspect of our friendship, manifested itself during the 1990 Iraqi invasion, when Russia supported Kuwait politically, diplomatically and in many other dimensions. For example, the world famous Hermitage Museum in the Russia city Sankt-Petersburg played a crucial role in safeguarding Kuwait's cultural heritage. The museum provided storage facilities and conservation expertise, ensuring that Kuwait's most valuable Islamic artworks and cultural artifacts were kept safe from damage or destruction. In 1991, when the Kuwaiti oil fields were set on fire causing ecological disaster, Russia sent a team of firefighting experts and equipment to help extinguish the fires. The Russian team worked tirelessly alongside Kuwaiti firefighters, utilizing specialized equipment and techniques. Kuwait and Russia also cooperated closely in the search for Kuwaiti prisoners and missing. This humanitarian mission bolstered solidarity between the Russian and Kuwaiti people.

The cultural and humanitarian relations between Russia and Kuwait have also strengthened over the years, with exchanges of art, music and literature. We particularly appreciate Kuwait's efforts to preserve traditional family values, serve as a great example for many to follow. The common grounds between us have deepened the understanding and appreciation of our cultures, and have fostered

a strong sense of friendship between the people of Russia and Kuwait.

Ties in the field of tourism have recently acquired particular significance. With the end of the pandemic, the flow of Kuwaiti tourists has been steadily growing, which is contributed by the opening of direct flights between Kuwait city and Moscow, as well as our joint efforts to ease visa restrictions for the citizens of our countries. One of the highlights of the Russia-Kuwait relations is our close ties in the energy sector. Kuwait, being one of the world's largest oil producers and important policymakers in this field, is a key partner for our country, especially within the framework of OPEC+ alliance aimed at ensuring stability in the global energy market. In addition, there is a wide array of opportunities to develop trade and investment cooperation based, first of all, on the agreements, reached between the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during their meeting in Sochi in 2015. The agreement between the Kuwait Investment Authority and the Russian Direct Investment Fund on the automatic co-investment mechanism is another testament to the commitment of both countries to enhance economic ties and promote mutual prosperity. Moving forward, we aim to work together to increase bilateral trade volumes, expand the range of products traded, and further develop investment cooperation. We also seek to implement long-term joint projects in various fields. We believe that with our joint efforts we can achieve these goals under the wise leadership of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Cats can improve mental health of owners: Studies

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Many studies have proven that cats can improve the general well-being of their owners. Owning a cat can make its owner have better psychological health by reducing stress and anxiety. Also, a cat's purring can help lower blood pressure and relax the nervous system, in addition to helping provide anti-anxiety benefits and lower risk of heart disease. A study showed people who own cats are less likely to die from a heart attack than those who do not own pets. Cat owners also tend to be introverted, trustworthy and down-to-earth.

Ali Sami, 29, affirmed to Kuwait Times that he is emotionally attached to his cat, who he considers his best friend. "I refuse to let him sleep at night on the floor or in his pet bed, but rather I share my own bed with him. The blessing of having a friend is in reducing loneliness, as cats are known to be affectionate and kind. They can help reduce feelings of loneliness, and it

is almost as good as having a romantic partner. I confirm that having pets gives more feelings of compassion to their owner," he said.

Aziza Ahmad, 61, grew up in a pet-loving home, and inherited this love from her parents. "Although I loved pets when I was young, I refused to allow my daughter to get a cat, until she adopted one without my permission, and this is where our life changed. Now my cat Nancy is my friend to the point that she feels me without speaking, so whenever I am depressed or have bad feelings, she approaches me," she said, adding, "I spoil my cat more than my own children."

Dima Adel, 25, confirms that raising pets is a great solution for those who suffer from feelings of loneliness and betrayal. She said some of her friends beat loneliness by raising pets, and believes pets are the source of happiness. "I do not feel lonely at all as long as I am with my loyal cat (Antar), to whom I am very attached. He is a very smart cat and I consider him my loyal friend because he feels me a lot," she said. Adel indicated her cat also improved her sleep quality, as sleeping with a cat gives her a feeling of comfort and calm. It also boosts her self-esteem, which helps in dealing with her struggles better.



KUWAIT: A three-way traffic accident on Fahaheel Expressway resulted in the death of a person. Three people sustained injuries also in the accident.

Saudi urged to allow bedoons to perform umrah

KUWAIT: The ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs has communicated with Saudi authorities to allow bedoons to perform umrah during the month of Ramadan. Sources said the ministry will write again to Saudi Arabia's hajj ministry to allow bedoons to perform hajj this year.

The sources expected the Saudi reply to include conditions that bedoons' passports should be electronic, in addition to guarantees by Kuwait campaigns and the

awqaf ministry to ensure the bedoons depart Saudi Arabia as soon as the hajj rituals are over.

The sources said Saudi authorities will allow 1,000 bedoons to perform hajj, as the awqaf ministry told them it accepts the Saudi conditions. Sources said as soon as the Saudi approval is issued, the awqaf ministry will announce an e-platform to register names of bedoons who wish to perform hajj, with the elderly and those who have never performed hajj to have priority.

The ministry will have tenders for hajj campaigns to take bedoons at reduced prices, while the ministry secretariat and Zakat House will bear half the cost, expecting prices to be no more than KD 1,200, with the bedoon pilgrim paying KD 600.

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PAHW initiates projects for private sector

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) is working on several investment opportunities for the private sector, to strengthen partnership with the private sector on one hand and gain financial revenues on the other. The investment opportunities include 11 projects with a total area of 1.86 million square meters with investment periods varying between 3 to 47 years.

Among the most notable current opportunity is a private school in Sabah Al-Ahmad City with an area of 176,994 sq m with an investment period of 35 years, and a private hospital in Jaber Al-Ahmad City with an area of 40,798 sq m with a 47-year investment. Another project is a private university in Jaber Al-Ahmad over an area of 8,891 sq m with a 35-year investment period.

As for projects that are being contracted, they include the industrial area in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City, the S2 investment opportunity, the projects' main facilities, warehouses, light industries, maintenance and repair workshops, laborers' residence covering an area of 1.28 million sq m with a 30-year investment period and a commercial center in Jaber Al-Ahmad Residential City covering an area of 148,560 sq m with a 25-year investment period.

Kuwaiti MPs attend 146th Asian-Islamic Conference

Jenan Bushehri elected for IPU Women's Forum



MP Dr. Mohammad Al-Mahan, and a member of the Executive Committee, MP Khaled Al-Tamar, represented the delegation in the (Asian) meeting.



MP Hamad Al-Obaid (right) represented the delegation in the Islamic meeting

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation participated in two coordination meetings on Saturday on the sidelines of the Asian and Islamic 146th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in the Kingdom of Bahrain until March 15. During the two meetings, members of the participating delegation stressed, in a statement reported by Al-Dustour News Network, the importance of coordination between geopolitical groups to reach consensus on issues of common concern. The Secretary of the Parliamentary Division, MP Dr. Mohammad Al-Mahan, and a member of the Executive Committee, MP Khaled Al-Tamar, represented the



Kuwaiti MP Dr Jenan Bushehri

delegation in the (Asian) meeting, while MP Hamad Al-Obaid represented the delegation in the Islamic meeting.

The participating Kuwaiti delegation is headed by the Undersecretary of the Parliamentary Division, MP Thamer Al-Dhafiri, with MP Al-Mahan, MP Al-Obaid, MP Khaled Al-Tamar and MP Jenan Bushehri.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti MP Dr Jenan Bushehri on Friday was elected by the Arab states group in the Inter-Parliamentary Union for a seat in the Bureau of Parliamentary Women's Forum.

In a statement, Bushehri assured the importance of this position pointing to the potential opportunities that lie in

raising and discussing issues of political, economic, and social matters. She also expressed her keenness to leave an imprint of influences during forum participations.

The delegation headed by Thamer Al-Dhafiri, along with Secretary Dr. Muhammad Al-Mahan, Treasurer Hamad Al-Obaid, MPs Khaled Al-Tamar and Dr. Jenan Bushehri succeeded in mobilizing enough support thanks to the leadership roles Kuwaiti women enjoy at all levels. Considered the most important parliamentary platform since 1889, the 146th Conference of the IPU was held in Bahrain under the theme of Promoting Peaceful Co-existence and inclusive societies: fighting intolerance. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Attendees pose for a group photo.



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Sheikha Basema hosts female envoys, ambassadors' wives

KUWAIT: The spouse of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, Sheikha Basema Al-Mubarak Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, host-

ed female ambassadors, ambassadors' wives, heads of diplomatic missions and accredited international organizations in Kuwait at a luncheon held at Al-Reemiya Farm in Abdaly.

Sheikha Basema lauded the notable role ambassadors and spouses of heads of missions play to strengthen relations between Kuwait and brotherly and friendly countries. Sheikha Basema commended the strong relations that link Kuwait and its people with all brotherly and friendly countries.





Iraqis look back at US invasion with hope, pain

China appoints Xi's trusted ally as premier

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'New Beginning': Macron, Sunak strike UK-France migrant deal

UK to fund a detention center in France in unprecedented move

PARIS: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday agreed a new pact worth over 500 million euros to stop illegal cross-Channel migration, at a summit in Paris aimed at forging a new start after years of Brexit tensions.

The deal will see Britain step up funding to France to allow hundreds more French police to patrol the Channel and also establish a new detention center as a further deterrent. Both leaders hailed a fresh beginning in relations between the two neighbors, after intense talks in Paris which were also marked by expressions of unity in their support for Ukraine in fighting the Russian invasion.

It was the first UK-French summit in five years, after Sunak became prime minister in October following the stormy tenures of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss marked by rancorous relations with Paris. Macron said his talks with Sunak marked a "new start" while Sunak said it was "a new beginning, our entente renewed". "We're writing a new chapter in this relationship," Sunak added, acknowledging the relationship "has had its challenges in recent years".

'No silver bullet'

The centerpiece of the new atmosphere Friday was the deal to thwart illegal cross-Channel migration, a prime political priority for Sunak as he seeks to rescue the popularity of the ruling right-wing Conservative party. London will step up funding to France over the next three years to total 541 million euros (\$575 million), allowing the deployment of "hundreds" of extra French law enforcement officers along the Channel coast to stop the illegal migration, the British government said in a statement.

For the first time, the UK will help fund a detention center in France to enhance its ability to cope with the number of people being trafficked across

the Channel. "We don't need to manage this problem, we need to break it," said Sunak. "And today, we have gone further than ever before to put an end to this disgusting trade in human life."

The new funding from the UK this year is already more than double last year's package worth over 70 million euros that increased the number of French police patrolling Channel shores. Sunak is under fierce pressure at home to reduce the number of asylum seekers arriving in Britain, and this week unveiled legislation that critics said would make Britain an international outlaw on refugee rights.

"There is no one silver bullet to solve this problem. So, the legislation we introduced this week is incredibly important, cooperation with the French is important, illegal migration enforcement at home is important," Sunak said as he travelled to Paris on the Eurostar train. But activists expressed unease over the plan, with the France director of Human Rights Watch Benedicte Jeannerod saying the sides were persisting with a tactic that "pushes exiles to risk dangerous crossings and subjects them to undignified treatment".

They said they were in complete agreement on helping Ukraine to defeat the Russian invasion and it should be Kyiv that chooses when any peace talks start. "We want Ukraine to win this war. We are absolutely united on this," said Sunak. Macron added: "Our desire is to help Ukraine to resist and to carry out the counter-offensives that it wishes to carry out. The priority of the moment is military."

Bromance?

Macron's distrust of Brexit figurehead Johnson was barely concealed, while Truss said she didn't know whether the French leader was a "friend or foe" during her campaign to become prime minister. But both sides now see an opportunity to reset the "Entente Cordiale"



PARIS: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (L) and France's President Emmanuel Macron (R) shake hands during a joint press conference at the end of the French-British summit. —AFP

between Western Europe's two nuclear powers.

"I hope it can be the start of a stronger relationship between us and it's a privilege to be able to play a part in that," Sunak told reporters as he travelled over. As part of the British government's post-Brexit outreach, the summit paves the way for King Charles III to make France his first foreign destination when he

heads there on a state visit at the end of March. While Johnson reveled in French-bashing, Sunak says he and Macron are "friends", with their warm embrace during their first encounter in November sparking light-hearted speculation about a "bromance". "It was not a summit like others. It was a summit of new ambitions," Macron said at the news conference. —AFP

Gunman kills six at Jehovah's Witness hall attack in Germany

HAMBURG: A disgruntled former Jehovah's Witness member shot dead six people of the Christian group's congregation in the German city of Hamburg, before turning the gun on himself, authorities said. Eight other people were wounded, including four seriously, in Thursday evening's attack, said Hamburg interior minister Andy Grote, calling it "the worst crime in our city's recent history".

Police identified the gunman as Philipp F., 35, a former member of the Christian group who left the community about 18 months ago "but apparently not on good terms". Investigators were still seeking a motive for the killings, but there was no indication of a terrorist motive in the attack, said a senior prosecutor. An anonymous tip-off had been sent to the weapons control authority in January this year, claiming that Philipp F. may have been suffering from an undiagnosed psychological illness and that he had a "particular anger against religious members or against the Jehovah's Witnesses and his former employer".

Raids following the shooting on the gunman's apartment uncovered 15 magazines loaded with 15 bullets each and four further packs of ammunition with about 200 rounds. Police said the gunman had fired several shots at a car after noticing the driver maneuvering the vehicle as he was headed for the Kingdom Hall building. The woman escaped with light injuries and contacted police.

The assailant shot at a window through which he entered the building and began firing on the congregation of around three dozen



HAMBURG: Police stand behind a cordon as the body of one of the victims of the Hamburg rampage is taken away. —AFP

people present at the service with another 25 people participating on livestream. The first distress calls reached emergency services at 9:04 pm local time (2004 GMT) on Thursday, and police forced their way into the Jehovah's Witnesses building minutes later.

The police action interrupted the shooting, prompting the attacker to flee to the first floor of the building where he killed himself, said Grote. "We can assume that (the rapid police action) saved many lives," he added. Police had initially said the shooting left eight people dead, but that included the gunman and a seven-month-old fetus killed in the attack. The woman pregnant with the baby has survived and was counted among the wounded.

The Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany association said it was "deeply saddened by the horrific attack on its members". Chancellor Olaf Scholz condemned the "brutal act of violence" and said his thoughts were with the victims and their loved ones.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said investigators were "working flat-out to determine the background" to the attack. In a public television interview on Friday, Faeser spoke in favour of tougher legislation on carrying firearms in Germany. A bill now being drafted seeks to make a medical certificate a requirement for a permit to carry weapons, she said. But without evidence of unfitness to bear arms, it is "very, very difficult" to intervene after a permit has been granted, she said. — AFP

Russia denounces Georgia protests as coup attempt

TBILISI, Georgia: Moscow on Friday accused foreign countries of fomenting mass protests in Georgia, likening them to an attempted coup designed to sow tension on Russia's borders. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that several days of demonstrations in the Georgian capital Tbilisi reminded him of a Ukrainian uprising that ousted a Kremlin-friendly government in 2014.

Hundreds of Georgians rallied for a fourth day outside parliament, keeping up their calls for a pro-European future, as lawmakers dropped the controversial "foreign agent" legislation that triggered violent clashes between police and protesters this week. The demonstrations point to turmoil over the future of Georgia, which aims to join the EU and NATO, much to the frustration of Moscow.

Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and recognized two separatist territories in the north of the country as independent, stationing military bases there after the war. "There is no doubt that the law on the registration of non-governmental organizations was used as an excuse to start, generally speaking, an attempt to change the government by force," said Lavrov. The protests looked similar to "Kyiv's Maidan" uprising, he said, and "are of course being orchestrated from abroad" with the aim of creating "an irritant on the borders of Russia".

Critics of the Georgian bill say it resembles Russian legislation used to silence dissenters. Reacting to the claims of foreign influence, French President Emmanuel Macron said: "There is a tendency in the Kremlin, which is not new, to imagine that every public demonstration is a foreign manipulation because the fundamental belief is that there is neither public opinion nor free people."

The Kremlin also criticized remarks from Georgia's president, delivered from the United States, and accused Washington of stoking "anti-Russian" sentiment in the Black Sea state. "We see where the president of Georgia is addressing her people from," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. This week President Salome Zurbishvili sent messages of support to the protesters from New York, where she is on an official visit. On Friday, she accused Russia of centuries of "attacking, occupying sovereign countries" in an interview with French news channel LCI, adding that "what is important" is the message of the Georgian protesters.

"We already have Russian troops at home ... That did not prevent Georgia from staying independent and continuing on its path towards Europe," she said, adding that was "the only path that exists for a sovereign and independent Georgia".

Georgian lawmakers had voted down the foreign agent bill in a second reading after just one MP out of 36 backed it. Jailed ex-leader Mikheil Saakashvili praised the role that protesters had played in forcing the government to drop the bill. "They were brilliantly resisting brutal force used against them," Saakashvili said in a Facebook post. "No Russia with its brutal oligarch is in (a) position to defeat them," he said, referring to the billionaire founder of Georgia's ruling party, who has made his fortune in Russia. — AFP

French strikes continue for seventh day

PARIS: Demonstrators in France took to the streets Saturday for a seventh day of protest against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform plans, with police expecting up to a million people at rallies nationwide.

Unions hope they can still force Macron to back down as parliament debates the draft law, with the National Assembly and the Senate moving towards a final vote as early as this month.

"This is the final stretch," said Marylise Leon, deputy leader of the CFDT union. "The endgame is now," she told the franceinfo broadcaster Saturday. This week, Macron twice turned down urgent calls by unions to meet with him in a last-ditch attempt to get him to change his mind.

"When there are millions of people in the streets, when there are strikes and all we get from the other side is silence, people wonder: What more do we need to do to be heard?", said Philippe Martinez, boss of the hard-left CGT union. "This country's leaders need to stop being in denial of this social



MONTPELLIER: Demonstrators march during a protest as part of a nationwide day of strikes and protests called by unions over the proposed pensions overhaul. —AFP

movement," said CFDT head Laurent Berger on Saturday. Police said they expect between 800,000 and one million people at 230 planned demonstrations across France, of which up to 100,000 were likely to march in Paris. It was the second protest day called on a weekend, with unions hoping that demonstrators would show up in greater numbers if

they did not have to take a day off work.

"I'm here to fight for my colleagues and for our young people," said Claude Jeanvoine, 63, a retired train driver demonstrating in Strasbourg, eastern France. "People shouldn't let the government get away with this, this is about the future of their children and grandchildren," he told AFP. — AFP

International

China appoints Xi's trusted ally as premier

Li Qiang takes helm of the country's economy amid its weakest performance in decades

BEIJING: Li Qiang, one of Chinese President Xi Jinping's most trusted allies, was confirmed as premier on Saturday, as Xi cements his influence on the country's top leadership. Li, the former Shanghai party chief who oversaw the city's grueling two-month lockdown last spring, was named the successor of outgoing premier Li Keqiang at a meeting of the country's rubber-stamp parliament.

The 63-year-old received nearly every vote from the more than 2,900 delegates at the National People's Congress, a day after Xi was unanimously selected by deputies for a norm-breaking third term as president. Xi's motion nominating Li Qiang as premier was read out to the chamber on Saturday morning.

Journalists were asked to leave the chamber as deputies, mostly dressed in dark suits, marked their ballots in a tightly choreographed process. Delegates later applauded as Xi ceremoniously deposited his votes in the ballot box while cheerful traditional music played from speakers. An electronic screen in the hall

displayed 2,936 votes for Li, with only three delegates voting against his appointment and eight abstaining.

Li later took an oath, swearing to be loyal to China's constitution and to "work hard to build a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious and great modern socialist country". His ascension had once seemed in doubt after his handling of the Shanghai lockdown, in which residents struggled to access food and medical care. But Li's record, along with widespread protests last winter over Xi's zero-Covid policy, has been brushed aside as Xi cements his grip on Chinese politics.

Longtime allies

Unlike almost all previous premiers, Li does not have experience working at the central government level. Li, who started his career as an irrigation pump station worker near his hometown, rose steadily through local government ranks and was promoted to affluent Zhejiang province's top job in 2012. In 2017, Li was appointed the party secretary of Shanghai - a sign

of the president's high degree of trust in him. Now, in his capacity as premier and head of China's cabinet, the State Council, he will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the country as well as macroeconomic policy.

Outgoing premier Li Keqiang last week announced a growth target of "around 5 percent" for 2023, one of the lowest in decades, as the world's number two economy fights stiff headwinds. Last year, the Chinese economy expanded just three percent, one of its weakest performances in decades on the back of the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and a real estate crisis.

China's housing market, which along with construction accounts for more than a quarter of GDP, remains in a slump, having been dealt a hefty blow since Beijing started cracking down on excessive borrowing and rampant speculation in 2020. Hong Kong-based Chinese politics expert Willy Lam told AFP it was unlikely Li Qiang would serve as a counterweight to Xi's efforts to control the economy. "Xi has doubled down on the fact there must be



BEIJING: China's newly-elected Premier Li Qiang takes an oath after being elected during the fourth plenary session of the National People's Congress. — AFP

tighter party-state control of the economy," Lam said. "It is very doubtful whether Li Qiang himself will have the authority to further develop Deng Xiaoping's re-

form and open-door policy," Lam added, referring to the decades-long process of opening up that has appeared to be threatened under Xi. — AFP

Japan mourns 2011 disaster amid push for nuclear energy

TOKYO: Japanese offered tearful prayers Saturday on the anniversary of the deadly tsunami that triggered the Fukushima disaster, but public support for nuclear power is growing as memories of the 2011 meltdown fade. A minute's silence was observed nationwide at 2:46 pm (05:46 GMT), the precise moment when a 9.0-magnitude quake - the fourth strongest in Earth's recorded history - devastated northeastern Japan 12 years ago. The undersea quake unleashed a tsunami that left around 18,500 people dead or missing and overwhelmed cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, leading to the worst nuclear catastrophe since Chernobyl. All of Japan's nuclear reactors were taken offline after the disaster and the majority remain out of action today.

But the global energy crisis sparked by the war in Ukraine has caused electricity bills to soar in Japan, inspiring a government push to reboot reactors as polls show that public views on nuclear power are softening. On Saturday, TV footage showed people who lost loved ones to the tsunami laying flowers, offering prayers and bowing in front of graves.

"Hi guys, it's been 12 years," public broadcaster NHK showed Fumiko Sugawara, 73, telling the grave of her family members, including her husband. "We're surviving, so please watch over us," said the

resident of Kesenuma, a city flattened when huge waves rushed ashore. No deaths have been directly ascribed to the nuclear accident, after which around 165,000 people fled their homes in the area either voluntarily or under evacuation orders.

Most areas around the plant have since been declared safe after extensive decontamination work, but many former residents have chosen not to return. With Japan now facing its most severe energy crunch in decades, the government wants to speed up the revival of its nuclear industry. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has called for seven reactors approved by Japan's nuclear safety watchdog to resume operations, and for the nation to consider building "next-generation" reactors with new safety mechanisms. Recent opinion polls by major newspapers the Asahi Shimbun and Yomiuri Shimbun show that a majority of people support restarting the reactors for the first time since 2011.

"The government will continue to spearhead efforts toward the safe and steadfast decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi plant - a process crucial to recovery," Kishida said at the Fukushima memorial service. "It is our responsibility to promote efforts to build a disaster-resistant country." Mistrust of nuclear power still runs deep among campaigners who accuse TEPCO, the operator of the Fukushima plant, of safety lapses that upended local communities. In January, Tokyo's High Court upheld the acquittal of three former TEPCO executives, again clearing them of professional negligence over the disaster. But in a separate civil verdict last year, the trio - plus one other ex-official - were ordered to pay a



TOKYO: People take part in silent prayers to remember the victims on the 12th anniversary of 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster. — AFP

whopping 13.3 trillion yen (\$97 billion) for failing to prevent the accident. The enormous compensation sum is believed to be the largest ever for a Japanese civil case, although lawyers acknowledge it is well beyond the defendants' capacity to pay. The government also plans to start releasing more than a million tons of treated water from the stricken Fukushima plant into the sea this year.

A combination of groundwater, rainwater that seeps into the area, and water used for cooling, it has been filtered to remove various radionuclides and kept in storage tanks on site, but space is running out. The water release plan has been endorsed by the International Atomic Energy Agency but faces staunch resistance from local fishing communities and neighboring countries. — AFP

Saudi, Iran to restore ties in...

Continued from Page 1

governments over its nuclear activities, has the potential to reshape relations across a region characterized by turbulence for decades.

Iran and Saudi Arabia support rival sides in several conflict zones including Yemen, where the Houthi rebels are backed by Tehran and Riyadh leads a military coalition supporting the government. The two sides also vie for influence in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian welcomed the rapprochement and said Tehran will "actively prepare other regional initiatives". "The return to normal relations between Tehran and Riyadh offers great opportunities to the two countries, the region and the Muslim world," he tweeted. Saudi Arabia's top diplomat Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said the agreement stems from the kingdom's preference for "political solutions and dialogue" - an approach it wants to see become the norm in the region.

The White House welcomed the deal, but said it remains to be seen whether the Iranians will "meet their obligations". France also saluted the move, saying it was in favor of dialogue, but urged Iran to "renounce its destabilizing actions". UN chief Antonio Guterres welcomed the announcement and said he remains ready to "use his good offices to further advance regional dialogue". "Good neighborly relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are essential for the stability of the Gulf region," he said through his spokesman.

The head of Lebanon's Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militant group, called the agreement a "good development". "It could open new horizons in the region," said Hassan Nasrallah, whose movement has been blacklisted as a "terror" group by Saudi Arabia since 2016.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme

National Security Council, had travelled to Beijing on Monday for "intensive negotiations with his Saudi counterpart in China in order to finally resolve the problems between Tehran and Riyadh", Iran's official IRNA news agency said. Sandwiched between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Iraq had hosted several rounds of talks since April 2021. Those encounters were held at a relatively low level, involving security and intelligence officials.

Amir-Abdollahian had said in July that the two countries were ready to move talks to a higher level, in the political and public spheres. But no talks had been publicly announced since April last year. The pledge to resume ties comes two-and-a-half years after the UAE, which also lies between Saudi Arabia and Iran, signed the Abraham Accords opening ties with the Zionist entity - a similarly unexpected move. It follows a broad pattern of attempts to settle regional disputes, including the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar, which lasted from June 2017 to January 2021.

Gulf Arab allies of Saudi Arabia already beat a path back to Tehran. In September, Iran welcomed an Emirati ambassador back after a six-year absence. A month earlier, Iran said Kuwait had sent its first ambassador to Tehran since 2016. On Thursday, Amir-Abdollahian was in Damascus where he welcomed Arab outreach to Syria's internationally isolated government after an earthquake struck the war-torn country and neighboring Turkey last month.

He also said Tehran, which has backed Damascus during its 12 years of conflict, would join efforts to reconcile Syria and Turkey, which has long supported rebel groups opposed to President Bashar Al-Assad. There has also been a rapprochement between Riyadh and Ankara since the 2018 killing of Saudi journalist and government critic Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has pushed hard to revive ties, a move analysts describe as largely driven by economic considerations. — Agencies

Grundberg said it was urgent to reach an agreement. "With Ramadan approaching, I urge the parties to fulfill the commitments they made, not just to each other, but also to the thousands of Yemeni families who have been waiting to be reunited with their loved ones for far too long," he said.

Saturday's talks began a day after Saudi Arabia and Iran said they had agreed to restore diplomatic relations, following years of supporting opposite sides during Yemen's more than eight years of war. A detente between the two regional heavyweights could facilitate a solution to the conflict, which has pitted the Iran-backed Houthis against the internationally-recognized Yemeni government propped up by Saudi Arabia, analysts say.

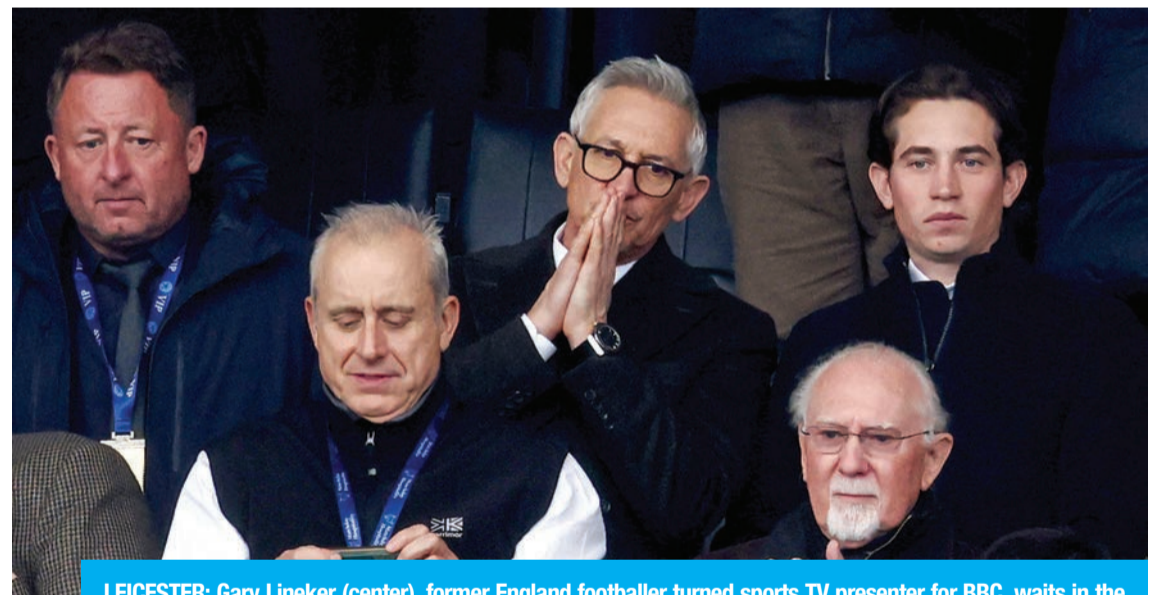
The Houthi rebels took control of the Yemeni capital Sanaa in 2014, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene on behalf of the Yemeni government the following year. Since then, a grinding war has killed hundreds of thousands and pushed the impoverished nation to the brink of famine. Fighting has largely been on hold since a UN-brokered ceasefire took effect in April last year, even after the agreement expired in October. — AFP

Yemen rivals discuss prisoner...

Continued from Page 1

exchanges, and to repatriating or transferring released detainees across front lines back to their respective homes," the organization said. Emphasizing that it was "a neutral intermediary in this process", the ICRC said it was "not involved in the negotiations on who exactly is going to be released and the identities of the detainees proposed and accepted for exchange by all concerned parties".

Speaking to the official Saba news agency on Thursday, Yemeni government delegation member Majed Fada'il said the aim of the talks was "to reach an understanding regarding the details" of a prisoner exchange. In a Twitter post the same day, the leading Houthi delegate to the Geneva talks said he hoped the negotiations would yield concrete results. "We hope that this round will be a decisive one," Abdul Qader Al-Murtada said.



LEICESTER: Gary Lineker (center), former England footballer turned sports TV presenter for BBC, waits in the stands ahead of kickoff between Leicester City and Chelsea at King Power Stadium on March 11, 2023. — AFP

BBC shows in chaos as Lineker...

Continued from Page 1

not need to adhere to the same strict rules on impartiality. Pundits and former England strikers Ian Wright and Alan Shearer immediately tweeted that they would not take part either, followed by the program's commentators. Wright then said on his podcast on Saturday that he would quit the BBC if Lineker was sacked for good.

The BBC announced that the highlights show, a Saturday night fixture since 1964 and the longest-running football television program in the world, would air without pundits or a presenter for the first time. It also said players would not be asked for interviews after some indicated they would not be available in support of Lineker. Adding to the chaos, sports presenters and pundits then pulled out of a slew of BBC radio and television shows on Saturday, forcing their cancellation and the airing of repeats and podcasts instead of live coverage.

The row was sparked by Lineker's response to a video in which Home Secretary Suella Braverman unveiled plans to stop migrants crossing the Channel on small boats. Lineker, the BBC's highest-paid star, wrote on Twitter: "This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the '30s."

The Conservative government intends to outlaw asylum claims by all illegal arrivals and transfer them elsewhere, such as Rwanda, in a bid to stop the crossings, which totaled more than 45,000 last year. A YouGov poll published on Monday showed 50 percent backing the measures, with 36 percent opposed. But rights groups and the United Nations said the legisla-

tion would make Britain an international outlaw under European and UN conventions on asylum.

Some 36 Tory lawmakers have sent a letter to the BBC warning the affair will "no doubt shake many people's already fragile confidence" in the BBC's impartiality. They are asking the BBC, which collects a license fee from households with a television, for a full apology from Lineker. The BBC's move sparked a wave of criticism from politicians and public figures, many of whom accused it of buckling to demands from Conservative lawmakers.

Sports correspondent Natalie Pirks posted a picture of a George Orwell statue outside the BBC building in a free-speech reference, while a petition calling for Lineker to be reinstated has attracted almost 160,000 signatures. Former BBC director general Greg Dyke said the broadcaster had made a mistake. "The real problem today is that the BBC has determined its own credibility by doing this," he told the broadcaster, adding it could create the impression that the "BBC has bowed to government pressure".

The issue has brought to a head years of debate over BBC impartiality, which intensified after Britain voted to leave the European Union in 2016. Brexit supporters claimed that the corporation coverage was biased against them, while the left claim that it allowed presenters to make disparaging remarks against former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn without punishment.

The Lineker row comes at a particularly heated period after it emerged that BBC chairman Richard Sharp allegedly facilitated a loan guarantee for former prime minister Boris Johnson while in the process of applying for the job. BBC director-general Tim Davie warned staff about their use of social media when he took on the role at the end of 2020. Lineker, a former Barcelona, Tottenham and Everton player, has hosted refugees at his home and has previously been vocal in his criticism of the government's handling of migrant crossings. — AFP

International

Iraqis look back at US invasion with hope, pain

‘I had lost hope. I saw young people like me dying, and we were helpless’

BAGHDAD: Two decades after the US-led invasion of Iraq toppled Saddam Hussein, its war-weary people recount their painful memories of dictatorship, major conflict and years of violent turmoil.

Some told AFP about the iron-fisted repression under Saddam, others spoke of the traumatic childhoods they endured, marred by bullets, bombs and bloodshed. They look back at the horrors of the Islamic State group and the dashed hopes of a brief anti-government protest movement.

‘Terrified childhood’

Zulfokar Hassan, 22, was a young child when his mother woke him in the middle of the night so they could hide in the bathroom during a US forces raid in their Baghdad neighborhood. “The houses around us were collapsing,” he recalled about the battle on September 6, 2007 when US helicopters and tanks targeting Shiite militants killed 14 civilians in the Al-Washash district.

The next day, the seven-year-old boy looked around the rooftop terrace where the family usually slept in the blistering summer months. “There was



BAGHDAD: (L-R) Hanaa Edouard, Zulfokar Hassan and Alan Zangana share their memories of the US-led invasion of Iraq. — AFP photos

shrapnel, our mattresses were burned,” recalled Hassan, now a calligraphy student.

Like many from his generation, he tells his story in the detached tone of someone for whom street battles, car bombs and corpses lying on the road were the tragic backdrop of daily life. “Throughout our childhood we were terrified,” he said. “We were afraid to go to the toilet at night, no one

could sleep alone in a room.” One of his uncles has been missing since 2006. He left in his car to shop for food and never came back. In late 2019, Zulfokar joined the sweeping, youth-led demonstrations against endemic misrule and corruption, crumbling infrastructure and unemployment.

“But I stopped,” he said, recounting the crackdown that killed hundreds. “I had lost hope. I saw young people like me dying, and we were helpless. Martyrs have been sacrificed, without result and without change.” Despite this, he said he has no plans to emigrate, like so many other disillusioned Iraqis have. Otherwise, he asked, “who would be left?”

‘Fear leads nowhere’

Hanaa Edouard, 77, a feminist and human rights activist, is a veteran of decades of struggle for democracy in Iraq. Her opposition to Saddam forced Edouard, a Christian and a former communist activist, into exile in the former East Berlin, Damascus and to the rugged mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan. Returning to Baghdad soon after the invasion of March 2003 was a “dream” at first, she said.

But Edouard quickly became disillusioned as she watched US armored convoys rumble through the streets of the occupied country already long battered by painful sanctions. As the specter of Iraq’s coming years of sectarian bloodshed already loomed, in a country where activists and officials are routinely kidnapped, threatened and even killed, she continued working with her non-government organization “Al-Amal” that she had founded in the 1990s.

Its stated goal was and remains to “build an independent civil society and a democratic Iraq that believes in human rights,” she said. Among her victories was the adoption of a women’s quota in parliament which she proudly remembers as “a historic

moment”. Video footage from 2011 attests to her fearlessness. It shows Edouard berating then-prime minister Nuri al-Maliki to demand the release of four detained demonstrators. A man seated next to Maliki is seen trying to calm her - he is the current Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani.

“Fear leads nowhere,” Edouard said, stressing that in today’s Iraq “challenges abound” and castigating the entrenched political parties whose main goal is to stay in power. She welcomed the anti-government demonstrations that demanded sweeping change and renewal, but said she has no illusions: “There is no democracy in Iraq”.

Political ‘red lines’

Alan Zangana was the 12-year-old son of civil servants living in the northern Kurdistan region when his family watched on TV how the US forces entered Baghdad in 2003. “We stayed up until dawn to follow the events”, he said.

Weeks later, they were stunned to see American soldiers topple a giant Saddam statue in Baghdad before rolling cameras for the entire world to watch, recalled the 32-year-old. “When the statue fell on April 9, 2003, then we believed it.” Rare among younger Kurds, Zangana speaks Arabic after growing up in the south of Iraq. And for the past three years, he has produced a podcast on current affairs and history, pushing the boundaries of free speech. “The Iraqi elite is locked in on itself for fear of the events of the past 20 years,” he said. “There are those who have seen their friends die, those who have been threatened.” His guests discuss Iraq’s often tense politics, its rich and ancient culture, and the dire state of the economy, but they must often tread carefully to avoid danger. “There are a lot of red lines left,” he said, “and that’s not healthy.” — AFP



This file photo dated on July 9, 2017 shows a general view of the destruction in Mosul's Old City.

Kurdish-run center seeks to rehabilitate IS-scarred children

QAMISHLI, Syria: Children of foreign jihadists play football on a dirt field at a center in northeastern Syria that Kurdish authorities hope will help rehabilitate minors raised on Islamic State group ideology. More than 50 boys aged 11-17, some with parents hailing from Britain, France, Germany or the United States, live at the heavily guarded Orkesh rehabilitation center near the city of Qamishli, close to the Turkish border.



QAMISHLI: Children of foreign Islamic State (IS) fighters attend an arts class at the Orkesh rehabilitation center on March 7, 2023. — AFP

Opened six months ago, it is the first facility seeking to rehabilitate foreign boys in the Kurdish administered northeast, where prisons and camps are packed with thousands of IS group relatives from more than 60 countries. Another center opened its doors in 2017 to rehabilitate young former jihadists. The success of the centers is crucial to “saving the region from the emergence of a new generation of extremists,” said Khaled Remo, co-chair of the Kurdish administration’s office of justice and reform affairs.

Some of the boys wearing tracksuits played table football in one of the rooms, while others kicked around a ball outside in the sun, talking to one

another in broken Arabic. Once the boys turn 18, they will need a new rehabilitation program or for their home countries to take them back.

“We don’t want the kids to stay permanently in these centers, but diplomatic efforts are slow, and many children need rehabilitation,” Remo said. Kurdish-led forces, supported by a US-led coalition, spearheaded the fight against IS in Syria, driving the group from its last redoubt in the country in 2019.

Tens of thousands of people, including relatives of suspected jihadists, have been detained ever since in the Kurdish-controlled Al-Hol and Roj camps, including around 10,000 foreigners in Al-Hol alone. While girls are also in the camps, this rehabilitation center focuses on boys because they would be who IS remnants - now in hideouts in the desert - would recruit to fight if they could, Remo said.

Therapy sessions

Kurdish authorities have repeatedly called on countries to repatriate their citizens, but foreign governments have allowed only a trickle to return home, fearing security threats and domestic political backlash. The boys at the rehabilitation center were transferred from Al-Hol and Roj, authorities said, as well as from the Ghwayran prison, where hundreds were killed after jihadists stormed it early last year. Some with their heads shaved or wearing beanies attend classes in Arabic and English, learning mathematics, drawing and even music.

Inside one classroom, the boys fiddled around with crayons, one teenager drawing the sunset in shades of orange and pink. Later that day, they were learning to count in English, repeating the numbers after their female teacher. The facility also has dormitories, recreation areas and a dining hall, and the boys can play chess or watch documentary films and cartoons.

The center’s goal is to prepare the boys “to integrate into their communities in the future” and live better lives “in a normal context”, said Aras Darwish, who heads the project. “Our goal is to offer psychosocial and educational support,” Darwish said of the center, which provides individual and group therapy sessions. The boys are also encouraged to draw in order to express their feelings and deal with memories, he said, pointing to a room decorated with drawings of trees, cars and houses.—AFP

Ethiopian Airlines victims’ families flay Boeing, lawmakers

ARLINGTON, United States: Families of victims of the 2019 Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 MAX crash gathered Friday near the headquarters of aircraft manufacturer Boeing to denounce what they called “total impunity” over the loss of life.

“There has been no investigation, from a judicial point of view and from a criminal point of view, in the United States for manslaughter,” said Catherine Berthet, who lost her daughter Camille in the accident.

Berthet, who is French, joined with other families from as far away as Canada and Germany as they brandished portraits of loved ones and stood in rain in protest outside the imposing headquarters of Boeing in suburban Virginia. “Four years later... this plane is still in the air,” she said. On March 10, 2019, six minutes after takeoff from the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa and bound for Nairobi, Kenya, flight ET302 crashed in a field, killing all 157 passengers and crew.

The accident came barely five months after a similar tragedy in which a 737 MAX operated by Lion Air

crashed into the Java Sea off Indonesia, killing 189 people. The successive air disasters plunged Boeing into the worst crisis in its history, and forced the grounding of the worldwide MAX fleet for 20 months as investigators probed defects in its flight control software, the MCAS anti-stall system. The aircraft was allowed to fly again in the United States in 2020. “This plane is still dangerous,” Berthet said. “Boeing must be sued for manslaughter ... It’s manslaughter and they have to be sued and DOJ has to do its work.”

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) entered into a deferred prosecution agreement with Boeing that allowed its executives to skirt criminal charges. Instead, Boeing recognized that two employees misled authorities during the certification of the 737 MAX. The airline manufacturer agreed to pay \$2.5 billion in penalties and compensation in exchange for accepting the deal, which was negotiated out of the public eye.

Berthet and other families of victims are challenging the agreement in a federal court in Texas. A federal judge there ruled in early February that he did not have the authority to grant their petition, and the case is now under appeal. Adnaan Stumo, brother of crash victim Samya Rose Stumo, said US prosecutors and Boeing lawyers “were on the same side of the courtroom against the family seeking justice ... They struck a sneaky side deal.”—AFP



ARLINGTON: Chris Moore from Toronto, whose daughter Danielle Moore died in the Boeing 737 MAX crash in Ethiopia on March 10, 2019, speaks during a memorial protest. - AFP



CALABRIA: Italy's Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni and Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini talk during a press conference near the site of a shipwreck where at least 72 migrants died. — AFP

Italian coastguard wraps up migrant rescue operation

ROME: More than 1,000 migrants were brought to safety at two Italian ports after the overcrowded boats they were on encountered problems in the Mediterranean, the coastguard said Saturday. The rescues came the same day as a body was discovered of the 74th victim of the deadly shipwreck nearly two weeks ago - that of a female child between five and six years of age, according to news agency AGI.

The February 26 shipwreck, which occurred just off the shore of Calabria, has drawn sharp criticism of the

right-wing government led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni for its failure to intervene timely to save the boat. The coastguard said Saturday it was wrapping up a large rescue operation that began Friday after three boats were spotted drifting off Italy’s coasts.

One was south of the Calabrian city of Crotona and two further south off Roccella Ionica. Coastguard videos showed a large fishing boat pitching violently back and forth in nighttime rough seas with dozens of people visible on the deck. Other images showed inflatable rescue boats approaching another fishing vessel packed with people.

Those 487 migrants onboard the first boat were safely brought to the port of Crotona at about 0200 GMT Saturday morning, the coastguard said. Another rescue operation in which 500 migrants were brought to safety aboard a coastguard ship was wrapping up, it said. News agency ANSA had earlier

reported that the ship had docked at the port of Reggio Calabria. A third boat carrying 379 people was rescued by two coastguard patrol boats and the migrants transferred to a Navy ship headed to the Sicilian port of Augusta, it said. Italy’s defense ministry said it had begun to air transfers of migrants away from the crowded migrant center on the island of Lampedusa, which it said was now over capacity.

The recent shipwreck has put the government on the defensive. On Thursday, Meloni held a cabinet meeting at Cutro, near the disaster site, and announced a new decree that included stiffer prison sentences for human traffickers, but no new measures to help save lives. Her far-right Brothers of Italy party, which won elections last year, had promised to curb arrivals, but Italy has recently seen a sharp rise in the number of migrants attempting to reach its shores via the dangerous Mediterranean crossing. —AFP

Business

SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 2023

Zain, Huawei join forces to accelerate development of green 5G networks

Companies explore improving network energy efficiency and greener ICT infrastructures at MWC Barcelona



Eaman Al-Roudhan and Steven Yi at MWC Barcelona.



Al-Roudhan and Yi with Zain and Huawei executive teams.

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, has joined forces with Huawei, the global technology leader, to launch a long-term initiative to accelerate the development of green 5G networks and ICT infrastructures. Both partners seek to build green and sustainable networks, leveraging on 5.5G technologies, to achieve their joint goals towards tackling climate change. The announcement was made during the Mobile World Congress (MWC 2023) in Barcelona, Spain.

Zain, one of the region's leading operators, has launched an extensive array of initiatives and efforts over the years to address climate change in the ICT sector. As a leading global ICT solutions provider, Huawei has become one of Zain's top strategic climate action partners and is committed to helping Zain build the greenest ICT infrastructure possible.

In 2023, Zain and Huawei will jointly explore and define a climate change related performance indicators that will be built around a consistent and progressive decarbonization of network infrastructure. Zain will also cooperate with Huawei to accelerate the development of green 5G networks and deploy innovative technologies that contribute to building a greener ICT infrastructure.

Eaman Al-Roudhan, Chief Executive Officer of Zain Kuwait, said: "In 2021, Zain joined Huawei's Digital Energy Summit to affirm our stance on climate change. Today, we continue our journey to further outline our joint strategic vision in pursuing this crucial endeavor together."

Green practices

"On the regional scene, companies like Zain and Huawei have spearheaded the industry in adopting green practices, but more efforts are needed to further reduce our environmental footprint by limiting our dependence on fossil fuels, reducing energy consumption, adopting eco-design principles, elimi-

- **Eaman Al-Roudhan:** We've aligned our partnership ecosystem to accelerate our transition to a net zero economy. Addressing climate change is a top priority.
- **Steven Yi:** Huawei is committed to support Zain's endeavors in pursuing green and sustainable development for a transition to a low carbon economy.

nating e-waste, adopting circularity across our value chain, implementing water and electricity conservation measures, addressing impacts on biodiversity and ensuring that our plans and activities are inclusive. We have aligned our partnership ecosystem to accelerate our transition to a Net Zero economy and achieve our sustainability strategic goals. Addressing climate change is a top priority," Al-Roudhan added.

"Huawei strongly believes that climate change leads to physical and transition risks such as increased severity of floods, changes in precipitation patterns, rising mean temperatures, rising sea levels, acidification of oceans, and increased price of raw materials and energy tariffs. These risks will have impacts on societies and biodiversity as well as companies' assets, capital expenditures, operating costs and revenues. To mitigate such risks, it is important for companies to adopt sustainable practices and reduce their carbon footprint in line with limiting global warming to the recommended level of 1.5°C compared to the pre-industrial level. Zain's focus on green development strategies such as pursuing energy-saving and intelligent solutions for ICT infrastructure is a positive move towards achieving this goal. As Zain's strategic partner, Huawei is committed to support their endeavors in pursuing green and

sustainable development", said Steven Yi, President of Huawei Middle East & Central Asia.

Sustainability strategy

Zain and Huawei will strengthen their cooperation in green technology products, solar hybrid power solutions, and AI energy saving innovations. Both companies are launching a long-term initiative to build a green and sustainable network utilizing 5.5G technologies.

Zain has made addressing climate change one of the four pillars of its corporate sustainability strategy. The company is dedicated to reducing its overall energy consumption and emissions across its entire value chain, enhancing the environmental performance of its workplaces, and promoting environmental care. Zain has established short and medium-term targets to lower its entire carbon footprint and aims to achieve net zero by 2050 to minimize its negative environmental effects. As a result, Zain and Huawei are conducting extensive research on cutting-edge technologies such as 5.5G, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy to reduce the ICT infrastructure's carbon footprint.

Both partners have engaged in extensive, multi-layered practices and research in environmentally friendly development throughout the years. In 2022,

the collaboration succeeded in several areas, including optimizing network design, introducing innovative technologies, activating artificial intelligence, and implementing renewable energy sources. 5G, as a more energy-efficient network, can reduce the amount of power per bit in the network compared to its predecessor, LTE 4G. Zain works with partners like Huawei, actively migrating data traffic from 4G network to 5G network.

Zain is continuously working with partners to improve its policies for conserving energy across the whole network, which has resulted in a reduction of 5G energy consumption of more than 20 percent while maintaining network KPIs. The capabilities of the network's artificial intelligence made the accomplishment of this goal conceivable. In addition, by utilizing renewable energy sources such as solar power, Zain can reduce the usage of diesel generators at the solar hybrid powered site by 85 percent.

Zain will continue its search for high-quality, low-carbon, and environmentally friendly technology, products, and practices. In addition, Zain will work with Huawei to develop a system and solution for defining what a green network is. The company is determined to develop an environmentally friendly network and foster technological innovation to assist Kuwait in achieving its total carbon-neutral vision by 2060. To promote key sustainability pillars and increase awareness amongst its employees, Zain is launching Sustainability Week, an internal initiative to highlight the company's sustainable goals and shed more light on the role every employee plays in achieving these goals. The initiative covers many activities throughout an entire week, featuring seminars and talks, workshops, documentary screenings, and trips to local parks and nature reserves, giving employees an opportunity to learn more about sustainability as well as to participate in activities with their colleagues outside of the office environment.

US closes SVB in biggest collapse since 2008

SANTA CLARA: US regulators pulled the plug on Silicon Valley Bank on Friday in a spectacular move that sent global banking shares sputtering, as markets fretted over possible contagion from America's biggest banking failure since the 2008 financial crisis. US authorities swooped in and seized the assets of SVB, a key lender to US startups since the 1980s, after a run on deposits made it no longer tenable for the medium-sized bank to stay afloat on its own.

Little known to the general public, SVB specialized in financing start-ups and had become the 16th largest US bank by assets: at the end of 2022, it had \$209 billion in assets and approximately \$175.4 billion in deposits. Its demise represents not only the largest bank failure since Washington Mutual in 2008, but also the second largest failure ever for a retail bank in the United States.

In response to the sudden collapse, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen convened an emergency meeting of top US banking regulators. "Secretary Yellen expressed full confidence in banking regulators to take appropriate actions in response and noted that the banking system remains resilient and regulators have effective tools to address this type of event," a Treasury statement said.

Based in the shadow of the world's biggest tech companies, SVB's travails have raised fears that more banks may face doom as the fallout from high inflation and hiked interest rates squeezes weaker lenders. In front of the SVB headquarters on a rainy day in Santa Clara, California, nervous customers spoke in small groups wondering how they could withdraw their money as news spread of the government seizure.

One customer dressed in a t-shirt and sweatpants, and who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he used the bank for payroll at his startup. "It's not a



SANTA CLARA: Police officers leave Silicon Valley Bank's headquarters in Santa Clara. —AFP

good situation. A lot of really top tier (venture capital firms) have very high amounts of exposure here," he said, adding that he was worried for his employees.

A day after the four biggest US banks lost a whopping \$52 billion in market value following signs of trouble at SVB, European banking giants were similarly mired in the red, with Deutsche Bank down 10 percent at one stage. But on Wall Street on Friday, shares in heavyweights Bank of America, Wells Fargo and Citibank seesawed, with Yellen telling a congressional panel that she was "monitoring" a few banks.

This was swiftly followed by news that the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI) closed SVB and appointed the Washington-based Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to take it over. The crisis measure protects customers with up to \$250,000 in deposits and crucially buys time to find a potential buyer of whatever remains of the embattled Silicon Valley lender. CNBC reported Friday that SVB was in talks with potential buyers after attempts to ride out the crisis on its own failed. "The debate today is whether SVB issues are SVB's issues or the start of a bigger issue for the banking sector," said a note from Patrick O'Hare of Briefing.com. —AFP

US job growth beats expectations in Feb

WASHINGTON: The United States added more jobs than expected in February—though fewer than the previous month—government data showed Friday, suggesting policymakers have more to do to cool down the world's biggest economy. The numbers, which saw the unemployment rate tick up, bring slight relief after January's hiring surge but also indicate the economy remains hotter than hoped.

Employers added 311,000 jobs last month, down from a revised 504,000 figure in January, the Labor Department said. The jobless rate went up slightly to 3.6 percent, from a low last seen in the late 1960s. The numbers come days after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell warned that the US central bank is prepared to speed up the pace of its interest rate hikes and could lift rates higher than anticipated if needed to rein in stubborn inflation.

"Today's job numbers is clear. Our economy is moving in the right direction," President Joe Biden told reporters on Friday. He added that with inflation easing, he felt "confident that we're headed in the right direction" on this front as well.

The Labor Department said "notable job gains occurred in leisure and hospitality, retail trade, government, and health care."

Meanwhile, employment slipped in the information sector and in transportation and warehousing, the report added. Average hourly earnings picked up by 0.2 percent to \$33.09 in February, with the pace of growth decelerating. From a year ago, earnings were up 4.6 percent.

Potential shift

Asked how to reconcile February's job growth and rise in unemployment, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Friday pointed to a slight increase in the labor force participation rate. She noted that the rates for both adult men and women have exceeded their pre-pandemic highs, helping to

address supply and demand imbalances in the labor market. "What we're seeing here is a continued, very strong labor market, putting Americans back to work," Yellen said in testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee.

Friday's numbers suggest the labor market "remains strong with the economy still creating jobs at a rapid pace," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics. "But a rise in the unemployment rate and softer wage growth suggest a potential adjustment in conditions," she added in a note. Although indicators had suggested the economy might be cooling, after eight Fed rate hikes since early last year to lower inflation, data released last month raised fears that the central bank would have to do more in the coming days.

"A resilient labor market coupled with sticky inflation suggests the Fed will continue to move rates higher over coming meetings," Farooqi said. The report will not stop the Fed from hiking interest rates further when policymakers meet later this month, said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. But "it does lower the odds of a 50 basis points increase," he said. —AFP



WASHINGTON: The United States added more jobs than expected in February — though fewer than the previous month — government data showed Friday, suggesting policymakers have more to do to cool down the world's biggest economy. —AFP

Business



KUWAIT: Group picture of Gulf Bank and Suffix teams.



Part of the activities conducted at the event.

Gulf Bank wraps up second edition of 'Off-Road Challenge' competition

Winners of professional and amateur categories announced at Off-Road Challenge

KUWAIT: After fierce competitions between the contestants that lasted for hours last Friday in Bnaider as part of Gulf Bank's "Off-Road Challenge," the organizing committee announced the winners of the race prizes. From the professional category, winners included: 1- Ahmed Al-Saffar, 2- Sulaiman Al-Khudari, 3- Hasan Al-Jarallah. From the amateur's category winners included: 1- Jarrah Al-Rabiah, 2- Mohammad Al-Samir, 3- Mohammad Reda Al-Kaabi.

This year's Off-Road Challenge is Gulf Bank's second edition of the sporting event, the first of its kind in Kuwait for fans of four-wheel drive vehicles held in cooperation with Suffix Sports Events Management Company. In light of the wonderful weather and the large public attendance, many restaurants were keen to be present at the race site.

Social sustainability

On this occasion, the Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmed Al-Amir, said, "We would like to congratulate the winners of the prizes of the second edition of the Off-Road Challenge. This year's competition was fierce, displaying the skills and abilities of Kuwaiti youth in driving four-wheel drive vehicles and facing natural and industrial challenges in the racetrack."

He added: "In parallel with Gulf Bank's organization of the Off-Road Challenge activities for off-road racing amateurs and professionals, we have been keen this year to support amateurs and professionals in sports car racing by sponsoring the KTC race that was held on March 10-11, a community event that gathered local youth in spending a special weekend that blended sports and entertainment."

He continued: "Within the framework of its social responsibilities and its continuous support for the youth, Gulf Bank is keen to organize multiple sporting events throughout the year, designed to provide young people with the opportunity to practice their beloved sport, enjoy the passion of the challenge, and compete



Winners of the professionals' category.

for valuable financial prizes."

He stated that sustainability programs represent one of the main pillars of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, which touches on financial, environmental and social sustainability in a way that contributes to the development of society and enhances its leadership in all fields.

Prioritizing local youth

For his part, the Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Fahad Al-Sharrah, emphasized Gulf Bank's interest in sponsoring sporting events, because of their role in promoting physical and health fitness for local youth, whom the Bank prioritizes both in terms of banking and community services. He pointed out that the participants previously competed in the face of natural terrain and artificial barriers, ranging in difficulty from easy to medium, as the competition circuit was prepared with many off-road roadblocks, using sand, rocks, water basins, and other challenges that the competitors must pass. Throughout the competition, Gulf Bank adhered to the utmost security

and safety procedures. Al-Sharrah indicated that the race consists of several stages - each stage being a different natural or industrial challenge - while contestants were evaluated by a judging committee on their speed and skill in overcoming the challenges.

Partnership and cooperation

In turn, the General Manager of Suffix Sports Events Management Company, Ahmed Al-Majed, said: "We are proud to cooperate with Gulf Bank in organizing the second edition of the Gulf Bank 'Off Road Challenge,' the first sporting event of its kind in Kuwait. We are pleased to have organized such a successful event and to have made the event possible for our passionate athletes and audience."

He pointed out that Suffix enjoys a long-standing partnership with Gulf Bank, extending over six years and entailing multiple sporting events including the Gulf Bank Marathon. Notably, the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon is among only 128 races in the world, and the only marathon in Kuwait, that has the bronze

AbbottWMM accreditation from the AbbottWMM Wanda Age Group World Rankings, a global age group marathon ranking system. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to

- **Ahmed Al-Amir:** We are keen to organize various sporting events as part of our community sustainability initiatives
- **Fahad Al-Sharrah:** Local youth are at the heart of Gulf Bank's interest, and we are keen to provide them with quality sports activities while providing the highest levels of safety and security
- **Ahmed Al-Majed:** We are proud to collaborate with Gulf Bank in organizing the Off-Road Challenge, the first sporting event of its kind in Kuwait.

conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt has already been boosted by a stronger-than-expected public finances surplus in January.

'Long way to go'

"In the face of severe global challenges, the UK economy has proved more resilient than many expected, but there is a long way to go," Hunt said in response to Friday's data. "Next week, I will set out the next stage of our plan to... grow the economy-so we can improve living standards for everyone." However, millions of Britons will likely have to pay more for gas and electricity from next month as the government plans to remove some of its costly financial help that had lowered energy bills. The ONS cautioned that economic growth flatlined in January from the same month a year earlier, hit by high living costs.

Yet month-on-month activity rebounded as the services sector offset a poor performance by construction and manufacturing. Activity was stimulated by schools reopening after Christmas holidays and the return of England's Premier League football competition following the World Cup. Another boost came as postal services recovered from industrial action the previous month.

Energy payouts

Global inflation last year reached the highest levels in decades as the invasion of Ukraine by key oil and gas producer Russia sent energy prices soaring. British energy giant BP on Friday revealed it more than doubled the remuneration of chief executive Bernard Looney to £10 million (\$12 million) last year.

The news came one day after rival Shell said its recently-retired CEO Ben van Beurden earned a similar amount in 2022. The UK economy registered zero growth in the final three months of last year, after shrinking 0.3 percent in the third quarter. Output was additionally hit by the Bank of England's interest rate hikes that sought to dampen consumer prices. —AFP



WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden and top EU official Ursula von der Leyen announced Friday the start of negotiations on granting access to European producers seeking to export critical minerals for EV batteries under a new US program to stimulate the green economy.

US, EU announce talks on critical EV battery minerals

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden and top EU official Ursula von der Leyen announced Friday the start of negotiations on granting access to European producers seeking to export critical minerals for EV batteries under a new US program to stimulate the green economy. "We intend to immediately begin negotiations on a targeted critical minerals agreement for the purpose of enabling relevant critical minerals extracted or processed in the European Union" to qualify for the US government subsidies under Biden's signature Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) stimulus plan, they said in a joint statement.

Batteries are a vital part of the US plan for massive expansion of electric vehicle production. The IRA sets aside some \$370 billion for tax credits and clean ener-

gy subsidies, but contains a "made-in-America" requirement for qualification. European leaders have grown worried that EU-based energy and auto companies will be shut out or move to the United States.

The aim of the critical mineral talks will be to provide one significant exemption for the EU. "Today we agreed that we will work on critical raw materials that have been sourced or processed in the European Union and to give them access to the American market as if they were sourced in the American market. We will work on an agreement," von der Leyen told reporters after meeting Biden. In their joint statement, the two leaders stressed that the IRA and new European initiatives meant to mirror the program, such as the Green Deal Industrial Plan, should work in tandem. "Both sides will take steps to avoid any disruptions in transatlantic trade and investment flows that could arise from their respective incentives. We are working against zero-sum competition so that our incentives maximize clean energy deployment and jobs-and do not lead to windfalls for private interests," the statement said. — AFP

the move would help to avoid a repeat of soaring energy bills that millions of Britons have endured since last year after the invasion of Ukraine by major energy producer Russia tightened global oil and gas supplies. "We don't want to see high bills like this again, it's time for a clean energy reset," Hunt said in the statement. "That is why we are fully committing to nuclear power in the UK, backing a new generation of small modular reactors, and investing... in clean energy through carbon capture."

Energy Security Secretary Grant Shapps said the government wants Britain, "already a global leader in offshore wind power" to reach the same level "for the UK's nuclear and carbon capture industries". In the near-term, the government plan would "drive forward projects that aim to store 20-30 million tons of CO2 a year by 2030". —AFP

UK economic rebound eases recession fear

LONDON: The UK economy has returned to growth, data showed Friday, easing fears of an inflation-induced recession as the government readies next week's budget against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis. Gross domestic product grew 0.3 percent in January, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, boosted partly by entertainment and transport activity.

Output dropped 0.5 percent in December on widespread strikes as workers protested over pay failing to keep pace with UK inflation above 10 percent. Britain last year swerved recession-defined as two straight quarters of contraction-and many experts believe it will manage to do the same in 2023.

"Things are better than people had feared, sentiment is improving, confidence is returning and that is I think partly a function of the plans that we've put in place," Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters.

'Risks remain'

Deutsche Bank economist Sanjay Raja said the UK economy is no longer expected to fall into a technical recession this year. "However, the margin of error is slim, and risks remain skewed to weaker growth over the coming quarters, given lingering uncertainty and pessimism around the economic outlook." Britain's Conservative government, facing anger over soaring energy bills as executive pay in the sector rockets, unveils a budget on Wednesday.

"Today's news does provide evidence of a surprisingly resilient UK economy, which will add a positive backdrop to the budget next week," noted economist Josie Anderson at research group CEBR.



LONDON: Britain last year swerved recession and many experts believe it will manage to do the same in 2023. — AFP

Business

DHAMAN supplies lab equipment and devices at Jahra and Ahmadi Hospitals

Advance Technological and Central Circle begin installation of devices



KUWAIT: During the signing of the agreement.



KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) announced the completion of the supply of medical laboratory equipment and devices within Jahra and Ahmadi hospitals, and the suppliers — the Advance Technological (ATC) and Central Circle (CCC) — have commenced installation of the equipment and devices in accordance with the two partnership agreements concluded with them to develop operations at the laboratories in DHAMAN's hospitals.

The signing of the two new agreements came within the framework of DHAMAN's ongoing plan to complete building its health network by operational expenses (OPEX Model) agreement to provide the best healthcare services in Kuwait.

The new partnerships come within the framework of DHAMAN's efforts to provide the highest standards at work, which contributes to achieving its mission, which is to provide the highest levels of healthcare to patients, based on the best technologies in the market.

DHAMAN indicated in a press statement that

these agreements (signed in 2022) aim to provide services for the supply, installation, operation and maintenance of its laboratory equipment in its new hospitals in the Jahra and Ahmadi governorates, as part of its strategy aimed at applying the approved international standards in the context of completing its health network in various parts of the country.

The company stated that the development of laboratories in DHAMAN hospitals comes in light of the vital role it plays in healthcare, helping doctors diagnose patients' conditions, providing important

data, statistics and results that help in disease research, discovering diseases and epidemics, following up on their development and spread, and helping to control and combat them appropriately.

Moreover, DHAMAN continued that it is keen to provide its laboratories with the best equipment and tools from the largest companies and manufacturers known worldwide, and which can be integrated with the systems used in DHAMAN hospitals, that help them to perform the role entrusted to them to the fullest extent and keep abreast of develop-

ments in conducting the necessary examinations for patients at the local and international levels, which contributes to enhancing their success, performance and operational operations at all levels.

It is noteworthy that DHAMAN hospitals, with their vast capabilities, will constitute an outstanding addition to the medical sector and medical infrastructure, as each hospital is built on a total area of 85,000 square meters distributed over five floors and a basement with a capacity of 330 beds and contains 14 operating rooms, 21 intensive care units and 75 outpatient clinics that include all specialties. In addition to an automated system pharmacy, x-ray departments, laboratories, emergency department, and an air ambulance helipad, a multi-storey car parking building with a capacity of approximately 550 vehicles attached to it. The company will make sure that the design of hospitals meets all the standards of smart buildings, equipped with an advanced recycling system for medical waste, taking into account that it is environmentally friendly in all details.

- Providing advanced equipment to conduct exams and tests
- Adopting the highest standards in the diagnosis and development of diseases
- The two agreements include the supply, installation, operation and maintenance of laboratory equipment for a period of 5 years

To drill or not to drill: Biden to make decision on Alaska oil project

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden is poised to decide whether to pull the plug on a massive oil drilling project on Alaska's North Slope or allow it to go ahead. With the decision imminent, environmentalists have ramped up pressure on the White House, urging Biden to live up to the climate change pledges he made during his campaign.

During the 2020 presidential race, the Democratic candidate vowed not to approve any new leases for oil and gas projects on federal lands. But Biden has found himself stuck in the middle of a years-long battle over the so-called Willow Project, a plan by US energy giant ConocoPhillips to drill for oil in the federally-owned National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska's pristine western Arctic.

The Trump administration approved the Willow Project at the tail end of the former president's term but it was blocked by a judge for further review. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in an environmental impact analysis in February, approved three drilling sites while striking down one and deferring consideration of another. ConocoPhillips welcomed the BLM's assessment, saying it can "provide a viable path forward for development of our leasehold."

The Interior Department, which oversees the



Temperatures in Alaska have been rising faster than in other regions of the planet and environmental groups have warned that the oil extraction project would make things worse. — AFP

BLM, said, however, it has "substantial concerns" about the project "including direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions and impacts to wildlife and Alaska Native subsistence." Biden has described global warming as an existential threat and promoted the development of renewable energy sources.

Temperatures in Alaska have been rising faster than in other regions of the planet and environmental groups have warned that the oil extraction project

would make things worse. The Willow Project will add more than 250 million metric tons of carbon emissions to the atmosphere over the next 30 years, the Sierra Club said, equivalent to the annual emissions of 66 coal plants. Greenpeace described it as a "carbon bomb." A petition on Change.org seeking to halt the project has garnered more than three million signatures and a #StopWillow campaign on TikTok has drawn 150 million views. — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's central bank left its ultra-easy monetary policy unchanged on Friday in its last meeting before Governor Haruhiko Kuroda steps down and is replaced by economics professor Kazuo Ueda.

Bank of Japan leaves policy unchanged as Kuroda bows out

TOKYO: Japan's central bank left its ultra-easy monetary policy unchanged on Friday in its last meeting before Governor Haruhiko Kuroda steps down and is replaced by economics professor Kazuo Ueda. The Bank of Japan has steadfastly resisted tightening in recent months, even as peers in other developed economies have hiked rates to tackle inflation.

While most analysts expected the bank to stay the course in Kuroda's final policy decision, some had speculated about a surprise tweak. But the bank left its longstanding negative interest rate in place and made no further adjustments to the band in which rates for 10-year government bonds fluctuate.

The decision came shortly after Japan's parliament approved Ueda as the BoJ's next governor, paving the way for the 71-year-old to take over in April. At his final press conference as governor, Kuroda said it was "unfortunate" that the bank's longstanding target of sustained two-percent inflation had remained elusive, after years of stagnant wages and prices.

But he defended his record, saying he had "no regrets" and that prices had stopped falling during his tenure, after the deflation that plagued Japan from 1998 through 2012.

BoJ policymakers have insisted that the bank's inflation target—considered necessary to turbocharge the world's third-largest economy—has not yet been achieved. Consumer prices hit 4.2 percent in January, driven by factors including higher fuel costs, but Kuroda has argued the rises are the result of temporary factors such as the war in Ukraine.

He wants to see evidence of more sustained rises, including salary increases, before adjusting the bank's policy. Ueda told lawmakers last month that he saw the "continuation of monetary easing as appropriate", warning of uncertainty in financial markets and the global economy. Current factors driving higher prices "will likely ebb in the future, and inflation in consumer prices will likely drop below two percent", he added. — AFP

Tourism announces its return at Berlin fair, defying inflation

BERLIN: The Berlin tourism industry fair this week celebrated its comeback from the dark days of the coronavirus pandemic with strong demand that has so far defied high inflation figures. The industry gathering returned after a three-year hiatus enforced by the pandemic crisis, with 5,500 exhibitors from 161 countries descending on the German capital.

"Travel is back!" Julia Simpson, the head of the World Travel and Tourism Council said during the fair. In 2022, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) registered an increase in international arrivals of almost 900 million compared with the previous year. In total, arrivals stood at 67 percent of their pre-pandemic level, with the figure reaching as high as 80 percent in Europe. "We are already at a similar level to 2019" in some countries, said UNWTO Europe director Alessandra Priante.

Savings power

"The savings made by a whole section of the population during the pandemic lockdowns have yet to be fully spent and are flowing into the sector," said Clemens Fuest, head of the economic think tank Ifo Institute. China's abandonment at the end of last year of its zero-Covid policy, which strictly regulated travel in and out of the country, has been another boon.

Before the pandemic, Chinese travelers represented 15 percent of all tourists. The atmosphere at the fair was celebratory with delegates from central

Asia and Pacific islands parading through the aisles in traditional garb to promote their region. "Our clients have all come back," Lukas Knauber, 23, a German spa hotel worker, told AFP.

The upturn in fortunes has continued despite painfully high inflation in many parts of the world. Consumer prices in the eurozone rose at an 8.5-percent pace in February and look set to remain elevated. But the positive trend may not carry forward very far. "In 2023, many consumers were able to say I'm going even if I have lost spending power. But in 2024 that will likely not be the case," said Fuest.

Consumer behavior is already changing as a result of inflation. In Germany, more and more holidaymakers are "booking early in the year to benefit from discounts", the German tourism industry group DRV said in early March. One in two clients at travel giant Tui is choosing the all-inclusive option, in order to have a better grip on their expenditure, according to Stefan Baumert, the group's lead for Germany. In the cruise industry, "55 percent of customers say they want to spend less money, or travel less far", according to Markus Stumpe, CEO of the website CruiseWatch.

"The sector will have to adapt its offers and prices to this new context," Fuest said. At the fair in Berlin, the startup Room Price Genius is demonstrating software which allows small hotels to estimate the ideal price for a room. Not just consumers, but the sector itself is reeling from rising costs, especially for energy. To limit the sector's impact on the environment, people will also have to "pay more", according to Soeren Hartmann, head of the German federal tourism organization BTW. Rising global temperatures are having a major impact on much-loved holiday destinations as winter snows fail to materialize and summer heat waves become more frequent. — AFP

Brazil inflation slows to 5.6%

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's annual inflation rate slowed in February, the government said Friday, though a rise in the monthly rate and upward pressure on wages mean price increases remain problematic for President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The annual inflation rate in Latin America's biggest economy was 5.6 percent, down from 5.77 percent in January, said the national statistics institute, IBGE.

The drop, which was driven by a fall in food prices, inches the rate a bit closer to the target of 3.25 percent set by the central bank, which has aggressively raised interest rates in a bid to rein in surging prices. But the monthly inflation rate came in at 0.84 percent, up from 0.53 percent in January.

"Core inflation pressures remain uncomfortably strong for the central bank, which, coming alongside elevated fiscal risks, mean that rate cuts are not on the cards anytime soon," analyst Kimberley Sperrfechter of consulting firm Capital Economics said in a note. "Core inflation is likely to stay uncomfortably high, not least because of strong wage pressures." Veteran leftist Lula, who defeated far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro in October promising a return to the economic growth of his first presidency (2003-2010), has publicly sparred with central bank chief Roberto Campos Neto, insisting the bank needs to lower the key interest rate to allow the economy to grow faster. Brazil's economy contracted by 0.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, raising fears for the new administration it could have a recession on its hands if the trend continues. — AFP

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This photograph shows an image (center) designed with artificial intelligence by Berlin-based digital creator Julian van Dieken (center) and inspired by Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring" at the Mauritshuis museum. — AFP photos

Girl with AI earrings sparks Dutch art controversy

At first glance it seems to be just a modern take on Johannes Vermeer's masterpiece "Girl with a Pearl Earring". But look more closely and things get a little strange. Firstly, there are two glowing earrings in the image hanging in the Mauritshuis museum in the Dutch city of The Hague. And aren't those freckles on her face actually... a slightly inhuman shade of red? That's because the work-one of several fan recreations replacing the 1665 original while it's on loan for a huge Vermeer show at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum-was made using artificial intelligence (AI).

Its presence has sparked a fierce debate, with questions over whether it belongs in the hallowed halls of the Mauritshuis-and whether it should be classed as art at all. "It's controversial, so people are for it or against it," Mauritshuis press officer Boris de Munnick told AFP. "The people who selected this, they liked it, they knew that it was AI, but we liked the creation. So we chose it, and we hung it."

'Frankensteinish'

Berlin-based digital creator Julian van Dieken submitted the image after the Mauritshuis asked people to send in

their versions of the famous painting for an installation called "My Girl with a Pearl". Van Dieken said he had used the AI tool Midjourney-which can generate complex pictures on the basis of a



A visitor takes a picture with his mobile phone of an image designed with artificial intelligence by Berlin-based digital creator Julian van Dieken (center) inspired by Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring" at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague.

prompt, using millions of images from the internet-and Photoshop.

The Mauritshuis then chose it as one of five images out of 3,482 submitted by fans that would be printed and physically hung in the room where "Girl with a Pearl Earring" is normally housed. "It's

surreal to see it in a museum," van Dieken wrote on Instagram.

The budding artists ranged in age from three to 94, depicting the "Girl" in diverse styles ranging from a puppet to a dinosaur and a piece of fruit. But the decision to choose an AI-generated image sparked a backlash. Dutch artist Iris Compiet said on the Instagram feed for the Mauritshuis exhibition that it was a "shame and an incredible insult", and dozens of others piled in. "It's an insult to the legacy of Vermeer and also to any working artist. Coming from a museum, it's a real slap in the face," Compiet told AFP. She said AI tools breach the copyright of other artists by using their works as the base for artificially generated images, as well as scraping the data of internet users in general. The image itself she described as "almost Frankensteinish".

Artist Eva Toorenent, of the European Guild for Artificial Intelligence Regulation, criticised what she called the "unethical technology". "Without the work of human artists, this program could not generate works at all," she was quoted as saying by the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant.

'What is art?'

"It's such a difficult question-what is art, and what is not art?" said the Mauritshuis's de Munnick. But he insisted that the museum, whose collection boasts three Vermeers and nearly a dozen Rembrandts, had not deliberately set out to make an artistic statement on AI. "Our opinion is, we think it's a nice picture, we think it's a creative process," he said. "We're not the museum to discuss if AI belongs in an art museum." He admitted though that "up close, you see that the freckles are a little spooky."

Visitors to the Mauritshuis were equally divided, he added. "Younger people tend to say, it's artificial intelligence, what's new. Elderly people sometimes say we like the more traditional paintings." The Mauritshuis was looking forward to the return of the real "Girl" in April, he added. The painting's fame has increased in recent years due to a 1999 novel by US author Tracy Chevalier and an ensuing Hollywood film. "Well, she is beautiful in the (Rijksmuseum) exhibition... But we will be very happy when she is at home." — AFP

French utopian architect Roland Castro dies aged 82

French utopian architect Roland Castro, a political activist who fought what he called "urban apartheid" and wanted to transform run-down housing estates into places people would actually like to live, has died aged 82, his daughter said. "He passed away peacefully surrounded by lots of family in a Parisian hospital" on Thursday, his daughter Elisabeth Castro told AFP.



In this file photo taken on December 5, 1990 architecte Roland Castro (left) speaks with then French prime minister Michel Rocard about the "Banlieue 89" urban project in Bron.

Famed for his short stature and sparkly green eyes, the idealist met Che Guevara in his youth, re-imagined a drab Paris suburb with its own leafy Central Park, and made an unsuccessful bid for president. He believed that buildings were only a success "when they gave the person living in them a good impression of themselves".

He advocated for ending what he called "urban apartheid" between Paris and its poorer, high-immigrant suburbs. "We need to build a Greater Paris based on solidarity, that means breaking the isolation of towns on the Paris outskirts, link-

ing them up and renovating them," he said. The architect wanted to build thousands of homes along a Central Park in La Courneuve, a multi-ethnic suburb of Paris that is home to one of the region's biggest low-income housing estates. "We need to plant some beauty where there it is now mostly ugliness," he said in 2009.

'Existential debt'

He presented plans for a better Greater Paris-including the long-dreamt Central Park-to President Emmanuel Macron in 2018, but they never came to pass. He did however contribute to improving some run-down housing estates on the Paris outskirts, including La Caravelle. His designs often privileged the color white, combined wood and concrete, and integrated lush green plants into facades.

Castro was born into a Jewish family in the southern city of Limoges in 1940 during World War II. He spent the first years of his life with his parents in hiding to avoid deportation as France was under Nazi occupation. Communists of the French Resistance helped keep them out of sight, and he later said that had left him with "an existential debt towards France". He became a prominent figure in student protests that rocked France in 1968.

Presidential bid

In the 1980s, he and urban planner Michel Cantal-Dupart set about "leading a revolution in the suburbs" to improve low-income housing. Then president Francois Mitterrand gave him dozens of projects to work on, but the plans fizzled out due to lack of government funding.

The charismatic architect, who was often seen in a pin-striped suit, rubbed shoulders with French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. In his youth, he also met Fidel Castro-not a relative-and Che Guevara on a trip to Cuba in 1961.

He founded his own party-"The Movement for Concrete Utopia"-and tried to run in the 2007 presidential elections, though he ultimately failed to garner enough backing. He survived a bout of COVID-19 and still had plans in his 80s. "I'm working like crazy at the moment," he told French newspaper Le Monde in December 2020. Brazilian architect "Oscar Niemeyer died aged 104 and he was still working. I have time." — AFP



In this file photo taken on July 26, 1983 then president Francois Mitterrand (center) and architect Roland Castro (right) visit the new stock exchange building in Saint-Denis.—AFP photos



This handout picture shows visitors looking at items found by treasure hunters in a Danish national museum exhibition.

Treasure hunters' gems go on display in Denmark

They may be derided elsewhere but in Denmark, hobby archaeologists who hunt treasures with metal detectors are such an asset the National Museum has dedicated an entire exhibit to their finds. "What they save now means the world for what we can do in the future and how we can build our museums," exhibit curator Line Bjerg told AFP. "What they do really matters." In Denmark's muddy soil, if objects "are not saved, then they are lost to history", she added.

In three rooms on the museum's bottom floor, visitors can learn about "detectorists" and admire some of their discoveries, including rings, necklaces and gold coins, all marked with the name of their finder. In the Scandinavian country once populated by Vikings, amateurs can use metal detectors almost everywhere as long as they get permission from the landowner. They are not, however, allowed to dig beneath the top layer of soil. Any archaeological finds have to be turned over to a local museum for an initial evaluation before they are transferred to the National Museum for an in-depth assessment and a possible reward. Detectorists' hauls can be abundant.

"Last year, we had almost 18,000 objects that were sent for treasure trove processing. The year before that it was 30,000 objects," Bjerg said. Known as "Danefae", any archaeological artefacts found by treasure hunters automatically belong to the state, under an old medieval law. According to Torben Trier Christiansen, an archaeologist with the Historical Museum of Northern Jutland, the collaboration with the hobbyists is invaluable.

They are "one of the most important collaborators of the museum", he insisted. There are more than 250 detec-

torists in his region, with the most active among them handing over around a hundred objects per year. Arne Hertz, a 64-year-old pensioner who heads a local association of detectorists, said "people are pleased to do the right thing by handing over the findings".

Writing history together

The unique collaboration is based on a mutual understanding. On the one hand, archaeological sites won't be looted. On the other, authorities are able to showcase the amateur discoveries. "Sometimes it's these particular finds that change our history because they add knowledge that we simply did not have before," Bjerg noted. One section of the biggest exhibition room is dedicated to the "Vindelev Treasure".

Comprised of 22 gold objects, it was buried in the sixth century in southwestern Denmark and found in late 2020 by an amateur who had just bought a metal detector. The treasure trove includes a bracteate-a thin coin stamped on one side. "And on the inscription of the bracteate is mentioned the name of Odin, the Norse god. And it puts Odin 150 years before we actually knew that he existed as a god," Bjerg said. "We're building our history together in Denmark."

For detectorists, whose finds have on occasion been displayed at local museums, the exhibit at the National Museum is a major recognition. "It's very impressive to see how the things we've found are displayed-and to see that we are actually helping a little to enrich Denmark's history," 38-year-old Simon Grevang, who works in online marketing and has been a detectorist for four years, told AFP.

The exhibit has drawn crowds since opening in February. Annie Lund, a 72-year-old retiree who was enthralled by the jewelry on display, said it was a good way of making history accessible. "Twenty or forty years ago, this was only for a small group of people, scientists... not for the general public. So I think this is really good," she said. — AFP

Warnings over AI and toxic beauty myths follow TikTok's Bold Glamour filter

TikTok's latest sensation is a real-time filter called Bold Glamour that sashays right past debates over toxic beauty standards on social media, going all in on giving users a new face. Quietly released to the app's more than a billion users, Bold Glamour convincingly blends a user's real face with an AI-generated ideal of a supermodel, drawing both laughs and alarm. Millions of posts on TikTok capture the shock at Bold Glamour's superpowers, with users marveling at their plumped up lips, well-chiseled chin and fluffy eyebrows worthy of a fashionista. "It's the new onslaught of the 'beauty myth'," said Kim Johnson, associate professor of nursing at Middle Georgia State University in the United States.

Effects like Bold Glamour "lead to unhealthy behaviors such as excessive dieting, comparison, and low self-esteem," Johnson said. Filters and effects have been a stalwart of TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat for years, but the latest generation of features like Bold Glamour are supercharged. "It is not subtle. It is instantaneous. It is powerful," said Gwendolyn Seidman, professor of psychology at Albright College, in Psychology Today. Those yearning for social approval, like under-pressure teens, "won't like what they see when they turn the filter off, and that's the problem," she added.

'So cool'

But beyond Bold Glamour's troubling aesthetic, observers are scratching their heads about the technology itself and wondering if the app is an unsung advance in artificial intelligence. Earlier filters overlaid an effect-like joke lenses on Snapchat-over an onscreen face and were easily discernible with a sudden movement or by waving a hand in front of the image.

"What's so cool about this is that you can ... take your hand and put it in front of your face and it (continues to look) pretty darn real," mixed reality artist Luke Hurd explained on TikTok. And while the technology has been available on powerful computers, real-time video filters are now on smartphones, ready for all.

"This is AI for the masses to alter one's appearance and that's what's catching so many people's attention," said Andrew Selepek, a social media professor at the University of Florida. Contacted by AFP, TikTok declined to discuss the technology behind the app, leaving an air of mystery on how Bold Glamour actually works.

The company did insist that "being true to yourself is celebrated and encouraged" on the site and that effects help empower "self-expression and creativity."

"We continue to work with expert partners and our community, to help keep TikTok a positive, supportive space for everyone," TikTok said in a statement. According to experts, Bold Glamour is using generative AI, following the same idea behind ChatGPT or Dall-E, apps that can churn out poems or art and designs on demand almost instantaneously. Petr Somol, the AI research director at Gen, a tech security firm, said these type of filters have existed for a couple of years, but TikTok's latest version is "precisely fine-tuned and well done". Crucially, if Bold Glamour were indeed generative AI's latest iteration, it would mean that the filter depends on goldmines of data to deliver its increasingly perfect effects.

This dependency on big data comes as the Chinese-owned firm is under intense scrutiny by the United States and other western governments that fear the company's ties to communist authorities in Beijing. "The question is whether TikTok is really concerned with the implications of this new shiny thing," said Selepek.

Path to 'deep fake'

Catfishing, scams, deep fakes: some wonder whether state-of-the-art filters are pointing to a world where the ability to misuse the technology is now at the fingertips of anyone with a smartphone. The latest filters "are not necessarily a deep fake technology as such, but there is a relatively straightforward path extending in that direction," said Somol.

Siwei Lyu, professor of computer science at the State University of New York at Buffalo, said it was unlikely that the major platforms like TikTok or Meta-owned Instagram would knowingly provide dangerous tools. But "what makes them more dangerous is people who understand the technology could change it to help users evade being identified online", opening new avenues for misuse, he added. —AFP

OSCARS RETURN – WITH SLAP JOKES AND HOT DOG FINGERS ON MENU

The Oscars take place Sunday, with two big questions on everyone's lips: Will anyone get slapped? And can a wacky sci-fi featuring hot dog fingers really win best picture? While the answer to the first question is likely no-Academy chiefs have a "crisis team" in place after Will Smith's misadventures last year-the overwhelming response to the latter seems to be yes.

"Everything Everywhere All at Once," which follows a Chinese immigrant laundromat owner locked in battle with an inter-dimensional supervillain who happens to also be her own daughter, could not be further from your typical Oscar winner. In a plot almost too bizarre to describe, Michelle Yeoh's heroine Evelyn must harness the power of her alter egos living in parallel universes, which feature hot dogs as human fingers and talking rocks used as weapons and trophies.

But the film has dominated nearly every awards show in Hollywood, with its charismatic, predominantly Asian stars-supported by the ever-popular Jamie Lee Curtis-becoming the feel-good story of the season. "It's a group of very likable people behind the movie who it's impossible to not be happy for," Hollywood Reporter awards columnist Scott Feinberg told AFP.

Having won top honors from Hollywood's directors, producers, actors and writers guilds, the film-a bona fide, word-of-mouth, \$100 million-grossing audience hit too-is expected to dominate

Oscars night. But unlike in other categories, the movie could hit a stumbling block for best picture-the evening's top prize-due to the special "preferential" voting system, in which members rank films from best to worst.

The system punishes divisive films, and Feinberg said "many" voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences "just don't get" the madcap appeal of "Everything Everywhere." If any rival can benefit, it is likely "All Quiet on the Western Front," Netflix's German-language World War I movie that dominated Britain's BAFTAs. Another potential beneficiary is "Top Gun: Maverick," the long-awaited sequel from Tom Cruise-no less a figure than Steven Spielberg recently said the actor and his film "might have saved the entire theatrical industry" from the pandemic.

Toss-ups

If best picture has a clear favorite, the acting races are incredibly tight. "I can't remember a year, at least in the time I've been doing it, where three of the four acting categories were true toss-ups," said Feinberg.

In best actress, Cate Blanchett had long been favorite to win a third Oscar for "Tar," but "Everything Everywhere" love could propel Yeoh to a historic first win by an Asian woman in the category. Best actor is a three-horse race between Austin Butler ("Elvis"), Brendan Fraser ("The Whale") and Colin Farrell ("The Banshees of Inisherin").



And supporting actress may be even closer. Angela Bassett, the first Marvel superhero actor ever nominated with "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," is up against Curtis and "Banshees" star Kerry Condon. One category does appear to be locked. Ke Huy Quan, the former child star of "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" and "The Goonies," has won every best supporting actor prize going and looks near-certain to complete a comeback story for the ages.

'The Slap'

Hanging over the ceremony is the specter of "The Slap"-the shocking moment at last year's Oscars when Smith assaulted Chris Rock on stage for cracking a joke about his wife. At

a press conference this week, Oscars executive producer Molly McNearney said: "We're going to acknowledge it, and then we're going to move on." For Feinberg, "the Academy has made it very clear that they don't find it funny and they would rather it not be discussed. But I guess you can't pretend it didn't happen."

Organizers were criticized last year for allowing Smith to remain at the show after the attack, and even collect his best actor award. He was later banned from Oscars events for a decade, meaning he cannot present the best actress statuette this year, as is traditional. A "crisis team" has been set up for the first time, to immediately respond to any unexpected developments.

Asked by AFP how this would work should something untoward happen, producer Glenn Weiss said "every major event I've worked on in the last 20 years has some kind of security." "We've done the Democratic Convention, we've done the inauguration for multiple presidents. We put on the entertainment-the Secret Service takes care of the other side." The focus of his team, and host Jimmy Kimmel, is strictly "to keep it entertaining and hopefully keep you guys watching," he said.

Blockbusters

Whether people will keep watching is arguably the biggest question of all. Partly thanks to "The Slap," last year's ratings improved from record lows, but remained well below their late 1990s peak, as interest in awards shows wanes and doomsayers continue to predict the demise of theatergoing. This year, organizers hope nominations for widely watched blockbusters like "Top Gun: Maverick" and "Avatar: The Way of Water" will bring viewers back.

"If the public cares about the movies, they care about the Oscars, relatively more," said Feinberg. The year "Titanic" won 11 Oscars including best picture, in 1998, recorded the highest ever ratings, with 57 million tuning in. "That world is gone," said Feinberg. "But if it doesn't go up from last year, then the Academy has a big problem." — AFP



Best picture Oscar winners of past 20 years

The following is a list of the best picture Oscar winners from the last 20 years, ahead of Sunday's 95th Academy Awards in Hollywood. This year, 10 films are in contention for the top prize: "All Quiet on the Western Front," "Avatar: The Way of Water," "The Banshees of Inisherin," "Elvis," "Everything Everywhere All at Once," "The Fabelmans," "Tar," "Top Gun: Maverick," "Triangle of Sadness" and "Women Talking."

- 2022 - "CODA"
- 2021 - "Nomadland"
- 2020 - "Parasite"
- 2019 - "Green Book"
- 2018 - "The Shape of Water"
- 2017 - "Moonlight"
- 2016 - "Spotlight"
- 2015 - "Birdman"
- 2014 - "12 Years A Slave"
- 2013 - "Argo"
- 2012 - "The Artist"
- 2011 - "The King's Speech"
- 2010 - "The Hurt Locker"
- 2009 - "Slumdog Millionaire"
- 2008 - "No Country for Old Men"
- 2007 - "The Departed"
- 2006 - "Crash"
- 2005 - "Million Dollar Baby"
- 2004 - "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King"
- 2003 - "Chicago"—AFP



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Five things to watch for at the Oscars

The 95th Academy Awards take place Sunday, with wacky multi-verse movie "Everything Everywhere All at Once" leading the nominations with 11. Late night funnyman Jimmy Kimmel returns to host the Oscars for a third time. His first stint ended with the infamous mix-up that saw "La La

her long-awaited Super Bowl halftime show, at which she revealed she is pregnant. She will sing "Lift Me Up" from "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," while Talking Heads frontman David Byrne and "Everything Everywhere" star Stephanie Hsu will perform "This Is A Life."

gala, performing music to accompany the annual "In Memoriam" tribute.

Best actress history?

This closely fought category is likely to buck tradition and break records. If Michelle Yeoh ("Everything Everywhere") beats Cate Blanchett

of who presents the award. Traditionally, it is the previous year's best actor winner. Given Will Smith is serving a decade-long Oscar ban (see below), that doesn't seem very likely.

Slap chat

Just as it is impossible to write an Oscars preview this year without mentioning "The Slap," expect the ceremony to address the incident. For those living under a rock, Will Smith assaulted Chris Rock on stage during last year's Oscars for cracking a joke about his wife. Rock himself got the ball rolling last weekend, joking in a live Netflix special that he recently rooted for the slave master who beats Smith's character in his latest movie "Emancipation."

Oscars organizers say the plan is to "acknowledge it"—presumably in Kimmel's opening monologue—and then swiftly "move on." But will the various presenters and winners be able to keep Smith's name out of their mouths?

Marvel-ous Bassett

Will Angela Bassett "do the thing?" Before she became the subject of a viral meme-courtesy of Ariana DeBose's cringeworthy rap lyrics at the BAFTAs—Bassett was best known for her enviable acting CV. With acclaimed films like "What's Love Got to Do with It" and "Boyz n the Hood," to name a few, it is surprising she has never won an Oscar.

It would be even more surprising if her first win came for a superhero movie. But that appears a likely outcome, after her role as Queen Ramonda in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" earned the first-ever Oscar acting nomination for a Marvel film. She will have to see off Jamie Lee Curtis ("Everything Everywhere") and Kerry Condon ("The Banshees of Inisherin") to pull off the win.



Michelle Yeoh arrives as Vanity Fair and Richard Mille host a private cocktail party honoring A24's "Everything Everywhere All at Once" in Los Angeles. — AFP



Land" accidentally named best picture in 2017. Assuming the correct envelopes are handed out this year, here are five other things to watch out for on Hollywood's biggest night:

Rihanna and 'RRR' but no Gaga

All five best song nominees are invited to perform live at the Oscars. That means pop superstar Rihanna will grace the stage, just weeks after

Perhaps the biggest spectacle will be "Naatu Naatu," the infectious showstopper from India's "RRR," which has recently had audiences dancing in their seats in Hollywood movie theaters. Sadly, there will be no Lady Gaga. Nominated for "Hold My Hand" from "Top Gun: Maverick," she is unavailable as she is "in the middle of shooting a movie," Oscars producers say. Lenny Kravitz will bring further stardust to the

("Tar"), she will become the first Asian woman to claim the best actress prize. Should Blanchett win, she will become just the eighth actor in history to win three Oscars. Meanwhile, Andrea Riseborough would surely be the most unlikely ever winner, having earned her nomination for obscure indie film "To Leslie" thanks to a controversial campaign by celebrity pals of the film's cast and crew. Finally, there is the question

'All Quiet' makes noise

Karl Marx said history repeats itself—the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. He probably wasn't talking about the Oscars, but if "All Quiet on the Western Front" wins best picture, it will be the first film to essentially win Hollywood's biggest prize twice. The original, English-language screen adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's anti-war novel won top honors way back in 1930, at just the third-ever Oscars.

Should this year's German-language version win, it will be Netflix's first best picture win—just a year after Apple pipped it to become the first streamer to collect Hollywood's biggest prize. If there is any film that can stop the "Everything Everywhere" juggernaut on Sunday, it's probably this one. — AFP



Hanks 'wins' Razzies as organizers nominate themselves for blunder

Tom Hanks is an elite double-Oscar-winning actor, but on Saturday he received two more prizes from an award show that no movie star wants on their CV—the Razzies. Organizers of the parody prizes, which recognize the worst films and performances each year, also awarded themselves a tongue-in-cheek Razzie for having cruelly nominated a 12-year-old child star. Razzies voters declared Hanks' role as Elvis Presley's manager in rock 'n' roll biopic "Elvis" the year's most awful performance by a supporting actor. The movie has been widely praised, and is up for eight Oscars this Sunday. Its star Austin Butler is a frontrunner for best actor.

But Hanks' appearance beneath heavy prosthetics as Presley's exploitative manager Colonel Tom Parker was panned by many critics, who viewed his casting as the film's biggest flaw. A New York Times review said Hanks appears "with a mountain of prosthetic goo, a bizarre accent and a yes-it's-really-me twinkle in his eyes." Piling on the insults, Razzies voters on Saturday also awarded "worst screen couple" to "Tom Hanks & His Latex-Laden Face (and Ludicrous Accent)."

Hanks was at least spared the worst actor award. His role as Geppetto in Disney's live-action "Pinocchio" remake was deemed less terrible than that of regular Razzies punching bag Jared Leto in Spider-Man spinoff "Morbius." The controversial Marilyn Monroe biopic "Blonde" was named the year's worst movie. The Razzies are announced the day before the Oscars, serving to mock the following night's self-congratulatory Tinseltown back-slapping.

But the Razzies themselves have made recent high-profile blunders. This year, Razzies organizers were forced to rescind a nomination for Ryan Kiera Armstrong—then just 12 — for her role in a "Firestarter" remake. Announcing the winners on Saturday, the group said Armstrong's spot on the worst actress nominees list was given to the Razzies themselves. According to a press release, the Razzies "won by a landslide." "Well, what can we say? We earned this Razzie," organizers said in a mock acceptance speech posted to YouTube. Last year, a new category labeled "Worst Performance by Bruce Willis in a 2021 Movie" was jokingly created to accommodate all of the former "Die Hard" star's questionable output. — AFP

Americans buying more vinyl than CDs for first time in decades

Vinyl records continued to translate their retro appeal into a steady resurgence, outselling compact discs last year in terms of units in the United States for the first time since 1987. Revenues from the sale of physical records jumped four percent in 2022 to \$1.7 billion, according to the latest report from the Recording Industry Association of America released Thursday.

Consumers snagged 41 million vinyl units last year compared to 33 million CDs, an eye-popping reversal of trends.

Vinyl's popularity has grown steadily in recent years, fueled by collectors and fans nostalgic for the warm crackle that emanates from Side A and Side B. Revenue from physical records had already started surpassing CDs as of the 2020 report, but this is the first time

in more than three decades that more vinyl units were sold than their compact counterparts.

Still, streaming remains king: services including paid subscriptions and ad-supported platforms grew seven percent to reach a record high \$13.3 billion in revenue, accounting for 84 percent of the total. Paid subscriptions comprise the lion's share, accounting for 77 per-

cent of streaming revenues and exceeding \$10 billion for the first time. The RIAA said 92 million people are now paid subscribers of a streaming service, up from 84 million the year prior. Total record music revenues grew for the seventh consecutive year, according to the RIAA, up six percent to a record high \$15.9 billion. — AFP

In LA, Clooney-backed school works to boost Hollywood diversity

At just 14 years old, Ja'saray Juarez debates what makes a good ad with her friends-catchy music, clever camera work and appealing characters are all part of the mix. She will eventually film her own commercial to show her class. In a few years, the freshman hopes to launch her career behind the camera, thanks to a special program at her Los Angeles high school for hundreds of young people from underrepresented communities looking to break into showbiz.

Since September, the public high school has been home to a magnet program for film and television studies that has received financial backing from Oscar winner George Clooney. "I'm so glad I get to learn about how to

some of his famous friends—including actors Eva Longoria and Don Cheadle—along with Paramount, Disney and other studios to fund the project. The goal? To combat the lack of diversity in US film and television—an issue that often rears its head at the Oscars, set for Sunday—from the bottom up.

'Starting early'

"Our aim is to better reflect the diversity of our country," Clooney said in a statement. "That means starting early. It means creating high school programs that teach young people about cameras, and editing and visual effects and sound and all the career opportunities that this industry has to offer." Costume designers, lighting technicians, hair and make-

was launched—from camera and lighting crew to editors. Since the eruption of the #OscarsSoWhite equality movement in 2015, on-screen representation of minority communities has been scrutinized.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which organizes and hands out the Oscars, admitted a large number of new members to diversify its voter rolls. Slowly, that process seems to be having the desired effect. This year, many observers see the 11 nominations for the frontrunning "Everything Everywhere All at Once," a zany sci-fi romp with a primarily Asian cast, as a sign of progress.

Internships

But behind the scenes, crews remain largely white. A strong union tradition means that jobs are nearly impossible to get without connections—something those in underrepresented communities may not have. "There's a real diversity problem, especially on crews," says Brittany Hilgers, who teaches film basics at the school after 12 years as a working screenwriter. The Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California is one of the few academic institutions to study diversity in Hollywood, under its "inclusion initiative."

From 2016 to 2018, researchers went through the credits of 300 films. They found that 80 percent of all film editors were white men. Only 14 percent of costume designers were minorities. The Roybal program hopes to move the needle by leaning on unions and its studio partners to offer internships, possibly leading to job placement. After a year of generalized film study at the school, they gradually specialize in a chosen field—in addition to their regular studies in standard subjects like math and science. "The kids that want to do editing are going to learn how to do editing on the actual software that the people in the industry use," Hilgers explains, emphasizing that teachers are looking to help the students graduate with marketable skills. — AFP



Instructor Brittany Hilgers (right standing) teaches a ninth grade Film class, part of the Roybal Film and Television Production Magnet program at the Edward R. Roybal Learning Center in Los Angeles.

make films... how to script, how to write dialogue," the teen told AFP in a classroom decorated with movie posters, old-school film clapboards and even a director's chair.

Ninety percent of the students at the Edward R. Roybal Learning Center are Latinos, and many of them come from families of modest means. For them, Hollywood Boulevard and the starry Walk of Fame are worlds apart from their own realities. To help those students chase their entertainment business dreams, Clooney rallied

up artists-in Ja'saray's classroom, posters listing 80 or so showbiz professions are there to show students the variety of paths available.

"I had absolutely no idea that there were that many. I thought it was just basic director and actors," says the teen, who explains she initially wanted to try her hand at animation but now is thinking about pursuing screenwriting. "It just opened my eyes."

In fact, there are 65,000 "below-the-line" technical industry jobs in the United States, Clooney said when the program

Leaping lizards: Peru finds a new one

A new species of lizard, of the genus Proctoporus, was found in a high Andean area of a national park in Peru, authorities said Friday. This small species was located in the Otishi National Park, in the jungle area shared by the departments of Cusco and Junin, the Peruvian authority for protected areas announced.

This is a new specimen of the genus Proctoporus that includes species that inhabit yungas forests and high mountain grasslands on the Amazon slope of the Andes," said the National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State (Sernanp), without specifying the date of discovery in an area located between 3,241 and 3,269 meters above sea level.

Among its characteristics, "its smooth scales on the head, which lack grooves or roughness, and the eyelids with an undivided translucent disc" stand out, the agency reported. Males have a dark gray to black neck, breast, and belly, while females have a pale gray neck, breast, and belly with a diffused dark gray. Peruvian authorities say that there are 20 species of Proctoporus, of which 18 are found in Peru. The discovery was made by a team of five researchers. — AFP



Gill ton powers India's reply but Australia still ahead

Anything that was happening off the pitch was off the rough area

AHMEDABAD: Shubman Gill's sparkling century and an unbeaten 59 by Virat Kohli kept India strong in their first innings reply against a persistent Australian spin attack in the fourth Test on Saturday. India were 289-3 at stumps and still trailing Australia's 480 by 191 runs on day three at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. Gill stood out with his 128 — the opener's second Test ton and first in India — as he built key partnerships including a 113-run stand for the second wicket with Cheteshwar Pujara, who made 42. "It feels great to be able to get a hundred in India," Gill, 23, told broadcaster Star Sports.

"The pitch was pretty good to bat on. Anything that was happening off the pitch was off the rough area." Spinners kept coming back with wickets as Nathan Lyon, Matthew Kuhnemann and Todd Murphy took one each on a pitch favouring the batsmen.

Gill, who replaced a struggling KL Rahul in the third Test, hit 12 fours and one big six in a good show of batting to surpass his previous Test best of 110 despite cramping towards the end of his knock. He finally fell lbw to Lyon's off-spin in the third session before Kohli took charge along with the left-handed Ravindra Jadeja, on 16, to see out the day's play.

"The way Shubman played was exceptional to be honest," Lyon said. "That one I got him on was probably a little bit flatter, a little bit faster than what he was expecting," he added. "A decent ball on my behalf, but I thought the way he went about it was pretty special... He's definitely a special player."

Kohli reached his first Test half-century since January 2022 after a jittery start to his innings when he got off the mark on the 12th ball. Australia delayed tak-

ing the second new ball, available to the fielding side after the 80th over, by 14 overs.

Test of patience

Earlier Gill overcame a tough spell of run-making in the second session to raise his ton with a fine sweep off Murphy, taking a bow as the raucous weekend crowd applauded, but lost his partner Pujara four balls later. Murphy trapped Pujara lbw, ending a stand which prospered after skipper Rohit Sharma fell to Kuhnemann's left-arm spin for 35 in the morning session. "It's a big moment for the two young spinners and I think they bowled exceptionally well," Lyon said of Murphy and Kuhnemann.

"I think it's pretty even. We know games in this part of the world can speed up quickly." Australia's stand-in-skipper Steve Smith rotated his bowlers, who remained disciplined in their line and length to test the batsmen's patience for much of the hot afternoon.

Gill broke the shackles with two successive boundaries off Cameron Green to bring the crowd alive with delightful cover drives. India started the day on 36-0 and kept attacking. Mitchell Starc bowled to plan with his short balls and a heavy leg-side field, but Rohit took on the challenge as he smashed the left-arm quick for a four and a six at long leg.

The pitch has been vastly different from the vicious spinning tracks in the previous three Tests and Usman Khawaja brought Australia the early advantage with his 180. India lead the four-match series 2-1 after Australia won the third Test. The hosts need a win to clinch the series and secure a berth in the World Test Championship final in June. — AFP



AHMEDABAD: India's Ravindra Jadeja (L) plays a shot during the third day of the fourth and final Test cricket match between India and Australia at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on March 11, 2023. — AFP

SA win by 284 runs as West Indies collapse

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's bowlers ripped through the West Indies batting as the hosts completed a 284-run win on the fourth day of the second Test at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Saturday.

The West Indies were bowled out for 106 after being set to make 391 to win. South Africa won the two-match World Test Championship series 2-0. The match was effectively won and lost in 8.1 overs leading up to lunch when the West Indies crashed to 34 for six.

Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada struck twice in three balls and sparked the collapse after opening batsmen Kraigg Brathwaite and Tagenarine Chanderpaul survived the first 10 overs, putting on 21 runs. Rabada dismissed Brathwaite for the seventh time in successive innings when he trapped the West Indian captain leg before wicket for 18 with a ball which kept low.

Two balls later Raymon Reifer gloved a catch down the leg side to wicketkeeper Heinrich Klaasen. Spinners Simon Harmer and Keshav Maharaj also took two wickets each as the West

Indies lost six wickets for 13 runs. Off-spinner Harmer shared the new ball with Rabada and extracted extravagant turn, having Chanderpaul caught at second slip after the left-hander had faced 36 balls and scored only two runs. Roston Chase, Jermaine Blackwood and Kyle Mayers all fell cheaply with South Africa's only setback coming after Maharaj won a successful appeal for leg before wicket against Mayers in the last over before lunch.

In celebrating, the left-arm spinner collapsed and was stretchered off the field with a left ankle tendon injury. Maharaj was taken for a scan. With all-rounder Wiaan Mulder suffering a right index finger injury, which also required a scan, South Africa were effectively down to three frontline bowlers. The West Indies batting, though, had already been wrecked.

Mulder returned after lunch but was not required to bowl. Joshua Da Silva, Jason Holder and Alzarri Joseph all played some aggressive strokes after lunch as the last four wickets yielded 72 runs before the match ended soon after the afternoon drinks break.

There had been concerns about Rabada's fitness after he suffered back pain during the first innings but he showed no signs of discomfort during a hostile seven-over spell. South Africa were bowled out for 321 earlier, with captain Temba Bavuma adding only one run to his overnight 171 before he was caught at deep square leg off Holder. — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: West Indies' Roston Chase (R) is bowled by South Africa's Keshav Maharaj (not seen) as South Africa's wicketkeeper Heinrich Klaasen (L) looks on during the fourth day of the second Test cricket match between South Africa and West Indies at The Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on March 11, 2023. — AFP



Roki Sasaki

Sasaki leads Japan to baseball win

TOKYO: Pitcher Roki Sasaki led Japan to a 10-2 win over the Czech Republic at the World Baseball Classic on Saturday, the 12th anniversary of the devastating 2011 earthquake and tsunami. The 2011 devastating quake unleashed a tsunami that left around 18,500 people dead or missing, and triggered a meltdown at Fukushima nuclear plant.

Sasaki lost his father and grandparents in the disaster, and was forced to live in a shelter with his mother and brothers after the tsunami swept away their house. Twelve years later, on the anniversary of the disaster, the 21-year-old made his World Baseball Classic debut, issuing a statement of intent when he threw a first pitch that clocked in at a ferocious 162 kilometres (100 miles) per hour.

He is considered to be Japanese baseball's brightest new star — last year, he became the first pitcher to deliver a perfect game in Japan in 28 years. He gave a solid performance against the plucky Czechs, whose amateur team of teachers, firemen and financial traders caused problems for Japan early in the game.

He struck out eight batters and gave up two hits and one run before leaving the game just before the end of the fourth inning. He also left Czech batter William Escala with a nasty bruise on his leg after hitting him with a wayward pitch.

The Czechs are appearing at the World Baseball Classic for the first time. On Friday, they pulled off a dramatic last-gasp win over China in their opening game. They took an unlikely lead against Japan when a fielding error allowed Marek Chlup to sprint home and score a run in the first inning.

Japan went ahead with three runs in the third inning and they added four more an inning later, thanks in part to a huge double from superstar Shohei Ohtani. Shugo Maki hit a solo home run in the eighth inning. The win moves Japan within touching distance of the quarter-finals, with their final Pool B game against Australia to come on Sunday. Australia beat China 12-2 earlier in the day in a game that was cut short on the so-called mercy rule because the Australians were 10 runs ahead after seven innings. — AFP

Schmidt rules out of All Blacks coaching race

WELLINGTON: New Zealand assistant coach Joe Schmidt confirmed on Saturday he won't lead the All Blacks next year, saying his focus will not extend beyond this year's Rugby World Cup. Schmidt, the former Ireland head coach, responded to speculation he was in contention to replace outgoing top man Ian Foster by issuing a short statement, ruling himself out of an expedited New Zealand Rugby appointment process.

It is widely believed two former All Blacks forwards — Scott Robertson and Jamie Joseph — are the only contenders to take the top spot when

Foster stands down after the World Cup. The new coach is expected to be unveiled by mid-April after NZ Rugby announced this month it wants to ensure it recruits a world-class candidate in a competitive market.

New Zealander Schmidt took up a Super Rugby Pacific assistant role with the Auckland Blues last year before joining the All Blacks coaching staff as an assistant. The 57-year-old said the head coaching appointment process comes too soon for him as he is reluctant to make any commitment for 2024.

"I have really enjoyed being back on the grass coaching with the (Auckland) Blues and the All Blacks," Schmidt said. "I very much appreciate those opportunities, but presented with a condensed time frame this year, I won't be applying for any coaching roles that extend beyond the Rugby World Cup. "In the shorter term, I will work hard to

support the All Blacks in 2023." In seven years as Irish head coach, he clinched three Six Nations titles, including a Grand Slam in 2018, and led them to their first-ever wins over New Zealand.

Ireland climbed to number one in the world rankings for the first time the following year but Schmidt's reign ended on the low of a heavy loss to the All Blacks in the quarter-finals of the 2019 Rugby World Cup — their same exit point as the 2015 tournament.

Robertson is the favourite to take charge in 2024 after leading the Canterbury Crusaders to six Super Rugby titles. Joseph boasts more international experience, having coached Japan since finishing as coach of the Otago Highlanders in 2016.

Foster has been critical of the timing of the appointment process, saying it could prove to be a distraction for him and the All Blacks players this year. — AFP

Mitchell, Tickner lead N Zealand fightback against Sri Lanka

CHRISTCHURCH: A stubborn century from Daryl Mitchell, a blazing 72 from Matt Henry and three wickets to Blair Tickner swung the momentum New Zealand's way in the first Test against Sri Lanka on Saturday.

Sri Lanka had claimed the initiative on the first two days of the Christchurch Test but were 83 for three in their second innings at stumps on day three, a lead of 65 runs. New Zealand have "swung the game to their side," Sri Lanka assistant coach Naveed Nawaz conceded.

Angelo Mathews was not out 20, with Prabath Jayasuriya also at the crease on two, and Nawaz suggested Sri Lanka would need at least 200 more runs. "Daryl Mitchell and Matt Henry, the partnership, took the game away from us," he said. "But we have to back ourselves that a couple of our batsmen will go in there and get stuck in and get some big runs to swing the game back to our side. "Its a good wicket to bat on and gives a little bit to the fast bowlers still so I suppose anything above 275-300 would be a good score."

New Zealand earlier recovered from 151 for five to be all out for 373, an 18-run lead, after a dogged 102 from Mitchell and Henry's swash-buckling performance that included 58 runs from boundaries. Tickner claimed the wickets of captain Dimuth Karunaratne for 17, Oshada Fernando for 28 and Kusal Mendis for 14 in the 38 overs before stumps to finish with three wickets for 28 runs off 10 overs.

Sri Lanka, who need to sweep the two-Test series to keep their hopes of making the World Test Championship final alive, had ripped through the New Zealand top order. But Mitchell, who has so often been New Zealand's saviour in his 17-Test career, refused to give in as he toiled through 193 deliveries for his eighth century. The 31-year-old right-hander, son of former All Blacks player and coach John Mitchell, lifted his average to a remarkable 58 from 25 innings. He put on 54 for the sixth wicket with Michael Bracewell, a further 47 with Tim Southee and 55 with Henry.

Mitchell leapt in the air when he reached his century, waved his bat and received a hug from Henry to celebrate. He added only two more runs before was caught behind off Lahiru Kumara and New Zealand were 291-8.

Henry then exploded with his personal-best 72, which included 10 fours and three sixes. He belted spinner Dhananjaya de Silva out of the attack by taking 17 runs in just one over. Worse was to come for Sri Lanka when de Silva's replacement Kasun Rajitha conceded 24 to Henry in his first over. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell celebrates after scoring 100 runs during the third day of the first Test cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Hagley Oval in Christchurch on March 11, 2023. — AFP

Sports

Brilliant Embiid leads Sixers comeback, Denver fall again

We don't quit, and we don't give up: Harden

LOS ANGELES: Joel Embiid scored 39 points and drained a superb game-winning jump shot with less than two seconds remaining as the Philadelphia 76ers completed a dramatic 120-119 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Friday. The Sixers looked to be heading for defeat after trailing by 21 points in the second quarter, and were down by 13 with less than six minutes remaining in the final period.

But Embiid and James Harden spearheaded a late rally to haul the Sixers back into contention, shutting down the Portland offense while stitching together a run to make it a one-point game with 38 seconds remaining. And with the clock ticking down, Embiid spun away from the Blazers' Jusuf Nurkic to drain a fadeaway jumper to put the Sixers ahead 120-119, the first time Philadelphia had led during the game.

"I knew I had to get a bucket," Embiid said afterward of his game-winning play. "We'd fought the whole game, come back after being down by 20 to make it a one-point game—you've got to make those plays. "But my teammates and my coach trust me to do my job."

Embiid's 39 points came on 13-of-20 shooting and was the latest in a series of dazzling performances by the Cameroonian star. Since the start of March, Embiid has averaged nearly 37 points a game, with tallies of 39, 39, 42, 31 and 35 over his last five appearances.

Embiid had scoring support from James Harden with 19 points, while Tyrese Maxey and De'Anthony Melton had 13 each. Georges Niang added 12 points off the bench for the Sixers, who trailed 71-56 after a sluggish first half.

Stuck 'in mud'

"We just couldn't get going," Sixers coach Doc Rivers said. "We looked like we were in mud in the first half, at both ends. "That's a hell of a win for us because we didn't have a lot—and you could see it. But we just hung in there long enough, and we found a way."

It was the third time this season that the Sixers, who are third in the Eastern Conference with a 44-22 record, have come back from being down by 20 points to win. "We don't quit, and we don't give up," Harden said afterward. "Obviously you don't want to be down 20, but we try to find ways to stay in the game to give ourselves a chance and that's what we did tonight." Portland meanwhile was left to reflect on a victory that slipped away at the end after a superb shooting performance from Anfernee Simons, who finished with 34 points on 13-of-22 shooting, including eight three-pointers.

Jerami Grant added 24 points and Damian Lillard had 22. Elsewhere Friday, the Western Conference-leading Denver Nuggets suffered a second straight defeat in a 128-120 loss to the San Antonio Spurs in Texas. The Nuggets, who were beaten 117-96 by lowly Chicago on Wednesday, looked to have put that defeat behind them after outscoring the Spurs 38-26 in the first quarter.

But San Antonio roared back with a 42-point second quarter and outscored Denver 60-53 in the second half to seal a surprise win. Keldon Johnson led the Spurs scorers with 23 points, with six other San Antonio players finishing in double figures.

Denver's reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic recorded a 37-point triple-double—his 26th of the season. Despite the loss, Denver remains



Joel Embiid

firmly on pace for top seeding in the Western Conference playoffs, leading second-placed Sacramento by six games with a 46-21 record.

In Miami, Jimmy Butler led a fourth-quarter rally to help the Heat claim a 119-115 win over Cleveland despite a 42-point showing from the Cavaliers' Donovan Mitchell. Miami outscored the Cavs 37-26 in the final frame, with Butler scoring 12 points as part of a 33-point display to get the Heat over the line.

In Los Angeles, D'Angelo Russell finished with 28 points as the Lakers bolstered their playoff push with a 122-112 win over the Toronto Raptors. The Lakers have now won three straight and are ninth in the Western Conference with a 33-34 record.

Elsewhere Friday, Brooklyn downed the Minnesota Timberwolves 124-123 in overtime while the Atlanta Hawks claimed a 114-107 road win over the Washington Wizards. —AFP

Sprint king Fred Kerley dominates 400m in Sydney

SYDNEY: American sprint star Fred Kerley maintained his strong start to the season by cruising to victory in the 400m at the Sydney Track Classic on Saturday. The reigning 100m world champion and Tokyo Olympic silver medallist lived up to his top billing to cross in 44.65 seconds.

Kerley kicked off his season last month with a comfortable 200m victory at the Maurice Plant Meet in Melbourne. He competed in the 400m for just the fourth time since 2019, having focused on the shorter sprints in recent years.

The 27-year-old was visibly exhausted after the race and remained on his haunches for several minutes. "It was a good race. I want a good year ahead," Kerley said after the race. One of only three men in history to run sub-10 seconds for the 100m, sub-20 for the 200m and sub-44 for the 400m, Kerley started modestly before motoring to the front.

He eased up on the back straight to complete a second straight commanding performance in Australia. However, he fell short of the fastest time in Australia, the 43.84 clocked by compatriot



SYDNEY: Fred Kerley (C) of the US competes in the men's 400 metre event during the 2023 Sydney Track Classic athletics meet at Sydney Olympic Park Athletic Centre on March 11, 2023. — AFP

Michael Johnson at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Australia's Luke van Ratingen finished second with 46.17. In-form New Zealander Zoe Hobbs ran a blistering 10.97 to record the fastest women's 100m time on Australian soil while setting a new mark for her country. — AFP

Barcelona charged with corruption in referee affair

BARCELONA: Spanish prosecutors on Friday charged Barcelona with corruption over payments the club made to a former vice-president of Spain's referees' committee through a company owned by him. According to the prosecution, the Catalan club paid a total of more than 7.3 million euros to Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira, former referee and ex-vice president of the refereeing committee of the Spanish football federation between 1994 and 2018.

Two of the club's former presidents, Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell, as well as Enriquez Negreira are facing the same charge, originating from the Barcelona prosecutor's office. Enriquez Negreira was allegedly paid for providing the club with advice on topics relating to referees.

"FC Barcelona obtained and maintained a strictly confidential verbal agreement with Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira so that, in his capacity as vice-president of the Technical Arbitral Committee (CTA) and in exchange for money, the latter carries out actions tending to benefit FC Barcelona in decisions by the referees," explained the Barcelona public prosecutor's office.

The investigation began after Spain's tax authorities identified irregularities in tax payments made between 2016 and 2018 by the company Dasnil 95 — owned by Enriquez Negreira. Dasnil 95 reportedly received payments from Barcelona between those years. The last invoice, according to Cadena Ser radio, was issued in June 2018. After that the CTA was restructured and Enriquez Negreira left the organisation. This week, current Barca boss Joan Laporta insisted his club had never "bought referees".

Reports claim the Catalan side paid 6.5 million euros (\$6.9 million) between 2001 and 2018 to Enriquez Negreira's firm. "Let it be clear Barca have never bought referees and Barca have never had the intention of buying referees, absolutely never," said Laporta on Tuesday. — AFP

Thompson topples Tsitsipas at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS: Unseeded Australian Jordan Thompson grabbed one of the biggest wins of his career on Friday, ousting third-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (7/0), 4-6, 7-6 (7/5) to reach the third round of the Indian Wells WTA and ATP Masters.

"It's unreal at a Masters 1000 ... to have a win like that is incredible," said Thompson, the world number 87 whose only prior victory over a top-10 player came back in 2017 against Andy Murray at Queen's Club. He admitted he felt a little lucky when a stinging forehead from Tsitsipas on match point was ruled a hair wide.

"I'm thankful that last ball was out—I thought it was in," Thompson told fans on court. While Tsitsipas led the third-set tiebreaker 2-1 and 4-3, Thompson's coolness under pressure paid off as Tsitsipas belted a forehand into the net to give the Aussie a match point before succumbing with the near miss.

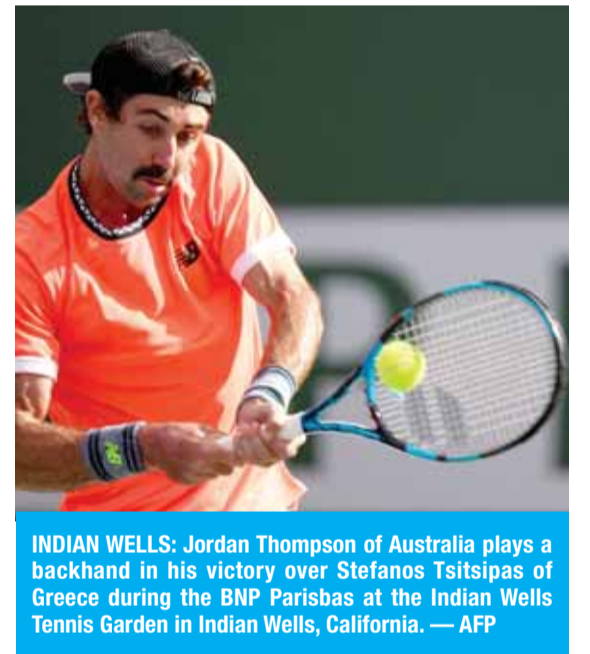
Thompson next faces Chilean qualifier Alejandro Tabilo, who hung on to beat American Maxime Cressy 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (15/13). For Tsitsipas it was another setback in the wake of his sparkling run to the Australian Open final in January.

He departed Melbourne energized despite falling to Novak Djokovic in the title match, but shortly thereafter suffered a shoulder injury. Playing his first tournament since a second-round exit at Rotterdam, Tsitsipas admitted earlier this week that his shoulder was still troubling him and he didn't have high hopes of a third Masters 1000 crown.

Tsitsipas and women's second seed Aryna Sabalenka—playing just her second tournament since winning the Australian Open—headlined Friday's second-round action. Sabalenka moved smoothly into the third round with a 6-2, 6-0 victory over Evgeniya Rodina, who was playing her eighth match since a return to competition at last year's US Open after three years away from the game.

"Happy to win this match in two sets without struggling too much," said Sabalenka, who has never made it past the round of 16 in the California desert. Sabalenka, still barred from playing under her native flag of Belarus because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, next faces Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko, who beat 29th-seeded Croatian Donna Vekic 2-6, 6-2, 6-2.

In other women's matches, last year's runner-up Maria Sakkari salvaged Greek pride with a bat-



INDIAN WELLS: Jordan Thompson of Australia plays a backhand in his victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece during the BNP Parisbas at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

ting 2-6, 6-4, 6-0 victory over American Shelby Rogers. Sakkari, trailing 1-4 when rain halted play for about 90 minutes, managed to turn it around in the second set. She fended off five break points—despite three double faults—to hold serve in the fifth game and broke Rogers to pocket the set. The American, who had won all three of their prior encounters, was down 3-0 in the third when she received treatment on her right calf and Sakkari remorselessly powered to the win.

Fifth-seeded Daniil Medvedev, fresh off three straight ATP victories Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai, continued his red-hot form with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over American Brandon Nakashima. Medvedev didn't face a break point in the first set, but had to fight off half a dozen in an entertaining second set before closing it out with his third break of Nakashima's serve.

"There were some tough moments in the match, tough break point saves I'm happy that I managed to make it through," Medvedev said. "Second set I could have done better on return a few times to maybe make my life easier, but he also played some great points."

Third-seeded Casper Ruud, former champion Cameron Norrie and 12th-seeded Alexander Zverev all eased into the third round with straight-sets victories. For Ruud, a 6-2, 6-3 victory over former top-10 Argentinian Diego Schwartzman was a confidence-boosting win in a season in which he had so far failed to advance past the second round in three tour-level tournaments he had played. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khaldiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adalya	22517144

Change of Name

I, Ismail, holder of Passport No. Z4825276, do hereby change my name to Ismail (as Given name) Bakariya (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Ismail Bakariya and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#3179) - 10-03-2023

I, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM MOHAMAD YUSUF ABDUL RAHIM TO MOHAMMED YUSUF ABDUL RAHIM SHAIKH AS PER MY DOCUMENTS. (C#3176)

I, MOHAMMAD SHAKEEL ABDUL KALAM DARUGAR holder of Indian Passport No. L1458509 do hereby change my name to MOHAMMAD SHAKEEL

BARUDGAR for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name MOHAMMAD SHAKEEL BARUDGAR and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#3177)

I, JENAB HOJEFA BADODIYAWALA, Civil ID No. 298042001882, do hereby change my name to ZAINAB HOJEFA BADODIYAWALA for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name ZAINAB HOJEFA BADODIYAWALA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#3178) - 09-03-2023

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Liverpool revival ended by Bournemouth

Salah misses penalty, Kane double lifts Tottenham



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English goalkeeper Fraser Forster (2L) saves a penalty shot by Nottingham Forest's Ghanaian midfielder Andre Ayew during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Nottingham Forest at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Liverpool's resurgence proved short-lived after a 1-0 defeat at Bournemouth on Saturday as Tottenham took advantage in the race for a top-four finish by beating Nottingham Forest 3-1. Jurgen Klopp's men inflicted a historic 7-0 thrashing on Manchester United last weekend to equal the Red Devils record defeat.

But Liverpool suffered another setback in a frustrating season as Mohamed Salah fired a second half penalty wide. Philip Billing scored the only goal on 28 minutes as Bournemouth's first home win since November lifted the Cherries out of the bottom three.

"The game was pretty much the opposite of what we wanted to show and to do today. I think we played for pretty much 95 minutes the game Bournemouth wanted to play," said Klopp. "This game was a massive knock and how it is with knocks, you have to take them, you have to have a look how big

the scars are and then you go from there."

Fifth-placed Liverpool are now six points adrift of the Champions League places after Harry Kane ensured a tough week for Spurs ended on a high. The England captain's future has been a source of speculation after Tottenham crashed out of both the FA Cup and Champions League in the space a week.

Antonio Conte's men had failed to score in their previous three games, but Kane ended that drought by rising highest to head in Pedro Porro's cross. Kane then coolly slotted home his first penalty since missing a crucial spot-kick in England's World Cup quarter-final exit to France.

Conte named Richarlison in the starting line-up despite the Brazilian's criticism of his coach after exiting Europe to AC Milan in midweek. Richarlison made amends by teeing up Son Heung-min to fire in Spurs' third. Joe Worrall pulled a goal back for For-

ster, who then also had a stoppage time penalty from Andre Ayew saved by Fraser Forster.

Lineker sees Leicester lose

Gary Lineker made the most of his absence from the BBC's flagship football highlights programme Match of the Day to watch his beloved Leicester lose 3-1 against Chelsea. Lineker was forced to "step back" from his presenting duties after comparing the UK government's rhetoric towards refugees this week to Nazi-era Germany.

Leicester remain rooted in the relegation battle, just one point above the drop zone after a fifth consecutive defeat. Ben Chilwell put Chelsea ahead early on against his former club before Patson Daka levelled. But a sensational pass from Enzo Fernandez and finish from Kai Havertz put Chelsea back in front and Mateo Kovacic's strike secured a third consecutive

win for the Blues, who continue to lift the pressure on Graham Potter. Everton moved out of the bottom three and up to 15th thanks to a third 1-0 win in four home games under Sean Dyche.

Dwight McNeil smashed in the only goal inside the first minute to end Brentford's 12-game unbeaten run in the Premier League. Leeds remain second from bottom but closed to within a point of safety after twice coming from behind to draw 2-2 at home to high-flying Brighton. Alexis Mac Allister put the Seagulls in front before Patrick Bamford levelled before the break. Jack Harrison then scored at both ends in the second half to leave Brighton still nine points off the top four, albeit with three games in hand.

Manchester City can close to within two points of leaders Arsenal later when they travel to Crystal Palace. Arsenal are not in action until Sunday when they face Fulham. — AFP

Madrid cut Liga gap on Barca with Espanyol comeback

MADRID: Vinicius Junior scored a fine solo goal as Real Madrid came from behind to beat Espanyol 3-1 and cut Barcelona's lead to six points at the top of La Liga on Saturday. Joselu had sent the visitors ahead early on at the Santiago Bernabeu but Vinicius produced a surging run and lethal finish to pull the champions level. Eder Militao's header completed the turnaround and Madrid could have added more goals in the second half, with Rodrygo hitting the crossbar from a free-kick. Eventually Marco Asensio tucked away the third in stoppage time after a fine run and pass from defender Nacho Fernandez.

Barcelona visit Athletic Bilbao on Sunday night to try and restore their advantage, ahead of the Clasico at Camp Nou on March 19. "They caught us out a bit with their goal, but the game gives us confidence to face a complicated week," said Nacho, ahead of Madrid's clashes with Liverpool in the Champions League on Wednesday and Barcelona on Sunday. "When space opens up, we're a team that has very fast players up front (to capitalise)." After failing to score from open play in their last three matches across all competitions, Madrid's three well-taken goals were a confidence boost.

With Karim Benzema out with an ankle issue, although poised to return for the Champions League last 16 second leg clash with Liverpool, Carlo Ancelotti selected Rodrygo up front in his place. The coach also opted to play Eduardo Camavinga out of position at left-back again and the French midfielder's mistake helped the visitors move ahead after eight minutes.

Camavinga misjudged a long ball which he allowed to reach Ruben Sanchez, who crossed for striker Joselu to smash into the top corner. It was the forward's 12th goal of the season-only Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski has scored more in La Liga, with 15.

Stirred by Espanyol's goal, Madrid quickly improved in the early afternoon spring sun, and Vinicius fired them level with a superb solo effort of his own. The Brazilian winger cut inside from the left and drove home to net his 19th goal of the season across all competitions. Militao headed the champions in front before the break, meeting a sumptuous Aurelien Tchouameni cross, which the midfielder served up with the outside of his boot. Vinicius blasted over as Madrid looked to



MADRID: Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Rodrygo (L) vies with Espanyol's Spanish forward Javi Puado during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and RCD Espanyol at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on March 11, 2023. — AFP

press home their advantage and the Brazilian was also knocked to the floor off the ball by Oscar Gil, who was booked. The forward has been targeted by opposition defenders in recent months and Vinicius appeared winded after Gil's bodycheck. Rodrygo came closest to extending Madrid's lead when he curled a free-kick over the wall but it struck the crossbar.

Espanyol could not trouble Thibaut Courtois in the final stages, with Martin Braithwaite directing a header a long way off target. Vinicius was warmly applauded by Madrid fans as he was taken off late on, with Ancelotti giving another brief cameo to young forward Alvaro Rodriguez. However it was another substitute, Asensio, who wrapped up the win with a cool finish after Nacho's uncharacteristic dribble forward into attack. Defeat leaves Espanyol provisionally 14th, two points above the relegation zone.

"Our gameplan is what we did today, to go out there, up for it, don't let the opponent play," Joselu told Movistar. "We saw Real Madrid shooting from range, we made it hard for them. From this game we must take away the great effort we made ... this is the path we have to follow." — AFP

Shiffrin breaks ski record with 87th WCup win

ARE: Mikaela Shiffrin became the most successful racer in the history of World Cup skiing as she won for the 87th time with victory in the slalom at Are on Saturday. "It's pretty hard to comprehend that thought," said Shiffrin after sealing the victory that lifts her ahead of the legendary Swede Ingemar Stenmark whose record of 86 victories she equalled 24 hours earlier by winning the giant slalom at the same venue.

"My brother and sister-in-law got here. I didn't know they were coming so that makes it so special," said Shiffrin. Two days shy of her 28th birthday, the American finished 0.92 seconds ahead of second-placed Wendy Holdener to secure her 13th World Cup win of the season at the Swedish ski station where, fittingly, she had opened her World Cup account back in 2012 as a 17-year-old.

Are also happens to be Stenmark's own home turf. "She is so impressive, she's awesome," Stenmark told AFP by telephone on Saturday. "It's great for her, fantastic. And especially since she beat the record in Are where she won her first World Cup race."

After a blistering opening run, she led Sweden's Anna Swenn Larsson by 0.69 seconds at the halfway

stage with Holdener of Switzerland third at 0.94sec. Another Swede Cornelia Oehland was quickest on the second run but Shiffrin had enough of a cushion to ease to a convincing and comfortable record-breaking victory.

"The best feeling is to ski on the second run when... you have a lead," said Shiffrin. "You have to be smart but also I just wanted to be fast too. And ski the second run like its own race, and I did it exactly how I wanted and that's amazing." Shiffrin secured her fifth overall crystal globe last weekend.

Decade of brilliance

By a quirky coincidence, Saturday's record-breaking win comes 12 years to the day after Shiffrin, two days short of her 16th birthday, made her World Cup debut in the giant slalom at Spindleruv Mlyn in the Czech Republic. Since then she has clocked up 87 wins from 245 starts. Like Shiffrin, Stenmark relished the slalom and giant slalom with the Swede dominating the two disciplines from 1975 before retiring in 1989. But while the Swede won all his World Cups in slalom and giant slalom, Shiffrin has developed into a skier for all disciplines with her World Cup haul comprising 53 wins in slalom, 20 in giant slalom, five in super-G, three in downhill, five in parallel slalom and one combined.

Shiffrin arrived at Are on the back of the world championships in France where she won gold in the giant slalom and silver in both the super-G and slalom. She is also a two-time Olympic gold medalist despite failing to make the podium at all last year in Beijing. — AFP



ARE: Winner USA's Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates with her team after the giant slalom competition in the World Cup, Are. — AFP