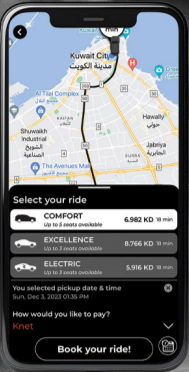



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Messi and Bonmati scoop FIFA's 2023 best awards



Iran flexes military muscles

Guards strike Zionist, IS targets in Iraq, Syria • Baghdad recalls Tehran envoy



BAGHDAD: Iraq summoned Iran's envoy in Baghdad and recalled its ambassador from Tehran on Tuesday in a sharp rebuke to its ally over deadly missile strikes on its autonomous Kurdish region. Iraq challenged Iran's claim that the strikes targeted the Zionist entity's intelligence services in response to recent Zionist assassinations of Iranian and pro-Iranian commanders. It said it would lodge a complaint with the UN Security Council over the Iranian "attack on its sovereignty".

Iran's strikes, which also hit alleged Islamic State group targets in Iraq's western neighbor Syria, came with tensions high across the Middle East as the Zionist entity battles Iran ally Hamas and drew condemnation from the United States. Four people were killed and six wounded in the strikes on Iraqi Kurdistan, the region's security council said. The dead included prominent real estate magnate Peshraw Dizayee who was hit by a strike on his family home, the region's leading party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, said.

Iran defended its missile strikes in Iraq and Syria, saying they were a "targeted operation" and "just punishment" against those who breach the Islamic republic's security. "The Islamic republic, with its high intelligence capability, in a precise and targeted operation identified the criminals' headquarters and hit it with precision weapons," foreign ministry

spokesman Nasser Kanani said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had destroyed the "Zionist regime's spy headquarters in the Kurdistan region of Iraq". The strike came "in response to the recent vicious actions of the Zionist regime which martyred the commanders of the Revolutionary Guards and the resistance front," a Guards statement carried by Iran's official IRNA news agency said.

Senior Guards commander Razi Mousavi was killed in a strike in Syria last month that was widely blamed on the Zionist entity. This month, Hamas deputy Saleh Al-Aruri was killed in a Beirut strike that Lebanese officials blamed on the Zionist entity. The Guards said their reprisals "will continue until the last drops of blood of the martyrs are avenged".

But after a visit on Tuesday to the scene of the strike, Iraq's National Security Adviser Qassem Al-Araji dismissed Iran's claim it had hit a Zionist intelligence base, saying it struck a businessman's family home. "Concerning the alleged presence of a headquarters of (the Zionist entity's) Mossad, we visited the house, we inspected every corner of it and everything indicated that it was the family home of an Iraqi businessman," Araji told Kurdish television station K24.

Continued on Page 6

Winter 'missing' in Kuwait after searing summer

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Even in mid-January, Kuwait finds itself still awaiting the arrival of proper winter chill. Surprisingly, the weather remains rainless, with a departure from typical winter conditions. The absence of expected cold temperatures and precipitation has raised eyebrows among residents accustomed to a more traditional winter experience.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Astronomer Adel Al-Saadoun highlighted the influence of global warming on the delay of winter in Kuwait, altering the traditional onset and conclusion of seasons. He explained that during periods of cold weather, Europe usually experiences high pressure, redirecting cold air to other areas.

But even Europe has witnessed higher temperatures than usual and hasn't seen the cold they used to have. His insight sheds light on the interconnectedness of global climate patterns and their impact on local weather phenomena, emphasizing the dynamic nature of our planet's climate system in the face of environmental changes.

Saadoun pointed out that while Kuwait is expected to undergo some weather changes, the temperatures are not anticipated to drop to subzero levels in certain areas, as was previously experienced.

"In the coming days, a slight cooling trend is forecast, though the decrease in temperature will be modest."

Continued on Page 6



Adel Al-Saadoun

Assembly adjourned for three weeks after government no-show

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun on Tuesday adjourned the regular session of the Assembly for the second time for three weeks because the new Cabinet has not been formed after the previous one resigned. As Saadoun announced in the chamber that he was

Zionists pound Gaza amid fears of widening war

GAZA: The Zionist entity pummeled southern Gaza on Tuesday, after announcing the winding down of the intense phase of the war that has inflamed tensions across the Middle East. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has come under mounting international pressure to end its offensive in Gaza.

But fears are mounting the war could escalate, with Iran and its prox-

ies stepping up attacks across the region in solidarity with Hamas, the Islamist movement that rules the Palestinian territory. Hamas' press office said Zionist strikes killed at least 78 people in the Gaza Strip overnight. An AFP correspondent said the southern city of Khan Yunis was hit hard.

A young girl scoured rubble for salvageable items, while some scrambled to reach safer areas in Rafah on the Egyptian border, their belongings piled onto carts drawn by donkeys and tractors. In central Gaza's devastated Al-Maghazi refugee camp, one woman raised her hands and cried out amid the wreckage of warped metal, gutted buildings and overturned vehicles.

Continued on Page 6

Trump notches landslide win in Iowa caucuses

DES MOINES: Donald Trump stormed towards New Hampshire on Tuesday, knowing that a repeat of his runaway win in Iowa would all but seal the Republican nomination to set up his rematch with President Joe Biden in November. The scandal-plagued former president romped home in the first contest of the drawn-out US presidential race, scoring 51 percent of Iowa voters to trounce rivals Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley for the biggest Iowa caucuses victory in modern history.

The three Republican contenders will

meet again for the next contest in New Hampshire next Tuesday and Trump, 77, will have a chance effectively to deliver a killer blow. "I really think this is time now for everybody, the country, to come together," Trump told a victory rally in Iowa in an unusually conciliatory tone toward his would-be rivals. But the tycoon and former reality TV star quickly pivoted to his usual harsh rhetoric, promising to shut the Mexican border to stop an "invasion" of migrants and pledging to drill for oil if reelected.

It's an abrasive message that has divided the country and promises a bitter year's campaigning ahead as Trump seeks what he says will be vengeance against Biden. But it's also a message that has delivered Trump a powerful base of support. "Trump is demonstrating impressive strength among blue-collar, working-class, and rural voters. His victory

informed by the outgoing government that no minister will be attending the session and that he was calling the session off, MP Dawood Maarafi protested against the cancellation. Saadoun said the next sessions will be on Feb 6 and 7.

Under Kuwaiti law and practice for the past 60 years, the presence of at least one Cabinet minister is essential to convene the National Assembly session. However, Maarafi and several other MPs contend that sessions can be held without the government's presence, insisting that there is no provision in the constitution that clearly states that the presence of ministers is essential to convene sessions. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah submitted his government's resignation on

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: MPs arrive to attend a session at the National Assembly on Jan 16, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



GAZA: A Palestinian woman reacts in front of a destroyed building in the Al-Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza on Jan 16, 2024. — AFP



DES MOINES: Former US President Donald Trump attends a watch party during the 2024 Iowa Republican presidential caucuses on Jan 15, 2024. — AFP (See Page 7)

was not a surprise," Dennis J Goldford, a political science professor at Drake University in Des Moines, told AFP. Trump was heading to a campaign event in New Hampshire on Tuesday night — with a stop on the way to appear in court in New York, where he is on trial for defamation in the wake of a jury finding he was liable for a 1990s sexual assault against writer E Jean Carroll. — AFP

Local

Lack of private sector support may delay strategic payroll alternative

CSC issues new regulations for expats' end-of-service benefits

KUWAIT: The strategic payroll alternative, anticipated to be ready by the end of the current fiscal year in early April, may not be implemented in the first half of this year. The government perceives it as lacking support for the private sector.

Ministerial sources reveal that the current interim government lacks a clear vision for this legislation, suggesting that a decision on its fate rests with the incoming government. Informed sources note that technical teams within the ministerial economic committee have formulated recommendations aligning with a former finance minister's stance. They emphasize that the strategic alternative aims not only to address salaries but also to link compensation with employee performance.

The recommendations aim to gauge employees' cognitive and professional development, with the

goal of not only maintaining Kuwaitis' interest in working in the private sector but also increasing their presence at the expense of expatriates. Additionally, the strategic alternative aims to avoid inflating the government's functional apparatus and hindering the sustainability of state public finances, potentially impacting the launch of capital-intensive projects.

Sources indicate that the parliamentary finance committee has postponed discussions on the strategic alternative until the formation of the new government and a subsequent meeting with the minister of finance. The technical report underscores the need to address labor market imbalances before considering the strategic alternative to prevent exacerbating the financial crisis and destabilizing the labor market, especially given the presence of numerous unemployed Kuwaiti youth unable to se-

cure positions in government agencies.

To mitigate the financial crisis, sources stress the importance of promoting the private sector as a preferred work environment. The recommendations also propose enhancing job benefits for Kuwaitis in the private sector, such as reducing retirement age or duration, extending annual leave and introducing unemployment insurance. If approved, the strategic payroll alternative should apply universally to both existing and new employees entering the labor market after the law's implementation.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Civil Service Commission has intimated government agencies about the new rules and regulations for the payment of end-of-service benefits to non-Kuwaiti employees, based on numerous communications from the authorities regarding the issue.

The rules and regulations included: a copy of the end-of-service gratuity form issued by the integrated systems, a clearance issued by the ministry of Interior "Judgments Enforcement Department" for the case required to pay end-of-service benefits, as well as a clearance issued by the ministry of Electricity, Water and Communications.

The conditions also included a copy of the contract concluded for the case for which disbursement is sought, and a copy of the decision issued for separation from service. The commission pointed out that they attached a statement of career progression and details of the comprehensive monthly bonuses, provided that they include all increases granted during service, and the entry of all financial and functional data on the integrated systems of the civil service system.

Kuwait Food Fair welcomes French chef to presidents

KUWAIT: As part of its renewed, qualitative and unprecedented activities in the world of the hospitality industry, the 12th Kuwait Food Fair welcomed Guillaume Gomez, the personal representative for gastronomy and food of French President Emmanuel Macron.

Claire le Flecher, Ambassador of France to Kuwait, stated: "I would like to thank the organizing committee of the food exhibition for its interest in French knowhow in the field of hospitality, agri-food and culinary arts. I am very happy that the ambassador of French gastronomy and former chef of the French Presidential Palace 'Elysée', Guillaume Gomez, is participating in the fair."

The presence of Gomez in Kuwait with other French chefs, such as Car-

los Marsal, shows the great interest of Kuwaitis in French culinary arts and our rich bilateral exchanges in the field of gastronomy. "I am delighted to see a significant French participation in the event through the presence of a large number of producers and professional chefs. It is a unique opportunity to exchange knowhow and experiences between participants, whether they are companies or chefs. We hope that cooperation in this area between our two countries will expand to new and diverse activities in the near future," le Flecher added.

Gomez won the title of Meilleur Ouvrier de France in 2004, becoming the youngest winner in the history of the competition at the age of just 25. He spent 25 years at the Elysée Palace, serving four French presidents.



KUWAIT: Chef Guillaume Gomez (L) with French Ambassador Claire le Flécher at the food exhibition.

In March 2021, Macron appointed Gomez the ambassador for gastronomy and named him his personal representative for gastronomy and the

food industry. Today, Gomez tours the world promoting French cuisine and is a judge at some of the world's top events.

NBK holds masterclass in partnership with IE Business School

KUWAIT: Regarding its employees as the most valuable resource, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always strives to develop them and increase their efficiency through the best training and development programs and workshops in collaboration with globally renowned educational institutions and experts. In this context, the bank organized a masterclass focusing on Leadership & Influence titled "Achieve Greater Influence and Impact with Less Effort", in partnership with IE University - Business School Madrid.

This masterclass is the last of a series of 6 masterclasses organized by NBK covering a number of key topics including Innovation and Leadership and Effective Communication and Negotiation Skills.

The masterclass was delivered by Professor Mark Fritz, the prominent leadership speaker, and professor at IE University - Business School Madrid and attended by 40 NBK leaders.

In the masterclass, Mark shared with participants a framework with the ways for leaders to extend their influence to places they cannot personally reach. When leaders extend their influence and impact, they expand success, not just for themselves, but also for everyone in their team.

Mark has mentored leaders and delivered masterclasses in over 50 countries across the world. He has also delivered leadership development programs for leading companies, banks and other institutions, and taught courses on ownership, leadership and influence at prestigious business schools across Europe. Speaking on this, Maryam Al-Nasrallah, Talent Management Manager, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are always working to enhance the competencies and technical skills of our employees, including leadership capabilities and personal and professional skills. This aligns with



Professor Mark Fritz delivers the masterclass.

NBK's belief that work team efficiency is essential to ensure the quality of different banking services provided to customers, and that continuous training keeps employees abreast of the changes and developments taking place in the banking industry."

"Investing in our employees is instrumental in our strategy to achieve sustainable growth and maintain our excellence and leadership. Therefore, NBK strives to keep pace with the latest developments in the training and development area, as part of the continuous support provided to employees to empower and qualify them through specialized pro-

grams," she added.

"NBK has a unique work environment that is comparable with international peers. We harness all our capabilities to develop employees and always seek to unlock their creativity and innovation, which positively reflects on their performance, and help maintain our leadership position, both locally and regionally," she noted. Founded in 1973, IE Business School is considered one of the leading and top ranked business schools in the world according to international magazines and newspapers including Forbes, The Economist, Financial Times and Bloomberg.

Kuwait and China to cooperate in cybersecurity field

KUWAIT: The head of the National Center for Cybersecurity, Engineer Muhammad Bouarki, discussed on Tuesday, with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait, Zhang Jianwei, ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of cybersecurity, especially developing the technological and security infrastructure and exchanging experiences between the two sides in this regard.

The National Center for Cybersecurity stated in a press statement that this cooperation comes within the framework of enhancing cooperation with friendly countries in the field of cybersecurity and an embodiment of the strategic relations that Kuwait enjoys with China. He pointed out that during the meeting, the possibility of improving academic cooperation in the field of cybersecurity and artificial intelligence was discussed, which would contribute to strengthening national capabilities in this field. The statement quoted Ambassador Jianwei as expressing his country's aspirations to provide support and exchange experiences with Kuwait in the field of cybersecurity.

In turn, Bouarki welcomed the aspirations expressed by the Chinese ambassador to achieve cooperation in the field of cybersecurity, stressing his desire to meet those aspirations in a way that contributes to strengthening joint cooperation. —KUNA

Committee for Arab rules of origin opens, Kuwait participates

CAIRO: The 13th meeting of the Technical Committee for Arab Rules of Origin began Tuesday, headed by Saudi Arabia and with the participation of Arab member states of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), including the State of Kuwait. Chief of economic integration directorate at the League of Arab States, Dr Bahjat Abu Al-Nasser said in his opening statement that this assembly, which will be held over three days, will review the general requirements of the Arab rules of origin for Arab goods that will be completed based on observations of the Arab member states of GAFTA.

Kuwait is participating in the meeting with a delegation headed by the Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Industry, Shamlan Al-Juhaidli, and includes the Director of the Industrial Development and Support Department at the Authority, Dr Abdullah Al-Hajri, and the Director of the Air Cargo Customs Department at the General Administration of Customs, Mutlaq Al-Anazi.

This issue is a "permanent item" on the agenda of the Technical Committee meetings until the final review of the requirements is completed, indicating that "the review of about 90 percent of the general requirements has been completed, and the remaining items will be discussed in preparation for submitting them to the Economic and Social Council to consider their adoption," added Dr Abu Al-Nasser.

He elaborated that during the assembly, Egypt and Saudi Arabia will present their practical experience with the "certified exporter" system, based on the exchange of information and the sharing of best practical practices among Arab countries to maximize benefits from these experiences and closely identify the system and the advantages that will accrue to countries if it is implemented facilitating the movement of trade between Arab countries.

Dr Nasser explained that the "certified exporter" is a system that grants exporters who have the requirements stipulated in executive procedures to replace the issuance of permits of origin within the framework of preferential trade agreements, or with a commercial invoice or other commercial document, with an agreed-upon statement proving the preferential origin of the goods and granting this exporter with special codes, so that each approved source has its own code, and the commercial document containing the code of the approved source, is treated as a document proving its origin. — KUNA

MEW holds mock evacuation drill in main building

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy conducted a mock evacuation exercise at the ministry's main building on Tuesday.

Assistant Undersecretary for the Technical Services Sector in the ministry, Eng Aaqoul Al-Enezi said that the ministry aims to conduct the mock evacuation exercise for the ministry's employees in the building in order to prepare them for any potential emergency situations. The drill also helps the ministry to check out on the readiness of the maintenance team responsible for alarm and fire systems and security and safety measures so that it can deal with any possible emergency situation.

"The experience was successful and confirms the ministry's readiness to deal with emergency incidents that can occur at any time," Al-Enezi explained.



People come out of the building following the mock evacuation drill.

Local

Zain and SACGC strategic partners of Kuwait National Robotics Competition

Under ‘Innovation Nation’ initiative to foster creativity

KUWAIT: In support of their joint vision to invest in the digital and tech capabilities of young people in Kuwait, Zain and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) have announced that they are joining the Kuwait National Robotics Competition 2024 as strategic partners. The competition is organized by the Computer Science Department, College of Science, Kuwait University from March 2-3.

The exciting competition, to be hosted by Kuwait University's Conferences Center in Shada-diya, comes in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Kuwait Technical College (KTC), and private sector supporters. The initiative is a successful result of direct and active collaboration between the public and private sectors to empower the next generation of innovators in Kuwait.

This partnership comes under the umbrella of Innovation Nation, the initiative under which all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs fall, with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) areas. The initiative mainly targets young people and entrepreneurs and aims to foster a digitally capable generation.

The Kuwait National Robotics Competition targets middle school, high school, and university-level students, and features a rich and comprehensive program to develop various technical skills related to building, assembling, and programming robotics. The initiative uses a unique combination of theoretical lessons and practical exercises, and also focuses on invaluable personal skills like teamwork, problem-solving, and

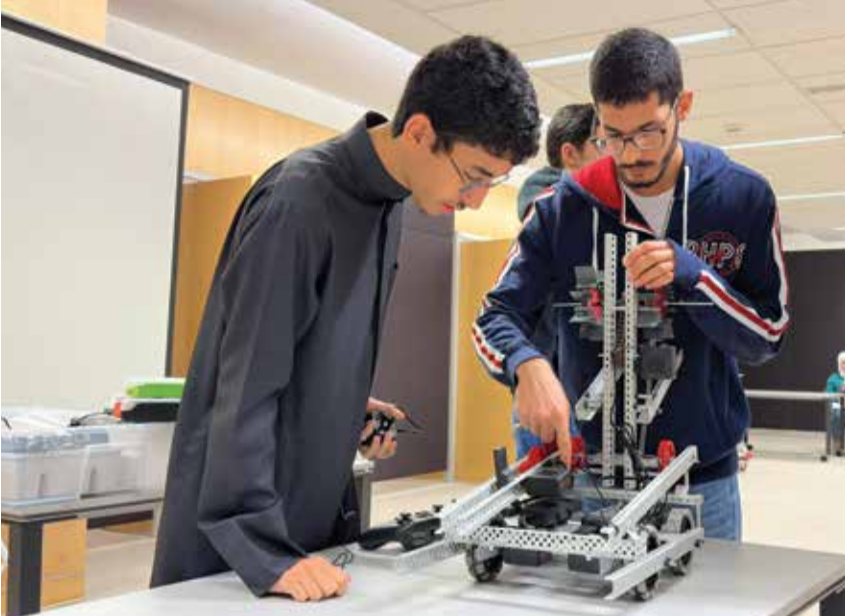


Officials from Zain, SACGC and KU's Computer Science Department.

critical thinking. The competition features three levels, each designed for a specific age group. The middle school level centers around the basics of robotics and programming and encourages young minds to explore and innovate. The high school level brings a more advanced platform that pushes the boundaries of creativity, technical skills, and teamwork. The university level is the most advanced, with theoretical and practical skills put to the test. Each level has its

special rules and challenges for a unique and informative experience for everyone.

This competition represents an important step towards fostering creativity and empowering Kuwait's next generation of technology leaders and innovators. In addition, the winning teams in the Kuwait National Robotics Competition will represent the State of Kuwait in the upcoming global VEX Robotics Competition to be held in the United States in April.



Competition aims to empower the next generation of technology leaders in Kuwait.

This announcement adds to the long list of programs and initiatives presented and supported by Zain and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity under their strategic partnership that kicked-off last year. The partnership focuses on a number of strategic pillars and sustainable goals like supporting tech innovation, empowering entrepreneurs and startups, encouraging creativity, investing in the digital skills of young people, and more.

You've been breathing all wrong: Expert

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Breathing is an involuntary action that humans naturally take all day long. But how many times does one pause and question: Am I breathing properly? Nearly never. According to Abeer Al-Osaimi, a certified transformational breath coach, almost everyone breathes much shorter and shallower than they're biologically supposed to be, as they fail to maximize the use of their lungs' full capacity.

The inefficient use of the lungs tends to limit the reach of oxygen to our body cells, which causes a defect in their function, negatively affecting our quality of living, Osaimi noted. "Our breath is our connection with life. The more deeply we breathe, the more deeply we can live life," she said.

Osaimi explained that we are all born with a normal and healthy breathing pattern. But, as we grow up and face different incidents in life, almost everyone tends to react to them by suppressing their emotions as a survival mechanism. Subsequently, people's breathing habits change in response to the repeated encounters of these arousing emotions such as facing short or rapid breathing during moments of sadness, anxiety or fear.

Transformational breathing is a deep breathing technique that Osaimi uses to help people through the release of negative emotions and physical pain that has been built up in their



Abeer Al-Osaimi

minds and cells for years. During the exercise, one gets into a very deep state as their long-suppressed emotions and buried pain come to shore. Osaimi referred to people she has dealt with during sessions, who expressed feeling pain in parts of their bodies that were hurt years ago due to accidents or abuse. "The process triggers memories that one might think they almost forgot, only to realize they have been embedded in their bodies all long," said Osaimi.

For that, she highlighted the importance of learning to let go of these negative feelings as they can subconsciously influence one's life. "Every action that you take in life is merely based on your internal emotions. The more you can release these emotions, the better life you'll lead," Osaimi said.

Kuwait Times went to experience this deep breathing session to see how the process goes. It starts with monitoring the normal breathing pattern, learning to control it by focusing on creating a harmonious continuous rhythm between each inhalation and exhalation, and focusing on gentle deep abdominal breathing into the nostrils until the belly is full of air before slowly exhaling the air out of the



nose. Through the repetition of this exercise in the long term, deep breathing, according to Osaimi, works on developing one's mental, spiritual and physical states.

Osaimi noted that deep breathing can enhance one's focus levels, as 40 percent of oxygen goes directly to the brain. It also works on strongly facilitating their mental states and wellbeing, as it helps one reach an emotionally stable and relaxed condition. "It can let you regain strength, balance and grounding with life," Osaimi noted.

On the spiritual side, it improves one's mind-body connection, bringing them to become more self-aware, which helps one stay more engrossed in the moment and stop zoning out into random negative thoughts and memories. Osaimi believes the impact of this state is very profound, as it feels like cleaning dust from inside. "While people keep looking for peace from the outside world, this breathing technique

makes them realize that peace can only be found within," she said.

On the physical level, she explained that deep breathing can feed our cells with enough oxygen, which can save us from diseases such as cancer that is prone to grow in places of our bodies that are low in oxygen. "It truly turned out that it's our suppressed emotions that make us sick," she asserted. It also purifies our bodies from toxins, enhances blood circulation and the digestion process and acts as a massage for the organs in our lower abdominals.

According to Osaimi, the science of transformational breathing was developed in the '70s and is now trained in around 54 countries in almost 10 different languages. It's a practice that has highly been embraced in the Gulf, including Kuwait, where multiple cases showed a very quick recovery from different diseases, just through learning proper breathing.

Kosovo seeks to deepen ties with Kuwait: Envoy

KUWAIT: The Director General of the Diplomatic Academy in the Republic of Kosovo, Ambassador Bakr Ismail, affirmed on Tuesday his country's keenness to deepen relations with Kuwait and expand them into more areas. Ismail was delivering a speech at the first seminar of the Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute that was held within the seasonal training program for the year 2024 and entitled 'Kosovo and International Relations.' The speech was delivered in the presence of the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Affairs of the Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute, Ambassador Nasser Al-Sabeeh and a number of heads of foreign missions and diplomats.

Ismail praised the charitable work provided by Kuwait through its institutions in the Republic of Kosovo and its efforts in building mosques and providing relief aid. During the symposium, he reviewed the stages of formation of political life in the Republic of Kosovo, the stages of the war with Serbia, and the presence of international peacekeeping forces in the region. He pointed out the suffering of the people of Kosovo, who continued their education from homes and mosques. They were affected by all different aspects of life after the closure of government institutions, universities and schools due to the repercussions of the war, he said. He touched on his country's relations with neighboring and friendly countries, explaining that his country is recognized by 117 countries, including 22 European Union countries. A short film about the Republic of Kosovo and its geographical borders was screened explaining the history of the Republic and the stages of its formation. — KUNA



Bakr Ismail



Removing illegal camp.



A municipal vehicle removes illegal camping structures.

Municipality removes 137 camps

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality announced the removal of 137 camps for violating the conditions and regulations of camping in the governorates of Jahra and Ahmadi after the supervisory teams from the Spring Camps Committee intensified their tours to inspect the violating camps.

The Director of the Department of Public Hygiene and Road Works in Jahra Governorate, Mohammed Al-Jabaa, said

in a press statement on Tuesday that the tours carried out by the supervisory team in the governorate resulted in the removal of 12 camps, the lifting of 20 mobile vehicles, 250 motorcycles and six street shops as the tours included the areas near Jahra and Al-Mutlaa.

Nawaf Al-Mutairi, director of the Public Hygiene and Road Works Department in Ahmadi province, said in a similar statement that the governorate's supervisory team has removed 125 camps for violating the conditions and regulations.

Al-Mutairi stressed that the inspection teams will not hesitate to remove any violating camp calling for the need to adhere to the rules and regulations for setting up spring camps.



The seized motorcycles being removed.



A bulldozer clears a camp site.

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KAPP invites SOQ for fixed telecom network project

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications (MoC), invites local and international companies, excluding entities licensed by CITRA or their affiliates, to submit statements of qualification (SOQ) for the fixed telecommunications network development project (the Project).

The fixed telecommunications network development project aims to establish a public-private partnership to design, finance, build, operate, maintain, and transfer Kuwait's nationwide, high-speed fiber broadband network. As such, the relevant project company (the Project Company) will operate and improve the current MoC fixed telecommunications network and roll out the fiber network in areas not yet covered.

The Project Company will be entitled to the usage and exploitation rights of MoC's active infrastructure (eg, XPON, NGN) and passive infrastructure (eg, ducts, central offices, dark fiber) during the 50 years term of the public-private partnership agreement to be entered into between the Project Company and the MoC in respect of the project (PPP agreement). The Project Company will upgrade and enhance the fiber network in areas covered and roll-out fiber network in areas not yet covered within five years from the date of the PPP agreement to achieve 90 percent coverage of households and businesses.

The authority said in a statement to KUNA that this call is in line with the government's orientation towards activating the public-private partnership program in accordance with the provisions of Law No 116 of 2014 on partnership between the two sectors, its executive regulations and in cooperation with the ministry of Transportation. —KUNA

Interior honors HR, IT teams

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed that the human resources and information technology team specialized in transforming the services of the Interior into digital deserved to be honored for its successive achievements and continuous efforts in developing the security technology system and providing all security services online.

He stressed that serving the people of Kuwait is an honor for all of us and this is an inherent duty for everyone. The facilitation of the needs of citizens and the completion of their transactions with ease in all sectors of the Ministry of Interior is part of this duty, he said. This came during the reception and honoring of Human Resources and Information Technology team specialized in transforming the services provided to citizens in the service sectors of the Ministry of Interior.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A bird's eye view of Sheikh Jaber Cultural Center. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Apply AI to enhance performance of govt institutions: CAIT official

CAIT, Huawei hold workshop on 'Innovation and Application in Artificial Intelligence'

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology, Dr Ammar Al-Husseini on Tuesday underlined the importance of applying artificial intelligence techniques in state institutions and their role in improving performance in the government sector.

In a statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the third workshop "Innovation and Application in Artificial Intelligence" which was held by the CAIT in cooperation with Huawei, Al-Husseini said that this workshop aims to understand the technology of artificial intelligence and keep pace with the rapid changes in this field, in addition to studying how to adopt these technologies in various government agencies according to the needs of each agency.

He added that the use of this technology would contribute to changing the level of business performance in the government sector to provide better and faster services, adding that AI has been used in various agencies in the country. Al-Hus-



Dr Ammar Al-Husseini

seini stressed the necessity of adopting these technologies and ensuring the initiative in digital transformation because of its positive impact on changing performance and improving the nature of work and thus developing government sectors. He pointed out that the previous two



The workshop titled "Innovation and Application in Artificial Intelligence."

workshops touched on machine and deep learning and the development of artificial intelligence, with the participation of leaders and employees from government agencies. The cooperation of the Central Agency for Information Technology with Huawei comes within the framework of

improving technology, developing systems in a more effective manner, and exploring the possibilities of artificial intelligence to be a catalyst for innovation and contribute to providing creative solutions to meet current and future challenges in the government sector. — KUNA



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The International Friends Club (IFC-Kuwait) New Year 2024 get-together.

IFC-Kuwait holds New Year get-together

KUWAIT: The International Friends Club (IFC-Kuwait) held New Year 2024 get-together with the participation of the club members and spouses of the ambassadors accredited

to the State of Kuwait. Among the attendees were lady diplomats, friends and members of the club and representatives of companies who sponsored the event.

At the end of the ceremony, the IFC presented gifts to all the participants. In the closing remarks, Madame Nargis Al-Shatti, the advisor to the IFC expressed her gratitude and thanks for the wonderful evening and appreciated everyone who contributed to the success of this event. She congratulated and wished all a happy New Year wishing that the New Year 2024 would be filled with happiness, joy, wellness and success.





Trump ramps up aggressive rhetoric

UK parliament braces for Rwanda migrant law battle



PYONGYANG: This picture taken on Jan 15, 2024 by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) shows Kim Jong Un (right) speaking at a session of the Supreme People's Assembly. — AFP

N Korea abolishes reunification policy

Growing hostility 'disproportionate' response to recent changes in the south: Analyst

SEOUL: Kim Jong Un threatened South Korea with war if “even 0.001 mm” of the North’s territory is violated, as Pyongyang abolished agencies that oversaw cooperation and reunification, state media said Tuesday.

The North Korean leader also said Pyongyang would not recognize the two countries’ de facto maritime border, the Northern Limit Line, and called for constitutional changes allowing the North to “occupy” Seoul in war, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

In Seoul, President Yoon Suk Yeol told his cabinet that should the nuclear-armed North carry out a provocation, South Korea would hit back with a response “multiple times stronger”, pointing to his military’s “overwhelming response capabilities”.

The hawkish rhetoric on both sides of the border follows a sharp deterioration of inter-Korean ties in recent months, with Pyongyang’s November spy satellite launch prompting Seoul to partially suspend a 2018 military agreement aimed at defusing tensions.

Pyongyang’s decision to jettison the agencies charged with overseeing cooperation and reunification with the South was announced by the North’s rubber-stamp parliament, KCNA said, part of a string of recent measures that have escalated tensions, including live-fire artillery drills and missile launches.

In a speech delivered at the Supreme People’s Assembly, Kim called for drawing up new legal measures to define South Korea as “the most hostile state”, KCNA reported. “In my opinion, we can specify in our constitution the issue of completely occupying, subjugating and reclaiming the ROK (Republic of Korea) and annex it as a part of the territory of our Republic in case a war breaks out on the Korean peninsula,” Kim said. “If the Republic of Korea violates even 0.001 mm of our territorial land, air and waters, it will be considered a war provocation,” he said.

‘Principal enemy’

The decision comes shortly after Kim labelled South Korea the “principal enemy” and stated that continuing to seek reconciliation was a “mistake”.

In their constitutions, both North and South Korea claim sovereignty over the whole of the peninsula.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Republic of Korea—the North and South’s official names — were founded 75 years ago but still technically regard each other as illegal entities. Until now, what passed for diplomatic relations was handled by Seoul’s Unification Ministry and Pyongyang’s Committee for Peaceful Reunification — one of the agencies the Supreme People’s Assembly has now declared abolished. “The two most hostile states, which are at war, are now in acute confrontation on the Korean peninsula,” the decision adopted by the assembly said, according to KCNA. “The reunification of Korea can never be achieved with the Republic of Korea,” it added.

Cho Han-bum, a researcher at the Korea Institute for National Unification, noted that the North Korean system has long been grounded on the idea of reunification, an unachieved wish of the country’s founding leader and Kim’s grandfather Kim Il

Sung. “Now he is denying everything that his predecessors have done,” he told AFP.

Pyongyang may be engaging in “mirror imaging”, responding to the Yoon government’s recent adjustments to the mission of the unification ministry to focus more on human rights issues in the North. “But the Kim regime is taking disproportionate steps in dismantling its inter-Korean organizations and formalizing a hostile policy line toward the South,” he added.

Weapons tests

At Pyongyang’s year-end policy meetings, Kim threatened a nuclear attack on the South and called for a build-up of his country’s military arsenal ahead of armed conflict he warned could “break out any time”. On Sunday, the North launched a solid-fuel hypersonic missile, just days after Pyongyang staged live-fire exercises near the country’s tense maritime border with South Korea, which prompted counter-exercises and evacuation orders for some border islands belonging to the South.

Kim also successfully put a spy satellite



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un

into orbit late last year, after receiving what Seoul said was Russian help, in exchange for arms transfers for Moscow’s war in Ukraine. Traditional allies Russia and North Korea have boosted ties recently, with Kim making a rare overseas trip to see President Vladimir Putin in Russia’s far east in September. On Monday, a North Korean government delegation headed by Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui arrived in Moscow for an official visit, KCNA reported. — AFP

Palestinians decry Zionist raids in West Bank as ‘revenge’

TULKARM, Palestine: Amid the warren of Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm, in the occupied West Bank, armed Palestinian militants wander around and greet passers-by from the ruins left by a Zionist raid. The city, home to two refugee camps, shows the scars of the increasing number of Zionist military operations in the West Bank targeting militant strongholds.

Zionist raids were not uncommon before the recent escalation in the decades-long occupation of Palestine, but the ongoing Zionist attack on Gaza has been accompanied by a marked intensification. The Zionist army says it is “conducting night-time counterterrorism operations to apprehend suspects, many of whom are members of the terrorist organization Hamas”, and that there have been “over 700 attempted attacks” in the West Bank since the start of the war.

But Said, a 23-year-old Palestinian militant in Nur Shams, said the operations were an attempt at “revenge” against Palestinians. “They can’t get over what happened on Oct 7, they didn’t anticipate it,” he told AFP, weapon in hand.

The young militant is a member of the “Tulkarm Brigade”, an armed Palestinian organization that brings together various militant factions. Since the start of the war in Gaza, Zionist forces have conducted eight raids in Tulkarm, including four in December, a militant in the camp told AFP on condition of anonymity.

On Oct 20, the Zionist army announced the death of a border guard after a confrontation with armed men in the camp. More than 330 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by the Zionist army or settlers since Oct 7, including at least 35 in Tulkarm, according to an AFP tally based on figures from the Palestinian health ministry. Tulkarm, in the northern West Bank, sits directly on the border with the Zionist entity.

‘Upside down’

At a bend in an alley, Assoum, a 26-year-old militant, was navigating his vehicle between piles of rubble. “Nothing will stop us,” he said, adding that



TULKARM: A Palestinian child walks past rubble at the Nur Shams camp for Palestinian refugees, where the Zionist army has conducted multiple raids, near the occupied West Bank city of Tulkarm on Jan 8, 2024. — AFP photos

support for the brigade was widespread. “The entire camp is a battalion.”

Said and Assoum are both former prisoners of the Zionist entity and said they wanted to “bring an end to the occupation”. On Dec 26, while demolishing the home of a Palestinian that Zionists claimed was a wanted individual, the Zionist army caused severe damage to the home of Yousef Zendiq, 50. “My house is uninhabitable” and “my clothes are in the car” said the father of four. With nowhere to live, he set up a tent.

A week ago, the Zionist army raided the home of one of his relatives, Sabhia Zendiq, 65, and arrested her along with her husband, before releasing them. When she returned home, she found her home turned upside down. Zionist soldiers “entered the house and came back with a bag of children’s toys, including some plastic guns, and declared ‘you are terrorists’”, she said. “They want revenge,” her husband said. “What they can’t do in Gaza they do here.”

‘A little Gaza’

Sitting amid the rubble, Tamim Khreis, a school principal, was sipping coffee with friends. The 42-year-old charged that the Zionists “want to destroy people, displace them and break their resilience”. Sitting with Khreis, his friend Abdelkader Hamdan interrupted to say: “Before, (the Zionists) drove them out,” referring to the Nakba, which is Arabic for catastrophe, of 1948 when the establishment of the Zionist entity forced 760,000 Palestinians from their homes. “Today they are pursuing them in the place where they were expelled to,” Hamdan said.

On Al-Manshiya street, all that remained of a two-story building that once housed a kindergarten and a wedding hall were children’s drawings on the outer walls and a stone plaque with the logo of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. Saleh, 10, was playing nearby with his friends. “It’s a nursery school, what do they want with it?” he asked. “Al-Manshiya is like a little Gaza.” — AFP

WHO: Adult use of tobacco shrinking despite interference

GENEVA: The number of adult tobacco users is steadily dropping, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday, but warned that Big Tobacco was working hard to attract young people. In 2022, about one in five adults around the world were smokers or consumed other tobacco products, compared to one in every three in 2000, the UN health agency said.

A fresh WHO report looking at trends in the prevalence of tobacco use between 2000 and 2030 showed that 150 countries were successfully reducing tobacco use through regulation, high taxes and other measures. But it cautioned that the tobacco industry was stepping up its efforts to circumvent and undermine that progress, including through systematic attempts to hook children with their highly addictive products.

They are using “what I would personally call criminal efforts,” Ruediger Krech, director of the WHO’s health promotion department, told reporters in Geneva. “They are killing, and they continue to do everything possible to undermine the countries’ very good efforts.” Currently, tobacco use is still estimated to kill more than eight million people each year, including an estimated 1.3 million non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke, WHO statistics show. And the WHO warned that while smoking rates are declining, it will take decades for the number of tobacco-related deaths to follow suit.

Though the number of smokers has steadily shrunk, the WHO said the world was set to miss its goal of a 30-percent drop in tobacco use between 2010 and 2025. Fifty-six countries around the world are expected to hit that target, including Brazil, which has already slashed tobacco use by 35 percent since 2010.

Six countries have meanwhile seen tobacco use rise since 2010 — the Republic of Congo, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Moldova and Oman. Overall, the world is on track to shrink tobacco use by a quarter over the 15-year period to 2025, the report said. — AFP

International

UK parliament braces for Rwanda migrant law battle

Controversial legislation ‘not compatible’ with international law: UN refugee agency

LONDON: Britain's plan to send migrants to Rwanda returns to the spotlight on Tuesday, when lawmakers debate the controversial scheme, testing leader Rishi Sunak's authority with a general election around the corner.

The prime minister — in power since October 2022 — has staked his political future on slashing record levels of regular and irregular migration. His government's Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill is key to that pledge.

But the legislation has reopened schisms in his ruling Conservatives between right-wingers and moderates, meaning Sunak faces a fight to get it on the statute books. The plan is Sunak's answer to a unanimous UK Supreme Court ruling in November that deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda is illegal under international law. It would compel judges to treat Rwanda as a safe third country and proposes giving UK ministers powers to disregard sections of international and British human rights legislation.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reiterated this week that the legislation and a recently signed treaty with Kigali designating Rwanda “safe” were “not compatible” with international refugee law.

Meanwhile, the bill has triggered deep factional Tory infighting not seen since the wranglings over Brexit. Sunak faced down party rebels last month and won a knife-edge parliamentary

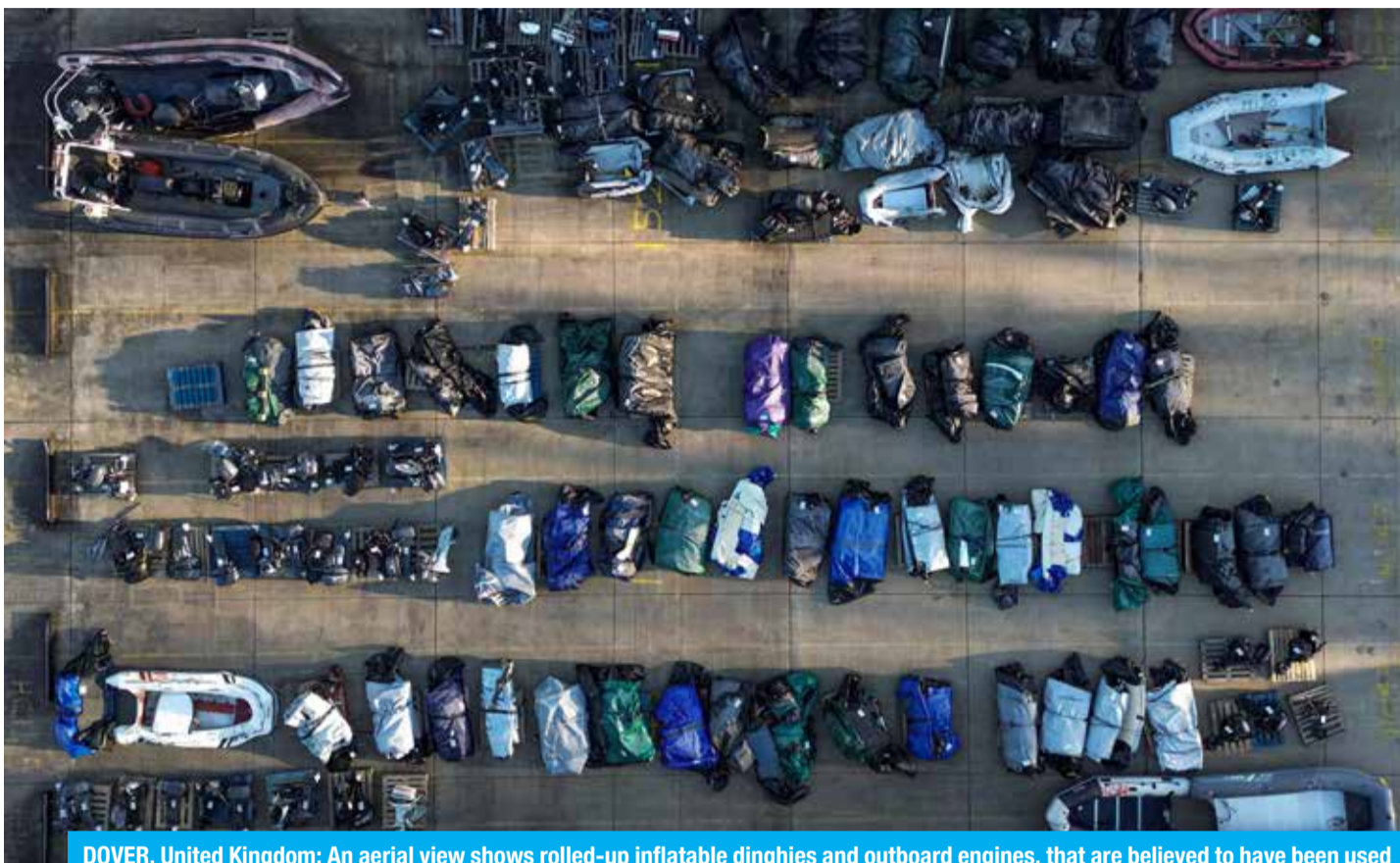
vote on the Rwanda legislation. He must do so again, in a vote expected on Wednesday night. First, beginning on Tuesday, MPs will debate a series of amendments to the legislation. They are unlikely to be passed but will reveal the extent of opposition that Sunak faces.

‘Resolve this issue’

More than 50 Tory MPs have publicly backed right-wing amendments that toughen up the bill, including by disapplying international law and restricting asylum seekers' rights to appeal against deportation. They include two Tory deputy chairmen, who are testing Sunak's mettle for party discipline amid calls for their dismissal from the roles.

If the UK leader agrees to right-wingers' demands, then the bill would almost certainly be scuppered by party centrists, who oppose any violations of international law and say the legislation already pushes the limits. Sunak said on Monday he was “talking to all my colleagues” and was “determined to get this new legislation on to the statute book so we can get our Rwanda scheme up and running”. “I'm confident that the bill we have got is the toughest that anyone has ever seen and it will resolve this issue once and for all,” he told reporters.

Sunak says the law is essential to deter migrants from considering travelling to the UK via unauthorized



DOVER, United Kingdom: An aerial view shows rolled-up inflatable dinghies and outboard engines, that are believed to have been used by migrants and asylum seekers while crossing the English Channel from France to England. — AFP

routes, particularly on small boat crossings from France. Around 30,000 asylum seekers crossed the English Channel on rudimentary vessels last year. Five died

trying to make the journey this past weekend. Sunak has yet to announce the date of the UK's general election but has said it will be held this year. Some opinion polls

put the main opposition Labour party more than 20 points ahead of the Tories, suggesting the ruling party is heading for a landslide defeat. — AFP

Kenya to charge cult leader with murder, terrorism

NAIROBI, Kenya: Kenyan prosecutors said on Tuesday they intend to charge a suspected cult leader and dozens of other suspects with murder and terrorism over the deaths of more than 400 of his followers, after a court warned it may have to free him.

Self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie is alleged to have incited his followers to starve to death in order to “meet Jesus” in a case that shocked the world. Mackenzie was arrested in April last year after bodies were discovered in a forest near the Indian Ocean coast.

His pre-trial detention has been extended on several occasions as investigations draw out. “Upon thorough analysis of the evidence, the director of public prosecutions is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to prosecute 95 suspects,” the DPP's office said.

The move comes a week after a court gave authorities 14 days to prosecute the former taxi driver or release him. Mackenzie and his co-accused will face 10 charges including murder, manslaughter and terrorism. They will also be charged with “subjecting a child to torture”, the prosecutors said. It was not immediately clear when the 95 suspects would appear in court but prosecutors said they undertook “to expeditiously prosecute the matters”.

Autopsies have revealed most of the victims died



NAIROBI: Self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie, who is accused of inciting cult followers to starve to death “to meet Jesus”, appears in the dock at the court in Malindi on May 2, 2023. — AFP

of hunger. But others, including children, appear to have been strangled, beaten, or suffocated. To date, 429 bodies have been located. The grim discoveries, in what has been dubbed the “Shakahola forest massacre”, prompted the government to flag the need for tighter control of fringe denominations. Kenya has a history of self-declared pastors and movements.

A Senate commission of inquiry reported in October that Mackenzie had faced charges back in 2017 for his extreme preaching. “(But) the criminal justice system failed to deter the heinous activities of Paul Mackenzie in Shakahola,” it said. He was acquitted of charges of radicalization in 2017 for illegally providing school teaching. He rejected the formal educational system that he claimed was not in line with the Bible. — AFP

Millions of expat Brits now eligible to vote in UK poll

LONDON: An estimated 3.5 million Britons living overseas will from Tuesday be eligible to vote in UK general elections, is one of the biggest increases in the country's electoral franchise in a century. The expansion in the electorate follows a change in the law, approved by parliament in 2022, scrapping a previous curb on UK citizens voting if they had lived overseas for over 15 years.

Implemented ahead of an election set for later this year, it is the most significant change to the voter rolls since a 1928 law granted women equal voting rights, and a 1969 move to lower the voting age to 18 from 21. Britons worldwide will now be able to register to vote online, regardless of how long they have been overseas.

Under UK election law, once registered they will also be permitted to donate to political parties and campaigners. Around 233,000 overseas voters were registered for the last election in December 2019, a significant Brexit-attributed bump on the numbers seen in previous contests.

The government estimates Tuesday's change could enfranchise around 3.5 million people — nearly treble the 1.3 million votes that was the winning margin in the 2016 referendum on European Union membership. It is also greater than the difference in

the vote totals for Britain's two main parties — the Conservatives and Labour — in five of the last six general elections. But UK elections ignore the parties' overall vote counts, instead electing lawmakers under the first-past-the-post system in 650 individual constituencies.

‘Every corner of the world’

It remains unclear how many of the newly eligible 3.5 million UK citizens living overseas will successfully register to vote. They will need to provide details of the address and time they were last registered to vote or living in Britain.

Local authorities, which are responsible for the electoral roll in their areas, must be able to verify an applicant's identity and past connection to the area, according to the Electoral Commission. Unlike some countries, there is no provision for in-person voting overseas and all ballots have to be cast by post or by using a proxy in the UK.

The Electoral Commission is launching a publicity campaign and working with partner organizations to raise awareness of the rule change. “We know there are eligible voters in every corner of the world so we're calling on those with friends and family abroad to help spread the news,” communications director Craig Westwood said.

Research by Britain's Office for National Statistics suggests the largest numbers of British emigrants are in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada and European Union member countries. The election law change follows campaigning by various advocates, including the long-running “Votes for Life” campaign led by an overseas arm of the Conservatives. — AFP

Iran flexes military muscles...

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The Kurdistan region's Prime Minister Masrour Barzani met with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Davos on Tuesday, where the Kurdish leader criticized the attacks as “unjustified and illegal” and called on the international community “not to remain silent”, his office said. The US State Department condemned the “reckless” Iranian strikes, saying they undermined Iraq's stability.

In March 2022, the Guards carried out missile attacks in Arbil that it said targeted a “strategic center” operated by arch foe the Zionist entity. Contacts with the Zionist entity are outlawed in Iraq but some politicians and businessmen in Arbil have in the past been accused of maintaining informal ties. The Iraqi Kurdish authorities deny any contacts.

In Syria, the Guards said the strikes against alleged IS targets were in response to recent attacks in Iran. Explosions were heard in Aleppo and its countryside, where “at least 4 missiles that came from the direction of the Mediterranean Sea” fell, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said.

On Jan 3, IS suicide bombers struck crowds gathered near the tomb of Guards general Qasem Soleimani in Kerman, killing around 90 people. In December, an attack claimed by jihadist group Jaish al-Adl (Army of

Justice) killed at least 11 police officers in Iran's southeast. The official IRNA news agency said the Syria attack was “the longest missile launch by Iran with a range of 1,200 kilometers” that can be interpreted as a “direct message to (the Zionist entity)”.

“There was an immense amount of pressure on the leadership in Tehran to flex its muscles in response to a series of setbacks it had suffered for the past few weeks,” Ali Vaez, director of the Iran Project at the International Crisis Group told AFP. “This is kind of a show of force with the twin objective of satisfying core constituents at home and also without escalating tensions with the US and (the Zionist entity).”

“Iran continues to proactively and dynamically back the anti-(Zionist) campaign,” said Tohid Asadi, professor at the University of Tehran. Iran has made support for the Palestinian cause a centerpiece of its foreign policy since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Asadi noted that Iran is aware “that any direct intervention will run the risk of dragging the region into a full-fledged all-out confrontation”. “This is the least favorite scenario for Iran,” he added.

International affairs specialist Fayyaz Zahed agreed. “Neither Iran, nor the United States, nor the other powers are interested in a direct conflict. But each of them plays their own cards,” he said. Zahed said a characteristic of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's 35 years in power was to “avoid war” while maintaining the influence of Iran's military. “We are already in a regional war,” said Vaez. “The events of the past 24 hours clearly demonstrated this has already started even though it's still at a low simmer.” — Agencies

The delayed arrival of the winter season, according to Saadoun, is intricately linked to the surge in temperatures observed in June and July, marked by record-breaking figures not witnessed in the past 150 years. Alarming as it may be, he disclosed 2024 is projected to witness even higher temperatures during the summer in Kuwait.

This underscores the profound impact of global warming on the Earth's climate, leading to a notable shift in traditional seasonal patterns, a poignant reminder of the urgent need for sustainable measures to address and mitigate the consequences of rising temperatures worldwide.

Assembly adjourned for three weeks...

Continued from Page 1

Dec 20 immediately after the new Amir HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah took the constitutional oath in the Assembly to assume his constitutional powers following the demise of former Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Later, HH Sheikh Mishal named former foreign minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to form the new Cabinet. So far, he has not presented his Cabinet line-up to HH the Amir.

The General Secretariat of National Assembly denied on Tuesday rumors regarding possible parliamentary queries addressed to Prime Minister-designate Sheikh Dr. Mohammad, confirming that all queries were addressed to the resigned government. The secretariat said in a press statement that it was not possible to submit parliamentary grillings to a prime minister who has not

Zionists pound Gaza amid fears...

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A barrage of 50 rockets was fired toward Netivot in the Zionist entity, without causing any casualties, the army said. Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qasam Brigades, claimed the attack. AFP TV live footage showed trails of smoke and explosions ring out as Zionist air defenses intercepted rockets near Gaza.

At least 24,285 Palestinians, about 70 percent of them women, children and adolescents, have been killed in Gaza in Zionist bombardments and ground operations since Oct 7. The Zionist entity has concentrated operations on Khan Yunis since claiming on Jan 6 that it had dismantled Hamas' military structures in the north. Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on Monday said intense operations would “soon” wind down in the territory's south. The army announced Tuesday the death of two more soldiers in Gaza, bringing to 190 the total number killed since its ground invasion began.

UN chief Antonio Guterres on Monday reiterated

taken the oath yet, in compliance with the constitution and the Assembly's bylaws, calling for ensuring accuracy while reporting such news that may mislead the public.

Meanwhile, head of the Assembly's human rights committee MP Mohammad Hayef said on Tuesday the panel has completed hearings in the torture case of a Kuwaiti citizen who claimed that he was illegally held and physically tortured by the defense ministry. Hayef said the panel heard the testimony of the citizen, Turki Al-Enezi, in addition to the head and members of an investigation committee formed by the defense minister to probe the case.

The committee also heard the testimonies of a number of military commanders linked directly to the torture case. The case was first exposed by MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who sent a series of questions to Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah. Hayef said the committee asked the National Assembly to extend its duration to be able to prepare the report, and as the Assembly has not met for over a month, the decision of extension is not expected before the next scheduled regular session.

calls to stop the facilitate delivering aid, releasing the hostages and “tamp down the flames of wider war”. But Zionist officials have repeatedly warned the fighting will continue for months. Violence involving regional allies of Iran-backed Hamas has surged since the war began.

Yemen's Houthi rebels, who say their repeated attacks on Red Sea shipping are in solidarity with Gaza, claimed a missile strike on a US-owned cargo ship on Monday. It came just days after the United States and Britain bombed scores of targets inside Houthi-controlled Yemen in response to their operations. In another such attack, a missile struck a Greek-owned cargo ship in the Red Sea off Yemen, maritime risk management company Ambrey said on Tuesday. The US military said it had seized Iranian-made missile parts that were en route to the Houthis on a boat in the Arabian Sea. On Tuesday, the Zionist army said it conducted air and artillery strikes on Hezbollah, Lebanon's powerful Iran-backed movement that has exchanged regular cross-border fire with Zionist forces since the war started. The UN says the Zionist-Hamas war has displaced roughly 85 percent of Gaza's 2.4 million people, many of whom have been forced to crowd into shelters and struggle to get food, water, fuel and medical care. — AFP

Winter ‘missing’ in Kuwait after...

Continued from Page 1

The overall climate is projected to maintain spring-like temperatures, signaling a deviation from the more pronounced winter chill of the past. This shift in seasonal patterns reflects the ongoing impact of climate variations on the weather dynamics in Kuwait, pointing towards a prolonged spring before the onset of the summer season,” he said.

International

Trump ramps up aggressive rhetoric

Violent language offers insight into how he might govern if re-elected

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has never been known for flattering his opponents, but in recent months he has come out with even more aggressive language that gives a hint as to what his second term might be like if he returns to the White House.

The former president, who is miles ahead of his rivals in the race for the Republican nomination and easily won the Iowa caucuses on Monday, has made very clear that vengeance is a powerful motivating force for him. If he wins the November election he has said he will go after his critics, President Joe Biden, and others he feels have hurt him.

"In 2016, I declared: I am your voice. Today, I add: I am your warrior. I am your justice," Trump said in March. "And for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution," said Trump, who still insists baselessly that the 2020 election he lost to Biden was stolen from him.

A few months later, he got more specific. "I will appoint a real special prosecutor to go after the most corrupt president in the history of the United States of America, Joe Biden, the entire Biden crime family," Trump said in June. "I will totally obliterate the deep state, and we know who they are," he said.

Trump faces four criminal indictments, including over his efforts to thwart the transfer of power to Biden — a concerted drive that culminated in the violent attack on the US Capitol by a mob of Trump supporters. For his part, Trump insists he is a victim of political persecution and accuses Biden of trying to block him from winning another term.

'Vermin'

Trump's opponents are warning Americans to take his language very seriously, recalling how his fiery rhetoric before and after his election loss helped

lead to the stunning attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. Trump is now referring to people jailed for taking part in the assault as "hostages" and has said that he is "inclined to pardon many of them."

In December 2022 he charged that the fraud he insists took place in the 2020 election "allows for the termination of all rules, regulations and articles, even those found in the constitution." This remark caused an uproar as many in America came to fear Trump might suspend the constitution that US presidents pledge to uphold.

"We pledge to you that we will root out the communists, Marxists, fascists and the radical left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country that lie and steal and cheat on elections," Trump said in November. Biden slammed Trump's use of the term "vermin" as language echoing Nazi Germany and added: "Damn, he shouldn't be president."

Muslim ban, tariffs and Ukraine

On immigration Trump has said those arriving in the United States are "poisoning the blood of our country," prompting more comparisons with Hitler's rhetoric. If reelected, Trump also vows to sign a decree denying automatic citizenship to babies born of undocumented migrants as well as to carry out "the largest domestic deportation operation in American history."

Trump also pledged to reinstate his controversial travel ban, which imposed restrictions on entry to people from seven Muslim-majority nations. "We will keep radical Islamic terrorists the hell out of our country," Trump said. Trump's order in 2017 was quickly challenged in court as discriminatory and Biden reversed it in 2021.

On the economy, Trump has said he is considering imposing a 10 percent tariff on almost all imports



DES MOINES: Former US President and Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump arrives to speak at a watch party during the 2024 Iowa Republican presidential caucuses in Des Moines, Iowa, on Jan 15, 2024. — AFP

into the United States and stripping China of special trade rights. Trump said he would manage to end the war in Ukraine "in 24 hours" but gave no details on how he would accomplish this.

Trump's supporters in Congress are vehemently opposed to open-ended, no-strings-attached US

military aid to Ukraine as it fights the Russian invasion. During his first term Trump repeatedly criticized NATO as freeloading off American largesse, and, asked recently if he would be committed to NATO in a second term, he said: "Depends on if they treat us properly." — AFP



French Minister of Education, Sports, and Olympic Games Amelie Oudea-Castera.

France's education minister under fire over school slip-up

PARIS: France's new Education Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera is coming under increasing pressure over her decision to have her children attend a private school, a row overshadowing President Emmanuel Macron's attempt to relaunch his second term with a government reshuffle.

Opponents have questioned her insistence that she sent one child to a private school because of teacher absences and staffing shortfalls at his public establishment in central Paris, in an increasingly bitter and personal dispute. Oudea-Castera was one of the main winners in last week's reshuffle, with the former French junior tennis champion given the education ministry alongside her existing portfolio as sports minister.

Heading the new "super ministry", she will be leading preparations for the 2024 Olympics in Paris as well as handling one of the most sensitive issues in French politics. The controversy began Friday, when Oudea-Castera told reporters she had chosen to put her son in an elite private school because of "loads of teaching hours without a serious replacement" teacher at his public school, called Littré.

Speaking to reporters on her first visit to a school as minister, she said she had been "fed up, like hundreds of thousands of families" across France. All three sons of Oudea-Castera, who is married to the president of French pharma giant Sanofi, Frederic Oudea, have instead attended the prestigious Stanislas school, a Catholic institution near her home in Paris. The private school has been under investigation by the education ministry since last year over press reports of homophobic and sexist behavior.

'Double fault'

But left-leaning daily Liberation reported Sunday that Oudea-Castera's son had not been affected by staffing gaps at public school, citing the nursery school teacher who had his class in 2009. The family in fact chose to move the child to the private school because the public one would not bump him up a year, the teacher said.

Oudea-Castera "categorically denies the claims reported by Liberation," her office told AFP. "We have to close this chapter of personal attacks and personal life," the minister said during a visit to a Paris school on Monday, adding that she had "tried to respond as sincerely as possible".

Teachers' unions — already fuming that education has been merged into a multiple ministry — and the political opposition have seized on the report to launch a broadside against the new minister. "It's a double fault to the minister! This match is starting off really well!" said Guislaine David, spokeswoman for primary school teachers' union SNUipp-FSU, referring to Oudea-Castera's earlier tennis career.

The new minister is scheduled to meet education union representatives from Monday, her office said. "If the minister really lied ... (she) has no place at the head of the education ministry," Rodrigo Arenas, an MP for the hard-left LFI party and former head of a nationwide parents' federation, wrote on X (formerly Twitter). Late Monday, a source close to Oudea-Castera said the minister would visit her son's former public school on Tuesday "to meet the teachers and directors for a discussion". — AFP

Fighting 'spidermen' narcos in Ecuador's biggest port

GUAYAQUIL: At Guayaquil, Ecuador's biggest port and export hub, drug gangs and the coast guard play a cat-and-mouse game, vying for supremacy of the river among the many hidden inlets and tangles of mangrove. The Guayas Estuary, with its 28 ports, is the heart of the violence-torn country's economy.

Excluding oil, 80 percent of Ecuador's exports pass through here, including key products such as bananas and shrimp. It is also the main export channel for drugs. "Seventy percent of the cocaine that arrives in Europe comes from Ecuador, and 80 percent of this cocaine comes out of Guayaquil," navy coast guard commander Fernando Alvarez, whose unit is at the forefront of the fight against trafficking, told AFP.

According to Alvarez, Ecuador has become the main cocaine distributor in the world, with most of the drugs originating in neighbors Colombia and Peru — the world's top producers of cocaine. Daily, Alvarez and his team patrol the Guayas River.

To the right of them is a forest of mangroves shielding shrimp farms. To the left, miserable poverty-stricken neighborhoods in which gangs rule with an iron fist. And in the middle of the water lane, a massive container ship about six storeys high — the perfect vessel for a hidden drug stash.

'Real spidermen'

The coast guards' job is a complicated one. On the one hand, they have to look out for speed boats, semi-submersibles and even submarines now employed by ever-wealthier drug traffickers along the

nearly 75-kilometer (46-mile) channel that connects Guayaquil to the open sea.

"The whole city is connected via canals. It is a very, very complicated task to control all this," one officer told AFP on condition of anonymity for fear of being targeted. Another threat is criminals who bring drugs from ashore in canoes or small boats, use ropes or ladders to clamber up the sides of tankers and container ships bound for the United States or Europe, and hide the contraband there.

"These criminals are real spidermen," said the anonymous officer. "There are mangroves everywhere, it's very easy to hide," he added. The intruders, some of whom pose as fishermen, usually act under the cover of darkness, sometimes with the complicity of the crew, according to the coast guard. "If there is a risk of 'contamination,' we board with a tactical group to protect the ship," said Alvarez. Shipping companies increasingly also rely on protection from private security escorts.

'They adapt constantly'

According to Alvarez, the gangs often follow the vessels carrying their illicit goods, and "do not hesitate to open fire" if they spot anyone on their tail. "They are ever more violent. They adapt constantly" — also trying to buy off members of the security forces.

The gangs are in cahoots with three major transnational traffickers: Mexico's Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels, and Albanian groups with ties to Italy's notorious 'Ndrangheta mafia. Alvarez said about 80 percent of crimes intercepted by his unit nowadays are related to drugs.

The same patrols are also tasked with securing the waterway to the protected Galapagos archipelago from illegal Chinese and Spanish fishing fleets. And while the task is sometimes overwhelming, the state of emergency declared last week to



GUAYAQUIL: Officers from the Ecuadorean National Police escort a man detained on suspicion of belonging to a criminal gang during a joint operation with members of the Armed Forces. — AFP

put down a violent gang uprising "has changed things in our favor," said Alvarez. "It has changed the rules on the use of force, and since these gangs are now considered fighting forces, this allows us to respond more robustly."

Once a bastion of peace, Ecuador has recently been plunged into crisis after years of expansion by transnational cartels. The latest violence was triggered by the escape from Guayaquil prison just over a week ago of one of the country's most powerful narcotics gang bosses.

The government declared a state of emergency and countrywide curfew, infuriating gangsters who declared war against civilians and security forces, launching several deadly attacks and taking dozens of hostages. Most have since been freed.

By Sunday, Ecuador's security forces said they had taken control of several prisons back from gangs and reported more than 1,300 arrests, 27 escaped inmates recaptured and eight gangsters, whom the government describes as "terrorists," killed. — AFP

Snowless winter sparks worry for Afghanistan

KABUL: Afghanistan saw almost no snow as of mid-January, a new sign of the heavy toll of global warming on the Central Asian country which is usually accustomed to harsh winters, experts say. The exceptionally low level of rain in a country that relies heavily on agriculture has forced many farmers to delay planting.

"In previous years by January we had a lot of rain and snow," said Rohullah Amin, head of climate change for the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA). But "now we don't have enough of anything at all", he told AFP this week. "It is very worrying, as there could be serious droughts in the future, putting heavy pressure on livelihoods and the economic sector."

Already in its third year of drought, Afghanistan is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, according to the UN. The lack of snow, predicted by experts to arrive in December, threat-

ens the vital snowpack that provides water in hotter months, Amin said.

Members of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) flew over the country in recent days, from the southern Helmand province to Kabul. "On all the mountains, there is no snow at all," FAO spokesman Robert Kluijver told AFP. "It's very serious."

Farmers in the southwest of the country are hardest hit by drought, according to Amin, followed by those in southern provinces—although dry conditions have touched every part of the country. In the eastern Ghazni and Paktika provinces, only a few centimeters (an inch or less) of snow fell recently, and mountainous Badakhshan province just saw its first flakes only this week.

Even at 3,800 meters (12,400 feet) near the Salang Pass in the Hindu Kush mountains, only patches of snow dot the rocky ground, an anomaly in mid-January. The tunnel has been frequently cut off by heavy snow and avalanches in winters of the past.

In December, the Taliban government instructed religious authorities in every province to carry out Namaz-e Istisqa — prayers for rain in Islam. But with little forthcoming, many farmers



KABUL: A general view shows residential buildings against the backdrop of mountains on Jan 16, 2024. — AFP

have held off on planting, usually carried out in October or November. "If this goes on, we'll be paralyzed," said Nazeer Ahmad, a 25-year-old farmer in the western Herat province.

"Everyone is waiting for the rain or snow, but if there is none in 10 or 15 days we will not be able to sow wheat

because the soil will be too dry," he told AFP. But Afghan meteorologists do not anticipate any change in the next two weeks. "If the Islamic Emirate doesn't look after farmers, they may be forced to go to other countries like Iran for work, as farmers have no other income except their crops," Ahmad said. — AFP

Japan doubles disaster relief fund after deadly quake

TOKYO: Japan doubled a fund used for disaster relief and other contingencies to \$6.8 billion after a devastating New Year's Day earthquake, the government said Tuesday, as snow worsened conditions for survivors. The 7.5-magnitude quake and powerful aftershocks killed at least 222 people in central Japan, laying waste to houses and infrastructure.

In the Ishikawa region on the Sea of Japan coast, about 16,700 people were still stuck in limbo in shelters, many without running water. "It is important to take all possible financial measures to enable

a seamless response to rebuild the livelihoods of quake victims, as well as the restoration of the affected areas," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

In the fiscal year from April, the government will raise its reserve fund — used for emergencies from disasters to economic downturns — from 500 billion yen (\$3.4 billion) to one trillion yen (\$6.8 billion). The revised draft budget, approved by ministers on Tuesday, will now be submitted to parliament for enactment.

Separately, around 100 billion yen (\$680 million) from the current fiscal year's reserve fund was set to be earmarked for a relief package for the New Year's Day quake. Fears are rising of further deaths due to worsening health conditions in shelters as a cold front blankets the coast in snow.

TV footage showed a long line of evacuees with heavy coats and umbrellas waiting for food rations, while others sifted through donated winter clothing.

Officials are trying to move people to secondary shelters in other regions with water, electricity and heaters, but progress has been slow.

On Tuesday, the quake-ravaged city of Wajima said it had made prolonged accommodation arrangements for displaced residents at hotels elsewhere in the country. "Our infrastructure has been decimated, and full-fledged reconstruction is still nowhere in sight," the city said in a statement.

Even so, analysts said the impact of the disaster on Japan's economy will likely be limited, as the earthquake struck a remote area with few industrial sites. Takahide Kiuchi, an economist at the Nomura Research Institute, evaluated the cost of material damage at around 800 billion yen (\$5.5 billion) in a preliminary estimate. That figure represents only 0.15 percent of the country's GDP, and less than five percent of the damage cost of the huge earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeastern Japan in 2011. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024

Business

NIC, on behalf of Rawasi, completes 2nd partial purchase transaction in Kuwait

Bashar Khan: NIC committed to providing customized and innovative solutions for its clients

KUWAIT: National Investments Company (NIC), in its capacity as the partial purchase manager for Rawasi Kuwait Holding Company KSCC, is pleased to announce the successful completion of the partial acquisition of Rasiyat Holding Company KPSC, marking only the second time such a transaction has taken place in Kuwait in compliance with the provisions of book nine of the executive regulations of the Capital Markets Authority's law no. 7 of 2010 and its amendments.

Bashar Khan, Executive Vice President of Investment Banking Sector at National Investments Company, expressed his delight, stating, "We are thrilled that NIC has successfully fulfilled its role as the partial purchase manager for Rawasi Kuwait Holding. This transaction is a testament to NIC's commitment to providing customized and innovative solutions for its clients."

Khan further emphasized the collaborative efforts of NIC team, working closely with key shareholders of Rasiyat to ensure a swift and seamless

transaction. The Capital Markets Authority granted approval for the partial purchase offer document submitted by Rawasi Kuwait Holding to acquire 7 percent of the capital of Rasiyat Holding Company on August 29, 2023. NIC received CMA approval for the transfer of the achieved percentage of the offer (6.087 percent) to Rawasi ownership on Nov 16, 2023.

National Investments Company has a track record of successfully completing a diverse range of advisory deals, including capital increases for



Bashar Khan, Executive Vice President of Investment Banking Sector at NIC



clients, mergers and acquisitions, private placements, and IPOs, with subsequent listings on Boursa Kuwait. The advisory team is currently engaged in several exciting transactions, showcasing our commitment to delivering services at international standards for our clients in Kuwait. Khan, on behalf of National Investments Company, extends sincere gratitude to the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait, and Kuwait Clearing Company for their valuable cooperation and contribution to the success of this transaction.



DAVOS: Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani speaks during a session of the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos on January 16, 2024. — AFP

In Davos, Chinese premier takes aim at trade 'barriers'

DAVOS: Chinese Premier Li Qiang told the world's political and business elites in Davos on Tuesday that "discriminatory" trade barriers were a threat to the global economy, in a not-so-subtle dig at the United States. Li's remarks came as the World Economic Forum's (WEF's) 54th annual conference is preoccupied with a slew of global risks, including wars in Ukraine and Gaza, climate change and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence. Li shared the spotlight with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who attended the forum in person for the first time in an effort to maintain military support from Kyiv's allies after nearly two years of war with Russia.

Li spoke just days after a tense presidential election in Taiwan, the democratic island that Beijing claims as part of China. But the most senior Chinese official to attend the WEF since 2017 did not address the election and instead focused on trade, his country's economy and AI.

He said "new discriminatory trade and investment measures" had appeared every year, adding: "Any obstacles or disruptions can slow down or block the flow of lifeblood of the world economy."

Li did not name any countries but Beijing has tussled with the United States and the European Union over trade in recent years, particularly on high-tech and clean energy.

US-China trade tensions soared under the presidency of Donald Trump and have continued under



DAVOS: Chinese Premier Li Qiang addresses the assembly during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos on January 16, 2024. — AFP

President Joe Biden. In October, the United States announced tighter export curbs on state-of-the-art artificial intelligence chips, sparking fury in Beijing.

The EU, meanwhile, has launched a probe into Chinese electric car subsidies. Without naming names, Li said: "There are many examples where one side's capriciousness undermines mutual trust with others." But US and European companies have long complained of obstacles to doing business on a level playing field in China.

Zelensky took the podium hours later and used the venue to condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "predator" who would pursue his invasion of Ukraine even if fighting paused on the sprawling front. Earlier, he met the "CEOs for Ukraine" group

teasing the prospect of rate cuts but then refusing to commit, which is causing unease among investors," AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould noted Tuesday. "There are plenty of signs that inflation is coming down and this is fuelling the rate cut expectations on the market, yet central banks are being spectacularly stubborn."

The prospect that rates would stay higher than previously expected has lent support to the dollar, which made strong gains Tuesday against main rivals. Oil prices rose as attacks on Red Sea shipping continued. While inflation is on a general downward path, there is a worry that it could pop back up anytime, particularly with tensions in the oil-rich Middle East showing no sign of calming, putting key trade routes at risk.

The United States and Britain have in recent days launched strikes against Yemen's Houthis in retaliation for the Iran-backed rebels' attacks on Red Sea shipping in what they say is solidarity with Gaza. The strikes have been met with warnings of retaliation from the group, which on Monday hit a US-owned cargo vessel with a missile, heightening fears that a region-wide conflict could erupt, battering supplies of oil and other goods.

think partnerships is one avenue of, in fact, having competition," Nadella said. "I'm sure the regulators will look at it and say, is this a pro-competition partnership or not? And to me, I think it's a no brainer." Microsoft has poured billions of dollars since 2019 into OpenAI, which thrust AI into the spotlight with its chatbot, ChatGPT in late 2022.

ChatGPT demonstrated AI's dizzying advances as it could produce eloquent poetry and concise essays within seconds as well as pass medical and legal exams. But with popularity came greater scrutiny and now anti-trust regulators in the European Union and Britain are examining the Microsoft-OpenAI partnership. Nadella insisted AI's recent rapid developments come after Microsoft's risk-taking.

"If Microsoft had not taken the highly risky (decision) -- and this is now all conventional wisdom-- but when we made those investments, when we

and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Kyiv is scrambling to ensure that support from allies does not waver during the biggest war in Europe since World War II. The world's attention has shifted to the Middle East amid fears of a spillover from the conflict in Gaza. "We are determined to sustain our support for Ukraine," Blinken said after the talks.

Republicans in the US Congress are blocking a renewal of US military assistance for Ukraine, and Kyiv and its allies worry about reduced support if Donald Trump wins the US presidential election later this year. European Union leaders will hold talks next month in a bid to approve a 50-billion-euro (\$55-billion) aid package for Ukraine that was vetoed in December by Hungary. — AFP



TOKYO: A passing pedestrian is reflected in the glass of a shop advertising foreign currency exchange rates in downtown Tokyo on January 16, 2024. — AFP

A Greek-owned cargo ship was hit by a missile on Tuesday. Oil-price gains were capped by demand worries as the global economy struggles. In a slight boost, China's Premier Li Qiang on Tuesday said his country's economy was expected to have grown stronger than expected last year. — AFP

backed OpenAI, went all in on a particular form of computing that led to all of these breakthroughs, it would have not been what we had. "And more importantly, the incumbents would have been the winners," Nadella said.

OpenAI faced a tumultuous period late last year when its CEO Sam Altman was ousted then made a shock return, all while he maintained Nadella's support. Nadella said Microsoft now just wanted "stability in the partnership". He also seemed confident about limiting the risks of AI on elections as billions prepare to head to the polls this year, including in the United States, where Microsoft is based. "It's not like this is the first election where disinformation or misinformation, and election interference is going to be a real challenge that we all have to tackle," he said. "We as a company have to do our best work." Nadella was set to speak later on Tuesday during an official WEF event. — AFP

LNG shipments will be hit by Red Sea attacks: Qatar PM

DAVOS: Liquefied natural gas shipments will be affected by tensions in the Red Sea, Qatar's prime minister said on Tuesday, warning that military strikes on Yemen risk aggravating the crisis. "LNG is... as any other merchant shipments. They will be affected by that," Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told the World Economic Forum in Davos, referring to the increasing exchanges with Yemen's Houthi rebels.

"There are alternative routes, those alternative routes are not more efficient, they're less efficient than the current route," he added. Rather than use the key route between Asia and European markets, which normally carries about 12 percent of global maritime trade, some shipping companies are now taking a major detour around southern Africa.

Bloomberg reported on Monday that at least five LNG vessels operated by Qatar had stopped en route to the Red Sea. Sheikh Mohammed said the "central issue" of Gaza, where the Zionist entity's war on Gaza has been raging since October, must be addressed to calm the situation in the Red Sea.

He added: "(Military intervention) will not bring an end for this, will not contain it. So the contrary, I think will create... a further escalation." His comments come after US and British forces hit scores of targets across Yemen on Friday following weeks of attacks by the Iran-backed rebels in response to the Zionist entity's war with Hamas militants in the Palestinian territory.

Then on Sunday, US forces shot down a Houthi cruise missile targeting an American destroyer, and on Monday a US-owned cargo ship in the Gulf of Oman was hit by another Houthi missile. The Houthis had been targeting what they deemed the Zionist-linked shipping but after Friday's attacks, they declared US and British interests "legitimate targets".

The Qatari premier called the Red Sea crisis "the most dangerous escalation right now because it's not affecting only the region, it's affecting the global trade as well", as fears rise that the war in Gaza could spread. Violence involving Iran-aligned groups in Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria has surged since the war in Gaza began in early October.

Meanwhile, British oil giant Shell has paused transit through the key Red Sea shipping route indefinitely, over fears of escalating tensions involving Yemen's Houthi rebels, according to a media report Tuesday. The worries of escalation grew after United States and United Kingdom strikes on scores of sites in rebel-held Yemen Friday, the Wall Street Journal reported, in retaliation over Houthi attacks in the Red Sea which have disrupted shipping.

The Houthis have been targeting what they deemed the Zionist-linked vessels. But after Friday's strikes, they declared US and British interests "legitimate targets." On Sunday, US forces shot down a Houthi cruise missile targeting an American destroyer, and on Monday a US-owned cargo ship in the Gulf of Oman was hit by another Houthi missile. Shell decided to suspend transit last week, considering worries that a successful attack could cause a major spill and threaten the safety of ship crew, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday. The company declined to comment on the matter when contacted by AFP.

The Journal also reported that in December, a tanker chartered by Shell was targeted by a drone in the Red Sea, and harassed by Houthi boats. The oil major's decision comes after Britain's BP said in December that it would suspend transit of oil through the Red Sea. — AFP

Stock markets down on rate cut, Middle East uncertainty

LONDON: Major stock markets dropped Tuesday as hopes of early interest rate cuts this year fade and tensions mount in the Middle East. Equities soared at the end of 2023 as softening inflation saw the Federal Reserve indicate that it was preparing to reverse more than a year of hikes to US interest rates.

Bets had been building that officials would announce a rate reduction as soon as March.

However, January has seen the wind come out of the sails with Fed officials saying they were keen to keep rates elevated for some time as inflation stays high despite recent falls. The European Central Bank and Bank of England are also seen delaying the start of their cuts, after central banks hiked interest rates by sizeable amounts over nearly two years between late 2021 and second half of 2023.

"Part of the problem is central banks constantly

Microsoft CEO defends OpenAI partnership

DAVOS: Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella on Tuesday defended his company's multi-billion-dollar investment in ChatGPT developer OpenAI after the EU and Britain launched probes into whether it resembles a merger.

Nadella was speaking on the sidelines during an event organized by Bloomberg at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alpine resort of Davos. "If we want competition in AI against some of the players who are completely already integrated, I

Business



Launching the ninth edition of Ajyal program.



Jassim Boodai poses for a group photo with bank officials and guests of the Lead the Way conference.

Human Resources at Gulf Bank: Performance summary for 2023

International collaborations, prestigious awards, and a prominent position in recruitment, training, and development

KUWAIT: Being a highly appealing hub for talent, Gulf Bank consistently invests in the training and development of its workforce through collaborations with esteemed international and local institutions. This approach ensures that employees are equipped with the latest expertise and skills essential to navigate the significant transformations occurring in the banking industry both locally and globally.

In its commitment to attracting exceptional young talents, Gulf Bank has actively sponsored various career fairs organized by Kuwaiti universities. The goal is to position itself as the preferred employment destination for emerging professionals entering the workforce. Aligned with the bank's 2025 strategy and in harmony with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Gulf Bank remains dedicated to fostering inclusivity and empowerment for women, youth, and people of determination.

Furthermore, as part of its dedication to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the yearly "Employee Engagement Survey" has demonstrated consistent positive progression in recent years.

Salma Al-Hajjaj, the General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, highlighted key achievements, programs, and courses organized by the bank in 2023 within this overarching framework. These initiatives include:

Gulf Bank's double win at 2023 MENA HR summit

Gulf Bank won two awards at the 2023 Middle East and North Africa HR Management Summit in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The summit included the participation of esteemed officials and specialists in the human resources field, representing prominent companies and banks in the region. Salma Al-Hajjaj was honored with the awards for "Best Training and Development" and "Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion" at the ceremony that recognized outstanding achievements in human resources within various companies.

Data Innovation Excellence Award at Finnovex Qatar 2023

At the 18th Finnovex Qatar 2023 summit, Gulf Bank received the Data Innovation Excellence Award for its exceptional contributions to advancing data-driven innovations within the Kuwaiti financial sector. This recognition is attributed to various impactful initiatives such as the Data Ambassadors Program, data literacy training courses, and the Fekrety Innovation Competition.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration with Coursera

In its ongoing commitment to employee development, Gulf Bank has partnered with Coursera, a leading global online learning platform. This collaboration aims to offer employees advanced training opportunities and access to courses and certificates from renowned educational institutions and universities.

Partnership with Coach Hub

Gulf Bank has joined forces with Coach Hub, a worldwide platform specializing in talent and leadership development. This collaboration empowers employees of major organizations globally, to establish distinctive, measurable, and scalable training programs.

Employment opportunities for youth

As part of its support for the youth and its continuous efforts to attract the best talents from the national workforce, Gulf Bank concluded its sponsorship and participation in the second edition of the "Wathefti" Career Fair. Representatives from Gulf Bank highlighted the nature of banking work during their participation in the exhibition, offering comprehensive explanations to job seekers about the banking industry and the career development opportunities offered by the bank to its employees.

Career Fair at Kuwait University

Gulf Bank, the favored choice for employment in the Kuwaiti financial sector, successfully wrapped up its sponsorship of the three-day career fair hosted by Kuwait University.

Gust Career Fair's diamond sponsor

In its ongoing commitment to empower youth and as the preferred choice for employment in the Kuwaiti financial



Salma Al-Hajjaj

- Gulf Bank received the prestigious "Best Training and Development" and "Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion" awards at the 2023 MENA HR Management Summit
- Gulf Bank was acknowledged with the Excellence in Data Innovation Award at the eighteenth Finnovex Conference summit in Qatar.
- We established strategic partnerships with global platforms Coursera and Coach Hub, focusing on the development of employees and leaders.
- We participated in the Kuwait University, GUST, "KTech," and "Wathefti Career Fairs.
- We successfully graduated the eighth batch of the Ajyal program, inaugurating the ninth batch, and engaged in various international training programs
- We launched the second edition of the Datathon competition
- We introduced a digital library and actively participated in the Innovation Challenge Program
- We organized the "Lead the Way" conference and conducted a "WOW Diwaniya, showcasing our unwavering commitment to women's empowerment.
- The annual "Employee Engagement Survey" showcased consistent positive progression in recent years.

sector, Gulf Bank served as the diamond sponsor for the twenty-fourth career fair at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST).

Career Fair at Kuwait Technical College

As part of its continuous commitment to empower youth and its position as a favored choice for employment in the Kuwaiti financial sector, Gulf Bank took part in the Kuwait Technical College (KTech) Career Fair last March.

The Australian University Alumni Exhibition

Gulf Bank wrapped-up its Platinum sponsorship of the Alumni Exhibition for the College of Engineering students at the Australian University. This reflects the bank's unwavering support for young individuals, its ongoing efforts to empower



A number of Gulf Bank officials graduated from the Harvard Business School program.

them, and its encouragement for innovation while reinforcing the principles of sustainability in society.

Hiring people of determination

Gulf Bank participated in the Employment Forum for People of Determination, showcasing graduates from the fourth batch of the "Partners to Employ Them" campaign. The campaign was organized by the Public Authority for Disability Affairs in collaboration with the Human Construction Society for Social Development. At the forum, Gulf Bank announced the recruitment of a group of these graduates.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Ajyal program

In its ongoing commitment to foster the development and skills of its employees, Gulf Bank initiated the ninth edition of the "Ajyal" program. This edition welcomes a new group of recently appointed trainees with less than 5 years of experience at Gulf Bank. The program aims to refine their skills and contribute to their professional and personal development.

Qualifying fresh Kuwaiti graduates

In its continuous dedication to human resource development, Gulf Bank announced the successful conclusion of the "Qualifying Fresh Kuwaiti Graduates for Employment in the Banking Sector" program for a group of its employees. This initiative was carried out in partnership with the Institute of Banking Studies and the Central Bank of Kuwait from March 2022 to May 2023. (KGDP – Kuwait Graduates Development Program)

Part of their training includes a trip to Oman to visit the National Bank of Oman Apprenticeship (6 weeks)

Corporate directors training program

Gulf Bank has declared its involvement in the Corporate Directors training program for the second consecutive year. This program is organized by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, in collaboration with the Tammayaz Foundation and So-optimist International. The bank's participation reflects its commitment to promoting sustainability principles in society and supporting programs and initiatives for women's empowerment.

Harvard Business School program

Several leaders from Gulf Bank successfully completed the Harvard Business School program, specifically crafted to foster the growth of leaders in the banking and financial sector. The program, titled "Strategic Leadership in a Changing World," is a part of the "Kafaa" initiative, a collaborative effort between the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwaiti banks aimed at supporting and cultivating leadership in the industry.

FranklinCovey leadership program

Built upon enduring principles of human effectiveness, this program is crafted to facilitate transformative change for individuals. The Institute of Banking Studies has established a strong partnership with FranklinCovey, collaborating to cultivate essential skills for personal and interpersonal effectiveness among leaders and their teams. Sustainable shifts in behavior originate from within — shaping one's identity and perspective. This internal transformation reflects in how individuals engage with and lead others.

The primary goal of the program is to empower leaders to recognize their capacity to engage with others, amplify their influence, foster collective action, and achieve groundbreaking results for their banks.

for the bank's products and services, representing a key component of the extensive digital transformation the bank aims to accomplish across various sectors and business operations.

The second edition of the Datathon competition

With the involvement of over 400 young Kuwaiti participants, Gulf Bank revealed the winning teams at the end of the second edition of the Datathon competition. As the first platform of its kind in Kuwait, the Datathon aims to empower data professionals, as well as school and university students, and new employees keen on entering the realms of data and analytics. Notably, the second edition marked the inaugural participation of the 14-18 age group in the competition, alongside contestants aged 18 and above.

The Innovation Challenge program

Gulf Bank participated, alongside five selected Kuwaiti banks and companies, in the seventh edition of the Innovation Challenge Program for the year 2022-2023. This program is annually organized by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences in collaboration with the London Business School. The program aims to stimulate innovation and enhance creative skills within private sector companies, supporting economic growth and contributing to the transformation of Kuwait's economy into a knowledge-based economy.

Data Ambassadors program

As a testament to its prosperous digital transformation and ongoing commitment to foster the skills of its workforce, Gulf Bank successfully completed the second edition of the Data Ambassadors Program. This data and analytics program is the first of its kind in Kuwait, with the total number graduates reaching 210.

A training program for youth

Gulf Bank completed a training program in Data Science and Innovation for high school graduates and university students who reached the final stage of the second edition of the annual Datathon competition. The competition featured the participation of over 400 young and talented Kuwaiti contestants, including, for the first time, individuals aged 14 to 18 years.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Lead the Way conference

In celebration of International Women's Day 2023, Gulf Bank orchestrated the "Lead the Way" conference. The event attracted a diverse audience, including notable figures and officials from banks, the private sector, diplomats, government representatives, and public welfare associations.

The conference delved into key challenges hindering endeavors to bolster and empower women. Through engaging workshops, motivational speeches, and stimulat-

American Business

Council AmCham seminar

Gulf Bank participated in a seminar organized by the American Business Council AmCham Kuwait at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. The seminar, titled "Diversity, Inclusion and Sustainable Practices", saw active participation from numerous representatives from both the public and private sectors. During the event, Gulf Bank's notable journey in solidifying sustainability principles, particularly in the realm of women's empowerment, was extensively reviewed.

Kuwaiti Women's Economic

Empowerment Platform (KWEPP)

A collaborative digital platform, in alignment with the UN Call-to-Action WEPs, emphasizing Gulf Bank's commitment to shaping a better future for working women and fostering sustainability.

HEALTH AWARENESS

Annual women's health awareness campaign

On the occasion of Breast Cancer and Mental Health Awareness Month, Gulf Bank initiated its yearly campaign dedicated to promoting women's health and safety throughout October. The campaign includes offering complimentary screenings for female employees and conducting a workshop focused on women's empowerment.

Three-day women's empowerment workshops in collaboration with Safira CSR

These workshops included engaging sessions featuring various guest speakers addressing topics such as well-being, achieving work-life balance, goals setting, seizing opportunities, as well as fostering critical thinking.

Mental health awareness podcast session with Dr Mohammad T Al-Suwaiddan

The interactive podcast session featured Dr Mohammad Al-Suwaiddan, Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director at Mindwell Center Kuwait, as well as Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto, Canada. The session delved into the connection between mental and physical health and was accessible to all Gulf Bank employees.

The first Movember campaign

Continuing its steadfast dedication to fostering the well-being of its employees, Gulf Bank introduced its inaugural Movember campaign, emphasizing men's health and safety, following the successful Breast Cancer Awareness Month initiative last October.

Blood donation campaign

In collaboration with the Kuwait Blood Bank, Gulf Bank organized a blood donation campaign for its employees. The objective was to bolster the strategic reserves of the blood bank and its humanitarian endeavors in saving the lives of patients during critical emergencies.



Salma Al-Hajjaj receives two awards at the Human Resources Management Summit at the Middle East and North Africa.

ing panel discussions, participants explored the impactful ripple effects of supporting and empowering women on the economy. The event served as a platform for interactive dialogue on these crucial issues.

"WOW" monthly discussion circles

Gulf Bank organized the monthly "WOW" Diwaniya for women, providing a platform for networking, sharing experiences and ideas, and engaging in discussions about suggestions and solutions to the challenges that women encounter.

Numeric overview of 2023

- 55 internships
- 275 training courses
- 1480 employees enrolled in training courses
- 72% of national employment
- 365 new employees recruited
- 57% of youth in the overall workforce (aged 19-35)
- 31% of youth in overall workforce (aged 19-30)
- 42% of women in the overall workforce
- 27% of women in leadership positions

Global equity markets: Sustained rally hinges on resilient economy, Fed pivot

GCC equities lag behind global peers amid slower growth

Chart 1: Major global equity indices
(Rebased, 100= 31 December 2022)



Source: Refinitiv

KUWAIT: Most international equity markets ended 2023 with substantial gains as investors looked past various headwinds ranging from high inflation, hawkish central banks, and the possibility of a recession. Adverse geopolitics and oil market volatility were additional risk factors. Emerging markets underperformed along with GCC markets amid ongoing economic weakness in China and lower oil prices and growth prospects in the latter. Though a reversal of tight monetary policy will be supportive of equities in 2024, a sluggish global growth outlook and ongoing geopolitical risks could weigh on performance.

The positive annual performance was thanks in part to a strong first half where an AI-driven tech rally lifted major indices. Despite a selloff in Q3 amid profit taking and renewed inflation and recession concerns, losses were reversed in Q4 on signs of economic resilience, decelerating inflation, and optimism that restrictive monetary policy was nearing its end. In addition, the rally came despite adverse geopolitics which could potentially disrupt global supply

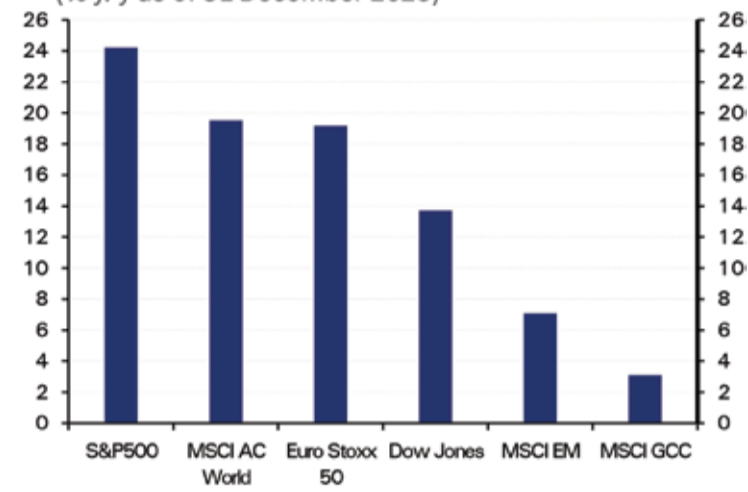
chains and lead to renewed inflationary pressure. After major indices ended the year near all-time highs, markets have since been volatile ahead of key economic data releases. Moreover, some investors have reassessed their previous aggressive rate-cut calls which may have been optimistic given the Fed's own dot-plot projections and comments suggesting the possibility of a relatively long period of restrictive policy. The rally will likely resume should inflation prove to be supportive of a dovish Fed pivot along with no material weakness in economic indicators that would boost the soft-landing scenario.

However, should the data justify a 'higher for longer' policy approach, investor sentiment and market performance could be hit in coming months.

Markets mostly positive

Global equity gains were led by US indices, driven largely by optimism that the economy will be able to weather monetary tightening and recession odds. The tech rally in the first half of 2023 drove tech-heavy

Chart 2: Global indices annual change
(% y/y as of 31 December 2023)



Source: Refinitiv

indices like the Nasdaq Composite (+43 percent in full-year 2023) and S&P500 (24 percent) higher compared to less inclusive indices such as the Russell 2000 (15 percent) and Dow Jones (14 percent). However, the broader market subsequently gained momentum in Q4 as lower inflation and better corporate earnings contrary to expectations earlier in the year fueled upbeat market sentiment. Further support came from the better-than-expected holiday season sales reflecting a still solid consumer sector. The Euro Stoxx 50 rose 19 percent y/y as European markets benefited from similar optimism, but the MSCI Emerging Market index underperformed, up a relatively modest 7 percent, weighed down by ongoing economic weakness in its largest constituent – China.

GCC market performance was mixed but mostly positive (MSCI GCC +3.1 percent y/y) with strong gains in Dubai (22 percent) and Saudi Arabia (13.5 percent) partly offset by losses in Oman (-7.4 percent), Kuwait (-6.5 percent), and Abu Dhabi

(-6.2 percent). Dubai and Saudi Arabia continued to benefit from strong non-oil economic activity thanks to business-friendly reforms aimed at growing the private sector, which involved a large privatization drive and an unprecedented number of IPOs for two consecutive years. The strong corporate sector activity should continue in 2024, as the region's two key markets compete for foreign capital and undergo an economic transformation. Meanwhile, lower oil prices (and production) and weakened fiscal positions, slower growth, higher interest rates, and the general absence of a catalyst contributed to muted activity in other regional markets.

Economic data and Fed policy

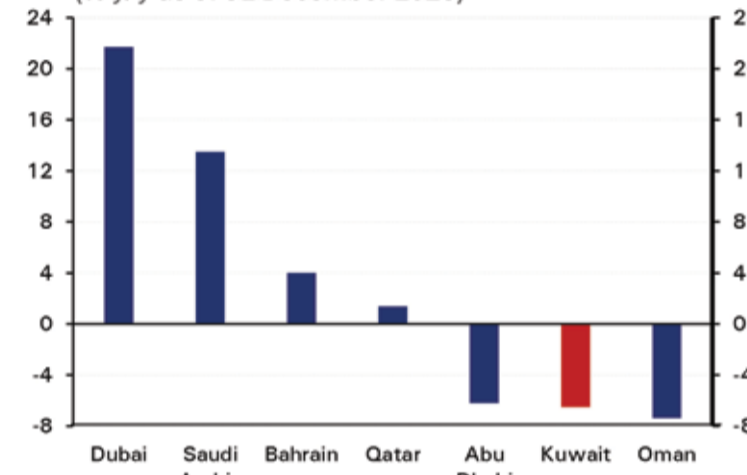
Though equities are poised to perform well this year given receding headwinds, an unclear growth outlook and geopolitical uncertainty remain key downside risks. On the other hand, lower bond yields and interest rates, and a still resilient economy with durable earning performance are bullish factors for equities in 2024. Another rally

Chart 3: Select GCC equity indices
(Rebased, 100= 31 December 2022)



Source: Refinitiv

Chart 4: GCC indices annual change
(% y/y as of 31 December 2023)



Source: Refinitiv

is possible this year with investors mostly betting on a sooner-rather-than-later dovish Fed pivot, which in turn will depend on inflation softening sustainably towards the Fed's 2 percent target. Lastly, a pivot accompanied by continued economic resilience, rather than in response to a downturn, will in our view be decisive for longer-term market confidence and momentum. In

other words, monetary easing in tandem with a soft economic landing will present the ideal conditions for a bull market. Meanwhile, the strong upside potential of underperforming EM stocks, especially if paired with signs of recovery in the Chinese economy could support EM equities, though investor confidence remains weak in the risk laden economy.

Sweet 2023 for Lindt as volumes resist price hikes

ZURICH: Premium Swiss chocolate maker Lindt & Sprungli said Tuesday it had a better-than-expected 2023 as sales rose despite it passing rising cocoa costs onto consumers. The company, known for its Lindor pralines and golden chocolate Easter bunnies, said sales rose 4.6 percent to a record 5.2 billion Swiss francs (\$6.0 billion). Sales would have risen even more without the strong Swiss franc. The company calculated sales grew 10.3 percent after stripping out currency effects, better than its 7-9 percent target. Analysts surveyed by Swiss financial news service AWP had forecast 9.2 percent sales growth to 5.1 billion Swiss francs. The firm is scheduled to release complete 2023 results on March 5 but said it expects an operating profit margin of 15.5 percent, up from 15 percent in 2022. A Swiss tax change would also provide a boost to the result, it said.

The firm said the rise in sales was due primarily to being able to pass on the rise in raw material costs, particularly that of cocoa which struck new records last year, while volumes held up despite an overall fall in the global market marked by depressed consumer sentiment in many countries.

"It shows that customers remain loyal to Lindt & Sprungli despite price increases," the company said in a statement. Rebounding tourism helped boost foot traffic in its stores and online sales also grew despite the end of the pandemic. — AFP

Polish truckers suspend Ukraine border blockade

WARSAW: Polish truckers will suspend their longstanding blockade of the Ukrainian border following an agreement with the government, the infrastructure minister said Tuesday. The hauliers have been blocking the border since November to demand the reintroduction of restrictions to enter the European Union for their Ukrainian competitors.

The bloc had waived the permits system after Russia invaded Ukraine, but the Polish road carriers say the move took a toll on their earnings.

"The protest will be suspended until March 1,"

'Europe must up its game' on AI: Von der Leyen

DAVOS: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen told Davos on Tuesday that "Europe must up its game" on artificial intelligence, as the bloc readies landmark legislation to curb possible AI abuse.

"Our future competitiveness depends on AI adoption in our daily business. And Europe must up its game and show the way to responsible use of AI," von der Leyen said in the ritzy Swiss resort hosting the World Economic Forum. The European Union is currently working on a draft AI Act that it views as a possible template for regulation in other parts of the world for the fast-moving technology.

In December, its member countries and EU lawmakers reached agreement on the text which seeks to rein in potential AI misuse—such as its use for biometric surveillance and manipulation of behavior—while fostering innovation in the sector. Von der Leyen said she was a "tech-optimist" and said "AI is also a very significant opportunity, if used in a responsible way," with its projected ability to boost productivity and economic growth.

AI breakthroughs are currently being led by the United States, home to ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, with China close behind. Europe does not want to be left in the digital dust and has ambitions of growing its own AI champions, encouraging companies such as Germany's Aleph Alpha and France's Mistral AI as well as

Polish Infrastructure Minister Dariusz Klimczak told reporters alongside representatives of the hauliers. "We have an agreement. An agreement that was long-awaited not just by Polish hauliers, but also by many entrepreneurs in Poland, by the European Commission, by Ukraine," he added.

Protest co-organizer Rafal Mekler also announced that they were signing an agreement to suspend the border protest.

"The government is undertaking several commitments within the specific timeframe that are intended to fulfil the protest demands," he said on X, formerly Twitter. "If we don't manage to reach a solution, we will return to the border... This is not capitulation but a strategic pause."

Ukraine relies heavily on road transport with EU member Poland for its exports and imports, particularly since the Russian invasion nearly two years ago. — AFP



DAVOS: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva (right) speaks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos on January 16, 2024. — AFP

new ones. But it wants regulatory "guardrails" to be quickly erected, especially with the risk of AI-fuelled disinformation during EU elections in June and the more general disruption AI is forecast to bring to many labor sectors and professions. "Europe has got talent," von der Leyen said, boasting of the bloc's 200,000 software engineers with grounding in AI and its pools of industrial data.

She promised that EU startups in the sec-

India inks lithium mining deal with Argentina

NEW DELHI: India has bought exploration and production rights to lithium blocks in Argentina in its first such overseas deal, aimed to reduce dependency on China for the key green technology metal. Coal and Mines Minister Prahlad Joshi said the "historic" \$24 million deal will ensure a "resilient and diversified supply chain for critical and strategic materials". Lithium is a key component in batteries for energy storage and electric vehicles.

India is one of the world's top greenhouse gas emitters, but is also pushing its production of electric

vehicles and has vowed to become carbon neutral by 2070. The world's fastest-growing major economy, India imported \$33 million worth of lithium in 2022-2023, according to government figures.

More than two-thirds was imported from China. "The project will help India strengthen lithium supplies, while developing lithium mining and downstream sectors," Joshi said on X in comments late Monday. Argentina, along with Chile and Bolivia, together form what analysts call the "lithium triangle", a region that experts estimate holds more than half of global lithium resources.

The five-block deal was signed between state-owned Khanij Bidesh India and Argentina's state-owned Camyen SE in the Catamarca province, the source of some of Argentina's largest lithium deposits. India last year found its first lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir, with estimated reserves of 5.9 million tons. — AFP

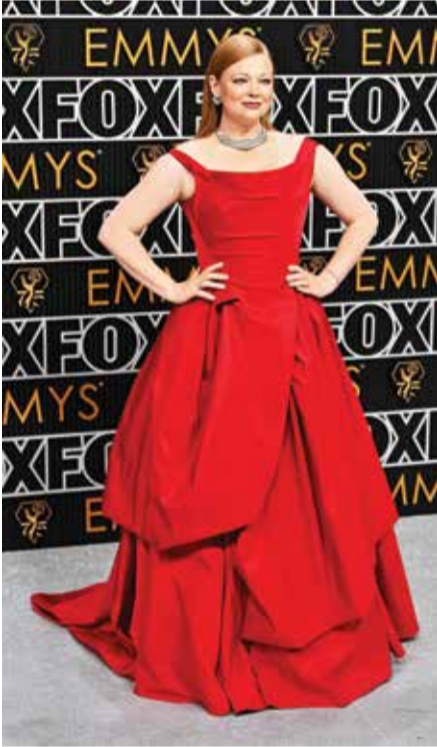
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024

Lifestyle

Emmys fashion Red, black and purple all the rage



Hannah Waddingham and Colman Domingo



Australian actress Sarah Snook



Jennifer Coolidge



Taraji P Henson



Elizabeth Debicki



Rachel Brosnahan

Television's top stars sparkled on the Emmys red carpet Monday, embracing the trends that have emerged in a hectic week of awards shows in Hollywood -- red gowns, sumptuous purple frocks and lots of basic, sexy black. Here is a glimpse at the top looks seen at the Peacock Theatre in Los Angeles:

Women in red
"Succession" star Sarah Snook, who won best drama actress honors for her work on the popular HBO show, glowed in a red draped Vivienne Westwood ball gown with a plunging neckline. A sparkling choker completed the look.

Janelle James, nominated for her work on ABC hit comedy "Abbott Elementary," went for a similar look in a crimson Rodarte gown with a lingerie vibe. Fellow nominee Camila Morrone ("Daisy Jones & the Six") also got the memo, sizzling in a red Versace gown with a train.

Katherine Heigl, who was part of an onstage "Grey's Anatomy" reunion, channeled Old Hollywood in a strapless red Reem Acra gown with a brooch -- the must-have accessory this awards season -- adorning the waist.

Glamorous black

Black is basically a foolproof red carpet choice -- or silver carpet, in this case -- and several nominees went for it. Ayo Edebiri, who won a Golden Globe and a Critics Choice Award in the past week for her work on "The Bear," made it a threepeat at the Emmys, claiming the first award of the night in a sculptural strapless black leather Louis Vuitton gown.

When asked if her younger self would have imagined her success, Edebiri told E! network: "She didn't dream of nights like this. She sort of dreamed of, just, dental insurance."

Jennifer Coolidge, a winner again on Monday for her work on "The White Lo-

tus," hit the red carpet in a gauzy black pleated gown with sheer sleeves and a bronze pattern.

And bringing the swagger on the men's side, "Abbott Elementary" star and nominee Tyler James Williams sported a leather Dolce and Gabbana tux -- shirt not required.

Royal purple
Purple, the color of royalty, is reigning supreme at the moment in Hollywood, perhaps in part due to the release of the new version of "The Color Purple."

Rachel Brosnahan, a past Emmy winner for "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel" and a nominee on Monday, rocked a purple Versace corset gown, with a high slit in the front.

She told E! she felt like a "warrior princess." Taraji P. Henson wore a sultry sleeveless purple gown with a bodice cutout -- and showed a fair bit of leg. The gown had a train -- another major trend on the red carpet this season.

Elizabeth Debicki, a nominee for her portrayal of the late Princess Diana on "The Crown," wowed in a regal Dior burgundy velvet column gown, her back revealed.

And Daniel Radcliffe, nominated for best actor in a limited series or movie for his portrayal of Weird Al Yankovic -- yes, you read that correctly -- rocked a purple tuxedo with black lapels.

All about the jewels... on the guys

Brooches have been inescapable this awards season, mainly on the lapels of Hollywood's male actors, and Emmys night was no different.

Host Anthony Anderson emerged at one point in the ceremony with a sparkly dragonfly pin, Colman Domingo sported a pearl brooch and nominee Joel Kim Booster ("Fire Island") wore a brown tux with a bejeweled bird brooch. —AFP



Camila Morrone



Host Anthony Anderson



Ayo Edebiri



US actress Annaleigh Ashford

Katherine Heigl





British screenwriter Jesse Armstrong speaks as the cast and crew of “Succession” accept the award for Outstanding Drama Series onstage during the 75th Emmy Awards at the Peacock Theatre at LA Live in Los Angeles.—AFP photos

‘SUCCESSION,’ ‘THE BEAR,’ ‘BEEF’ DOMINATE STRIKE-DELAYED EMMYS

The final season of “Succession” dominated the Emmy Awards on Monday, scooping six prizes including best drama, at a nostalgic gala honoring television’s past and present that was delayed by four months due to Hollywood strikes. The HBO show about the back-stabbing dynastic battles of a powerful media family won awards for stars Kieran Culkin, Sarah Snook and Matthew Macfadyen, while “The Bear” topped the comedy awards and “Beef” led in the limited series section.

US actress Ali Wong, winner of Outstanding Lead Actress In A Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie and Outstanding Limited Or Anthology Series for “Beef.”

“This is a show about family, but it’s also about when... partisan news coverage gets intertwined with divisive right-wing politics,” said “Succession” creator Jesse Armstrong. “After four seasons of satire, as I understand it, that’s a problem we have now fixed,” he joked, on the night that Donald Trump won the Iowa Republican caucuses.



Accepting their best actress and actor prizes, both Snook—who was pregnant during the show’s final season—and Culkin paid tribute to their babies, with Culkin joking to his wife, “I want more... you said maybe, if I win!” “Succession,” which had already won best drama series twice previously, had entered the night with a whopping 27 nominations, including a record three of the six nominees for best actor. It also won for best writing and directing.

Jennifer Coolidge, the sole returning star for the Sicily-set second season of satire “The White Lotus,” won for best supporting actress. Coolidge thanked “all the evil gays,” in a nod to her character’s memorable storyline in which she befriended a flamboyant, yacht-owning group of men with sinister intentions.

The Emmys, which are the small screen’s equivalent of the Oscars, typically take place in September. But organizers opted for an unusual January slot this time around, correctly gambling that the entertainment industry strikes would be over, and that actors would be free to attend. Stars and guests from Harrison Ford to Joan Collins walked the red carpet into the Peacock Theatre at LA Live in downtown Los Angeles for the ceremony.



South Korean director Lee Sung Jin poses in the press room with the Outstanding Writing For A Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie and Outstanding Limited Or Anthology Series awards for “Beef”.



Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series Matthew Macfadyen, “Succession”.



South African comedian Trevor Noah poses in the press room with the Outstanding Talk Series award for “The Daily Show With Trevor Noah”.



Cast members of “The Bear”, (from left) US actress Abby Elliott, US actor Oliver Platt, US actor Edwin Lee Gibson, US actress Liza Colón-Zayas, US actor Ebon Moss-Bachrach, US actress Ayo Edebiri, US actor Jeremy Allen White, US actor Lionel Boyce and Canadian chef and actor Matty Matheson, pose in the press room with the award for Outstanding Comedy Series.



(From left) Mark Mylod, Lorene Scafaria and Andrij Parekh accept the Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series award for “Succession” onstage.



Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series Ebon Moss-Bachrach, “The Bear”, speaks onstage.



Outstanding Reality TV Competition Program winner RuPaul for “RuPaul’s Drag Race”.



(From left) Cast and crew of “Beef,” winners of Outstanding Limited Or Anthology Series, pose in the press room.



Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series Quinta Brunson, “Abbott Elementary”.



Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series Ebon Moss-Bachrach (right) and Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series Jeremy Allen White for “The Bear”.



US actor Steven Yeun, winner of Outstanding Lead Actor In A Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie and Outstanding Limited Or Anthology Series for “Beef.”



Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series Ayo Edebiri, “The Bear,” accepts her award onstage.

Vintage comedy
Celebrating its 75th year, the Emmys featured multiple skits paying homage to beloved classic shows on elaborate sets. Stars like Kelsey Grammar and Ted Danson appeared on a set emulating the beloved famous Boston bar from “Cheers,” while “The Sopranos” actors Lorraine Bracco and Michael Imperioli presented an award from the mob drama’s psychiatrist office.

Other shows getting nostalgic reunions included “Grey’s Anatomy” and “Ally McBeal.” The organizers’ decision to hark back to television’s golden days came in stark contrast with the gala’s recent struggles, as the Emmys’ audiences have plummeted.

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 it was competing Monday with an NFL playoff game and the Iowa vote. Plus this time, there was the confusion of honoring seasons of shows that aired months before.

The delay meant votes were cast back in the summer, for nominated shows that premiered as long as 18 months ago. Most notably, “The Bear”—which took viewers behind the scenes of a dysfunctional Chicago restaurant—won six awards on Monday including the top comedy prize.

Stars Jeremy Allen White, Ayo Edebiri and Ebon Moss-Bachrach won for best actor, supporting actress and actor, and the show also won writing



Australian actress Sarah Snook, winner of Best Actress in a Drama Series for “Succession”.

and directing prizes. But the ceremony honored the show’s intense debut season, which premiered way back in June 2022. At the next Emmys ceremony, taking place this September, the show’s even more acclaimed and ambitious second season is eligible.

Quinta Brunson won for best actress in a comedy for “Abbott Elementary.”

Limited series
Netflix’s “Beef” dominated the limited series categories, for shows that run only a single season, with five prizes including best limited series, writing and directing. Its stars Ali Wong and Steven Yeun took lead acting prizes, playing road-rage drivers locked in a rapidly escalating feud. “Dahmer—Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story” co-star Niecy Nash-Betts won best supporting ac-

tress, while Paul Walter Hauser won for best supporting actor for “Black Bird,” another dark true crime series.

“Last Week Tonight with John Oliver” won best scripted variety series, and variety series writing. Rob Reiner and Sally Struthers paid tribute to the late Norman Lear for “changing American culture,” from a set modeled on one of his many hit shows, “All In The Family.”

The annual “In Memoriam” section honored TV stars who died in the past year including Angela Lansbury, Richard Roundtree, Harry Belafonte, 25-year-old “Euphoria” actor Angus Cloud and “Friends” star Matthew Perry.—AFP



Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series Jennifer Coolidge, “The White Lotus”.



US actor Paul Walter Hauser poses in the press room with the Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Limited/Anthology Series or Movie award for “Black Bird”.



Winners of Outstanding Writing For A Variety Series for “Last Week Tonight With John Oliver” pose in the press room.

WINNERS

Outstanding Comedy Series
The Bear

Outstanding Drama Series
Succession

Outstanding Limited or Anthology Series
Beef

Outstanding Talk Series
The Daily Show with Trevor Noah

Outstanding Reality Competition Program
RuPaul’s Drag Race

Outstanding Scripted Variety Series
Last Week Tonight With John Oliver

Outstanding Variety Special (Live)
Elton John Live: Farewell from Dodger Stadium

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series
Jeremy Allen White, The Bear

Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series
Quinta Brunson, Abbott Elementary

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series
Kieran Culkin, Succession

Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series
Sarah Snook, Succession

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie
Steven Yeun, BEEF

Outstanding Lead Actress in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie
Ali Wong, BEEF

Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series
Ebon Moss-Bachrach, The Bear

Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series
Ayo Edebiri, The Bear

Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series
Matthew Macfadyen, Succession

Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series
Jennifer Coolidge, The White Lotus

Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie
Paul Walter Hauser, Black Bird

Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie
Niecy Nash-Betts, Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story

Outstanding Directing for a Comedy Series
The Bear, “Review,” Christopher Storer

Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series
Succession, “Connor’s Wedding,” Mark Mylod

Outstanding Directing for a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie
“BEEF,” Lee Sung Jin

Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series
The Bear, “System,” Christopher Storer

Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series
Succession, “Connor’s Wedding,” Jesse Armstrong

Outstanding Writing for a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie
Beef, “The Birds Don’t Sing, They Screech in Pain,” Lee Sung Jin

Outstanding Writing for a Variety Series
Last Week Tonight with John Oliver

Sports

Australia's Sam Welsford wins tight finish in first TDU stage

‘That was crazy, it was very hairy down the hill and lots of crashes’

ADELAIDE: Australia's Sam Welsford held off the fast-finishing German Phil Bauhaus to take the opening stage of Australia's Tour Down Under in his first WorldTour ride for new team BORA-Hansgrohe on Tuesday. Welsford was perfectly positioned for the dash to the finish line in Tanunda by teammate Danny Van Poppel and prevailed by a half front wheel over last year's stage winner Bauhaus (Bah-rain Victorious) with Eritrea's Biniam Girmay (Intermarché-Wanty) third.

The Australian, who recently made the switch from Team DSM to BORA-Hansgrohe, leads the general classification with four seconds on Bauhaus and six seconds on Girmay. "That was crazy, it was very hairy down the hill, lots of crashes and near misses, but the boys just kept calm, be patient and wow they did an amazing job for me today," Welsford said.

"First race with the guys and they backed me one hundred percent. That's super special, first one of the year to get a win. I'm stoked." As the peloton sped down Menglers Hill some 13 kilometres (8 miles) to the finish line, a few riders came to grief in heavy falls.

"It was pretty fast on the downhill, we were going around those long bends, upwards of 100km an hour," he said. "Everyone's trying to

be at the front as well, it became pretty messy but I hope everyone's alright because there's still five more days left."

It was the superb teamwork by the BORA-Hansgrohe riders that made it possible for Welsford, who turns 28 this week, and he had just enough to claim the 144-kilometre (90-mile) stage of the season-opening WorldTour event staged outside of Adelaide.

"I did my best, it was the best possible result today, there's not much you do when the guy gets led out with 50 metres to go," runner-up Bauhaus said. "I am happy with the legs and it's a good result to start." A fast-charging Girmay passed Australia's champion sprinter Caleb Ewan (Jayco-AlUla) to round out the podium.

Two-time French world road race champion Julian Alaphilippe (Soudal-QuickStep) needed a bike change during the stage and had to work his way back through the peloton before finishing 98th. Italy's nine-time Grand Tour stage winner Elia Viviani was 32nd in the stage for Ineos Grenadiers.

"Not the best feeling for me today," he said. The first four stages of the TDU are better suited for the sprinters before the final two weekend stages feature the testing Willunga Hill and Mt Lofty finishes. — AFP



ADELAIDE: Hansgrohe rider Sam Welsford from Australia celebrates after winning the first stage of the Tour Down Under cycling race in Adelaide on January 16, 2024. — AFP

Bills down Steelers to advance, Bucs thump Eagles

LOS ANGELES: Josh Allen led the Buffalo Bills to a 31-17 victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers in the NFL playoffs on Monday as the Philadelphia Eagles' once-promising season ended in a 32-9 drubbing by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

In freezing conditions at Buffalo's Highmark Stadium, Bills quarterback Allen threw three touchdowns and conjured a scintillating 52-yard run for a superb rushing touchdown to help take down the seventh-seeded Steelers.

The victory sends the Bills into another playoff clash with Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs, the reigning Super Bowl champions who head to Buffalo on Sunday for a mouthwatering Divisional Round battle.

Buffalo were beaten in Kansas City in the AFC playoffs in 2022 and 2021, in two classic high-scoring encounters. "It's going to take a team effort," Allen said of facing the Chiefs. "We know the type of team that they are, obviously the type of quarterback that they have in Pat over there."

Allen and the Bills laid the foundation for victory with a devastating first-half display that took full advantage of Pittsburgh's offensive ineptitude. Monday's game had been shifted from Saturday due to the winter storm that enveloped swathes of the United States last week. While the pitch at Orchard Park was cleared in time for kick-off, thick snow blanketed the stands.

When the game finally got under way, Allen was too hot to handle as the Bills roared into a 21-0 lead. Allen found Dawson Knox for the opening touchdown to cap an 80-yard drive and then punished a Steelers fumble on the next possession with a 29-yard bullet into the end zone for tight end Dalton Kincaid.

Allen then brought the house down midway through the second quarter with a magical individual score, showcasing the quarterback's athleticism by charging 52 yards for a rushing touchdown that made it 21-0. At that stage, the Bills looked to be cruising to a blowout victory against a Steelers offense whose first five possessions of the game resulted in three punts, a fumble and an interception.

Eagles crash

Pittsburgh did rally to get within seven points early in the fourth quarter at 24-17, Mason Rudolph marching the Steelers 75 yards upfield before passing to Calvin Austin III for a touchdown. Yet the Bills responded with their fourth touchdown of the game to restore the 14-point cushion, Khalil Shakir stooping to gather a pass from Allen before jinking into the end zone. In Monday's NFC Wild-Card game meanwhile, Philadelphia crashed out of the playoffs in the final act of a late-season collapse that saw them go from potential Super Bowl contenders to whipping boys.

At the start of December, the Eagles—narrowly beaten in last year's Super Bowl—were 10-1 and looked a good bet to return to next month's NFL championship game in Las Vegas. But the Eagles' season unraveled with five defeats in their final regular season six games, and the denouement came in Florida on Monday as Tampa Bay became the latest team to expose their brittleness.

Tampa Bay, who claimed victory in the 2021 Super Bowl with Tom Brady at quarterback, will now head to Detroit on Sunday in the divisional round. Monday's victory marked a personal triumph for Bucs' quarterback Baker Mayfield, who threw three touchdowns and no interceptions to finish with 337 passing yards.

Mayfield entered the NFL in 2018 after being chosen by the Cleveland Browns with the No.1 pick in the Draft. But the 28-year-old was jettisoned by the Browns in 2022 and struggled to rebuild his career during separate stints with the Carolina Panthers and Los Angeles Rams before joining Tampa Bay in 2023. — AFP

Joshua sees Ngannou fight as road to heavyweight shot

LONDON: Anthony Joshua said on Monday he is hoping a fight against ex-mixed martial arts fighter Francis Ngannou will lead to a shot at becoming the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. Former heavyweight world champion Joshua will face Ngannou in just his second professional bout in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 8.

Three weeks prior to that fight, Tyson Fury takes Oleksandr Usyk in Riyadh for the right to become the first undisputed heavyweight champion since 1999. Joshua won all three of his fights in 2023 as he bids to return to the top of the heavyweight division, with his most impressive performance coming in a fifth-round stoppage of Otto Wallin last month.

Cameroon-born Ngannou only made his professional boxing debut in October, when he knocked down WBC champion Fury before losing a close decision. "Every fight leads to somewhere, so this fight is my everything and we will see where it leads me," said Joshua as the fighters faced off at a press conference in London.

"I have got to take his mind and his spirit, it will be explosive. We can both trade and it will be a good fight." Joshua's promoter Eddie Hearn did not hide from his ambitions for the former Olympic champion.

"If you can imagine the winner of this fight against the winner of Fury v Usyk, it's been a long dream of Anthony and his team to be undisputed." Former UFC heavyweight champion Ngannou has another shot at one of the biggest names in the sport after nearly ending Fury's unbeaten record.

"I'm going to come as an underdog to win the fight. I will get this done, I'm just a beginner,"



LONDON: British heavyweight boxer Anthony Joshua (L) and French-Cameroonian boxer Francis Ngannou (R) pose after a press conference in London on January 15, 2024, ahead of their fight in March. — AFP

said Ngannou. "I will come out better and that's how I see things. I prepared for a hard fight. The Fury fight is in the past and I will take this more serious than before because there's more on the line, the undisputed.

"I will do something nobody has done before and I have the tools to do that. It will not be an easy fight, but a possible one (to win)." Both Joshua's victory over Wallin and Ngannou's surprise showing against Fury also took place in the Saudi capital, with the oil-rich Gulf Kingdom rapidly becoming

the go-to destination for promoters seeking big purses for major bouts. Saudi Arabia has lavished billions of dollars on sporting events in recent years, including the right to host the 2034 World Cup, the LIV Golf circuit, a Formula One Grand Prix and football's Club World Cup.

But the world's biggest exporter of oil has been accused by its critics of "sportswashing" by using sport to improve its international reputation after widespread criticism for its human rights and environmental record. — AFP

From Anfield to Asian Cup for China's England born 'role model'

DOHA: A decade ago, England youth international Tyias Browning made his Everton debut against Liverpool at Anfield, a baptism of fire in one of British football's fiercest derbies. Fast forward and the defender has a new name and is currently playing at the Asian Cup in Qatar for China.

Now 29 and officially going by "Jiang Guangtai", Browning retains the unmistakable accent of his home city of Liverpool despite his reinvention as a bedrock at the heart of China's defence. "Tyias is a top player and professional, very serious, with a big experience in football, and that is precious for our team," China's Serbian coach Aleksandar Jankovic said on Tuesday in Doha.

"He can match up in duels, intensity, strength, speed, everything," Browning's unusual journey began in 2019 when he left his boyhood club Everton and joined Guangzhou Evergrande. At the time Guangzhou were the most successful team in the Chinese Super League, which itself was throwing money at bringing internationals such as Oscar and Carlos Tevez to the country.

Italian defensive legend Fabio Cannavaro was Guangzhou's coach. After a protracted couple of years sorting out the paperwork, Browning—by this time Jiang—made his debut for his newly adopted country. He followed in the footsteps of another former England youth international in Nico Yennaris, who made history in 2019 as China's first naturalised footballer, part of a policy back then to help the country reach the World Cup for only the second time.

Now 30, former Arsenal reserve Yennaris, known in China as Li Ke, is not in Qatar. Browning, who qualified to play for China because of his grandfather, last week spoke to Chinese media—in English—about his "excitement" at playing his first Asian Cup.

'Precious role model'

Browning's debut in the tournament did not exactly go as planned. China, who have still only reached the World Cup once despite President Xi Jinping's grand ambitions, were held 0-0 by competition newcomers Tajikistan.

China thought they had snatched an



Jiang Guangtai

undeserved victory late on but Zhu Chenjie's header from a corner was ruled out for offside following a VAR check with Browning loitering on the goal-line. Had Browning's career continued on its initial upward trajectory he might have been eyeing up the European Championship with England this summer, rather than sweating it out for a draw with Tajikistan.

He joined Everton aged 10, played for England up to under-21 level and made his club debut in 2014 as a substitute in the 1-1 derby draw at Anfield. Browning made nine appearances for Everton but failed to establish himself.

deciding on a replacement for veteran opener David Warner, who retired after their win over Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground earlier this month.

They have settled on moving Steve Smith up the order and bringing back towering all-rounder Cameron Green to bat at number four, where he slots in for the Western Australia state side. The rest of the team is unchanged from the one that beat Pakistan 3-0 in the just-completed series.

Smith said he had lobbied to replace Warner at the top of the order, adding that it allowed the selectors to pick Green at number four instead of asking him to open. "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," Smith told reporters earlier this week.

"I've played for a long time and I'm an experienced player, and I think it's something I should have done." For the West Indies, however, it is a completely different picture, with seven uncapped players in their 15-man squad.

They will also be missing former captain Jason Holder and fellow all-rounder Kyle Mayers, who have both chosen to sit out the tour to concentrate on the T20 format. The once mighty West Indies have not won a Test in Australia since 1997 and were soundly beaten when they toured last summer. — AFP

West Indies look to spring surprise on Australia

ADELAIDE: Australia head into the two-Test series against the West Indies beginning in Adelaide Wednesday as the hottest of favourites, but the visitors insist they are ready to shock the reigning world Test champions.

For the Australians, the biggest challenge has been

Sports

Senegal enjoy winning start to AFCON defence, Cameroon and Algeria held

Some matches played out before swathes of empty seats

ABIDJAN: Lamine Camara scored a stunning brace as Senegal began their defence of the Africa Cup of Nations title with a 3-0 win over Gambia on Monday, but fellow heavyweights Algeria and Cameroon were both held in their opening matches.

Sadio Mane's Senegal are hoping to retain the trophy they won in Cameroon two years ago and were too strong for their Gambian neighbours, who played the whole second half with 10 men. Marseille midfielder Pape Gueye swept home an assist by Mane to give the Lions of Teranga the lead inside four minutes in Ivorian capital Yamoussoukro.

Gambia endured a troubled build-up to the tournament, boycotting a training session over an unpaid qualification bonus before their flight to Ivory Coast was forced to turn around just nine minutes after take-off due to technical problems.

Quarter-finalists in 2022, they had Cardiff midfielder Ebou Adams sent off for a studs-up challenge just before the break. Senegal effectively killed off the game early in the second half when 20-year-old Camara, the African young player of the year, drilled a low shot into the far corner.

He then completed the victory with an early contender for goal of the tournament in the 86th minute, expertly bending a shot into the top corner from just outside the box. Aliou Cisse's Senegal will likely face a tougher assignment in their next Group C match when they face five-time winners Cameroon.

The Indomitable Lions, champions in 2017, had to come from behind to draw 1-1 with 10-man Guinea in the second game of the day in Yamoussoukro, with Frank Magri equalising for Cameroon early in the second half.

Guinea had taken an early lead through Mohamed

Bayo, who was leading their attack in the absence of the injured Serhou Guirassy, the striker enjoying a fine season in Germany with Stuttgart. Cameroon, with Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana not in the team having not arrived in Ivory Coast until just before the match, were given a boost as Guinea's Francois Kamano was sent off with half-time approaching. Magri headed them level, but they could not find a winner in the sapping late afternoon heat.

Empty seats

Algeria, who won the title in 2019, became the latest major nation to fail to win their opening game after Cameroon, Nigeria, Egypt and Ghana, as they were held to a 1-1 stalemate by Angola in Bouake. Baghdad Bounedjah gave Algeria the lead after 18 minutes in Ivory Coast's second city, and the striker then had a stunning second goal disallowed for a tight offside call soon after.

Angola equalised through a Mabululu penalty midway through the second half in the Group D game, although they have now failed to win any of their last nine matches at the Cup of Nations, stretching back to 2012.

Burkina Faso and Mauritania meet in the same group, also in Bouake. Monday's matches were played out before swathes of empty seats, which has quickly become a source of embarrassment for tournament organisers.

Ivorian Prime Minister Robert Beugre Mambe on Monday said measures would be taken to try to ensure full stadiums. "You will see the results in the next 48 hours," he said, in response to criticism after fewer than 37,000 fans attended Saturday's opening game between the hosts and Guinea-Bissau at the



BOUAKE: Algeria's forward #13 Islam Slimani (C) heads the ball while being challenged by Angola's defender #3 Jonathan Buatou (L) during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 group D football match between Algeria and Angola at Stade de la Paix in Bouake. — AFP

60,000-seat Ebimpe Olympic Stadium.

The game had been declared a sell-out, with many Ivorians complaining that certain people had bought tickets in bulk over the internet and had not managed to then sell them on. "Numerous supporters expressed their concerns about the fact the stadium

was not totally full," acknowledged the Confederation of African Football and the local organising committee in a joint statement.

Tuesday will see the opening games in Group E, with Tunisia meeting Namibia and Mali taking on South Africa in Korhogo. — AFP



ASC officials with the winners

Kazakhstan wins mixed doubles at trap event

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The mixed doubles trap event of the Asian shotgun championship took place yesterday resulting in Kazakhstan winning through shooters Alisher Aisalbayev and Mariya Dmitriyenko.

While second place went to Iran through Mohammad Beyranvand and Marziyeh Parvaresh. Third place was shared by China through Yuhao Guo and Xiaojing Wang and Kuwait through Naser Meqlad and Shahad Al-Hawal. A special award was given to the youngest shooter from Iran who won the individual gold medal and qualified for Paris 2024 Olympics.

Sheikh Salman after the awarding ceremony thanked HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the major support in holding the shooting championship, as he always presents all that is necessary for this sport of heritage, as shooting has made many achievements in the name of Kuwait, and most importantly made Olympic achievements as well.

He said there is no doubt that Kuwait's organization of the Asian Shotgun Championship is very important due to having quota place for Paris 2024 Olympics, and at the same it has a large Asian gathering, and for the first time the number of participating countries reached 26 federations. This is something we are proud of, and we thanked the organizing committee and President of Kuwait



Mohammad Beyranvand

Shooting Sport Federation Eng Al-Otaibi and all those who worked for their efforts.

He said the tournament began with an outstanding opening, and the trap events, as things are moving highly organized. He said Asian Shooting officials are impressed with the ranges of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex which has all the international features.

Thanks for our country Kuwait for hosting the event, and thanks for sports officials in the government who contributed to the success of this event. The skeet event will start today followed by an unofficial training and competitions on Thursday.

Roma sack Mourinho, eye former star De Rossi as successor

ROME: Jose Mourinho's time at Roma came to an end on Tuesday after the Serie A club sacked the "Special One" midway through what has been a deeply disappointing third season in the Italian capital. Mourinho departs Roma after an emotional two-and-a-half years in which he won Europa Conference League in 2022, ending a 14-year trophy drought for the club.

Roma said that Mourinho would leave alongside his staff "with immediate effect", adding that it was "in the best interests of the club" after a series of poor results left the team way off the pace in the Italian top flight. Italian media report that former Roma captain Daniele De Rossi, a World Cup winner with Italy in 2006, is the favourite to replace Mourinho as coach. Mourinho's contract was due to expire in June and although he had repeatedly stated that he wanted to stay on, talks about an extension to his deal never materialised.

Rumours of his departure grew more persistent



Jose Mourinho

after Sunday's dismal 3-1 defeat at AC Milan which left Roma ninth in Serie A, five points away from the Champions League positions. "We would like to thank Jose on behalf of all of us at AS Roma for his passion and efforts since his arrival at the club," said owners Dan and Ryan Friedkin in a statement.

"We will always have great memories of his tenure at Roma, but we believe that an immediate change is in the best interests of the club. "We wish Jose and his assistants all the best in their future endeavours."

The 60-year-old Portuguese was a shock appointment in 2021, Roma's announcement of his arrival as the replacement to Paulo Fonseca coming almost completely out of the blue. — AFP

Wiegman signs new contract

LONDON: England Women's manager Sarina Wiegman signed a new contract on Tuesday that will run to the 2027 World Cup. Wiegman has made a big impact since taking charge of the Lionesses in September 2021. The Dutch coach led England's women to European Championship glory at Wembley in 2022.

She took England to last year's World Cup final, although they were beaten 1-0 by Spain. England also won the first Women's Finalissima against Brazil under Wiegman's leadership last year. On Monday night, the 54-year-old won the 2023 FIFA award for the best women's coach. Wiegman, who replaced former Manchester United defender Phil Neville in the England role, can now focus on leading the Lionesses in their 2025 Euro title defence and then challenge for the 2027 World Cup.

"I am so happy to have the chance to lead England through to 2027 after an incredible two and a half years," Wiegman said. "Looking forward, we have unfinished business and I know we are capable of even more, although nothing will come easy."

Qualification for the Euros starts in April, with the finals being played in Switzerland next year. "Our game is becoming so competitive at the top level. I



Sarina Wiegman

relish that opportunity and can't wait to start the Euro qualifiers, followed by the World Cup," Wiegman said. "It is a fantastic job working with these amazing players and alongside great colleagues. And, of course, it is very special to be able to play a part in giving our fans such wonderful moments."

Before taking the England job, Wiegman masterminded the Netherlands' Euro glory on home soil in 2017 and also took them to the 2019 World Cup final. Wiegman, a four-time winner of the FIFA best women's coach prize, has impressed the Football Association with her role in developing England's female players into global talents. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752

Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Bayanaboyina Lakshmi Narasaiah, S/o Bayanaboyina Panchalaiah, R/of D.No. 2/65, Upparapalli, Kotha Madhavaram, Siddavatam(M), Kadapa, A.P - 516247, have changed my name from Binaboena Lakshmi Narasaiah (old name) to Bayanaboyina Lakshmi Narasaiah (new name), Passport No. S7633005.

(#4594) 17/1/2024

I Sahil, holder of Indian Passport No. N6011960 having permanent address, ward No. 23, Raigran Mohalla, Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, Pin-333042, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given name Sahil and surname Bisti.

(#4593) 17/1/2024

I HUSSAINA (current name in passport) , holder of Indian Passport No. U0610247 having permanent address in India, Burhani Mohalla, Mohammad-ia Colony, Galiyakot, Dungarpur, Pin - 314026 , Rajasthan, India. residing in Kuwait at address: Yusuf al bader street , Block 10, Salmiya, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as HUSSAINA (given name) CHIKHLI (surname)(#4592) 15/1/2024

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Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Messi, Bonmati scoop awards for FIFA's best in 2023

We're here because we won a lot and thousands of fans involved in our success: Guardiola



LONDON: The prize winners pose on stage during the Best FIFA Football Awards 2023 ceremony in London. — AFP

LONDON: Lionel Messi was controversially crowned as FIFA's best men's player for 2023 on Monday, while Aitana Bonmati added to her collection of individual accolades at the awards ceremony in London. Messi claimed the award for the third time, but the 36-year-old was a surprise victor ahead of Erling Haaland on an otherwise glorious night for Manchester City.

The award only covered the period after Messi had led Argentina to World Cup glory in December 2022 to August 2023. During that time the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner had a subdued end to his career at Paris Saint-Germain, despite winning the Ligue 1 title, before joining MLS side Inter Miami in June. Messi quickly made his mark in the United States as he helped the franchise, part-owned by David Beckham, to their first trophy by winning the Leagues Cup in August.

Haaland was favourite to win after scoring 52 times in his debut season with City as the English side won a treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup. After receiving the same number of points from a scoring system based off votes from national team captains, coaches, journalists and fans, Messi was crowned victor thanks to more first-choice nominations.

Messi's former club teammate Kylian Mbappe

was third. However, all three of the men's finalists did not attend the ceremony leaving Arsenal and France legend Thierry Henry, who was co-hosting the event, to pick up the award in Messi's absence.

'Powerful generation of women'

Bonmati's selection as the best women's player was never in doubt as she completed a clean sweep of personal awards after helping Spain to win the World Cup and Barcelona to Champions League glory in 2023. The 25-year-old also won the Ballon d'Or, Golden Ball for player of the World Cup and UEFA's player of the year in recent months.

"A couple of weeks ago when 2023 came to an end I was nostalgic because 2023 was an exceptional and unique year I will remember for the rest of my life," said Bonmati.

"I'm proud of being part of a powerful generation of women who are changing the rules of the game and the world." Pep Guardiola was named best coach after masterminding City's first ever Champions League success. "We're here because we won a lot and the thousands of people involved in our success," said Guardiola.

"I'm really happy for the season we had because it was an incredible journey. In the end we did it, but the pleasure of being there was incredible." Ha-

land was joined by five of his club teammates—Kyle Walker, John Stones, Ruben Dias, Bernardo Silva and Kevin De Bruyne—in the team of the year.

Real Madrid's Thibaut Courtois, Jude Bellingham and Vinicius Junior, Messi and Mbappe made up the 11. City's Ederson won men's goalkeeper of the year, while England and Manchester United stopper Mary Earps picked up the women's award. England national team boss Sarina Wiegman won the women's coach of the year after leading the Lionesses to the World Cup final.

Seven of England's women were included in the team of the year: Earps, Lucy Bronze, Alex Greenwood, Keira Walsh, Alessia Russo, Lauren James and Ella Toone. Olga Carmona, who scored the winning goal in the World Cup final, was the only other Spaniard included alongside Bonmati with American star Alex Morgan and Australia's Sam Kerr also selected.

The Brazilian men's team won the fair play award after they dawned an all black shirt for the first time in a show of support for forward Vinicius, who suffered several incidents of racist abuse while playing for Madrid last year. There was also Brazilian success in the Puskas award for the best goal, scored by Botafogo's Guilherme Madruga for his spectacular overhead kick. — AFP

Embiid scores 41 for Sixers, Lakers end Thunder streak

LOS ANGELES: Joel Embiid scored 41 points in a dazzling return from injury on Monday as the Philadelphia 76ers romped past the Houston Rockets 124-115. Kicking off a packed slate of NBA fixtures as the US marked the Martin Luther King Jr. public holiday, the Sixers were always in control as they cruised to victory.

Embiid missed the Sixers' past three games after twisting his left knee in a January 5 defeat to the New York Knicks. But the NBA's reigning Most Valuable Player showed no sign of rustiness as he posted his seventh 40-point game of the season, adding 10 rebounds and three assists. Embiid shot 12-of-21 from the field and was near-perfect from the foul line, making 16 of 17 free throws in a comfortable win for the Sixers, who improved to 25-13 to remain in third place in the Eastern Conference.

Embiid's performance also extended a remarkable scoring streak. The 29-year-old has now gone 16 consecutive games with at least 30 points and 10 rebounds, tying Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the second-longest streak of its kind in NBA history. Only Wilt Chamberlain is ahead of Embiid and Abdul-Jabbar. Embiid received scoring support in Monday's rout from Tyrese Maxey with 27 points while Patrick Beverley added 11 from the bench and Tobias Harris 10. Jalen Green led Houston's scoring with 20 points while Alperen Sengun finished with 19.

While Embiid made a successful return from injury, there was less to celebrate for Golden State Warriors star Draymond Green in his first game back since missing 16 games through suspension. Green, who was given an indefinite ban by the NBA last month after striking Phoenix Suns player Jusuf Nurkic, played 23 minutes off the bench in the Warriors' 116-107 loss to the Memphis Grizzlies. A close game was settled by a late fourth quarter rally by Memphis, who compiled a 10-1 run to open up a 12-point lead with four minutes remaining. "Draymond played well, played hard—it's good to have him back," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said after the loss. "Obviously as a team we didn't play well, but Draymond competed and it's good to get him back in the fold."

In other games on Monday, Anthony Davis finished with 27 points, 15 rebounds and five assists while LeBron James added 25 points as the Los Angeles Lakers ended Oklahoma City Thunder's four-game winning streak with a 112-105 win at the Crypto.com Arena. A game that saw 17 lead changes swung the Lakers' way in the third quarter as Los Angeles outscored the Thunder 34-26 to take the lead for the final time.

In Dallas, Kyrie Irving scored 42 points and Tim Hardaway Jr. 41 as the Dallas Mavericks staged a fourth quarter rally to defeat the New Orleans Pelicans 125-120. Irving and Hardaway scored 20 points between them in the fourth quarter as the Mavericks fought back from a double-digit deficit late in the third to snatch victory. — AFP

Swiatek wins at Australian Open as Alcaraz makes bow

MELBOURNE: Iga Swiatek survived a tough test against former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin to reach the second round in Melbourne on Tuesday as Carlos Alcaraz prepared to make his bow. The Polish world number one came through 7-6 (7/2), 6-2 against the player she beat to win her first Grand Slam title, at the French Open in 2020.

In-form Swiatek, 22, twice came back from a break down in a gruelling first set lasting 68 minutes but stepped on the gas in the second set, winning the final five games to finish with a flourish. The four-time major winner, now on a 17-match winning streak, next faces unseeded American Danielle Collins, who beat former winner Angelique Kerber 6-2, 3-6, 6-1.

"It wasn't the easiest first round. She played really well. I tried to find my rhythm, especially in the first set," said the top seed, who owns three Roland Garros crowns and another at the US Open. "I'm happy at the end of the set I could win the most important points." Third seed Elena Rybakina, now firmly established in the elite, overcame a slow start and saved three set points to beat former world number one Karolina Pliskova 7-6 (8/6), 6-4. The 2022 Wimbledon champion, last year's beaten finalist, will face unseeded Russian Anna Blinkova in the second round.

"No matter what the result was last year, I'm super happy to be back," said the cool Kazakh. "It was very positive for me even though I lost (in the 2023 final)." Emma Raducanu had an easier passage through to the second round, overcoming American Shelby Rogers 6-3, 6-2, and will face China's Wang Yafan next.

The British player stunned the tennis world when she triumphed at Flushing Meadows in 2021 but her record since then is patchy and she has only just returned from a injury-enforced eight-month break. There were also wins for former US Open champion Sloane Stephens and American 27th seed Emma Navarro, fresh from her Hobart triumph. On the men's side, Danish eighth seed Holger Rune came through in four sets against Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka while 11th seed Casper Ruud and Britain's Cameron Norrie also progressed.

Veteran Grigor Dimitrov, who ended a six-year title drought in Brisbane this month, recovered from a rocky start to get the better of Marton Fucsovics in five sets.

Motivated Alcaraz

Wimbledon champion Alcaraz, who is vying with Novak Djokovic for the coveted number one spot, is the main draw in the evening session in Melbourne. The Spaniard, 20, edged the



MELBOURNE: USA's Sofia Kenin hits a return against Poland's Iga Swiatek during their women's singles match on day three of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 16, 2024. —AFP

Serbian great in a thrilling final at the All England Club last year to win his second major.

Since that meeting at Wimbledon, world number one Djokovic, a 10-time winner in Melbourne, has come out on top twice against his young opponent, including at the ATP Finals in November. But Alcaraz, who missed last year's Australian Open with a hamstring injury, is undaunted as he prepares for his first match against veteran Frenchman Richard Gasquet.

He said the challenge of toppling Djokovic—king of Rod Laver Arena—gave him "extra motivation". "I always want to play against the best players in the world to see what my level is," he

said. "Obviously it's a good test, playing against him in the places or in the tournament that he's almost unbeaten."

"Yeah, I am looking to reach the final and hopefully playing a final against him. It would be great, obviously," Alexander Zverev took to Margaret Court Arena in the evening against fellow German Dominik Koepfer under the shadow of a looming court case.

The world number six will go on trial at the end of May for allegedly assaulting his former girlfriend in 2020. Zverev, who has rejected the allegations, is accused of "physically abusing a woman and damaging her health during an argument", according to the court. — AFP