

2 Mirzaam, largest decor and interior design expo, returns for 4th edition



7 China's Xi in Vietnam in bid to counter US



11 Jordan's mission to save its ancient olive trees



16 Turkish football plunges into crisis after attack on referee



Foreign firms don't need agents

Assembly reduces prisoners' rehab duration • Panel to probe torture case

Amir's health stable

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

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call Tuesday morning from Algerian President Abdelmajid Tebboune, in which he inquired about the health of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf. Tebboune wished HH the Amir good health and wellness, a sentiment which was met by HH the Crown Prince's deep appreciation. Sheikh Mishal wished Tebboune good health and continued wellness, and the people of the Algeria progress and prosperity. — KUNA



HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly on Tuesday passed a law allowing foreign companies and investors to operate in the country without the need for a local agent, a step expected to open the doors for foreign investments. Fifty-six MPs, including Cabinet ministers, voted for the law, while one MP objected. The law removes the precondition that foreign investors must have a local agent to be able to work in Kuwait. Under the law, foreign companies and investors can now open offices and work on projects in the country with no need for a local representative.

MPs believe this will encourage more foreign investors to do business in Kuwait and that the cost of projects will be significantly reduced. But several MPs called for improving the business environment in the country to reap the benefits of the law. The Assembly also passed another legislation to reduce the duration for the rehabilitation of political prisoners despite the government's rejection. The law is expected to allow a large number of former prominent opposition lawmakers to contest parliamentary polls.

MPs described the law to reduce the rehabilitation period for those who were handed prison terms as a major political reform, as it will allow former politicians who were sentenced to prison terms to re-enter the political arena. Under present Kuwaiti law, most



KUWAIT: MPs attend a National Assembly session on Dec 12, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Continued on Page 6

Mideast leaders have few answers for 'day after' war

DOHA: Middle East leaders gathered in Qatar sought ideas for what happens after the Gaza war, but remained firmly opposed to putting their own troops or international forces into the ravaged territory. The Palestinian question is extremely delicate for leaders in the Arab world, where the war has sparked massive protests in several countries.

At the annual Doha Forum that ended Monday, Qatar reiterated that no Arab country would send in forces to stabilize the situation after the guns of the Zionist entity and Hamas fall silent. "No one from the region will accept... to put boots on the ground (following after) a (Zionist) tank. This is unacceptable," said Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

But he also opposed any international force in Gaza under current conditions. "We shouldn't always talk about the Palestinians as if they need some guardian," he said. The Palestinians were represented by the Palestinian Authority, which has power in the Zionist-occupied West Bank territory, but not Gaza, which is in the hands of Hamas fighters.

Despite their rivalry, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said Hamas could not be eradicated. They are "an integral part of the Palestinian political mosaic," he told the forum. Yet, eradication is precisely what the Zionist entity is seeking with its war, which has killed more than 18,400 people in Gaza.

On Tuesday, Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said following a conversation with US President Joe Biden that there was "disagreement" between the allies over "the day after Hamas". The premier said he hoped "we will reach agreement here" but he vowed not to "repeat the mistake of

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait rejects phaseout of fossil fuels; COP28 goes into overtime

DOHA/DUBAI: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Oil Minister Saad Al-Barrak reaffirmed Kuwait's rejection of the inclusion of any call for phasing out fossil fuel consumption and production in the COP28 climate deal final draft. Campaigners had hoped the UN climate summit in Dubai could deliver a historic, global phasing out of the high-emission fuels which account for three-quarters of greenhouse gases.

Barrak dismissed the proposal as an "aggressive attack" and accused Western nations of trying to dominate the global economy through alternative energy sources. "I am amazed at

this extraordinary insistence on depriving peoples and many countries, most of them in the developing world, of a basic source of energy," Barrak told the meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in Doha.

The minister lambasted the approach as "racist and colonial", saying it amounted "to cutting off important parts of our economies in the region on which our future depends". Barrak called the move "completely unacceptable" and added that he wondered on that basis how the negotiations at the climate conference "lasted this long".

Continued on Page 6



DUBAI: Climate activists attend a protest against fossil fuels during the COP28 climate talks on Dec 12, 2023. — AFP

UN calls Gaza 'hell on earth'

GAZA: Zionist forces battled Hamas militants and bombed more targets in the devastated Gaza Strip Tuesday with the UN General Assembly due to vote on a new demand for a ceasefire. More than two months into the war, visiting chief of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, likened Gaza to "hell on earth". The health ministry updated its death toll in Gaza to 18,412, mostly women and children.

The Islamist group said Zionist forces raided a hospital in Gaza City, the biggest urban center. "(Zionist) occupation forces are storming Kamal Adwan hospital after besieging and bombing it for days," health ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qudra said, accusing troops of rounding up men in the hospital courtyard, including medical staff.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said earlier that "the hospital remains surrounded by (Zionist) troops and tanks, and fighting with armed groups has been reported



GAZA: People mourn by the bodies of martyrs following Zionist bombardment, including children from the Harb family, at Al-Najjar hospital in Rafah in southern Gaza on Dec 12, 2023. — AFP

in its vicinity for three consecutive days". It said two mothers were killed in a strike on the maternity ward, and that about 3,000 internally displaced people were trapped in the facility amid reports of "extreme shortages of water, food and power".

UN agencies and aid groups fear the Palestinian territory will soon be overwhelmed by starvation and disease, and are pleading with the Zionist entity to boost efforts to protect civilians. Air and artillery strikes again rained down on multiple targets in Gaza, a day after Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant reported significant progress in the war, now in its third month.

The war has deepened the suffering in Gaza, whose devastation top European Union diplomat Josep Borrell has compared to that

Continued on Page 6

Houthis claim attack on tanker

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed responsibility on Tuesday for a missile strike on a Norwegian-flagged tanker, an attack the Iran-backed group said was part of its military campaign against the Zionist entity. Norwegian shipowner J Ludwig Mowinckels Rederi said the overnight strike on the Strinda caused a fire that the crew, all Indian nationals, were able to extinguish and that no one was hurt.

The Houthis said the ship was carrying oil bound for the Zionist entity — a claim denied by the owners of the 144-m vessel that was sailing towards the Suez Canal. France's defense ministry said one of its naval vessels in the area shot down a drone that had also been launched during the attack, which it described as an "attempted hijacking". The frigate Languedoc, "which was patrolling in the area, intercepted and destroyed a drone directly threatening the Strinda," it said in a statement.

The attack was the latest in a series of drone and missile strikes launched by the rebels since the start of the Gaza war between the Zionist entity and Palestinian militant group Hamas over two months ago. "The naval forces of the Yemeni Armed Forces carried out a qualitative military operation against the Norwegian ship Strinda, which was loaded with oil" and bound for the Zionist entity, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said. The US military initially reported the strike, saying that a navy destroyer had heard the ship's mayday call and was giving assistance. — AFP

Local

Mirzaam returns for 4th edition

The largest decor and interior design expo in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Mirzaam, the largest decor and interior design expo in Kuwait, returned for its fourth edition on Tuesday at Kuwait International Fairgrounds. The five-day expo, from Dec 12 to 16, takes place in halls 5, 6, and 7 with more than 300 participating pavilions in 30 categories. Founder and organizer of Mirzaam Farah Al-Humaidhi has unveiled an ambitious five-year plan for the future, signaling Mirzaam's intent to support regional expansion by launching Gulf versions.

This strategic move aims to provide opportunities for participants and companies beyond Kuwait, broadening the scope of Mirzaam's impact. Humaidhi



Kuwait News speaks with Farah Al-Humaidhi.

emphasized that sustainability has been a fundamental cornerstone of Mirzaam since its inaugural edition in 2019. She highlighted the substantial development seen in subsequent editions of Mirzaam as a testament to the commitment to promoting sustainability, aligning with the goals outlined in the New Kuwait 2035 vision. This approach reflects Mirzaam's dedication to not only showcase innovation, but also contribute to broader societal and environmental objectives.

Humaidhi highlighted that Mirzaam 4 Expo stands as a showcase for over 230 prominent local and international names, boasting more than 300 distinctive pavilions spanning 30 categories in the realm of interior design and decoration. Encompassing an expansive area exceeding 25,000 square meters, the exhibition provides a platform for participants to showcase their products, ideas and latest trends in furniture and decoration.

This diverse and comprehensive representation enables exhibitors to connect with visitors, offering insights into current market requirements. The commitment to staying abreast of trends and understanding the evolving preferences of the Kuwaiti market is evident, driven by the enthusiasm of Kuwaitis for decor and interior design, affirming that Mirzaam 4 stands as a dynamic hub for industry players to engage with the vibrant landscape of design and innovation.

"The exhibition will make it easier for visitors to find everything they need under one roof, from interior and exterior finishes to furniture, accessories, kitchens and all home needs. Mirzaam's primary goal since its launch is to transform the process of furnishing homes and spaces

Kuwait Times and Kuwait News are media sponsors

from a tiring challenge to an enjoyable experience," Humaidhi pointed out, explaining that Mirzaam 2023 will allow visitors to win valuable prizes when shopping for a minimum of KD 10, including the grand prize of a Volvo car that is offered annually, in addition to cash prizes worth KD 10,000 and more than 10 valuable prizes offered by sponsors.

Humaidhi concluded by thanking the sponsors and participants, led by the platinum sponsors for the fourth year in a row, Zain, the pioneer of mobile telecommunications in the Middle East, in addition to strategic sponsor Volvo Cars and other sponsors.

Shaima Alshatti, Director of the resources development department at Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), said: "We are participating in the Mirzaam exhibition to receive donations for the 'Help Palestine' campaign. We started the campaign from the beginning of the crisis in Gaza and we are working to send more aid. There is a direct presence in Gaza to distribute aid to the needy and we are continuing to send humanitarian air bridge flights." She indicated that at the Kuwait Red Crescent booth at the Mirzaam expo, visitors have the opportunity to contribute to the cause by donating through a payment link or KNET, ensuring a transparent process where they can obtain a payment receipt for their support.

This underscores the organization's commitment to facilitating avenues for humanitarian assistance and rallying support for those affected by the crisis in Gaza. Mirzaam will also celebrate the winners of the "best booth design", where three winners will be awarded. Also, upcoming expos were announced - Mirzaamiyat for Ramadan on Jan 24-27, 2024 and Mirzaam expo 2024 on Dec 3-7, 2024 at Kuwait International Fairgrounds. Kuwait Times and Kuwait News are the media sponsors of the fourth edition of Mirzaam Expo.

PAM stresses media importance in raising social awareness

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) stressed on Tuesday the important role of media by participating in a variety of exhibitions and conferences to raise social awareness for different groups of people. The authority said in a statement on the sidelines of the Hayatk Ghalia (your life is important) exhibition at Kuwait University Al-Shadadiya that they made sure to be present at media exhibitions to support the youth and students by supporting their goals and providing them with guidance. The authority added their responsibility to give attention to students and find ways to increase students' creativity, innovations, success, and scientific developments. The Public Authority of Manpower participated in the exhibition to raise awareness about drugs and their effects on youth and society. — KUNA



Founder of Mirzaam, Farah Al-Humaidhi poses for a group photo with Zain's team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Backburner at Mirzaam



Visitors checking booths at Mirzaam.



GIA's booth



Volvo Cars' booth at the exhibition.



A visitor checks Polestar 2 car at Mirzaam Expo.



Kuwait Red Crescent Society's booth.



Farah Al-Humaidhi poses for group photo with Boubyan's team.



Officials from The Public Authority of Manpower and Kuwait University at the exhibition. — KUNA photos



Public Authority of Manpower participates in Hayatk Ghalia (your life is important) exhibition at Kuwait University Al-Shadadiya.

OAPEC Council to hold next meeting in Kuwait

DOHA: The Council of Ministers of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) approved on Tuesday holding its next meeting in Kuwait at the end of 2024. In a statement, OAPEC said that the agreement came during the discussion of the 111th agenda Ministerial Council, which was related to the work and activity of the organization in Doha, in the presence of the oil and energy ministers of the member states.

The statement added that the organization's Council of Ministers held its 111th meeting yesterday, headed by the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister for Energy Affairs and Minister of Oil, Hayyan Al-Sawad, as Iraq's representative in the organization's Council of Ministers. He explained that the meeting discussed the organization's draft estimated budget for the year 2024, in addition to developing its work and restructuring it, developing its activities,

and reconsidering the systems and laws that govern its work in a way that is compatible with the challenges and new developments in the field of energy.

The meeting also reviewed steps that were taken regarding developing the infrastructure of information technology systems within the organization, in addition to following up on the activation of Cabinet Resolution No. 4/107 regarding the Green Middle East Initiative. Participants also reviewed the report by OAPEC Secretary-General Jamal Al-Loughani and discussed the activities of the General Secretariat, represented in the preparation of economic and technical studies, including reports following up on global petroleum conditions, environmental affairs, and climate change, along with progress on the work of the Information Bank. — KUNA

Zain 'Platinum Sponsor' of South Subahiya Park

In collaboration with TEC • Four adventurous zones with 40+ rides, attractions, and facilities



Nawaf Al Gharabally and Fadhel Al Dousari sign the sponsorship agreement.



Al Gharabally and Al Dousari with Zain and TEC executives.

KUWAIT: In continuation of its strategic partnership with the public sector to support the nation's biggest entertainment projects, Zain has announced its platinum sponsorship of South Subahiya Park in collaboration with the Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC). The Park, considered Kuwait's newest and most anticipated entertainment destination, offers the community a thrilling world-class experience throughout the winter and spring seasons. The sponsorship agreement was signed at TEC headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by Zain Kuwait's Acting Chief Executive Officer Nawaf Al Gharabally, Touristic Enterprises Company's Chief Executive Officer Fadhel Al Dousari, along with the management teams from the two partners.

Zain is proud of its strategic partnership with TEC, which recently covered some of the nation's biggest recreational projects. Zain has found immense interest from the public sector to bring to life a number

of major plans that present the best experiences to the Kuwaiti community. The company is committed to being a main partner in realizing this vision, thus reflecting the key role played by the private sector in achieving the nation's various developmental goals.

South Subahiya Park is Kuwait's latest and most anticipated theme park, and Zain was keen on being among the first of its supporters to help bring an exceptional entertainment destination to families and young people in the community. The Park covers 107,000 square meters and can welcome 10,000 visitors per day. The Park boasts four adventurous zones, each inspired by one of four natural elements: water, wind, earth, and fire. It includes over 40 rides, attractions, and facilities designed with the highest safety and quality standards in mind, including 21 outdoor rides, 12+ skill games, a children's playground, a videogames area, along with over 45 food and beverage stations.

Every year, the community anticipates Zain's participation in the biggest social and entertainment events, and this time the company has prepared a number of surprises and activations at South Subahiya Park for the opportunity to make the most wonderful memories with the public. Through its dedicated booth at the park, Zain will share the joys of various occasions with families, children, and young people, reflecting its brand values "Zain A Wonderful World".

Through its extended partnership with the Touristic Enterprises Company, Zain has contributed to bringing the best world-class entertainment destinations to the community. This collaboration has also vitalized the local touristic, economic, and social scenes, supported local entrepreneurs and startup owners, and drove the progress of the national economy. Zain and TEC's partnership covered some of the biggest recent entertainment projects, including the first season of Winter Won-

derland Kuwait, which came all the way from London to Kuwait for the first time, bringing with it a unique thrilling experience for the whole family.

During the national holidays season, Zain also collaborated with TEC to present a national celebration like no other. Leveraging on its tech innovation leadership, Zain presented spectacular aerial shows using 2,000 of its drones that lighted up the skies above the Green Island with the most wonderful images of Kuwait's leaders, landmarks, and cultural symbols.

In a recent and ongoing collaboration with TEC, Zain also sponsors K-Land, a new entertainment family destination that offers an enjoyable and entertaining experience that celebrates Kuwait's rich cultural heritage. Behind K-Land's success story is a creative team of national talents that worked tirelessly to bring it to life, offering a unique opportunity to enjoy the winter and spring seasons in its beautiful outdoor site located at the Arabian Gulf coastline.

National Office for Human Rights begins workshop

KUWAIT: The National Office for Human Rights launched a workshop for workers in the field of human rights and law enforcement under the patronage of the foreign minister and the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at Kuwait University, as this year celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was approved by the United Nations in 1948 and is the most important legal document in international issues related to human rights in the entire world. Human Rights Day is marked in the countries that signed the document to review and highlight international commitments in their quest to provide a decent means of life and achieve sustainable development goals.

"As we celebrate Human Rights Day, we cannot ignore the continuation of the brutal Zionist attack against the Gaza Strip in a genocidal war, a war crime and a crime against humanity, many of whose victims are women and children, the demolition of all vital installations and the prevention of basic



Head of the Kuwaiti National Diwan for Human Rights Jassem Al-Mubarakhi

means of life," Head of the Kuwaiti National Diwan for Human Rights Jassem Al-Mubarakhi said.

"This Zionist brutality places the entire world and human rights and humanitarian organizations under huge responsibility to move and demand an immediate ceasefire. Here I must address the shameful positions of some countries that claim to be sponsors of human rights in different countries of the world while they make the worst decisions in supporting the attack politically and providing with the most advanced weapons to continue its aggression," he said.

"By this I mean the United States, which recently used its right of veto against a resolution calling for a ceasefire in a setback to the world order and the necessity of establishing international peace and

security. I value the official and popular position of Kuwait in support of the Palestinian cause and humanitarian causes, with the support and guidance of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, hoping that international efforts will succeed in ending this humanitarian suffering," Mubarakhi added.

Since its establishment, the National Diwan for Human Rights has been keen to support all initiatives that contribute to promoting and respecting human rights in accordance with international covenants and conventions and what is stipulated in Kuwaiti legislation. Organizing such workshops, which aim to raise awareness and train workers in the fields of human rights in Kuwait, is one of the occasions through which the diwan is keen to develop joint work organization, build the capabilities of workers and exchange local and regional experiences.

"We thank all governmental, private, and civil society entities for their interaction and keenness to participate, as 25 parties are participating in the workshop as part of efforts to communicate to achieve strategic partnerships to promote human rights. In conclusion, I can only thank the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at Kuwait University for their cooperation in organizing and making the workshop and their contribution as an academic research institution in serving the human rights file," Mubarakhi added.

In my view

Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Time for change



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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Commerce is a term used to describe the business through which goods and services are sold and purchased. Throughout history, man has engaged in various sources of livelihood that bring him benefits, including selling and buying. However, in Kuwait, there has been a conflation of the principles of commerce with wealth, to the extent that the term "merchant" has come to signify wealth, despite many merchants struggling to meet their basic needs. Commerce has become the most widespread source of livelihood, with many people unaware that the Prophet's (PBUH) saying, "Nine-tenths of livelihood is in trade," is considered weak.

Interestingly, merchants are adept at calculating profit and loss, unlike other professions, as their livelihood depends on these calculations. It is perplexing that the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a 70-year-old institution, has failed in calculating loss and profit in its relations with various sectors of Kuwaiti society.

The recent unanimous passage of a law by the National Assembly highlights the overwhelming popular desire to regulate the Chamber of Commerce and subject it to the law, similar to other legal entities. Despite claims by some to support the law, it reflects a restriction of freedom and a reduction of the chamber's role, contrary to its wishes. Following the vote, questions arise about the chamber's actions over the past 70 years, leading to widespread hostility among Kuwaiti people and unanimous support for the law.

Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry has given the impression, whether accurate or not, that it wields influence over the country's economic and political decisions. This perception has consequences, as the chamber is held responsible for societal issues, such as high prices of goods, soaring real estate prices hindering youth from homeownership and interference in elections, contributing to the loss of public sympathy. The majority of individuals controlling the Chamber of Commerce and Industry are influential but lack a robust reliance on graphic readings, scientific surveys and critical analysis. The outcome, though delayed due to economic and political challenges over the past 50 years, is a unanimous passage of the chamber organizing law.

The prevailing mentalities within the chamber must change for the benefit of the youth and not just the heirs. Kuwait's industry was supposed to diversify beyond oil, providing a new source of income. Recognizing the past and present contributions of men and women in business and industry who have sincerely supported the country, it is crucial for the chamber to evolve, responding to citizens' needs, promoting inclusivity and preparing for a new era in Kuwait.

In this new Kuwait, the chamber should be at the service of the entire population, not just a minority, addressing the needs of all youth without discrimination. By doing so, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry can contribute to the advancement of true commerce and effective industry, becoming a vital component of future development.



Participants take a group photo.

Creative Confidence kicks off 'Tamakan' program with NBK strategic sponsorship

KUWAIT: Creative Confidence has kicked off the fifth edition of "Tamakan" training program for Kuwaiti fresh graduates, with the strategic sponsorship of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) for the fourth consecutive year. The program runs for 10 weeks, from 12 December, 2023 to 22 February, 2024, during which NBK hosts the trainees at different departments and requires full-time commitment being a full-time job experience.

It comes with NBK's strategic sponsorship with Creative Confidence which provides training to develop the skills of participants to become a genuine and active work force. The program was kicked off in a ceremony held at NBK's headquarters which included a panel discussion with the trainees. The panel discussion was headed by Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO of Consumer and Digital Banking Group, and Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources.

NBK strongly believes in the importance of nur-

ture the Kuwaiti youth by attracting and developing talents and providing all means of support to help them navigate their way into the labor market. It also supports different social initiatives that align to Kuwait National Development Plan (KNDP), and serve the country's strategic agenda to drive growth, and create job opportunities for the Kuwaiti youth in the private sector, being the country's most valuable resource and the cornerstone for national development.

"Tamakan" is a unique training opportunity as it gives participants an exceptional opportunity to benefit from the expertise of NBK's executive management, through the open discussions held for participants with the bank's leaders who have extensive experience spanning long years in the banking industry. This allows them to benefit from these experiences for a successful and sustainable career.

"Tamakan" aims to develop the personal skills

needed to become compelling candidates, in addition to motivating Kuwaiti youth to explore their potentials and energies. It also unleashes the creativity of young talent through workshops about creativity and innovation, design thinking, business model design, career exploration and innovative de-risking solutions. Creative Confidence is a Kuwaiti consulting and training company specializing in stimulating innovation and creativity and providing practical training experiences for Kuwaiti graduates with the aim of developing young national talent.

At the end of the reception ceremony, the trainees extended their thanks to NBK for sponsoring the program and providing its long-standing expertise to develop their skills and qualify them for the labor market in a professional way, benefiting from the bank's highly professional organizational approach. It is worth mentioning that "Tamakan" received "The Social Work Pioneer Project Award" from the GCC Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labor, recognizing it as an innovative training experience for Kuwaiti fresh graduates to achieve professional self-development in pursuit of emerging as active and efficient workforce.

Envoy to Singapore presents credentials

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Singapore Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Shuraim presented his credentials on Tuesday to Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam during an official ceremony in the Istana Presidential residence. The ambassador relayed the greetings and well wishes of Kuwait's leadership to the President of Singapore and congratulated him on his win in the recent presidential elections. Moreover, he wished the Republic of Singapore more progress and prosperity, said Kuwait's embassy in Singapore in a statement obtained by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). The ambassador praised the good relations tying Kuwait to Singapore for over 38 years, stressing the importance of working together to further improve relations in different sectors and serve both countries. — KUNA



Assistant FM meets Belgian diplomat

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi discussed bilateral relations between Kuwait and Belgium on Tuesday with Jeroen Cooreman, Political Director General at the Belgian Foreign Ministry. In a statement, the foreign ministry said that both sides agreed on celebrating the 60th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, set for next year, and hoped for further cooperation between the countries. The statement added that a Belgian official congratulated Kuwait for joining the UN Human Rights Council for the period of 2024-2029. — KUNA

CAIT organizes international forum on artificial intelligence

Conference is aimed at facilitating the exchange, access of info



Eng Sulaiman Al-Arouj



Audience at the forum.

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) held an international forum on artificial intelligence and digital services titled "Digital Smart Society" on Dec 12, 2023. The forum included the presence of people from different sectors in GCC countries to discuss the role of artificial intelligence in developing the work system in both public and private sectors and the future revolution.

During the forum, Sulaiman Al-Arouj, who was representing CAIT, said the first conference on artificial intelligence is inaugurated as a result of the tremendous technological advancements in communication and information technology and the diversity of multiple programs, which aims to facilitate the exchange and access of information to users, indicating the important role of AI and digital services in

influencing businesses' and individuals' daily lives, as well as governments and all sectors, including the oil, banking, governmental and private sectors.

The specific topics being discussed at the forum were artificial intelligence and its digital services, and their impact on various fields. The latest research and advanced technologies in the field of artificial intelligence were also highlighted. The current stage of AI applications is a very significant transformation in human life, as it represents a real, effective and future revolution in the telecommunications and information technology sector.

The importance of AI topics and the development of digital services and procedures in government entities, as well as private sector institutions, led to accelerating these processes, especially those provided to citizens, as the use of these technologies has numerous benefits across various sectors. It facilitates our daily work by

utilizing technological advancements, which help increase work productivity and reduce risks and errors.

The impact of artificial intelligence on the work system within institutions in all sectors, programs, cloud computing and others, as well as the importance of cybersecurity in using the latest types of technology to maintain the entire environment, has significant effects on the performance and quality of outputs from governmental entities and the private sector in Kuwait and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which is symbolized by this forum.

It serves as a platform to discover, research and discuss the latest updates, which are extremely important. Furthermore, the conference will also present local and global developments in artificial intelligence topics and discuss them with experts and partners to reach results and recommendations for maximizing the role and techniques of artificial intelligence.



KUWAIT: South Korea Embassy and Kuwait Oil Company co-hosted a tree planting event 'Go Green Kuwait' on Dec 9, 2023.



S Korea Embassy, KOC organize tree planting event

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait and Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) co-hosted a tree planting event "Go Green Kuwait" on Dec 9, 2023 at KOC's Al-Abdaliya Nature Reserve. This significant environmental initiative was co-organized in cooperation with the Korean community in Kuwait.

Ambassador Chung Byung-ha expressed enthusiasm about this being the second edition of the campaign, emphasizing the Korean community's deepening engagement with local Kuwaiti society and its steadfast commitment to natural environmen-

tal conservation in Kuwait. Ambassador Chung extended heartfelt appreciation to KOC and its volunteering staff for their invaluable support in preparing this event. In a significant gesture of collaboration, KOC designated an exclusive tree planting zone for the Korean community within its natural reserve, symbolizing a shared commitment to environmental conservation and cross-cultural cooperation.

The "Go Green Kuwait" campaign is more than a tree-planting event; it is aimed at restoring ecological resilience in Kuwait's unique environment. The initiative focused on planting specific tree species - *Vachellia tortilis* and *Rhazaria eripappum* - capable of thriving in the challenging conditions of the water-scarce Kuwaiti desert. This campaign highlights the crucial role of tree planting in mitigating the effects of climate change. Trees are also key to preserving biodiversity, preventing soil erosion, and maintaining ecological balance.



KUWAIT: Japan Embassy holds the 16th Japanese Speech Contest in collaboration with the Center for Community Service & Continuing Education at Kuwait University and the Japanese Society in Kuwait on Dec 10, 2023.

Embassy holds 16th Japanese Speech Contest

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Japan in Kuwait held the 16th Japanese Speech Contest in collaboration with the Center for Community Service & Continuing Education at Kuwait University and the Japanese Society in Kuwait on Sunday, Dec 10, 2023. The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) hosted the contest at the National Library of Kuwait. In his opening remarks, Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait Morino Yasunari, expressed great delight in having been able to hold the event for 16 years, showing his appreciation for the continuous support of the Center

for Community Service & Continuing Education at Kuwait University for Japanese language education since 1996. The ambassador also expressed his desire for more Kuwaiti people to join in learning Japanese language, which is not so difficult as it might look, but rather is very much interesting. Ardent Japanese language learners participated in the contest, in the presence of audience of more than 60 people interested in the Japanese language and culture. The excellent performance shown by the contestants on stage impressed everyone indeed.

A side event took place as well, as a special guest, Merve Dag Al-Shareefen, Academic Coordinator of J-MENA (Study in Japan Global Network Project in Middle East & North Africa) Ankara Office, Kyushu University, gave a presentation promoting studying in Japan with general information of various famous Japanese universities. Also, participants enjoyed watching a live performance of the Japanese martial art aikido, performed by Aikikai, which is a group of experienced aikido practitioners in Kuwait.



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Xi visits Vietnam in bid to counter US growing influence

EU awards Mahsa rights prize as Iran blocks family

Page 6

Page 7



WASHINGTON: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (2nd L), accompanied by US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (C) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (L), arrives to meet with members of the US Senate on Capitol Hill in Washington. — AFP

Zelensky pleads for US war aid

Russia claims advances on the battlefield

WASHINGTON: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky began talks in Congress and at the White House Tuesday to plead for more US military aid, as Russia claimed advances on the battlefield and scornfully dismissed the impact of Western help for Kyiv.

Zelensky arrived at the Senate where he was set to meet with leaders of both parties, before going on to the House of Representatives to confer with the Republican speaker, Mike Johnson. Later, Zelensky was set to move over to the White House for one-on-one talks with President Joe Biden and a joint press conference.

The trip — coming as Ukraine's main phone operator suffered what it said was a massive hacking attack — represents a desperate bid by Zelensky to keep Ukraine's most important international backer from drifting away. Republicans are increasingly lukewarm about the

need to support Ukraine and are also treating Biden's request for billions of dollars in new armaments as a bargaining chip for gains on immigration reform and US-Mexico border security — one of the most intractable issues in US politics.

In a speech Monday at the National Defense University in Washington, Zelensky said that politics should not "betray" Ukraine's soldiers and he echoed Biden's frequent warning that the Ukrainian struggle against invasion has global implications. "When the free world hesitates, that's when dictatorships celebrate and their most dangerous ambitions ripen," he said. "They see their dreams come true when they see delays." "Putin must lose," he said.

'Advanced significantly'

The Kremlin scoffed at the impact of US support, echoing the arguments made by some senior Republicans who

say that continuing the flood of weaponry to Ukraine would be futile. "It is important for everyone to understand: the tens of billions of dollars pumped into Ukraine did not help it gain success on the battlefield," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday.

"The tens of billions of dollars that Ukraine wants to be pumped with, are also headed for the same fiasco." In an interview with Russian state television on Sunday, Putin said that Ukraine was "running out" of arms because its defense industry was not able to produce enough.

"When there is no base of their own, no ideology of their own, no industry of their own, no money of their own, nothing of their own, then there is no future. And we have one," Russia said it was pressing ahead on the ground, just as Ukraine's freezing winter deepens.

"Our units have advanced significantly forward northeast of Novo-

pokrovka," the Moscow-installed head of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region, Yevgeny Balitsky, said on Telegram. Ukraine said Russia had launched a "massive offensive" with armored vehicles in another part of the front near Avdiivka in the east.

In a blow felt by civilians far beyond any frontlines, the country's main mobile operator said it had been paralyzed by a "powerful hacker attack." The disruptions, which the company's CEO called an act of "war," make it impossible to send out air raid alerts, just as Ukraine is dealing with nightly Russian bombing.

'Full mobilization'

Even as the United States ponders its future Ukraine policy, Kyiv's main European ally Poland urged global support. Polish prime minister-designate Donald Tusk called for the "full mobilization on the part of the free world, the West in

support of Ukraine in this war."

That will be the same message delivered by Zelensky in his talks on Capitol Hill — and it will likely be echoed loudly by Biden at the White House. Republican senators last week blocked Biden's request for \$106 billion in emergency aid primarily for Ukraine and Zionist entity.

Talks are ongoing behind the scenes on a deal that would make concessions to Republican demands for tough measures against illegal immigration in return for the Ukraine package. However, Biden, who is seeking reelection next year, needs to thread a narrow passage between giving Republicans what they want and not alienating the left of his own party.

One key Republican senator, James Lankford, was quoted by US media on Monday saying "we're not going to be able" to get a deal by the end of this week. — AFP

French parliament rejects Macron's immigration bill

PARIS: France's government insisted Tuesday it would implement tough measures against illegal migrants as it battled a political crisis following the rejection of its flagship immigration bill in the lower house of parliament.

In a surprise move on Monday, members of the opposition joined forces in parliament's National Assembly to vote down the controversial legislation without even debating it, sparking a political crisis. The rejection of one of the government's flagship initiatives is a humiliating defeat for French President Emmanuel Macron who does not have a majority in parliament and comes amid a heated debate in society around immigration and security.

Advocacy groups have criticized the bill which seeks to toughen the country's immigration law, saying France relies on migrants including undocumented workers in a lot of industries. On Tuesday morning, Macron held a crisis meeting with Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne and key ministers at the Elysee, deciding to maintain its bid to pass the bill and send the legislation back to a parliamentary committee, the government said.

Macron rejected on Monday the offer from Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who has spearheaded the bill, to step down, instead ordering him to find new ways to break the deadlock and push the legislation through.

On a visit to a police station in the southeastern suburbs of Paris, Darmanin said that "whatever path we take" he wanted "firm measures" to be put in place by the end of the year to help law enforcement to fight illegal immigration.

'Return to people'

Originally proposed by Macron's centrist government with a mix of steps to expel more undocumented people and improve migrants' integration, the draft law has been criticized by both the far right and the far left for opposing reasons. Darmanin on Monday urged the National Assembly to debate the bill but lawmakers backed the motion to dismiss by 270 votes to 265.

The adoption of the motion led to the interruption of the examination of the legislation's roughly 2,600 proposed amendments. The bill now leans firmly towards enforcement after its earlier passage through the upper house Senate, which is controlled by the right.

The government will now send the legislation to a so-called mixed parliamentary commission made of upper house Senators and lower house MPs in a bid to thrash out a compromise text, government spokesman Olivier Veran told reporters.

It would start its work "as soon as possible," he said. The compromise version would still have to be backed by both houses of parliament, with no guarantee it would not face the same obstacles in the National Assembly.

The government could once again opt to trigger article 49.3 of the constitution, which allows it to pass legislation without a vote, as it did with contentious pension reforms earlier this year. But the government wants to avoid wielding this widely unpopular constitutional hammer, which can also trigger a no-confidence vote.

The far-right called for the dissolution of parliament's lower house and early elections. "Faced with this major political crisis, we must return to the people," Jordan Bardella, head of far-right Rassemblement National (RN), declared on BFMTV. The left have said the bill should be dropped.

'Open to discussion'

In neighboring Britain, Prime Minister Rishi Su-



(FILES) France's President Emmanuel Macron (R) and France's Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin listen to a participant as they attend a public meeting with residents in a gymnasium in La Busserine area during a visit to Marseille, southeastern France, on June 26, 2023. — AFP

nak's plan to stop irregular migration with deportation flights to Rwanda has also sparked a crisis. In both countries, a rise in the number of asylum seekers, a chronic affordable housing shortage, and a cost-of-living crisis have worsened social tensions.

Eric Ciotti, head of France's conservative The Republicans (LR), whose cooperation is crucial, said he was ready to continue discussions but not with Darmanin. "I am open to discussion on the continuation of this text, but I will do it with the prime minister," Ciotti said on Europe1.

But the outcome is deeply frustrating for Macron, who French media are increasingly seeing as a potential lame duck as he sits out the rest of his term without being able to stand for a third time in 2027. While the rejection is above all "the failure of Gerald Darmanin, it also highlights the fact that the government has less and less control," said the Le Monde daily. — AFP

Suicide attack on Pakistan army base kills 23

PESHAWAR: At least 23 soldiers were killed when militants rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a Pakistani military base on Tuesday, the army said, in an attack claimed by affiliates of the Pakistani Taliban. A suicide squad of six fighters attacked an outpost in Dera Ismail Khan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province — near the Afghan border — in the early hours of Tuesday, the military's media wing said.

"The attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted which forced the terrorists to ram an explosive-laden vehicle into the post, followed by a suicide bombing attack," a statement said. "The resulting blasts led to the collapse of the building, causing multiple casualties," it added, saying all six attackers were slain as soldiers fought back.

A local official who spoke on condition of anonymity said many of the soldiers "were killed while they were sleeping" in the base, a government school commandeered by the army adjacent to a police station.

Another 36 people had been wounded in the attack, he said. Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan — a new group affiliated with the Pakistan Taliban — said the assault began around 2:30 am (2130 GMT) with a "martyrdom attack" by one fighter before others stormed the compound. The army media wing said Dera Ismail Khan had "witnessed heightened activities" overnight and a total of 27 militants were killed in firefights with troops in the restive area. — AFP

International

Spanish lawmakers begin debating divisive amnesty bill

Senate can delay but not block the adoption of the measure

MADRID: Spanish lawmakers on Tuesday begin debating a controversial bill to grant an amnesty to Catalan separatists that was pledged by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in order to remain in power. The amnesty was offered six years after a failed independence bid by Catalan separatists, with Sanchez insisting it would help "turn the page" on Spain's worst political crisis in decades that still stirs up very raw emotions.

For years, Sanchez opposed such a move but recently admitted he'd had a change of heart. Even though such a step was "complex to explain" to the Spanish public, it was a "necessary decision" to learn from what happened in 2017 and move towards a "resolution" of the conflict with Catalonia, he said Monday. Promising the measure would be swiftly adopted by Spain's parliament had won Sanchez the key support of Catalan separatist lawmakers that enabled him to be sworn in last month for a new term in office.

Once passed, the law will allow the courts to drop the charges against hundreds of separatist leaders and activists facing legal action over their role in the October 2017 crisis, in a process that should be completed within two months.

First and foremost, the move benefits Carles Puigdemont who headed Catalonia's regional government when it staged a referendum banned by Madrid then made a short-lived declaration of independence. Considered by many Spaniards as public enemy number one, he fled to Belgium to avoid prosecution although the amnesty will allow him to return home.

Absolute majority

Although the amnesty proposal is backed by a majority drawn from the ranks of the left, the radical left and Basque and Catalan parties, it has deeply divided Spanish society and provoked an outcry from parts of the judiciary. In recent weeks, huge crowds of protesters have hit the streets in Spain to denounce the amnesty, answering a call by the right-wing opposition Popular Party (PP) placed first in July's general election but without enough support to form a government.

"The amnesty is a form of political corruption because it is a means of getting into government in exchange for granting legal impunity," said PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo on Monday. The PP, which holds an absolute majority in the Senate, parliament's upper house, has promised to do everything within its power to delay the adoption of the bill that the Socialists are pushing to have fast-tracked to speed up its promulgation.

The Senate can delay but not block the adoption of the measure. Accusing Sanchez of a "coup d'etat", the leader of the far-right Vox party Santiago Abascal went a step further in his criticism over the weekend, saying the prime minister would meet a dictator's end.

"The time will come when... the Spanish people will want to string up (Sanchez) by the feet," he told the Argentine daily Clarin, in remarks that prompted an angry backlash from the government.

Denouncing Abascal for "hate speech that seeks to polarise and incite violence", Foreign Minister



MADRID: Spain's Prime minister Pedro Sanchez (2L) poses for photographs during the presentation of his new book 'Tierra Firme' ('Solid ground') in Madrid. — AFP

Jose Manuel Albares said such language hadn't been heard "in Spain for many decades, since times that were very dark," referring to the 1936-39 civil war and ensuing dictatorship that ended in 1975.

More worrying for the government is the

fact that the amnesty has deeply divided Sanchez's Socialists, with a survey published Monday in El Mundo daily showing 45.8 percent of those who voted for him in July were opposed to the measure. — AFP

EU awards Mahsa rights prize as Iran blocks family

STRASBOURG: The European Parliament on Tuesday presented a top EU rights prize to Mahsa Amini, whose death in Iranian custody sparked mass protests, but her family was blocked by Tehran from attending. The award—also for the broader "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement—is the latest international recognition for the women challenging Iran's religious government after jailed activist Narges Mohammadi was given the Nobel Peace Prize. Amini's mother, father and brother missed the ceremony at the parliament in the French city of Strasbourg after Iran's authorities confiscated their passports and barred them from flying to collect the EU's Sakharov Prize. In a speech read out by the family's lawyer, Amini's mother Mojan Eftekhari said they were denied the opportu-

nity to attend "in violation of all legal and human standards". She said her daughter's name "became a secret code for freedom and spread the dream of liberty from her birthplace, Kurdistan, all over Iran, the Middle East and the world".

"Her life was taken unjustly, they believed that by taking her life, they will stop her from being and becoming," said the speech, read out by lawyer Saleh Nikbakht. Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died on September 16, 2022 while being held by Iran's religious police for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women. Her death triggered major protests in Iran and a global movement known as "Woman, Life, Freedom", calling for the end of the Muslim cleric-led government in Tehran and its imposition of headscarves on women.

Iranian security forces have cracked down on the protests domestically, killing hundreds, and have executed dozens for allegedly participating in what officials have termed "riots". The refusal by Iran's government to let Amini's family attend has caused outrage among EU

lawmakers, who said Tehran is seeking to stifle her supporters.

"That treatment is another example of what the people of Iran face every day," European Parliament president Roberta Metsola said. "Let me say that the courage and resilience of Iranian women in their fight for justice, liberty and human rights will not be stopped. Their voices cannot be silenced and while they are not here today, their presence will be felt."

Two prominent activists living in exile outside Iran, Afsoon Najafi and Mersedeh Shahinkar, picked up the award in the name of the broader movement. Najafi's sister died during the anti-government protests that swept Iran in the wake of Amini's death. Shahinkar was shot in the eye by the country's security forces. "We are standing here on behalf of all the women and we are tired of the regime of the Iran," Shahinkar told a press conference. "The Islamic Republic is not representative of the Iranian people. I and the people who protest are the sound and the voices of Iranian people."

The EU has imposed sanctions on scores of Iranian officials over the re-



STRASBOURG: (From L) Mahsa Amini's representative, Iranian lawyer Saleh Nikbakht, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, Mersedeh Shahinkar and Afsoon Najafi from the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement in Iran pose during the 2023 European Parliament's Sakharov Prize award ceremony. — AFP

pression of the demonstrators. Najafi said there are many Iranians who are still "suffering and tortured" by the authorities. "The Islamic Republic by putting pressure on Iranian people they do not let them do anything," she said.

She called for the international community to further make the authorities in Tehran pariah for their treatment of the protesters. "The time has come for the politicians to stop supporting them or not to shake their hands," she said. — AFP

Foreign firms don't need...

Continued from Page 1

prisoners who were handed jail terms on criminal offenses have to wait for around 10 years to be rehabilitated. During those 10 years, they are barred from getting jobs.

But the voting of Cabinet ministers against the law indicates that the government is going to send the law back to the Assembly. MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the government informed lawmakers on Monday it will oppose the law under orders from the political leadership. If the law is returned by the government, the Assembly can overturn the government's objections if it passes the law with a two-thirds majority and the government must accept it.

MPs also agreed to ask the Assembly's human rights committee to investigate the case of Kuwaiti citizen Turki Al-Enezi who was allegedly illegally arrested and tortured by the army intelligence unit. MP Ghanem, who was the first to expose the issue, blasted Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, accusing him of interfering in investigation committees and cast

doubt about the integrity of the probe panel he ordered the defense ministry to form.

Ghanem said he does not trust investigation panels which the defense minister can influence. He repeated accusations that the army intelligence physically tortured Enezi, who was the private driver of former defense minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, when he told them Sheikh Khaled did not go to Ghanem and his brother Khaled. Ghanem also accused some members of the human rights panel of being corrupt.

The defense minister told MPs that no one in Kuwait can accept any citizen to be tortured, adding that he has asked the military judiciary unit to investigate the case and allowed other government legal departments to be in the committee. He also said the government has opened the door for the parliament to take part in the investigation. He stressed that those found guilty will be held to account.

The minister revealed the ministry's investigation found two other cases linked to the so-called army fund case in which the former defense minister was sentenced to seven years in jail. In the first case, the ministry found highly sensitive spy devices were bought by the army fund and were not found in the military, while the second case involved smuggling liquor using military planes.

mercy on her, oh Lord." The Zionist army has lost 105 soldiers in the offensive, it said on Tuesday, including 13 killed by friendly fire and others in accidents. Fighting and heavy bombardment in south Gaza, where the Zionist entity previously urged civilians to seek safety, have left people with few places to go.

In Gaza City, thousands of Palestinians set up camp at a UN agency headquarters after nearby homes and shops were destroyed by Zionist strikes. An AFP correspondent said both the Islamic and adjacent Al-Azhar universities had been reduced to rubble, as had the police station. "There is no water. There is no electricity, no bread, no milk for the children, and no diapers," said Rami Al-Dahduh, 23, a tailor.

The UN General Assembly was due to vote later Tuesday on a non-binding resolution demanding "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire". The draft text, seen by AFP, largely reproduces the resolution blocked by the United States, a key ally of the Zionist entity, at a UN Security Council vote on Friday.

"We condemn anyone who encourages (the Zionist entity) to continue its killings," Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh told a cabinet meeting in Ramallah ahead of the vote. "While claiming to be against the killing of civilians, the United States obstructs the Security Council resolutions to halt the war," he said.

Fears of a wider conflict continue to grow, with Iran-backed groups targeting US and allied forces in Iraq and Syria, and daily exchanges of fire along the Zionist entity's border with Lebanon. France said one of its frigates shot down a drone threatening a Norwegian-flagged tanker hit in an overnight missile attack claimed by Iran-backed Houthi rebels. — AFP

Mideast leaders have few answers...

Continued from Page 1

Oslo," referring to 1993 peace accords signed in the United States.

Jordan's Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh warned that failure to deal with "the day after" the war would mean "uglier scenes in a year or two". He hoped the war would act as a "wake-up call", especially as the conflict threatens a wider regional conflagration. The war has encouraged groups linked to Iran, which backs Hamas, to launch attacks on US and allied forces in Iraq and Syria, while Yemen's Houthis have fired missiles and the Zionist entity is engaged in near-daily cross-border clashes with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Zionist-Palestinian question is "at the center and the heart of all conflicts in the region," said Sheikh Mohammed. "What's coming out of Gaza every day is not just affecting those forces in Lebanon or Yemen."

Kuwait rejects phaseout of fossil...

Continued from Page 1

In statements to KUNA, Barrak, also minister of state for economic and investment affairs and Chairman of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, said Kuwait deeply believes in the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions to protect the environment. But this goal could be achieved through the introduction of new technical and control solutions, he argued.

The minister noted that ditching fossil fuels would undoubtedly gravely impact the global economy and create enormous problems for the energy sector and the development process. He warned that such a policy would also affect developing countries' ability to meet their needs and achieve UN sustainable development goals.

Iraq's oil minister, Hayyan Abdul Ghani Al-Sawad, said "fossil fuels will remain the major source of energy in the whole world. We cannot phase out the use of that energy." He also took aim at nations that consume fossil fuels. "We as Arab countries, we produce this energy, but we are not the producer of emissions," he said. "The users need to develop the technologies to reduce their emissions," he said.

Mohammed Mubarak Bin Daina, Bahrain's oil and environment minister, said petrol and oil was "a main factor in our economies". "We should focus and preserve this industry and consume its derivatives in a balanced way," he said, while calling for emissions reductions and the further use of renewable energy.

Negotiators haggled Tuesday to find a compromise over the fate of fossil fuels as the Dubai climate summit

It also affects an entire generation that might be radicalized because of these images," the Qatari premier added. But concrete policies were lacking at the forum, which excluded high-level representatives from key regional players Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Egypt.

The United States, the Zionist entity's key diplomatic and military ally, has previously indicated the Palestinian Authority could govern both Gaza and the West Bank in the aftermath of hostilities. But the Palestinians say a much more fundamental response is needed, one that takes seriously "an independent, sovereign, viable state of Palestine on all the Palestinian territories" in Shtayyeh's words.

Qatar, which hosts the Hamas leadership, said it is still working on a fresh truce like the one last month that saw a one-week break in fighting and scores of Zionist captives exchanged for Palestinian prisoners and humanitarian aid. But Sheikh Mohammed warned the Zionist entity's relentless bombardment in Gaza was "narrowing this window" for a ceasefire. "There is a collective responsibility on all of us to stop the killing, to go back to the table to find a lasting solution," he said. — AFP

went into overtime, with Saudi-led crude producers resisting a phaseout of oil, gas and coal. The 13-day UN COP28 conference in the glitzy metropolis has debated a historic first-ever global exit from fossil fuels, the main culprits in a planetary crisis of warming.

But a deadline set by COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber, himself head of the UAE oil company, expired without a deal, a day after he presented a draft that only suggested reductions in fossil fuels among several options. With low-lying island nations warning that their very survival is at risk, negotiators worked through the night and the Emirati hosts promised a new text to try to find consensus.

Denmark's Dan Jorgensen, one of the climate ministers tasked with leading the talks, said the summit needed to be clear that fossil fuels were on their way out. "I'm personally not married to one word," he said. "But I am insisting that the meaning of this formulation, whichever one we will end up having, has to be extremely ambitious." Veteran US negotiator John Kerry has also urged stronger language on phasing out fossil fuel, even though the United States is the world's top oil producer.

Saudi Arabia, built on oil wealth, has told COP28 to take its "concerns" into consideration while the OPEC oil cartel has urged members to resist calls to end their lucrative export. The most emotionally charged appeals for phaseout have come from low-lying islands, which fear being submerged as polar ice melts and whose teams flew to Dubai at great expense to their national budgets.

John Silk, the negotiator from the Marshall Islands, which lies on average 2.1 m above sea level, said Monday that his country "did not come here to sign our death warrant". Vanessa Nakate, 27, a leading climate activist from Uganda, said the summit had to address fossil fuels. — AFP

UN calls Gaza 'hell on earth'

Continued from Page 1

of Germany during World War II. He said the EU was also "alarmed by the violence in the West Bank by extremist settlers" and condemned the Zionist government's decision to approve 1,700 more housing units in Jerusalem, a violation of international law. Zionist forces killed four Palestinians in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin on Tuesday, the Palestinian health ministry reported. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said they were killed in a drone strike on the Old City.

The UN estimates 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been displaced by the conflict, half of them children. Zionist air strikes killed at least 24 people in Rafah near the border with Egypt, where tens of thousands are seeking shelter, the Gaza health ministry said. One strike left a deep crater and gutted surrounding buildings. Teenagers salvaged belongings from the debris with their hands, a young girl retrieving some notebooks. "There are still people under the rubble," said resident Abu Jazar, 23. "We call on the Arab people and the world to put on pressure to stop the strikes on Gaza."

At Rafah hospital, bereaved father Hani Abu Jamaa cradled the body of his young daughter Sidal, who was killed by shrapnel. He said there had been strong explosions overnight and he only found she was dead when he tried to wake her on Tuesday morning. "Even if I live 100 years, I will never find another like her," he said, crying. "May God have

International

China's Xi visits Vietnam in bid to counter US growing influence

'Asia's future is in the hands of no one but Asians'

HANOI: China's President Xi Jinping called Tuesday for a "new stage" in relations with Vietnam as he began his first visit in six years, seeking to counter the United States' growing influence with the communist nation. Xi will meet the leader of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong, later on Tuesday, after Hanoi upgraded diplomatic ties with Washington when US President Joe Biden visited in September.

Biden's visit was part of US efforts around the world to contain China's rising economic power—and to secure supplies of crucial materials needed for high-tech manufacturing. Speaking after his arrival at Hanoi's airport, Xi said he would talk with Vietnamese leaders on "the overall, strategic, and directional issues of China-Vietnam relations, as well as international and regional issues of common concern, in order to push bilateral relations into a new stage", according to Chinese state media.

Vietnam has long pursued a "bamboo diplomacy" approach, striving to stay on good terms with both China and the United States. It shares US concerns about Beijing's increasing assertiveness in the contested South China Sea, but it also has close economic ties with China. Vietnam and China, both ruled by communist parties, already share a "comprehensive strategic partnership", Vietnam's highest diplomatic status.

Hanoi and Washington upgraded their relationship to the same level in September. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that the visit would involve discussions on "bringing China-Vietnam relations to a higher position".

That could see Xi push for Vietnam to join his

"Community of Common Destiny", a loosely defined phrase that refers to a vision of future cooperation on economic, security and political issues. In an article published Tuesday in Vietnam's Nhan Dan newspaper, Xi said that "Asia's future is in the hands of no one but Asians". Wang said the agenda for Xi's trip includes "politics, security, practical cooperation, the formation of public opinion, multilateral issues and maritime issues".

Overlapping claims

On Tuesday, Chinese and Vietnamese flags lined the route from the airport into central Hanoi, and dozens of well-wishers gathered outside the hotel where Xi is expected to stay. On Wednesday, Xi will hold talks with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and President Vo Van Thuong, and lay a wreath at the mausoleum of revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh.

The trip comes with tensions running high between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea, after a spate of incidents involving the countries' vessels at flashpoint reefs. The Philippines said it had summoned China's envoy on Monday and flagged the possibility of expelling him.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea and has ignored an international tribunal ruling that its assertions have no legal basis. It deploys boats to patrol the busy waterway and has built artificial islands that it has militarised to reinforce its claims.

Vietnam, along with Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, also have overlapping claims in the South China Sea. During Biden's visit, Vietnam and the United States jointly warned against the "threat or use of force" in

the contested waterway. Vietnam was one of several ASEAN members upset by a new official Chinese map published in September, showing sovereignty over almost the entire resource-rich waterway. Analysts say that, like Biden in September, Xi may seek closer cooperation on rare earth minerals used in the manufacture of high-tech devices such as smartphones and electric car batteries.

Chinese state-controlled media reported last month that China Rare Earth Group Co. was looking for opportunities to work with Vietnam's mining giant Vinacomin. The United States and Vietnam in September agreed to cooperate to help Hanoi quantify and develop its rare earth resources.

Their new partnership also included an agreement on semiconductors, as fears about US reliance on China for strategic resources grow. US chip giant Nvidia wants to set up a base in Vietnam to develop its semiconductor industry, its CEO was quoted as saying by the Vietnamese government. — AFP

So far this year, only 10 have made landfall or come close, the lowest number since 1998 when 11 were recorded, said Ana Solis, chief climatologist at the state weather forecaster. With less than three weeks of the year left, "it looks like the record will be beaten", Solis told AFP, adding that climate change was "probably" a factor.

The Philippines began keeping weather records in 1948, Solis said. As a consequence of the weather phenomenon known as El Nino, the Philippines was also likely to experience "moderate to severe drought conditions" from February to May 2024, the government's Science and Technology Department Secretary Renato Solidum told reporters.

That would be comparable to the drought during

the 1997-1998 El Nino, which was the country's worst-ever dry spell. El Nino was already underway, bringing drier conditions to some areas of the country where there had been up to an 80 percent reduction in rainfall, Solidum said.

Solidum said 77 percent of the country's provinces were expected to be in drought by the end of May. He urged government agencies to begin preparing to ensure enough water, food and electricity would be available.

"We need to plan ahead and make it fast," Solidum said. Temperatures in the capital Manila could reach up to 38.3 degrees Celsius (100.9 degrees Fahrenheit) in April and May—comparable to 1998 figures, he said. Northern areas of the main island of Luzon could hit 41C. — AFP



HANOI: China's President Xi Jinping (centre L) and Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong (centre R) attend a welcome ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi on December 12, 2023. — AFP

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Malaysia PM Anwar reshuffles cabinet as popularity dips

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced a major cabinet reshuffle Tuesday, adding several new ministers and agreeing to share the finance portfolio with a trusted technocrat in a bid to shore up flagging support.

Anwar's popularity has been eroded in recent months by concerns over inflation and the falling value of the ringgit. The prime minister has also helmed the finance ministry since taking office last year, but as part of the shake-up he named a second finance minister, Amir Hamzah, the former head of the country's biggest pension fund.

"I think that I have built a consensus that the finance ministry, other than being headed by me, must have a strong professional team to ensure we are on the right track, focus on the economy, and not be sidelined or deflected by political pressures," Anwar said. The cabinet reshuffle—the first since Anwar became prime minister in November 2022 -- increased the number of ministers to 31 from 28.

New ministers were assigned to the defence, foreign, health, higher education and commodities portfolios. The revamp comes after a survey published in November by the independent Merdeka Center showed Anwar's approval rating had fallen to 50 percent from 68 percent a year ago due to growing concerns about the economy, prices and wages.

Anwar's party won the most seats in last year's general election but fell short of the outright majority needed to form a government. That forced him into an alliance with former foes in the United Malays National Organisation to secure a two-thirds parliamentary majority and approval from Malaysia's king to form a unity government.

The coalition has so far held together in a country that had seen three leadership turnovers in as many years after scandal-tainted Najib Razak was voted out as prime minister in 2018 over massive corruption at state fund IMDB. Oh Ei Sun of Pacific Research Center said the new ministers brought more experience to the cabinet. "Hopefully people would have a higher regard for this cabinet because the previous cabinets there were a lot of new hands and frankly speaking that might not have performed exceedingly well," Oh told AFP. — AFP



Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

Taiwan candidate seeks 'pragmatic' path on China

NEW TAIPEI CITY: Presidential candidate Ko Wen-je has sought to portray himself as an alternative to Taiwan's more established leaders, proposing what he calls a "pragmatic" approach to China ties that might attract some younger voters. China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own and has repeatedly vowed to seize it one day, by force if necessary.

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which defends the island as sovereign, has described the January 13 election as a choice between "democracy or autocracy". Its main opposition, the Kuomintang (KMT), is more open to ties with Beijing and has branded itself as the "party of peace" with China.

Ko, a former surgeon-turned-Taipei mayor and the main challenger to the island's two dominant parties, told AFP he sees himself as a "reasonable, pragmatic" outsider. "A great many middle voters, especially young people, cannot stand the blue and green parties anymore," he said, referring to the island's leading parties, in an interview held at his campaign headquarters in New Taipei City.



NEW TAIPEI: Taiwan People's Party (TPP) presidential candidate Ko Wen-je speaks during an interview in New Taipei City on December 12, 2023. Presidential candidate Ko Wen-je has sought to portray himself as an alternative to Taiwan's more established leaders. — AFP

"In the past 30 years, the ideologies of (declaring) independence or unification (with China) have divided Taiwan," he said, adding that he believes many islanders would rather focus on "our real problems". Ko pointed to a string of issues, naming water, land and work shortages among them, but would not be drawn on discussing concrete policies.

His brash rhetorical style has won him some support—especially from younger voters—but critics say he has flip-flopped on issues depending on his audience. His comments on women and LGBTQ people in one of the only territories in Asia-Pacific where same-sex couples have marital rights have also sparked controversy. And last month, his outsider image was dented when he entered into a tentative alliance with the KMT. The unity bid collapsed over a disagreement on who would head the presidential ticket, resulting in a public argument waged in front of Taiwan's bemused press corps.

Polls see-saw on voters' approval for Ko—putting him either second or third in a three-horse race, with the DPP in first place—but his rallies appear to pull supporters of all ages, including younger voters who have previously voted for the ruling party.

"I feel like there's been no change (under the DPP's administration) and it's been eight years," 29-year-old Abby Cheng, who works in sales for a tech company, said at a recent rally. The Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation pollster branded the rise of Ko's party "truly phenomenal", while political scientist Wen-ti Sung said a strong third party in Taiwan could force a more meaningful policy debate between the two main parties.

"However, that's not what we have," Sung told AFP. "No, it's just about simple, anti-establishment populism... that lets people let off steam." — AFP

Philippines records fewer storms, faces drought in decades

MANILA: The Philippines has so far endured fewer storms in 2023 than in any of the past 25 years and now faces potentially the worst drought in decades, officials said Tuesday. The tropical archipelago nation—which is ranked among the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change—is usually affected by around 20 major storms a year.



GENEVA: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk addresses the assembly during an event to mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, at the United Nations Offices, in Geneva. — AFP

75 yrs on, UN urges return to spirit of rights declaration

GENEVA: The UN on Monday urged world leaders to revive the spirit that led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 75 years ago, to counter today's widespread oppression and polarization. The text adopted after World War II and the Holocaust marked the first time that countries agreed to protect fundamental rights and freedoms on a universal scale, for all people.

"In the ashes of global warfare, it brought hope. To put an end to cycles of bloodshed, it promised justice," said United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk. "It set out the path to peace," he told a gathering celebrating the 75th anniversary of the groundbreaking tract, adopted in Paris on Dec 10, 1948. Turk said his thoughts went "to the millions of people suffering unbearably in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, notably in Gaza, and (the Zionist entity); in Sudan; Ukraine; Myanmar; and so many other places".

"Famine. Oppressive and hateful discrimination. Repression and persecution. Threats to human rights generated by climate change, pollution and biodi-

versity loss. These are profound and interlocking challenges that stem from failure to uphold human rights," Turk told Monday's event at the UN's European headquarters in Geneva. During the event, which began with a minute of silence for victims of rights violations, Turk said the declaration provided a "guide" to solve the towering challenges we face today. The declaration, he said, "resonates with the ancient wisdom that connects all human beings". It drew its inspiration from around the world, he said, including the philosophies of the Enlightenment; Islam's emphasis on human dignity and compassionate sharing; and the demands of the Haitian revolution for an end to enslavement and racist oppression.

Although not legally binding, the declaration stresses the supremacy of individual rights over those of states. "The drafters of the Universal Declaration transcended geopolitical clashes and economic differences. They set aside many terrible disputes to achieve this luminous text, which lit the path to peace, justice and freedom," he said. The 75th anniversary, he said, should be seen as "a call to hope and... action".

"At a time of so little solidarity, and so much divisive and short-sighted vision, I view it as a call to overcome polarization," he said. "A call to hark back to the spirit that led every member state to adopt the Universal Declaration; and to base local, national and global decisions, across all areas of policy, on the intrinsic, and equal, value of every human life." — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023

West Bank's economy suffers as Palestinians lose Zionist entity jobs

Zionist entity has terminated 130,000 work permits for West Bank Palestinians

JERUSALEM: West Bank Palestinian Ibrahim Al-Qiq lost his Zionist entity job permit after the Gaza war began, sinking him into despair and debt like thousands of others in the occupied territory. The war between Zionist entity and Hamas may be happening in Gaza, a separate Palestinian territory on the other side of Zionist entity, but its impact is being powerfully felt in the West Bank.

Zionist entity terminated work permits for Palestinians from both the Zionist entity-occupied West Bank and Gaza following the October 7 war, leaving many people like Qiq struggling to survive.

A 37-year-old father of three, Qiq earned around 6,000 shekels (\$1,615) a month as a construction worker in Zionist entity until he lost his work permit. "We have spent what we earned," he told AFP. "Our debts have piled up, and we need to buy provisions and pay the rent for our homes and the water and electricity bills." He has been forced to borrow nearly 7,000 shekels to cover expenses.

His mountainous hometown of Kharas, near the West Bank city of Hebron, has around 12,000 inhabitants. Seventy percent of its workforce used to cross time-consuming Zionist checkpoints every day to work in Zionist entity according to local municipality. The rest are employed by the Palestinian Authority, but it is struggling to pay staff amid a downturn that saw economic output fall by more than a third in the month after the war began.

Zionist entity has terminated 130,000 work permits for West Bank Palestinians and withheld 600 million shekels (\$160 million) in taxes on Palestinian goods, said Manal Qarhan, an official at the Palestinian ministry of economy. She said the administration

was now losing \$24 million per day thanks to the loss of taxes and reduced tourism from Palestinians living in Zionist entity.

The Gaza war was sparked by Hamas's unprecedented attack on southern Zionist entity on October 7 when militants broke through the militarized border to kill around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and drag some 240 hostages to Gaza, according to Zionist entity figures. In retaliation, Zionist entity vowed to destroy Hamas, unleashing a relentless bombing campaign and ground invasion that has killed at least 18,205 people, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Palestinian workers do not receive social insurance or unemployment compensation from the Zionist entity government, as Zionist entity workers do—nor is any offered by the Palestinian Authority.

The jobless are left to fend for themselves. "Those whose wives had gold jewelry sold it to feed their children," said Tareq Al-Hlahla, also unemployed and struggling to support an extended family of 10.

Jamil Staara, an unemployed construction worker, said: "Our future is unclear. There is mental stress, and no savings." The impact is rippling through the local economy. Ahmed Radwan, who owns a supermarket in Kharas, said sales were down 70 percent and he had stopped providing groceries on credit after customer debts reached 40 percent of sales. People are buying only "basics like milk, rice, sugar and flour, and those who used to buy bread now only buy half a loaf," said Radwan.

He has laid off half his six workers, and two more will go this month. "There is no hope," he said. Violence has also surged in the West Bank,



JENIN: A Palestinian street vendor pushes a bread cart as the Zionist entity security forces conduct a raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank on December 12, 2023. — AFP

where Zionist entity forces conduct regular raids. The Palestinian Authority says around 270 Palestinians have been killed by Zionist entity forces or settlers in the West Bank since the war began. Zionist entity "has set up around 130 permanent and moving military checkpoints in the West Bank, which force

Palestinians to travel on rough side roads that are extremely dangerous, because they expose them to settler attacks," the Palestinian ministry of economy said. The checkpoints worsen the economic impact, say locals, as they complicate transport of agricultural goods and workers. — AFP

US inflation slows in November but pressures remain

WASHINGTON: Consumer inflation in the United States edged down for a second straight month in November, government data showed Tuesday, in encouraging news for policymakers seeking to get prices under control. The consumer price index (CPI), a closely eyed gauge of inflation, rose 3.1 percent from a year ago, said the Department of Labor, down from a 3.2 percent rate in October.

The slowdown comes on the back of falling gas prices, with the gasoline index dropping 6.0 percent.

But the inflation figure was slightly hotter than expected, and CPI rose 0.1 percent between October and November. Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI increase was steady at 4.0 percent from a year ago. Tuesday's numbers were released on the same day the Federal Reserve opens its final policy meeting of the year. Central bank officials have rapidly lifted the benchmark lending rate since last year to tame stubborn inflation, and the overall CPI figure has come down sharply from its 9.1 percent peak in June 2022.

Analysts largely expect the Fed to keep interest rates at the current level as the effects of existing rate hikes ripple through the world's biggest economy. "The inflation numbers have little implication for the Fed's December meeting," said Michael Pearce, lead US economist at Oxford Economics.

He added that officials have "widely signaled an extended pause and won't react based on one month's data." "To see earlier rate cuts, we would need to see inflation slowing more sharply, perhaps helped by a slowdown in the labor market which helps bring wage growth lower and therefore services price inflation," Pearce told AFP ahead of the latest report.

Price pressures remain in other areas as well. According to the Labor Department, "the index for shelter continued to rise in November, offsetting a decline in the gasoline index," said the Labor Department. While inflation is coming down, EY chief economist Gregory Daco cautioned that there could be a risk of "over-tightening" in monetary policy. He noted the Fed is extremely data dependent in making its rate decisions, which worked out when inflation was rising or stabilizing at high levels.

But, he said, "we're in a world where disinflation has been faster than what the Fed had anticipated." "That alludes to the possibility that essentially, they will have monetary policy that is too restrictive given where inflation is at," he added. — AFP

S&P: GCC countries have resources to soften climate risks

KUWAIT: Physical risks from climate change are rising globally and GCC countries could become more vulnerable to their economic and financial effects over the next few decades if investments in adaptation and resilience stagnate, S&P Global Ratings said on Monday. Extreme heat and water stress caused by global warming could result in an annual drop of up to 8 percent in the region's gross domestic product by 2050, without risk mitigation and adaptation, the report said.

"GCC governments have some of the highest assets-to-GDP ratios among the countries we rate," it said. "Consequently, they have significant financial means to invest in adaptation and resilience measures." To assess the economic impact of physical climate risks, S&P applied four shared socioeconomic pathways (SSP) scenarios in its Lost GDP: Potential impacts of physical climate risks report released last month before the start of COP28.

SSPs are a set of scenarios for projected greenhouse gas emissions and temperature changes, and include changes in socioeconomic systems, including population growth, economic growth, resource availability and technological developments. On the other end of the spectrum is SSP5-8.5, which

Rising egg prices show cracks in Russian economy

MOSCOW: Russians have voiced concern about the growing cost of a basic food staple—eggs—pointing to the fragile state of the sanctions-hit economy, as President Vladimir Putin seeks a fifth term in office. Putin has said he would run for re-election in March in a vote that falls over two years after he launched a military operation that led to mass casualties and triggered Western sanctions.

He has repeatedly praised his economy's resilience against the sanctions, but Russians' buying power is shrinking with inflation accelerating to 7.5 percent year on in November. And the price jump in eggs—they up by 40 percent in November from the same time last year, according to the Russian statistics agency Rosstat—couldn't come at a politically worse time as they are a key ingredient for many traditional Russian holiday dishes.

"I'm horrified!... What's going on with the prices is a nightmare, and not just for eggs, but for everything," 76-year-old pensioner Yelizaveta Shalayevskaya told AFP in Moscow on Monday.

"I used to buy eggs for 70 rubles at the shop, now it costs around 130-140," 21-year-old student Ilya Zarubin told AFP. Nina Nevarenkh, a 65-year-old pensioner, agreed that egg prices have risen sharply.

"I do not understand why (eggs) have gone up, but it's a fact... I can feel how my wallet is impacted," she said. Experts cited in Russian media said the increase was triggered by a rise in the prices of poultry feed and veterinary products, itself indirectly caused by Western sanctions on imported goods.

has high emissions and limited mitigation measures. Compared with other regions, the GCC shows the third-largest GDP at risk of a drop of about 8 percent annually by 2050 without adaptation under SSP3-7.0, the report said.

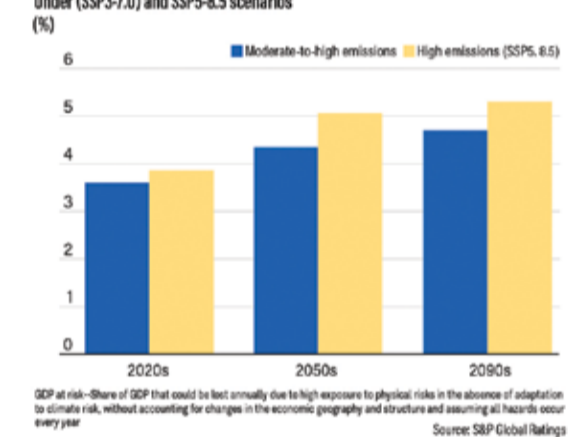
Water stress and extreme heat events are not uncommon in the GCC. Generally, higher temperatures raise energy requirements for cooling while compounding water stress, the report said, adding that there is also the risk of potential damage from pluvial flooding, which occurs during heavy rainfall.

At risk is the share of GDP that could be lost annually due to exposure to physical climate risks. This metric is based on a static view of the economy and does not account for adaptation to climate risk, changes in the economy's geography and structure, or any other growth dynamics. Without adaptation, S&P's Lost GDP report found that up to 4.4 percent of the world's GDP could be lost annually by 2050 if global warming does not stay well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

The rating agency estimated that 3.2 percent of global GDP is at risk annually under SSP1-2.6 and this could rise to 5.1 percent under SSP5-8.5, where emissions are high under limited mitigation. The GCC's economic geography is relatively concentrated in cities, hydrocarbon-producing centers and import or export-free zones. This makes the region highly exposed to water stress, extreme heat and occasional flooding after extreme rainfall, according to S&P's latest report.

Decision makers throughout the region have — to differing extents — embedded adaptation and resil-

ANNUAL WORLD GDP AT RISK TO PHYSICAL CLIMATE RISKS



ience measures into their national infrastructure, it said. "These measures may help reduce the potential impacts of physical climate risks. Yet they may also contribute to increased greenhouse gas emissions, particularly where additional energy is required, such as for desalination and cooling," the report said. The GCC is estimated to hold 44 percent of the world's water desalination capacity, S&P said, citing a 2022 World Bank report.

As part of efforts to put in place mitigation measures, regional policymakers recognize continued investment as a prerequisite for sustainable economic development and have been integrating net-zero commitments into national economic diversification plans, the rating agency said.



MOSCOW: A customer holds a pack of chicken eggs in a shop in Moscow on December 11, 2023. — AFP

The increase has authorities worried. General prosecutor Igor Krasnov launched checks to probe potentially unjustified price increases from sellers and producers. The Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Supervision—Rosselkhozadzor—in the meantime authorised the import of eggs from Turkey. The agriculture ministry also suggested a six-month ban on the export of Russian eggs.

In the southern city of Belgorod, near Ukraine, authorities called for calm after people queued for eggs over the weekend. In a scene reminiscent of the Soviet Union, videos on social media showed people queuing in the snow in the hope of getting cheaper priced eggs at an agricultural fair. "There won't be any shortage... there will be eggs for everyone," regional vice-governor Yulia Shechedrina said on Telegram. She nonetheless announced to limit sales to 20 eggs per person. Egg prices are scrutinized by Russian families who are getting ready for winter celebrations. — AFP

UK jobless rate steadies as wage growth drops

LONDON: UK unemployment steadied and wages growth retreated in October, according to official data Tuesday that is likely to influence the Bank of England's next moves on interest rates. The unemployment rate came in at 4.2 percent, unchanged from September's reading, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

Average wages jumped 7.3 percent in the 12 months to October but this was down on the 7.8-percent reading in the year to September, the ONS added. It was the steepest fall in earnings growth for nearly two years, while the data comes ahead of the Bank of England's latest decision on UK interest rates due Thursday. With the BoE widely expected to keep borrowing costs steady, markets will be looking for clues in minutes of the meeting on when the BoE would begin cutting interest rates as inflation cools. "The sharp fall in wage growth in October will probably further fuel investors' expectations that interest rates could be cut as soon as the middle of next year," Ashley Webb of Capital Economics research group said following Tuesday's data. — AFP

Business

'Chip alliance': South Korean president kicks off Dutch trip

Major chip makers accompany Yoon to Amsterdam

AMSTERDAM: South Korea's president kicked off a visit to the Netherlands Tuesday, hoping to forge a "chip alliance" between the two global semiconductor powerhouses amid growing tech tensions with China. Yoon Suk Yeol became the first foreign leader to visit the highly controlled "cleanroom" manufacturing facilities of Dutch tech giant ASML, which makes cutting-edge machines to manufacture semiconductor chips.

These high-tech chips are the lifeblood of the global economy, found in everything from the smartphone in your pocket to the car you drive, but semiconductors have also emerged as a battleground between China and the West. Washington and the Netherlands are among the powers that have imposed restrictions on exporting advanced chip-making equipment to China, fearing Beijing could use it to make cutting-edge weapons.

Semiconductors are the "linchpin" of ties between Korea and the Netherlands, Yoon told AFP in an exclusive written interview before becoming the first Korean leader to visit since ties were established in 1961. As competition with China heats up, the semiconductor industry is "strategically more important than ever before, which makes this visit to the Netherlands especially meaningful," added Yoon.

Yoon was joined on his visit to ASML by the heads of major chip makers Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix. The two Korean firms are affected by the export curbs to China since they have based a large portion of their production, especially of advanced DRAM and

flash memory chips, in China. ASML too enjoys healthy sales to China, especially of DUV (deep ultraviolet) systems that print the tiny elements that make up a microchip.

Yoon told AFP his visit to ASML would mark a "crucial turning point" for ties between the two countries, with discussion on chip co-operation his "top priority" during the visit. His office has said the two nations want to forge a "chip alliance" that would involve governments, businesses and research universities. The two countries are expected to sign several agreements after a meeting between Yoon and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Wednesday.

The Netherlands and Korea already enjoy strong trade ties. Korea is the third-largest trade partner for the Dutch in Asia, while the Netherlands is the second-top partner for Korea in the European Union, according to the Dutch government. During a summit between Yoon and Rutte in November 2022, the two countries signed a "strategic partnership" including a pledge to boost semiconductor ties.

The visit kicked off with a welcome ceremony from Dutch King Willem-Alexander, before the trip to ASML in Veldhoven, southern Netherlands. In the ceremony on Amsterdam's historic Dam central square, Yoon and Willem-Alexander inspected a military guard of honour and chatted to children waving Korean and Dutch flags. Yoon will head to The Hague for the meeting with Rutte Wednesday, following which the two men will hold a news conference. —AFP



AMSTERDAM: King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands (left) accompanies South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol (center) during a welcome ceremony at Dam Square in Amsterdam, on December 12, 2023. — AFP

Burgan Bank hosts AUS students at its head office

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently welcomed a group of high school students from the American United School of Kuwait (AUS) at the bank's head office, where the students were guided on a comprehensive tour that introduced them to Burgan's different departments and functions. This visit comes under Burgan Bank's far-reaching social responsibility program and its commitment to inspiring Kuwait's young, bright talents.

Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager - Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "We were truly delighted by the visit and are very proud of all the brilliant students who showed great interest and curiosity about the banking industry and how it works. Today's young adults are a lot more exposed to the different services offered by the banking industry, especially when it comes to online payments, and it is very important that they are educated about how these financial services and technologies work."

The visit was conducted with the primary aim of

simplifying the banking world for the students, many of whom will be choosing their undergraduate fields of study in the coming months. Burgan representatives from each unit explained to the visitors how their work reflects on the students' day-to-day lives and how each new product and service responds to a new rising need in the market.

The tour also served as an extension of Burgan's continued support for the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) banking awareness campaign, which continues to run for its third consecutive year under the patronage of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), in partnership with all Kuwaiti banks, as part of its efforts to extend the Diraya messages as far and wide as possible across the different circles of the community. Burgan Bank proudly hosts young visitors from different educational institutions to ensure that they are equipped with vital banking information and financial awareness.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank spares no effort to guide students and young talent along their journey through its committed presence at many employment fairs across Kuwait. The Bank also invests in human capital development through a range of programs, including Ro2ya, Entelaqah, and Innovation Lab, which aim to encourage exceptional talents to dream bigger and aim higher with the support of the Bank.



The Burgan Bank team with students

Key Ukraine-Poland crossing reopens despite truckers protest

WARSAW: The largest cargo crossing point between Ukraine and Poland reopened on Monday despite a month-long blockade by Polish hauliers, following a decision by local authorities who withdrew permission to protest.

Lorry traffic at four border crossings has been paralyzed since November by Polish truckers, who are demanding the reintroduction of entry permits to the European Union for their Ukrainian competitors.

But on Monday, the local authorities in Dorohusk announced they were cancelling their consent for protests at the checkpoint, citing the toll the demonstrations were taking on other Polish companies.

"Firms are already suffering very large losses and unfortunately someone had to take this decision," Dorohusk mayor Wojciech Sawa told AFP. He said the move had not been made in coordination with the Ukrainian authorities.

"I took this decision myself, after much thought and after receiving many phone calls from all over Poland. I cannot allow people to lose their jobs in other areas of our economy," Sawa said.

Kyiv on Monday confirmed the Dorohusk

crossing point between Ukraine and Poland had been reopened. "The blockade of the Yahodyn-Dorogusk (sic) checkpoint is over. Stable truck traffic has been restored since 2:00 pm (1200 GMT)," Ukrainian Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said on social media.

"The blocking of the largest cargo crossing point lasted for more than a month," he said, adding that several trucks had already begun crossing from both sides of the border. Ukraine relies heavily on road transport with EU member Poland for its exports and imports, particularly since the Russian invasion nearly two years ago. The EU waived entry permits for Ukrainian hauliers following Russia's invasion to ease the flow of goods in and out the war-torn country.

But the Polish truckers say it led to "unfair competition" from Ukrainian firms and caused a slump in their earnings. The protesters want the permit system reinstated and a simplification of procedures for the Polish trucks leaving Ukraine to return home.

Kubrakov said that unblocking the Yahodyn-Dorohusk border was only the beginning of easing road freight traffic at other crossings. "The border must be fully unblocked and further blockages will not be allowed," he said. Contacted by AFP, the Polish infrastructure ministry said no deal has been struck between Poland and Ukraine to resolve the dispute. Kyiv said earlier that the fallout from the protest had been "catastrophic" and that Ukrainian drivers stuck at the border were facing "dire" conditions. —AFP



PARIS: The CAC 40 and other stock tickers displayed at the headquarters of the Pan-European stock exchange Euronext, in La Defense, Paris, France. — AFP

Paris CAC 40 stock index sets new record high

PARIS, France: The Paris CAC 40 stock index set a new record during trading on Tuesday as equity markets are buoyed by hopes that central banks will begin to cut interest rates early next year. At 1055 GMT the CAC 40 hit 7,582.11 points, climbing more than 11 percent from the low point it struck in October. It had set its previous record high in April. European stock markets climbed at the start of trading Tuesday following gains in Asia and on Wall Street, as traders awaited US inflation data due later in the session.

London's benchmark FTSE 100 index rose 0.3 percent to 7,570.67 points, as the latest UK unemployment data boosted hopes of a cut to British interest rates by the middle of next year. Global equities have won support in recent weeks on hopes that major central banks will next year start to cut interest rates as inflation cools. Asia's main stock markets closed higher following gains Monday on Wall Street where the Dow index ended at the highest level in two years. The dollar retreated before the consumer price index (CPI) reading that comes a day before the US Federal Reserve's final policy meeting of the year. The Fed outcome will be closely followed by investors hoping for an idea about decision-makers' plans for potential interest-rate cuts. —AFP

Sri Lanka awards \$1.7bn solar project to Australian firm

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's government announced Tuesday it had tapped an Australian company to build the island nation's largest solar energy plant at an expected price tag of \$1.7 billion.

An unprecedented economic crisis last year saw Sri Lanka hit with blackouts of up to 13 hours each day as power generators ran out of funds to pay for fossil fuel imports. The government has since fast-tracked a number of renewable energy proposals to diversify the island's grid. Energy minister Kanchana Wijesekera said the government had approved plans to buy electricity from a proposed 700-megawatt plant to be built by Australia's United Solar Energy. The facility in northern Kilinochchi district will be financed by \$1.7 billion in foreign direct investment, he wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. The plant would be Sri Lanka's largest renewable energy scheme so far.

Colombo approved in February a \$442 million investment by India's scandal-hit Adani Group to build a 350-megawatt wind power plant, also in the island's north. Sri Lanka's economic crisis saw widespread shortages of food, fuel and medicines last year when the country ran out of foreign exchange to pay for imports. President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took office after public protests against the crisis prompted the ouster of his predecessor, has committed Sri Lanka to an International Monetary Fund rescue plan to restore the nation's finances. —AFP

News in brief

Toy-maker Hasbro cuts more jobs

NEW YORK: Toy company Hasbro—home to Transformers, My Little Pony and Monopoly—on Monday said it was cutting nearly 1,000 more jobs after a first round of cost-cutting fell short of goals. In a legal filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the company said 900 jobs would be eliminated over the next two years. "The market headwinds we anticipated have proven to be stronger and more persistent than planned," CEO Chris Cocks said in a memo to staff. "While we're confident in the future of Hasbro, the current environment demands that we do more." The group had already announced in January that it would be cutting around 1,000 jobs worldwide this year, following lower-than-expected sales over the holiday season. At the end of 2022, it employed 6,490 people, according to its annual report. — AFP

El Salvador to issue bitcoin bonds

SAN SALVADOR: El Salvador announced Monday it will issue bitcoin bonds in the first quarter of 2024, the proceeds of which are expected to finance the construction of a "Bitcoin City" powered by a volcano. "The Volcano Bond has just received regulatory approval from the Digital Assets Commission (CNAD). We anticipate the bond will be issued during the first quarter of 2024," the National Bitcoin Office, which manages all cryptocurrency-related projects, said on X. Bitcoin became a legal currency in El Salvador, alongside the US dollar, in 2021 at the behest of President Nayib Bukele. The dollar has been legal tender in the Salvadoran economy since 2001. With bitcoin, Bukele sought to make it easier, and cheaper, for Salvadorans to receive remittances and to provide financial services access to the 70 percent of people with no bank account. — AFP

Fiat opens plant in Algeria

ALGIERS: Italian automaker Fiat on Monday inaugurated its first assembly and manufacturing plant in Algeria, in a move that is expected to revive the country's automobile market. Algeria's car market was sent into a tailspin after the authorities' decision in 2019 to stop importing cars and close assembly factories. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune at the time said the plants "were only used to put wheels on the vehicles" in exchange for large tax concessions. The opening of the Fiat plant, in the northwestern Algerian city of Oran, marks the first car manufacturing facility to be inaugurated under Tebboune, according to the Algerian news website TSA. —AFP

Unilever probed on 'greenwashing'

LONDON: Britain's competition and markets watchdog on Tuesday said it would probe claims made by consumer-goods giant Unilever regarding the environmental friendliness of products. "The Competition and Markets Authority will be scrutinizing environmental claims made by the consumer goods group Unilever," a statement said amid concerns that companies overstate how 'green' they are, known as 'greenwashing'. The CMA added that its move forms part of the watchdog's "wider investigation into greenwashing and follows concerns around how Unilever is marketing certain products, within some brands, to customers as environmentally friendly". — AFP

Business

China confronting 'difficulties and challenges' to its recovery: Leaders

World's second-largest economy charts an uneven rebound from pandemic

BEIJING: China is confronting "difficulties and challenges" to its recovery, Beijing's leadership said, according to state media on Tuesday, as the world's second-largest economy charts an uneven rebound from the pandemic. The annual closed-door meeting of Beijing's top decision-makers — dubbed the Central Economic Work Conference — comes as China's economy battles headwinds on multiple fronts, from waning consumer demand to a debt crisis in its property sector.

"China still has to overcome some difficulties and challenges to further revive the economy," top leaders, including President Xi Jinping, noted at the meeting, state news agency Xinhua reported.

At the Monday to Tuesday meeting, top officials "decided priorities for the economic work in 2024" and Xi gave a speech, Xinhua said. "It was noted at the meeting that China's economy has achieved a recovery," the report said.

And according to the officials present, "favorable conditions outweigh unfavorable factors in China's development", state media reported. "The fundamental trend of the economic recovery and long-term positive outlook has not changed," Xinhua quoted them as saying.

Last week, Xi warned the country's economic recovery remained "at a critical stage", and ordered measures to boost demand and "defuse" risks. Exports rose in November for the first time in seven months, although the reading compared with a low base from last year when

the impact of draconian COVID policies was being felt the most.

Chinese exports — long a key growth driver — had largely been in decline since last October, except for a short-lived rebound in March and April. A surprise drop in imports in November also highlighted weak consumer activity at home. And figures last week showing the country's slide into deflation accelerated in November also painted a grim picture. Officials said the decline was linked to "downward fluctuations in the prices of energy and food".

Ratings agency Moody's last week downgraded the outlook on the country's credit rating to negative from stable, citing "broad downside risks to China's fiscal, economic and institutional strength". Beijing's finance ministry insisted concerns about China's economy were "unnecessary".

Woes in the property sector — another traditional engine of growth — remain one of the largest sources of worry. China's vast real estate industry is mired in a deep debt crisis, with some of the nation's biggest developers owing hundreds of billions of dollars and facing going out of business.

Authorities are on edge as debt fears stoke buyer mistrust, send home prices plummeting and, crucially, threaten to infect other sectors.

Construction and real estate account for about a quarter of China's gross domestic product.

China is aiming for "around five percent" growth this year — from a low base last year



HUAIAN, China: This photo taken on December 3, 2023 shows an employee working at a steel plant in Huaian, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

when the domestic economy was paralyzed by strict COVID restrictions. But Beijing faces an uphill battle to achieve that target, with author-

ities under pressure to offer greater support after issuing sovereign bonds worth 1 trillion yuan (\$137 billion) in October. — AFP

Threads countdown teases app's potential EU launch

BRUSSELS: The wait could be over for Internet users in the European Union keen to sign up to Threads, an Instagram app. Meta-owned Instagram launched Threads in the United States and elsewhere in July but EU users cannot access the platform because the company was wary of Brussels' regulatory oversight before any roll-out.

Now though, when anyone in the EU visits the Threads website there is a countdown timer that ends on Thursday at 1100 GMT. People outside of the EU see the usual log-in page.

EU users can also search for a "ticket" and find a digital invitation with a countdown and the words "Threads EU launch" as well as a QR code. Speculation is now rising that this means that the app will be made available in the bloc. Contacted by AFP, Instagram refused to comment.

The Wall Street Journal had reported last month that Instagram planned to launch Threads in the EU in December. Threads has been portrayed as a challenger to X, formerly known as Twitter, which remains one of the world's biggest social media platforms despite its struggles following tech tycoon Elon Musk's takeover in 2022. Within the first few hours of Threads' launch in 100 countries, more than 30 million people signed up, according to Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta, which also owns Facebook.

The EU has built a powerful legal armory to rein in Big Tech, including the Digital Markets Act (DMA) that curbs how the world's "gatekeeper" companies do business online. Meta had been wary of the DMA, a source close to the matter said in July. The company has come under heavy scrutiny in Europe for how it handles personal data, and has struggled to comply with the EU's strict rules on data privacy.

Since November, Facebook and Instagram users in Europe have been told they must pay to use Meta's social networks if they want to continue to avail of those EU data-privacy protections, or they can opt for a "free" version that harvests their personal data for targeted advertising.

That "pay for privacy" approach is running the gauntlet of two legal challenges. Zuckerberg has said he wants a "public conversations app" for more than a billion people as he seeks to capitalize on Musk's chaotic ownership of Twitter and turn his app into the go-to platform for celebrities, companies and politicians. Instagram has more than two billion users that it hopes will turn to its Threads spin-off.

X, meanwhile, says it has more than 200 million daily users. — AFP

Joe & The Juice opens stores in Al-Khiran Mall, Arraya Centre, Airport T1

KUWAIT: Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Light Food, a subsidiary of Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW), on Tuesday announced the opening of three additional Joe & The Juice stores in Kuwait. The three stores are located at Al-Khiran Mall, Arraya Centre, and Kuwait International Airport, Terminal 1 — arrivals.

Since its debut in Kuwait in March 2023, Joe & The Juice has quickly expanded. Today, the cafe competes with well-established chains of coffee shops and restaurants offering light food, and has become a preferred destination for custom-

ers seeking healthy and delicious food and beverage options. This reflects both the diversity of the Kuwaiti market and the growing demand for healthier food choices.

The Al-Khiran Mall store features distinctive outdoor seating that overlooks Al-Khiran Marina. The Arraya Centre is an ideal destination for nearby offices, offering quick and healthy options to refuel and recharge during the workday. The store at Kuwait International Airport Terminal 1 - arrivals, operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All branches offer Joe & The Juice's signature range of high-quality, fresh juices, shakes, coffee, and made-to-order sandwiches, in a trendy environment. Joe & The Juice's other locations include the Argania Complex in Shuwaikh, Argan Square in Salmiya, The Walk Mall in Ardiya, Al-Andalus in Hawally, The Warehouse in Sabahiya, Sahara Golf Resort, and GUST campus in West Mishref.



Joe & The Juice store at the Terminal 1 of the Kuwait International Airport.



Joe & The Juice store at Al-Khiran Mall.



Joe & The Juice store at Arraya Centre.

Kenya 'out of debt distress', says Ruto

NAIROBI: President William Ruto said on Tuesday that Kenya was emerging "out of debt distress", touting his economic policies despite public anger over tax hikes and slashed subsidies as the country marked its 60th independence anniversary.

East Africa's economic powerhouse has been struggling to manage multiple challenges, including deplet-

ed government coffers, high inflation and a plunging currency that has sent debt repayment costs soaring.

Kenya had accumulated more than 10.1 trillion shillings (\$66 billion) in debt by the end of June, according to Treasury figures, equivalent to around two-thirds of gross domestic product. Speaking at a public ceremony in Nairobi to mark the former British colony's independence day, Ruto said Kenya was now "safely out of the danger of debt distress".

He did not provide any figures on the current levels of debt, but said Kenya's gross domestic product (GDP) had grown by 5.4 percent in the last six months. "We have made the right choices, sometimes taken

very difficult and painful decisions, to steer Kenya back from the edge of a catastrophic cliff of debt distress and move our country in a new direction," he said.

Ruto, who was elected last year on a pledge to ease conditions for ordinary Kenyans, has been on a campaign to slash public debt and "wasteful" government expenditure in the country of some 53 million people. He has also cut food and fuel subsidies introduced by his predecessor and former boss Uhuru Kenyatta.

The cost of servicing public debt, mainly to China, has soared as Kenya's currency has slumped to record lows of 153 shillings to the US dollar. The government also has a \$2-bil-

Fortnite's Epic Games wins court fight with Google

SAN FRANCISCO: Epic Games, the maker of Fortnite, won a major US court battle against Google on Monday when a jury decided that the search engine giant wields illegal monopoly power through its Android app store. Epic sued Google and Apple in 2020, accusing the tech titans of abusing control of their respective shops selling apps and other digital content on mobile devices.

Google and Apple take percentages of all financial transactions at their app shops, prompting complaints by developers about an unfair "tax" imposed by the companies. The defeat is a rare setback for a US tech giant in a US court, where

judges have recently ruled in favor of big tech against accusations of running illegal monopolies or abusing their market power.

The San Francisco jury took just a few hours to decide against Google, finding that the company had embarked on various illegal strategies to maintain its app store monopoly on Android phones. "Victory over Google! After four weeks of detailed court testimony, the California jury found against the Google Play monopoly on all counts," Epic CEO Tim Sweeney said on X (formerly Twitter).

The case now goes back to the judge to decide how to remedy the harm found by the jury, which could force open the Android operating system to competing app stores. Google said it would appeal the decision and the case could still drag on for months or years. "We will continue to defend the Android business model and remain deeply committed to our users, partners, and the broader Android ecosystem," said Wilson White, Google's vice president for government affairs & public policy.

Phones running on the Android operating sys-

tem have about a 70 percent share of the world's smartphone market. Smartphone companies can install the Android app for free under the condition that the Play app store remains on the home page and that other Google offers are pre-installed.

During the trial it emerged that Google worked aggressively in other ways to make sure that the Google Play app store was the only conduit for making payments to third party apps such as Fortnite and other games. A sizable chunk of app store revenue comes from video games and Epic Games has long sought to have payments for its mobile games, such as Fortnite, take place outside the Google or Apple app stores that take commissions as high as 30 percent.

Epic had mostly lost a similar case against Apple, where a US judge largely ruled in favor of the iPhone maker. Apple and Google regularly argue that their app shop commissions are industry-standard, and that they pay for benefits such as reach, transaction security, and ferreting out malware.



SAN FRANCISCO: This illustration picture shows a person logging into Epic Games' Fortnite on their smartphone in Los Angeles. — AFP

Google also argued that the arrangement with smartphone makers helped Android-run devices better compete against Apple's iPhone. But the trial exposed that Google rakes in tens of billions of dollars of revenue through the app store. — AFP

Lifestyle



A view of some of the oldest olive trees in Jordan at a farm in Ajlun Governorate, close to the Jordan River and the Zionist border.



Ali Saleh Atta walks in his grove.—AFP photos



Ali Saleh Atta, 84, who owns a farm in the Ajlun Governorate that includes the oldest olive trees in Jordan, close to the Jordan River and the Zionist border, walks in his grove.



Every morning, Jordanian farmer Ali Saleh Atta swallows two cloves of garlic with a cup of olive oil before heading out to check on his ancient olive trees.

"These trees represent the history of Jordan," said the 84-year-old, looking at the 2,000-year-old trees whose enormous gnarled trunks hoist up branches with delicate, pale green leaves. The trees are a beloved national symbol, but they are also under threat from urban sprawl, illegal logging for firewood and uprooting to the homes and gardens of the wealthy for decoration.

The land of Atta, a father of 10, is in Al-Hashimiyya, a wooded area about 70 kilometres (45 miles) northwest of Amman. "I have given my children and grandchildren a written will that after my death, you preserve them and (live) from what they produce," he said.

Jordan is the tenth-largest producer of olives globally, according to the World Olive Council. Its many ancient trees that have survived thousands of years are an integral part of the country's identity and culture.

Across many regions, "you can hardly visit a house ... without finding an olive tree in every garden", said Nizar Haddad, director general of the National Agricultural Research Center. "We were raised from childhood on this culture." But today, he said, the trees' beauty has put them in danger.

"Some hotels, villas, businessmen and companies like to add a touch to their institutions' decoration, so they buy such trees and transport them" away, he said. The trees often do not survive the move, said Haddad, adding that new laws aim to protect them.

"New Jordanian legislation protects these trees from being uprooted or removed, and there is coordination between the Ministry of Interior, our centre and the police to prevent transport operations except in very exceptional cases."



Jordan's mission to save its ancient olive trees

'National treasure'

Jordan has 11 million olive trees in groves that make up 20 percent of all cultivated land in the country. They produce 50,000 tons of olives and 25,000 tons of olive oil annually, contributing 120 million Jordanian dinars (\$169 million) to the economy.

Haddad noted that the olive tree has symbolic meaning for both Muslim and Christian Jordanians, saying they are mentioned in the Quran and "Jesus Christ spent his last hours praying on the Mount of Olives". "These trees must be preserved so that they can remain a source of inspiration for the community, especially since they are

the type capable of adapting to all the environmental challenges facing not only our region, but the world."

The tree variety, commonly known as Roman or Mehras, should be preserved as a "national treasure", said Amer Gharaibeh, head of the Mehras Cooperative Society.

"Here you can see the oldest olive trees... they have been here since the Romans ruled this region, before Muslims controlled it," he said. Research has shown that the Mehras has a common ancestor with cultivated olives in Italy, Cyprus and Spain.

Alongside Jordan's culture ministry, Gharaibeh's organisation is working to

add the trees to the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List, hoping this "will ultimately contribute to preserving them and protecting them". Jordan is working on a plan to engage the public with the trees by placing a QR code on every bottle of olive oil produced.

It lists the tree's location, the name of its owner, its history, the quality of the oil and the age of the tree, said Haddad, whose organisation is working on the project. "We will not only sell olive oil," he said, "but we spread a relevant story through which we can fully market our country".—AFP



Japan's oldest person dies at 116

Japan's oldest person passed away Tuesday at the age of 116, officials said, offering their condolences for Fusa Tatsumi who lived through two world wars and multiple pandemics. Born in 1907, Tatsumi raised three children with her husband, a farmer, in Osaka, local broadcaster MBS reported. "Tatsumi died aged 116 at a care facility in Osaka on Tuesday," an official in Osaka's Kashiwara city told AFP.

Osaka governor Hirofumi Yoshimura offered condolences on the social

media site X, recalling a party he attended to celebrate Tatsumi's longevity in September. "I still remember how healthy Fusa Tatsumi was," Yoshimura said. "I sincerely pray for her soul." In footage aired by MBS and other local media outlets she was seen in a wheelchair, mostly sleeping, at her 116th birthday celebration in April.

Tatsumi was recognized as Japan's oldest person after Kane Tanaka passed away last year at 119. Guinness World Records had officially acknowledged Tanaka's status as the world's oldest person in April 2022. Today that honor belongs to US-born Maria Branyas, who will turn 117 on March 4 next year. Japan has the world's second-oldest population after Monaco, boasting more than 47,000 centenarians. — AFP



Fungi and flatworms: Scientists want more diverse nature emojis

Too many cats, not enough crustaceans: The current emoji catalog doesn't accurately represent the breadth of biodiversity seen in nature — and that hurts conservation efforts, according to scientists. An analysis published Monday in the journal iScience found that while animals are well represented by the current emoji catalog, plants, fungi, and microorganisms get short shrift.

"While the biodiversity crisis may seem distant from the online world, in our increasingly digitized society, we should not underestimate the potential of emojis to raise awareness and foster appreciation for the diversity of life on Earth," wrote authors Stefano Mammola, Mattia Falaschi, and Gentile Francesco Ficetola. "The development and maintenance of diverse and inclusive emoji sets are crucial to ensure the equitable representation of the tree of life in digital communication tools," added the University of Milan conservation biologists.

The team assessed emojis related to nature and animals available in Emojipedia, a curated online catalog of emojis, and tracked how these changed between 2015 and 2022. Among animals, vertebrates — including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and bony fish — were overrepresented, making up 76 percent of animal emojis.

Arthropods, including insects, arachnids, crustaceans, were propor-



This photo illustration created on December 11, 2023 shows emojis on a smartphone screen in Washington, DC. — AFP

tionally underrepresented, despite there being 1.3 million described species of arthropod compared to 85,000 known species of vertebrate. The researchers also noted there were no emojis representing either platyhelminths — flatworms, including tapeworms — or nematodes, despite there being more than 20,000 platyhelminth species and almost 20,000 nematode species.

On the flip side, they found emoji biodiversity was increasing. "Annelids gained representation in 2020 with the addition of the 'worm' emoji, which most likely represents an earthworm, and cnidarians gained representation in 2021 with the addition of a red coral emoji," they found. — AFP

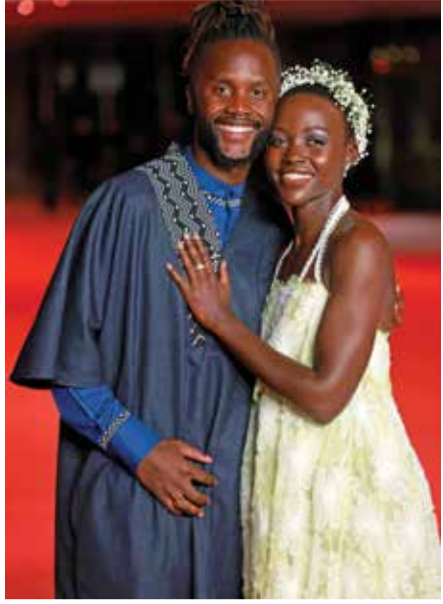
Paris Ritz finds missing €750,000 ring in vacuum cleaner

Diamonds in the dust — a ring worth 750,000 euros (\$807,000), which went missing at the luxury Ritz hotel in Paris, has been found in a vacuum cleaner. The ring went missing on Friday and its owner suspected hotel staff of theft. On Sunday, it was found in a vacuum cleaner bag after police launched an investigation, the Ritz said. The hotel told AFP the ring had been found "thanks to the meticulous search work carried out by our security guards."

"Our client is delighted with this news," the hotel was quoted as saying. The owner, described as a Malaysian businesswoman, went to the police on Friday after discovering that her ring, left on the table in her room, had disappeared. On Saturday, she left Paris for London but was expected to return to the French capital to retrieve her ring, Le Parisien newspaper said. — AFP



Lifestyle



Kenyan-Mexican actress Lupita Nyong'o (right) and a guest attend the 3rd Annual Academy Museum Gala at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles.

Lupita Nyong'o named first black Berlinale jury chief

Kenyan-Mexican actor Lupita Nyong'o will in February head up the jury at Berlin's international film festival, Europe's first major cinema showcase of the year, organizers said Monday. The Berlinale, as the event is known, told AFP that Nyong'o, 40, would be the first black person in its 74-year history to lead the panel selecting the winners of the Golden and Silver Bear top prizes. Festival chiefs Mariette Rissenbeek and Carlo Chatrian said they were "happy and proud" that Nyong'o, who won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in "12 Years a Slave", had accepted the post.

"Lupita Nyong'o embodies what we like in cinema: versatility in embracing



Kenyan-Mexican actress Lupita Nyong'o arrives for the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. — AFP photos

different projects, addressing different audiences and consistency to one idea that is quite recognizable in her char-

acters, as diverse as they may look," they said in a statement. Nyong'o was born to Kenyan parents in Mexico City and then grew up in Kenya before studying film and theatre in the United States, initially working on various film productions there.

In 2009 she wrote, produced and directed "In My Genes", about Kenya's albino population. Her first major acting breakthrough came when she was cast as Patsey in the hard-hitting Steve McQueen biopic. Her other screen successes include playing the warrior Nakia in the Marvel superhero film "Black Panther" and its sequel, Jordan Peele horror film "Us" and "Star Wars: The Force Awakens".

Nyong'o is also active on the Broadway stage and wrote the New York Times bestselling children's book "Sulwe" in 2020. The Berlinale, which will run February 15-25, ranks with Cannes and Venice among Europe's top three film festivals and serves as an early annual launchpad for the industry.

French director Nicolas Philibert won the Golden Bear for best film this year for "On the Adamant", a documentary about a floating day-care centre for people with psychiatric problems. The festival is due on Tuesday to announce a new director to replace Rissenbeek and Chatrian after its 74th edition. — AFP

Death and madness on the night train from Tolstoy to Bond

The return of the sleeper train from Berlin to Paris is a reminder of the romance of railways that has long inspired writers, musicians and filmmakers. One of the first-ever films, the 50-second "Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station", reportedly terrified audiences in 1896 who thought they were about to be squashed in their seats. Long before and

week in each direction before going daily in October 2024. Night trains became trendy after World War I as prices fell and Europeans sought a break after the war, said Andrew Martin, author of "Night Trains: The Rise and Fall of the Sleeper".

A whole genre of books and films emerged, most famously Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Orient Express".

the much-parodied sexual innuendo of a train entering a tunnel. Journeying through the night is exotic, Martin said. "And you can move around," he added. "You can't murder someone on a plane and then go back to your seat."

Action

High speed and cramped spaces have made for memorable cinematic set-pieces. Tom Cruise leapt between a helicopter and a train in the first "Mission: Impossible" and clambered up falling carriages in the most recent. James Bond is a train enthusiast, from Sean Connery's bruising carriage fight in "From Russia With Love" to Daniel Craig plummeting off one in "Skyfall", via Roger Moore dressed, cringe-inducingly, as a gorilla on a circus train in "Octopussy".

Few have matched the chutzpah of Buster Keaton, whose dedication to realism saw him drive a real locomotive onto a collapsing bridge for 1926's "The General"—the costliest stunt in silent movie history. Another Bollywood landmark was the fast-paced train robbery with its galloping horses in 1975's "Sholay".

Music and painting

Songwriters have loved the metaphor of trains bringing them home or veering off-track. Johnny Cash dreamed of the "train-a-comin'" to take him away from his cell in "Folsom Prison Blues", while the US band Soul Asylum saw depression as a "Runaway Train". Cat Stevens called for a "Peace Train" to end the Vietnam War; Ozzy Osbourne feared the Cold War had driven him "off the rails on a crazy train".

Billowing smoke, movement and modernity were ideal fodder for experimental painters. JMW Turner's "Rain, Steam, and Speed" is one of his most celebrated works, while Claude Monet's 12 paintings of the Gare St Lazare station in Paris were his first series on a single theme. — AFP



(From left) Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly co-president Brigitte Klinkert, SNCF's president Jean-Pierre Farandou, Director of International Long-Distance Deutsche Bahn AG Marco Kampp, OeBB-Personenverkehr AG's member of the board Sabine Stock, French Junior Minister for Transport Clement Beaune and French CEO of SNCF Voyageurs Christophe Fanichet pose for a photograph at the arrival of the Berlin-Paris night "train night-jet" at the Gare de l'Est in Paris. — AFP photos

since, trains have provided a setting for love, mystery and danger in some of the most enduring works of art.

Love and intrigue

Despite the romance, night trains fell out favor early this century, and most lines in Europe closed in the 2010s. But with growing demand for low-emission forms of travel, several European countries are now looking into bringing them back. On Monday, a number of government ministers were on hand as the first Berlin-Paris night train in nine years left the German capital on its 10-hour journey to Paris.

The service will run three days a

"Night trains evoke crime, sex and intrigue," Martin said. "It's an enclosed setting, like a country house, perfect for a mystery." Railways were a place for life-changing romance in David Lean's classic "Brief Encounter" and Richard Linklater's "Before Sunrise".

One of the most iconic moments in Bollywood history was superstar Rajesh Khanna serenading his beloved from his jeep as she rode the Darjeeling toy train in 1969's "Aradhana".

Alfred Hitchcock used trains repeatedly—a place to hatch conspiracies ("Strangers on a Train"), disappear ("The Lady Vanishes") or fall in love ("North by Northwest"), the latter ending with



This photograph shows the interior of the Berlin-Paris night "train night-jet" during its launch at the main station in Berlin.



This photograph shows the interior of the Berlin-Paris night "train night-jet" during its launch at the main station in Berlin.



A SNCF employee walks past a coach of the Berlin-Paris train "nightjet" after it arrived at the Gare de l'Est in Paris.

Final two members of BTS start mandatory military service

The last two members of K-pop superstars BTS to enlist for mandatory military service, Jimin and Jung Kook, were set to begin their training on Tuesday, South Korean media reported,

resulting in the entire megagroup being on hiatus. All able-bodied men in South Korea must serve at least 18 months in the military. After a years-long debate about whether BTS deserved a rare exemption, Jin, the oldest member of the group, enlisted last year, with the remaining members following suit in 2023.

The BTS septet has become a global cultural phenomenon, selling out stadiums around the world and dominating key US charts while raking in billions for South Korea's economy and building an international legion of fans known as ARMY. BTS members J-Hope and

SUGA enlisted earlier this year. Two more members, RM and V, enlisted on Monday.

Now, the final two members of the group will begin their five-week basic training at an army boot camp on Tuesday, the Yonhap news agency reported. "I think I will be able to rely on Jung Kook a lot since we are enlisting together," said Jimin during a livestream with fans on web platform Weverse late Monday. "I'll be back after doing a good job," he added. During an earlier livestream, Jung Kook thanked his fans and said he had led a "busy life".

BTS's label BIGHIT MUSIC confirmed in November that the last four members of the group would enlist, but did not disclose additional details. Earlier this year, the chairman of the BTS's agency, Bang Si-hyuk, said that making the band do military service was slowing down the global growth of K-pop.

South Korea offers exemptions from military service to some individuals, including Olympic medal-winning athletes and some classical musicians, but K-pop stars are not eligible under the existing program. And in an intensely competitive industry where artists can be easily replaced, some male K-pop stars have faced challenges in resuming their careers after fulfilling their duties. — AFP



A woman walks past a poster showing images of members of South Korean K-pop group BTS in front of a cafe in Seoul. — AFP



People drive past a bronze statue of Ousmane Sembene in street of Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou on February 22, 2019, on the eve of the opening of the Pan-African Film and Television Festival (FESPACO).

Senegalese cinemas pay tribute to Sembene on 100th anniversary

The lights fade and the screen lights up, transporting Senegalese cinemagoers back in time to the world of Ousmane Sembene, who would have been 100 this year. To celebrate, Dakar movie theatres are showing some of the best-known works by the father of African film, including "The Money Order", "The Outsiders", "Camp de Thiaroye" and "Black Girl". Sembene, who died in 2007 at the age of 84, is celebrated for championing social and political issues throughout his career as a writer and filmmaker.

"He showed the way to an entire generation of artists," said Senegalese film critic Baba Diop, arguing that Sembene had enabled African cinema to take the place it deserved. Thanks to Sembene's team, scores of photos of the director have been rediscovered, pipe in mouth or peering in deep concentration through the lens of his camera. The African cinema archive fund ASM is now digitalizing these old negatives and is due to exhibit them in Burkina Faso, France and Italy.

'African chutzpah

"He wanted to make films with Africans for Africans. For me, he is the epitome of African chutzpah," said the fund's coordinator Katlyn Liliou. The previously unseen photos feature in a new book on Sembene published this year, alongside interviews with his family and colleagues. "Ousmane Sembene: the Founding Father" paints a portrait of the activist and his legacy, a man who inspired a generation of filmmakers, writers and artists.

"He was in the army, he was a builder, a docker, a trade unionist, a writer and a film director. That's perseverance," the artist Cheikh Ndiaye told AFP. Ndiaye's current exhibition in Dakar includes paintings of the capital's former cinemas, where people came not just to be entertained but to learn what social and political justice meant and how to get it. Its title, "Evening

class", is a nod to Sembene, who saw films as a way of passing on knowledge in the African oral tradition.

Unnoticed?

Like Ndiaye, Clarence Thomas Delgado, a friend and senior assistant to Sembene, remembers his boss as a fervent advocate of social justice and human dignity. "He wanted to criticize a long list of things in each of his films. I told him to choose," Delgado grinned.



Senegalese director Ousmane Sembene, 82, poses for a photo in his office in Dakar on February 18, 2005.

Colleagues remember Sembene as funny and hard-working, and a taskmaster on set. "Either you were up to the job or you got thrown out," said Makhete Diallo, another of his assistants. Despite Sembene's national and international renown, friends and family alike complain that successive Senegalese governments have failed to afford him the recognition he deserves.

There is no statue to the filmmaker in his home country and no streets are named after him. "How come the 100th anniversary of the birth... is going unnoticed?" said political commentator Alioune Tine. "Sembene is our Victor Hugo, our Godard," he said. — AFP



People gather next to a bronze statue of Senegalese film director, producer and writer Ousmane Sembene during a march called by the UAS union to call for better security measures against terrorism, in Ouagadougou. — AFP photos

Lifestyle

'BARBENHEIMER' TOPS GOLDEN GLOBES NOMINATIONS

"Barbie" and **"Oppenheimer"** - the unlikely pair of films that dominated the box office and spawned countless internet memes this summer - topped the newly revamped Golden Globes nominations Monday.

"Barbie" - a vivid feminist satire about the all-conquering line of plastic dolls - claimed nine nods, including best comedy as well as acting nominations for stars Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling.

This year's top-grossing movie, earning more than \$1.4 billion globally, "Barbie" also scooped a whopping three best song nominations, and recognition for its writer-director Greta Gerwig. "Oppenheimer," Christopher Nolan's critically adored film about the inventor of the nuclear bomb, took eight nominations, including best drama and best director.

Cast members including Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt and Robert Downey Jr all received nods. The two blockbusters - collectively dubbed "Barbenheimer" after their theatrical releases happened to fall on the same date - now have a strong start to Hollywood's film awards season, which ends with the Oscars in March. "It's amazing that they maintained that momentum," said the Globes' new executive vice president Tim Gray.

"Last July, people were exclaiming about how popular they are, but I think nobody was confident that they were going to dominate the awards. But they did."

Other movies that proved popular with Globes voters were "Killers of the Flower Moon" and "Poor Things," both earning seven nominations, and "Past Lives" with five.



(From left) Cedric the Entertainer, Helen Hoehne and Wilmer Valderrama attend the nominations announcement for the 81st Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos



Moviegoers walk past the poster of the movie "Barbie" at a cineplex in Islamabad on July 21, 2023.



This combination of pictures shows Irish actor Cillian Murphy at the UK premiere of "Oppenheimer" and Australian actress Margot Robbie at the world premiere of "Barbie".



US actor Leonardo DiCaprio poses during a photocall for the film "Killers of the Flower Moon".



US actor and director Bradley Cooper arrives for the 2023 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



US actress Greta Lee arrives for Elle's 2023 Women in Hollywood celebration at Nya Studios in Los Angeles.

List of key Golden Globe nominees

Here are the nominees in key categories for the 81st Golden Globe Awards, which will be handed out on January 7.

FILM

Best film, drama

"Anatomy of a Fall"
"Killers of the Flower Moon"
"Maestro"
"Oppenheimer"
"Past Lives"
"The Zone of Interest"

Best film, musical or comedy

"Air"
"American Fiction"
"Barbie"
"The Holdovers"
"May December"
"Poor Things"

Best actor, drama

Bradley Cooper, "Maestro"
Leonardo DiCaprio, "Killers of the Flower Moon"
Colman Domingo, "Rustin"
Barry Keoghan, "Saltburn"
Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer"
Andrew Scott, "All of Us Strangers"

Best actress, drama

Annette Bening, "Nyad"
Lily Gladstone, "Killers of the Flower Moon"
Sandra Huller, "Anatomy of a Fall"
Greta Lee, "Past Lives"
Carey Mulligan, "Maestro"
Cailee Spaeny, "Priscilla"

Best actor, musical or comedy

Nicolas Cage, "Dream Scenario"
Timothée Chalamet, "Wonka"
Matt Damon, "Air"
Paul Giamatti, "The Holdovers"
Joaquin Phoenix, "Beau is Afraid"
Jeffrey Wright, "American Fiction"

Best actress, musical or comedy

Fantasia Barrino, "The Color Purple"
Jennifer Lawrence, "No Hard Feelings"
Natalie Portman, "May December"
Alma Poysti, "Fallen Leaves"

Margot Robbie, "Barbie"
Emma Stone, "Poor Things"

Best supporting actor

Willem Dafoe, "Poor Things"
Robert De Niro, "Killers of the Flower Moon"
Robert Downey Jr., "Oppenheimer"
Ryan Gosling, "Barbie"
Charles Melton, "May December"
Mark Ruffalo, "Poor Things"

Best supporting actress

Emily Blunt, "Oppenheimer"
Danielle Brooks, "The Color Purple"
Jodie Foster, "Nyad"
Julianne Moore, "May December"
Rosamund Pike, "Saltburn"
Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"

Best director

Bradley Cooper, "Maestro"
Greta Gerwig, "Barbie"
Yorgos Lanthimos, "Poor Things"
Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"
Martin Scorsese, "Killers of the Flower Moon"
Celine Song, "Past Lives"

Best non-English language film

"Anatomy of a Fall"
"Fallen Leaves"
"Io Capitano"
"Past Lives"
"Society of the Snow"
"The Zone of Interest"

Best cinematic and box office achievement (new award):

"Barbie"
"Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3"
"John Wick: Chapter 4"
"Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part 1"
"Oppenheimer"
"Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse"
"Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour"
"The Super Mario Bros. Movie"

TELEVISION

Best animated feature

"The Boy and the Heron"
"Elemental"
"Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse"
"Suzume"
"The Super Mario Bros. Movie"
"Wish"

Best drama series

"1923"
"The Crown"
"The Diplomat"
"The Last of Us"
"The Morning Show"
"Succession"

Best drama actor

Brian Cox, "Succession"
Kieran Culkin, "Succession"
Gary Oldman, "Slow Horses"
Pedro Pascal, "The Last of Us"
Jeremy Strong, "Succession"
Dominic West, "The Crown"

Best drama actress

Helen Mirren, "1923"
Bella Ramsey, "The Last of Us"
Keri Russell, "The Diplomat"
Sarah Snook, "Succession"
Imelda Staunton, "The Crown"
Emma Stone, "The Curse"

Best musical or comedy series

"Abbott Elementary"
"Barry"
"The Bear"
"Jury Duty"
"Only Murders in the Building"
"Ted Lasso"

Best musical or comedy actor

Bill Hader, "Barry"
Steve Martin, "Only Murders in the Building"
Jason Segel, "Shrinking"
Martin Short, "Only Murders in the Building"

Jason Sudeikis, "Ted Lasso"
Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear"

Best musical or comedy actress

Rachel Brosnahan, "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel"
Quinta Brunson, "Abbott Elementary"
Ayo Edebiri, "The Bear"
Elle Fanning, "The Great"
Selena Gomez, "Only Murders in the Building"
Natasha Lyonne, "Poker Face"

Best limited series or TV movie

"All the Light We Cannot See"
"Beef"
"Daisy Jones and the Six"
"Fargo"
"Fellow Travelers"
"Lessons in Chemistry"

Best limited series or TV movie actor

Matt Bomer, "Fellow Travelers"
Sam Claflin, "Daisy Jones and the Six"
Jon Hamm, "Fargo"
Woody Harrelson, "White House Plumbers"
David Oyelowo, "Lawmen: Bass Reeves"
Steven Yeun, "Beef"

Best limited series or TV movie actress

Riley Keough, "Daisy Jones and the Six"
Brie Larson, "Lessons in Chemistry"
Elizabeth Olsen, "Love & Death"
Juno Temple, "Fargo"
Rachel Weisz, "Dead Ringers"
Ali Wong, "Beef"

Best performance in stand-up comedy on television (new award):

Ricky Gervais, "Armageddon"
Trevor Noah, "Where Was I"
Chris Rock, "Selective Outrage"
Amy Schumer, "Emergency Contact"
Sarah Silverman, "Someone You Love"
Wanda Sykes, "I'm an Entertainer".



US actress Cailee Spaeny attends the red carpet of the closing ceremony of the 80th Venice Film Festival.



British actress Carey Mulligan arrives for the Los Angeles premiere of "Saltburn".



German actress Sandra Huller poses during a photocall for the film "The Zone Of Interest".



US actress Lily Gladstone arrives for The Hollywood Reporter's annual Women in Entertainment gala in Beverly Hills.



Actress Annette Bening attends AARP The Magazine's 21st annual movies for grownups awards at the Beverly Wilshire.



Irish actor Andrew Scott arrives for the Los Angeles special screening of "All of Us Strangers".



US actor Colman Domingo arrives for Elle's 2023 Women in Hollywood celebration at Nya Studios in Los Angeles.



Irish actor Barry Keoghan arrives for the Los Angeles premiere of "Saltburn" at The Theatre at ACE Hotel.

Sports

Lyles and Kipyegon named 'track athletes of the year'

Kenya's Kipyegon clinches three world records

PARIS: American sprinter Noah Lyles and Kenya's Faith Kipyegon were named the men's and women's track athletes of the year by World Athletics on Monday. Lyles was recognized for the three gold medals he won at the world championships in Budapest. After an all-conquering 2023, the 26-year-old will now turn his focus to next year's Paris Olympics where he is targeting gold in the 100m, 200m and 4x100m relay and has said he will also aim for a spot in the US 4x400m relay quartet.

In Budapest, he scorched to gold in the 100m in 9.83sec for his first global title in the short sprint. "I've always known I was the fastest man on the planet but no one would have believed me unless I had the 100m title," Lyles said. "That changed the way that people have viewed me a little bit, especially outside of the sport," he added. Kipyegon clinched the women's prize after

setting three world records in the 1500m, the mile and the 5,000m.

She also completed a 1,500m-5,000m double at the world championships. "It was a magnificent year," the 29-year-old said. "I didn't expect what I did this year, breaking three world records and winning two gold medals. "It was a historical year for me and I'm very very happy and I know it's not only what I did for myself but I know I inspired many young girls out there," she added. Sweden's Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis won the men's field athlete of the year award after he improved his pole vault world record to 6.23m.

Venezuela's Yulimar Rojas took the women's field award after winning her fourth world outdoor triple jump title. Awards were also given to Tigist Assefa of Ethiopia who sliced more than two minutes off the women's marathon time in

Berlin in September, the biggest single improvement on the mark for 40 years. The equivalent "out of stadia" award for men went to Kelvin Kiptum, the Kenyan who ran a world record 2:00:35 in the Chicago Marathon in October, taking 34 seconds off Eliud Kipchoge's previous record.

"The depth of talent and the outstanding performances in our sport this year more than justify the expansion of the World Athletics Awards to recognize the accomplishments by these six athletes across a range of disciplines," said World Athletics President Sebastian Coe. "Our World Athletes of the Year alone have achieved seven world records between them in 2023, as well as a host of world titles and major wins, so it is only fitting that they be recognized as the athletes of the year in their respective fields," he added. — AFP



Kenya's Faith Kipyegon celebrates during the podium ceremony. — AFP

News in Brief

Ronaldo hits his 50th goal

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo said he had more left in him this year after scoring his 50th goal of 2023 in Al Nassr's 5-2 Saudi King Cup victory over rivals Al Shabab. The former Manchester United and Real Madrid forward lashed home from close range with his right foot in the 74th minute. "Great victory and I'm thrilled to announce my 50th goal in 2023," the 38-year-old Portuguese wrote on Instagram after his goal helped Al Nassr reach the semi-finals on Monday in Riyadh. "All thanks to the unwavering support of my teammates, fans, and my family! There's still room for a few more this year." — AFP

Inter confirm Saudi friendly

MIAMI: Inter Miami on Monday confirmed details of two upcoming friendlies in Saudi Arabia next year which will include a showdown between Lionel Messi and old rival Cristiano Ronaldo. The Major League Soccer club had already announced plans for the team to face Ronaldo's Al Nassr in Riyadh, without confirming a date. Inter said on Monday the team would take on Saudi powerhouses Al Hilal at the Kingdom Arena in Riyadh on January 29. They will then face Al Nassr at the same venue on February 1, giving Messi the chance to lock horns once again with Ronaldo in the latest installment of a rivalry that has spanned decades stretching back to their first meeting in 2008. "These matches will offer important tests for our team, which will benefit us as we approach the new season," said Chris Henderson. — AFP

Granada hold Athletic Bilbao

BARCELONA: Athletic Bilbao moved to fifth in the La Liga table with a 1-1 draw at Granada on Monday in a game restarted from Saturday after a fan died at the stadium. Before kick-off in southern Spain, players from both sides paid tribute to the supporter with Granada's Victor Diaz laying a wreath of flowers on the individual's seat in the stadium. A minute of silence was also held in Andalusia. The match was paused in the 18th minute over the weekend with visitors Athletic leading 1-0 as the Granada fan received medical attention. The game restarted at the Nuevo Los Carmenes stadium at the point after Inaki Williams' opening effort on Saturday. — AFP

Ibrahimovic returns to Milan

MILAN: Zlatan Ibrahimovic has returned to AC Milan as an advisor to the Serie A club's management, owners RedBird Capital Partners confirmed on Monday. In a statement, American investment firm RedBird said that the former Sweden striker, who won a host of trophies as a player in Italy, will "serve as a senior advisor to AC Milan ownership and senior management". The 42-year-old has also been hired as "Operating Partner" for RedBird's "sports and media and entertainment investment portfolio". RedBird said that Ibrahimovic's mandate at Milan "will include player development and high-performance training, advancing AC Milan's global brand and commercial interests, and supporting special projects of strategic importance, including the club's new stadium." — AFP

Oosthuizen end title drought

MALELANE: Former British Open champion Louis Oosthuizen survived a last-hole scare on Monday to win the Alfred Dunhill Championship by two shots from fellow South African Charl Schwartzel. Seeking a first European Tour title since December 2018, Oosthuizen went to the final tee holding a two-stroke advantage over ex-Masters champion Schwartzel. His drive on the par five at Leopard Creek Country Club, which borders the Kruger National Park game reserve, found water and he needed four shots to reach the island green. But he then holed a long putt to save par and retain his two-stroke advantage over Schwartzel, who also finished with a five. "I really, really wanted to win this one on an unbelievable course," said Oosthuizen after his 10th European circuit triumph. — AFP

Kuwait Special Olympics attends regional forum

KUWAIT: Kuwait, represented by the Kuwait Special Olympics, participated in the regional conference for the new leader players council that was held in Cairo recently. Kuwait was represented by player Abdullah Al-Mutairi and coach Ayman Yacoub. The conference included several workshops and lectures that dealt with leadership, training on fighting bullying, and personal protection, in addition to physical fitness and psychological health.

Council members also celebrated World Disability Day at the American University. The new regional council includes 10 players, and each program is represented by a leader who is 21 years old and a companion who should be 25 or older. Members of the new council were selected following intensive meetings by the regional chairmanship with the players to measure their abilities to implement the goals of the council. Deputy Chairwoman of the Board of Kuwait Special Olympics, Huda Al-Khalidi, said the program is highly important to improve the skills of the disabled and increase their confidence in their abilities to rely on themselves. Al-Khalidi wished the new council success.



'Third Arab Masters' tournament to kick off on Dec 23

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of the Arab Tennis Federation, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, said the Third Arab Tennis Masters Tournament will be held in Doha from December 23 to 28. He said that the Arab Federation received the approval of the Qatari Federation to host the third edition of the tournament. He added that the Arab Federation will continue to organize this tournament due to the success of the first two that were hosted by Kuwait at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah tennis complex in 2021 and 2022.

The Arab Federation and players are looking forward to a new chapter of success in the third edition. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber thanked the chairman of the Qatar Federation, Nasser Al-Khulaifi, for agreeing to host the tournament in Doha. He said Qatar has vast experience hosting major world events, and this will have a positive effect on the Arab Tennis Masters Tournament.



One in five players at Women's World Cup suffer online abuse

LAUSANNE: One in five players at this year's Women's World Cup were targeted by online abuse, according to a study released Monday by FIFA and the FIFPRO global players body. The findings emerged from analysis of 5.1 million posts and comments relating to 697 players and coaches taking part in the tournament in Australia and New Zealand. Football's world governing body FIFA said in a statement 152 players received targeted "discriminatory, abusive or threatening messaging."

Nearly 50% of the verified online abuse was homophobic, sexual or sexist in nature. The analysis also found players at the Women's World Cup were 29% more likely to receive abuse compared to male players at last year's World Cup in Qatar. The findings came from analysis of data produced by FIFA's Social Media Protection Service (SMPS), which

screened millions of posts for abusive content using artificial intelligence software.

Players were given the option of opting into the SMPS, and under the system, abusive messages - totaling 116,820 - were hidden from intended recipients. The SMPS data showed that the United States women's team - who have routinely been targeted for online abuse over the years - were subjected to most abuse during the tournament. FIFA said two players - one from the United States, and one from Argentina, whose identities were not revealed - were targeted above all.

Colombian player Leicy Santos was quoted in the report saying the abuse was harmful to mental health. "If there is one thing that footballers suffer from the most, apart from losing, it is all the abusive comments - the taunts, the insults," Santos said. "Beyond what we do as professional footballers, we are people. Some players are able to put up with the outrageous abuse we receive online, but other players aren't. It is a very sensitive issue when it comes to mental health."

FIFA President Gianni Infantino meanwhile vowed no let up in the battle to tackle player abuse. "There can be no place on social media for those who abuse



FIFA President Gianni Infantino

or threaten anyone, be that in FIFA tournaments or elsewhere," Infantino said in a statement. Infantino said that since the SMPS system was first introduced last year, players, teams and officials had been shielded from more than 400,000 abusive comments. "Discrimination has no place in football and no place in society," Infantino added. — AFP

Australian netball boss resigns following bitter pay row

SYDNEY: Netball Australia's chief executive resigned on Tuesday in the wake of a protracted contract dispute that allegedly left unpaid players sleeping in their cars. Australia are netball world champions but the sport in the country is in financial turmoil after struggling to lure major sponsors and losing government funding. Union officials in

November said players in the domestic Super Netball competition had not been paid for two months, the result of a long-running contract dispute with Netball Australia.

Although an agreement was eventually hammered out earlier this month, Netball Australia chief executive Kelly Ryan on Tuesday said the "timing felt right to hand over the reins". "Netball Australia has a wonderful team of people who work tirelessly for the benefit of the sport and I thank them for their continued efforts and for their support," she said.

The pay row ignited when Australian Netball Players' Association official Kathryn Harby-Williams accused the national governing body of ignoring struggling players. "I have had them weeping. Play-

ers have slept in their cars, players have had to move out of their homes and move across the country back to families," the former captain told reporters. "That's the toll that this is taking on these players."

Respected former player Liz Ellis recently said the saga was "poisonous" and questioned whether administrators were "up to the task". Players eventually secured an 11 percent pay rise and a greater share of competition revenue. Netball Australia was recently stripped of Aus\$18 million (\$12 million) in government funding after failing to meet criteria. An Australian mining company pulled an Aus\$15 million sponsorship last year after players protested over its founder's past treatment of Aboriginal people. — AFP

Sports

Nigeria scores with CAF's top awards for men and women

Osimhen named African player of the year

ABUJA: Nigeria on Tuesday celebrated the CAF awards won by Napoli striker Victor Osimhen and Asisat Oshoala from the Barcelona women's team. On Monday night in Marrakesh, Morocco, Osimhen was voted Africa's best player for 2023 and Oshoala bagged the women's prize for a record-extending sixth time. France-based Chiamaka Nnadozie was named the top women's goalkeeper on the continent. The Super Falcons were named CAF Team of the Year after they reached the knockout rounds of this year's Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Osimhen, Oshoala and Michelle Alozie also made the teams of the year. The Nigerian Presidency congratulated all the country's winners, describing it as inspirational, in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "This recognition at the highest level is a massive shot in the arm for Nigeria football," Abuja Football Association chairman, Adam Muktar Mohammed told AFP. "Evidently, there is an abundance of talent in Nigeria. We only have to harness this talent to be a major force in international football."

However, Nigeria's 2026 World Cup hopes are already in jeopardy after they drew their first two qualifiers against Lesotho and Zimbabwe last month. The men's team also failed to reach last year's World Cup in Qatar after losing to Ghana on away goals in a play-off. Several Super Eagles stars led by captain Ahmed Musa and defender William Ekong as well as coach Jose Peseiro joined in the tributes for Osimhen after he was named CAF Player of the Year.

It is the first time a Nigeria star has won the accolade since Nwankwo Kanu in 1999. "Congrats once again @victoriosimhen9 @asisatoshuala proud of you," Musa wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "Well deserved @victoriosimhen9, we are all proud of you," added Ekong. Local newspapers also honored the award winners on Tuesday. The lead story of The Daily Trust was headlined "Nigeria sweeps CAF awards" accompanied by photos of triumphant Osimhen, Oshoala and Nnadozie with their respective prizes. The Tribune front page ran with a photo of Osimhen and Oshoala displaying their awards and flanked by CAF president Patrice Motsepe. The same photo led the front page of This Day. — AFP



MARRAKESH: Victor Osimhen of Nigeria receives the Men's Player of the Year award during the 2023 Confederation of African Football (CAF) Awards in Marrakesh on December 11, 2023. — AFP



MARRAKESH: Asisat Oshoala of Nigeria receives the Women's Player of the Year award during the 2023 Confederation of African Football (CAF) Awards in Marrakesh on December 11, 2023. — AFP

German football clubs accept investor plan by narrow majority

BERLIN: German football clubs voted in a plan to secure private equity investment on Monday in return for a share of TV rights over the next two decades. In total, 24 of the 36 clubs in the top two divisions of German football voted in favor of the plan at an assembly in Frankfurt, enough to give the proposal the necessary two-thirds majority. One fewer vote would have seen the process fail. Ten of the clubs voted against the plan while two abstained in the secret ballot.

A similar proposal which sought to sell off a higher percentage of the TV revenue for a larger fee failed to get the necessary majority when put to a vote in May. The German Football League (DFL) which proposed the vote said it would "secure the long-term and sustainable success" of the clubs and the top two divisions. "The aim is for the Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2 to continue to be competitive in sporting and commercial terms, and remain financially stable while maintaining the balance between social integration and economic growth."

In particular, the DFL said the money, estimated to be close to one billion euros (\$1.08 billion), would be used for marketing and internationalization, including the establishment of a streaming platform. Further funds will be used to provide additional short-term compensation for the clubs and to establish a fund to encourage clubs to travel abroad for advertising purposes. DFL CEO Steffen Merkel said the outcome showed "German football is ready to invest in the future." Bayern Munich CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen said "we've got the result that we wished for in order to develop the league."

'Money above everything else' The proposal was however opposed by some clubs and fan groups. Prior to the vote, Champions League club Union Berlin said the vote was "taking place at the wrong time" and should be postponed. Fan alliance Un-

ser Kurve complained before the vote that the process was lacked "sensible, transparent and in-depth discussion" and the input of club members.

After the result, Unser Kurve called the vote a "set-back" and accused the DFL of putting "money above everything else." "The uniqueness of German football has been thrown overboard in order to take part in a hopeless rat race with the Premier League," the organization said in a statement. The DFL has promised the deal will include protections against changes in kick-off times or moving competitive fixtures abroad.

German football has a notable commitment to fan control and involvement by restricting the degree of influence an external investor can have over a club. Clubs must be compliant with the 50+1 rule, which requires clubs have at least 50 percent plus one vote ownership of the club, thereby ensuring members have control over major club decisions. Two German clubs, Wolfsburg and Bayer Leverkusen, owned by Volkswagen and pharmaceuticals company Bayer respectively, have been granted exceptions to this rule as this ownership pre-dated the creation of the Bundesliga. — AFP

Greece matches without spectators over violence

ATHENS: Greek football matches will be played behind closed doors until February 12, the government announced on Monday, in an attempt to clamp down on violence at sports events. The decision came after a police officer was severely injured last week when rival fans clashed during a volleyball game in Athens, the latest in a series of incidents in the country. Government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said the measure could also extend "on a case-by-case basis to European matches involving Greek teams".

This week's Europa League match between Olympiakos and Serbian club Backa Topola will be played without spectators, he added. "For a number of years, criminals posing as fans have committed serious crimes, seriously injuring and killing people," said Marinakis. Police officers in several Greek cities gathered on Monday to denounce the lack of security at stadiums. The Greek government last year increased the maximum sentence for fan violence from six months to five years. "The problem didn't start last week nor does it concern the supporters of one or two clubs... We need to find who is behind these criminal acts, who tolerates them and who encourages them," the government spokesman said.

In order to combat the issues, Greek authorities plan to install high-definition cameras and electronic entry systems with verification of supporters' identities at all stadiums. The Greek league's board of directors is set to meet on Tuesday. According to local media, AEK Athens, Panathinaikos, PAOK and Aris Thessaloniki want to remove Evangelos Marinakis, the owner of Olympiakos, as president of the Super League.



BACKA TOPOLA: Backa Topola's Serbian goalkeeper #01 Nikola Simic concedes a goal during the UEFA Europa League group A football match. — AFP

Volleyball riots

The government announcements came after a volleyball game between Athens rivals Olympiakos and Panathinaikos was abandoned on Thursday as fighting between fans erupted outside the arena. A 31-year-old police officer was hospitalized in a "critical" condition after reportedly being struck in the thigh by a flare. Police took more than 400 people in for questioning, the majority of whom were released on Saturday. An 18-year-old was arrested on Sunday accused of shooting the flare which seriously injured the police

officer. He will appear in court later this week and face a charge of "attempted murder".

Football in Greece has been plagued by fan violence in recent times. The December 4 league game between Olympiakos and Volos was interrupted by disorder in the stands. Top-level games were then postponed this past weekend after referees said they would not officiate in protest at what they called dangerous working conditions. Last year a teenager was fatally stabbed in a fight in Thessaloniki between supporters of the northern Greek city's rival clubs, Aris Thessaloniki and PAOK. — AFP

PSG survival hinges on crunch Dortmund tie

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain take on Borussia Dortmund in Germany on Wednesday in their final group-stage game with more than just Champions League survival hanging in the balance. In Group F, the one that had all eyes on it when the draw was made, things could not be tighter as PSG, Newcastle and AC Milan all still have the chance to join already-qualified Dortmund in the knockout stages.

A win for PSG would ensure them of not only

qualifying but of topping the group as they currently sit second with seven points, three behind Dortmund and two ahead of Newcastle and Milan. "The most important thing is to focus on ourselves," said Paris coach Luis Enrique. "If we win, we're going to finish first, but even if we lose, we could go through to the next phase. It's so complicated, but I hope we can make it easier by winning."

In the return fixture on matchday one, PSG's campaign got off to a flyer when Kylian Mbappe and Achraf Hakimi goals ensured a 2-0 win, giving them a better head-to-head record with the Germans should both sides finish the group level on points. Since then, they have been up-and-down

and a humiliating 4-1 away defeat to Newcastle and a 2-1 loss at Milan were backed up by a 1-1 draw on matchday five against the English outfit. Although already assured of their place, the onus is still on Dortmund to avoid defeat if they wish to ensure top spot and a better draw for the next round. "We want to get first spot and avoid the crazy good teams. We don't want to go out in the round of 16," said Dortmund defender Mats Hummels. In the group's other game, Newcastle's first Champions League appearance in 20 years could end early when they host seven-times winners Milan, with both sides on five points and needing victory to have any hope of qualifying. — AFP

Leao boosts Milan's Champions League mission impossible

MILAN: Rafael Leao returns for AC Milan's last desperate attempt to reach the Champions League knockouts, the seven-time European champions starting at early elimination ahead of their final Group F match at Newcastle on Wednesday. Portugal attacker Leao has been out of action for the past month with a hamstring injury but Milan are confident their winger will be ready to start at St James' Park and repeat his mesmerizing display against Paris Saint-Germain from a month ago.

The 24-year-old is Milan's undoubted star man, the player who when on form is capable of turning a match in his side's favor but whose performances have been erratic in a troubled season for the Italian outfit. Milan will need the version of Leao which tore PSG to bits if they are to have any chance of progressing to the last 16 as a painful home loss to Borussia Dortmund in their most recent group fixture left qualification out of their hands.

Leao has scored four times and set up three more this season but has been criticized for lacklustre performances, his equalizer in the 2-1 home win over PSG his first goal in the best part of two months. "Criticism spurs me on, keep talking because I'll reply on the pitch," said Leao after the PSG win, which was the last time he found the net as he picked up his hamstring knock a few days later at Lecce. After the Dortmund defeat which left Milan bottom of the group, Yacine Adli said his team had a "two-to-three percent chance of qualifying", and making it to the next round is indeed a tall order.

Milan must beat Newcastle, not an impossible task judging by the 4-1 thumping Eddie Howe's team took at Tottenham on Sunday, but also need group leaders Dortmund to beat PSG who are two points ahead of Milan in second spot. A 3-0 thrashing in Paris in October means that Milan have to finish on more points than PSG otherwise it's relegation to the Europa League or - if they don't win in England - elimination from all continental competition.

Pioli at risk?

And the team is already at a low ebb after Saturday's last-gasp defeat at Atalanta which left Milan nine points behind Serie A leaders Inter Milan and fans calling for coach Stefano Pioli's head. Pioli has good relations with the club hierarchy and American owners RedBird, and he has a lot of credit in the bank after leading Milan back to the top echelons of the game. The 2022 Serie A title and last season's run to the semi-finals of the Champions League have been the high points of the post-Silvio Berlusconi era.

He also gets on well with returning idol Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who was key alongside Pioli to re-establishing Milan as a big player. Ibrahimovic, who called time on his playing career in June, has been brought in as a "senior advisor" by RedBird with a wide mandate which has been met with confusion from fans and pundits alike and led to suspicion that Pioli's job is at risk. "When he returned to Milan as a player, he was in the dressing room and had an impact there," said Fabio Capello, a four-time Serie A winner with Milan in the 1990s. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507

Change of Name

I, **ABIJAR** Holder of Indian Passport No. M2288551 Having Permanent Address 16 6, Baghicha Mohalla Babra, Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh, Pin: 457887, India Residing In Kuwait At Present, Hereby Declare That Henceforth My Name Will Be Read As Given Name **ABIJAR** And Surname **BORKI**.
(#4075) 11-12-2023

I, **ALI ASGER** holder of Indian passport No. W0763381 having permanent Address: Najampur PO, Sagwara Distt: Durgapur, Rajasthan Pin: 314025 Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth My Name will be read as under given name: **Ali Asger** and Surname: **Ghaslett**
(#4573) 12-12-2023

Titans stun Dolphins 28-27

Giants overwhelm Packers 24-22



MIAMI GARDENS: Derrick Henry #22 of the Tennessee Titans runs for a touchdown in the fourth quarter against the Miami Dolphins at Hard Rock Stadium on December 11, 2023. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: The Tennessee Titans staged an incredible late rally to stun the Miami Dolphins 28-27 and claim their first road victory of the NFL season on Monday. The Titans appeared to be heading for defeat after a fourth-quarter meltdown gifted two touchdowns to Miami who surged into a 27-13 lead with 4min 34sec remaining. But Titans rookie quarterback Will Levis responded superbly to orchestrate two late touchdown drives that saw the visitors sneak to victory.

Levis found DeAndre Hopkins with a three-yard pass to cap a 75-yard drive to cut the gap to 27-19, and then made a successful two-point conversion to

make it a one-score game. Tennessee then forced Miami to punt, allowing Levis to launch another long drive that culminated with running back Derrick Henry charging over from three yards to make it 28-27 after the extra point.

There was still time for Miami to attempt to get into field-goal range, but the Titans defense bottled up Tua Tagovailoa as the Dolphins turned over to effectively end the game. "I think we showed the type of team we always thought we could be this season," Levis told ESPN. "Obviously we've had some lows but we've got a special locker room and special guys across the board. So glad that we were able to grind it out at

the end there." The Titans remain bottom of the AFC South with a 5-8 record and have little realistic prospect of forcing their way into the postseason.

But the defeat could prove costly for Miami, who would have drawn level with the Baltimore Ravens at 10-3 with the best record in the AFC with a victory. Instead the Dolphins fell to 9-4 to leave the Ravens on pole position for top seeding and home field advantage in the playoffs.

A Miami defeat had seemed unthinkable after Tennessee seemingly hit the self-destruct button in the fourth quarter. A muffed punt reception handed the Dolphins possession in the red zone to allow Raheem

Mostert to score the go-ahead touchdown at 20-13.

Levis then botched a pitch on the next Titans possession to hand back the ball to Miami, and Mostert subsequently claimed his second touchdown to leave Miami 27-13 ahead. But the Titans' unlikely late rally turned the game on its head to leave the Miami home crowd in stunned silence. Monday's other NFL game also went down to the wire, with the lowly New York Giants upsetting the Green Bay Packers 24-22 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford. Giants kicker Randy Bullock slotted a 37-yard field goal with the final kick of the game to clinch victory for New York, who improved to 5-8. — AFP

Wolves sunk by Pelicans; Doncic dazzles for Mavs

LOS ANGELES: Zion Williamson erupted for 36 points as the New Orleans Pelicans exploited the absence of Anthony Edwards to upset the Minnesota Timberwolves 121-107 on Monday. Williamson spearheaded a dominant offensive performance by New Orleans, who bounced back superbly after being bullied into defeat by 44 points against the Los Angeles Lakers in last week's in-season tournament. CJ McCollum added 23 points while Brandon Ingram weighed in with 20 to fire the Pelicans to a deserved victory over the NBA Western Conference leaders. The defeat snapped Minnesota's six-game winning streak although the Wolves remain clear at the top of the table with a 17-5 record.

"We trusted each other and we executed," Williamson said. "We've been through tough moments but we're resilient. I think that showed tonight, glad we got the win," Williamson added. New Orleans improved to 13-11 and are ninth in the Western standings. Elsewhere, Luka Doncic inspired the injury-hit Dallas Mavericks with 35 points, eight rebounds, and six assists in a gutsy 120-113 road win over the Memphis Grizzlies. The shorthanded Mavs, missing Kyrie Irving, Grant Williams and Tim Hardaway Jr. amongst others, took the lead eight minutes into the first quarter and kept their noses in front to claim victory.

Rookie Dereck Lively II had 16 points and 16 rebounds while Jaden Hardy added 19 from the bench. Mavs coach Jason Kidd saluted Doncic's leadership in galvanizing an understrength Dallas line-up. "I think you've seen enough of him that he believes anytime he takes the floor he has a chance to win," Kidd said. "His leadership of always getting that group together, to make sure everybody was on the same page, he's done that all year for us. "That just shows his leadership, his maturity. He's growing. On the road, against a talented team, we found a way to win, but it starts with Luka and he set the tone."



MEMPHIS: Luka Doncic #77 of the Dallas Mavericks blocks the shot of Santi Aldama #77 of the Memphis Grizzlies during the second half at FedExForum on December 11, 2023. — AFP

'Pretty amazing'

It was another in a sequence of MVP-calibre performances from Doncic, who has now scored 30 or more points in his last seven games. "I think leadership is important," Doncic said. "I think this year has been way better for me. Obviously we had like five guys out, so it's a pretty amazing win."

In other games, the San Antonio Spurs' woes continued with a franchise-record 17th straight defeat in a 93-82 loss to the Houston Rockets. San Antonio remain rock bottom of the Western Conference with a 3-19 record.

San Antonio's No.1 draft pick Victor Wembanyama led his team's scoring with 15 points but the Spurs were always struggling after converting only five successful three-pointers from 41 attempts from beyond the arc. "They played their ass off. They played a great game," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "But you've got to make a shot in the NBA—you can't shoot five for 41 from three... it just makes it very, very difficult." In Atlanta, a 29-point performance from Jamal Murray and 25 points from Nikola Jokic helped the NBA champion Denver Nuggets to a 129-122 win over the Hawks. — AFP

Turkey's football plunges into crisis after referee attack

ISTANBUL: Turkey's football plunged into all-out crisis Tuesday following an on the pitch attack on a referee by a club president who was mentioned as a possible candidate for mayor of Ankara. The top-flight SuperLig indefinitely suspended matches and a court placed Ankaragucu club president Faruk Koca and two others in pre-trial detention for "injuring and threatening a public official".

Images of Monday night's incident showed Koca rushing onto the pitch with a group of men and throwing a punch at referee Halil Umut Meler after he had blown the final whistle. Koca appeared to be incensed at Meler for awarding a stoppage-time penalty kick that allowed visiting Caykur Rizespor to leave the capital with a 1-1 draw. Meler fell to the ground and was kicked several times in the ensuing melee.

The 37-year-old match official was shown standing minutes later with a black eye that had swelled up the left part of his face. He released a statement after being rushed to hospital saying Koca had threatened his life. "Faruk Koca punched me under my left eye and I fell to the ground. While I was on the ground, they kicked my face and other parts of my body many times," Meler said in a statement. "Faruk Koca told me and my fellow referees: 'I will finish you'. Addressing me in particular, he said: 'I will kill you'."

'My brain went crazy'

Koca admitted to Beyaz TV immediately after the match that he had momentarily lost control. "My brain went crazy," Koca said. "My eyesight blacked out! I don't remember what I did!" The incident pushed all other events off the front pages of the main newspapers in a nation where football passions run deep—and are often politically linked. The Turkish Football Federation condemned "this vile attack" and suspended all matches until further notice. It also prompted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan—a

one-time football player whose love for the game has helped improve the fortunes of top Turkish clubs—to issue a late-night appeal for calm.

"Sports means peace and brotherhood. Sport is incompatible with violence," he said in a social media statement. The Turkish interior ministry later released a video showing Erdogan placing a call to Meler in his hospital bed. "We are so deeply sorry and we wish you a speedy recovery," Erdogan told the injured referee in the clip. "I told all our friends, my interior minister, my justice minister and all the other relevant friends to do what is necessary," Erdogan said. Turkish football is known for its passion and occasional bursts of violence. A Turkish court briefly arrested 19 people involved in a brawl that broke out during a second-division match in November of last year. Second-division Bursaspor played seven matches earlier this year in an empty stadium following another incident during which fans chanted anti-Kurdish slogans. — AFP



ANKARA: Turkish Referee Halil Umut Meler (ground) covers himself as MKE Ankaragucu's president Faruk Koca (left) attacks him at the end of the Turkish Super Lig football match between MKE Ankaragucu and Caykur Rizespor on December 11, 2023. — AFP