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100 DAYS OF GAZA GENOCIDE

Kuwaiti protesters rally in solidarity with Palestinians

By Faten Omar & Agencies

Amir receives PM-designate, interior minister



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

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace on Sunday Prime Minister-designate Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. HH the Amir also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Hundreds of protesters gathered at a demonstration at Irada Square on Sunday, organized by political and civil organizations. The event marked the 100th day since Hamas' "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation and the Zionist-American criminal war of genocide against Gaza and Palestine that has claimed a surging civilian death toll and ravaged the besieged Palestinian territory.

The Zionist entity's relentless military campaign has killed at least 23,968 people in Gaza, mostly women and children. Zionist strikes continued to pound southern Gaza on Sunday, with the Hamas government media office saying "more than 100 people were martyred in the attacks last night until 6:00 am in all areas of the Gaza Strip".

"Hundred days is a period that may shape a future that may determine one's fate, and today this period started a revolution to correct the path and achieve victory. Despite the wounds, the pain and the afflicted families, the Zionists were unable to reach a single (Zionist) captive," MP Hassan Jowhar said during the demonstration opposite the National Assembly.

Lawyer Ahmed Al-Hammadi, Vice Chairman of the Civil Conservative Party, called on the Kuwaiti government to allow Kuwaiti lawyers to be a part of the historic trial in the genocide case filed by South Africa against the Zionist entity at The Hague.

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KUWAIT: Kuwaitis rally in solidarity with the people of Gaza and Palestine at Irada Square on Jan 14, 2024, as the Zionist war on Gaza enters its 100th day. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Foreign firms don't need agents

KUWAIT: Foreign companies are now allowed to operate in the country for the first time without a local representative after a law abolishing that requirement was published by an Amiri decree in the official gazette on Sunday. The law states that foreign companies can operate in the country and participate in bids directly without the need for a local representative.

Namibia slams Germany over Gaza

WINDHOEK: Namibia has condemned its former colonial ruler Germany's decision this week to reject accusations against the Zionist entity by South Africa of genocide at the International Court of Justice. Namibia, where the first genocide of the 20th century took place under German colonial rule, "rejects Germany's support of the genocidal intent of the racist (Zionist) state", the presidency said in a statement late Saturday. Namibian President Hage Geingob accused Berlin of "ignoring" the "deaths of over 23,000 Palestinians in Gaza" and defending in front of the ICJ "the genocidal and gruesome acts of the (Zionist) government". — AFP

China calls for Palestine statehood

CAIRO: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi called Sunday for the establishment of a Palestinian state and a ceasefire in Gaza. In a press conference with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry in Cairo, the top Chinese diplomat said "it is necessary to insist on the establishment of an independent, fully sovereign state of Palestine on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital". — AFP

Tunisians mark 2011 revolution with protests

TUNIS: Hundreds of Tunisians demonstrated on Sunday to mark the anniversary of the country's 2011 revolution that sparked the Arab Spring uprisings, and to demand the release of jailed opposition leaders. They marched down the central thoroughfare of the capital Tunis waving the national flag, commemorating the day when dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted — which set off a series of uprisings across the Middle East.

"The spirit of January 14 is still

here," said Moncef Araissia, a retiree who was among the several hundred protesters that AFP journalists estimated turned out for the demonstration. "Our vision is still the same, despite some mistakes we made, and despite the coup that took place," he added, referring to President Kais Saied's sweeping power grab.

Saied was democratically elected in 2019, but two years later he sacked the government and suspended parliament. He later amended the constitution to further centralize power. A number of his opponents are currently behind bars as the North African country prepares for presidential elections in December this year.

Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, leader of the National Salvation Front (FSN)

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TUNIS: Tunisians wave national and Palestinian flags during a protest on Habib Bourguiba Avenue on Jan 14, 2024. — AFP

King Frederik X ushers in new era in Denmark

COPENHAGEN: Denmark's King Frederik X acceded to the throne on Sunday, ushering in a new era after his mother Queen Margrethe abdicated, with more than 100,000 Danes turning out for the unprecedented event. After a final horse-drawn carriage procession through the streets of Copenhagen, the hugely popular 83-year-old queen signed a declaration of abdication at Christiansborg Palace, ending her 52-year reign and automatically

making her son monarch.

She then left the Council of State, also attended by the government, the new king, his wife and their 18-year-old eldest son, the new Crown Prince Christian. Margrethe left the room with tears in her eyes, saying: "God bless the king." In front of a sea of Danes waving red-and-white flags, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen then proclaimed 55-year-old Frederik the new king on the balcony of Christiansborg Palace, the seat of parliament and government.

Wrapped up against the cold, a visibly moved Frederik, clad in his gala admiral's uniform with gold epaulettes, blinked back tears and smiled as he waved to the crowd, estimated at more

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COPENHAGEN: King Frederik X and Queen Mary of Denmark wave from the balcony of Christiansborg Palace on Jan 14, 2024. — AFP

Iceland village threatened as volcano erupts

REYKJAVIK: Houses caught fire after a new volcanic eruption sent smoke and lava spewing out near the Icelandic fishing port of Grindavik Sunday, just hours after villagers were evacu-

ated to safety, authorities said. It was the North Atlantic nation's fifth volcanic eruption in under three years. The most recent occurred just weeks ago on Dec 18 in the same region, southwest of the capital Reykjavik.

At least two houses were seen engulfed in fire on live images broadcast by public television RUV. The blaze then spread from one home to another. "In a little village like this one, we're like a family, we all know each

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Billowing smoke and flowing lava are seen on Jan 14, 2024 during a volcanic eruption on the outskirts of the evacuated town of Grindavik in western Iceland. — AFP



Local



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis rally in solidarity with the people of Gaza and Palestine at Irada Square on Jan 14, 2024, as the Zionist war on Gaza enters its 100th day. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti protesters rally in solidarity with Palestinians

Demonstrators hail South Africa, Yemen as they mark 100 days since Al-Aqsa Flood operation

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Hundreds of protesters gathered at a demonstration at Irada Square on Sunday, organized by political and civil organizations. The event marked the 100th day since Hamas' "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation and the Zionist-American criminal war of genocide against Gaza and Palestine that has claimed a surging civilian death toll and ravaged the besieged Palestinian territory.

"Hundred days is a period that may shape a future that may determine one's fate, and today this period started a revolution to correct the path and achieve victory. This is what our heroes in Gaza are, who succeeded in breaking the image of (the Zionist entity's) strong intelligence. Despite the wounds, the pain and the afflicted families, the Zionists were unable to reach a single (Zionist) captive," MP Hassan Jowhar said during the demonstration.

"The 100 days have recorded unprecedented success. Today, the Arab and Western peoples are liberated from the restrictions of their governments. They are taking action, and there has become a culture of boycott among Arabs and Muslims. Even our children are calling for a boycott that harms the financial and economic situation of the Zionists and their allies who support them," he said.

Jowhar emphasized that today's gathering aims to bring attention to the upcoming 100 days that may reshape the political and geopolitical landscape. He cautioned against reprehensible efforts to sow discord within Arab nations, designed to entangle both the countries and their people in internal conflicts. Jowhar stressed the importance of vigilance to prevent being drawn into the quagmire of strife.

"Today, for the first time, the Zionists are being dragged into international courts by South Africa, and we in the National Assembly unanimously demanded that the government of Kuwait



join the team of victory of the Palestinian cause. There will be a depletion of economic forces, especially concerning oil exports. But beware if the horizons of war expand, causing side battles in the region. We must be careful and there must be joint political action," he added. "We hope to stop the bloodshed as soon as possible with weapons, diplomacy and boycotts, and to the Palestinian people — we are with you until the final victory."

Lawyer Ahmed Al-Hammadi, Vice Chairman of the Civil Conservative Party, called on the Kuwaiti government to allow Kuwaiti lawyers to be a part of the historic trial. "I'm calling on the ministry of foreign affairs in Kuwait to

join or send a defense team to the International Court of Justice to support South Africa. Kuwait has lawyers who could be of assistance in prosecuting this occupier," he said.

"We all feel helpless and think about what we can do for the people of Gaza. This message is for the people. You have a role to play in prosecuting and holding this occupier to account. South Africa and its legal team posted on social media a website asking everyone to file any material or documentation of the crimes committed by the Zionists, and we can be assistants to their team. This is a beginning. Anyone who has such materials must provide them with this data," he added.

Lulwa Al-Mulla, Chairperson of the Women's Cultural and Social Society, passionately stated: "We convene today to voice the Kuwaiti people's outrage over the ongoing genocide inflicted upon the Palestinian people for the past 100 days — 25,000 martyrs, with 70 percent being children and women, in addition to those wounded and missing under the rubble." She questioned the absence of justice and humanity and appealed to the world's conscience, urging a collective response to the dire situation.

"Today, Gaza is witnessing the largest genocide in history. All of this is happening in front of television cameras, and everyone is watching. We call



MP Hassan Jowhar addresses the crowd.



Chairperson of the Women's Cultural and Social Society Lulwa Al-Mulla addresses the crowd.

on the international community and organizations to confront the brutal practices against a defenseless people," she stressed.

Mulla praised the position of Yemen and South Africa. "We know that South Africa sacrificed its economic interests and its international interests, but the Arabs abandoned them to preserve their interests. We say to the steadfast people of Gaza and all our brothers that this is your destiny and your legendary steadfastness will not be in vain, but will be recorded as a shining sign against injustice, and we remain in solidarity with Palestine until the State of Palestine is established with Jerusalem as its capital," she vowed.



Kuwait Institute for Judicial & Legal Studies, UAB sign MoU

Memorandum of understanding to exchange expertise, experiences

CAIRO: The Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies and the Union of Arab Banks (UAB) signed on Sunday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that focused on the exchange of expertise, experiences, and studies in the legal and judicial fields, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Ahmad Aboul Gheit.

Director General of the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Counselor Hani Al-Hamdan and UAB's Secretary General Dr Wissam Fattouh inked the MoU, with dignitaries present at the ceremony such as Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi

and the Assistant Secretary General, Head of the Economic Affairs Sector Ambassador Ali Al-Maliki, representing the League's Secretary General, along with Dr Raed Al-Juboori, director of the Arab organizations and federations department at the League.

During the ceremony, in a speech, Al-Maliki emphasized the League's commitment to supporting collaborative endeavors, viewing them as vital initiatives to advance joint Arab efforts and expressing optimism for the positive impact of this cooperation on the judicial, legal, and banking sectors, fostering a unified Arab approach.

Speaking at the ceremony, Al-Hamdan

underscored the strategic significance of the agreement, presenting it as an opportunity to exchange ideas, enhance visions, and develop specialized training programs in banking, highlighting the memorandum's focus on addressing challenges posed by modern financial transactions, particularly within the evolving landscape of artificial intelligence.

The collaboration is expected to yield not only the exchange of curricula, programs, and scientific materials but also well-defined training and scientific plans that are envisaged as foundational elements in developing a knowledgeable and experienced generation, prerequisites for achieving excellence, success,

and innovation in legal, judicial, and banking fields, he added.

In a statement to KUNA, Dr Fattouh highlighted the MoU's importance in harmonizing laws and banking, crucial for resolving disputes within the Arab banking sector, anticipating joint studies and research on laws and banking, with plans for an international conference in Kuwait later this year that focuses on mediation, arbitration, and the development of laws supporting banking.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Mutairi underscored the significance of the memorandum in enhancing cooperation in the judicial, legal, and banking sectors, pointing out the distinguished position

of the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies and anticipating benefits for UAB through the institute's expertise in specialized legal and judicial studies in banking.

The MoU is poised to contribute new experiences and build specialized legal expertise in financial aspects, marking a significant step toward strengthening collaboration between the two entities and contributing to the development of legal and banking practices in the Arab world. Al-Mutairi clarified that the Arab League possesses mechanisms for addressing financial matters, including institutions like the Arab Investment Court and the Administrative Court. — KUNA

Manpower and KGOC enhance opportunities

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower and Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) discussed on Sunday the company's future projects which are aimed at enhancing job opportunities for Kuwaiti youth and national cadres in the oil sector. Acting Director General of the Authority, Marzouq Al-Otaibi, said that this came after the Cabinet's decision on the disbursement of national labor support to citizens working in contracts for joint operations contractors in the Divided Zone.

"The issuance of this decision is an encouragement to citizens, fairness to them, and equality with their fellow citizens working for contractors in the oil sector," he praised the active role of the KGOC in encouraging Kuwaiti youth to work in the company. For his part, the Head of Al-Khafji Joint Operations and Executive Vice President for Administrative and Financial Affairs at KGOC, Nayef Al-Enezi, expressed their desire to provide job opportunities for Kuwaiti youth wishing to work in the oil sector. KGOC presented an honorary shield to the Public Authority for Manpower in appreciation of its efforts in supporting the employment of national workers.



KGOC presents an honorary shield to the Public Authority for Manpower in appreciation of its efforts in supporting the employment of national workers in the oil sector.

MoH issues directive for automatic prescriptions

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi has issued a directive concerning the automatic linking of prescription data for prescribed medicines dispensed by private sector pharmacies.

Article One

An electronic system for the health ministry will be established in coordination between the assistant undersecretary for drug and food control affairs and the assistant undersecretary for digital health affairs. This system will facilitate the linking of all prescription data for prescribed medicines and preparations dispensed by private sector pharmacies.

Article Two

The medicines inspection department is tasked with monitoring and ensuring the regularity of prescription registrations for medicines by private sector pharmacies in the electronic system.

Article Three

All private sector pharmacies licensed to trade in prescribed medicine and regulate their circulation must register in the electronic system, following the specified conditions and procedures: Create a dedicated account for each private pharmacy in the electronic system. The pharmacy license holder and the pharmacist in charge of the pharmacy are jointly responsible for all prescription data uploaded to the pharmacy's account.

The pharmacist in charge must:

(A) Ensure that prescription data for prescribed medicines and preparations meet all the necessary conditions outlined in the prescriptions for these substances and the procedures for their circulation, in accordance with ministerial decisions, before dispensing to the patient.

(B) Register and upload each prescription of the substances and preparations dispensed in the pharmacy to the electronic system.

(C) Verify that prescriptions received by the pharmacy are issued by doctors registered in the Ministry's electronic system. No prescription may be dispensed unless it meets the required conditions.

(D) Download the prescription onto the electronic system after dispensing, ensuring clarity. A photocopy in PDF format should be created, bearing the pharmacist's seal and the pharmacy's seal, and stored with the original copy in the pharmacy. The data should match the records in the pharmacy's register of prescribed medicines and preparations, with this process completed on the same date as the prescription's dispensation.

Article Four

The pharmacy license holder and the pharmacist responsible for dispensing the prescription are legally accountable for all prescription data uploaded to the pharmacy's account in the electronic system.

Article Five

Licenses, permits and approvals for these pharmacies will not be issued or renewed in the event of non-compliance with the provisions outlined in this resolution.



KUWAIT: Doctors use the latest class of Da Vinci Xi surgical robots at Jaber Hospital. More than 130 surgeries have been performed - utilizing the Da Vinci surgery system.

Da Vinci Xi surgical robots used in over 130 surgeries

KUWAIT: The ministry of health has clarified the acquisition and utilization of the latest class of Da Vinci Xi surgical robots at Jaber Hospital, underscoring its commitment to delivering cutting-edge technologies and devices to align with global advancements. In light of this development, Dr Suleiman Al-Mazidi, the Head of the Department of Surgery at Jaber Hospital, highlighted the completion of over 130 surgeries utilizing the Da Vinci surgery system, representing the pinnacle of robotic surgery technology.

These surgeries encompassed 35 cases in colorectal surgery, 65 cases in bariatric surgery and applications in various gynecological, urological, as well as ear, nose and throat surgeries, Dr Mazidi explained. The Da Vinci Xi, he emphasized, stands as the latest category of robots globally and is presently operational at Jaber Hospital. This state-of-the-art technology empowers surgeons to perform more intricate procedures with



increased speed and precision, boasting multiple arms for enhanced capabilities.

"It enhances the surgeon's control over the device, enabling the execution of procedures through smaller openings with heightened accuracy. This leads to reduced blood loss during operations, mitigating risks and minimizing patient waiting times," he stated, noting that the utilization

depends on the nature, circumstances and specificity of the pathological condition. Dr Mazidi underscored that the availability of such advanced devices aligns with the ministry's commitment to delivering optimal health services. He commended the continuous oversight of Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and the Undersecretary Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Group provides winter clothes, bags for workers

KUWAIT: As part of its humanitarian initiative, the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society has launched an initiative (Winter Clothing for the Worker) to educate and create awareness during the winter. The project is aimed at helping road workers by providing them with an integrated winter bag containing gloves, socks, and a winter hat, in addition to a pajama, jacket, ear cover, scarf, and other supplies to protect them from the cold weather. The cost of one bag is KD 10. The society has previously organized several campaigns in many areas of Kuwait.



Nomination opens for Arab Environmental Excellence Award

CAIRO: The Arab League announced on Sunday the opening of nominations for the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for Environmental Affairs Award for Arab Environmental Excellence for the year 2024, with the theme "Land Rehabilitation to Enhance Resilience." The Arab League said in a statement that the prize is awarded every two years for the best scientific research, innovation, project, environmental personality, or pioneering applied environmental work accomplished within the framework of encouraging innovative actions and individual and collective initiatives that contribute to the protection of the environment and the preservation of resources and sustainability.

The statement pointed out that based on the charter of the Arab League and its goals, which are guaranteed by the statute of the league, and in application of its principles and directives, it was decided to adopt a prize award at the Arab level known as the "Arab Environmental Excellence Award".

This award is one of the motivating tools to raise awareness, enhance environmental action efforts, encourage individual and group initiatives, scientific research, innovation, and good and sustainable management.

Arab countries are currently striving to achieve the sustainable development goals and the global goals adopted within the framework of international agreements, including neutralizing land degradation, zero carbon neutrality, protecting 30 percent of their land and sea areas, and other goals.

According to the statement, nominations are sent directly to the secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for environmental affairs no later than the first of June so that the technical secretariat can present them to the jury. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Birds are seen in the lake at Boulevard Park in Salmiya. — Photo by Shakir Reshamwala

Post-pandemic shifts: Navigating changes in relationships, social skills

By Mohammad Akram

KUWAIT: If we agree to prioritize honesty and clarity, it is evident that nobody enjoys being alone. Relationships, with their multifaceted branches, define us as a human race. Given the diverse experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown, it has become necessary to discuss and evaluate changes in our social skills and relationship manners compared to the pre-lockdown era.

Much has changed, and whether these changes are positive or negative remains uncertain due to the varied experiences of individuals. However, a common sentiment is that our relationships and social skills have undergone dramatic shifts post-COVID. Personally, I found relief in discovering that many people shared similar feelings. Through discussions with numerous individuals, I aimed to gather diverse opinions to thoroughly examine this topic from various perspectives.

Many attribute the change in people's behavior to the extended hours spent on social media



Ahmed Al-Fadly



Dhoha Al-Issa



Hussein Dashti



Kareem Hussein

and the Internet during and after the lockdown. Unlike pre-COVID times when we were more engaged in reality and physical activities, the excessive time spent online is seen to contribute to increased depression, introversion, and a reduced desire to connect with others. According to Kareem Hussein: "I feel that how people communicate nowadays is very different; we used to prefer face-to-face communication, but now people rely on social media, which is a bit odd and not as it used to be."

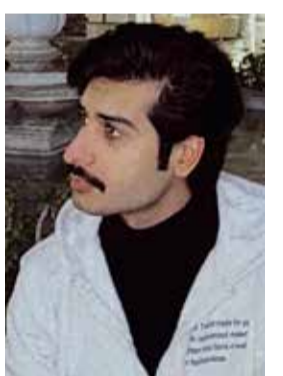
Dhoha Al-Issa echoes this sentiment, stating: "I think social media was the only source to socialize, sadly enough during COVID, and after COVID, this habit stuck with me till this day." However, it's important to note that not everyone solely blames social media for these changes. Some suggest that fears during the lockdown, coupled with concerns about vaccine side effects, may have led to depression, anxiety and hostile behavior, making it harder for people to connect and socialize.

Hussein Dashti observes: "From my perspective, friend groups were much bigger before, but now the gatherings are much smaller, and everyone mostly prefers to be alone." The shift towards smaller social circles may be influenced by health precautions such as social distancing and mask-wearing, which could

have affected people subconsciously.

Expatriates highlighted the impact of not being able to see their families during the lockdown, affecting family bonds and socialization patterns. Mohammed Al-Shammari notes: "Children nowadays are more introverted than the previous generations," attributing it to increased screen time. Similarly, Ahmed Al-Fadly said, "I feel that I am more introverted now compared to how I was, and friendship-making before the lockdown was much easier for me."

In terms of future perspectives, some are optimistic that the current era of social numbness and online-based communication will pass, and we will return to normalcy soon. Others believe that the shift towards reduced social activity is inevitable and was accelerated by the pandemic. Regardless, the discussions emphasize the need for reflection on our evolving social dynamics.



Mohammed Al-Shammari



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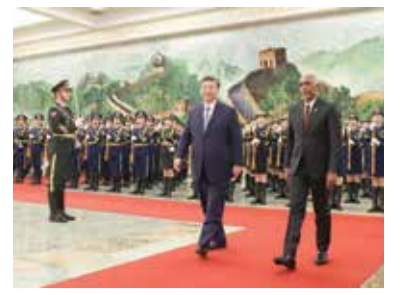


Kuwaiti pastor receives 'Baselio Golden Award'

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Mar Baselios Movement, a spiritual and charitable organization of St Gregorios Indian 'Orthodox Maha Edavaka', the 'Baselio Suvarna Puraskaram' (Baselio Golden Award) was presented to Pastor Emmanuel Benjamin Ghareeb in recognition of his comprehensive contributions to the Christian com-

munity in Kuwait. Pastor Emmanuel Ghareeb is the only native Christian priest in Kuwait. Ghareeb was ordained to the priesthood in January 1999. He left the position as the Undersecretary in Kuwait's ministry of Oil and chose to become a Christian minister.

There are almost 100 different Christian denominations in Kuwait who are worshipping on the premises of the National Evangelical Church which is chaired by Pastor Ghareeb. Mar Baselios Movement is a spiritual movement that has been working in Kuwait for the past 50 years under the patronage of Moran Mar Baselios Ghevarghese II Bava of blessed memory, who was the Third Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Church.



Maldives leader asks India to withdraw troops by March

Ecuador prison riot hostages freed

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Armageddon: Yemenis fear another war

US-British bombardment revives memories of unrest, concerns over future

HODEIDA, Yemen: Nearly two years after the fire of Yemen's civil conflict had largely been quelled, Manal Faqirah awoke at dawn Friday to the sound of bombs raining on her coastal home city of Hodeida. "When I heard the first blast, I was terrified, I thought it was a dream," the 36-year-old civil servant told AFP, saying she was awakened from her sleep by the strikes.

"When the second blast came, I knew this was a strike, this was war," she continued, recalling how she curled up underneath her covers at the sound of the third strike. She said she was so afraid of the sound of bombing that it felt "like Armageddon".

Faqirah is a resident of Hodeida, a strategic port city overlooking the Red Sea that saw a large share of the strikes by US and British forces targeting Houthi rebels over their attacks on shipping. The Houthis have launched a series of attacks on vessels suspected to have links to the Zionist entity in a bid to push for a ceasefire in the Zionist attack on Gaza which has been ongoing for more than three months.

"I thought about the children and mothers and fathers. Who is being struck? ... I feared for my country, for my family members," Faqirah said. Hodeida province, whose seaports are a lifeline for millions in the Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen, is a key launch site for rockets and drones targeting Red Sea shipping. The rebels have also been holding the Galaxy Leader, a merchant vessel linked to a Zionist businessman that was seized on Nov 19, at Salif Port, north of the city.

'Nowhere to hide'

Pharmacist Assem Mohamed, 33, was awoken at 2:30 am by the sound of not only the blasts but the cries of his child. "When the strikes hit, my youngest son awoke crying in fear and screaming 'firecrackers,'" the father of three said. At first, he "thought there was a wedding in the alley".

The three-year-old boy was too young to remember the days of fierce fighting in Hodeida between a Saudi-led coalition and the Houthi rebels. Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen in 2015 on behalf of the internationally recognized government against the Houthi rebels who had overrun the capital Sanaa the previous year.

The war raged for years, killing hundreds of thousands and resulting in what is dubbed by the United



SANAA: Two Yemeni men walk on a bridge in the country's capital on Jan 12, 2024. — AFP

Nations as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, but a ceasefire has largely held since April 2022. "There is nowhere to hide ... but we all gathered in one room," Mohamed said, adding that he did not really expect the West to follow through with their threats to strike the rebels.

The sound of the strikes revived memories of the bloody war that for years gripped the Arab Peninsula's poorest country. "When the strikes hit, we didn't know they would only target military sites. We thought they would target everywhere as it was in the past nine years," Mohamed said.

'We don't want wars'

Faqirah told AFP that her husband's friend lives in the capital Sanaa, another city targeted by the US and British strikes. When they called to check on them, he told them "Sanaa is burning". Faqirah fears returning to the battles that gripped the country for years after the return to relative normality over the past two years. "God willing, the war will not return. Our hope in this world is to live in health and peace,"

she said. But Mohamed is less optimistic. "The situation is very tense and the next days do not bode well," he said, pointing to the Houthis' vows to respond to Washington and London.

Yemenis — grown accustomed to preparing for crises by stocking up on food and supplies — began forming queues on Friday at petrol stations in Hodeida and Sanaa before eventually dispersing, AFP correspondents reported. The cooking gas company in Sanaa said it was "continuing to provide citizens with their needs", calling on residents to report back on any outlets that had interrupted supplies or raised prices.

On Saturday morning, rebel forces in north Sanaa had imposed strict security measures around Al-Dailami airbase, which was targeted with fresh strikes at dawn, an AFP correspondent said. The surrounding area was shut and no one was allowed to enter except residents with permits from neighborhood chiefs. Glass was scattered around the buildings surrounding the base, with some residents having fled to areas considered to be safer. — AFP

US climate envoy to step down to help Biden's campaign

WASHINGTON: US climate envoy John Kerry, a key player in the Biden administration's push to tackle climate change, will step down to work on the president's reelection bid, media reported Saturday. The former secretary of state and senator has spent the last three years liaising with other countries to up commitments on climate change, including at the most recent COP28 UN climate summit in Dubai.

Kerry, 80, intends to help Joe Biden's campaign by publicizing the president's work in combatting global warming, according to multiple US media outlets citing officials familiar with the situation. Kerry informed Biden of his intentions to leave on Wednesday, and his staff learned of the decision on Saturday, those officials said. Apart from leading the US delegation at three UN climate summits, Kerry worked effectively with China despite complicated diplomatic relations. Together, the countries are the world's two largest polluters, accounting for 41 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

In a rare display of unity, the United States and China helped carry the COP28 December climate summit in Dubai, where negotiators sealed a historic although watered-down agreement to begin to transition away from oil, gas and coal. Kerry had welcomed his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua a month earlier in California, where the two countries agreed on outlines of climate action that partly served as a basis for the nearly 200-nation Dubai deal. News of Kerry's stepping down comes one day after Xie retired on health grounds. One of Biden's first moves in office after his inauguration on Jan 20, 2021 was to rejoin the Paris climate agreement, which former president Donald Trump had exited. Under the 2015 UN deal countries committed to limiting the Earth's warming to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius and preferably to the safer 1.5C threshold. — AFP

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Ecuador prison riot hostages freed

At least 19 people dead during last week's violence, including civilians, police



GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador: Soldiers from the 5th Infantry Brigade keep a man in custody while participating with police officers in a security operation and search for suspects during the curfew in poor neighborhoods of Guayaquil, Ecuador, at dawn on Jan 12, 2024. — AFP photos



MACHALA, Ecuador: A prison official (left) who was being held hostage by inmates is embraced by a relative upon being released from Machala prison on Jan 13, 2024.

QUITO, Ecuador: All remaining 136 prison guards and administrative workers who were seized as hostages during prison riots in Ecuador were freed on Saturday night, prison authorities said. Nearly 180 prison guards and civil servants had been taken hostage by rioting inmates after President Daniel Noboa launched a military crackdown on criminal groups this week, sparking a deadly confrontation with narco gangs in the South American country.

"Security protocols and the joint work of the police and the national army enabled the release of all the hostages who were being held in various prisons across the country," the SNAI prison authorities said in a statement on X. Images broadcast by the police showed the guards, many in tears, exhausted and supported by their colleagues shortly after their release. "We are released (...) Thank God we all got out safely," a prison employee said in a video posted on social media, waving the Ecuadorian flag and standing in

front of one prison in southern Cotopaxi province.

Earlier on Saturday, 41 hostages had been freed, including 24 guards and 17 administration employees. Noboa celebrated the latest releases in a post on X. "Congratulations to the patriotic, professional and courageous work of the armed forces, national police and the SNAI (...) for achieving the release of the prison guards and administrative staff held in the detention centers of Azuay, Canar, Esmeraldas, Cotopaxi, Tungurahua, El Oro and Loja," he wrote.

State of emergency

The crisis was triggered by the escape from Guayaquil prison of one of the country's most powerful narcotics gang bosses, Jose Adolfo Macias, known by the alias "Fito", who headed the country's main gang "Los Choneros".

Riots erupted in at least five prisons and attacks on security forces following his escape. At least 19 people have died in the violence, including civilians,

prison guards and police in the last week, according to SNAI authorities. Authorities said eight "terrorists" were killed and 27 escaped prisoners were recaptured. The SNAI has said it will investigate the causes and those responsible for the prison riots. Hundreds of military personnel and police have been deployed in a manhunt for Fito since Monday, while Noboa announced a 60-day nationwide state of emergency and a nightly curfew.

Neighboring Colombia, the world's largest cocaine producer, put its army on high alert Friday over the possibility that Fito could cross the border into its territory. Once a bastion of peace situated between major cocaine producers, Ecuador has been plunged into crisis after years of expansion by the transnational cartels that use its ports to ship the drug to the United States and Europe.

'We are going to win'

Noboa has vowed not to bow before the violence,

giving orders to "neutralize" the criminal groups responsible. "I believe we are going to win and I will not stop fighting until we do," he told the BBC on Friday.

Narco gangs often use prisons as criminal offices, from where they manage drug trafficking, order assassinations, administer the proceeds of crime and fight to the death with rivals for power.

Ecuador's murder rate quadrupled between 2018 and 2022, as the criminal gangs found a foothold in the country. Last year was the worst yet, with 7,800 murders and a record 220 tons of drugs seized.

Under Noboa's presidency, the country introduced two "super maximum" security prisons with a capacity for more than 3,000 people, with proposals for future "prison ships" also on the table. Much of the country's increasing violence has been concentrated in prisons, where spectacularly brutal clashes between inmates have left more than 460 dead, many beheaded or burned alive, since February 2021. — AFP

Colombia landslide toll at 33 as rescuers work against clock

EL CARMEN DE ATRATO, Colombia: Rescuers were working against the clock Saturday to find survivors of landslides that claimed at least 33 lives, mostly children, in northwestern Colombia, the country's vice president said Saturday.

"I deeply regret the death of 33 people in this tragedy, mostly children, according to preliminary reports," Vice President Francia Marquez wrote on social media site X. Search teams — including firefighters, soldiers and local residents — slogged through deep mud and debris in hopes of finding survivors, while relatives stood nearby, some crying inconsolably, others tearfully hugging.

Rescuers used stretchers to carry out bodies, while a helicopter hovered overhead. "I don't even know what to think, I'm worried, looking for my relatives," Andres Asprilla told AFP. He said four family members were missing.

Earlier, officials had put the toll in Friday's landslides, which hit a road linking the cities of Medellin and Quibdo in Choco department, at 23 dead and 20 injured. All available resources were

being sent to the area. President Gustavo Petro said on social media Friday.

As of early Saturday, 17 bodies had been transported to morgues and forensic examiners had identified five, authorities said. The landslides in Choco, which lies on the Pacific Ocean, followed more than 24 hours of intense rain.

A local official told AFP that many travelers, blocked by an earlier landslide Friday, had left their cars to take shelter in a house near the municipality of Carmen de Atrato. "But unfortunately, a landslide came and buried them," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity. Images shared on social networks showed part of a mountain breaking loose and crashing down onto a line of cars, as screams break out.

'High risk'

Rescuers used sniffer dogs to locate those buried and excavating equipment to gingerly remove the dirt. "We have been here since three in the morning, and at around six the relief agencies arrived and the search and removal of the bodies began," said Sneider Palacios, who lost a cousin. It was "very hard," he added.

Clara Estrada reached the scene at 5 am to search for her nephew. "We don't know anything, whether he's alive or dead," she said. The bodies that were carried out, Estrada added, "none of them were him." Meanwhile, the Ombudsman's Office warned of "high risk of new landslides."



QUIBDO, Colombia: Members of the rescue team search for people trapped at the area of a landslide in the road between Quibdo and Medellin, Choco department, Colombia on Jan 13, 2024. — AFP

"We call for all necessary actions to be taken in order to safeguard the lives of people who are at risk in the area," it said in a bulletin.

A landslide in the same part of Colombia in December 2022 killed at least 27 people, trap-

ping people in a bus and other vehicles. While much of Colombia is suffering through drought, meteorologists have warned of the risk of heavy rains in several departments bordering the Pacific. — AFP

100 DAYS OF GAZA...

Continued from Page 1

"I'm calling on the ministry of foreign affairs in Kuwait to join or send a defense team to the International Court of Justice to support South Africa," he said.

Lulwa Al-Mulla, Chairperson of the Women's Cultural and Social Society, passionately stated: "Today, Gaza is witnessing the largest genocide in history. All of this is happening in front of television cameras, and everyone is watching. We call on the international community and organizations to confront the brutal practices against a defenseless people."

The conflict has created a dire humanitarian crisis for the 2.4 million people in Gaza, the United Nations and aid groups warn, and reduced much of the coastal strip to rubble. A correspondent in Rafah, in southern Gaza near the border with Egypt, saw a thick column of smoke after strikes on the city where many displaced Palestinians have sought shelter in makeshift tents.

Fears that the conflict could spread across the wider region grew when new strikes hit Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, after the rebels warned of more attacks in solidarity with Gaza on Zionist-linked Red Sea shipping. Hamas' military wing the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades reported "clashes with Zionist forces" in Khan Yunis. Further south,

80-year-old Palestinian Nimma Al-Akhras said a strike had destroyed her house in Rafah. "We started to scream and I couldn't move," she recounted, "but someone pulled me out and put me on a cart." At Rafah's Al-Najjar hospital, mourners prayed near the bodies of slain relatives. One man, Bassem Araf, held up a photo of a child and said: "She died hungry ... This is the resistance they are targeting in Gaza, just children." The Gaza Strip's people suffer acute shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel, and the health system is collapsing.

"The massive death, destruction, displacement, hunger, loss and grief of the last 100 days are staining our shared humanity," said Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA, during a visit to Gaza on Saturday. He warned an entire generation of children in Gaza were being "traumatized", diseases were spreading and the clock was "ticking fast towards famine".

In the occupied West Bank, where violence has surged since early October, Zionist forces killed three Palestinians on Sunday, including two who were shot dead when their car broke through a checkpoint. The Zionist army also said troops detained two sisters of Saleh Al-Aruri, Hamas's deputy leader who was killed in a strike in Lebanon this month. The brother-in-law of Aruri, Awar Al-Aruri, said the two women had been put into "administrative detention", which allows for detainees to be held without charge or trial for renewable periods of up to six months. The Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group said 5,875 Palestinians have been detained in the West Bank since the Gaza war began.

Early last year, authorities arrested a number of Saied's political opponents and others opposed to the government, and they were later jailed over an alleged plot against the state. Among them were Rached Ghannouchi, the 82-year-old leader of the opposition Ennahdha party, and Jawhar Ben Mbarek, co-founder of the FSN. Ghannouchi received a one-year prison sentence on terrorism-related charges in May. At least 16 Tunisian journalists currently face trial, according to local media. Many are being prosecuted under a law introduced by Saied to punish "spreading false news" with up to 10 years in prison. — AFP

Tunisians mark 2011 revolution...

Continued from Page 1

opposition coalition, said the polls should not be conducted under conditions set by Saied. "Candidates are in jail or have been threatened to prevent them from running, the election authority is under (Saied's) control... journalists are harassed and prosecuted," he added. "This is not free competition."

King Frederik X ushers in new...

Continued from Page 1

than 100,000 people by media outlets. Like his mother, Frederik is hugely popular, enjoying the support of more than 80 percent of Danes. "My mother succeeded like few others in becoming one with her country," he told the crowd.

"My hope is to become a unifying king for the future... It's a responsibility I assume with respect, pride and a lot of happiness," he said, repeatedly placing his hand on his heart as the crowd cheered. "I think he's going to be a great king. I'm looking forward to seeing how he's going to do it and see him show more of himself," Rene Jensen, a Copenhagen resident fitted out for the day in a red velvet robe and crown, told AFP.

Frederik was then joined on the balcony by his Australian-born wife Mary, wearing a white dress with her dark hair swept back in a bun, and their four teenage children. Mary is the first commoner to become queen in Denmark. The crowd erupted in loud cheers as the new king and queen kissed on the bal-

cony. It is only the second time a Danish sovereign has stepped down — the last one was Erik III, almost nine centuries ago in 1146.

Aske Julius, a 27-year-old Copenhagen resident, called Margrethe "the embodiment of Denmark... the soul of the nation". "More than half of the Danish population has never known anything else but the queen," he said. Portraits and banners around the capital thanked the queen for her years of service, with cheeky signs in the metro declaring "Thanks for the Ride, Margrethe". Others read "Long Live the King".

No foreign dignitaries or royals were invited to Sunday's succession, in line with Danish tradition, and there was no coronation or throne for the new monarch. Margrethe chose to abdicate exactly 52 years to the day after she took over from her father, Frederik IX. The queen stunned Danes when she announced her abdication in her annual televised New Year's Eve address, after having repeatedly insisted she would follow tradition and reign until her death.

Even her own family was only informed three days prior. She attributed her decision to health issues after undergoing major back surgery last year. Margrethe will retain her title of queen and may represent the royal family on occasion. — AFP

Iceland village threatened as...

Continued from Page 1

other as family — it's tragic seeing this," local resident Sveinn Ari Gudjonsson told AFP. "It's unreal, it's like watching a film," added the 55-year-old, who works in the fishing industry.

A first eruption began at 8:00 am (0800 GMT) on Sunday when a crack opened in the ground around 450 m from the town. A second crack then opened around midday on the edge of town, with that lava engulfing the homes. Jets of glowing orange lava flowed out and a huge smoke cloud rose

against the dark sky. Iceland's President Gudni Jo-hannesson was to address the nation, RUV said. "No lives are in danger," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter but "infrastructure may be under threat," he wrote, adding that airline flights had not been affected. Most of the 4,000-strong population of Grindavik had been evacuated as a precaution on Nov 11 after scientists said a tunnel of magma was shifting beneath them.

A series of small earthquakes — sometimes hundreds per day — created large cracks in roads, homes and buildings. Shortly after the Dec 18 eruption, residents were allowed to return for brief periods. They were authorised to regain their homes permanently on Dec 23 but only a few dozen chose to do so. — AFP

International

Maldives leader asks India to withdraw troops by March

'We may be small, but that doesn't give you the license to bully us'

MALE, Maldives: The Maldivian president told India Sunday to withdraw its nearly 100 troops by March 15, a day after returning from China where he signed a raft of deals. New Delhi considers the Indian Ocean archipelago to be within its sphere of influence, but the Maldives has shifted into the orbit of China — its largest external creditor.

The March deadline was set during talks with Indian officials in the Maldives on Sunday, a top aide to President Mohamed Muizzu said, honoring the leader's long-standing election pledge. "The president put forth this request at the meeting of the high-level committee between the two nations ... the proposal is currently under consideration," Muizzu's Public Policy Secretary Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim told reporters.

India has a deployment of about 89 personnel, including medical staff, to operate three aircraft to patrol the archipelago's vast maritime territory. New Delhi's foreign ministry said Sunday diplomats had discussed how to find a "mutually workable solution" to allow continued Indian air operations that it said provided "humanitarian and medevac (medical evacuation)" services. It said a further round of talks would be held, without giving a date.

'Independent nation'

Muizzu came to power in September after pledging to evict Indian forces. On Saturday, after arriving in the capital Male, the president said that while the Maldives may be small, the country will not be bullied. "We are not a country that is in the backyard of another country. We are an independent nation,"

Muizzu said. "This territorial integrity policy is one that China respects", he said in the nation's Dhivehi language, the *Mihaaru* newspaper reported.

With Beijing and New Delhi tussling for influence, Muizzu was elected in September after pledging to cultivate "strong ties" with China. "We may be small, but that doesn't give you the license to bully us," Muizzu said, in a final comment in English.

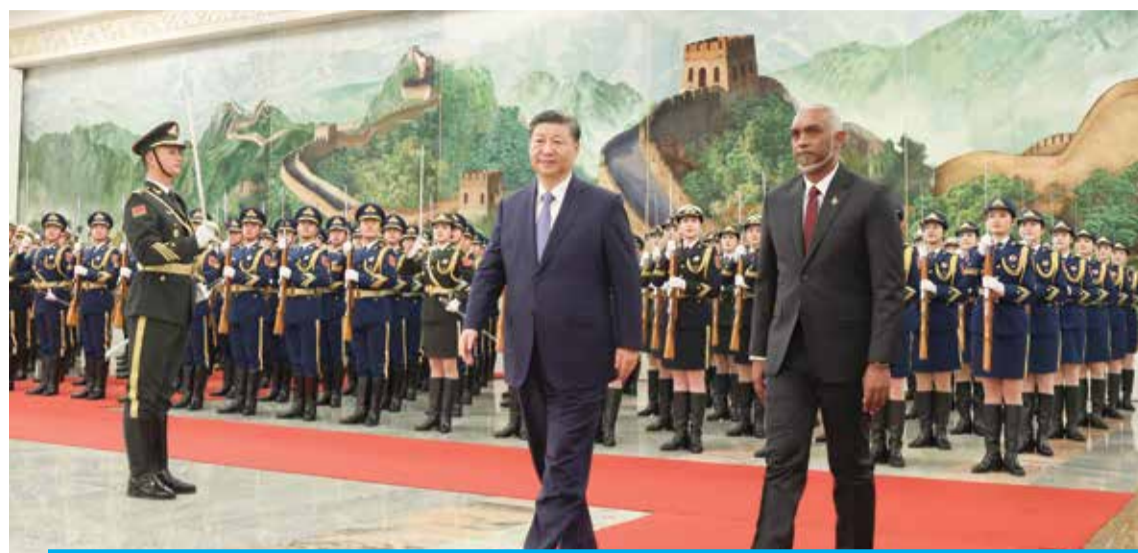
He has denied seeking to redraw the regional balance by bringing in Chinese forces to replace Indian troops. Muizzu's trip to China this week was his first state visit since becoming president. China's state broadcaster CCTV said deals included "infrastructure construction, medical care and health care, improvement of people's livelihoods, new energy sources, agriculture and marine environmental protection" agreements.

'Diminish reliance'

Tensions with New Delhi flared after three of Muizzu's junior ministers reportedly called Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "clown" and a "terrorist" in since-deleted social media posts earlier this month.

Bollywood actors and some of India's cricket greats responded with calls for compatriots to boycott their southern neighbor and instead book their next holidays closer to home. Tourism accounts for nearly a third of the Maldives's economy, with Indians making up the largest share of foreign arrivals.

Muizzu said the Maldives will also slash reliance on India for healthcare and medicine, adding more



BEIJING: The photo taken on Jan 10, 2024 shows Maldives' President Mohamed Muizzu (right) and Chinese President Xi Jinping walking during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. — AFP

countries where citizens needing government-paid health treatment abroad can go. Most eligible citizens currently get treatment in India, as well as small numbers in Sri Lanka and Thailand, officials said.

But Muizzu said the government would "diminish reliance on ... a select group of countries", without specifically mentioning India, and would now support treatment also in the United Arab Emirates. Most pharmaceuticals in the Maldives are

currently imported from India, and Male will now seek to import medicines from the United States and European nations, he said.

At the same time, Muizzu, the former capital's mayor, suffered his first electoral setback as his party's candidate lost the vote to replace him. Adam Azim of the former ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), which is seen as more pro-Indian, won the seat. — AFP

Taiwan's voters move on from China anxiety

TAIPEI: A day after defying Beijing's threats by electing a new president that China regards as a dangerous separatist, Taiwanese voters brushed off their saber-rattling neighbor across the narrow strait. Lai Ching-te of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won comfortably in Saturday's election — despite China repeatedly warning the Taiwanese that electing him would put the island on an "evil path" to war.

Communist China, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory, strongly opposes Lai and the DPP, seeing them as too favorable to independence — a red line for Beijing. China has never ruled out using force to take Taiwan, and Beijing's threats have loomed over the election campaign.

Retiree Cindy Huang told AFP that Lai's victory over Hou Yu-ih of the Kuomintang (KMT) — seen as more favorable to Beijing — showed that Taiwan wanted to move on from decades of anxiety about China. "Taiwan has come out, we don't want to go back to the old path," the 58-year-old told AFP. "We don't want to be tied to China anymore."

Dire straits

Beijing insists Taiwan is part of China in the same way as Macau and Hong Kong are, but the experience of the former British-ruled banking hub has alarmed Taiwanese voters. After years of allowing Hong Kong limited freedoms under the "one country, two systems" doctrine, Beijing has cracked down hard on dissent with a national security law implemented after city-wide protests for greater liberty.

"That protest (in Hong Kong) had a profound impact on young people in Taiwan and made us want Taiwan to be recognized separately and independently in the world," university clerk Hana told AFP. Her friend Mike, a construction worker, said the



NEW TAIPEI CITY: Supporters wave Taiwan's national flags and Taiwan People's Party (TPP) flags during an election campaign rally in Keelung on Jan 10, 2024. — AFP

current set-up, in which Taiwan is independent in practice — with its own government, flag, military and economy — was working.

"I just want to maintain the status quo, meaning not getting any worse," he said, dismissing the idea of China seizing the island as empty threats. "China has been chanting those strong words for 70 years but they have not invaded us."

Lai and the DPP have toned down past rhetoric pushing for full independence, arguing that since Taiwan is essentially sovereign, there is no need for a formal declaration that would enrage Beijing. A 40-year-old factory worker surnamed Wang, enjoying the warm Taipei sunshine with her two chinchillas, said she was happy with the arrangement.

"Taiwan is a de facto independent country so it doesn't really matter whether the world will recognize that," Wang said. "I think the election results

show that Taiwanese people want to maintain the status quo and preserve our own way of life."

Saturday's election saw a shift in the island's political dynamics as the upstart populist Taiwan People's Party (TPP) won more than 25 percent of the vote, disrupting the traditional DPP-KMT duopoly. TPP and its charismatic presidential candidate Ko Wen-je promised a "reasonable and pragmatic" option for voters weary of the two main parties. While Ko finished in third place, for some younger Taiwanese his party represents a refreshing alternative to the two establishment outfits.

University student Stephanie Chen missed the election as she is still a few days from her 20th birthday — the legal voting age in Taiwan. For her, despite China's dire warnings across the Taiwan Strait, war is a distant prospect — unimaginable almost — and TPP offered inspiring new ideas. — AFP

US election heats up as frigid Iowa tests Trump

DES MOINES: Voters venture into sub-zero temperatures Monday to kick off the Republican presidential nomination race with the Iowa caucuses, the first major test of whether runaway front-runner Donald Trump is as much of a sure thing as he appears. With a commanding lead in polls, the ex-president is expected to win the Midwestern state's first-in-the-nation vote easily as he bids to be the Republican standard-bearer against President Joe Biden in November.

But Iowans may have to contend with the coldest conditions in the modern era of presidential election campaigns, with blizzards and a potential wind chill of -26 degrees Fahrenheit (-32 degrees Celsius) forecast. Trump and his leading rivals, Nikki Haley and Ron DeSantis, were forced to cancel appearances in the home stretch as the threat to Monday's turnout added intrigue to a campaign season that is already something of an unknown quantity.

Trump canceled three weekend rallies, but was still due to hold a campaign event on Sunday in Indianola, just south of Des Moines. Despite his apparent strength, the former president has been indicted four times since he was last a candidate and is preparing for the potential collapse of his business empire in his native New York in a civil fraud trial.

"If DeSantis's massive ground effort, coupled with a recent Haley surge, can drag Trump under 50 percent by several points, that will be the first meaningful sign that Trump can be defeated," said political analyst Alex Avetoom, who worked on Republican John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign. "However, this paradigm-shifting reality — that Trump could be defeated — happens if, and only if, the rest of the field consolidates behind one anti-Trump candidate."



DAVENPORT: A young boy holds his hand over his heart during the national anthem at a campaign event for Florida Governor and 2024 Republican presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis in Davenport, Iowa, on Jan 13, 2024. — AFP

For all the talk of miracle bounces, the Iowa race is hardly competitive: A new NBC News/Des Moines Register/Mediacom poll has Trump at 48 percent among likely caucus-goers, with Haley surging into second place but still only at 20 percent. "I'm voting for Trump again," 37-year-old trucker Jeff Nikolas told AFP, adding that "he may be bullheaded, but he can actually get stuff done."

The poll was more bad news for Florida Governor DeSantis, who scored just 16 percent and has seen his claim to be heir apparent to the post-Trump Republican Party eclipsed by Haley. But DeSantis insisted Sunday that his "very motivated" backers would turn out in sufficient numbers — despite the frigid conditions — to keep him relevant in a vote that is open only to registered Republicans.

In 2016, he told ABC, only 186,000 Iowans took part in the caucus, and "now, with this weather, it could be significantly less," making turnout paramount. He urged his supporters: "Bring in friends and family, man, that's going to pack a punch." Haley, a former South Carolina governor, is looking to outperform expectations to cement her claim to be Trump's top challenger going into her preferred state of New Hampshire the following week. — AFP

Five die trying to cross channel to UK in bitter cold

CALAIS, France: Five migrants died and a sixth was in critical condition on Sunday after trying to reach Britain from northern France in freezing temperatures, the French maritime authority said. More than 30 people were rescued, the maritime prefecture said in a statement.

The fatalities were the first reported migrant deaths on the Channel in 2024. Authorities said four migrants died overnight, while a fifth body was found later on the beach. The group was attempting to

reach a vessel off the resort town of Wimereux when their small boat got into difficulty around two am (0100 GMT), the maritime prefecture said.

The crew of a French tow vessel, the *Abeille Normandie*, went to the rescue and spotted "unconscious and lifeless people" in the water, an official said, estimating the water temperature at nine degrees Celsius. Along the Wimereux embankment an AFP journalist saw items of clothing and shoes abandoned by the migrants. The survivors were taken to a shelter in Calais.

'Entire families'

According to the maritime prefecture more than 30 were rescued, but one person, who spoke on condition of anonymity, had said around 70 migrants were brought in at around three am, including "entire families with children, some of them very young".



SANGATTE: Migrants wait at a bus station after failing to board a smuggler boat in Sangatte, northern France on Jan 14, 2024. — AFP

"Some of the survivors did not stay and told us they wanted to go to the Dunkirk train station to reach an accommodation center in Armentieres," the source added. Authorities launched an investigation into "aggravated manslaughter" and other crimes, the Boulogne-sur-Mer public prosecutor's office told AFP.

Autopsies would determine the cause of death, which may be due to "drowning" or "thermal shock", prosecutors said. Jean-Claude Lenoir, head of the Salam association, said migrants took huge risks by trying to board bigger vessels in the water in the current conditions. "Migrants want to get on board at all costs," he told AFP. "They quickly fall victim to hypothermia or drowning."

Twelve migrants lost their lives in 2023 trying to cross the Channel, according to the maritime prefecture. The region around Calais, the jumping-off point for the shortest crossing to England, has long been a magnet for migrants.

More than two decades after the closure of a Red Cross center in Sangatte, hundreds of people still live in tents and makeshift shelters near Calais and Dunkirk, hoping for a chance to make the crossing hidden in a truck or aboard a small boat. The boats are a political priority for the British government and a bone of contention with France, as tens of thousands of people a year make the dangerous crossing.

The British government has been pushing ahead with a plan to deport migrants, who arrived illegally on British soil, to Rwanda. "It breaks my heart, but it just shows we've got to stop the boats, we've got to stop this illegal trade in human beings," British Foreign Minister David Cameron told the BBC, referring to the latest tragedy. "The only way you can stop the boats is by busting the model of the people smugglers."

Labour opposition leader Keir Starmer, widely tipped to become prime minister later this year, said: "To lose your life in a small dinghy or boats in the winter, in the Channel is just awful." But he slammed the Rwanda scheme as a "gimmick" and said the authorities had to go after the people smugglers. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024

Syrian farmers abandon the land for more steadier jobs

Climate change and spiraling costs dealing a blow to agricultural production

JAABAR AL-SAGHIR, Syria: After years of war, drought and economic crisis, Omar Abdel-Fattah was forced to rent out his farmland in northeast Syria, preferring a more stable job to provide for his family. "It breaks my heart to see someone else working my land," said Abdel-Fattah, 50, who grew wheat, cotton and vegetables in Jaabar Al-Saghir, in Syria's Raqa province, for three decades.

He said he had to abandon agriculture to make ends meet and provide an education for his eight children because he can "no longer keep up with the costs of farming", including irrigation.

Agriculture was once a pillar of northeast Syria's economy. The region was the country's breadbasket before 2011, when the government repressed peaceful protests, triggering a conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions. Now the effects of climate change—particularly rising temperatures and drought—along with spiraling costs are dealing a heavy blow to agricultural production and the families that depend on it to survive.

Abdel-Fattah found a job at a water pumping station run by the area's semi-autonomous Kurdish administration. It pays around \$70 a month, so he also runs a small shop on the side selling hardware and other items to get by. Some of his relatives have also rented out their land, while others have left Syria because of the dire financial situation there, Abdel-Fattah said.

He urged the Kurdish administration and international agricultural organizations to provide "support and loans" for farmers in the area. "This is the only solution to save agriculture, help farmers and encourage them to return to their fields again," he said. Across vast swathes of Raqa province, empty farmland sits beside cultivated fields where farmers and workers harvest crops, including potatoes and corn. Syria has endured more than 12 years of civil war, and Raqa was the centre of the Islamic State group's brutal "caliphate" in Syria until their ouster from the city in 2017.



AS SADIYAH, Syria: Adnan Sabri, a 56-year-old retired farmer, stands near his agricultural equipment and machinery in the village of Kardim Halima in the vicinity of Qahtaniyah in northeastern Syria on December 14, 2023. — AFP

In the town of Qahtaniyah, Jassem Al-Rashed, 55, said agriculture was his only income for 30 years but now it has become a "loss". His children initially helped him on the land, but now he looks after the crops alone. "Two of my children work in the livestock trade, and two others left for Europe, while three others joined the traffic police and security forces," he said.

"Farming is no longer right for them, after the recent years of drought," he added.

In November, the World Weather Attribution group said that human-caused climate change had raised temperatures, making drought about 25 times more likely in Syria and neighboring Iraq. Suhair Zakkout is the spokesperson in Damascus for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

She has previously told AFP that "Syria's agricultural production has fallen by approximately 50

percent over the last 10 years" because of war and climate change. In the far northeastern corner of the country, former farmer Faruk Mohammed, 40, gazed at his uncultivated land at Tal Hamis in Hasakeh province. Now a teacher employed by the Kurdish administration, he said he had changed job "to earn a living—nothing more, nothing less".

He too expressed the hope that local authorities would help farmers and work to "save what's left of the agricultural land". "Years of drought have hurt farmers, as well as the rise in fuel prices," he said.

More than a decade of war has shattered Syria's economy, and long daily blackouts mean people have to rely on generators for power amid regular fuel shortages. Farmers told AFP they struggled to pay for seeds and fertilizer, with some turning to solar panels to help power water pumps.

Leila Sarukhan, an official with the Kurdish ad-

ministration, acknowledged that factors including drought and rising costs had led to a decline in agriculture. "Climate change is impacting rainfall, while desertification expands in northeast Syria," she told AFP, adding: "These are dangerous factors for farming." Back in Raqa province, farmer Adnan Ibrahim said his children had left agriculture behind and joined the Kurdish security services instead "to earn a steady salary".

He pointed to farming equipment sitting idle near the house, and lamented the impact of climate change as well as rising prices. But the 56-year-old also said the ever-present specter of conflict influenced his children's decision. "We are afraid of cultivating our land," he said.

"War could break out at any time and warplanes could bomb our lands. So having a steady job is better." — AFP



JAABAR AL-SAGHIR: Omar Abdel-Fattah, a 50-year-old retired farmer, walks past his plantation which was rented to another farmer in the village of Jaabar Al-Saghir in the area surrounding Tabqa in Raqa province in northern Syria. — AFP

Microsoft briefly overtakes Apple as most valuable firm

NEW YORK: Microsoft briefly dethroned its rival Apple to become the world's most valuable company, illustrating the contrast between a firm driven by artificial intelligence and another whose iPhone sales are a cause for concern.

Shortly after markets opened on Wall Street, the value of the Windows operating system creator reached a market capitalization of almost \$2.9 trillion, slightly above Apple, according to calculations made by AFP.

Microsoft only held the top spot for a few seconds before returning to second place, but this nonetheless underscores how the explosion of interest in AI has reshaped investors' enthusiasm for the two firms. The Redmond, Washington-based group has been riding high due in large part to its partnership with OpenAI, the creator of the generative AI interface ChatGPT, in which it controls almost half the capital.

Since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, Microsoft shares have gained almost 75 percent. Over the same period, Apple has had to make do with a more modest—yet still impressive -- 35 percent rise.

Since the arrival of ChatGPT, Microsoft has launched several products enabling businesses and individuals to use the capabilities of generative AI, notably via its Bing search engine and Copilot virtual assistant. Apple, for its part, has been penalized by market concerns about its ability to maintain the unbridled growth it has posted for decades.

Earlier this month, an analyst at Barclays lowered their outlook for the stock, citing concerns about a slowdown in iPhone 15 sales particularly in China, which is a major market for Apple. On Wednesday, analysts at Redburn Atlantic revised their opinion to "neutral" from "buy" on concerns about the prospect of limited growth in the coming years, and mixed results for the current quarter.

Since January 2022, Apple's market capitalization has on several occasions surpassed the symbolic threshold of three trillion dollars. However, the group regularly carries out massive share buybacks and cancels shares once they are in its possession, which mechanically reduces the number of shares in circulation and the lowers its market capitalization. — AFP

E-bike craze in high gear at CES gadget fest

LAS VEGAS: Electric bicycle makers at CES touted slick features like ChatGPT as they rode a trend of people wanting to enjoy a breeze in their face without sweat on their brow. Some 44 million "e-bikes" were sold worldwide last year, and that number is expected to top 77 million by the year 2030, according to market tracker Statista.

E-bike sales are outpacing sales of electric cars, according to data and companies pitching their latest models at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) that ends in Las Vegas on Friday. "Bikes are fun," said Futurum Group research director Olivier Blanchard, a self-confessed cyclist. "There is something about the freedom of being on a bicycle, out in the open air feeling the sun and wind on your skin."

And with e-bikes, that exhilaration

comes with knowing you won't have to pedal hard up hills or exert much energy at all if you are tired. China-based Urtopia grabbed attention at this year's AI-obsessed CES with the introduction of an e-bike with ChatGPT chatbot capabilities built in.

Riders can speak to a smartphone-size control panel mounted to the center of the handlebars, prompting it with requests such as finding a fun one-day bike tour around Las Vegas.

The bike could also be asked to map a rider's route, with the right or left handle bar grip vibrating to signal which way to turn so they can keep their eyes on the road. "I don't think the world needs another normal e-bike," Urtopia chief executive Bo Zhang said with a hand on his company's latest model. "Everything is connected; everything is smart. That is definitely the future."

Also based in China, scooter-maker Okai started making e-bikes after seeing the trend picking up speed in Europe when cities began reopening in the wake of COVID-19 shutdowns, Jia Ren said at the company's CES booth. People wanted



LAS VEGAS: Jia Ren shows off Okai's latest electric bicycle models at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. — AFP

the convenience and cost-savings of getting around cities by bicycle, and were averse to public transport given COVID concerns, Ren said.

E-bikes are particularly popular with younger folks accustomed to the mode

of transportation, and with "the senior crowd" that wants to stay active but may be dealing with aging issues such as knee trouble, she added. "E-bikes give people a chance to be laid-back, to be lazy," Ren said. — AFP

Wars to cast pall over meeting of global VIPs in Davos

PARIS: The world's political and business elites will convene in Davos this week, with wars in Gaza and Ukraine set to dominate the annual gabfest in the Swiss Alps. Russia's nearly two-year-old assault on Ukraine has taken centre stage at previous editions of the World Economic Forum (WEF), with Kyiv dispatching officials and lawmakers to lobby allies for more weapons and funding.

A meeting of national security advisers on the "Ukrainian peace formula" took place on Sunday in Davos on the eve of the forum's kick-off, which President Volodymyr Zelensky will attend in person for the first time. But the WEF will now also wrestle with concerns that Zionist entity's war on Gaza could grow into a wider Middle East conflict, with global trade already disrupted by attacks by Yemeni rebels on commercial ships in the Red Sea, sparking US and British air strikes in response early Friday.

A cascade of other global threats ranging from climate change to a cost-of-living crisis and a sputtering economy will share the agenda at the meetings starting Monday under the theme "Rebuilding Trust".

The gathering "is taking place against the most complicated geopolitical and geoeconomic backdrop in decades", said WEF president Borge Brende. A broad cast of political heavyweights will de-

scend on Davos, ranging from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to French President Emmanuel Macron and a clutch of Middle East leaders, including the Zionist President Isaac Herzog and leaders from Qatar, Jordan and Lebanon.

"We know that the war in Gaza is still going on and there are worries for a further escalation," Brende said, adding that the WEF meeting would "look how to avoid a further deterioration". Ukraine will continue to make its case for sustained Western aid, with Zelensky, who had previously appeared via video link, set to meet CEOs. Trade and diplomatic tensions between the United States and China add to the complex geopolitical picture in Davos.

On top of this come major elections in several countries this year, including Britain, India and the United States, where Donald Trump is widely favored to secure a rematch against President Joe Biden. A WEF survey released Wednesday found that misinformation and disinformation driven by artificial intelligence ahead of elections are the biggest global risks this year and next.

"Geopolitics these days is like watching a circus performer spinning plates on top of sticks," Karen Harris, an economist at the consulting firm Bain & Co, told AFP. She noted that the Davos forum would be held just after elections on Saturday in Taiwan, the democratic island that China considers a renegade province—a major source of tension between Beijing and Washington.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang, who will make a special address on Tuesday, will be the most senior Chinese official to attend Davos since President Xi Jinping in 2017.



DAVOS: A special police officer is monitoring the area from the roof of the Congress hotel on the opening day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 16, 2023. — AFP

More than 60 heads of state and government are expected at the five-day forum, which will also welcome some 800 chief executives among a total of 2,800 participants. The WEF will feature a newcomer, Argentina's eccentric and libertarian new president, Javier Milei, a self-described "anarcho-capitalist" whose anti-establishment views have drawn comparisons to Trump's.

Around 5,000 Swiss soldiers will provide security for the event, with fighter jets patrolling the skies of the Alpine nation. Business will of course also figure highly in the talks. The rapid rise of artificial intelligence will be among the hot topics of discussion, with Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella and Sam Altman, chief of ChatGPT developer OpenAI, among the attendees. — AFP

Business

AI will create new jobs: Adecco chief

Generative AI could change the contours of many professions: Machuel

ZURICH: Artificial intelligence raises serious concerns for jobs but it will also create new positions, the head of Adecco, the world's biggest temporary staffing agency, told AFP. From meteorologists to lawyers and screenwriters, generative AI capable of creating content—such as the chatbot ChatGPT—could change the contours of many professions. But it will also create new positions, according to Denis Machuel, the chief executive of Zurich-based Adecco.

Machuel: "It's probably the largest disruption and revolution that we've seen in decades. It's going to be massive. And let's be clear, no one really knows or can really anticipate with a precise view what's going to happen in the next five years. "All this productivity enhancement helps people do more but also destroys some of the jobs people are doing. There is definitely an element of jobs being created and jobs that are being destroyed. We've seen that with the internet, with digitalization.

"What we've seen in the past tells us that there is more or less a balance between the two. "Technology brings a lot of better understanding of in-

teraction between people and markets but it also brings complexity. And that complexity requires more people to deal with it.

"GenAI will bring productivity on one side but it will also bring more proof-points, more data, more ways of looking at relationships, products and services. And for all these, we need people."

Machuel: "It's probably a bit too early to precisely describe jobs that are fundamentally at risk. Because we have to look at the tasks behind them. "If you only compute information, gather information and synthesize it, then your job is at risk, be it a job in finance, in legal, in business, because... it is what GenAI does. "Probably white-collar workers will be more impacted than blue-collar workers—at least in the short term.

"Within the white collar space, the things that are linked to massive information management will be more disrupted than the skills that are linked to relationship building, to strategic thinking or problem-solving. "However, we know that there are limits. "Take the example of a lawyer or of a paralegal:



Denis Machuel says artificial intelligence raises serious concerns for jobs but it will also create new positions.

computing an immense number of legal decisions can be done by GenAI. "However, the deep and subtle understanding of a complex legal situation and problem-solving skills that are needed to put things together is still very human-related.

"Usually, the sort of mundane tasks that can be

automated are not the most exciting for people to do. So if you can automate that, it gives you more time to concentrate on the nicer things."

"We've signed a partnership with Microsoft to create a career platform that will advise companies and workers on their path, supporting their reflection on the type of skills and jobs they could go for. "Opening horizons on things people didn't necessarily imagine but could be achievable for them.

"There are quite a few workers whose skills are transferable. "The good news about GenAI is that there is a positive explosion of possibilities of up-skilling and re-skilling through these tools.

"We've created a curriculum vitae maker with an AI-powered tool that helps people generate their own CV. "On the daily tasks of our recruiters, I was mentioning this chatbot that interacts with thousands of candidates very quickly. "It gives the possibility for our recruiters to spend more time in the human relationship, and not in a database search. "That means a recruiter can spend more time with people than doing the mundane tasks." — AFP

Gadgets to make everyday life easier at CES

LAS VEGAS: Technology is often designed to lighten the load from the everyday - and brushing your teeth or using the toilet are no exception. Here are some highlights from the array of gadgets on display at the Consumer Electronics Show intended to make the mundane more efficient:

Supersonic toothbrush

"Is that a toothbrush for lazy people?" asks a visitor to the Y-Brush stand. The French company has designed an electric brush in the shape of a "Y", which is inserted into the mouth and does all the work in twenty seconds instead of two minutes. The company's founder came up with the idea one day while brushing his teeth. "He thought, 'No one can last two minutes'". Already sold in Europe, the Y-Brush is now available in the United States for around \$100.

Talk to my hologram

CES visitors passing by the Holocon-

nects stand may have a moment of confusion: is there a person in that big box? It's actually a hologram and the real person is standing right next to it, facing a camera.

The Dutch company specializes in larger-than-life 3D holograms, projected in see-through box displays, either life-sized or miniaturized to be placed on a table or hung on a wall. Holograms have been a curiosity for years, particularly in the entertainment sector. But Steve Sterling, North American Director for Holoconnects, believes that their use is becoming widespread.

"Right now, there's a global dispute resolution conference going on between Amsterdam and Phoenix. So we've connected an expert from Amsterdam into the panel," said Sterling. The hologram displays are used in the hotel, medical and retail sectors. Thanks to ChatGPT-style artificial intelligence, Holoconnects can also create avatars, including for celebrities or experts, that interact with the public without disturbing the real person.

"We have a (virtual) sommelier from a vineyard that you can ask questions to, and you can talk to her about how the wine is made and things like that, and she'll respond to you," said Sterling.

Luxury throne

"This is the smartest toilet that exists

in the world," said Ryan Grotegut, marketing manager at Kohler, the US kitchen and bathroom design specialist. Grotegut is referring to Numi 2.0. Numi opens, as if by magic, as the user approaches. Once settled, the seat is heated to a pre-determined temperature and, once the user has done what they have to do, they can get up and go about their business, with no worry about flushing.

Numi 2.0 flushes the toilet, adapting the amount of water to the duration of use (between 3 and 3.80 liters), and then deodorizes and disinfects. The toilet is equipped with showerheads—whose temperature, pressure and other settings can be customized—as well as a dryer.

A magnetic remote control allows the user to select options, but Numi also takes verbal instructions using Alexa, Amazon's virtual assistant, which is integrated into the toilet. The toilets, which feature LED lighting in customizable colors, are priced at \$10,000 in black and \$8,500 in white.

Autofocus eyes

There's no need for progressive lenses with the Vixion01, which lets you focus on something very close and then far almost instantaneously, thanks to sensors that measure distance and adapt lenses accordingly. "These are autofocus glass-



LAS VEGAS: Jad Sassine from Hydro-One, demonstrate how to use the Y-Brush, an electric toothbrush supposed to clean the teeth in only 20 seconds total, during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. — AFP

es," Takuya Nonaka, one of the heads of the Japanese company Vixion, told AFP.

The glasses allow the user to see fine details, such as the grain of wood and the battery lasts up to ten hours. For

safety reasons, it is strongly advised not to drive or play sports wearing the glasses. At this stage, they are only available in Japan and in a single design, at a price of \$700. — AFP

AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 11 JANUARY 2024

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	34,122	7,934.96	3.7%	6.1%	6.1%	785,096,876	248,482,182	41,791	16.9	1.3	77.9%
Main Market	9,669	5,830.57	3.0%	4.7%	4.7%	797,389,956	110,879,718	38,818	12.5	0.8	22.1%
All Share	43,791	7,214.22	3.6%	5.8%	5.8%	1,582,486,832	359,361,901	80,609	13.8	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	26,247	1,752.51	3.8%	6.4%	6.4%	234,748,070	107,726,862	16,101	18.0	1.2	59.94%
Basic Materials	446	791.12	3.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6,692,377	4,131,380	1,187	11.0	2.1	1.02%
Consumer Discretionary	1,153	1,678.78	2.0%	4.7%	4.7%	40,001,560	16,988,803	4,952	13.0	0.9	2.63%
Consumer Staples	208	684.97	2.4%	4.0%	4.0%	2,919,354	1,659,046	253	14.7	1.2	0.48%
Energy	201	962.93	-1.1%	1.5%	1.5%	8,581,701	561,054	598	10.8	0.7	0.46%
Financial Services	4,641	1,313.32	5.4%	8.3%	8.3%	745,249,610	121,225,230	28,851	18.4	0.8	10.60%
Health Care	237	477.91	1.8%	-0.9%	-0.9%	49	39	1	12.8	1.0	0.54%
Industrials	3,337	965.75	4.0%	6.4%	6.4%	79,354,623	29,617,110	6,924	12.9	0.9	7.62%
Insurance	944	2,309.72	0.3%	0.7%	0.7%	4,948,268	508,438	589	9.8	1.0	2.16%
Real Estate	2,660	1,239.69	1.4%	2.2%	2.2%	426,911,524	60,906,741	17,200	17.2	0.6	6.07%
Technology	8	609.64	1.0%	5.4%	5.4%	647,516	52,352.47	100	NM	0.7	0.02%
Telecommunications	3,509	1,148.18	3.5%	3.9%	3.9%	29,144,618	15,396,413	3,544	10.5	1.4	8.01%
Utilities	199	476.32	2.3%	4.6%	4.6%	3,287,562	588,431	309	14.0	1.5	0.45%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ALDEERA	510	79.58%	557,202	231,311	351
FTI	92	66.37%	2,040,931	173,747	325
SANAM	214	32.10%	63,298,401	12,301,003	3,228
EKTTITAB	22	28.32%	15,322,219	319,933	484
NINV	288	20.00%	30,339,205	8,227,040	2,230

Top Losers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MADAR	79.5	-15.69%	2,107,019	177,954	184
CLEANING	41.7	-7.33%	3,019,523	128,738	183
GFC	56	-6.67%	37,763	2,179	12
INJAZZAT	84.2	-6.44%	441,529	39,646	34
TAMINV	425	-6.39%	1,908	819	6

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KRE	213	-1.39%	111,861,898	23,462,179	3,565
ARZAN	241	7.11%	109,046,013	25,665,021	2,680
IFA	358	8.48%	76,076,123	26,452,714	3,140
KFH	778	4.57%	65,977,114	50,304,726	6,260
SANAM	214	32.10%	63,298,401	12,301,003	3,228

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	778	4.57%	65,977,114	50,304,726	6,260
IFA	358	8.48%	76,076,123	26,452,714	3,140
ARZAN	241	7.11%	109,046,013	25,665,021	2,680
KRE	213	-1.39%	111,861,898	23,462,179	3,565
NBK	950	2.81%	22,301,228	21,046,893	3,350

All Share Price Index YTD

Market Summary:

- The Premier and Main markets witnessed a significant increase in trading due to expectations of the FED reducing interest rates.
- Premier and Main indexes have been on an upward trend for the past 3 weeks, with expectations that this trend will continue.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7214, with support levels at 7178, 7162, and 7105, and resistance at 7233. The Premier index closed at 7934, with support levels at 7864, 7767, and 7730, and resistance at 7945. The Main index closed at 5830, with support levels at 5813, 5780, and 5750, and resistance at 5845.

Business

China exports fall in 2023 for first time in seven years

Report shows country in danger of slipping into deflationary spiral

BEIJING: China's exports fell last year for the first time in seven years, data showed Friday, as tensions with the United States and a stuttering global economic recovery compound Beijing's struggles to kickstart growth at home.

Overseas shipments have traditionally been key to feeding GDP expansion over the past four decades and the figures came as a separate report showed the country in danger of slipping into a deflationary spiral that could further complicate officials' plans to stimulate activity. The reading also highlighted a geopolitical pivot as annual trade with the United States fell for the first time in four years, while commerce with Russia hit a record high despite international pressure to isolate Moscow over its war in Ukraine.

And customs officials warned that there would be more hurdles to come over the next 12 months. "The complexity, severity and uncertainty of the external environment are on the rise, and we need to overcome the difficulties and make more efforts to further promote the growth of foreign trade," vice minister of the General Administration of Customs Wang Lingjun said. Exports rose in November for the first time since April, and while December also saw an on-year increase of 2.3 percent, the data compare with the low base of 2022 when the impact of zero-COVID policies were being felt the most.

Overall, exports fell 4.6 percent in 2023, the first annual drop since 2016. The report also showed imports dropped 5.5 percent last year. The weak demand for goods from overseas was reflected in data showing the consumer price index (CPI) fell 0.3 percent last month, the third straight monthly drop and the longest streak since October 2009, according to Bloomberg News.

For the whole year inflation came in at an average of 0.2 percent, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) figures showed. China slipped into deflation last July for the first time since 2021 and following a brief rebound the following month, prices have been in decline since September.

"Ongoing low core CPI inflation likely reflects dampened domestic demand due to ongoing property downturn and stressed labor market," Goldman Sachs analysts wrote in a note.

Beijing has unveiled a number of targeted stimulus measures aimed at supporting key sectors, particularly the troubled property industry. "Fiscal and monetary policies started to move in the right direction in the fourth quarter 2023, but it takes time for these policies to be transmitted to the economy," Zhiwei Zhang from Pinpoint Asset Management wrote in a note.

"It is also unclear if these policies are strong enough to offset the deflationary pressure in the economy." While deflation suggests goods were cheaper, it poses a threat to the broader economy as consumers tend to postpone purchases, hoping for further reductions.

A lack of demand can then force companies to cut production, freeze hiring or lay off workers, while potentially also having to discount existing stocks—dampening profitability even as costs remain the same. The NBS also said producer prices sank 2.7 percent, the 15th consecutive month of declines.

The PPI index, which measures the cost of goods leaving factories and provides an insight into the health of the economy, fell three percent in November. China-Russia trade in 2023 reached more than \$240 billion, according to customs data, overshooting a goal of \$200 billion set by the neighbors in



NANJING: People shop for fruits and vegetables at a supermarket in Nanjing in eastern China's Jiangsu province on January 12, 2024. — AFP

bilateral meetings last year. The figure is a record for the two countries, who have grown closer politically and economically since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Beijing has drawn criticism from Western countries for its stance on the Ukraine war. China insists

it is neutral in the crisis but has refused to criticize Moscow's invasion. The trade figures represented a year-on-year increase of 26.3 percent, according to the data. In contrast, trade between the United States and China fell 11.6 percent to \$664 billion last year, the first fall since 2019. — AFP

Alghanim Industries names Mahmoud Samara as CEO

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries (Kutayba Alghanim Group), one of the largest privately-owned companies in the region, has appointed Mahmoud Samara as Chief Executive Officer, effective January 2024. Mahmoud brings a wealth of knowledge and insights gained from his extensive tenure at General Motors, a leading global Fortune 500 corporation. Having joined Alghanim Industries one year back as Deputy CEO, Mahmoud Samara succeeds the company's previous CEO Samir Kasem, who contributed to the company in various leadership roles over the past decades.



Mahmoud Samara

Before joining Alghanim Industries, Mahmoud Samara had a successful 18-year career at General Motors (GM) marked by a diverse range of international experiences and senior leadership roles. Most recently he was GM's President and Managing Director for Europe based in Switzerland, he led the development and implementation of GM's start-up business in Europe. Prior to that, Mahmoud was the Vice President of Cadillac North America based in the US where he steered the brand into becoming a future frontrunner in electric vehicles, while markedly boosting sales and dealer profitability. As GM's Global Director of Enterprise Customer Experience, he significantly refined the company's digital strategies and was a pioneer in adopting online retail platforms. Mahmoud's journey with GM began in the Middle East & Africa operations based in Dubai, from where he rapidly advanced to key international leadership positions across four continents, contributing significantly to areas of sales, marketing, after-sales, manufacturing, and general management.

Mahmoud holds an MBA from Findlay University and a bachelor's degree in international business from the University of Toledo. He also completed his executive education at Stanford Graduate School of Business. In his new role at Alghanim Industries, he brings this educational background and experience to a company known for its market leadership and commitment to excellence in its diverse sectors.

Alghanim Industries, with a history of more than a century, is a Kuwaiti company and a leader in the region, operating in various sectors such as engineering, retail, automotive sales and service, pre-engineered steel building structures, logistics and warehousing, fast-moving consumer goods, food and beverage, office automation, insurance, consumer credit, and travel. The company has a significant regional presence in markets across the Middle East, India, and Southeast Asia, contributing to the private sector's growth in these regions.

Africa's biggest diesel, aviation fuel refinery starts production

LAGOS: Africa's biggest diesel and aviation fuel refinery built by the continent's richest man has started production, the company said on Saturday, calling it a "big day for Nigeria". The 650,000 barrel-per-day Dangote refinery could be a game changer when fully operational by helping end Nigeria's reliance on fuel imports.

Argentina's 2023 inflation tops 211% amid crisis

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's annual inflation surged beyond 200 percent in 2023, the statistics agency said as the country grapples with an economic crisis new President Javier Milei has vowed to address by slashing state spending.

Monthly inflation in December stood at 25.5 percent, said the INDEC agency, while the annual figure over 12 months was 211.4 percent.

Milei took office in December after winning a resounding election victory on a wave of fury over the country's decades of economic crises marked by debt, rampant money printing, inflation and fiscal deficit. Shortly after the self-described "anarcho-capitalist" took office, his administration devalued Argentina's peso by more than 50 percent and announced huge cuts in generous state subsidies of fuel and transport. His government has also done away with a program to control the prices of some goods, introduced by the previous government to try and ease the impact of inflation. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) -- to which Argentina owes \$44 billion—welcomed these measures.

Milei has warned the country is on the brink of hyperinflation, and said economic "shock" treatment was the only solution. Poverty levels in Latin America's third-biggest economy are at 40 percent.

The INDEC said food and non-alcoholic drink prices rose more than 251 percent year-on-year, the single-biggest contributor to the annual inflation rate. In the month to December, the increase in this sector was 29.7 percent, with meat, bread and cereal prices the main contributors, it said.



BUENOS AIRES: Signs show the price of the different cheeses at the Central Market in Buenos Aires. — AFP

Health care costs rose year-on-year by more than 227 percent and transport 187 percent. Economist Hernan Letcher said the main driver of December inflation was "the exchange rate" of the peso to the US dollar, alluding to the devaluation of the currency. The official rate was 835 pesos to the dollar Thursday, or 1,120 pesos on the parallel exchange market. "Usually, when there is a devaluation... there is a direct effect on prices. And wages tend to update later. That is why there is a loss of purchasing power," said Letcher, director of the

Center for Argentina Political Economy (Cepa).

At markets on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, resignation reigned. "We can't even drink milk given the price of a liter," said Maria Ester Espindola, a 65-year-old retiree. Argentines remain haunted by hyperinflation of up to 3,000 percent in 1989-1990 and a dramatic economic implosion in 2001. Ana Albornoz, a 53-year-old nanny, likened her shopping these days to a treasure hunt. "Before, I went to one supermarket, now I go to several places to compare" prices, she said. — AFP

Biden sells economic strength, but voters aren't buying yet

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has good news to sell on the economy as he seeks reelection in November—but voters don't seem to be buying it. Growth is up, unemployment is down, and the US economy is recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic better than most other countries thanks to a huge stimulus package.

The problem for the Democrat's campaign for a second term in office is that most Americans are not feeling the improvement in the place that matters most: their wallets. Inflation is mostly declining, but stubbornly high prices mean people are still struggling to put food on the table, pay the rent or run their car, whatever the government numbers say. Biden will be trying to convince them that things will get better as he heads on Friday to his first economy-focused campaign event of 2024, in Allentown in the crucial battleground state of Pennsylvania.

After inflation figures rose more than anticipated on Thursday, he boasted of creating 14 million jobs since taking office—but conceded there was "much more work to do to lower costs for American families and American workers." Joanne Hsu of the University of Michigan, whose department publishes a monthly consumer

confidence survey that's closely followed by markets, said the mood in the United States was improving—but slowly.

"There is plenty of evidence in our survey that consumers do recognize the areas of strength in our economy," Hsu told AFP. "However, what they don't feel good about... is that inflation, high prices specifically, continue to weigh down on their economic experiences." Prices in particular have not come down to pre-pandemic levels, making a trip to the supermarket in America a punishing experience for many families. "Consumers are still really struggling to accept that we're not going back to 2019," said Hsu.

'Bidenomics'

Biden showed his frustration as he headed off on his Christmas holidays. Asked by a journalist how he viewed the economy in 2024, he shot back: "All good. Take a look. Start reporting it the right way." The 81-year-old is already facing historically low approval ratings and is neck-and-neck or behind likely Republican challenger Donald Trump, the man he beat in 2020. With the political wisdom saying that US elections are won on "the economy, stupid"—as the 1992 Bill



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden walks to Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House January 12, 2024 in Washington, DC. — AFP

Clinton campaign famously said—Biden could have been forgiven for thinking the economy would work in his favor. Biden's confidence that the economy would woo voters saw the White House last year rebrand his policies "Bidenomics" as they tried to sell the good news to voters last year. "Bidenomics" in particular involved his signature Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which

involved spending hundreds of billions of dollars to revamp infrastructure and kickstart high-tech manufacturing and green energy and technology. But many of those projects are years in the making, and won't bear fruit for voters until after the election. Another issue is that many are regional projects that local—sometimes Republican—officials can take credit for. — AFP

Nigeria swaps crude worth billions of dollars for petrol that it had subsidized for years to keep prices cheap for its domestic market. Fuel imports and subsidies caused a huge drain on foreign exchange when Nigeria was struggling with dwindling oil revenues and foreign currency shortages.

The refinery, first scheduled to open in 2021, was officially inaugurated by then president Muhammadu Buhari earlier this year and was supposed to begin operations in June. Since coming to office in May last year, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has ended the long-standing fuel subsidy and floated the naira currency in economic reforms he says will attract foreign investment and build long term growth. — AFP



The 650,000 barrel-per-day Dangote refinery begins production.

MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024



HUNDREDS MARRY IN TRADITIONAL ETHIOPIAN MASS WEDDING CEREMONY

Wedding attendants dressed in a traditional attire pose for a picture during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha' in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.— AFP photos



Couples dressed in a traditional attire dance during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha'.



Couples dressed in a traditional attire pose for a photograph during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha'.



Couples dressed in a traditional attire walk during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha'.

Hundreds of couples gathered in Ethiopia's capital on Sunday to take part in a traditional mass wedding ceremony, the first such event in a decade, according to the organizers and participants. Dressed in traditional white clothes, the couples sang and danced in the streets outside the venue before the ceremony began, bringing together Ethiopians from around the country.

Yakob Tesfaye and Lidet Tagel, both 21, travelled to Addis Ababa from the western region of Gambella for the ceremony, which was sponsored by events organizer Yament Private Limited and state broadcaster EBC. "This is a huge opportunity for us to see all the tribes from different regions, also to get sponsorship from the organizers because we didn't have much of a

budget to get married," Yakob told AFP.

The organizers said they were keen to bring back mass weddings following a decline accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. "The reason we started again is to showcase our traditional culture and marriage practices," Hawi Tilahun of Yament told AFP, adding that he hoped the event would also help boost tourism in Africa's second most populous nation.

Ashenafi Negassi told AFP he and his bride Zeytuna Usman, both 25, were "really excited" to take part in the ceremony. "This is a beautiful day to see other tribes from different regions and to be married alongside them is truly beautiful and I can't express the joy I feel to be with her," the shopkeeper said.—AFP



Couples dressed in a traditional attire eat bread during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha'.



Women prepare to serve a traditional coffee during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha'.



Couples dressed in a traditional attire look on during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha'.



Chefs arrange raw meats during a mass wedding called 'Yeshih Gabicha'.

RUSSIAN DISSIDENT POET RUBINSTEIN DIES AT 76

Poet Lev Rubinstein, a key figure of the Soviet underground literary scene who later protested against Russian President Vladimir Putin, has died days after being hit by a car, his daughter said Sunday. Rubinstein is considered as one of the founders of the Russian conceptualist movement, a literary "avant-garde" that mocked the official doctrine of socialist realism in the 1970s-1980s. "My dad, Lev Rubinstein, died today," his daughter

Maria wrote on a "LiveJournal" blog picked up by Russian media.

The 76-year-old had been hit by a car in Moscow on January 8, and hospitalized in a serious condition. The department of transports of Moscow said "the driver did not slow down" as Rubinstein was crossing the street. According to preliminary information, the driver who hit Rubinstein had been involved in 19 traffic violations in 12 months, the department said.

Authorities have launched an investigation into the accident, it added. The poet had created his own genre, between poetry and theatre, by writing short sentences on perforated cards and reading the "note-card poems" on stage. His daily work as a librarian and the bureaucracy of the Soviet era inspired his performances, which combined absurd comedy and improvisation.

After the USSR collapsed, he shot to

prominence and saw his work widely published by mainstream publishing companies. Rubinstein was openly hostile to Putin's government and regularly protested against the Kremlin's intensifying repression and human rights violations. After Putin launched his full-scale assault on Ukraine, Rubinstein signed with other renowned writers an open-letter denouncing a "criminal war" and the "lies" from the Kremlin.—AFP



A grab from an AFTV footage shows Russian poet Lev Rubinstein talking to journalists outside a church where the farewell ceremony for the director Alexander Rastorguyev took place, in Moscow. — AFP



File picture shows (from left) Scottish actor Brian Cox, Australian actress Sarah Snook, US actor Jeremy Strong, British actor Matthew Macfadyen, US actress J. Smith-Cameron, and US actor Nicholas Braun pose after winning the Emmy for Outstanding Drama Series for "Succession" during the 74th Emmy Awards at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos

Strike-delayed Emmys finally here as 'Succession' says farewell

Delayed by four months due to Hollywood strikes, television's Emmy Awards will finally take place on Monday, with the final season of HBO's "Succession" expected to dominate the top drama prizes. Here are five things to look out for at the small screen's equivalent of the Oscars:

Roy v Roy v Roy

"Succession" charted the back-stabbing dynastic squabbles of the ultra-wealthy Roy family, and so it is only fitting that the Emmys is pitting its stars against each other one last time. A record three of the six nominees for best actor in a drama are from the same show, with Golden Globe winner Kieran Culkin—who plays bratty heir Roman Roy—tipped to prevail over co-stars Jeremy Strong and Brian Cox. The show has a whopping 27 nominations, and is the frontrunner for six awards including best drama, which it has won twice previously.

Sarah Snook is expected to win best actress honors for her role as the only female Roy heir, while



File picture shows US actress Ali Wong arrives for the 81st annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California, on January 7, 2024.

Matthew Macfadyen—her husband on the show—should seal the fictional family's grip on the Emmys with the best supporting actor prize.

Prestige dramas

In a solid year for TV drama, perhaps the two shows that will feel most aggrieved to come up against the "Succession" swansong are "The Last of Us" and "The White Lotus." Arguably the best video game adaptation ever to grace the small screen, "The Last of Us" has already scooped eight Emmys in technical categories awarded ahead of the main gala, from best prosthetic makeup to best

guest actor for Nick Offerman's memorable turn in its beloved third episode.

But it may well leave the main gala on Monday empty-handed, unless its stars Pedro Pascal or Bella Ramsey can spring a surprise. Meanwhile "The White Lotus," a stylish satire on wealth and hypocrisy, was forced to switch from the limited series categories to drama, after returning for a second season set in Sicily. The sole returning star from the first season, Emmy winner Jennifer Coolidge, is a clear frontrunner for best actress.

Vintage comedy

"The Bear" is the hot favorite for the comedy prizes—but not for the season you're thinking of. Just before the Emmys' strike-enforced delay, Television Academy voters cast their ballots last summer for the show's intense first season, which took viewers behind the scenes of a dysfunctional Chicago restaurant kitchen way back in June 2022.

Since then, "The Bear" has released an even more critically acclaimed and ambitious second season, which Emmy voters will get their say on at the next ceremony, taking place this September. Confusing? Yes, but don't expect frontrunners like Jeremy Allen White, Ebon Moss-Bachrach or Ayo Edebiri to care if they win big. "The Bear" is up against "Ted Lasso," a prolific former Emmy winner that signed off with an underwhelming, (probably) final season.

Limited series

The always competitive limited series categories, for shows that run only a single season, is likely to spread the awards love around a bit more. Netflix's "Beef" and "Dahmer—Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story" led the limited series category with 13 nods apiece. Both are tipped by pundits to be rewarded, with Ali Wong a popular choice as a road-rage driver in "Beef," and Evan Peters too terrifying to ignore as notorious serial killer Dahmer.

Other standouts in this section are Hollywood A-lister Jessica Chastain in country music biopic "George and Tammy," and Paul Walter Hauser in "Black Bird," another dark true crime series.

Awards limbo

The Emmys have been locked in a downward spiral with TV audiences for years. Last year's telecast was watched by just 5.9 million—lower even than the 2020 "pandEmmys" lockdown edition that was broadcast from an empty theater and featured stars accepting their awards at home from delivery men dressed in tuxedo-themed hazmat suits.

The Emmys' struggles are not unique among

Pioneering AI artist says the technology is ultimately 'limiting'

An artist who shook up the cultural world with a haunting female portrait created by artificial intelligence has decided that she had enough of the new technology for now. Working with AI to create art is ultimately "very frustrating and very limiting," Swedish-based artist and writer Supercomposite told AFP. For the moment, she has stopped working with AI and is writing a screenplay instead, saying her experience with AI art left her "burned out."

"It creates this dopamine path in your brain. It's very addictive to keep pushing that button and getting these results," she said. Supercomposite created the red-cheeked, hollow-eyed woman called "Loab" in 2022 when she was testing out the new artistic possibilities offered by AI.

Her posts on social media of Loab and about the process to create her went viral, with commentators describing the images as "disturbing" and saying they had "sparked some lengthy ethical conversations around visual aesthetics, art and technology". Tools like Midjourney, Stable Diffusion and DALL-E have made it possible to generate images from written prompts. Supercomposite—whose real name is Steph Maj Swanson and is originally from the United States—had been looking at so-called "negative prompts", designed to exclude certain elements from an image.

'That was the spookiest'

She typed in the negative prompt "Brando:-1", asking one tool to come up with something as far as possible from the late American actor Marlon Brando. What appeared at first was a black logo with green lettering that spelt out "DIGITA PNTICS", the 32-year-old told AFP in an interview at the Chaos Communication Congress, which

brings the hacker scene together every year in late December in Hamburg.

But when the artist requested the opposite of this again with the query "DIGITA PNTICS" skyline logo:-1", the image of "this really sad, haunting looking woman with long hair and red cheeks" appeared for the first time, she said. The text "Loab" appeared in truncated letters on one of the images—giving a name to the creature that looked like it sprang from a horror movie.

Swanson then sought to get AI to modify Loab with another request. And to that new generated image, she made another different request, and another. But a strange trend surfaced. "Sometimes she would reappear, after vanishing for a few generations of the lineage. That was the spookiest," she said.

More disturbingly, Loab appeared regularly alongside children, "sometimes dismembered", and always in a "macabre" and "bloody" world, she said. Of the hundreds of images including Loab that were generated, Swanson decided not to show those she deemed the most shocking.

'My life changed'

Loab's existence was first revealed in September 2022 in a series of posts on Twitter, since renamed X. "It became viral, my life changed," she said, explaining how she became "so obsessed" with Loab. "I wanted to explore who she was, the different scenarios in which she would appear and her limits, to see how far I could push the model."

The reasons for the character's recurring appearance are unclear. Experts have noted it is impossible to know how generative AI interprets abstract requests. Swanson has not revealed which tool she

Emmy nominees in key categories

Here is a list of the nominees in key categories for the 75th Emmy Awards, which are scheduled to be handed out in Los Angeles on Monday.

HBO's "Succession" topped the nominations list with 27, followed by "The Last of Us" at 24 and "The White Lotus" at 23. Perennial favorite "Ted Lasso" led the comedy section with 21 nods.

OUTSTANDING DRAMA SERIES

"Andor"
"Better Call Saul"
"The Crown"
"House of the Dragon"
"The Last of Us"
"Succession"
"The White Lotus"
"Yellowjackets"

OUTSTANDING COMEDY SERIES

"Abbott Elementary"
"Barry"
"The Bear"
"Jury Duty"
"The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"
"Only Murders in the Building"
"Ted Lasso"
"Wednesday"

OUTSTANDING LIMITED OR ANTHOLOGY SERIES

"Beef"
"Dahmer -- Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story"
"Daisy Jones & the Six"
"Fleishman Is In Trouble"
"Obi-Wan Kenobi"

LEAD ACTOR, DRAMA

Jeff Bridges, "The Old Man"
Brian Cox, "Succession"
Kieran Culkin, "Succession"
Bob Odenkirk, "Better Call Saul"
Pedro Pascal, "The Last of Us"
Jeremy Strong, "Succession"

LEAD ACTRESS, DRAMA

Sharon Horgan, "Bad Sisters"
Melanie Lynskey, "Yellowjackets"
Elisabeth Moss, "The Handmaid's Tale"
Bella Ramsey, "The Last of Us"
Keri Russell, "The Diplomat"
Sarah Snook, "Succession"

LEAD ACTOR, COMEDY

Bill Hader, "Barry"
Jason Segel, "Shrinking"
Martin Short, "Only Murders in the Building"
Jason Sudeikis, "Ted Lasso"
Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear"

LEAD ACTRESS, COMEDY

Christina Applegate, "Dead to Me"
Rachel Brosnahan, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"
Quinta Brunson, "Abbott Elementary"
Natasha Lyonne, "Poker Face"
Jenna Ortega, "Wednesday"

LEAD ACTOR, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE

Taron Egerton, "Black Bird"
Kumail Nanjiani, "Welcome to Chippendales"
Evan Peters, "Dahmer -- Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story"
Daniel Radcliffe, "Weird: The Al Yankovic Story"
Michael Shannon, "George & Tammy"
Steven Yeun, "Beef"

LEAD ACTRESS, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE

Lizzy Caplan, "Fleishman Is In Trouble"
Jessica Chastain, "George & Tammy"
Dominique Fishback, "Swarm"
Kathryn Hahn, "Tiny Beautiful Things"
Riley Keough, "Daisy Jones & the Six"
Ali Wong, "Beef"

SUPPORTING ACTOR, DRAMA

F. Murray Abraham, "The White Lotus"
Nicholas Braun, "Succession"
Michael Imperioli, "The White Lotus"
Theo James, "The White Lotus"
Matthew Macfadyen, "Succession"
Alan Ruck, "Succession"
Will Sharpe, "The White Lotus"
Alexander Skarsgard, "Succession"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS, DRAMA

Jennifer Coolidge, "The White Lotus"
Elizabeth Debicki, "The Crown"
Meghann Fahy, "The White Lotus"
Sabrina Impacciatore, "The White Lotus"
Aubrey Plaza, "The White Lotus"
Rhea Seehorn, "Better Call Saul"
J. Smith-Cameron, "Succession"
Simona Tabasco, "The White Lotus"

SUPPORTING ACTOR, COMEDY

Anthony Carrigan, "Barry"
Phil Dunster, "Ted Lasso"
Brett Goldstein, "Ted Lasso"
James Marsden, "Jury Duty"
Ebon Moss-Bachrach, "The Bear"
Tyler James Williams, "Abbott Elementary"
Henry Winkler, "Barry"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS, COMEDY

Alex Borstein, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"
Ayo Edebiri, "The Bear"
Janelle James, "Abbott Elementary"
Sheryl Lee Ralph, "Abbott Elementary"
Juno Temple, "Ted Lasso"
Hannah Waddingham, "Ted Lasso"
Jessica Williams, "Shrinking"

SUPPORTING ACTOR, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE

Murray Bartlett, "Welcome to Chippendales"
Paul Walter Hauser, "Black Bird"
Richard Jenkins, "Dahmer -- Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story"
Joseph Lee, "Beef"
Ray Liotta, "Black Bird"
Young Mazino, "Beef"
Jesse Plemons, "Love & Death"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE

Annaleigh Ashford, "Welcome to Chippendales"
Maria Bello, "Beef"
Claire Danes, "Fleishman Is In Trouble"
Juliette Lewis, "Welcome to Chippendales"
Camila Morrone, "Daisy Jones & the Six"
Niecey Nash-Betts, "Dahmer -- Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story"
Merritt Wever, "Tiny Beautiful Things". —AFP



File picture shows US actor Kieran Culkin poses with the award for Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Television Series - Drama for "Succession" in the press room during the 81st annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California.



File picture shows US actress Ayo Edebiri poses with the award for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy for "The Bear" with US actor Jeremy Allen White with the award for Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy for "The Bear" in the press room during the 81st annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

awards shows, although events like the Oscars have recovered audiences since the pandemic. The gala's delay to January is unlikely to help—aside from inevitable confusion about honoring shows that premiered 18 months earlier, the move puts the Emmys smack in the middle of Hollywood's film awards season, starving the show of considerable publicity.—AFP



used to create Loab, wanting to avoid "shifting the focus away from art and onto the makers of the model" and being accused of "marketing," she said. But her refusal to name Loab's creator has led to doubts over how she was created, with some internet users suspecting Swanson of re-touching the images to create a so-called "creepypasta"—a kind of digital horror theme cooked up to haunt social networks. Swanson denied she'd dreamt up or manually altered Loab, saying she took the claims as a compliment: "It meant people were interacting with it."

But it has been over a year since Swanson has touched Loab, saying the whole affair left her exhausted and burned out. She has stopped creating AI images as she devoted herself to a screenplay. She summed up her current sentiment about such tools with a quote from South Korean-born video art pioneer Nam June Paik: "I use technology in order to hate it properly". —AFP



Prince Abdul Mateen and Yang Mulia Anisha Rosnah wave from their car during the wedding procession in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan.— AFP photos



Prince Abdul Mateen (left) and Yang Mulia Anisha Rosnah sit during their wedding reception at Istana Nurul Iman in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan.



Prince Abdul Mateen (left) and Yang Mulia Anisha Rosnah walk down the aisle during their wedding reception at Istana Nurul Iman in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan.

Leaders and blue bloods descend on Brunei for **royal wedding** climax

Lavish celebrations for the wedding of Brunei's Prince Abdul Mateen and his wife reached a climax Sunday with a glittering ceremony attended by government leaders and blue-blooded guests from Asia and the Middle East. Mateen, 32, wore a ceremonial uniform while his 29-year-old bride was in a long white dress and sparkling jewels for the event at the sprawling Istana Nurul Iman palace.

They made their first public appearance as a married couple in a procession through the normally sleepy capital Bandar Seri Begawan in front of thousands of onlookers. The popular prince was one of Asia's most eligible bachelors until he tied the knot with Yang Amat Mulia Pengiran Anak Isteri Anisha Rosnah, who is from a prominent family in Brunei.

Mateen's father is Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, the world's longest-reigning monarch and once the richest man on the planet. There was a festive atmosphere in the city with free ice cream on offer and soft drinks for sale as people began to take positions along the parade route hours before it began.

Wearing a traditional formal outfit and matching songkok hat, retired banker Haji Suhaimin Abas, 66, was among the elite Bruneians to receive an invitation to the wedding ceremony. "This is a very big celebration," he told AFP as he ate breakfast before going to the palace.

Royalty from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Bhutan were listed among the reported 5,000 guests. Malaysian



Prince Abdul Mateen and Yang Mulia Anisha Rosnah sit during their wedding reception at Istana Nurul Iman in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos were among government leaders in attendance.

'Once-in-a-lifetime moment'

Sunday's celebration is the highlight of 10 days of pomp and pageantry in the tiny country, whose extreme wealth is derived almost entire-

ly from its enormous oil and gas reserves. Mateen, a British-trained military officer in Brunei's armed forces and a helicopter pilot, held court with his wife at the elaborate ceremony before invited guests.

The ceremony was steeped in tradition drawn from Brunei's centuries-old history as an Islamic monarchy. The couple stood in the back of an open-top Rolls-Royce waving to onlookers as they weaved through the capital, where their images have been displayed on street arches and building facades for days. Many of the sultan's subjects lined the streets under a scorching sun to catch a glimpse of the couple. Hajah Aminah Abd Morsidee, 91 who has seen five royal weddings in her lifetime, said she was "happy to see Prince Mateen marrying the beautiful Anisha".

Schoolteacher Norliha Mohamad Din, 37, said it was a "once-in-a-lifetime moment". "I have seen Prince Mateen since he was small," she said. "I'm very happy for him. This is one way of showing appreciation to the royal family."

As the 10th child and fourth son of the sultan, Mateen is unlikely to ever ascend the throne. But he appears to have taken on the unofficial role of presenting a modern face for the royal family in a bid to connect with a younger generation of Bruneians raised on social media. Mateen's matinee idol looks and well-chiseled body have earned him a massive following on Instagram, where carefully curated photos and videos show him playing polo, dabbling in photography and posing in military uniform.—AFP



People cheer as the car of Prince Abdul Mateen and Yang Mulia Anisha Rosnah drive in front of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque during the wedding procession in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan.



People wait ahead of the wedding procession of Prince Abdul Mateen and Yang Mulia Anisha Rosnah in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan.

More queens in store for European royalty as Gen Z rises

The abdication of Denmark's Queen Margrethe leaves Europe without a female monarch, but not for long—a young generation of princesses born in the 21st century will be ascending to thrones across the continent in the coming years. Belgium's Princess Elisabeth, born in 2001; Catharina-Amalia of the Netherlands (2003); Ingrid Alexandra of Norway (2004); Leonor of Spain (2005); and Estelle of Sweden (2012) — half of the hereditary monarchies on the Continent are likely to be led by a queen before too long.

Many will be the first to take the throne after the introduction of female succession laws, a privilege previously reserved for male heirs. Previous queens, such as Elizabeth II of Britain, who died in 2022, had no brothers to inherit the throne. "Sweden was the first country in the world to adopt a gender-neutral order of succession, in 1980, when Princess Victoria bumped her younger brother down and she became crown princess" retroactively, Swedish royals expert Roger Lundgren told AFP.

Modern monarchs

Several experts said gender was unlikely to have much of an impact as the future queens embrace their new roles. "Much of what kings and queens do today, and what they will do in 25 years, is what kings did 200 years ago too—state visits, receiving ambassadors, ceremonial things," Lundgren said. Lundgren also noted that unlike earlier generations of queens, many in the upcoming generation has done some form of military service in their country.

In December, for example, Spain's *Hola!* magazine showed Princess Leonor in combat camouflage taking part in ski drills with her unit on slopes in the Pyrenees. Other princesses have studied in elite schools at home or abroad—both Leonor and Princess Elisabeth of Belgium studied at Atlantic



This combination of file pictures show (from top left to bottom right) Norway's Princess Ingrid Alexandra, Spanish Crown Princess of Asturias Leonor, Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria, Netherlands' Princess of Orange Catharina-Amalia, Princess Estelle of Sweden, and Belgium Crown Princess Elisabeth. —AFP

College in Wales—exposing them more to global affairs and concerns such as feminist causes or the risks from climate change.

"A clearer, firmer footing in the everyday life of the people, in combination with the pomp, castles, jewels and the fairy tale, is the winning concept to keep the monarchy," said Ebba Kleberg von Sydow, a Swedish influencer and royals expert. She said the future queens were likely to prove more media-savvy as well, if only to show that monarchies remain grounded and relevant in modern society.

Lundgren noted that while Queen Margrethe "doesn't even own a smartphone, and is proud of it", Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, Denmark's Crown Prince Frederik and Norway's Crown Prince Haakon have their own WhatsApp group. "You need to be on more platforms, have your message reach people in a completely different way, now

that traditional media channels that previous generations of royals used no longer reach everyone," von Sydow said.

New challenges

In many ways, Europe's future queens will be wrestling with new iterations of the question that has often confronted their ancestors. "Each new generation of monarchs has had to face one main challenge, and not the least: the questioning of what is the use of a monarchy," said Lisa Castro, a royals historian at the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaures in southern France.

In this regard, she said, being tuned in on issues like women's causes or environmental concerns will be a tool for ensuring the public's backing. But the next generation appears "the best placed to respond to expectations on these subjects—they understand the needs and the challenges of their time", Castro said, pointing to the embrace of climate causes by Scandinavian royal families.

"It's inevitable that modern times will have an influence on the institution of the monarchy," said Spanish journalist Pilar Eyre, noting in particular the polished image management by Britain's Prince William and his wife Kate.

His brother Prince Harry, meanwhile, has moved to California with his American-born wife, Meghan, previously an actress—the latest of several examples of modern royals tying the knot with commoners. There is already a precedent for embracing more contemporary causes—Spain's Queen Letizia, who was a journalist when she met her future husband, King Felipe, recently visited an aid association for women prostitutes—"which would have been unheard-of for preceding generations", Eyre said.

And in 2021, Mark Rutte, the Dutch prime minister at the time, said that if she wanted, Princess Catharina-Amalia could marry a woman under the country's same-sex marriage laws and still ascend to the throne. "It's with these types of gestures that you earn the affection and respect of citizens—not with grand ceremonies and magnificent outfits," Eyre said.—AFP

George Clooney offers New Year greeting to French mayor

Hollywood star George Clooney surprised the mayor of a southern French town with a video sending him new year greetings. Clooney addressed his video in English to Didier Bremond, the mayor of Brignoles, in the southern Var region, where he owns an estate. "Bonjour Didier, first of all I wanted to say Happy New Year," he said in the video, which the mayor posted on Facebook.

Thanking him for the time they had spent in Brignoles and the Var region, Clooney added: "We hope everyone has a wonderful holiday." Clooney acquired the Domaine Le Canadel near the small town of Brignoles in May 2001. The property includes an 18th-century country house, a pond, a swimming pool and vineyards across 170 hectares (420 acres).

It sits just a few kilometers from another estate owned by Hollywood producer George Lucas of Star Wars fame. Stars Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt also bought an estate in the region in 2008 before their separation.—AFP



Hollywood star George Clooney

Sports

New Zealand beat Pakistan by 21 runs to take control of T20 series

Captain Williamson retired hurt with hamstring injury



HAMILTON: Pakistan's Aamer Jamal (R) is stumped by New Zealand's wicketkeeper Devon Conway (L) during the second Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Seddon Park in Hamilton on January 14, 2024. — AFP

HAMILTON: Pace bowler Adam Milne claimed four wickets as New Zealand beat Pakistan by 21 runs in the second Twenty20 international Sunday to take a 2-0 series lead. The tourists threw away a strong position in their run chase after Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman scored half-centuries as they were dismissed for 173 in the final over, in response to New Zealand's 194-8.

Victory came at a cost for the Black Caps, whose captain Kane Williamson retired hurt with a hamstring injury while batting, placing him in doubt for the remainder of the five-match series. The match bore similarities to New Zealand's 46-run win in the

opening match in Auckland on Friday, with another aggressive batting approach led from the top by Finn Allen.

His 70 off 41 balls continued a run of form which the hard-hitting opener attributed to a change of approach. "I've been working hard on assessing conditions and choosing when to pull the trigger," Allen said.

"I'm always looking to score boundaries and be positive but it's situational. It's when to take a higher-risk option or a lower risk." The target looked within sight for Pakistan before Fakhar was bowled by Milne for a power-packed 50 off 25 balls in the 10th over, leaving Pakistan 97-3.

They struggled from that point, with only Babar looking a threat until he was caught off Ben Sears for 66. Milne finished with 4-33, having earlier removed the dangerous Mohammad Rizwan as Pakistan lost both openers with just 10 runs on the board.

New Zealand were again asked to bat first and Allen immediately took on the visitors' attack, blasting five sixes

and seven fours. Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi said he and the rest of his attack didn't bowl well enough to capitalise on winning the toss.

"With fast bowling, you go for swing and you know you need a wicket early on," he said. "Unfortunately we missed that. If we take those one or two wickets, their score would be 170-180. But the start wasn't very good, not the way we want."

The Black Caps were well placed at 111 for one at the midway point but suffered a major setback soon afterwards when Williamson was forced to retire hurt for 26. There will be concern it is a continuation of the spate of injuries the veteran skipper has suffered in the last year.

A long-standing knee problem ruled the 33-year-old out of both white-ball series at home to Bangladesh in December. New Zealand's middle and lower order struggled, with pace bowler Haris Rauf particularly adept over the closing overs, finishing with 3-38. — AFP

Sheikh Salman opens Asian Shotgun Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Asian Shotgun Championship continues at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex, as qualification rounds will be completed by shooting at 50 clay targets followed by the final rounds of men, women and juniors.

The tournament was officially declared open on Saturday evening in the presence of International Shooting Sport Federation Senator Luciano Rossi, President of Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC) Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations, Secretary General of ASF and KSSC Obaid Al-Osaimi, Deputy General Manager of Public Authority for Sport Hamid Al-Hazeem, heads of Asian Federations and several ambassadors in Kuwait.

Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud declared the Championship open hoping the games will be highly



ASC officials in a group picture

competitive and enjoyable, specifically that it has 8 quota places for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics. Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi appreciated the fatherly care by HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for Kuwait Shooting that had a great influence on its development and the significant achievements.

He said having 500 athletes and officials will give

the championship a special flavor of competition as each competitor aims at reaching the Olympics, and the organizers prepared all that is necessary with the support of concerned state entities to ensure the success of this highly important event. Eng Al-Otaibi thanked the officials of ISSF AND ASC for granting Kuwait the right to organize this major tournament.

President of ISSF Luciano Rossi said ISSF is



Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud declaring the championship open with Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi next to him.

confident that Kuwait Federation will succeed in organizing the championship and commended the organizing committee headed by Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi, adding that there will be 4 quota places for men and 4 for women in the trap and skeet events. Rossi said ISSF is keen on strengthening relations with ASC under the leadership of Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud and Secretary General Duaij Al-Otaibi.

Kuwait beat Chinese Taipei in Asian Men's Handball Championship

MANAMA: Kuwait National Handball team on Sunday defeated the Chinese Taipei team (31-27) in the second round of the 21st AHF Asian Men's Handball Championship held in Bahrain thus qualifying for the main round.

The Kuwaiti team took control in the first half and maintained the lead until the end to win the game and book a match against five-time winner Qatar next Tuesday. The 21st AHF Asian Men's Handball Championship takes place from 11 to 25 January in Manama and Isa Town in Bahrain, with 16 teams contending for the coveted crown of Asian champions.

The teams were divided in to four groups as follows: Group A: Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Chinese Taipei.



Group B: Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China, New Zealand.

Group C: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, India, Japan.

Group D: Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan. — KUNA

on the sideline. "It was, like, frozen," Mahomes said of the replacement helmet, which had to be warmed up before he could wear it. Mahomes shook off the distraction and the Chiefs reached the divisional round of the playoffs for the sixth straight season.

Meanwhile, the Dolphins' dynamic offense never fired as Kansas City's defense kept Miami quarterback Tua Tagovailoa under constant pressure. Wide receiver Tyreek Hill had a 53-yard touchdown catch but was otherwise kept in check by his former team and the Dolphins finished with just 264 total yards.

In Houston, Stroud continued his remarkable debut season, throwing three first-half touchdowns to outshine Flacco, the 38-year-old Super Bowl winner who was brought out of semi-retirement by the Browns after they lost three quarterbacks to injury and propelled them into the post-season.

Special Stroud

Stroud completed 16 of 21 passes for 274 yards with no interceptions and the Browns defense never got to him for a sack. "Just to have another week to go at it with my brothers is a blessing," said Stroud, who at 22 years and 102 days became the youngest quarterback to win a playoff game, passing Michael Vick, who was 22 and 192 days old when he led the Falcons past the Packers in 2002.

"He's special, a special young man," Texans coach DeMeco Ryans said of Stroud. "Continues to shine no matter how big the moment is." Stroud connected with Nico Collins for a touchdown that put Houston up 10-7. He hit Brevin Jordan for a 76-yard TD and his 37-yard strike to Dalton Schultz put the Texans up 24-14 at halftime.

Then Houston's defense took over. Flacco, who was without a team until late November after being released in the off-season by the New York Jets, threw for one first-half touchdown but had two second-half interceptions returned for touchdowns. —AFP

Beterbiev stops Smith to retain three light heavyweight titles

MONTREAL: Undefeated Artur Beterbiev defended three world light-heavyweight boxing titles by stopping Britain's Callum Smith in the seventh round on Saturday, winning by knockout for the 20th time in as many fights.

Beterbiev, a 38-year-old Russian-born Canadian, stopped the Englishman after two minutes of the seventh round in Quebec City, Canada, improving to 20-0 and remaining the only world champion to win every fight by early stoppage.

A hard right hand by Beterbiev to the side of Smith's head was the stunner that set up a series of punishing lefts to the head and a final right-left combination crumpled the Englishman to the canvas for the first time in his career at any level 70 seconds into the seventh round.

Smith rose against the ropes but Beterbiev quickly landed a five-punch combination to drop the challenger to the canvas again. Smith's corner halted the bout moments later. Beterbiev retained the World Boxing Council, World Boxing Organization and International Boxing Federation light-heavyweight crowns and set the stage for a likely undisputed unification fight with unbeaten World Boxing Association champion Dmitry Bivol of Russia.

Smith, a 33-year-old former WBA super middleweight champion, fell to 29-2. His only prior defeat was by unanimous decision in 2020 to Mexican star

Canelo Alvarez, the undisputed world super middleweight champion. Beterbiev was to have faced Smith last August but the fight was postponed after a bone infection required Beterbiev to have jaw surgery.

Beterbiev, who won his first world title in 2017, defended the three titles for the second time, having stopped Britain's Anthony Yarde in the eighth round last January in London in his most recent bout. Smith last fought in August 2022 when he stopped France's Mathieu Bauderlique in the fourth round to earn his chance against Beterbiev.

The home-region favorite is expected to fight for an undisputed 175-pound (79.9kg) division crown against Bivol, 33, who is 22-0 with 11 knockouts. Beterbiev attacked from the start with power punches but Smith worked his jab and pressed his case with combinations as the bout settled into a rhythm, the patient champion measuring the challenger early.

Beterbiev swelled Smith's right eye in the third round and landed a powerful right uppercut to the chin as well as hard body shots. A flurry of punishing punches by the champion to Smith's head in the fourth round stunned the Englishman, whose nose began bleeding in the fifth round, setting up the finish.

On the undercard, WBO bantamweight champion Jason Moloney of Australia retained his title with a 12-round majority-decision victory over American Saul Sanchez. The 32-year-old from Melbourne improved to 27-2 while Sanchez fell to 20-3 as two judges scored the Aussie a 116-112 winner and the third saw the fight drawn 114-114.

Moloney defended his crown for the first time after taking the vacant 118-pound belt last May with a majority decision over Filipino Vincent Astrolabio. — AFP

Chiefs down Dolphins, Stroud guides Texans in NFL playoff openers

LOS ANGELES: The Kansas City Chiefs took another step toward a Super Bowl title defense Saturday, routing the Miami Dolphins 26-7 at frigid Arrowhead Stadium in the first round of the NFL playoffs. Houston kicked off wildcard round action with rookie quarterback C.J. Stroud guiding the Texans to a 45-14 victory over the Cleveland Browns that ended veteran Joe Flacco's comeback story.

Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes threw for 262 yards and a touchdown, Harrison Butker kicked four field goals and the Chiefs defense kept Miami's potentially explosive offense in check, the hosts shrugging off brutally cold conditions.

It was minus-4 Fahrenheit (-20C) at kickoff with the wind chill making it feel even colder, the NFL calling it the fourth-coldest game in league history. Pop icon Taylor Swift turned out to cheer boyfriend Travis Kelce, wearing a Chiefs-themed down coat emblazoned with the star tight end's number 87, and Chiefs coach Andy Reid's trademark mustache was frozen by half-time.

"We knew it was going to be cold, but all week we were preaching let's come in there with that fire and just get after it and see what happens," said Mahomes, who hit rookie Rashee Rice for a touchdown on the first drive of the game.

Kelce had seven catches for 71 yards and Isaiah Pacheco ran 23 times for 82 yards and a touchdown. The cold might have been a factor when Mahomes's helmet cracked when he took a hit in the second half and it took some time to adjust a replacement kept

Smith relishing chance to open for Australia

ADELAIDE: Steve Smith said Sunday he felt obligated to step up and replace David Warner as Australia's Test opener, but also admitted it suited him because he got bored waiting to come in at four.

The 34-year-old veteran was a surprise pick to do the job ahead of openers Cameron Bancroft, Marcus Harris and Matt Renshaw after Warner bowed out of Test cricket this month. He will pad up in his new role for the first time in the opening Test of a two-match series against the West Indies in Adelaide, which starts on Wednesday.

"They (selectors) were obviously very keen to get Cameron (Green) in the side as well and play our best six batters, and for me it didn't sit right to have him come in and bat up top," he told reporters. "I've played for a long time and I'm an experienced player, and I think it's something I should

have done." The highly rated Green has been sidelined recently by a resurgent Mitchell Marsh, who has assumed the all-rounder role. Shifting Smith up the order, rather than opting for a specialist opener, allowed selectors to bring Green back primarily as a batsman.

Smith revealed he had been mulling the idea as far back as the Ashes in England last year, but the prospect only crystallised during the third Test against Pakistan in Sydney this month. "I'm looking forward to the opportunity of getting in and facing the new ball," he said.

"It's something that isn't really foreign to me. I've batted on numerous occasions where I've come in early doors and I batted at number three for quite a while." Former skipper Smith, who has played 105 Tests and accumulated 9,514 runs, also admitted that coming in early suited him because "I don't like waiting to bat".

"I actually don't like watching cricket that much, believe it or not," he said. "I'd prefer to be out there batting. It gets a bit boring sitting there (with the pads on) but I don't have to do that any more." — AFP

Sports

De Bruyne inspires City comeback to stun Newcastle, close on Liverpool

De Bruyne is obviously a world-class player: Howe

NEWCASTLE: Pep Guardiola said Manchester City showed the heart of champions to fight back to beat Newcastle 3-2 on Saturday thanks to a Kevin De Bruyne masterclass on his return to Premier League action.

The Belgian came off the bench to score and set up Oscar Bobb's stoppage-time winner to announce his comeback from a five-month injury layoff in style. Victory takes City up to second in the table, two points behind Liverpool, and ominously poised to strike when they return from a two-week winter break, by which point Erling Haaland may be fit to join De Bruyne in terrorising opposition defences.

"That was really good, sometimes it is better winning that way," said Guardiola. "We played with a huge personality. They showed me they want to be there, to fight until the end that they want to retain the title."

A cruel late twist for Newcastle saw Eddie Howe's men succumb to a sixth defeat in their last seven Premier League games. But a point would have been more than Newcastle deserved after being thoroughly outplayed but for two goals in two first-half minutes that threatened to frustrate the champions.

"Their quality told in the end. De Bruyne is obviously a world-class player," said Howe, who was publicly backed by the club's chief executive Darren Eales this week. "There's not a lot wrong with our performances. You can see today we are a top team. The group is in a good place, I don't see any negativity. I see hurt because we aren't winning and that's what we're here to do."

A frantic encounter got off to a disrupted start as City goalkeeper Ederson was forced off injured in his attempt to stop Sean Longstaff putting the ball into the net. The goal was ruled out as Alexan-

der Isak was clearly offside in the build-up and City were furious the flag was not raised earlier to prevent any damage being done to the Brazilian.

Silva's moment of magic

Guardiola's men dominated for the opening half-hour but lacked the poise of De Bruyne or presence of Haaland up front to turn their possession into a cutting edge. When City did break the deadlock, it took a moment of brilliance from Bernardo Silva.

The Portuguese backheeled Kyle Walker's low cross into the far corner on 26 minutes. Moments later only a brilliant save from Martin Dubravka turned another sweet strike from Silva onto the post.

However, the match was transformed in a stunning two-minute period just before half-time. Bruno Guimaraes cut open the City backline with one pass that freed Isak, who cut inside Walker and curled brilliantly into the far corner. Seconds later, the Swede's strike was surpassed as Anthony Gordon followed a similar route by turning inside onto his right foot and firing into the far corner. City restored their control of the game at the start of the second period, but again lacked a punch in attack until De Bruyne made his return to Premier League action for the first time since the opening day of the season.

The 32-year-old, who made his comeback as a substitute in a 5-0 rout of Huddersfield in the FA Cup last weekend, quickly showed what the European champions have been missing. De Bruyne latched onto Rodri's pass 16 minutes from time and drove forward before placing a low precise finish beyond Dubravka from outside the box.

Despite his lack of game time this season, De Bruyne has still produced more assists than any other player in Europe's top five leagues since the



NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United's Brazilian midfielder #39 Bruno Guimaraes (C) clears the ball under pressure from Manchester City's Spanish midfielder #16 Rodri during the English Premier League football match between Newcastle United and Manchester City at St James' Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, north east England. — AFP

start of last season. And another wonderful pass over the top for Bobb created the winner.

The young Norwegian still had plenty to do, but showed quick feet to round Dubravka and tap into an unguarded net for his first Premier League goal. "When Kevin has the ball and we have runners, Kevin

is unique in the world but the finish by Oscar, I am so, so happy for him," added Guardiola.

In contrast to City's jubilation, another defeat for Newcastle may have realistically ended their hopes of a top-four finish as they slip to 10th, still 11 points adrift of the Champions League places. — AFP

Japan survive Vietnam scare to start Asian Cup title bid

DOHA: Asian Cup favourites Japan survived a scare in their tournament opener on Sunday against Vietnam before winning 4-2 in a roller-coaster clash. Hajime Moriyasu's side are looking for a record-extending fifth Asian title and looked set for a comfortable start to their campaign in Qatar when Takumi Minamino gave them an 11th-minute lead.

But Vietnam, who are coached by Japan's 2000 Asian Cup-winning boss Philippe Troussier, turned the game on its head with two goals midway through the first half. Japan came roaring back before half-

time, Minamino scoring a second before Keito Nakamura curled home a sublime effort to send them into the break with the lead.

The second half was a far more sedate affair until Japan substitute Ayase Ueda made the win safe with a fourth goal in the 86th minute. Japan and Vietnam met in the quarter-finals of the last Asian Cup in 2019, with Japan winning 1-0 before losing to Qatar in the final.

Moriyasu left Kaoru Mitoma out of his matchday squad as the Brighton winger continues his comeback from an ankle injury. Real Sociedad forward Takefusa Kubo started on the bench but Minamino showed that Japan still had plenty of attacking talent when he opened the scoring early in the first half.

Yukinari Sugawara drilled a ball into the box that deflected off a Vietnam defender and former Liverpool attacker Minamino pounced on the rebound. Vietnam hit back four minutes later when Nguyen

Dinh Bac glanced a looping backwards header over a stunned Japanese defence from a corner.

And more was to come when Vietnam took the lead in the 33rd minute. Defender Bui Hoang Viet Anh got his head to a free kick swung into the far post and Japan goalkeeper Zion Suzuki could only parry his effort into the path of the onrushing Pham Tuan Hai, who stuffed the ball home.

There was still time for Japan to turn it around before the break. First, Liverpool's Wataru Endo picked out Minamino in the box and the Monaco forward rolled a precise first-time shot just inside the far post. Then Nakamura put Japan back in front with a jaw-dropping strike from the edge of the box in first-half injury time. The tempo dropped significantly in the second half but Ueda notched Japan's fourth with a well-taken strike with just minutes remaining. Indonesia play Iraq on Monday in the other opening game in Group D. — AFP

Ronaldo effect? Saudi spending spree fuels Asian Cup hopes

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia hope that the influx of foreign stars such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar into their club football will help the national team win their first Asian Cup in 28 years. Saudi Pro League sides have shelled out to lure big-name players while Saudi Arabia is set to host the 2034 World Cup, all part of a broader move into global sport.

With Roberto Mancini, who guided his native Italy to European Championship glory in 2021, now coach, the Saudis start their Asian Cup campaign against Oman on Tuesday. The national side beat eventual champions Argentina in the group phase of the 2022 World Cup and return to Qatar for the Asian Cup as one of the favourites.

Saleh al-Khalif, deputy editor-in-chief of the Al-Riyadiya newspaper, told AFP that playing against, and with, the likes of Karim Benzema, Sadio Mane and the rest made it "impossible (for the Saudi players)... not to benefit". "We hope that this strong competition will have a butterfly effect on the team," he added. Saudi Pro League clubs' spending on players over the summer was topped only by the English Premier League. Some domestic players have risen to the challenge of the influx, with Al-Ahly forward Firas Al-Buraikan starting at his club ahead of former Liverpool favourite Roberto Firmino.

National team stalwarts Salem Al-Dawsari, Ali Al-Bulaihi and Saud Abdulhamid have also played regularly despite Al-Hilal's galaxy of new stars. "The popularity and competitiveness of the league, in addition to the competition with foreign players, has actually raised the level of local players," said Ahmed Ezz El-Din, an Egyptian analyst on SSC TV.

Not everyone believes the spending spree will benefit the national team, who have won the Asian Cup three times but last reached the final in 2007 and last won it in 1996. Several players who appeared in the historic 2-1 World Cup win over Argentina just over a year ago have lost their club places because of the arrival overseas talent. The impact has been keenly felt at Al-Hilal, who as well as Neymar signed Serbian pair Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Aleksandar Mitrovic, Brazilian Malcom, Portugal's Ruben Neves and Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly over the summer.

Mancini left more than a dozen of the World Cup squad out of his Asian Cup roster, although injuries have also played a part. Portuguese coach Nelo Vinhaga, who led Saudi Arabia to the 1996 continental crown, sees no relation between the high-profile arrivals and the national side. "The quality of the Saudi league has become better now but in my opinion it will not benefit the Saudi national team," he told the Kooora website. Ezz El-Din believes the benefit of the Saudi league's spending may not be fully felt for years to come. — AFP

Inter continue title charge with Monza destruction

MILAN: Inter Milan continued their domination of the Serie A title race on Saturday by crushing Monza 5-1 and moving five points clear at the summit, while last-gasp drama gave Napoli a 2-1 win over Salernitana.

Doubles from Hakan Calhanoglu and Lautaro Martinez and a late strike from Marcus Thuram extended Inter's advantage on Juventus, who host Sassuolo on Tuesday night. "Monza are a good team with good players but if we play like we did today it'll be hard for anyone to beat us," said Calhanoglu to Sky Sport.

Turkey captain Calhanoglu has shone at Inter since being converted to a deeper midfield role by coach Simone Inzaghi and this season he has scored 10 times in all competitions. "I've grown as a player, I have a new role which I like a lot and I always try to give my best for my teammates," he added.

Inter now head to the revamped, four-team Italian Super Cup in Riyadh, where they begin a tough run of fixtures with Thursday's semi-final against Lazio. A trip to high-flying Fiorentina will follow the Super Cup at the end of the month before a showdown with Juve at the San Siro in early February, by which time their closest rivals could be top of the pile due to having a game in hand.

Inter don't play what would have been next weekend's home clash with Atalanta until the end of next month due to their Super Cup commitments.

Brilliant Inter

However if they continue to play as they did in a blistering display on Saturday they should have little to fear from any opposition. Calhanoglu put Inter



MONZA: Inter Milan's Argentine forward #10 Lautaro Martinez fights for the ball with Monza's Italian midfielder #32 Matteo Pessina during the Italian Serie A football match Monza vs Inter on January 13, 2024 at the Brianteo stadium in Monza. — AFP

ahead from the penalty spot in the 12th minute after Roberto Gagliardini handled Martinez's header, and the away side were two in front moments later.

A great team move swept Inter from one end of the pitch to the other and ended with Martinez prodding home from close range. Monza's Matteo Pessina then had a header ruled out for the tightest of offside in the 29th minute, and Calhanoglu made sure of the points on the hour mark when he stroked home Thuram's neat lay-off.

Pessina did get his goal from the penalty spot nine minutes later but by then the damage was done. With six minutes remaining Martinez netted a penalty of his own to take his league tally to 18 for the season and four minutes later Thuram capped a perfect evening with a fine individual strike.

"You can only compliment a great team, because they were brilliant tonight," said Monza coach Raffaele Palladino. "We lost a match against a really good side, but we need to clear our heads and just move on to the next game." — AFP

Celtics rout Rockets in Udoka's NBA return to Boston

WASHINGTON: Jaylen Brown scored 32 points and Jayson Tatum added 27 as the Boston Celtics remained unbeaten at home, defeating Houston 145-113 on Saturday in former Celtics coach Ime Udoka's return to Boston.

The Celtics improved to an NBA-best 30-9 overall and 19-0 at home, the league's only undefeated club at home stretching its team-record home win streak to start a season. Brown, who scored 21 points in the third quarter when the Celtics pulled away to stay, hit 11-of-15 shots from the floor, 4-of-6 from 3-point range, and added six rebounds, two assists, two steals and two blocked shots.

"Being aggressive. A lot of times defense gets you going," Brown said of his third-period success. "I get it on the run and when we play like that in transition we're tough to beat." Udoka guided the Celtics to the 2022 NBA Finals, where they lost to Golden State, but he was suspended just before the start of the 2022-23 season training camp over an improper relationship with a team staffer.

Udoka ultimately was dropped and replaced by former assistant Joe Mazzulla on a permanent basis last February. "I'm glad to see Ime back coaching on the sidelines," Brown said. "I'm glad to see a lot of the staff we spent time with over there in Houston. I wish those guys the best of luck."

Asked how he reflected on his departure, Udoka said, "Job not finished. The relationships you build and the people you impact, so that would be the biggest thing. When it came to his regrets, Udoka was equally matter-of-fact. "The biggest thing I'd say overall is letting some people down, for sure," Udoka said. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

Change of Name

I, Hussaina (current name in passport), holder of Indian Passport No. V0610247 having address in India Burhany Mohalla, Mohammadiya Colony, Galiyakot, Dungerpur (Pincode 314026) Rajasthan, India. At present residing in Kuwait at address: Yusuf Al Bader Street, Block 10, Salmiya. (Paci No. 11513012) hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under (Given name) Hussaina

Chikli (#4592) 15/1/2024

I, Kalpana Lama, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3680248 having permanent address, Shalak Vita, New Rangia, Darjeeling, Pin - 734013, West Bengal, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Kalpana (Given Name) Rai (Surname). (#4591) 14/1/2024

I, Pramsewar Reddy, holder of Indian Passport No. X5356390 having permanent address of Reddipalle (V), Pullampet Mandal, Annamayya District, Andhrapradesh (AP) Pin-516107 residing in Kuwait present, hereby declare that henceforth my son name will be read as Parameswar Reddy (given name) and Mannuru. (surname) (#4590) 14/1/2024

I, Meena Parvat Ambalal, holder of Indian Passport No. M2309188, having permanent address M F Dillima house, Bamanwada, Shar, P.O. Andheri, Mumbai, Pin - 400099, Maharashtra, India, residing in Kuwait hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Maria (given name) Santan Francis D'souza (surname). (#4589) 14/1/2024

Kuwaiti swimmer wins gold in Arab aquatics championships

Al-Ghaith wins bronze in 400m freestyle at Qatar's Arab Championship



Kuwait swimming team



Hamad Al-Ghaith with his bronze medal

DOHA: Kuwaiti swimmer Muhammad Zubaid won the gold medal in the men's 100-meter backstroke race in the age group (15-16 years) on Saturday evening - the fourth day of the Second Arab Aquatics Age Group Championships, raising the team's tally to 11 various medals. Head of the team delegation and member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Aquatics Federation, Faisal Abu

Al-Hassan, said in a statement to KUNA that the Kuwaiti swimming team concluded its participation in the Championship today, praising the efforts of the players participating in the tournament.

Kuwaiti national team swimmer Hamad Al-Ghaith won the bronze medal in the 400-meter freestyle race in the 13-14-year-old category today. Yesterday, Hamad Al-Ghaith won the silver medal in

the 200m backstroke race of the 13-14 year old category, and his teammate.

Muhammad Zubaid also won the silver medal in the 50-meter freestyle race of the 15-16 year old category. Last Thursday, the Kuwaiti swimming team won three medals - one gold and two silver, on the second day of the Second Arab Championship for Sunni Ages, where swimmer Muhammad Zubaid won the gold in the 50-m. back-

stroke race in the 15-16 year age group competitions. And the silver medal in the 100-meter freestyle in the same category. The Kuwaiti team for the 13-14 year age group, consisting of Hamad Al-Ghaith, Hassan Al-Sailik, Saud Al-Enezi, and Hassan Rajab, who won the silver medal in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay for teams.

On the first day of the tournament, the Kuwaiti team also won four medals: (gold)

captured by Hassan Al-Sailik in the 50-m butterfly competition, silver by Hamad Al-Ghaith in the 200-meter freestyle competition, bronze by Saud Al-Anazi in the 50-m butterfly competition, and bronze in other competitions. In the 4x200-m freestyle relay race for teams. The second Arab Water Sports Championship for Sunni Ages began last Wednesday and will continue until Jan 15.—KUNA

Djokovic bids for Grand Slam history at Australian Open

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic launched his bid for Grand Slam history at the Australian Open on Sunday against an 18-year-old qualifier after fifth seed Andrey Rublev survived a huge scare to progress.

Women's second seed Aryna Sabalenka starts her own title defence later in the evening session on a breezy opening day in Melbourne. World number one Djokovic is gunning for his 11th Australian Open title and 25th major, which would take him clear of Margaret Court on the all-time list.

The Serbian, with 24 Grand Slams, is already the most-decorated player in the men's game—two clear of the injured Rafael Nadal and four ahead of the retired Roger Federer. Djokovic came within a whisker of completing a calendar Grand Slam last year, winning three majors and losing a thrilling Wimbledon final to Carlos Alcaraz. The 36-year-old, who beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in last year's title match in Melbourne, is the hot favourite again and will be fancied to breeze through his opener against Croatia's Dino Prizmic. The age gap of 18 years and 75 days between the two is the greatest in an Australian Open men's match since Ken Rosewall downed qualifier Cary Stansbury in 1978.

"I'm just hoping I can start the season in a way that I have been starting my seasons, most of my seasons, throughout my career, with a win here in Australia, in Melbourne," said Djokovic. "It's my favourite place, no doubt." Earlier, Rublev was cruising against Brazil's Thiago Seyboth Wild—a set ahead and 5-1 up in the second. He pulled into a 2-0 lead but 78th-ranked Seyboth Wild refused to lie down and breaks in the third and fourth sets set up a tantalising decider against the two-time quarter-finalist.

Rublev failed to convert four match points on Sey-

both Wild's serve at 5-6 in the fifth set but he regained his composure in the decisive tie-break, rallying from 2-5 to triumph on his fifth match point after three hours and 42 minutes. The Russian collapsed to the ground before letting out a guttural roar, admitting he relaxed in the deciding tie-break, believing he was heading out of the tournament. "When I was losing 4-1, mentally I gave up and maybe that's what helped me in the end," he said. "I felt it's not my day but then I hit some good serves and good returns."

Jannik Sinner overcame Botić van de Zandschulp 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 in the opening match on Rod Laver Arena. The Italian fourth seed, one of a new generation of young guns seeking to dethrone Djokovic, did not have it all his own way against the Dutchman but raised his level in the key moments.

It was tougher for former French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková, who survived a scare to beat Japanese wildcard Mai Hontama 2-6, 6-4, 6-3. The Czech ninth seed, who triumphed at Roland Garros in 2021, dug deep when trailing 3-1 in the second set after losing the opener and eventually turned the tables.

Belarusian star Sabalenka, scheduled to play German qualifier Ella Seidel in the evening session, enjoyed a breakthrough 2023 in which she won in Melbourne, finished runner-up at the US Open and made the semi-finals at Roland Garros and Wimbledon.

Currently ranked number two behind Poland's Iga Świątek, the 25-year-old said she was in good shape mentally and physically. Former champion Caroline Wozniacki, granted a wildcard to compete, returns to the scene of her greatest triumph four years after her last appearance at Melbourne Park against Poland's 20th-seed Magda Linette. The 2018 Australian Open winner, 33, has joined a group of tennis mums juggling on-court commitments with the duties of motherhood, including Elna Svitolina, Angelique Kerber and Naomi Osaka. Injured former top-10 star Matteo Berrettini pulled out of the tournament on the eve of a blockbuster first-round clash with Tsitsipas, will now face Belgian lucky loser Zizou Bergs. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Everton's English striker #09 Dominic Calvert-Lewin (C) vies with Aston Villa's Spanish defender #15 Alex Moreno (L) and Aston Villa's Brazilian midfielder #06 Douglas Luiz (R) during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Aston Villa at Goodison Park in Liverpool. — AFP

Villa held by Everton after Alex Moreno strike ruled out

LIVERPOOL: Aston Villa's Premier League title challenge hit a roadblock as Alex Moreno's strike was controversially disallowed by VAR in Sunday's 0-0 draw against Everton. Unai Emery's side would have moved level on points with leaders Liverpool if they had won at freezing Goodison Park.

But the decision to rule out Moreno's effort for offside forced Villa to settle for a point that leaves them in third place. The offside call means Villa have only one win from their last four league games as their unexpected title bid falters.

They are two points behind Liverpool, having played a game more, and sit below second placed Manchester City on goal difference. Emery was named Premier League manager of the month for December, but the Spaniard will hope Moreno's disallowed goal isn't a sign he will suffer from the long-standing 'curse' that afflicts winners of the award.

Everton remain precariously poised just one place above the relegation zone after their winless run in the league extended to four games. Everton's 10-point deduction earlier this season for financial breaches has kept them mired in the relegation battle.

Beaten in their previous three matches, Sean Dy-

che's team are one point clear of third bottom Luton. With 14 goals and eight assists, Ollie Watkins had been involved in 22 of Villa's 43 top flight goals. Watkins threatened to add to that impressive tally when he took Moussa Diaby's pass and forced a save from Jordan Pickford.

Villa thought they had taken the lead through Moreno's blast from the edge of the area after a short corner, but the goal was ruled out for a tight offside against Leon Bailey. The decision only came after a four-minute VAR check, leaving Villa fuming at the perceived injustice.

Fuelled by that grievance, Villa went close to taking the lead twice in quick succession. Watkins rolled his shot inches wide, then Pickford made a fine save from Bailey after John McGinn's dummy opened up the Everton defence.

Everton nearly stole the lead as Emiliano Martinez rushed off his line to save from Dominic Calvert-Lewin as the Toffees striker fatally hesitated before pulling the trigger. James Garner's low strike forced another good stop from Martinez in the closing moments of the half.

McGinn drilled inches wide midway through a scrappy second half high on perspiration but low on inspiration. Chances were at a premium and, when they did come, Everton's Arnaut Danjuma wastefully miscued before Villa's Jhon Duran had a header saved by Pickford.

Villa defender Matty Cash looked set to score when his attempt was blocked by Vitaliy Mykolenko. And Everton midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure charged clear to fire home in the closing minutes, only to see his effort correctly disallowed for offside. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic serves against Croatia's Dino Prizmic during their men's singles match on day one of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 14, 2024. — AFP