

5 11 hikers dead after Indonesia volcano erupts, dozen missing



8 Iran, Cuba seek closer ties to confront US sanctions



11 Volunteer divers guard Oman's 'unique' reefs



16 Kuwait Olympic Committee elects new board, reelects Sheikh Fahad



Zionists expand Gaza carnage

UNICEF seeing 'massive child casualties' • Red Cross warns suffering 'intolerable'

NEWS IN BRIEF

Amir's health remains stable

KUWAIT: The health condition of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, said the Amiri Diwan affairs minister Monday. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah expressed wishes of good health and rapid recovery for HH the Amir. — KUNA

2 hurt in Mina Abdullah blaze

KUWAIT: A limited fire broke out at Mina Abdullah on Monday, injuring two workers, Kuwait National Petroleum Company announced. KNPC said in a statement the small fire that broke out at a backup power station affiliated to the environmentally friendly fuel project was brought under control. However, two workers suffered injuries, and were given first aid before they were taken to hospital. The station, called Unit 131, was under maintenance. — KUNA

Police arrest arsonists

KUWAIT: Police arrested the suspected arsonists who set Chancellor Sultan Buresli's vehicle on fire, the interior ministry announced Monday. The suspects have criminal records, the ministry said, adding that large amounts of drugs, weapons and cash were found in their possession.

Minor fire at foreign ministry

KUWAIT: A fire described as "minor" broke out in the foreign ministry building and it was rapidly extinguished without any casualties, the ministry said Monday. The ministry said all workers are safe and were escorted out of the building by Kuwait Fire Force and National Guard staff, indicating that losses were limited to minimal material damage. — KUNA

School shooter arrested

KUWAIT: Police have apprehended the driver of a quad bike involved in a shooting incident outside a secondary school in Abdullah Al-Mubarak. The shotgun used was seized. The incident, linked to a student dispute, caused panic but no injuries. Security patrols responded to reports but initially found no shooter, discovering only four empty bullet cases from a hunting rifle. A parent's official report and a video helped detectives identify the suspect, his companion and their vehicle.

MoE rejects ban on expat students

KUWAIT: The ministry of education has rejected a parliamentary proposal aimed at barring expatriate students from government schools and limiting admission to children of diplomats and scholarship recipients. The proposal had also called to bar children of teachers and education ministry employees, but the ministry noted the relatively small number of such teachers, minimizing their impact on student density.

GAZA: The Zionist entity's army on Monday sent dozens of tanks into southern Gaza as part of "aggressive" action against Hamas and its allies in the besieged territory, despite global concern over mounting civilian deaths. Weeks after the Zionist entity deployed ground forces in the north of the Gaza Strip, the army has been airdropping leaflets in parts of the south, telling Palestinians to flee to other areas.

Gaza's health ministry said nearly 15,900 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory, about 70 percent of them women and children — a toll that has sparked global alarm and mass demonstrations. Tanks, armored personnel carriers and bulldozers were seen Monday near the southern city of Khan Yunis, which is crowded with internally displaced Palestinians, witnesses told AFP.

Amin Abu Hawli, 59, said the Zionist vehicles were two kilometers inside Gaza in the village of Al-Qarara, while Moaz Mohammed, 34, said Zionist tanks were moving down the strip's main north-south highway, the Salah al-Din road. The military was trying to cut the road between Deir al-Balah in central Gaza and Khan Yunis. "firing bullets and tank shells at cars and people trying to move through the area," Mohammed said.

The advance of Zionist forces meant that in the north and east of the city, civilians could no longer travel along the Salah al-Din road, which "constitutes

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Palestinians flee from Khan Yunis to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Dec 4, 2023, after the Zionist army called on people to leave certain areas in the city. — AFP

Gold hits record high; bitcoin tops \$40K; oil down

LONDON: Gold hit a record high Monday as growing optimism that the Federal Reserve will cut US interest rates in the new year has dented the dollar in recent weeks. The precious metal, seen as a haven investment, reached an all-time pinnacle at \$2,135.39 an ounce. Profit-taking later set in, leaving it to trade at \$2,048.08. The dollar was also firmer Monday.

Gold is benefitting also from the Zionist-Hamas war according to analysts. "Concerns about the shaky global economic backdrop and the (Zionist)-

Hamas conflict have fueled investor demand for safe-haven assets like gold," said Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor. "Plus, expectations for Fed rate cuts next year have put downward pressure on the US dollar which is trading around three-month lows, adding to gold's attractiveness."

Elsewhere, bitcoin traded above \$40,000 for the first time since May last year, boosted by hopes that the United States would soon allow broader trading of the world's biggest cryptocurrency. Major stock markets mostly fell in Europe and Asia, while oil prices dropped. Traders are shrugging off Fed boss Jerome Powell's attempts to temper expectations of US rate cuts in the first quarter of 2024.

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UAE 'respects' science; Saudi derides pledges

DUBAI: The Emirati head of the UN climate conference insisted on Monday that he respects climate science after he came under fire over a leaked video in which he questioned the science on fossil fuels. Amid tough talks over the future of fossil fuels, Sultan Al-Jaber, who is also head of UAE national oil company ADNOC, hit out at "repeated

attempts to undermine" the work of the COP28 presidency in Dubai.

"We're here because we very much believe and respect the science," Jaber told a press conference there. Showing how touchy the issue has become, Jim Skea, the head of the UN body tasked with assessing climate science, appeared alongside Jaber to face reporters. He said Jaber "has been attentive to the science as we have discussed it and I think has fully understood it."

Jaber said global greenhouse gas emissions must be cut by 43 percent by 2030 to limit warming to

Continued on Page 6

US shoots down drones as attacks hit Red Sea ships

SANAA: An American destroyer shot down multiple drones on Sunday while assisting commercial ships in the Red Sea that were targeted by attacks from Yemen, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said. Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels — who said they targeted two of the ships — launched a series of drones and missiles toward the Zionist entity in recent weeks and seized a cargo vessel last month, but the latest attacks mark a significant es-

calation in the threat to shipping in the area.

"Today, there were four attacks against three separate commercial vessels operating in international waters in the southern Red Sea," CENTCOM said in a statement. "The Arleigh-Burke Class destroyer USS Carney responded to the distress calls from the ships and provided assistance" and shot down three drones that were heading for the warship during the day, the statement said.

The Carney detected a missile fired from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen that landed near the Bahamas-flagged M/V Unity Explorer, while the cargo ship later reported minor damage from another missile from a rebel-held area. Panamanian-flagged M/V Number 9 — a bulk carrier — reported damage but no casualties caused by a missile from Yemen, while the M/V Sophie II, which also flies Panama's flag, said it

was struck as well but suffered no significant harm. CENTCOM said the attacks "represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security".

"We also have every reason to believe that these attacks, while launched by the Houthis in Yemen, are fully enabled by Iran. The United States will consider all appropriate responses in full coordination with its international allies and partners," it said. The Houthis claimed responsibility for attacks on the Unity Explorer and Number 9 in a statement on social media earlier in the day, saying the ships were Zionist and that attacks on the country's vessels would continue "until the (Zionist) aggression against our steadfast brothers in the Gaza Strip stops".

The Zionist entity's relentless land and air campaign in Gaza has killed more than 15,800 people.

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KUWAIT: A jeweler displays gold bracelets at his shop in Souq Mubarakhiya on Dec 4, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



DUBAI: COP28 President Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber speaks during a press conference at the United Nations climate summit on Dec 4, 2023. — AFP



Local

Cabinet discusses Amir's health condition, Gaza brutal attacks

Ministers wish Amir good health and rapid recovery



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: Cabinet ministers hold their weekly meeting on Monday. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The Cabinet held its weekly meeting on Monday, discussing a multitude of issues, including the health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the recent alarming developments concerning the Zionist entity's brutal aggression against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and occupied territories. After the meeting—chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah—Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Essa Al-Kandari said that the attendees were informed about the stable health condition of His Highness the Amir.

The Cabinet also expressed wishes of good health and rapid recovery towards His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said Al-Kandari. On the issue of the Gaza Strip, Al-Kandari indicated that the Cabinet had reflected Kuwait's utter condemnation of the resumption of the Zionist occupation forces' brutal assault on the Gaza Strip. He indicated that the meeting called on the international community to impose its will against the Zionist aggressors in accordance with international laws and norms.

The world also should hold the Zionist aggressors responsible for their heinous acts, indicated the minister, adding that the Cabinet had called for resolving the Mid-

dle East issue through the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and east Jerusalem as the capital. Meanwhile, the Cabinet also touched on the recent grilling motion against His Highness the Prime Minister submitted by MP Muhallal Khaled Al-Mudhaf, indicated Al-Kandari.

He indicated that the grilling, which ended without any proposals, was lauded by His Highness the Prime Minister, saying that the motion was in line with the true values of Kuwaiti democracy. Minister Al-Kandari revealed that the Cabinet meeting also touched on Saudi Arabia's winning the hosting honor of Expo 2030 during a vote occurring in Paris last week, saying that the Saudi leadership and peo-

ple were worthy of such an honor, which reflected the vision and progress of the fellow Arab country.

The win also came in line with Saudi Arabia's own Vision 2030, he added. The Cabinet meeting also extended congratulations to the UAE, which is celebrating its 52nd National Day, said Al-Kandari, adding that the meeting expressed wishes of progress and development towards the Emirati people and leadership.

COP28's meeting

Meanwhile, Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah has stressed the importance of Kuwait's participation in the financial day meeting and the round table discus-

sion of finance ministers participating in the Conference of the Parties (COP28), held in Dubai. Al-Jarallah stated to KUNA that the two meetings discussed unifying initiatives to reach a common vision on improving climate financing, as well as discussing transitioning to a low-carbon global economy and keeping pace with climate change challenges. Kuwait is participating in the COP28 conference with an official delegation headed by a representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with more than 70,000 participants from 198 countries. — KUNA

In my view

Street without a speed bump



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

This anecdote may or not be true: A Kuwaiti visiting Japan once asked his Japanese colleague about the absence of speed bumps in their streets. To his surprise, his colleague explained that in Japan, there's essentially only one speed bump — right in front of the Kuwait Embassy! This humorous observation got me thinking about the prevalence of speed bumps in Kuwait.

Despite extensive efforts, historians have been unable to trace the origin of speed bumps in Kuwait, and the reasons behind our nation's affinity for them remain a mystery. With six governorates, around 130 areas, and numerous blocks, Kuwait boasts an impressive number of speed bumps. An estimate suggests an average of 10 bumps per block, making for over 10,000 bumps across the country's 18,000 sq km. Notably, residential areas only cover 447 sq km, around 2.5 percent of the total area of Kuwait.

Scholars attempting to unravel this phenomenon have proposed various theories. Some suggest it's an attempt to align with global norms, ensuring Kuwait doesn't stand out. Others, leaning toward conspiracy theories, claim a clandestine collaboration between orthopedic specialists and vehicle workshops. This alleged alliance, they argue, exerts pressure on the government to proliferate these non-ergonomic bumps, benefiting doctors and repair shops, as well as workshop and building owners renting space to them.

Interestingly, speed bumps have transcended practicality, becoming a residential norm and sometimes a status symbol. They adorn the front of influential individuals' houses, serving as a marker of the resident's importance. The remnants of bumps even stand as evidence of a power that once held sway but has since waned.

Today, it's imperative to scrutinize the issue of speed bumps in Kuwait. A scientific study emphasizes that artificial speed bumps are effective only under specific conditions: Adherence to scientific specifications and clear visibility. Unfortunately, these conditions rarely coincide in Kuwait.

Renowned Arab businessman Naguib Sawiris has warned that improperly designed artificial speed bumps may increase traffic accidents, causing damage to vehicles. Conversely, other studies highlight the positive impact of correctly designed bumps in reducing speeds. For instance, a study from PLA Science and Technology University in Nanjing, China, indicates a reduction in speed by approximately 30 meters before the bump and 15 meters after it, given the bumps adhere to safety conditions.

However, the reality in Kuwait often deviates from these ideal conditions, making us question the necessity of these bumps for the sake of our well-being.

Experts warn against misuse of new diabetes drug

KUWAIT: Recently, it has become widespread that some people are using new medications for type 2 diabetes (injections) to lose weight without medical advice, amid health warnings about serious side effects of their misuse by non-diabetics, despite the effect of this drug on weight loss. Specialized doctors confirmed to KUNA that misuse and not taking the drug under medical supervision are risky and have side effects that may include gastrointestinal bleeding, kidney failure, pancreatitis, and hypoglycemia.

Endocrinology and Diabetes Consultant and Head of the Kuwait Diabetes Association, Dr Walid Al-Dhahi, told KUNA that there are several medications used for weight loss that have been approved, and most of them are medications to primarily treat type 2 diabetes, including these injections. This drug is a weekly injection given to adults with type 2 diabetes to lower blood sugar by increasing insulin production and lowering sugar levels made by the liver, which slows the rate of food passing through the body and gives a feeling of fullness for a longer period, he said.

Dr Al-Dhahi pointed out that because of the injection's effect on satiety centers and reducing stomach movement, it helps in losing weight, as there are studies made on people who take this medication with no diabetes that found that it helps



Dr Walid Al-Dhahi



Dr Thamer Al-Essa

in losing between 15 and 20 percent of the weight. The doctor warned against using these injections without consulting a doctor: "As doctors, we see many problems due to the misuse or to those who have a family history of thyroid cancer, previous pancreatic infections, kidney and liver problems, and blood sugar drops."

People should not consider these needles as the only way to lose weight, especially since there are those who take them irregularly, which is extremely dangerous as they will depend on them for life, saying it's better to lose weight through changing the lifestyle and eating healthy food. Dr Al-Dhahi stressed that even for people with type 2 diabetes using these injections, they must be given after several laboratory tests.

For his part, Consultant, Head of Division, Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, Dr Thamer Al-Essa, said that all medications in general have side effects, but if they are approved, the symptoms are well studied and assumed to be few and ineffective. Dr Al-Essa

said that the injection may cause gastroesophageal reflux and fluctuations in the digestive system that last for weeks, but they disappear with time.

Adding the medicine is a safe treatment for patients with type 2 diabetes. Although the injections are a safe treatment for diabetics, they have other side effects that may harm some cases. Dr Al-Essa said, causing nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain. In rare cases, they could lead to kidney failure, pancreatitis, hypoglycemia, and may cause a thyroid tumor for people with a family history. Those who take the medication need close medical supervision, he said, due to the risk that a severe lack of appetite will lead to malnutrition and an eating disorder, negatively affecting overall health.

He warned against using these injections, which are in great demand these days by the majority of overweight people, without consulting a specialist doctor to avoid complications that they may cause in the future. He also stressed the necessity of preventing the use of this medicine without consulting a specialist doctor in cases of hypersensitivity to one of the medicine components, previous or current infection with medullary thyroid cancer, type 2 multiple endocrine neoplasia syndrome, and type 1 diabetes.

Dr Al-Essa pointed out the necessity of using this medicine with extreme caution and under medical supervision during pregnancy, breastfeeding, liver or kidney disease, pancreatitis, diabetic retinopathy, and severe disorders of the digestive system. It is strictly forbidden to use this medicine for patients with acute kidney failure, those undergoing dialysis, people with previous pancreatitis, or those with a family history of hereditary thyroid cancer, he stressed. — KUNA

Exploring societal judgment of girls going out at night

By Ghadeer Ghloom

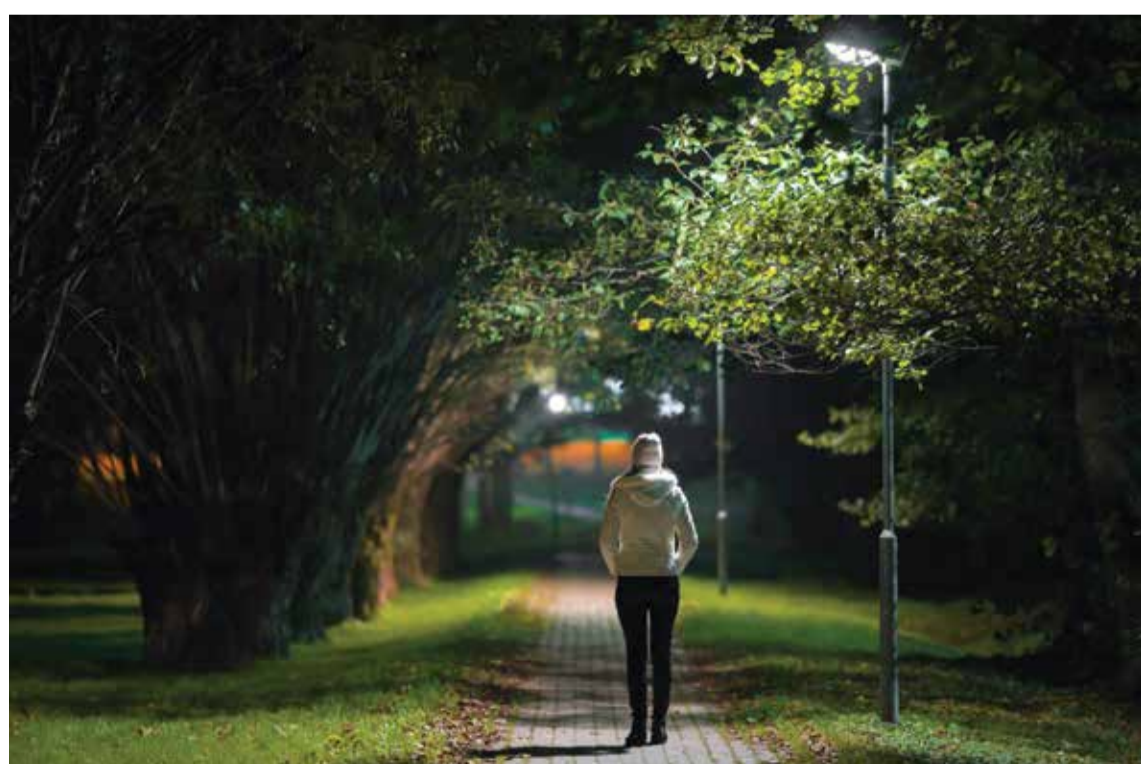
KUWAIT: Within any culture, societal expectations and norms take part in shaping the behaviors of its people. One deeply rooted expectation in many societies is the association between a girl's reputation and being out of the home during the night. To understand the cultural and societal factors that contribute to this association, and explore how changing attitudes and evolving social dynamics are challenging such associations to pave the way for a more inclusive society, where a girl is not unjustly judged for being out at night, Kuwait Times interviewed Khadeja Karam, social relations consultant and cognitive behavioral therapist, and a local girl who preferred to remain anonymous.

The local working girl told Kuwait Times about society's unjust judgment of girls who are not at home during nighttime. "It is disheartening to see how quickly people judge others, especially girls, based on their actions, without considering the circumstances. By judging a girl's behavior simply because she happens to be outside after dark, shifts the responsibility for any harm that may happen to the girl herself," she said.

Assuming negative intentions solely based on a



Khadeja Karam



girl's whereabouts during the night denies her right to live without prejudice and unfairly question her motives. "Only a while ago, I was with my mother driving, and happened to stop at the red traffic light, when a car with several guys stopped near us and started harassing us. I locked the car's doors and rolled up the window, but they continued trying to talk to us in a mocking and disrespectful way. After their failed attempts, one of them stuck his head out of the car window and raised his voice, asking what were we doing out at this time of the night. As if he had the right to question us or harass us just because we were not sheltering at home after sunset," she argued.

On her part, Karam explained that such judgments are deeply rooted in the customs, traditions and norms in Arab societies, as well as the prevailing social mindset. However, as time is progressing, women are becoming more liberated and have more freedom in choosing their paths, which may require them to stay out late or attend conferences or events.

Karam emphasized that although this unfair association still exists among societies, we see positive progress as time moves forward. This can be clearly recognized if we are to compare between the vulnerability of women's reputation in the past due to unfair and severe judgement, and the shift in many people's beliefs today.

Local

Zain empowers and supports disability inclusion efforts

Company sponsored Special Run marathon for people with intellectual disabilities



Sheikha Sheikh Al Sabah, Rehab Borisli, and Jasim Al Nouri recognize Zain for supporting the event.



The run coincided with the International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

KUWAIT: In a move to champion disability inclusion in the community, Zain sponsored the Special Run marathon for people with intellectual disabilities. The event, organized by the Special Olympics Kuwait and Al Tomooh Sports Club, took place at the Boulevard Mall's outdoor area in Salmiya and featured both a 2K walkathon and a marathon.

The event was attended by Honorary President of the Kuwait Disabled Sport Club Sheikha Sheikh Al Abdullah Al Khalifa Al Sabah, National Manager of the Special Olympics Kuwait and member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Rehab Boresli, and Chairman of Al Tomooh Sports Club Jasim Al Nouri. Also in attendance were Zain officials and many activists, volunteers, and community members.

The Special Run coincided with the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, observed around the world on 3 December of every year. The special day brings an opportunity for nations and communities to join forces and exert more efforts towards achieving inclusivity for people with disabilities, empowering them to realize their ambitions and reach their full potential.

Zain supported this event to reflect the key role of the private sector in shouldering civil society organizations and volunteer groups to create a positive social impact in the community. Amidst wonderful wintery conditions, the Special Run walkathon and marathon covered 2 kilometers at the outdoor area of Boulevard Mall, Salmiya, with over 300 persons with intellectual disabilities of 15-25 years



Group photo from the event.

joining the fun. The initiative contributed to boosting their health and encouraging them to exercise, while bringing them closer to their peers.

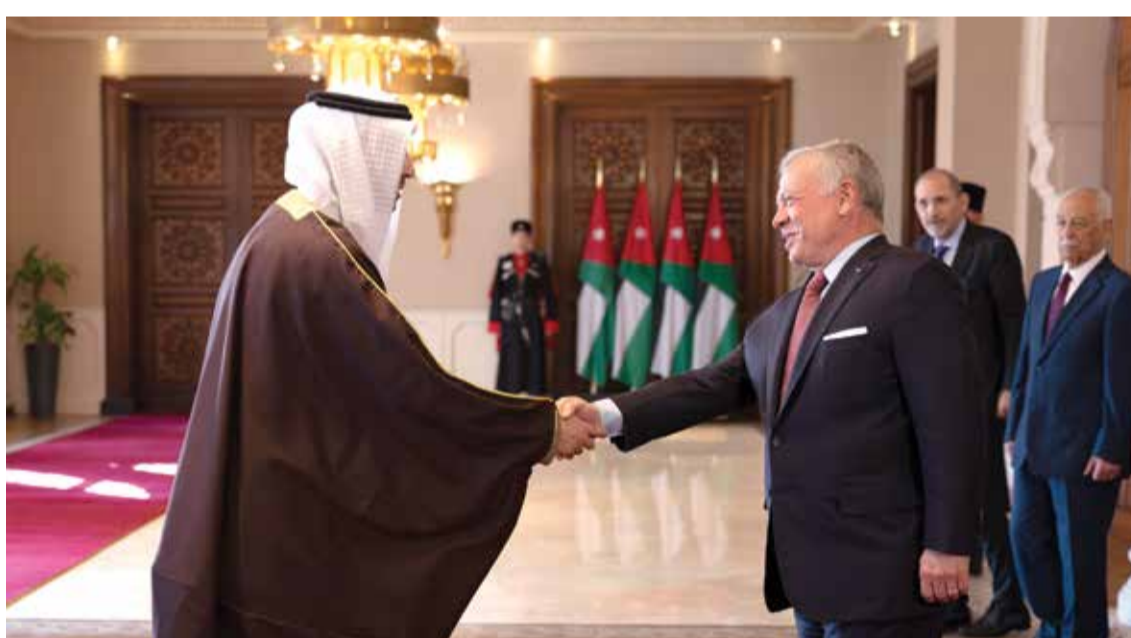
The Special Olympics Kuwait group aims to empower persons with intellectual disabilities, helping them reach their full potential and grow their skills by organizing various sports activities throughout the year. Such contributions help improve their health and fitness and raise their spirits. Similarly, Al Tomooh Sports Club works to

create a more inclusive community by supporting people with intellectual disabilities through social, cultural, and sports activities.

Zain continues to work towards fostering a spirit of giving, sharing, bonding, and community by directly supporting programs and initiatives that serve humanitarian needs. The company puts its social responsibility as a top priority, embodying and reflecting the values of its brand: Zain, A Wonderful World.

Kuwait ambassador presents credentials to Jordanian King

AMMAN: The Ambassador of Kuwait to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri, presented his credentials to Jordanian King Abdullah II as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on Sunday. Ambassador Al-Marri told KUNA, after the ceremony of presenting his credentials to the Royal Hashemite Court, which took place at Basman Palace, that he was honored to convey greetings on behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Jordanian King. The ambassador also expressed wishes on behalf of the political leadership in Kuwait to the Jordanian leadership and people for further progress and prosperity. He pointed out that King Abdullah II asked him to convey greetings to His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing the Kuwaiti leadership continued health and prosperity. — KUNA



AMMAN: Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri presents credentials to Jordanian King. — KUNA

Kuwait seeking cooperation in aviation sector

RIYADH: Kuwait is seeking more cooperation with Arab countries and international organizations in the fields of civil aviation and air transport, said Acting Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Imad Al-Jalawi. This came in a press statement by Al-Jalawi, who headed Kuwait's delegation in the 68th meeting of the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization held in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh.

He stated that Kuwait's participation in this

meeting is because it is a member of the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization, adding that the meeting was filled with topics related to civil aviation, especially regarding aviation safety, air transport, aviation security, and the environment. He praised the hospitality and reception of the Saudi Arabian government, wishing continued progress and success in political, economic, and social aspects.

The meeting discussed topics related to the Arab civil aviation industry at the regional and international levels to enhance joint Arab work and contribute to the growth of Arab civil aviation. Additionally, the meeting also included many important technical topics in the fields of air transport, aviation security, navigation, air safety, and environmental protection. — KUNA



RIYADH: Acting Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Imad Al-Jalawi is pictured during the event.

Forum explores ideas, highlights challenges

MANAMA: The seventh forum of the Royal Bahrain Foundation for humanitarian works was launched on Monday under the theme (My Story) with the participation of a group of speakers, specialists, and people with inspiring life experiences from the GCC countries, including Kuwait. The King's representative for humanitarian work and youth affairs, Sheikh Nasser Bin Hamad, said in a press statement that such annual forums reflect the keenness to contribute to the creation and implementation of the foundation's programs and to exchange enriching experiences to contribute to the development of humanitarian and social work.

He pointed out that the participation of a large number of people with inspiring life experiences in the competition that preceded the forum confirms the urgent desire and keenness to document the real experiences. He praised these inspiring stories, appreciating the "beautiful" ideas from participants from Kuwait and the UAE.

Deputy chairman of the board of trustees of the Royal Foundation for Humanitarian Works, Adnan Al-Qattan, stressed in a speech during the forum the foundation's keenness to organize many community activities through which it seeks to involve everyone without exception. He explained that this forum is just one of the community initiatives put forward by the foundation as part of its strategy to open horizons with institutions and communities to be active players in achieving long-term visions.

The secretary general of the foundation, Mustafa Al-Sayed, said that the selection of the (My Story) logo aims to present the stories of those who were unable to highlight their challenges and successes

to society and to contribute to the creation of valuable content for beautiful tales. During the forum, a number of inspiring experiences and life stories were reviewed by a number of speakers from inside the Kingdom and the GCC countries. — KUNA

In my view

Navigating advocacy and safety: Supporting the Palestinian cause as a student abroad



By Ahmad Hesham Alsarhan

Studying abroad is a privilege that we should never take for granted, providing the opportunity to travel and learn at some of the world's best universities. However, in light of recent conflicts involving the Zionist entity and their genocidal actions against the Palestinian people, there has been a new layer of complexity added to this transformative university experience.

As a freshman in the United States, I've heard about numerous hate crimes being committed against Arabs, Muslims and supporters of the Palestinian cause. From the brutal murder of a six-year-old Palestinian American boy and the attack on his mother to the most recent shooting of three Palestinian students wearing the keffiyeh. These hate crimes have created an atmosphere of insecurity. Even in my own community, incidents like people entering the mosque during Friday prayers for three consecutive weeks swearing and shouting remarks at us highlight the need for caution when advocating for the Palestinian cause for justice.

In educational settings, I usually avoid political topics to maintain professionalism and respect. However, when the conflict in Palestine escalated in early October, students in one of my classes proposed focusing our final group project on the issue. They wanted to report about events starting to emerge locally to show solidarity for the Zionist entity. As the only Arab and Muslim in the class, expressing my concerns led to slight tension. Despite an attempt from a classmate to condescendingly guilt-trip me into attending events associated with the Zionist entity, I stood firm in my decision not to attend any such event.

Recognizing the tension in the situation, I approached my professor to indicate that I did not view this group project as the appropriate outlet to discuss the conflict. I explained that I had much to say on this issue and was not at all intimidated about speaking my mind, as well as allowing my group members to explore whatever sides they wished to pursue. My professor thankfully understood my perspective and worked with me in finding a neutral solution.

The saying "Choose your battles wisely" holds true when advocating political, humanitarian and just causes. Engaging individuals with a prejudiced mindset can be more useless than speaking to a brick wall, but civil and respectful dialogue can be effective for those genuinely curious and willing to learn. It's crucial not to be offended by genuine ignorance, recognizing that some people may not have been exposed to the truth of the situation in Palestine. Aggressive engagement only deepens the hole they are in, when it is our duty to help shovel them out through informative conversations.

Before engaging in conversations, being well-informed is essential. Keeping up to date on current events, historical context, and the parties involved empowers us to make a more significant impact while ensuring our advocacy is based on facts and comprehensive understanding of the issues.

While protests and demonstrations are powerful means of advocating for change, it's important to choose events carefully and act responsibly. I attended a public gathering in early October to discuss the conflict in Gaza and mourn the lives lost of its people. Nearby, a Zionist event was taking place where a large group of their supporters made their way to where we were. It became a large standoff between the two groups, as emotions were high and people protested back and forth. If the area hadn't been secured with local police, the situation could have escalated and become extremely violent and hostile.

Avoiding violent standoffs and participating in peaceful demonstrations and information sessions with the local community is something I encourage. Show the power in numbers and be there to advocate peacefully for the cause. Supporting direct and known charitable aid organizations and boycotting establishments in the West that align with the Zionist cause are also both significant, non-violent tools in the broader effort to provide much needed support and promote justice in Gaza and for the Palestinian people.

Justice will prevail in Palestine. It is our duty to show support for this cause with a careful balance of personal safety awareness, informed engagement and meaningful action. Do your part to show your support and try to stay safe. In case of emergency, be familiar with the embassy contact, local safety measures and authority contact information. Together, we can make a meaningful contribution. Free Palestine!



Urgent relief aid onboard the 33rd plane for Gazans. – KUNA photos

GCC summit to prop up integration endeavors

DOHA: The forthcoming summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) due in Doha on Tuesday is of special significance, given its timing, on-table dossiers, and swiftly evolving regional and international developments. The 44th edition of the GCC summit, or Doha 44, comes at a time when the Middle East region is undergoing a critical time due to the Zionist occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip since October 7.

Since then, at least 15,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been martyred and more than 36,000 others injured, not to mention thousands of missing children and women from different cities and areas in the Palestinian territory. In response to the ongoing atrocities in occupied Palestinian territories, regional and international parties in general and Qatar in particular have been doing their utmost to halt the Zionist occupation's aggression on the enclave.

These efforts have produced a temporary humanitarian pause and the release of a number of prisoners from both the Palestinian and occupation sides. In the meantime, the Gulf countries are stepping up endeavors to address regional and international challenges, promote peace, ensure regional stability, help the population of the Gaza Strip, shore up permanent ceasefire efforts, and push forward a sustainable solution for the Palestinian cause, primarily based on the two-state approach.

"Doha 44" is the first Gulf summit to be held outside Saudi Arabia in five years, as Riyadh hosted the last five ordinary GCC gatherings following an amendment that allows the kingdom, the country that hosts the Gulf bloc's headquarters, to host the gathering. It will be the seventh time for Qatar to play host to the Gulf Summit, following the gatherings of 1983, 1990, 1996, 2002, 2007, and 2014. The Gulf leaders are expected to mainly look into how to stop the Zionist occupation aggression on the Palestinian territory and to ensure a fair settlement for the Palestinian cause, including an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital. The agenda of the Doha gathering also covers the necessity of completing the Gulf customs union before the end of 2024, as was recommended during the 43rd summit in the Saudi capital. In this context, officials met in Muscat in October and adopted a set of laws and resolutions aiming at promoting economic integration in the Gulf region, leading to economic unity by 2025. This came in response to the Gulf leaders' directives aimed at promoting the region's economic environment and ensuring economic stability.

The planned Gulf customs union and joint market are chiefly based on single customs duties, a uniform customs legal system, and single customs financial and administrative procedures pertinent to importing, exporting, and re-exporting. Also among the significant subjects to be considered during the event is a joint Gulf railway project that was approved in 2003 when the leaders asked the bloc's transportation committee to conduct a relevant feasibility study. — KUNA

33rd planeload of aid, relief supplies dispatched to Gaza

Arab League rebuffs Palestinians' coercive displacement

KUWAIT: The 33rd plane within the Kuwait Relief Air Bridge took off Monday, heading to the Egyptian city of Al-Arish, carrying 10 tons of urgent relief aid for the people in the Gaza Strip. Chairman of Al-Salam Charity and member of the Board of Directors of the Islamic Charitable Organization, Dr. Nabil Al-Aoun, told KUNA that the aid includes blankets, tents, dates, winter clothes, and others to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza.

Al-Aoun added that coordination had been made with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Egyptian and Palestinian Red Crescents to supervise the entry of aid through the Rafah crossing, noting that a relief plane would take off on Wednesday and another next Sunday. He explained that more than 250 tons of qualitative aid have been prepared and will be launched in the coming days, noting that Al-Salam Charity is distributing hot meals and water daily inside Gaza in cooperation with associations approved by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Coercive displacement

Meanwhile, the Arab League affirmed on Monday its rejection of coercive replacement by the

Zionist occupation of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Such a form of displacement is tantamount to a crime of global repercussions and explicit breach of international laws, the Arab League said in a statement marking "the Arab Immigrant Day." It called for ending Palestinian refugees' hardships, safeguarding their rights to determine their destiny, returning to their homeland, and compensating them in the implementation of the international legitimacy resolutions, namely the UN General Assembly Resolution 194/1948.

The Arab League rejected bids to "re-define the Palestinian refugee, his or her legal status, or "liquidate" the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and called for enabling it to pursue its tasks and shoulder full responsibilities toward the Palestinian refugees." It warned that a possible expansion of the conflict would lead to catastrophic consequences in the region and around the world. The Palestinian cause remains on top of the issues concerning Arabs in diaspora, the League statement said, alluding in this respect to Arab writers' extensive works on the cause.

The League has added that it marks "Arab Im-



migration Day" in difficult times where nations around the globe face a difficult test with respect to adherence to humanitarian and moralistic values. Continuing Zionist practices aim at increasing the number of Palestinian refugees and deepening their suffering, it said, urging the Arab communities abroad to unite their ranks and establish associations to increase their influence. — KUNA

KRCS stresses importance of volunteering work

DOHA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) stressed Monday the importance of developing and strengthening work in the volunteer and relief fields in communities, refining them through participation in specialized forums. This came in a statement made by the Director of Public Relations and Media Department at

KRCS, Khaled Al-Zaid, to KUNA on the sidelines of participation in the Fourth Gulf Voluntary Work Forum for Red Crescent societies from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which Doha is hosting for two days.

In the forum, volunteers will participate in exchanging experiences between them, he said, indicating its importance in highlighting capabilities and talents in the fields of volunteer and relief work. The volunteers presented KRCS' vision regarding plans for volunteers in dealing with disasters and emergency crises and their efforts in

relief work, as Al-Zaid pointed out. He stated that International Volunteer Day falls on December 5 every year, which comes in honor of volunteers and in recognition of the great humanitarian services they provide to local communities everywhere.

In another development, Kuwait sent on Monday an urgent humanitarian relief aid convoy to help ease the suffering of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including 77 trucks of medical supplies and food. Deputy Director of the Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR), Omar Al-Thuwaini, told KUNA that the aid from Kuwait

contains 1,000 tons of food baskets, flour, mineral water bottles, and medical supplies.

Al-Thuwaini added that the convoy came as part of an agreement by the KSR with Egypt's Dar AlOrman charity, amounting to \$500,000 to provide urgent aid for the people of Gaza. KSR's campaign to aid Palestinians was launched during the first days of the Zionist occupation aggression on Gaza on October 7, adding that 27 Kuwaiti charities, governmental bodies, and authorities all participated to help in any way possible. — KUNA



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Audience at Tamkeen conference.

Supporting Palestinian women a 'necessity'

KUWAIT: A number of participants in the 45th conference of the International Women's Empowerment and Capacity Building Organization (IWEBCO), also known as Tamkeen, stressed the importance of supporting Palestinian women, saying that it was a "necessity" during the current Zionist military onslaught on Gaza and Palestinians. The conference began Monday under the auspices of Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Feras Al-Sabah and will last until December 6.

The event highlights women's key role in different domains such as financing, politics, and media, said Ebtisam A-Qaoud, head of the IWEBCO, during the conference. She added that the conference was eager to communicate with all organizations on the vitality of supporting women's empowerment through the adoption of new laws and legislation. She said that it was important to protect the Palestinian women who were facing all forms of violence and abuse by the occupation forces.

IWEBCO is supporting Palestinian women for their heroic role in defending their homeland, she affirmed. Meanwhile, Dr. Salwa Al-Jassar, the organization's board member and head of the conference scientific committee, indicated that the conference's sessions focused on women's economic, social, and political empowerment as well



Speakers at the Tamkeen conference

as boosting women's leadership roles. The events include workshops that center on the empowerment of women, she revealed.

On the current Middle East violence, she mentioned the hardships that Palestinian women were going through and the necessity of supporting them. Al-Jassar took the chance and asked for a moment of silence in solidarity with Palestine. On her part, the Qatari Shura Council Sheikha Al-Jufairi stated that historical ties between the neighboring and friendly countries were the element that demonstrated joint vision, intensifying bilateral cooperation in areas of common interest.

On Palestine, she touched on the horrific situation of women and children in the Gaza Strip, which required international solidarity to end the massacres, indicating Qatar's leadership and people were supporting Palestine by contributing to the previous humanitarian truce and seeking means to end the violence against Palestinians. — KUNA



Five bodies found after crash of Osprey off Japan: US military

Far from the violence, Gaza wounded find care at Cairo hospital Page 6

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Eleven hikers dead after Indonesia volcano erupts, dozen still missing

Forensic workers to identify the dead through their dental, fingerprint records

AGAM: Eleven hikers were found dead Monday and another 12 were missing after a volcano erupted in Indonesia, with rescuers racing to carry injured and burned survivors down the mountain on foot. Rescuers worked through the night to find dozens of hikers stranded on Mount Marapi on the island of Sumatra after it spewed an ash tower 3,000 metres (9,840 feet) — taller than the volcano itself—into the sky on Sunday.

The dead hikers were found near Marapi's crater after the 2,891-metre volcano rained ash on nearby villages, according to a local rescue official. Twelve were missing, three more were found alive and 49 had safely descended from the crater, some with burns and fractures, the official said. "Until now I have not received any information," said Dasman, father of missing hiker Zakir Habibi, who made a two-hour drive from Padang city to the base of the mountain last night in hope of good news. "I will stay here until I hear some news," said Dasman, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. Neither the three survivors nor the 11 dead bodies had reached the bottom of the mountain as of Monday afternoon, local rescue agency chief Abdul Malik told AFP, as heavy rain and poor visibility hampered rescue efforts.

"It slowed the evacuation team," said Malik, adding that about 120 rescuers were involved in the response. "The search will be conducted for seven days. Let's pray they all survive," he said. Rescuers had been carrying the survivors down by hand, since an air retrieval had been deemed impossible with the eruption still ongoing, Malik said. A video clip shared with AFP showed a rescue worker with a flashlight strapped to his head piggybacking a hiker, who moans in pain and says "God is greatest" as she is carried to safety in the darkness.

'Tremendous trauma'
At a centre for information about the missing hikers, family members waited anxiously for any news, with the view of Marapi blocked by smoke. Forensic workers were preparing to identify the dead through their dental and fingerprint records, or based on marks such as birthmarks and tattoos, said Eka Purnamasari, an official from the West Sumatra police medical unit.

Local rescue agency spokesperson Jodi Haryawan said the rescue efforts had been broken up by sporadic eruptions but the search was still going despite the risks. At least eight survivors had suffered burns, one had burns and a fracture and another had a head wound, according to a list of those found from Basarnas, a national search and rescue agency, seen by AFP.

Marapi is on the second alert level of Indonesia's four-step system and authorities have imposed a three-kilometre (1.9 mile) exclusion zone around its crater. The Indonesian archipelago sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity.

The Southeast Asian country has nearly 130 active volcanoes. As the search went on for the missing 12 hikers, the family of Zhafrah Zahrim Febrina told AFP of their relief she was one of the lucky ones. Good news arrived in the form of a



AGAM: Rescuers prepare for a search and rescue operation after Mount Marapi erupted near Batu Palano village in Agam on December 4, 2023. At least 11 hikers were found dead and three others were rescued by search teams that worked through the night to find people missing after the eruption of a volcano in western Indonesia, officials said on December 4. — AFP

livestream on video app TikTok by a member of the rescue services on which the 19-year-old could be seen. Febrina had suffered burns and was visibly shaking, but still her mother Rani Radelani felt relieved. "It felt incredible, praise God she has been found," she said.

Febrina is now in a nearby hospital after being trapped on the mountain on a hiking trip with 18 school friends. "If she asks me to allow her to climb a mountain, I'll say no," Radelani said. — AFP

'Failure' in psychiatric care of Paris attacker

PARIS: There was a clear failure in the psychiatric care of the radicalised Islamist suffering from mental troubles who stabbed a German tourist to death in central Paris at the weekend, France's interior minister said Monday. The attack close to the Eiffel Tower has increased concerns in France over the risk of Islamist attacks, particularly with the French capital now barely half a year away from hosting the 2024 summer Olympic Games.

The attacker was a Frenchman in his mid-20s born to a non-religious Iranian family but who had already done prison time for planning an attack and was known to the authorities as an Islamist radical with mental troubles.

"There was clearly a failure, not from the point of view of his monitoring by the intelligence services, but a psychiatric failure," Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told BFMTV, adding the attacker had an "acute mental illness". "Doctors said on several occasions that he was doing better, was more normal and could be free."

'Exploiting weaknesses'
Armand Rajabpour-Miyandoab, a French national of Iranian origin born in 1997, killed a 23-year-old German-Filipino man with two blows from a hammer and four stab wounds from a knife on Saturday evening close to the Eiffel Tower.

The investigation is being handled by French anti-terror prosecutors who have launched a probe into a suspected "terrorist" plot. France's top anti-terror prosecutor Jean-Francois Ricard said Sunday the man's mother had reported concerns about him as recently as October, but there was insufficient proof at the time to take legal action.

He had already been arrested in 2016 for planning an attack, eventually serving four years in prison, and had been under close watch following his release. Darmanin said the attacker's mother had warned police that her son was no longer taking his medication and intelligence services had offered that he should be hospitalised. But she did not want that and then reported he was doing better.

He said regional authorities currently did not have the power to issue an administrative order for such an individual to undergo psychiatric treatment and "this has to change". Rajabpour-Miyandoab had been radicalised through contacts on the Internet rather than meeting people at a mosque, he emphasised, adding the attacker had also been in touch with perpetrators of similar past attacks.

These contacts included the future killer of teacher Samuel Paty, beheaded outside his school in 2020, a radicalised Islamist from Russia's northern Caucasus region. "Terrorism is changing and exploiting the weaknesses of our system," said Darmanin. Four people—the attacker and three other people from his family and close circle were still in custody on Monday morning, a source close to anti-terrorism prosecutors told AFP.

'No plan B'
The attack late Saturday came as France is at its highest alert level against the background of the war between Zionist entity and Palestinian militant group Hamas, and following the killing of a teacher in a school by a radicalised Islamist in October.

Shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest"), Rajabpour-Miyandoab fled over the Bir Hakeim bridge across the river Seine after a taxi driver intervened. Meeting a police patrol on the other side, he claimed to be wearing an explosive belt before running again, striking two passers-by—a 66-year-old British citizen and a 60-year-old French person—with the hammer.



PARIS: French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin (3rdR) attends a meeting with French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne (2ndL) and ministers, a day after one person was killed and two others wounded in a knife attack, at the Matignon Hotel in Paris. — AFP

He was finally stopped with two shots from a taser and taken into custody. Ricard said he had posted a video on social media where he swore allegiance to the Islamic State group and expressed his support for jihadists. — AFP

Death toll from Philippine quake rises to three

MANILA: The death toll from a powerful earthquake in the southern Philippines has risen to three, official tallies showed Monday, as frequent aftershocks send residents fleeing into the streets.

At least eight people have also been injured since the magnitude 7.6 quake hit Saturday off the coast of Mindanao island, in an area that has seen a series of aftershocks of magnitudes exceeding 6.0 through Sunday.

A magnitude 6.9 quake hit the area early Monday at a depth of 30 kilometres (18 miles), about 72 kilometres northeast of Hinatuan municipality in Surigao del Sur province, the US Geological Survey said.

"Up to now we're still terrified because there are many aftershocks," Alex Arana, head of the province's disaster agency, told broadcaster DZBB. As of Sunday night, more than 30,000 families were staying in evacuation centres in Surigao del Sur, Arana said.

Josephine Ungab, 54, and her three children spent Saturday night in an evacuation centre in Hinatuan, about 21 kilometres from the epicentre of the initial quake. They returned home the next day but were back at the shelter on Monday after another strong tremor.

"Every time that there is an earthquake we feel restless," she said. "It is as if our house will be destroyed by the quake and waves." Some walls and roads cracked while more than a hundred homes were destroyed and the roof of an outdoor court collapsed.

Monday's quake was "quite strong" but people did not panic this time, said Allan Luna, a disaster officer in Cagwait municipality. "Since they've experienced a similar quake already, they calmly went out of their houses and stayed outdoors for around an hour," he said.

Hinatuan police Staff Sergeant Joseph Lambo said a quake on Sunday evening—which USGS said was magnitude 6.6 -- sent people rushing out of their homes again. "They were panicking due to the memory of the previous night's quake," Lambo told AFP. — AFP

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International

Chilean appeals conviction for murdering Japanese ex-girlfriend

A developed country as France cannot sentence a person to 28 years on the basis of a hypothesis

VESOUL: A French court on Monday opened the appeal trial for a Chilean man who was sentenced to 28 years in prison last year for murdering his Japanese ex-girlfriend, Narumi Kurosaki. The trial opened shortly after 9:00 am (0800 GMT) in the town of Vesoul in eastern France.

Nicolas Zepeda spoke French to judge Francois Arnaud, who told him he could choose the language in which he wished to express himself. "I understand. Thank you", Zepeda replied in front of a packed courtroom, which included the victim's mother and two sisters.

The hearing had to be suspended, however, due to the absence of a juror. Zepeda was sentenced in April last year to 28 years in jail for the murder of Kurosaki, then aged 21, in December 2016. Her body was never found. He has insisted he is innocent.

In February, the appeal was delayed after the defendant's lawyer was changed at the last moment. Sylvie Galley, who represents Kurosaki's family, told reporters: "If the family is here today, it's for one and only one reason — to honour Narumi's memory". "The family has come without any hope of revelation, confession or truth from Nicolas Zepeda," she added.

The defendant's father, Humberto Zepeda, said he wanted to see his son exonerated at the end of the "new trial". "No-one can say with certainty today that Narumi is dead," he said. "This is the 21st century. A country as developed as France cannot sentence a person to 28 years on the basis of a hypothesis. It's not possible." Kurosaki, a brilliant scholarship student, arrived in the eastern French city of Besancon that summer to learn French. She disappeared on December 4. Zepeda, with whom she had broken up a year earlier, was the last person to see her alive.

The Chilean has admitted spending the night with Kurosaki in December, claiming he ran into her by chance. Several witnesses reported hearing "screams of terror", although none called the police at the time. Some of Kurosaki's friends received strange messages in the following days from her social networking accounts, which police believe were sent by Zepeda. He was extradited from Chile to France in 2020.

Renaud Portejoie, a lawyer for Zepeda, expressed hope the new trial would help "change the situation". Zepeda has learned French in prison, which could help him express himself better in court. — AFP



VESOUL: This court sketch made on December 4, 2023, shows Nicolas Zepeda, a Chilean man accused of allegedly murdering his Japanese ex-girlfriend in France in 2016, on the first day of the appeal trial, in Vesoul, eastern France, on December 4, 2023. — AFP

Far from the violence, Gaza wounded find care at Cairo hospital

CAIRO: Ilham Majid was praying when bombs fell on her Gaza house, and her husband only found her hours later under the rubble, alive but seriously wounded. She was one of the luckier ones -- 17 other family members, including two of her children, were killed in that fateful October 31 raid in the Jabalia refugee camp of northern Gaza, where Zionist entity has been fighting Hamas militants following deadly attacks earlier that month.

Now, like several other Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, Majid is receiving medical treatment in Egypt. "All of a sudden I felt the house crumbling. Three stories collapsed on top of me," the 42-year-old recalled from her hospital bed at Cairo's Nasser Hospital.

"I got shrapnel all over my body. My liver was hit, my leg, ribs and my jaw are all broken. I cannot walk." Majid said her husband found her trapped under the rubble of the house by chance four-and-a-half hours later, thanks to one of her fingers that was sticking out.

"I almost could not breathe—almost dead," she said. Her 15-year-old daughter was killed in the bombardment, and 10 days later the body of her 17-year-old son was pulled from under the debris. It was already rotting. Ever since the tragedy that ripped apart her family -- 50 relatives were staying at the house when it was hit—Majid has been looking at pictures of her son on her cell phone. Since early October, several Palestinians wounded

in Zionist entity's bombardment of the Gaza Strip, and some suffering various illnesses, have been authorised to leave the besieged territory and travel to Egypt for medical care.

More than 15,500 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in Gaza since fighting began on October 7, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. Zionist entity unleashed an air and ground campaign against the densely-populated territory with the aim of destroying Hamas, after the militants broke through Gaza's militarised border into Zionist entity. The unprecedented attacks by the Palestinian group killed about 1,200 people, also mostly civilians, while around 240 others were taken hostage, according to Zionist authorities.

'Catastrophic'

The war on Gaza has devastated swathes of the coastal territory, levelled entire neighbourhoods and destroyed much of the infrastructure, including hospitals.

Even before fighting resumed on Friday after a week-long pause during which militants released hostages in exchange for prisoners held by Zionist entity, Gaza's health system was on its knees with hospitals resembling a "horror movie", according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Now it is "catastrophic", the UN agency has said. Currently, only 18 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are even minimally to partially functional, with the three main hospitals in the north barely operative. Richard Peepkorn, WHO's representative in the Palestinian territories, told reporters in Geneva via video-link from Gaza on Friday.

The United Nations says not a single hospital in northern Gaza can carry out surgeries after several



CAIRO: Palestinian boy Youssef, 13, receives medical care at Nasser Institute hospital in Cairo, on December 3, 2023, after he was evacuated to Egypt following his injuries sustained amid fighting between Zionist entity and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. — AFP

were attacked by Zionist entity, while those in the south are overwhelmed by the number of casualties they receive daily. At Cairo's Nasser Hospital, patients such as Majid are trying to slowly regain their strength far away from the violence and chaos consuming Gaza. Youssef, 13, lay in a bed staring into the distance, his face puffy. Dried blood stained

his right leg which was held together with metal rods. "He was in a complete state of shock when I found him," said his older brother, under the rubble of their four-storey home in the Shati refugee camp. In another hospital room further down the corridor, Lubna al-Shafei, 36, said she was being treated for a "neck wound". — AFP

Zionists expand Gaza carnage...

Continued from Page 1

a battlefield", the military warned. "It is extremely dangerous to go there." Full-scale fighting resumed Friday after the collapse of a week-long truce brokered by Qatar with support from the United States and Egypt, during which Hamas and the Zionist entity had exchanged hostages and prisoners.

Air strikes have since intensified in Gaza's south, said James Elder, a spokesman for the United Nations children's agency UNICEF. "Despite what has been assured, attacks in the south of Gaza are every bit as vicious as what the north endured," he posted Monday on X, formerly Twitter. "This is the worst bombardment of the war right now in south Gaza. I am seeing massive child casualties. We have a final warning to save children; and our collective conscience. Somehow, it's getting worse for children and mothers."

International Committee of the Red Cross president Mirjana Spoljaric, visiting Gaza, described the suffering as "intolerable". "I have arrived in Gaza, where people's suffering is intolerable," she said on X. "It is unacceptable that civilians have no safe place to go in Gaza, and with a military siege in place there is also no adequate humanitarian response currently possible," she added in an ICRC statement.

Walaa Abu Libda found shelter at the Al-Aqsa hospital but said her four-year-old daughter remained trapped under rubble. "I don't know if she is dead or alive," she said, one of an estimated 1.8 million people displaced in Gaza — roughly three-quarters of the population. The Zionist military said Sunday it had carried out around 10,000 air strikes in total, while more than 11,500 rockets had been fired at the Zionist entity since the war began, government spokesman Eylon Levy said.

The Zionist army said Monday that three more

soldiers had been killed in fighting in the northern Gaza Strip, raising the number of troop deaths there to 75. The fatalities brought to 401 the number of Zionist defense personnel killed since Oct 7, among them those killed in the Hamas attacks themselves.

More air strikes rained down on northern Gaza where Hamas' armed wing reported clashes with Zionist tanks. Rocket salvos were again fired from Gaza towards Zionist territory. In the southern Gaza city of Rafah, resident Abu Jahar Al-Hajj said an air strike near his home felt "like an earthquake". "The earth shook, and the sound was so loud. Pieces of concrete started falling on us," he said. The Zionist entity's ally the United States has intensified calls for the protection of Gaza's civilians, with Vice President Kamala Harris saying that "too many innocent Palestinians have been killed".

A White House official said Sunday the United States believes the Zionist entity is "making an effort" to minimize civilian casualties in Gaza. The Zionist entity said that it was not seeking to force Palestinian civilians to permanently leave their homes. "We have asked civilians to evacuate the battlefield and we have provided a designated humanitarian zone inside the Gaza Strip," military spokesman Jonathan Conrucus said, referring to a tiny coastal area of the territory named Al-Mawasi. Any suggestion of Palestinian dispersal is highly contentious in the Arab world as the war that led to the Zionist entity's creation 75 years ago gave rise to the exodus or forced displacement of 760,000 Palestinians.

The Zionist-occupied West Bank has also seen a surge in violence since October. The Palestinian Authority's health ministry said two Palestinians had been shot dead in a Zionist raid on the northern West Bank town of Qalqilya, while a man was killed in Qalandia refugee camp. Despite the war, Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial resumed on Monday. Netanyahu is accused of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, allegations he denies. The trial had been suspended after the Oct 7 attacks. —AFP

from Lebanon and Yemen, while American forces in Iraq and Syria have been targeted in a series of attacks that have injured dozens of US personnel.

Washington has blamed the attacks on Iran-backed forces and responded with air strikes on multiple occasions. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in address to a security forum on Saturday that the United States "will not tolerate attacks on American personnel. And so these attacks must stop". "Until they do, we will do what we need to do to protect our troops — and to impose costs on those who attack them," he said. — AFP

Gold hits record high; bitcoin tops...

Continued from Page 1

Bets on an easing of monetary policy were ramped up when Powell said Friday that it was "well into restrictive territory" after more than a year of hikes that have put borrowing costs at a two-decade high. Central banks around the globe have sent interest rates soaring, helping to bring down surging inflation. Bloomberg reported that traders saw a 60 percent chance of a US rate cut, while they have fully priced in one in May. "Markets are piling in on the rate cut bets," said Kyle Rodda at Capital.com. He added that recession risks added to gold's appeal.

Bitcoin broke back above \$40,000 on hopes that firms including BlackRock would be given US approval to sell the first spot bitcoin exchange-traded funds. Bloomberg said a batch of the products are thought to be given the go-ahead by the Securities and Exchange Commission by next month.

The currency remains well below its record val-

UAE 'respects' science; Saudi...

Continued from Page 1

1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels — a reduction outlined by Shear's UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Guardian newspaper published a video on Sunday showing Jaber having a testy exchange with former Irish president Mary Robinson during an online forum.

"I'm not in any way signing up to a discussion that is alarmist," Jaber told the SHE Changes Climate online conference on Nov 21. "I am factual and I respect the science, and there is no science out there, or no scenario out there, that says that the phase-out of fossil fuels is what's going to achieve 1.5 (degrees)."

The video sparked an outcry among NGOs, which were already outraged by the appointment of an oil company boss to head the crucial climate negotiations. "If the COP28 president is guided by science and 1.5C remains his north star, he must draw the right conclusions: Nothing short of a full and rapid phase out of fossil fuels will get us there," said Romain Ioualalen, of Oil Change International.

Jaber said Monday that he has said "over and over that the phase down and the phase out of fossil fuel is inevitable". Although he also said it in the video, Jaber had previously only talked publicly of

ue of almost \$69,000 in 2020, but the rally marks a recovery following the high-profile scandals and collapses that rocked the crypto industry. FTX, the world's second-biggest crypto exchange, dramatically went under last year, and its boss Sam Bankman-Fried faces up to 110 years in prison for what prosecutors described as "one of the biggest financial frauds in American history".

And last month, Changpeng "CZ" Zhao stepped down as CEO of Binance — the world's biggest crypto exchange — after he and the company pleaded guilty to sweeping money laundering violations. Bitcoin is created — or "mined" — as a reward when powerful computers solve complex problems. But the amount of bitcoin is limited and every four years, the reward is halved. The next "halving" is due in May 2024.

In equities trading, troubled developer China Evergrande briefly surged more than 13 percent after a court in the city allowed extra time to form a restructuring plan aimed at avoiding liquidation. The firm, which defaulted on a debt repayment in 2021 and has reported more than \$300 billion in liabilities, was hit with a winding-up petition and faces liquidation if officials decide its proposal is not sufficient. —AFP

the inevitability of a "phase-down" — a weaker term as it implies that fossil fuels would not completely go away. Adding to the confusion, the website of the COP28 presidency published a summary of the first few days of the talks which said that 22 heads of state and ministers discussed "the phase down of fossil fuels".

It did not mention a phase-out, which many heads of state and government and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for during speeches on Friday and Saturday. A first draft of a COP28 agreement released on Friday included both options — a "phasedown/out" of fossil fuels, which are the largest contributors to climate change. Negotiators must now find common ground during talks due to end on Dec 12, with an agreement on the fossil fuels seen as key to the success of COP28.

Participants in the talks told AFP that the European Union, several Latin American countries and island nations back the 1.5C target, which implies a rapid phase-out. Other developed countries, including oil producers such as the United States, Canada, Norway and Australia also defend the 1.5C goal but with less ambitious paths out of fossil fuels.

Most African countries back a phase-out but with a longer delay for developing nations. Major producers Russia and Saudi Arabia and top consumer China oppose mentioning fossil fuels in the text. Jaber pleaded for the process to be given "the space it needs. And if anything, judge us on what we will deliver at the end of this COP." — Agencies

US shoots down drones as attacks...

Continued from Page 1

Those deaths have provoked widespread anger in the Middle East and provided an impetus for attacks against American troops in the region as well as on the Zionist entity by armed groups opposed to both. The Zionist entity has faced drone and missiles launched

International

Five bodies found after crash of Osprey off Japan: US military

Ongoing combined effort to recover the remaining crew members from the wreckage

TOKYO: US and Japanese rescuers found five bodies on Monday following the crash of an Osprey military aircraft last week off Japan with eight crew on board, the US military said. "Today (Monday), the combined Japanese and United States teams... had a breakthrough when their surface ships and dive teams were able to locate remains along with the main fuselage of the aircraft wreckage," the US Air Force said in a statement.

"The dive teams were able to confirm five additional crew members from the original team of eight that were involved with the crash," it said. "Currently two crew members of the five located today have been successfully recovered by the attending teams. There is an ongoing combined effort to recover the remaining crew members from the wreckage."

Hours after the aircraft disappeared on November 29 near the island of Yakushima, Japanese first responders had located and recovered the first known casualty from the crash of the CV-22 aircraft. The latest discovery, which follows a large-scale joint search operation that has lasted since the incident, meant that two crew members from the aircraft remained unaccounted for.

Japan's public broadcaster NHK, citing unidentified sources, said earlier on Monday what appeared to be the front part of the aircraft, possibly including the cockpit, had been found. The Osprey, which can operate like a helicopter or a fixed-wing turboprop plane, has suffered a string of fatal accidents. A crash in northern Australia killed three US Marines in August, while four more died in another crash in Norway during NATO training exercises last year.

Three Marines were also killed in 2017 when another Osprey crashed off Australia's north coast and 19 Marines died when their Osprey crashed during drills in Arizona in 2000.

Suspension request

The United States temporarily grounded the aircraft in Japan in 2016 after an Osprey crash-landed off Okinawa, sparking anger among locals. Defence Minister Minoru Kihara said on Thursday he had asked the US military to again suspend Osprey flights—except for search-and-rescue operations—and that Japan's military had halted using its own Ospreys pending safety checks.

But the Pentagon announced that only the unit of the crashed CV-22 had halted flying. "The United States is taking all appropriate safety measures, as we do for every flight and every operation," spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said last week.

"The unit of the CV-22 that had the accident is not conducting flight operations. All V22 Ospreys in Japan operate only after undergoing thorough maintenance and safety checks," Singh said. "We have already started sharing information about the accident with our Japanese partners, and have pledged to continue to do so in a timely and transparent manner."

An emergency management official in the Kagoshima region where the crash took place said police had been told the aircraft had been "spewing fire from a left engine". NHK quoted a local fisherwoman who said she saw the aircraft crash into the sea, sending up a column of water 100 metres (330 feet) into the air. —AFP



YAKUSHIMA: US military personnel carry a dinghy as they head out to search for the crash of a US CV-22B Osprey aircraft, on the island of Yakushima, Kagoshima Prefecture. The tilt-rotor CV-22B Osprey went down on November 29 off the island of Yakushima on a routine training mission with eight crew on board. — AFP

N Korean smugglers disguised under Pacific island flags

SYDNEY: North Korean "smuggling networks" are registering ships in Pacific nations to disguise themselves while trafficking oil, according to former United Nations sanctions experts and documents obtained by AFP. With strict sanctions limiting Pyongyang's ability to import fuel, North Korean smugglers have adopted increasingly creative methods to deceive authorities and dodge scrutiny. These efforts, security analysts said, could be directly linked to the North's military ambitions.

"Almost none of the Pacific Islands have escaped North Korean attempts to hide their vessels," said Neil Watts, a former member of the UN Security Council's expert panel on North Korea. The Washington-based Center for Advanced Defense Studies has been monitoring the bustling shipping lanes of the Taiwan Strait and Korean Peninsula. An internal sanctions database compiled by the think tank, and seen by AFP, identifies 17 vessels registered in the Pacific nations of Palau, Niue, Cook Islands or Tuvalu. By tracking these ships, the centre's researchers have identified patterns of "high risk behaviour" that they believe are linked to "illicit" North Korean oil supply chains.

A further 11 vessels flagged to Niue or Palau have been named in separate UN Security Council reports published since 2020, accused of carrying fuel shipments bound for North Korea. Watts, a former captain in the South African navy, said smugglers were looking to create "layers of obfuscation". This made it

difficult for investigators to determine if a vessel was sailing on legitimate business, or if it was stuffed with contraband cargo.

Oil smuggling 'mothership'

In August 2020, a 6,000-tonne tanker was acquired by new owners after more than a decade hauling freight for a Vietnam-based logistics company. Shipping records show it was swiftly christened with a fresh name, the Sky Venus, and registered to sail under a new flag—the blue and yellow banner of Palau. Although the Sky Venus easily blended in among the shipping fleets of Asia, UN investigators began to notice a series of suspicious movements. It would dock at oil terminals to pump its tanks full of petroleum, UN sanctions reports allege, before meeting smaller vessels on the open sea to siphon off its cargo.

By mid-2021, the reports allege, the tanker was being run as a smuggling "mothership". Through these chains of "ship-to-ship" transfers, investigators allege the fuel was ultimately hauled back to North Korea.

Flag hopping

What flag a ship flies has little to do with where it was built, where its crew are based or the nationality of its owners. Owners can pick which flag they sail under by paying a fee—sometimes just thousands of dollars—to join a country's shipping registry.

Sanctions expert Hugh Griffiths, who led the UN Security Council's North Korea panel from 2014 to 2019, said some Pacific registries were deliberately targeted by smugglers. "Put simply, North Korean smuggling networks know that these registries are not monitoring the vessels which sail under their flag," Griffiths told AFP. "Smugglers in general have 'flag hopped'. The Cook Islands used to be more popular, then it was Kiribati, then Palau, then Niue." A UN sanctions report

singled out Niue in March this year, saying its registry failed to conduct "convincing due diligence" when registering two suspect ships in 2022.

Those vessels—the Anni and the An Hai 6 -- declared they were sailing to Japan under Niue's flag. But they unexpectedly veered off course and docked at North Korea's main port of Nampo instead. Both ships are now registered in North Korea, according to records from the International Maritime Organization.

From oil to missiles

Joe Byrne, a research fellow with the Royal United Services Institute in London, said Pyongyang was constantly plotting new ways to conceal "illicit operations". While shipments of coal or oil might seem relatively harmless, Byrne said these helped fuel the country's military ambitions and weapons programmes.

"Whether it's revenue generation from exports of coal, or keeping its missile launchers on the road with imported oil, North Korea's sanctions evasion is directly linked to its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile program," Byrne told AFP.

In rare cases, investigators can unwind smuggling networks by tracking ships as they sail into North Korea. But more commonly they are forced to untangle convoluted financial webs expertly designed to hide who is pulling the strings. "You can close down a shipping company and it's gone. But it doesn't take much to open up a new one, and you'll find the same people involved," said economist Bill Newcomb, the finance specialist on the UN Security Council's North Korea panel between 2011 and 2014.

A spokesperson for Palau shipping confirmed that five vessels—linked to sanctions evasion between 2017 and 2022 -- had been struck off the country's registry. Two additional ships had been deregistered before they were accused of smuggling, she said. —AFP



HONG KONG: Hong Kong democrat Clarisse Yeung arrives to court where Hong Kong's largest national security trial against 47 pro-democracy activists started its final arguments on November 29, 2023 more than 1,000 days since the case under the Beijing-imposed law began. — AFP

HK's largest security trial closes, activists await subversion verdict

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's largest national security case, in which 47 pro-democracy activists are accused of subversion, closed on Monday with a verdict expected in three or four months. The defendants represent a cross-section of Hong Kong's opposition—from democratically elected lawmakers to academics—which has been effectively squashed after China imposed the sweeping national security law in 2020 to quell dissent.

Enacted after the city saw massive, and at times violent, pro-democracy protests, the law is regarded by critics as a clampdown on liberties that Hong Kong has enjoyed under an agreement Britain reached with China before handing the city over in 1997.

The case has dragged on for more than 1,000 days since authorities first filed charges and is being closely observed as a bellwether for Hong Kong's political environment. The group of 47 were jointly charged with "conspiracy to subvert state power" for organising, joining and supporting an unofficial primary election in July 2020 to shortlist pro-democracy candidates for the legislature election.

The prosecution alleged the group intended to obtain the legislature majority with the primary winners, then to compel the government to meet demands raised by protesters by threatening to indiscriminately veto the annual budget.

The final debates included a focus on whether vetoing the budget was a constitutional power provided by the Basic Law—Hong Kong's mini-constitution—or an "unlawful means" to the alleged subversive plot.

"We are talking about somebody doing something in breach of the central principles" of the Basic Law, leading prosecutor Jonathan Man told the court. While the prosecution argued that "unlawful means" does not need to be violent, defence lawyers said it must involve "physical coercion" or "criminal acts".

Defence lawyer Kevin Chan said the prosecution did not have any case or statute to back its definition of "unlawful". "What the prosecution has alleged would not amount to subversion in any other common law jurisdiction—it would be considered normal politics," said defence lawyer Trevor Beel.

Most of the group have been jailed for nearly three years since being charged in early 2021, with 31 pleading guilty and 16 standing trial since February. The 118-day trial has been conducted without a jury—a major departure from Hong Kong's 178-year-old common law tradition—as ordered by the secretary for justice to prevent the "involvement of foreign elements". Presided over by three government-picked senior judges, the court will deliver a verdict in "tentatively three to four months". — AFP



QUEZON CITY: Supporters of Philippine lawmaker France Castro hold a noise barrage before the preliminary investigation of her grave threat complaint filed against former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte outside the Prosecutor's Office in Quezon City, Metro Manila on December 4, 2023. — AFP

Filipino congresswoman accuses Duterte of second death threat

MANILA: A Filipino congresswoman accused former president Rodrigo Duterte on Monday of threatening to kill her for a second time. House of Representatives Deputy Minority Leader France Castro made the allegation in a "supplemental" criminal complaint filed with prosecutors in Manila.

Castro and Duterte had been subpoenaed to appear at the prosecutor's office on Monday to present witnesses and supporting documents relating to the congresswoman's first complaint filed on October 24. Castro has alleged Duterte made "grave threats" against her under the Cybercrime Prevention Act during an October 10 interview with local broadcaster SMNI.

She alleged on Monday Duterte had threatened her life again in an interview with the same broadcaster on November 16. In a transcript of that in-

terview filed to the prosecutor, Duterte talked about communist rebels who are fighting a decades-old insurgency.

"So you, France, how do you solve the problem now?" Duterte asked. "So that's my statement, communists should be killed, you should be included." Duterte did not appear at the prosecutor's office but two of his lawyers were there, Castro told reporters.

There was no immediate comment from Duterte or his legal representatives about Castro's latest allegation. The prosecutor will decide if there is enough evidence to charge Duterte in court. Duterte was protected from prosecution when he was president but he can be charged for alleged crimes committed in the Philippines now that he is an ordinary citizen.

Duterte often threatened to kill people, including drug dealers and rights activists, when he was president from 2016 to 2022. He also frequently labelled critics as communist sympathisers—a practice known as "red-tagging", which can result in the arrest, detention or even death of the person targeted.

His signature policy was an anti-drug campaign that killed thousands of people and triggered an international investigation into an alleged crime against humanity. — AFP

Rains pound southern India ahead of cyclone

CHENNAI: Rains lashed southern India's city of Chennai on Monday ahead of the landfall of a powerful cyclone, with a crocodile spotted swimming the streets and cars floating away. Cyclone Michaung will hit the Andhra Pradesh state's coast on Tuesday morning as a "severe cyclonic storm", packing winds of 90-100 kilometres (55-62 miles) per hour with gusts up to 110 km/h, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

In Tamil Nadu, the airport in state capital Chennai was expected to be closed until late Monday, local media reported, as rains pounded the city. The IMD issued warnings to those fishing in the area to suspend operations, warning of expected "major damage" to thatch huts along the coast.

Trees were uprooted and vehicles swept away due to the heavy rains, according to images posted on social media. The police posted images of rescuers evacuating people from waterlogged areas. Tamil Nadu government official Supriya Sahu warned people not to approach a crocodile, after one was spotted on the streets after being washed out by the rains. —AFP



CHENNAI: A resident wades through a flooded street after heavy rains in Chennai on December 4, 2023. Cyclone Michaung is expected to make landfall on December 5 along the southern coast. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2023

Net-zero targets must include fossil fuel phase-out: Monitor

Net Zero Tracker releases report amid contentious talks at COP28

DUBAI: Most countries which have committed to a target of net-zero carbon emissions have not announced any plans to phase out fossil fuels, putting those pledges at risk of being little more than a "bumper sticker," a climate monitor warned Monday. A new report from the group Net Zero Tracker was released amid contentious negotiations at the COP28 climate talks in Dubai about whether nations will agree to "phase down" or "phase out" planet-heating fossil fuels.

Some 150 countries have committed to a net-zero emissions target of some kind, covering 88 percent of all human-driven greenhouse gases emitted worldwide, the report said.

Yet only 13 percent of those countries have made at least one commitment to phase out the use, production or exploration of coal, oil and gas, said the platform, which is run by several research centers including Britain's Oxford University. Natasha Lutz, the group's co-data lead, suggested that the proliferation of net-zero pledges could amount to little if they are not matched by phase-out plans.

"A pledge without a plan for implementation is at risk of becoming a bumper-sticker: broadcasted but never taken seriously," she said. The report was released a day after it was revealed that Sultan Al-Jaber—who is both the UAE's COP28 president and the head of state oil giant ADNOC—said there was "no science" to show that phasing out fossil fuels would achieve the world's climate goals.

Jaber also said that removing fossil fuels would take the world "back into caves," according to a



Natasha Lutz



DUBAI: Participants walk past flags of attending countries at the COP28 United Nations climate talks in Dubai on December 4, 2023.-- AFP

video published by The Guardian. The Net Zero Tracker analysis looked at more than 1,500 nations, regions, cities and large companies who have committed to any kind of net-zero target, analysing how serious they are about achieving the goal. Around 95 percent of countries that produce oil and gas have

not pledged to phase out exploration, the analysis found. It was more positive when it came to companies, finding that 56 percent of firms working in coal production had at least partially committed to phasing out the particularly dirty fuel.

African and European companies were relative-

ly well represented in the phase-out plans, while US firms lagged far behind. The report also praised Spain for including phase-out plans in legislation, Swedish capital Stockholm for its emissions reductions targets and Danish energy company Orsted for divesting from fossil fuels. —AFP

Turkey's inflation ticks up to 62%

ISTANBUL: Turkey's annual inflation rate ticked up slightly in November, the state statistics agency said on Monday, showing further signs of leveling off following a series of sharp interest rate hikes.

The rate moved to 61.98 percent last month from 61.36 percent in October, the TUIK state statistics agency said. The pace at which consumer prices are rising has started to ease, after six successive months of interest rate hikes took borrowing cost to 40 percent from 8.5 percent.

Analysts are penciling in a final rate hike of 2.5 percentage points at the central bank's next policy meeting on December 21. The latest batch of data show higher borrowing costs starting to slow down consumption—a key goal of the central bank. Turkey's gross domestic product rose by just 0.3 percent between July and September. It had risen by



ISTANBUL: Turkey's annual inflation rate ticked up slightly in November.

3.3 between April and June. "The central bank will welcome these figures as evidence that demand is cooling and inflation pressures continue to soften," said analyst Liam Peach of Capital Economics.

tions," Raisi said, adding that "the common feature of the two countries is that they both stand against the system of domination."

Diaz-Canel, who arrived in Tehran on Sunday after participating in the UN's COP28 climate talks in Dubai, thanked Iran for supporting his country's "fight against the cruel embargo" imposed by the United States. Seven memorandums of understanding and cooperation documents were signed in various sectors of science and technology, health, agriculture, energy and mining, communications and medicine. Cuba is going through its worst economic crisis since the disappearance of Soviet subsidies in the 1990s. The island faces shortages of food, medicine and fuel, while Iran is experiencing a record depreciation of its currency and rampant inflation.

The last time a Cuban president visited Iran was in 2001 when revolutionary figure Fidel Castro travelled to the Islamic republic. Raisi visited Havana in June on the last stop of a tour of "friendly countries" in Latin America, including Venezuela. — AFP

ahead," BIS said in a report. "A substantial amount of debt will become due in the next few years and will need to be refinanced at significantly higher rates. Small corporates are particularly vulnerable to such a scenario." The institution, based in the northern Swiss city of Basel, reviewed 83,000 debt instruments issued by more than 18,000 companies in 53 countries, to assess debt rollover needs.

Within four years, many small businesses will have debts that are maturing and will have to be refinanced "in excess of 10 percent of total annual revenues and over four times annual earnings", before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, according to the BIS report. If refinancing needs are less marked in the short term for medium-sized enterprises, they too will rise to around 10 percent of annual revenues and 40 percent of their gross operating surplus by 2026.

The refinancing needs of large firms are lower, at

"However, bringing inflation down to much lower levels will require monetary policy to remain tight for a prolonged period and we expect the central bank to leave interest rates unchanged throughout 2024," Peach said. Signs of Turkey's economy starting to emerge from crisis are starting to be noticed by foreign investors, who had pulled out of the market because of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's unpredictable past policies. Analysts blame Erdogan for setting off the inflation spiral by forcing the nominally independent central bank to slash borrowing costs far below the rate at which prices were rising. The official annual inflation rate peaked at 85.51 percent in October 2022.

Standard and Poor's revised Turkey's long-term sovereign credit rating to positive from stable last month. "Inflation appears to have peaked, albeit at elevated levels of over 60 percent," the ratings agency said. But it also warned: "The policy reset will take at least two years to tame inflation." Turkey's central bank expects inflation to peak in May of next year at between 70 and 75 percent. — AFP



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the Iranian presidency on December 4, 2023 shows Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi (right) and his Cuban counterpart Miguel Diaz-Canel shaking hands during a joint press conference at the presidential palace in Tehran. — AFP

around three percent of annual revenues and only 20 percent of their gross operating surplus. Central banks quickly tightened their rates, faced with soaring inflation. "We are at a stage where inflation is coming down. Now looking forward, the challenges central banks have is basically to decide what to do next," said Claudio Borio, head of the BIS monetary and economic department.

If central banks knew they had to raise rates "rapidly and persistently" when inflation got out of control, "the direction of interest rates is less clear than it was during the phase when they had to tighten", he admitted. Because the evolution of inflation is uncertain, "we are not out of the woods yet", Borio said.

Investors are increasingly expecting the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank to begin lowering interest rates next year as inflation drops and economic growth slows even if officials have declined to commit to any course of action. — AFP

News in Brief

UK unveils north England rail boost

LONDON: Britain on Monday outlined plans to invest almost £4 billion (\$5 billion) to improve rail links in northern England, after it axed the region's key section of a new high-speed railway. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in October announced that HS2 would no longer run on high-speed rails to Manchester in northwest England—and instead pledged to spend the £36 billion saved on improving current train, road and bus networks. The government on Monday said it would inject £3.9 billion into the modernization of a route linking the northern cities of Manchester, Leeds and York, adding that it would make journeys faster as well as more frequent and reliable. — AFP

Telefonica to cut 5,100 jobs in Spain

MADRID: Spanish telecoms giant Telefonica will axe nearly 5,100 jobs in its home market by 2026 -- roughly one third of its posts in Spain—a union source said on Monday. The staff cuts, which were announced during a meeting between management and unions, will affect all areas of the debt-laden company's business in Spain, the source told AFP. Spain's largest telecoms company employs about 16,500 people in its home country, while its global workforce is over 100,000. It is present in 12 nations including Brazil, Britain and Germany. — AFP

German exports disappoint again

FRANKFURT: German exports fell unexpectedly in October on the back of lower demand from fellow European Union countries, official data showed Monday. Exports totaled 126.4 billion euros (\$137 billion), down 0.2 percent on the previous month, according to adjusted figures from federal statistics agency Destatis. Analysts surveyed by Factset had predicted a one-percent rebound in exports following a dip in September. Imports meanwhile declined more sharply by 1.2 percent month-on-month, totaling 108.6 billion euros. As a result, the country's trade surplus—the difference between exports and imports—grew to 17.8 billion euros from 16.7 billion in September. — AFP

'No' to Origin Energy takeover

SYDNEY: Shareholders in Australia's Origin Energy on Monday rejected a multi-billion-dollar North American takeover, which had been sold as a path to cutting carbon emissions. The proposed takeover by a consortium led by Canada's Brookfield and US investor EIG won the backing of 68.9 percent of the shareholder votes—failing to meet the required 75-percent majority, Origin Energy said. The acquisition was valued at Aus\$18.7 billion (US\$12 billion) when an outline deal was announced in March. — AFP

Iran, Cuba vow closer ties to face US sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran and Cuba vowed Monday to strengthen relations and stand together against sanctions imposed on them by the United States.

"What can neutralize the sanctions is the exchange of capacities between the two countries," Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said during a joint statement with his visiting Cuban counterpart Miguel Diaz-Canel. Cuba has been under a US embargo since 1962 and is included on the American list of countries supporting terrorism—like Iran, which is also subject to severe sanctions linked in particular to its nuclear program. "There is a serious determination between the two countries to develop rela-

BIS: Credit market tensions likely in coming years

ZURICH: The business credit market may witness tensions in the coming years, the Bank for International Settlements said Monday, warning that small businesses were notably vulnerable to refinancing at higher rates. During the phase of exceptionally low interest rates, many companies borrowed under favorable conditions and built up liquidity cushions so they can avoid having to refinance at the currently high borrowing rates, said BIS, considered the central bank of central banks, in its quarterly report.

"Tensions in corporate credit markets may lie

Business

Burgan Bank appoints Naqeeb Amin as GM of HR and Development for Group

Appointment to foster national talent across all departments



Naqeeb Amin

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the appointment of Naqeeb Amin, as the General Manager of Human Resources and Development for the Group. Joining the bank at an important moment of transformation, Amin will spearhead the bank's expansive human capital development efforts: crafting long-term strategies to attract, retain, and foster top national talent across the organization.

Following a series of top-level appointments and promotions across Burgan Bank in the past few months, this latest move seeks to further strengthen the Bank's senior leadership team with some of the industry's best talents.

Earlier this year, the Bank unveiled a new strategy and transformation roadmap, gearing Burgan towards becoming the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait, with a core focus on its human capital. Burgan Bank is also continuing its focus on Kuwaitization, especially at the leadership level, and this appointment will further support these nationalization efforts.

Speaking about the appointment, Fadel Mahmoud Abdullah, Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Kuwait, said: "As we move ahead in our transformation journey, we are fully aware that our employees are at the heart of everything that we do: they will drive

our transformation and realize the Bank's vision. Therefore, it is vital that we have the right leaders in place to shape and guide our human capital development efforts. Amin, a seasoned professional and a well-recognized expert in the field of change management, will be instrumental in achieving our culture transformation goals and further position Burgan Bank as an employer of choice within Kuwait's banking sector."

Amin is an accomplished professional, having held numerous leadership positions across various sectors and industries, including banking, telecommunications, technology,

petrochemicals, and medical. With more than 26 years of experience in Human Resources, he is an expert in the field of change management with a proven track record of successful culture transformation. He joined Burgan Bank from Ahli United Bank of Kuwait (AUB), where he was the General Manager of Human Resources, and his most recent focus was on leading HR transformation projects and employee engagement programs. Amin holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina and has also completed several Executive Leadership programs at Harvard Business School.

Spotify cuts 17% of jobs as growth slows

STOCKHOLM: Music streaming giant Spotify said Monday it would reduce the number of its employees by around 17 percent in a bid to cut costs amid "dramatically" slower economic growth. The announcement comes on the heels of a rare quarterly net profit of 65 million euros in October, compared to a loss of 166 million for the same period a year earlier, following 26 percent growth in active users for the third quarter to 574 million.

Around 1,500 people will leave the company, Spotify said. It was the latest in a series of layoffs announced in the tech industry cutting tens of thousands of jobs following a boom during COVID pandemic lockdowns. "I realize that for many, a reduction of this size will feel surprisingly large given the recent positive earnings report and our performance," chief executive Daniel Ek wrote in a letter to employees, which was seen by AFP.

He said that in 2020 and 2021, the Swedish company "took advantage of the opportunity presented by lower-cost capital and invested significantly in team expansion, content enhancement, marketing and new verticals." "However, we now find ourselves in a very different environment," noting that "economic growth has slowed dramatically and capital has become more expensive."

"Despite our efforts to reduce costs this past year, our cost structure for where we need to be is still too big," he added. Ek said that in 2022 and 2023, Spotify, which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, was "more productive but less efficient. We need to be both."

The company had "too many people dedicated to supporting work and even doing work around the work rather than contributing to opportunities with real impact." A leaner structure will "allow us to invest our profits more strategically back into the business," he said.

Spotify has invested heavily since its 2006 launch to fuel growth with expansions into new markets and, in later years, exclusive content such as podcasts. It has invested over one billion dollars into podcasts alone. In 2017, the company had around 3,000 staff members, more than tripling the figure to around 9,800 at the end of 2022.

The company has never posted a full-year net profit and only occasionally quarterly profits despite its success in the online music market. In the third quarter, Spotify registered a 16 percent rise in paying subscribers, which make up the bulk of the company's revenue, to 226 million, despite price hikes.

It said it expected to exceed 600 million active users by the end of the year. Monday's lay-off announcement was Spotify's third this year. In January, the company announced around 600 job cuts, followed by another 200 in the podcast division in June. "We debated making smaller reductions throughout 2024 and 2025," Ek wrote in his letter.— AFP



In Peru, a small carbon footprint is not a choice

LIMA, Peru: Sofia Llocclla Pellaca always descends on foot from the unlit hill where she lives with hardly any electricity on the outskirts of Lima. She rarely eats meat and cooks on a gas or wood stove.

She has never even heard of a carbon footprint. While some climate-conscious people in rich countries try to restrict their carbon emissions, Pellaca's minimal impact on the environment is an unhappy side-effect of poverty. Giving the poor a better life and spurring economic growth while also curbing planet-harming emissions is one of the major challenges facing world leaders meeting for COP28 climate talks next month in the United Arab Emirates.

"I walk down, I walk where I need to be, I walk back" up the hill, said Pellaca, 31, a single mother of two who barely uses public transport, owns no car or motorbike, and has never traveled by plane. Pellaca is a domestic worker who earns less than half Pe-



CILEGON, Indonesia: This picture taken on October 31, 2023 shows new construction at the Suralaya coal-fired power plant in Cilegon, Indonesia's Banten province. As countries gather in Dubai for crunch climate talks, the future of polluting fossil fuel coal will be high on the agenda. -- AFP

Indonesia's coal love affair still aflame despite pledges

SURALAYA, Indonesia: Sania sits in front of her home in Indonesia, less than a kilometer from Southeast Asia's biggest coal complex, where chimneys pump dark grey smoke and a chemical smell into the air. As countries gather in Dubai for crunch climate talks, the future of polluting fossil fuel coal will be high on the agenda. For some, the age of coal is now clearly over, and Indonesia has committed to moving away from the fuel despite being the world's top exporter.

But it is adding two more units to the Suralaya power plant, in Banten province next to the capital Jakarta, and has plans for new plants to power its nickel industry—key to the electric vehicle boom.

Sania, a 37-year-old housewife, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, is dreading the Suralaya expansion. "I am very worried. It's been very scary. I want to move out if I can because our house is too near to the plant," she told AFP.

"If the units start to operate, the dust here will be much worse. I mop the floor two to three times a day. The noise makes my head ache. The smell is terrible." It's a story repeated across Indonesia, where the government's pledge to end construction of new coal plants has been tempered by loopholes allowing existing expansions like that at Suralaya to proceed.

The government's promise also excludes so-called captive coal—plants that power industry rather than feed into the grid. Indonesia is one of the world's top coal producers, and is heavily reliant on the fuel for power generation. But it is also the recipient of a Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), which promises to mobilize \$20 billion to wean the country off coal.

Under the deal, Indonesia moved up its energy transition goals, pledging net-zero power sector emissions by 2050, and to boost the share of electricity generated from renewable sources to 44 percent by 2030. Solar and wind power each currently account for less than one percent of Indonesia's power mix.

'Cheapest, most reliable'

Its JETP calculations do not however account for captive power plants, with more than 13 gigawatts (GW) already installed and another 18 GW planned as

ru's minimum wage of \$265 per month. She lives in a shantytown in the fog-covered desert highlands of the Peruvian capital that are home to many of Lima's 2.7 million poor people. Peru's economy mainly leans on fishing and mining, with 73 percent of the working population in the informal sector.

It has one of the lowest carbon footprints in South America, emitting an average of 1.7 tons of carbon per person, compared to 4.2 tons in Argentina. In the United States, the average annual footprint per person is 15 tons, more than three times the global average.

Experts say that to stay below the critical benchmark two-degree Celsius (3.6-degree Fahrenheit) rise in global temperature, individuals need to reduce their carbon footprint to less than two tons in the coming decades. Eating less meat, taking fewer flights, driving less and using electricity more frugally are all billed as ways to reduce the emission of planet-warming greenhouse gases.

In Pellaca's prefabricated home, there is no bathroom or heating. She has a television and a half-empty fridge. She and her mother, who lives a few houses away, get infrequent electricity from a pirate connection. There is no public lighting or sewage system, and drinking water arrives every 15 days in tanker trucks. Some 27.5 percent of Peru's

of 2022, according to Jakarta-based energy think tank the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR).

Indonesia views these plants as vital to its growing role in the electric vehicle revolution, powering facilities that process nickel for batteries. It has even mooted designating as "green" coal-powered plants that power EV industry activities. "There's a major issue around captive coal power stations in Indonesia, that runs the risk of derailing or slowing that JETP process," said Leo Roberts, an analyst at climate think tank E3G. It could mean the deal is not "an effective whole economy transition for Indonesia", he said.

The Indonesian government, JETP secretariat and state-owned power company PLN did not respond to AFP's requests for comment. But Hendra Sinadia, executive director of the Indonesian Coal Mining Association, said efforts to push the country away from the fossil fuel were misguided and some coal-powered energy generation remains necessary.

"Coal is Indonesia's natural wealth. Indonesia has a significant potential for coal," he told AFP. "Coal remains the most relied-upon energy source to drive smelter development, allowing us to become one of the main players in the electric vehicle ecosystem." Closing existing power plants is complicated by the relative youth of many of Indonesia's facilities. That makes them expensive to retire because of the years of potential returns on investment left. "I believe choosing to phase out isn't a wise decision," said Sinadia. "Coal remains the cheapest, most reliable, and most accessible energy source."

But activists say that analysis ignores the planet-warming implications of unrestricted coal use as well as its serious health consequences. Data modelling by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air suggests emissions from the country's coal-fired power plants in 2022 were responsible for 10,500 deaths. "This 'cheap' label doesn't take into account the external costs due to environmental damage and health impacts caused," said Bondan Andriyanu, a researcher at Greenpeace.

Fisherman Hawasi, 55, also blames the Suralaya plant for pollution offshore that has depleted his livelihood. "There are no more catches in the waters near the shore. We have to sail far," he told AFP. "We have been beleaguered by pollution from all directions." IESR says Indonesia should retire nine GW of coal generation by 2030 to meet its commitments under JETP. But an energy ministry study released in September proposes retiring just over half that amount by 2030.—AFP

population of 30 million lives in poverty. Eradicating poverty and boosting access to services without increasing CO2 emissions from burning fossil fuels is a major challenge facing developing countries. In Peru, almost two-thirds of carbon emissions are a result of deforestation in the Amazon jungle and urbanization, said Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, former environment minister and president of the COP 20 in Lima in 2014.

He told AFP most of Peru's energy comes from hydro-electric sources. It is "confusing and misleading" to assume that because it is a developing country, Peru can shirk its responsibilities in the face of the climate crisis, said the former minister. Much of Latin America, he said, has failed to come up with "clear and well-planned strategies" to migrate towards renewable energy because it is "caught in the trap of oil, coal and gas."

Rich or poor, "the world will gradually leave fossil fuels behind. That is inevitable," said Pulgar-Vidal. On the outskirts of Lima, residents need improved landfills, basic services and construction that is in harmony with "the surrounding ecosystem," he said, and transport shortages must be addressed with electric vehicles. Pellaca, meanwhile, dreams of buying a motorbike on which to take her 14-year-old daughter to school.—AFP

Production woes hamper arms sales, says study

STOCKHOLM: Even with the war in Ukraine fuelling demand, revenue for the world's top arms suppliers dipped in 2022, as production issues kept companies unable to increase production, researchers said Monday. The sales of weapons and military services by the 100 largest arms companies in the world totalled \$597 billion in 2022, a decrease of 3.5 percent compared to 2021, according to a new report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). At the same time, geopolitical tensions coupled with Russia's invasion of Ukraine fuelled increased demand for weapons and military equipment.

Diego Lopes da Silva, a senior researcher at SIPRI, told AFP that in this context the slow-down in revenue was "unexpected". "What the decrease really shows is that there is a time lag between a demand shock like the war in Ukraine and the ability of companies to scale up production and really meet that demand," Lopes da Silva said. According to SIPRI, the decline was in large part due to diminished revenues among major arms makers in the United States, where manufacturers struggled with "supply chain issues and labor shortages" stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.



The sales of weapons and military services by the 100 largest arms companies in the world totalled \$597 billion in 2022, a decrease of 3.5 percent compared to 2021, according to a new report.

The United States alone saw a 7.9 percent decrease but still made up for 51 percent of total arms revenue in 2022, with 42 companies among the world's top 100. US arms suppliers are particularly vulnerable to supply chain disruptions as many of the weapon systems they produce are more complex. "That means that the supply chain is also more complex, and it has more parts, which means it's more vulnerable," Lopes da Silva said.

Russian arms makers also saw revenues drop significantly in the report, falling by 12 percent to \$20.8 billion. The decline was in part due to sanctions imposed on Russia over Ukraine, but Lopes da Silva also noted that lower revenues could also be the result of delayed payments from the Russian state. In addition, the transparency of arms makers in Russia has diminished and only two Russian companies were included in the top 100 "due to a lack of available data," according to SIPRI.

In contrast in other parts of the world such as the Middle East and Asia and Oceania, weapon makers producing less complicated systems were able to respond to the increased demand. The Middle East in fact saw the biggest increase of any region by percentage, growing 11 percent to reach \$17.9 billion. Turkish companies in particular saw an increase, with Baykar—which produces an unmanned drone widely used in Ukraine—seeing a 94 percent increase in revenue.

The combined revenue for arms suppliers in Asia and Oceania rose by 3.1 percent, reaching \$134 billion in 2022. China, which after the US represented the second largest supplier by country, saw its eight arms companies in the ranking increase their combined revenues by 2.7 percent, reaching to \$108 billion. Looking forward, Lopes da Silva said there were no signs of demand slowing down.

"In the company reports, something very interesting that we found is that the order intake and the backlogs of the companies, they are increasing by a lot," he told AFP. Added to that, many European countries have pledged increased military spending targets in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with some targets reaching all the way to 2030. "We're seeing that this demand will continue for the years to come. So we expect military spending to continue to increase and consequently arms revenues," Lopes da Silva said.—AFP

Business

China's Evergrande liquidation case adjourned until January

Property giant reported more than \$300 billion in liabilities

HONG KONG: Heavily indebted Chinese property giant Evergrande has until late January to put together a restructuring plan, a Hong Kong court ruled Monday, extending a deadline that could lead to its liquidation. Once China's biggest real estate developer, Evergrande has reported more than \$300 billion in liabilities and its troubles have become a symbol of the nation's years-long property crisis.

A creditor last year filed a winding-up petition in Hong Kong against China Evergrande Group — which would begin the process of liquidation — but the case has dragged on while parties tried to broker a deal out of court. Judge Linda Chan on Monday adjourned the case until January 29, a reprieve after earlier saying December 4 would be Evergrande's deadline before appointing independent liquidators from accounting firm KPMG.

Chan urged Evergrande on Monday to have "more direct discussion with relevant authorities to confirm what is on the table is doable". She emphasized "transparency is also key", asking whether the Chinese company planned to issue announcements on restructuring updates.

The demise of Evergrande, which first defaulted on a payment in 2021 and declared bankruptcy in the United States this year, has been closely watched as it was once a pillar of China's economy. China's construction and property sector once accounted for around a quarter of its GDP. But Chinese President Xi Jinping deemed the debt accrued by Evergrande and other property firms an unacceptable risk for China's financial system and overall economic health.

Authorities have gradually tightened developers' access to credit since 2020, and a wave of defaults

has followed. By the end of June, Evergrande estimated it had debts of \$328 billion. Evergrande in March offered to let creditors swap their debt into new notes issued by the company and equities in two subsidiaries, Evergrande Property Services Group and Evergrande New Energy Vehicle Group. Negotiations stalled in September when company chair Xu Jiayin was "subject to mandatory measures" from Chinese authorities on suspicion of "crimes".

The company said the same month that it could not issue new debt because its subsidiary in China, Hengda Real Estate Group, was being investigated. Lawyer Jose-Antonio Maurellet said Monday that Evergrande has had to "re-jeig or recast" its proposal since it was barred from issuing bonds or shares.

The firm will instead propose to issue "certificates" for the two subsidiaries, which were still trading as listed companies and "have value", Maurellet said. Evergrande will use the next two months to "further refine" the scheme and seek creditor support, he added. Lawyers for Top Shine Global, the creditor who filed the petition, told the court they would not actively seek liquidation — a move that jolted some other creditors.

"The petitioner changed its position and didn't push to wind up the company, which is a surprise to us," Neil McDonald, a partner at law firm Kirkland & Ellis LLP who advises an ad-hoc group of creditors, told reporters after the hearing. He added that the creditor group "has firmly rejected" the latest proposal Evergrande put forward to the court. Evergrande shares on Hong Kong's stock exchange rose by nine percent Monday to close at HK\$0.26 (\$0.03). Hong Kong has a common law legal system that is



NANJING, China: This aerial photo shows the Evergrande logo on residential buildings in Nanjing, in China's eastern Jiangsu province on December 4, 2023. — AFP

distinct from mainland China, and is favored by some offshore creditors as a venue to seek the liquidation of failing Chinese builders. It remains unclear if a winding-up order issued by a Hong Kong court can or will be enforced in the mainland. Stephen Innes, managing

partner at SPI Asset Management, said policymakers and investors are concerned about broader financial instability, adding that a liquidation order would be "nothing short of ruinous for other property developers and tragic for investors". — AFP

What we know about Evergrande's financial future

BEIJING: A Hong Kong court on Monday gave Chinese property giant Evergrande until the end of January to put together a restructuring plan, offering the embattled firm much-needed breathing room as it teeters on the brink of bankruptcy.

The real estate giant's astronomical debt has become emblematic of a years-long crisis in China's property market. Here's what we know about the state of Evergrande's finances:

What is Evergrande's situation?

In June — the last time it publicly disclosed its debts — Evergrande said it owed an estimated \$328 billion. The company was once China's biggest real estate firm, a giant in a sector that ballooned as property became the foundation of a burgeoning middle class's growing wealth.

But a long-running housing crisis has wreaked misery on the lives of homebuyers across the country, many of whom have staked life savings on properties that never materialized. Unable to repay interest on its loans, Evergrande formally defaulted in December 2021. And in August, the group declared bankruptcy in the United States, a measure intended to protect its assets there.

What do creditors want?

The firm's creditors are demanding controlling stakes in its equity, Bloomberg reported, with the property giant offering them 17.8 percent of its parent company and 30 percent of Evergrande's property services and electric vehicle groups. Many of the group's assets have been sold in recent months in a rush to build liquidity: around 50 billion yuan (\$7 billion) as of the end of November, according to Chinese media. But during a hearing in October, the recovery rate for Evergrande's lenders was estimated at less than three percent — highlighting the mountain creditors must climb if they want to retrieve their money.

Evergrande has until January 29 to come up with a detailed repayment plan, with a Hong Kong judge urging its lawyers to seek "more direct discussion with relevant authorities" to confirm that the company's restructuring proposal was doable.

What consequences so far?

Evergrande says it employs more than 100,000 people but its fate indirectly affects millions more. Its financial woes deepened fears of catastrophic consequences for the Chinese economy — threatening to further deepen views that the property market is unsustainable and pile pressure for the state to offer more support. Real estate and construction have long accounted for more than a quarter of China's gross domestic product and served as a driving force for many other sectors. In recent months, groups previously considered financially secure, including one of Evergrande's key competitors Country Garden, have also fallen into trouble.

And despite recent measures by Beijing to revive real estate, sales and prices continue to fall in many cities.

Where is the boss?

Deepening the firm's woes, Bloomberg News reported in September that billionaire boss Xu Jiayin was being held by police. The developer later confirmed that Xu — also known by his Cantonese name Hui Ka Yan — was "subject to mandatory measures in accordance with the law due to suspicion of illegal crimes". Neither Evergrande nor Chinese authorities have specified the nature of the facts alleged against its founder. — AFP

NBK raises customer awareness on e-mail scams

KUWAIT: Within its active contribution to promoting financial inclusion and banking awareness among different segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues supporting the "Let's Be Aware" campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

During this campaign, NBK highlights e-mail scams, where phishing e-mails are typically sent from suspicious domains using the logo of well-known organizations such as banks, telecom or big companies, so that the user cannot distinguish between real and fake messages.

Therefore, NBK advises customers to follow key tips when dealing with e-mails, including always verifying that the e-mail sender is from a legitimate organization, as well as checking the grammar and spelling in the e-mail, as many phishing e-mails are poorly written, which, of course, would not be sent by an official, well-known organization.

It also urges them to ignore and delete those suspicious e-mails to safeguard their personal and banking information from being compromised. With the increasing fraud attempts using various schemes, NBK is keen to protect customers by raising their awareness on how to steer clear of fraud by following the tips provided on all its digital channels. These tips mainly include cautious dealing with links, avoiding saving any sensitive information like ATM/credit card number on the phone, writing down the PIN on the card or sharing it with any other person, which also applies to OTP. It also advises customers to log out from the app or website once the transaction is made. NBK also affirms that it will never ask customers for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them of responding to such messages representing fraud attempts to obtain their banking information to steal their money or data.

The Huawei P60 Pro: Perfect gift for aspiring photographer in your life

KUWAIT: As the holiday season is around the corner, you might be looking for gifts for the important people in your life that make it worth living. And if you have an aspiring photographer on your list, consider giving them something they will truly appreciate and use every day. So, why not gift them something that captured some of this year's most stunning photographs — the Huawei P60 Pro?

In November this year, the global winners of the XMAGE Awards were announced. Out of the 57 winners, 5 of them used the P60 Pro to create their winning works. Of course, a skilled photographer can create magic with any camera. And in those award-winning shots, the eye for composition and unique perspectives of these photographers are evident. But having a great camera can go a long way in capturing the images exactly how you want them. This is especially true in challenging conditions.

Speaking of challenging conditions, the biggest strength of the P60 Pro is its powerful low-light capability. The 48-megapixel Ultra Lighting Main Camera is nothing short of extraordinary. It can capture incredibly detailed images even



in the darkest of nights. It lets you effortlessly capture stunning sunset and sunrise photos and the vibrant colors of urban nightlife. The phone combines cutting-edge hardware and algorithms, so you can create awe-inspiring shots regardless of whether you are a professional or just starting out on your photography journey.

The Ultra Lighting Main Camera of the P60 Pro features a large F1.4 physical aperture. It can let in more light than most other smartphone cameras on the market. But more than just offering a large aperture, the P60 Pro takes it to the next level by giving you an auto-adjustable physical aperture that varies from F1.4 to F4.0, depending on the scenario. This aperture adapts to the lighting conditions and the type of subject, allowing you to nail that perfect shot every time.

service to the continental United States, the two companies said, and the merger would create "new connections to Asia and throughout the Pacific for travelers across the US." The two airlines both provide service to areas "uniquely reliant upon air travel" — the Pacific archipelago and the frontier state of Alaska.

"Commitment to Hawaii remains steadfast," the companies said, including maintaining robust service between islands. "With the additional scale and resources that this transaction with Alaska Airlines brings, we will be able to accelerate investments in our... technology, while maintaining the Hawaiian Airlines brand," Hawaiian Airlines chief executive Peter Ingram said in the statement. Federal regulatory approval of the purchase is not assured.

US airlines have faced cutthroat competition in recent years, seeking to consolidate against financial pressure even as they endure federal antitrust scrutiny. The administration of President Joe Biden last year blocked an alliance between American Airlines and JetBlue Airways, and is seeking to halt JetBlue from buying Spirit Airlines, arguing that consolidation may not favor consumers. — AFP

الحملة التوعوية المصرفية



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NBK intensifies awareness campaigns by publishing educational materials and awareness content including video clips and text communications, as well as awareness tips on all its social media platforms and other digital channels, as well as reposting of CBK's communications. This aims to increase awareness among all segments of society and to familiarize them with the various fraud schemes, and the precautions that should be taken to steer clear of these attempts.

NBK utilizes its tremendous capabilities in communicating with customers as well as all its digital channels,

which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the economy. It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As the leading financial institution in Kuwait, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as many training courses for its employees to enhance their expertise in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

Alaska Airlines to buy Hawaiian Airlines for \$1.9 bn

SAN FRANCISCO: Alaska Airlines announced Sunday that it would buy Hawaiian Airlines for \$1.9 billion, consolidating its position as the nation's fifth biggest carrier if it can attain regulatory approval. Both brands will continue to exist under the terms of the agreement, which could take up to 18 months to finalize, according to a joint press release.

The combined airlines would have a fleet of 365 narrow and widebody aircraft, and reach 138 destinations. Based in Seattle, Alaska Airlines mainly serves the western United States. The Hawaiian capital of Honolulu would become its second main hub.

Residents of Hawaii would benefit from expanded



Another remarkable feature of the main camera of the Huawei P60 Pro is the Huawei XD Fusion Pro Texture Engine. With this feature, the camera can accurately restore the texture of subjects. This is perfect when you want to showcase the textures of the objects that you often come across. Complex and fine textures, such as fabrics, leather, and oil paintings, can be fully restored through high-frequency detail enhancement algorithms, providing you with true-to-life images that are as good as the real thing. And here's the great news — this is probably the time to buy the P60 Pro! So don't miss this opportunity. Order the Huawei P60 Pro for your loved one today and make this holiday season an unforgettable one with this powerful photography sidekick.



LOS ANGELES: An Alaska Airlines plane seen at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) on January 11, 2023. — AFP



Volunteer divers guard Oman's 'unique' coral reefs

On a sailing boat anchored off Oman's pristine Dimaniyat Islands, volunteer divers pull on wetsuits, check their scuba tanks and then take turns plunging into the clear turquoise water. They are diving for a reason: to remove the massive fishing nets damaging an unusually resilient coral reef system that is seen as more likely than most to survive rising sea temperatures.

The clean-up is one example of how divers and Omani authorities are joining forces to protect the reefs — which are critical for marine wildlife — from man-made damage. "Coral reefs are a refuge for marine habitat and wildlife," said Hammoud al-Nayri of Oman's environmental authority, as he watched the divers. "To protect marine ecosystems, we must first preserve coral reefs," said the 45-year-old who oversees the Dimaniyat Islands, Oman's only marine reserve.

Most shallow-water corals, battered and bleached white by repeated marine heatwaves, are "unlikely to last the century", the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said last year. Global warming, as well as dynamite fishing and pollution, wiped out a startling 14 percent of the world's reefs between 2009 and 2018, according to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network. But Oman's relatively cooler waters provide a rare refuge for its reefs, which are among the least studied in the world.

"Oman's reefs are actually considered to be relatively less vulnerable than some regions," said John Burt, associate professor of biology at New York University Abu Dhabi.

"This is largely due to the influ-

ence of the monsoon," the marine expert explained. "During peak summer temperatures, when we would expect to see bleaching related to marine heatwaves in most regions, the Indian Ocean monsoon picks up in southern Oman, cooling water temperatures dramatically."

'Huge environmental treasure'

Oman's reefs may be resilient to warming sea temperatures, but they

are not immune. The sultanate saw its last major bleaching event in the summer of 2021, when sea temperatures were particularly warm, said Burt. Cyclones, which are becoming more frequent due to climate change, are also a major threat.

A volunteer diver shows fishing nets removed from coral reefs at Oman's Dimaniyat islands.



Between 2005 and 2010, more than half of corals in Oman were lost because of Super-Cyclone Gonu in

2007, Cyclone Phet in 2010, as well as a large-scale algal bloom in 2008-2009, Burt said. "We have had over a decade of recovery in the intervening years which has allowed coral to come back to these reefs," Burt said.

To protect the reefs from fishing nets and coral-killing starfish, Hasan Farsi dives in Dimaniyat every week to inspect for damage.

The son of a fisherman, he records the GPS coordinates of damaged cor-

als and sends them to the environment ministry to register them as clean-up targets. He then joins the dozens of volunteers who dive down to remove the sunken nets and crown-of-thorns starfish, which prey on the reefs. Coral reefs are "a huge environmental treasure", Farsi said from a sailing boat, with extracted nets piled up behind him. "The coral reefs, because

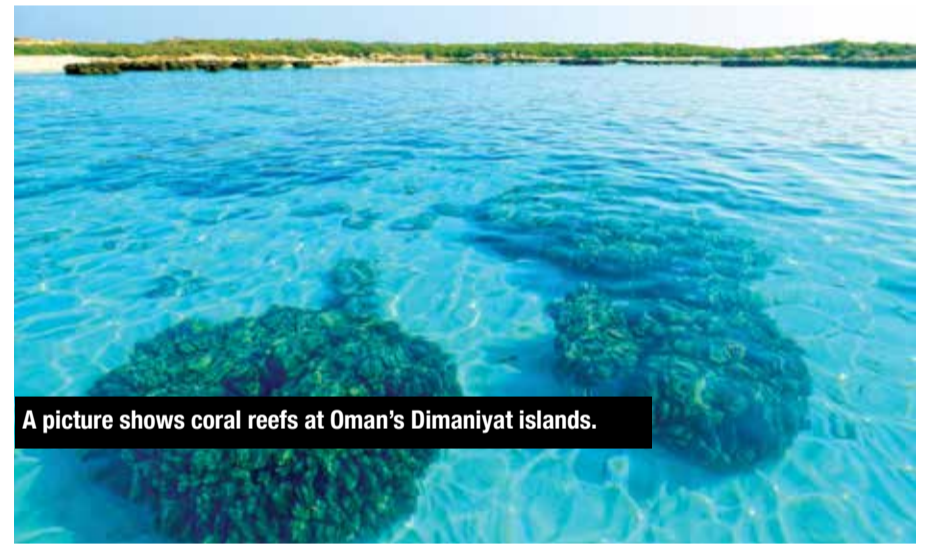
of wrong practices by fishermen, are deteriorating year by year," said the 52-year-old diving instructor. "Without clean-up campaigns, they would be destroyed completely."

Reefs database

Farsi is not alone in his effort. Jenan Al Asfoor, a diver and trainer, is a central figure in Oman's coral reef conservation. The 40-year-old heads Reef Check Oman, which is part of the global Reef

happening... most of the reefs we have surveyed look healthy and in good condition," Asfoor said. "The uniqueness of corals here, is that while other countries are suffering from high sea temperatures during summer, usually in Oman, we have a cool water temperature all around the year due to the cold water currents travelling from the south of Oman during the monsoon season."

According to Asfoor, Oman's coral reefs have also adapted to high sa-



A picture shows coral reefs at Oman's Dimaniyat islands.

Check Foundation. It was established in 2017 with the aim of building a full database of the country's coral reefs, monitoring their health, identifying their main threats, and working with authorities on protection policies. Over the years, the organization has conducted several surveys across the country.

"During these surveys, we noticed that we didn't record much bleaching

in Oman's northern seas. "We have a very unique ecosystem happening here, which is not found often anywhere else around the world," she said. "Our goal in Reef Check Oman is to continue protecting it for generations to come." — AFP



A volunteer diver jumps into the water during a campaign to remove fishing nets from coral reefs at Oman's Dimaniyat islands. - AFP photos



A volunteer takes part in a campaign to remove fishing nets from coral reefs at Oman's Dimaniyat islands.

'Rizz' charms Oxford wordsmiths to win word of 2023

"Rizz" — a colloquial term defined as "style, charm, or attractiveness" — has been crowned word of the year for 2023, Oxford University Press (OUP) announced on Monday. Its lexicographers chose "rizz", which also conveys "the ability to attract a romantic partner", from a shortlist of four words and phrases, after help from the public. An online vote had whittled down the list from eight finalists, all selected "to reflect the mood, ethos, or preoccupations" of the year.

"Rizz was chosen by the language

experts at OUP as an interesting example of how language can be formed, shaped, and shared within communities, before being picked up more widely," OUP said. "Etymologically, the term is believed to be a shortened form of the word 'charisma', taken from the middle part of the word, which is an unusual word formation pattern," it noted.

The publisher added that the word shows the growing society-wide impact of Gen Z and how "younger generations create spaces — online or in person — where they own and define the language

they use". The term earned mainstream recognition in June after an interviewer asked "Spider-Man" actor Tom Holland about his "rizz". The 27-year-old replied he had "no rizz whatsoever".

'Rizz' v 'beige flag'

It is the second consecutive year that the public have played a part in picking Oxford's word of the year, after an inaugural public vote last year saw "goblin mode" prevail. In that instance, the public were given the chance to choose the overall winner. An overwhelming 93 per-

cent opted for the slang term describing "unapologetically self-indulgent, lazy, slovenly or greedy" behavior.

Previous words of the year — chosen by Oxford lexicographers — include "vax" (2021), "climate emergency" (2019) and "selfie" (2013). In the 2023 selection process, more than 30,000 word lovers helped decide head-to-head competitions between four different pairs of words or phrases.

They selected "rizz" over "beige flag" — a character trait indicating that a partner or potential partner is boring.

The other finalists were "Swiftie" (an enthusiastic Taylor Swift fan), "prompt" (an AI program or algorithm instruction) and "situationship" (a romantic relationship not considered formal or established).

OUP said "rizz" has "boomed on social media" and shows how the internet can propel initially fringe language "into the mainstream". "This is a story as old as language itself, but stories of linguistic evolution and expansion that used to take years can now take weeks or months." — AFP

Lifestyle

Julia Roberts
wants cheese
burgers at the
apocalypse

Julia Roberts, who stars in the new apocalyptic comedy-drama "Leave the World Behind", says the end of humanity would be a good time to indulge herself. Streaming on Netflix starting Friday, the film also stars Mahershala Ali and Ethan Hawke, and was produced by former American president Barack Obama. Roberts plays an egocentric wife who finds the modern world collapsing around her while on a luxury break. She spoke to AFP about what really scares her and why she had a pair of very rude socks made after making the film.

Q: What would you do with your last day if the world was about to collapse?

Roberts: If I've got 24 hours, I'm piling in with my family, lots of cheeseburgers, chocolate chip cookies, hugs and kisses and wait... maybe sleeping pills! But it won't happen.

Q: Many things go wrong in the film. Which would terrify you the most in real life?

Roberts: Natural disasters, because they're more realistic and also because, you know, Mother Nature, she just doesn't care what anybody thinks.

Q: One of your first lines in the movie is, "I f**g hate people". Was it fun playing that kind of character?**

Roberts: It was very fun playing with that, because I actually love people



US actress Julia Roberts arrives for the 28th Annual Critics Choice Awards at the Fairmont Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, California.--AFP

and I think I'm very open and friendly, so I love that opening speech. I now have socks that say "I f****g hate people". And I love the idea of playing someone who has adopted this kind of mantra and what it really means. How do you carry yourself through a world of humans with this feeling inside of yourself?

Q: You have played a few unsympathetic characters in your career, was it a choice?

Roberts: I don't think it's a choice where I thought I'm choosing to play someone likeable or unlikable. I think it's what's in that whole broth. It's not about friendly or unfriendly, it's more about how it fits with what's happening within the whole thing.

Q: What is the message of the movie?

Roberts: I think that we're all in it together. Just the sense that we really are a thousand-and-one versions of one good thing, which is humanity. Oh, and cooking!--AFP

HARD TO BEAR: UK'S ONLY
PANDAS RETURN TO CHINA

The UK's only giant pandas left Edinburgh for China on Monday after spending 12 cubless years in the Scottish capital. It was hoped that female Tian Tian ("Sweetie") and male Yang Guang ("Sunshine") would produce a cub during their stay at Edinburgh Zoo. But the bears, who even had a special black, white, grey and red tartan created in their honor, never succeeded in conceiving.

"It's sad that Tian Tian hasn't bred here, we would obviously really have liked her to have done so, but this is not unusual with giant pandas," said Simon Girling, head of veterinary services at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS). "I think we're all quite sad to see them go, they are two lovely individuals, lovely characters, and we've got to know them really well." The pandas were transported to the airport in metal crates and loaded into a cargo plane with a pallet of bamboo ahead of their flight back to China.

They will spend time in quarantine on arrival in China before being rehomed at a sanctuary in Chengdu, the capital of southwestern China's Sichuan province. The pandas arrived at Edinburgh Zoo in December 2011 as part of a 10-year agreement between the RZSS and the China Wildlife Conservation Association, which was later extended by two years. During their stay in Edinburgh, the popular pair even had a special tartan created in their honor, in black, white and grey representing their fur, and red to symbolize China.

Difficult to breed

But it was soon clear the two were not eager to breed. The zoo and veterinarians from China made eight attempts at artificial insemination between the pair. There was also a failed attempt to artificially inseminate Tian Tian in 2013. The giant panda breed-

ing to the Pandas International conservation organization. "We have made a significant contribution to our understanding around giant panda fertility, husbandry and veterinary care—which has been of real benefit to efforts to protect this amazing species in China," said RZSS chief executive David Field.



ing program was stopped in 2021 after Yang Guang was castrated after being treated for testicular cancer. Giant pandas are notoriously difficult to breed in captivity, with bears losing interest in mating the natural way—or simply not knowing how.

A female panda has a single oestrous cycle in the spring in which she is fertile for only 24 to 36 hours, accord-

Attempts to breed pandas in captivity first began in China in 1955. In 1963, Ming Ming, the first giant panda bred in captivity, was born at the Beijing zoo. Pandas are found in the wild in southwest China, along the Tibetan Plateau.—AFP



Final year graduate opera student Yonwaba Mbo (center) and first year post graduate opera student Siphosihle Letsoso (left) practice during a rehearsal.



University of Cape Town (UCT) School of Opera lecturer Paulina Malefane teaches music to children of the Masiphumelele Primary school in Khayelitsha, Cape Town.



First year post graduate opera student Siphosihle Letsoso practices during a rehearsal of Mozart's Le Nozze Di Figaro at the University of Cape Town (UCT) School of Music in Cape Town. — AFP photos

Opera school hones
South Africa's musical talent

Yonwaba Mbo had a future in farming laid ahead of him when the opera "bug" hit. A few years ago, the tall, broad-shouldered South African decided to ditch agricultural studies to have a go at lyrical opera. At 31, he is now rehearsing to play Figaro in the "Marriage of Figaro", preparing to take the first steps as an opera soloist. Mbo is a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT) music faculty, home to what is arguably Africa's most prestigious opera school.

to hear the technical side of it and to understand how much work you need to put in, in order to sound like that. I started appreciating the art." Unable to read a musical score, he started from scratch. For six years now he has studied all things opera, motivated by the idea that someone like him can tell a story in music, singing in a foreign language.

On a November morning at the leafy university campus, he is practicing his rendition of Figaro, Mozart's re-

ment, says the British conductor Jeremy Silver, the school's director. In a bright classroom, Silver sits at a piano as he accompanies Mbo and Letsoso in their rehearsal. "With this crescendo, you're becoming more insistent, you're telling him things straight," he tells Letsoso, who diligently takes notes. The Cape Town academy is the only opera school in the country with a comprehensive curriculum, including music, singing, acting and opera languages including Italian, French and German.

"There is a huge amount of talent in South Africa," says Silver, adding that the country is now firmly on the global opera map. School, church and community choirs are ubiquitous in South Africa, helping expose people to "free, open singing" from a very young age, he says. "What we then have to do is to focus that interest, focus their instincts, and to teach them all the other skills."

This year, the school held auditions in six cities across South Africa. It offers music lessons in disadvantaged areas of Cape Town, organized by singing teacher Paulina Malefane, who keeps an eye out for promising voices. In the township of Khayelitsha east of Cape Town, one of the largest and poorest in the country, around thirty schoolchildren are learning to sing the C scale. "One day when you are grown up, you will come and take my job!" Malefane says, encouraging a girl who is drawing a treble clef on a white board.

A renowned actress and singer, Malefane also overcame a lack of theoretical knowledge she started off—something she hopes her pupils will not have to go through. "If and when they decide to take music or opera... at least they have something they can start with. They have some background of music," she says, as a student points with a hesitant finger to the C note keys on a piano, drawing thunderous applause from her classmates.—AFP

bellious servant, alongside Siphosihle Letsoso. Letsoso, 23, who hails from the former mining town of Kimberley in the Karoo desert and also dreams of a career as a soloist, plays Figaro's lover Susanna. "There is no opera scene in Kimberley!" she laughs. "That's what is really encouraging me to just do well. So that I could go back one day and develop the theatre, live it up."

'Raw talent'

Aspiring singers arrive at the academy with "raw talent" in need of refine-



Final year graduate opera student Yonwaba Mbo (center) and first year post graduate opera student Siphosihle Letsoso (left) practice during a rehearsal of Mozart's Le Nozze Di Figaro at the University of Cape Town (UCT) School of Music in Cape Town.

Pretty Yende, the soprano who sang at the coronation of Britain's King Charles III this year, honed her skills there, as have other rising stars of world opera. Like Yende, who grew up in a small village in eastern South Africa, many of the school's students got into singing somewhat late in life, often by chance. "Before I studied opera... when I heard it, I would always ask myself: why are these people always screaming?" Mbo, a powerful baritone, says with a laugh.

"Then when the bug bit me, I got

'Where is our future': Uganda
declares war on used clothing

For nearly three decades, the chaotic, overcrowded Owino secondhand market in Uganda's capital has been the cornerstone of Hadija Nakimuli's life, helping the widowed shopkeeper build a house and raise 12 children. But a potential government ban on the sale of used clothing threatens to sever this crucial lifeline for Nakimuli and tens of thousands of vendors like her. "Where is our future if they stop secondhand clothes?" the 62-year-old asked, rummaging through her stash of underwear, dresses, shoes and bags.

Established in 1971, the sprawling market employs some 80,000 people, 70 percent of them women, according to Kampala city authorities. "Other than students, my clients include ministers (and members of parliament who call me to deliver clothes to their air-conditioned offices," said Joseph Barimugaya, whose stall stocks menswear.

"This trade should not be tampered with. Everyone benefits, including the government, which gets taxes," the father of four told AFP. Every day, hundreds of customers squeeze through the narrow alleys separating the makeshift wooden stalls, eager to grab a bargain. Here, a secondhand Pierre Cardin blazer goes for 40,000 Ugandan shillings (\$11), a fraction of the price of a new one.

"As a teacher I earn less than 500,000 Ugandan shillings. If I am to buy a new garment it means I would spend all my salary on clothing," Robert Twimukye, 27, told AFP while shopping at Owino on a Saturday afternoon. He is not alone. Although there are no official figures available, the Uganda Dealers in Used Clothings and Shoes Association estimates that 16 million people—one in three Ugandans—wear used clothing.

'Clothes from dead people'

"Everyone is into secondhand clothes. Only few people in Uganda can afford new clothes," said Allan Zavuga, retail manager of Think Twice, which employs 30 staff across three branches in the country. "Banning it in Uganda is doing a disservice to the population and also the country at large," he said, pointing out the environmental cost of producing new clothing instead of reusing items.

East Africa imports about an eighth of the world's used clothing, providing jobs for some 355,000 people who earn \$230 million a year, according to a 2017 study

by the US government's aid agency, USAID. But the sector has also been a longstanding sore point for governments in Africa, who say the cast-offs harm the domestic textile industry. "These clothes are from the dead in a foreign country. When a white (person) dies, the clothes are sent to Africa," President Yoweri Museveni said in August this year. "I have declared war on secondhand clothes to promote African wear," he said. In an interview with AFP, Uganda's state minister for trade, David Bahati, said it was a question of "dignity".

If the proposed ban goes ahead, "we will be able to replace these second hand clothes," he added. "It cannot be done in one day but we can do it in a gradual manner," Bahati said. The government is examining the issue with a view to potentially implementing the ban in January. "The government is ready to give investors incentives... such as tax holidays to ensure we process our cotton into new garments to cover the market demands."

Trade row

Uganda has been here before. In 2016, Museveni sought to ban used clothing as part of an East African initiative to develop domestic industries, but faced significant opposition by the Kampala City Traders Association. Diplomatic considerations also played a part. Initially, the East African Community regional bloc put up a united front.

But the alliance cracked after Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda balked at the prospect of retaliatory loss of duty-free access to US markets. In the end, Rwanda decided to go it alone and imposed steep taxes on used clothing in 2016, leading to a sharp drop in imports and an increase in the smuggling of secondhand goods to meet demand.

Two years later, the US suspended duty-free benefits for apparel from Rwanda in a tit-for-tat move. At Owino, geopolitics is far from the minds of shoppers and sellers alike. "Who did the government consult (before deciding) to ban secondhand?" second-generation shopkeeper Harriet Musoke Kyambadde asked, her voice trembling with indignation. "Banning this business will be sending me into abject poverty," the mother of three told AFP, throwing her hands in the air.—AFP



Sellers offering second-hand clothes wait for costumers at a market in Kampala. — AFP



(From left) The 2023 honorees Renee Fleming, Barry Gibb, Queen Latifah, Billy Crystal and Dionne Warwick are pictured on screen as host Cuban singer-songwriter Gloria Estefan opens the show during the 46th Kennedy Center Honors at the Kennedy Center.



US musician and actress Queen Latifah arrives for a reception for the 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala. — AFP photos



Honorees Dionne Warwick, Renee Fleming, Queen Latifah, Billy Crystal, Queen Latifah with US first lady Jill Biden, US President Joe Biden, Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and others listen to the national anthem.

QUEEN LATIFAH, BILLY CRYSTAL AMONG HONOREES AT GLAM WASHINGTON GALA

A diverse class of music legends plus comedian Billy Crystal gave Washington a glow-up Sunday, gathering with the US capital's politicos for one of the city's glitziest events of the year. The annual Kennedy Center Honors see entertainment A-listers descend on Washington - a city known more for buttoned-up business casual than black tie - to celebrate their icons.

The 2023 class included the beloved comic and actor Crystal as well as rap pioneer Queen Latifah, soul legend Dionne Warwick, star soprano Renee Fleming and the sole surviving Bee Gee, Barry Gibb. The inductees were seated aside President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill to receive the highest American arts award.

"You can't campaign for this. It's unexpected," Gibb - who penned hundreds of songs over his career including smashes "Stayin' Alive" and "Nights On Broadway" - told journalists on the red carpet. The concert gala closed with a tribute to Gibb as well his late brothers, as the Oscar-winning performer Ariana DeBose performed a hip-shaking medley of Bee Gee classics accompanied by a troupe of dancers in shimmering halter-neck jumpsuits.

"It's very emotional," Gibb said, adding the presence of his brothers, Robin and Maurice, was palpable as he accepted the award. "There's something going on in the air, and you just feel it." The Grammy-winning rapper Latifah was the

first woman in hip-hop to receive the accolade, decades after she released her debut album "All Hail The Queen."

Kerry Washington along with Missy Elliott were among the peers who inducted the 53-year-old Latifah, just a month after the "Ladies First" singer herself in-

that scares me is sitting in the box." "It's all joy, but it's also overwhelming," she told journalists, floating across the carpet in a shimmering purple gown. Warwick, 82, was all smiles in the box, as proteges including Chloe Bailey - who delivered a rendition of the soul classic "Walk On By"

Artistic 'soul'

That sentiment rang true for Crystal, 75, who told reporters for him the night was "about appreciation for the soul of our artistic community." Peers including Robert DeNiro, Rob Reiner, Whoopi Goldberg and Meg Ryan turned out to

out sexual climax to prove a point. "The scene came really naturally," quipped Ryan. "I have Billy to thank for that." "I've actually never met anyone who made faking an orgasm easier."

She wasn't the only performer dropping one-liners, as DeNiro, himself 80,



(From left) The 2023 honorees include comedian and actor Billy Crystal, opera singer Renee Fleming, the Bee Gees' Barry Gibb, rapper and actress Queen Latifah and singer Dionne Warwick attend the The Kennedy Center Honorees reception.

roduced Elliott into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Sigourney Weaver and Christine Baranski turned out to celebrate the globally renowned soprano Fleming, the opera phenom who's played a large role in popularizing the form to wider audiences. She's graced the world's top stages but Fleming, 64, said "the thing

- performed in her honor. Calling it a "privilege" to accept the award, Warwick told attendees of the medallion ceremony at the State Department earlier this weekend that they were just as lucky as her. "The 62 years I've given to you is now being recognized," she said with a knowing smirk.



US actor and comedian Billy Crystal gestures during a reception for the 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala.

honor Crystal, a comedian beloved for his work in film and television.

Ryan - who co-starred opposite Crystal in the classic rom-com "When Harry Met Sally" - honored her fellow star from a set mirroring Katz's Deli, the restaurant where the pair performed their iconic scene that sees Sally act

mocked the 81-year-old Biden's age. "You're six years away from being the perfect age to be elected president," DeNiro told Crystal, as the audience burst into applause. — AFP



US singer Dionne Warwick, joined by members of her family, attends the 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala.



US President Joe Biden and US First Lady Jill Biden arrive for a reception for the 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala.



US opera soprano Renee Fleming arrives for a reception for the 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala.



US singer Dionne Warwick arrives for a reception for the 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on December 3, 2023.



Musical artist Vanvan attends the 46th Kennedy Center Honors gala.



US actress and dancer Debbie Allen and husband former professional basketball player Norm Nixon attend the 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala.

Sports

Celtic stun St Johnstone 3-1

Sima scores twice as Rangers win

News in Brief

Winless Almeria frustrated

BARCELONA: La Liga's bottom side Almeria were held 0-0 at home by 10-man Real Betis on Sunday. The winless Andalusian side were given a fine chance to pick up their first victory of the season when Hector Bellerin was sent off for an ugly tackle on Adri Embarba midway through the first half. Betis goalkeeper Rui Silva made several good saves in the second half to keep Almeria at bay, while the hosts also struck the woodwork twice. "You can't fail to take advantage of so many chances," Almeria midfielder Sergio Arribas told Movistar. "It's a bit tough to take, but that's football." Betis, seventh, fought hard to take a point and are one behind Real Sociedad in sixth. Almeria are seven points from safety after four draws and 11 defeats in 15 matches. Later Sunday, champions Barcelona, fourth, host third-place Atletico Madrid, with both teams aiming to cut the seven-point gap on the top two. — AFP

Carvajal suffers calf injury

MADRID: Real Madrid right-back Dani Carvajal is expected to miss the rest of the year after the club announced Monday he suffered a calf injury in the weekend win over Granada. Spain international Carvajal was replaced at half-time during Saturday's 2-0 victory which kept Madrid top of La Liga above surprise challengers Girona on goal difference. The club said tests revealed an injury to his left calf but did not give a timeline for his return. Spanish media suggested Carvajal could be sidelined for a month. The 31-year-old has been a regular for Carlo Ancelotti's side, captaining the team on a number of occasions this season. — AFP

Stade forget Pau woes

PARIS: Stade Francais rebounded from a tumultuous week to record a comprehensive 27-12 victory over champions Toulouse in the Top 14 on Sunday. The Parisian club was forced to discipline players and coaches after a member of Pau's coaching staff was reportedly hit in the face after Stade's heavy 30-6 away loss last weekend. There was seemingly no hangover from that, however, as Stade celebrated the 140th anniversary of their creation with a convincing home win over the record 22-time champions at a packed Stade Jean-Bouin. Stade led 10-0 at half-time thanks to a Joris Segonds penalty and conversion of a Leo Barre try. Segonds extended the lead with a second penalty, which was quickly followed by a converted try for Charles Laloui as the home side established a 20-0 lead by the 50th minute. — AFP

Arsenal to host Liverpool

LONDON: Arsenal will host Liverpool in a blockbuster third-round FA Cup tie next month featuring sides that have won the competition 22 times between them. The Premier League giants are meeting for the first time in the competition since Arsenal won a fifth-round tie 2-1 in 2014. The Gunners have come out on top in their past three FA Cup clashes, with Liverpool's last victory in the final of 2001. Championship side Sunderland are paired with neighbors Newcastle, who will travel to the Stadium of Light over the weekend of January 6 and 7. There are several other all Premier League ties, with Tottenham hosting Burnley, Everton travelling to Crystal Palace and Brentford facing Wolves. — AFP

Mbappe 'could win Ballon'

BANGKOK: Star French striker Kylian Mbappe can win the Ballon d'Or in "any team", Ronaldinho told AFP Sunday, but the Brazilian would like him to win it with Paris Saint-Germain, "a big club". "A great player like him can have the opportunity to win the Ballon d'Or in any team, but as I love PSG, I would like him to do it with PSG," the 2002 World Champion said. "I hope he will win it. He is a good friend and a very great player. I like his style of play," he said during an interview with AFP in Thailand. The prestigious award still eludes the French captain, who finished this year in third place - his best ranking to date. "Winning the big competitions will help him a lot," said Ronaldinho, who wore No.10 for PSG from 2001 to 2003. "PSG is a great club," the Brazilian said during a visit to Bangkok as an ambassador for Teqball, a novelty sport combining football and table tennis. — AFP

Dreams sink Rivers 2-1

JOHANNESBURG: Veteran John Antwi scored as Dreams of Ghana got back into contention for a CAF Confederation Cup quarter-finals place with a 2-1 Group C victory over Rivers United of Nigeria on Sunday. He put the home team ahead after 35 minutes in Kumasi and Abdel Issah doubled the lead on 74 minutes in the matchday two west African derby. An Alex Oyowah goal three minutes into added time was too little, too late as Rivers surrendered an unbeaten record this season in the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League. Antwi has scored three goals in the campaign - one less than chart-topper Abdulmunem Aleiyan from Libyan club Abu Salim. Club Africain of Tunisia, 3-1 away winners over bottom club Academica Lobito of Angola, top the table with six points, followed by Dreams and Rivers with three each. — AFP

GLASGOW: Celtic survived a stoppage-time scare as they came from behind to beat St Johnstone 3-1 in the Scottish Premiership on Sunday while Rangers returned to winning ways. In the early kick-off, Brendan Rodgers' men trailed to Diallang Jaiyesimi's first goal for St Johnstone at half-time after failing to deal with an in-swinging corner. But Callum McGregor netted with a powerful strike in the 67th minute and Matt O'Riley hit his seventh Premiership goal of the season 12 minutes later when he finished brilliantly from 22 yards.

The final outcome hinged on two incidents in

time added on. Saints substitute Jay Turner-Cooke headed off the post from close range before Celtic broke seconds later and Tomoki Iwata squared for fellow sub James Forrest to guide the ball home. Rodgers said he was furious with his team after a sub-par performance in the first half. "I think that's the angriest I've ever been as a manager at half-time," he told Sky Sports. "At this club the standards are very high. Our levels need to be much better. It's a reminder that teams in this league can hurt you when you drop off. You must have that intensity from the first whistle, but the reaction in the second half was really good."

Brighton loanee Abdallah Sima scored twice for Rangers in a 2-0 win against St Mirren at Ibrox as Philippe Clement's side stayed eight points behind Celtic with a game in hand. Rangers had drawn their previous two matches, against Aberdeen and Aris Limassol, but Sima quelled growing frustration in the stands when he broke the deadlock for the unimpressive home side with a strike just before the break. Rangers grew stronger in the second half and Sima grabbed a second in the 70th minute with a fine finish to take his tally for the season to 11. Hibernian beat Aberdeen 2-0 in Sunday's other game. — AFP



BENGALURU: India's players pose with the series trophy after winning the fifth and final Twenty20 international cricket match between India and Australia on December 3, 2023. — AFP

India edge Australia to seal T20 series 4-1

BENGALURU: Shreyas Iyer smashed 53 and fast bowler Arshdeep Singh kept calm in a tense final over as India edged Australia by six runs to seal the Twenty20 series 4-1 on Sunday. India posted 160-8 in the fifth match after Iyer propelled the total with his 37-ball knock despite losing regular wickets after the tourists elected to field first in Bengaluru. Fast bowler Mukesh Kumar (3-32), leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi (2-29) and left-arm spinner Axar Patel (1-14) stood out as the hosts, who took an unbeatable 3-1 lead in the fourth T20, restricted Australia to 154-8.

But it was left-arm quick Arshdeep who defended nine in the last over when he began with two dot

balls and then the wicket of skipper Matthew Wade for 22 to dim Australia's hopes. The next three balls got the batting team just three runs as India celebrated victory. "It was a good series from day one," skipper Suryakumar Yadav said. "We wanted to be fearless and enjoy ourselves when we were in the middle. So, very happy with that."

It was a second-string Indian team which gave some consolation to the fans who witnessed hosts India lose the ODI World Cup final to Australia on November 19 in Ahmedabad. Ben McDermott smashed 54 off 36 deliveries but the batting wobbled after his departure and Mukesh struck twice on two deliveries to dent the chase. He took down Matthew Short, for 16, Ben Dwarshuis, on a duck, to be on a hat-trick averted by Nathan Ellis.

The left-handed Wade smashed four boundaries and looked set to get the team home but a rising delivery from Arshdeep at the start of the final over

made him angry as he signalled to the umpires for a no-ball. Wade protested and got out two balls later to take back his team's hopes, still dejected and waving his bat. "My job is to get us home in situations like tonight," said Wade. "It would've been nice to get the result, but we learn and I thought Ben McDermott bounced back. (Jason) Behrendorff, (ben) Dwarshuis, (Tanveer) Sangha made an impact in tough conditions."

Earlier India lost regular wickets but Iyer set up victory after he put on fighting partnerships of 42 with Jitesh Sharma, who made 24, and 46 with Axa, who hit back with 31 from 21 balls and was named man of the match. Iyer, who returned in the previous match after resting following the team's World Cup defeat, raised his fifty with a four and six before he was bowled by Nathan Ellis. Both sides will feature in the T20 World Cup in June next year. — AFP

NBA's in-season tournament breaks new ground again

LOS ANGELES: The NBA's inaugural in-season tournament breaks new ground again this week with stars including LeBron James and Giannis Antetokounmpo gearing up for quarter-final clashes on Monday and Tuesday. Four-time NBA champion James has made no secret of the fact that he'd love to add a new accomplishment to his resume in his 21st season in the league.

His Los Angeles Lakers reached the quarter-finals as unbeaten group winners and will take on the wild card Phoenix Suns on Tuesday, when Antetokounmpo's Milwaukee Bucks host the wild card New York Knicks. On Monday, the Indiana Pacers host the Boston Celtics and the Sacramento Kings host the New Orleans Pelicans, all eight teams vying to reach the semi-finals in Las Vegas on December 7.

The title game is on December 9 in Vegas - where the finalists will be competing for the first NBA Cup and for the \$500,000 in prize money per player on the winning team. "It will be a heavyweight match in LA," Suns guard Devin Booker said. "A lot on the

line, winner goes to Vegas. So I think everyone is looking forward to it. It will be fun." The Lakers have beaten the Suns twice this season, including in the group stage of the tournament.

Suns star Kevin Durant is averaging 31 points per game, third best in the league. James, meanwhile, has dazzled as his 39th birthday approaches even as the Lakers coped with a string of injuries. "The most impressive thing is at what stage in his career he's doing it in," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "He's breaking barriers, it seems like, every day." Four of the league's top 10 scorers are in the quarter-finals - Durant at No. 3, Sacramento's De'Aaron Fox at No. 4, Antetokounmpo at No. 5 and Boston's Jayson Tatum at No. 9. Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton leads the league in assists, keying a high-octane offense that has the Pacers scoring 123.8 points per 100 possessions this season.

Loud and raucous

The Celtics blew out the Pacers 155-104 on November 1 in Boston. Haliburton missed that game, but Indiana coach Rick Carlisle admitted his team will have their work cut out to advance against a Celtics team that at 15-4 shares the best record in the league. "But we do get to play them at home. So, that's something important," Carlisle said. "We need our building to be as loud and raucous as it possibly can and we need to throw a game out there that's exceptional."



Giannis Antetokounmpo

Like the Lakers, the Bucks advanced with a 4-0 record in group play, including a 110-105 win over the Knicks. "It would be pretty cool to be part of history," Bucks forward Kris Middleton said of potentially winning the first NBA Cup. "You always want to be the first to win something. So, it would definitely be cool to win the first in-season tournament." For Pelicans forward Zion Williamson, the tournament could be a springboard to playoff success. "For us, we haven't won nothing," Williamson said as the team looked toward their Monday clash with Sacramento. "I think that would be a starting step to try to go and win that." — AFP

Scheffler wins Hero World Challenge

MIAMI: World number one Scottie Scheffler fired a bogey-free 68 on Sunday for a three-shot win in the Hero World Challenge, where 15-time major champion Tiger Woods said he'd "come a long way" in his first tournament since April. Scheffler had four birdies in his four-under par 68 on the Albany golf course in the Bahamas, his 20-under total of 268 beating Austrian Sepp Straka by three shots to give him the trophy after runner-up finishes to Viktor Hovland the last two years.

Tournament host Woods, who hadn't played since ankle surgery in the wake of his third round withdrawal at the Masters, said he was "ecstatic" with how the week had gone after carding a final-round 72 for an even par total of 288. Woods shook off a double-bogey at the second hole with birdies at the third, fifth and sixth. After bogeys at eight and 11 he birdied 14 and 15 before a bogey at 16 that left him 18th in the 20-player field. "I think I've come a long way," said Woods, who said this week that he was no longer playing with pain from leg injuries suffered in a 2021 car crash but still battled chronic back pain.

"From being a little bit rusty to playing four days and knocked off a lot of rust which was great, and



NASSAU: Scottie Scheffler of the United States poses with the trophy after winning the final round of the Hero World Challenge at Albany Golf Course on December 03, 2023. — AFP

just the physicality of actually playing and competing again - I haven't done this in a while," he said. "I wish I would have played a little cleaner but there's always next time." Having completed 72 holes, Woods said he thought his estimate that he could

play one tournament a month in 2024 "seems reasonable." "It gives me a couple of weeks to recover, a week to tune up. Maybe I can get into a rhythm. That's what the plan was going into next year and I don't see why that would change."

On a string

Woods, who said all week his fitness was his main concern, said the way he drove the ball was the best aspect of his game this week. "I drove it on pretty much a string all week," he said. "So it's not like I have to go and try and find something the next few weeks or something going into next year. What I've been working on is right there." The victory in the unofficial event saw Scheffler end 2023 on a high note, nine months after he claimed his sixth US PGA Tour title at the Players Championship.

Since then putting problems had held Scheffler back, but this week showed his recent work with putting coach Phil Kenyon was paying off. "I was optimistic going into this week," Scheffler said. "It's nice to see some fast results from the stuff we've been working on. It was nice to see some putts go in." Straka surged into second place with eight birdies in an eight-under par 64 for 271. "It was great, just a great round of golf," he said. "My putter finally heated up. I felt like the last two days I hit the ball really well, didn't make a lot of putts and today I finally made a few putts." — AFP

Sports

Haaland criticizes referee on social media after City draw

Guardiola refuses to follow Arteta in referee rant

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland faces possible disciplinary action after complaining about referee Simon Hooper on social media following Manchester City's dramatic 3-3 draw with Tottenham on Sunday. The City striker was incensed after the official failed to play an advantage in the closing moments of a thrilling Premier League clash at the Etihad Stadium. Haaland was fouled but quickly got up and played Jack Grealish through on goal, only for Hooper to pull play back and award a free-kick. Haaland was one of several City players to angrily remonstrate with the official and he continued his protests after the game by reposting a clip of the incident on X, formerly Twitter, with the comment "Wtf", which is offensive slang.

Manager Pep Guardiola was not aware of Haaland's social media post when he spoke to reporters after the game but, referring to Haaland's on-field reaction, admitted he could understand the player's anger. "It's normal," said the City boss. "His reaction was the same for 10 players. The rules are you cannot talk with the referees or fourth officials, so we should have had 10 players sent off today. He's a little bit disappointed."

Even the referee—if he played for Man City today he would be disappointed for that action, that's for sure," Guardiola had tried to temper his criticism, saying in a TV interview he did not want to make a "Mikel Arteta comment", in reference to the Arsenal manager's controversial remarks after a game against Newcastle last month.

He added in a press conference: "I make mistakes, the players make mistakes. "It surprised me because in the moment Erling went down (and) if you whistle in that moment it's fine. "But when he stands up and continues and the referee makes that gesture to play on, and after he (Haaland) makes the pass he then stops the game—I don't want to criticize him. "On the touchline sometimes I lose my mind and my gestures are not proper but for

many years as a manager I'm not a guy, when I'm refreshed, to comment."

Guardiola said he would not follow his former assistant Mikel Arteta in a public tirade at officials after Manchester City's 3-3 draw against Tottenham on Sunday ended in controversial fashion. City were denied a huge chance to win the match in stoppage time when referee Simon Hooper stopped the game to award Guardiola's men a free-kick just as Jack Grealish was bearing down on goal.

The decision sparked a furious reaction from City players and Guardiola on the touchline. Erling Haaland could face punishment after taking to social media to criticize the call. However, when facing the media, Guardiola kept his cool. Arsenal boss Arteta described the decision to award Newcastle's winning goal against his side last month as a "disgrace" and "embarrassing" to the Premier League.

Arteta faces a Football Association charge for his comments, which were backed up by Arsenal in a club statement. "Next question. I will not do a Mikel Arteta comment," Guardiola said when asked about the incident. "It is hard when you review the image. The referee decides to blow the whistle after he has already said to play on. "After the pass, the whistle, so I do not understand this action." After draws against Chelsea and Liverpool, City have now failed to win in three consecutive Premier League games for the first time in over six years.

Guardiola's men were made to pay for both a profligacy in front of goal and defensive errors. Spurs captain Son Heung-min scored at both ends in a frantic first 10 minutes. City then went on to dominate the first half but only had Phil Foden's goal to show for it. A depleted Tottenham hit back after the break as Giovanni Lo Celso fired in 20 minutes from time. Grealish looked to have given City victory, but Dejan Kulusevski's 90th minute goal rescued a point for Ange Postecoglou's men.



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Croatian midfielder #08 Mateo Kovacic (left), Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland (2nd left) appeal to English referee Simon Hooper during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur on December 3, 2023. — AFP

Postecoglou insisted he would not shy away from his attacking philosophy despite a mounting injury list and facing the might of City. And the Australian admitted his side were let off the hook in the first half by City's wastefulness in front of goal. "We were lucky to be in it by

half-time. City could have blown us away in that period," said Postecoglou. "We weren't anywhere near the level of our standards and City will do that to you, they are unbelievable. "Second half we had more belief in ourselves and the team we want to be and we clawed our way back into the game." — AFP

Barca's loan star Felix makes Atletico pay

BARCELONA: Joao Felix's superb dinked finish earned Barcelona a vital 1-0 win over Atletico Madrid on Sunday in the La Liga title race. The Portuguese forward, on loan at Barca from Atletico, made no secret of his pleasure to escape the Spanish capital this summer and made his parent club pay at the Olympic Stadium. Felix was criticized by some Atletico players ahead of the game and Barca coach Xavi Hernandez called on him to use those words as inspiration, which he duly did.

The forward's goal allowed Barca to reclaim third place from Atletico, now trailing leaders Real Madrid and second place Girona by four points. "Joao Felix said that he was calm, that it was just another game for him," Barca defender Ronald Araujo told Movistar. "He wanted to put himself out there, to score goals, to give assists, the important thing is that he is happy."

Araujo said Barcelona's squad have faith in coach Xavi Hernandez and themselves, despite the team's recent struggles. "We know the team that we have, we believe a lot in the work we're doing with the coach," added Araujo. "The results weren't coming but we did well in the Champions League and we knew that today we had to do it too." Atletico have not won away against the champions in La Liga since 2006, a run now stretching to 18 matches, but arrived thinking this could be the time to snap that streak.

Since crumbling to a defeat in the Clasico by Real Madrid at the end of October, Barcelona have struggled for form and confidence. They scraped tight wins against Real Sociedad and Alaves despite being outplayed, lost at Shakhtar Donetsk in

Europe and then drew with Rayo Vallecano. Xavi said Barca were back on track with their win over Porto earlier this week to reach the Champions League last 16 and his words were justified by a dominant first-half display.

Barcelona started well, carving out chances and Felix broke the deadlock after 28 minutes, taking a brilliant touch to ride Nahuel Molina's challenge and then dinking the ball over Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak. Felix celebrated with arms aloft, standing on the advertising hoardings in front of the angry visiting supporters, while Rojiblanco's coach Diego Simeone appeared disgruntled as he flashed up on the big screens. The 24-year-old forward, a club record signing at 126 million euros (\$137 million) in 2019, never settled in the capital and did not click with Simeone's management and playing style.

Payback

Perhaps not coincidentally, Axel Witsel was soon booked for hacking Felix to the ground shortly after. Koke was also cautioned for a cynical challenge on the rampaging Raphinha. Felix came close to a second with a prodded effort from Ilkay Gundogan's cut-back, but this time Oblak denied him. The forward called for a penalty as Hermoso stepped on his foot after the shot but his appeals were dismissed.

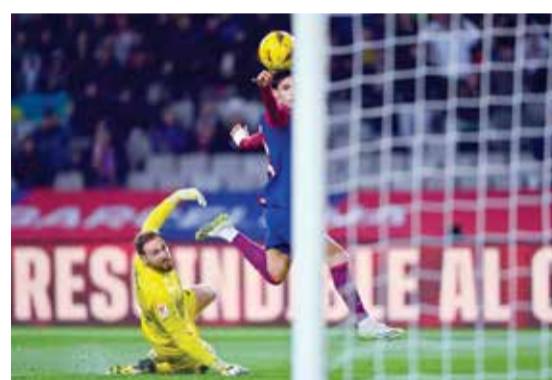
Gundogan impressed in midfield alongside fit-again duo Pedri and Frenkie de Jong, as Barcelona controlled the game. Raphinha clipped the pst at the start of the second half to get Barcelona fans out of their seats. Despite their high-calibre opponents, the attendance fell short of 35,000 and was the club's poorest this season, with supporters perhaps chastened by the colder winter evenings and the late kick-off.

While Felix was on-target against his former

with a curling long-distance shot on 81 minutes that squeezed through Walter Benitez in the PSV goal.

That set up a nerve-racking last period for PSV but they held firm to keep up the winning habit. With a thumping 5-2 win already over Ajax in October, PSV will now take some catching if they are to be stopped from adding to their 24 Dutch titles. Feyenoord's only previous loss had come via a 2-1 defeat away to Twente in October, but two draws have also left Arne Slot's side off the blistering pace set by PSV.

The two teams have had varied fortunes in Europe this season. PSV have already qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League after a thrilling 3-2 win away at Sevilla. Feyenoord in contrast have struggled at Europe's top table this year and are already out. They are nevertheless assured a place in the Europa League after the winter break. Ajax have recovered from their worst start to a season in history, but are still way off the pace in 11th, having suffered humiliating drubbings at the hands of both of the top two. — AFP



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Portuguese forward #14 Joao Felix (right) scores the opening goal during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Club Atletico de Madrid on December 3, 2023. — AFP

side, Atletico talisman Antoine Griezmann worked hard but could not find the net against his old employers - he has not netted in 14 games against Barca for the Rojiblanco. Memphis Depay, another ex-Barcelona player, came closest for Atletico with a free-kick tipped over by Inaki Pena, between the sticks for the hosts in place of the hurt Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Robert Lewandowski should have wrapped up Barcelona's victory but pulled an effort wide when running in on goal.

The veteran striker has only three goals in his last 10 games for Barca across all competitions, but on this occasion his profligacy did not cost Xavi's side. Pena denied Angel Correa in stoppage time to ensure Atletico, fourth, trail Barca by three points and the top two by seven. "The idea was to go for the game and I don't know what happened," Atletico goalkeeper Oblak told Movistar. "Nobody was good in the first half, nobody wanted the ball, nobody wanted to play." — AFP



ROTTERDAM: Feyenoord's Yankuba Minteh (center) fights for the ball with PSV Eindhoven's Patrick van Aanholt (left) and PSV Eindhoven's Malik Tillman (right) during the Dutch Eredivisie football match between Feyenoord Rotterdam and PSV Eindhoven on December 3, 2023. — AFP

Roma win, target Serie A top four

MILAN: Roma closed in on Serie A top four after coming from behind to win 2-1 at Sassuolo and move level on points with champions Napoli, who host Inter Milan in a huge title clash. Paulo Dybala's 76th-minute penalty and a wildly deflected strike from Rasmus Kristensen shortly afterwards earned Roma the points from a scrappy match which Sassuolo finished with 10 men after Daniel Boloca was sent off in the 63rd minute.

Roma are fifth, trailing by goal difference to Napoli who sit in the last Champions League spot and need to win the weekend's headline match to reignite their title defense. Inter will reclaim top spot from Juventus as long as they do not lose, while a win in Naples could also push Roma above Napoli and into fourth. Jose Mourinho's team looked unlikely to get a result until Dybala squeezed in his third goal of the season from the penalty spot.

Romelu Lukaku had missed the best chance of the game for Roma 10 minutes before Boloca's red card when he shot straight at Andrea Consigli when all alone in front of the Sassuolo goalkeeper. And the away side had a huge slice of good fortune with eight minutes remaining when Kristensen's effort clipped Ruan Tressoldi and looped over the despairing Consigli the delight of the massed ranks of Roma fans behind that goal.

The draw at the Mapei Stadium came as Mourinho is reportedly being investigated by the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) for saying that referee Matteo Marcanaro didn't "have the emotional stability to referee at this level" ahead of the match. The Portuguese blasted both Marcanaro, 31, in a pre-match outburst on Saturday which the country's refereeing association said "could lead to violence" against officials.

However, Mourinho was backed by Roma on Sunday. General Manager Tiago Pinto saying that the coach "didn't insult anyone" and that the club hadn't been informed of any FIGC probe. "We've never had him as a referee but we have had him as a fourth official in the past and he has always sent off someone from our bench," said Pinto. "If a manager can't use the term 'emotional stability' then I don't know what it is we can say." Fiorentina are a point behind Roma in sixth thanks to a simple 3-0 win over the division's bottom team Salernitana.

Meanwhile, Bologna are a further point and place back after Roberto Piccoli's penalty in the 10th minute of added time cost Thiago Motta's team a 1-1 draw for Lecce. Thomas Henry scored his first goal for Verona since August last year to snatch a 3-3 draw in the seventh minute of stoppage at fellow strugglers Udinese. Frenchman Henry has been restricted to short appearances off the bench this season after tearing knee ligaments in January. But after coming on with six minutes remaining and his team trailing he glanced home a perfect header to move his side one point from safety and two behind Udinese, who sit 16th. — AFP

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Change of Name

I, **Mahboob Basha Shaik**, father of Aisha Syed holding of her Passport number V6086715 resident in 2/361 Sastri Nagar Akkayapalli, Kadappa have change my daughter name Aisha Syed to Given name Aisha surname Shaik. #4569-5-12-2023

I, **Bushra Mohamed Yusuf Gigani**, holder of Passport No. L3084351, do hereby change my name to Bushra Usamah Zariwala for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **Bushra Usamah Zariwala** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. 3-12-2023

I, **Jawashar Basha Sarthar Kasim** holder of Indian Passport No. W7992735 having permanent address O NO 13 N No 42 New Street No 10, Thiruvannamalai, Tiruvannamalai, Pin:606601, Tamil Nadu, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: given name **Jawahar Basha** and surname **Sarthar Kasim** (#4570) 3-12-2023

Kuwait's Olympic Committee elects new board of directors

General Assembly appoints Women's Committee



KUWAIT: Officials are seen during the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC)'s General Assembly meeting. — KUNA photos



Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: The General Assembly of the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC) picked on Sunday a new board of directors for the years 2023–2027, headed by Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. In its meeting at the KOC headquarters, the General Assembly also elected Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah as vice president of the KOC and Hussein Al-Musalam as secretary, as well as six other members to the committee to include Sheikh Jaber Thamer Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Ali Al-Marri, Nael Al-Awadhi, Musaed Al-Ajeel, Ghazi Al-Jariwi, and Ali Al-Dabbous.

The General Assembly also decided on appointing Fatma Hayyat, Sheikh Bibi Salem Al-Sabah, and Rabaa Al-Hajri as members of the KOC's Women's Committee. Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah hailed His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince's support for the KOC and encouraged a furthering of achievements and triumphs for the national

sporting teams and associations. In his speech at the ceremony, he stated that the KOC had achieved "many sporting victories at all levels" during his first term, which include medals from the Tokyo Olympic Games, Asian Games in China, Arab Games in Algeria, and the Islamic Games in Turkey.

Regulation reforms ensued: most important was the amendment of the statute to comply with the Olympic Charter, approving the code of ethics, adopting a unified bylaw to organize the work of the affiliated committees, developing the committee's logo and identity, and signing cooperation agreements with many Olympic Committees around the world. While also paying due attention to women's involvement in sports and their need for support, decisions were made by the KOC to approve and facilitate a health insurance policy for their treatment abroad at Qatar's Aspire Academy to include other supportive matters. — KUNA

49ers destroy Eagles, Packers upset Chiefs

MIAMI: Brock Purdy threw four touchdowns and explosive receiver Deebo Samuel scored three as the San Francisco 49ers humbled the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday with a 42-19 NFL statement victory. Tyreek Hill starred for the Miami Dolphins in their 45-15 crushing of the Washington Commanders while Super Bowl champions the Kansas City Chiefs suffered their fourth defeat of the season with a 27-19 loss at Green Bay.

The 49ers, who lost to the Eagles in last year's NFC Championship game, were devastating on the ground and in the air as they dominated an Eagles side who had gone into the game with just one defeat. After a slow start, with the Eagles scoring two field goals in the first quarter, the Niners turned on the style in the second quarter.

Purdy found Brandon Aiyuk with a two-yard touchdown pass and then star running back Christian McCaffrey made it 14-6 with a two-yard rush. Samuel extended the lead with a powerful 12-yard rush early in the third and after Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts scored with a quarterback sneak, Samuel grabbed a short pass down the middle from Purdy, broke a tackle and sprinted home. San Francisco had linebacker Dre Greenlaw ejected after a confrontation on the sideline with an Eagles security official who was also ejected.

Hurts left the field early in the fourth for a concussion check but returned to action after being given the all-clear. The contest was over though when Jauan Jennings caught a Purdy pass, shoved Eli Ricks out of the way and ran in for an 18-yard touchdown. After a Devonta Smith two-yard touchdown for the Eagles, Samuel completed the rout, collecting a short pass and ripping his way through the Eagles defense for a 48-yard touchdown. Purdy threw for 314 yards. Samuel put up 138 total yards and McCaffrey 133 as the 49ers moved to 9-3. The Eagles fell to 10-2. Packers quarterback Jordan Love threw for 267 yards and three touchdowns as Green Bay won a thriller with the Chiefs at Lambeau Field. — AFP



Brock Purdy of the San Francisco 49ers

Mbappe leads PSG to hard-fought victory

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain ground out a tense 2-0 victory away to Le Havre on Sunday courtesy of strikes by Kylian Mbappe and Vitinha, after 'keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma saw red early on. Despite the two-goal win, PSG had to show great resilience to keep the hosts at bay and move four points clear of second-placed Nice in the table. After going down to 10 men in the 10th minute, a fine Mbappe goal, his 15th in the league this season, gave the embattled visitors the lead, but the points were only wrapped up right at the end when Portuguese midfielder Vitinha doubled the score with one minute remaining of normal time.

"(I am) very proud of what the team showed, the mentality, the ability to adapt to the different things that happened during the game and the team spirit," said PSG coach Luis Enrique. "We showed determination to defend more than usual, and we defended very well. "We didn't concede too many chances and the ones we did concede were saved by Arnau (Tenas)," added Enrique. The 22-year-old reserve goalkeeper, who joined PSG in the summer on a free transfer from Barcelona, made a surprise professional debut when he was unexpectedly called on when Donnarumma was sent off. "He (Tenas) is evidently a top pro, he trains every day like it is his last," said Enrique.

Red card

Le Havre started brightly and won a series of early corners, one of which forced the visitors into a change when Fabian Ruiz injured his right shoulder defending a set-piece. However, it was a long ball that finally broke down the Parisian defense as a clearance was not dealt with by Nordi Mukiele, allowing Josue Casimir to nip in before being abruptly halted by Donnarumma. The Italian's desperate attempt to clear the ball resulted in him catching the Le Havre man very high on the shoulder outside the box and the referee was left with little choice but to brandish a red card. Despite their numerical disadvantage and the loss of attacker Bradley Barcola, sacrificed for 'keeper



LE HAVRE: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #07 Kylian Mbappe (2nd right) kicks to score his team's first goal during the French L1 football match between Le Havre AC and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on December 3, 2023. — AFP

Tenas, it was PSG who opened the scoring.

Ousmane Dembele drilled a pass into his captain's feet and Mbappe's first touch took him inside the defender and with a yard of space he wrong-footed the goalie from inside the D, scoring via the post. Chances came at both ends just prior to the hour mark with Mohamed Bayo shooting tamely at Tenas from a promising position, before Dembele fired across goal with the ball brushing against the far post. The hosts began to press and only a fine save by Tenas in the 64th minute and a vital sliding interception by Danilo Pereira three minutes later kept PSG's lead intact.

But it was Dembele and PSG that had the best chance to score the second goal of the match in the 70th minute, however a retreating Christopher Operi managed to foil the winger. Tenas then came to the league leaders rescue again with an excellent double save at his near post from Nabil Alioui with 12 minutes remaining. Victory was finally assured in the 89th minute when a PSG foray into Le Havre territory led to Vitinha trying his luck from distance, with a large deflection causing

the ball to loop over the helpless goalkeeper.

Monaco profit

In Sunday's afternoon kick-offs, Monaco profited from Nice's slip-up on Saturday to close the gap to two points with a 2-0 win at home to Montpellier. Takumi Minamino sent the hosts on their way with nine minutes gone and Wissam Ben Yedder sealed the win two minutes into additional time in the second half. Brest brushed aside lowly Clermont 3-0 thanks to a brace from Romain Del Castillo and a Mathias Pereira Lage strike.

A 91st minute equalizer from Bamba Dieng ensured the spoils would be shared between Toulouse and Lorient after Thijs Dallinga had given the hosts the lead with 72 minutes on the clock. Two goals in first-half injury time secured a 2-0 home win for Lille against Metz. Yusuf Yazici was on hand to turn in a rebound two minutes into additional time and Jonathan David stepped up to convert a penalty four minutes later as the fourth-placed side kept pace with the league's other highfliers. — AFP