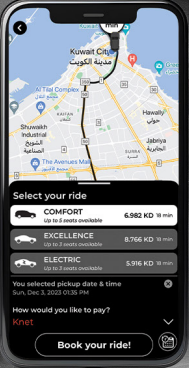



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No ties with Zionist entity before Gaza truce: Saudi



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West Bank economy in tatters as Gaza war rages



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Check out Kuwait Times' new weekend section!



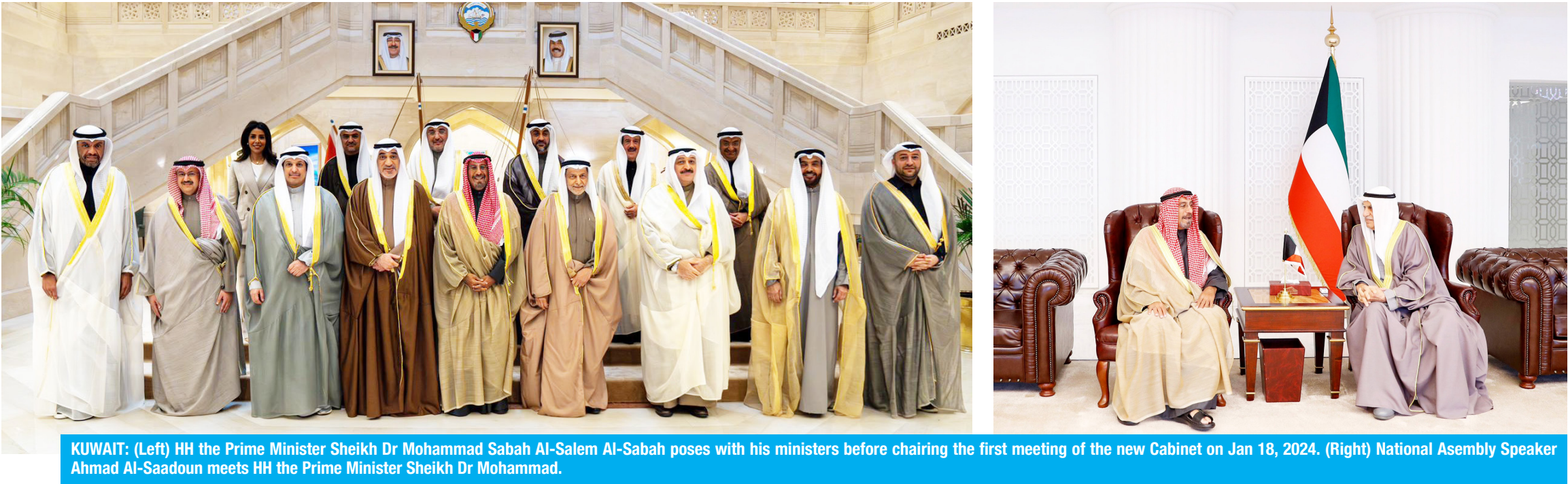
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Zain staff compete for top spot in fourth padel tourney



PM extends hand of cooperation

Pre-2020 expat residency violators allowed to pay fines and legalize status



‘Jordan’ strikes ‘drug traffickers’ in Syria, killing 9

BEIRUT: At least nine civilians, including two children, were killed Thursday in air strikes on Syria likely to have been carried out by Jordan against drug traffickers, a monitor and media outlet reported. The kingdom has tightened controls along its frontier with Syria in recent years and its armed forces occasionally announce operations to foil drug and weapon smuggling attempts from its war-torn neighbor.

“Jordanian warplanes carried out air strikes targeting residential areas and a warehouse in southeastern province of Sweida, killing at least nine people, including two girls and four women,” said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor, describing it as a “massacre”. The first strike on a house in the village of Urman killed a man, his wife and their two daughters, along with his brother and his wife, said the Britain-based group.

Continued on Page 6

US launches fresh strikes on Houthis

WASHINGTON: The United States carried out fresh strikes against Yemen’s Houthis on Thursday, targeting anti-ship missiles that the White House said the Iran-backed rebels planned to use for attacks in the Red Sea. “We did it again this morning, striking at... a couple of anti-ship missiles that we had reason to believe were being prepared for imminent fire into the southern Red Sea,” National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters.

The US military said Wednesday American forces targeted 14 missiles that were ready to launch in Yemen, after Washington re-designated the Houthi rebels as a “terrorist” entity for their attacks on merchant vessels. The Houthis — who have already faced multiple rounds of air strikes in response to

Continued on Page 6



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Sabah Al-Sabah on Thursday chaired the first meeting of his Cabinet and visited the National Assembly, where he stressed the importance of cooperation with parliament to help achieve the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people. Received by Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, the new prime minister said the government extends the hand of cooperation to the National Assembly based on constitutional principles.

He also insisted on the necessity of cooperation between the government and the Assembly to approve legislation to serve national interests amid regional and international challenges. HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad said his government’s priorities will be to handle economic challenges and revise legislation and policies to restructure the domestic economy.

Pak retaliatory strikes hit Iran targets, killing 9

TEHRAN: Pakistan launched deadly strikes against militant targets in Iran on Thursday in retaliation for Iranian strikes on its territory, further stoking tensions and prompting Iran to summon Pakistan’s envoy. At least nine people were killed in the strikes in restive Sistan-Baluchistan province, most of them women or children, Iran’s official IRNA news agency reported. They came just two days after Iran carried

Scores killed in brutal Zionist strikes on Gaza

GAZA: The Zionist army said troops reached the southernmost point of their ground invasion of Gaza so far on Thursday as they intensified operations across the south of the Palestinian territory. In Khan Yunis, southern Gaza’s main city, the army said its Givati Brigade was “fighting in the southernmost area that ground troops have operated in so far”.

Live footage from AFTV showed smoke rising over central-southern Gaza in the afternoon. Gaza’s Hamas authorities reported 93 deaths overnight,

The Harvard-educated premier on Wednesday formed his first Cabinet, mostly of technocrats, which included as many as 11 new faces out of 14 members, including himself. MIP Khaled Al-Otaibi welcomed the Cabinet, but insisted that it must cooperate with the Assembly to approve a number of legislation discussed with the former government.

Meanwhile, the interior ministry has started allowing residency violators living illegally in the country prior to 2020 to regularize their status after paying the prescribed legal fines. The decision entails the annulment of decision no. 288 issued in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic regarding rules for the deportation of foreigners without residency permits or whose residency permits expired. The decision mandates the adjudgment of the status of violators after March 1, 2020.

The interior ministry had previously banned such expat violators from getting legal residency after al-

out raids on what it described as “terrorist” targets in Pakistan, killing at least two children.

While Iran and nuclear-armed Pakistan often accuse each other of allowing militants to operate from the other’s territory, cross-border operations by government forces have been rare. Pakistan’s foreign ministry described Thursday’s raids as a “series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes against terrorist hideouts” in Sistan-Baluchistan.

The strikes took place at around 4:30 am (0100 GMT), with three drones destroying four houses in a village near the city of Saravan, IRNA said, citing Alireza Marhamati, deputy

Continued on Page 6

including 16 in a strike on a house in the southern city of Rafah, where many people have fled. Umm Walid al-Zamli said she lost her children and her house. “The oldest was a second-grade girl,” she said in a choked voice. “What did they do wrong?”

Vowing to destroy Hamas, the Zionist entity has been conducting a relentless air and ground offensive that has killed at least 24,620 Palestinians, around 70 percent of them women, children and adolescents, according to health ministry figures. The war has displaced roughly 85 percent of Gaza’s 2.4 million population, the UN says. Many have crowded into shelters where they struggle to get food, water, fuel and medical care. UN agencies say improved aid access to Gaza is urgently needed as famine and disease loom.

Continued on Page 6

lowing them to leave the country without paying fines during the COVID-19 period. Security sources said residency departments have begun receiving violators, who should first consult with residency affairs investigators to obtain a “no objection certificate”, then pay the fine amounting to KD 600 to complete the renewal of their residency permit.

Separately, the National Assembly on Thursday elected by acclamation MP Hamad Al-Matar as deputy secretary of the parliamentary caucus, Mohammad Al-Mahan as its secretary, and Hamad Al-Obaid as treasurer. This was announced during the first annual meeting of the general assembly of the parliamentary caucus in its second session of the 17th legislative term. Furthermore, the National Assembly elected by acclamation MP’s Fahad bin Jame and Hani Shams as complementary members of the parliamentary caucus.

ISLAMABAD: Youth activists of Muslim Talba Mahaz (MTM) holding a banner shout slogans during a protest against Iranian air strikes on Jan 18, 2024. — AFP

GAZA: Palestinians mourn over bodies of victims of Zionist bombardment on Jan18, 2024 in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah chairs the first meeting of his Cabinet on Thursday.— KUNA

Who's who in new Kuwait Cabinet

His Highness Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah — Prime Minister



Born in 1955, he holds a PhD in economics from Harvard University and has previously served as Kuwait's ambassador to the US in 1993, in addition to tenures as foreign minister (2001, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011), as well as deputy prime minister and acting oil minister.

Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah - Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Interior and Defense Minister.



Born in 1959, he graduated from the Kuwaiti military academy and previously served as an Amiri Guard officer.

Dr Emad Mohammad Abdulaziz Al-Atiqi - Deputy Prime Minister and Oil Minister.



He holds a PhD in chemical engineering from Leahy Pennsylvania College and has previously served in numerous academic roles in Kuwait University, including research department chief.

Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi - Minister of Information and Culture.



Al-Mutairi holds a BA degree in Psychology from Kuwait University. He served as a Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs since in the cabinets of December 2020, March 2021 and April 2023.

Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi - Minister of Health.



Born in 1959, he graduated from the Kuwaiti military academy and previously served as an Amiri Guard officer.

Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Sabah - Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs.



He served as Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for National Assembly Affairs.

Dr Anwar Ali Abdullah Al-Mudhaf - Finance Minister and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs.



He holds a PhD in business management from Claremont College and has been the chairman of Kuwait's Al-Ahli United Bank since 2014.

Dr Salem Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf - Minister of Electricity and Water and Minister of Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Housing Affairs.



He holds a PhD in mechanical engineering from the UK's Cranfield University and has completed more than 30 researches across scientific fields.

Dawood Sulaiman Maarafi - Minister of State for the National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications.



He holds a Master's degree in business management and served in various roles in the banking sector and the global stock market.

Dr Adel Mohammad Abdullah Al-Adwani - Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.



He previously served as professor in Kuwait University's faculty of Administrative Sciences.

Abdullah Hamad Abdullah Al-Jouan - Minister of Commerce and Industry.



He also serves as the chief of Kuwait's National Fund for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises.

Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Yahya - Minister of Foreign Affairs.



Born in 1966, he holds a bachelor's degree in business management from Western Oregon University in the US. Previously served as Kuwait's ambassador to a number of Latin American countries, including Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

Faisal Saeed Nafil Al-Ghareeb - Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.



Born in 1958, he holds a bachelor's degree in law and Islamic Sharia from Kuwait University. He has been national carrier Kuwait Airways' deputy chief since 2020.

Dr Noura Mohammad Khaled Al-Meshaan - Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs.



She previously served as Associate Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University.

Arab countries must align with the new digital world: CITRA

ABU DHABI: Chairman of the Board of Kuwait's Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), Omar Al-Omar, emphasized the crucial need for Arab countries to align with the rapid development of digital systems worldwide, particularly in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship within the technological sector. Omar, speaking to KUNA during his participation in the 27th session of the Council of Arab Ministers for Communications and Information in Abu Dhabi, stressed the necessity of establishing a unified Arab network to enhance the Arab communications system. This network would aim to improve citizens' experiences by ensuring the quality and speed of data transfer, fostering regional integration, and facilitating cross-border communications.

Omar stated that the presence of a unified network would significantly contribute to progress in innovation and entrepreneurship within the technological sector, ultimately boosting economic development and the

digital economy across member states. He highlighted ongoing efforts among Arab countries to find common ground on regulatory matters, enabling seamless information transfer in the face of global advancements in digital systems. Cooperation and coordination among member states, he emphasized, are essential for ensuring a promising future for Arab citizens.

Regarding the agenda of the recently concluded 27th session, Omar mentioned key topics such as cybersecurity, the need for a working mechanism for joint Arab cooperation, coordination among organizations in the communications field and updates on the meetings of the working groups of the Arab Permanent Committee for Communications and Information. The session aimed to discuss ways to support innovation and entrepreneurship in the technological sector, strengthen information and communications technology infrastructure in the Arab world, and address challenges in the communications and information technology sector.

Omar underlined Kuwait's commitment to sharing its vision and experiences, transferring expertise, and cooperating with the Arab Federation for the Digital Economy and the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security. He highlighted the collaboration of Kuwaiti entities and institutions in the information and communications sector to leverage artificial intelligence technology and its broad applications. — KUNA

Local

Absence of legal awareness remains a common societal problem: Lawyers

Around 2,740 legal cases being filed in Kuwait courts daily

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Around 2,740 legal cases were filed daily before Kuwait's courts in 2023, according to recent statistics issued by the ministry of justice. This raises a question — if people become aware that some of the acts that they encounter in their daily lives are considered as crimes that are punishable by law, would the rate of legal disputes remain this high?

Even with the development of technologies and easier access to all types of information, building legal literacy still doesn't count as one of the public's priorities, said lawyer Aljawhara Abdulredha. "People only seek legal consultation after a legal dispute has already taken place, oblivious to the fact that laws have been there in the first place to protect them from getting involved in these kinds of disputes," said Abdulredha.

Almost everything in this world is affected by law in some way, as Abdulredha said, referring to political, economic or social aspects of life. So, gaining basic legal awareness or seeking lawyers' advice in advance before disputes arise is undoubtedly a necessity, she noted.

Abdulredha believes that the cause of this illiteracy is driven by the fear of breaking the norms and standards of society, which encourages people to always stay on the safe side and avoid problems, which results in depriving them of many of their rights. "Society judges a person who frequently asks their rights as a troublemaker," she affirmed.

Even when people try to learn more about this integral aspect of life, they mostly derive their information from uncredible sources, either from unprofessional people or from random social media plat-



Aljawhara Abdulredha



Lina Adlouni



Nawaf Alwahaib



Sultan Al-Shemali

forms, Abdulredha pointed out. She advised people to always refer to trustworthy lawyers, highlighting the fact that to avoid being misled, they should study the lawyers' backgrounds and histories very well before consulting them.

Lawyer Sultan Al-Shemali said: "Legal awareness is crucial based on the legal principle that says, 'the law does not protect fools', which means claiming that you committed a crime or lost your legal rights due to lack of legal knowledge doesn't count as an excuse."

Shemali referred to a popular law that many people don't know of, which is, the "statute of limitations". It is a law that specifies a period of time a person has to file a lawsuit against a company or an individual after an alleged offense takes place.

An example of this, he noted, is in the cybercrimes law. For instance, after facing abuse by someone through social media platforms, one's right to file a complaint against this person remains valid only

within six months. After this time limit, even if all the evidence indicates that this person committed a crime, there is a real risk that one will be timed out and won't get justice.

Shemali referred to another common case, of someone asking a person to pay their money back. It is better to demand it within a 3-year limit, otherwise they might lose all their rights due to the statute of limitation. "You must have at least the basic knowledge of law to avoid losing your rights or getting yourself in trouble," he emphasized.

Lawyer Nawaf Alwahaib highlighted one of the most common problems that result from legal illiteracy — people blindly signing official contracts without referring to a lawyer to help them decipher their content properly. Therefore, one might sign up without knowing the risk that they are taking under the contract, which might possibly contain various clauses that impose certain liabilities and risks against them.



Lawyer Lina Adlouni echoed all the previous lawyers' statements: "Ignorance of the law is no excuse." As Adlouni's area of expertise is focused on the investment and business sector, she recalled encountering cases where lawsuits are filed between business partners or between employers and their employees, due to signing contracts without understanding all the rights and responsibilities that all parties should adhere to.

Adlouni mentioned multiple credible sources that people can derive basic legal information from, such as the government gazette Kuwait Alyawm, which is an official publication that notifies the public about the actions, decisions and legal notices of the government. In addition, she suggested following up with events that take place at the Kuwait Society of Lawyers, which mostly discuss the latest laws and regulations and are open to the public. Lastly, she encouraged following official government websites for legitimate information, such as of the ministry of justice.

Municipality, Credit Bank sign protocol to provide e-services

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Municipality signed a co-operation protocol with the Kuwait Credit Bank regarding electronic linking between them to provide electronic services using web service as part of their efforts to make citizens' transactions smooth and convenient.

The Director-General of the Municipality, Saud Al-Dabbous, said in a press statement after signing the protocol with the Director-General of the Bank, Khalifa Al-Fadil, that its implementation has taken effect as of Thursday and includes a commitment to establish and operate an automated inquiry service for data on description certificates, data on building permits, and engineering offices to provide them to the Credit Bank.

Al-Dabbous added that the service also includes the data of all employees of the two entities dealing



Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Saud Al-Dabbous, and Director General of Kuwait Credit Bank, Khalifa Al-Fadil, after signing the cooperation protocol.

with the services provided periodically according to monthly statistics, in addition to maintaining a historical record containing the information obtained from the Credit Bank via electronic link for reference when needed.

He stressed that the record includes information about the customer and information about the employee in charge of requesting the electronic service and the date of its request, pointing out the commitment of both parties to use the information in accordance with the purposes stipulated in this protocol. He stressed the commitment of both sides to issue an official letter specifying the contact officer from each party, including the employee's name, work phone, mobile phone, and official email to follow up on the implementation of the articles of this protocol.

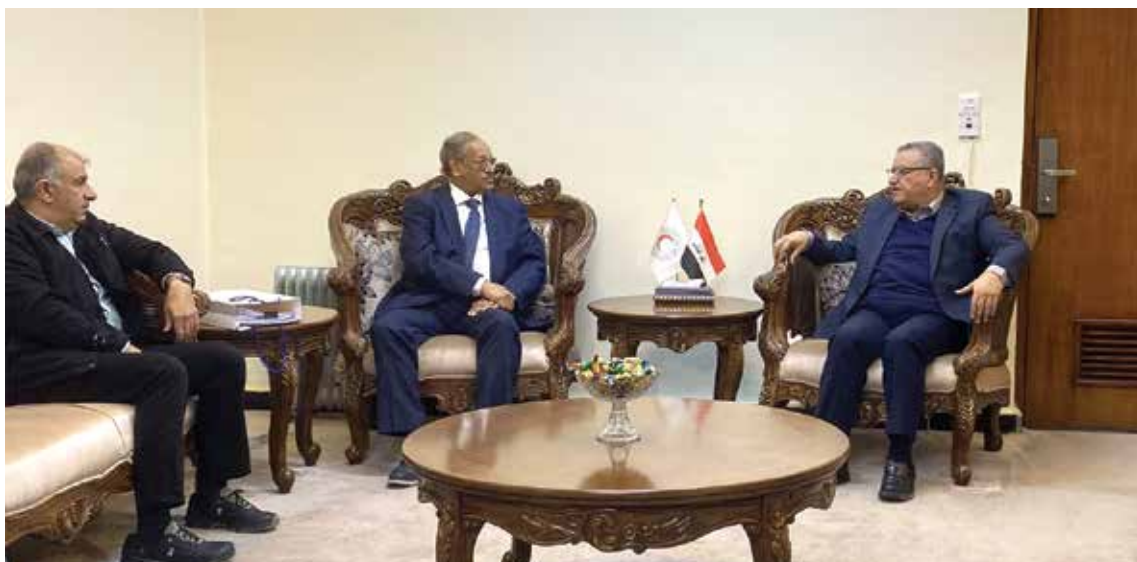
Al-Dabbous stated that the protocol emphasizes preserving the confidentiality of the information and data exchanged and not disclosing it to any other party or official body that deals with it inside or outside Kuwait except based on a judicial ruling or an official request from the judicial authorities or in accordance with the provisions of Law No (20) of 2014 regarding electronic transactions and its executive regulations. He stated that the protocol takes into account the intellectual and literary property rights owned by each party and the preservation of the licenses granted to either party, and it is not permissible to assign them, grant them, or transfer them to others. — KUNA

Official says KFAED keen on combating climate change

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) Walid Al-Bahr affirmed on Thursday the Fund's keenness to keep pace with global interest in the phenomenon of climate change and the need to limit its impacts. Al-Bahr said in a press statement after his visit to the Kuwaiti multi-purpose research ship 'Explorer' that the State of Kuwait is committed to contributing to efforts to preserve the environment, combat the phenomenon of climate change, and reduce its negative effects on the environment and societies. He stated that the delegation was briefed during the visit on the latest technologies used and the latest scientific capabilities of the ship 'The Explorer', owing to its scientific achievements in economic and environmental domains. He expressed his happiness at this achievement which helps improve the quality of life and preserve the safety and sustainability of the marine environment.

For his part, the Acting Director General of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Dr Mishaan Al-Otaibi, said the "Explorer" ship aims to conduct research and preserve the marine environment and marine life and sustain its resources in accordance with the country's development plan and the sustainable development goals of the United Nations.

Al-Otaibi explained that the Fund's delegation expressed its admiration of the 'Explorer' and its research capabilities, noting that ways of joint cooperation was discussed through research projects carried out by researchers from the institute. In turn, the scientific researcher at the Institute's Environmental and Life Sciences Research Center, Dr Turki Al-Saeed, said that the Explorer is one of the largest research ships and the most modern in technological equipment in the Arabian Gulf region and it has use in conducting marine surveys and collecting samples on a wide geographical scale. — KUNA



BAGHDAD: Vice President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society Anwar Al-Hassawi in talks with his counterparts in Baghdad. — KUNA

noting that the health center under discussion will enhance the cooperation between the two societies and joint funding on land belonging to the Iraqi Red Crescent in the (Umm Al-Broom) area in central Basra. He said that the Kuwaiti delegation's visit will also include bilateral discussions to enhance cooperation between the two parties, and field tours to a number

of hospitals affiliated with the Iraqi Red Crescent and to a number of mobile clinics previously donated by the KRCS to Iraq. Over the years, the KRCS has organized many humanitarian donation campaigns to support the Iraqi people and has also donated mobile medical clinics, equipment, ambulances, and medical devices. — KUNA

KRCS considers setting up health center in Basra

BAGHDAD: A delegation from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), headed by the Society's Vice President, Anwar Al-Hassawi, discussed with the President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, Yassin Ahmed on Thursday a number of topics most notably the establishment of a health center in the city of Basra, southern Iraq.

Al-Hassawi said in a statement to KUNA that the main goal of the visit is to agree with the Iraqi side to establish and equip a new health center in Basra governorate within the framework of the humanitarian projects adopted by the association to support the Iraqi people. He added that the KRCS will finance the establishment of the center with a portion of the amount it donated to support Iraq at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in 2018. Al-Hassawi stated that the visit will also include discussing a number of joint bilateral files, humanitarian projects, and ways to enhance close cooperation between the two societies.

In turn, the President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society praised the humanitarian support provided by the KRCS to the Iraqi people over the years,

DDI holds awareness outreach program at Scientific Center

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute, founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, recently organized an awareness outreach at the Scientific Center. On this occasion, Tarek Aleryan, Director of Public Relations and Media Services at Dasman Diabetes Institute, stated that the Institute participated with its mobile clinic, to conduct various preventative medical testing such as blood glucose, pressure, and vital signs, as the Institute believes in the importance of conducting early checks and spreading awareness on diabetes to contribute to the prevention of this disease and its complications.

In addition, booklets, leaflets, flyers and other material on educational topics such as the healthy plate, intermittent fasting, how to prevent diabetes, insulin doses and several other subjects were distributed to the staff. Aleryan added, "The Institute spares no effort in spreading awareness among all segments of society, noting the importance of the role played by the Institute through these awareness outreach".



Leaflets and flyers are distributed as part of the awareness outreach program.



A group photo during the outreach program.

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Moderate weather for weekend in Kuwait: Met dept

KUWAIT: The Meteorological Department expected that Kuwait's weather in general will be moderate during the day and it tends to be cold at night over the weekend. Head of the department of Agricultural and Hydrological Forecasts at the administration, Sulaiman Al-Sindi, told KUNA that weather maps and numerical models indicate that the country will be affected by a strong wind extending from the northwest with light to moderate northwesterly winds that will be active at intervals. Al-Sindi added that the weather was moderate and partly cloudy on Thursday with northwesterly to moderate winds active at intervals between 12 and 45 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures reached between 21 and 23 degrees Celsius.

He stated that the weather on Friday will be moderate with light to moderate northwesterly winds, active at intervals between 10 and 40 kilometers per hour. Some scattered clouds will also appear, he said. Maximum temperatures are expected to be between 21 and 23 degrees Celsius and the sea will be light to moderate, with waves sometimes rising between 2 and 6 feet.

He said the weather will be cold and cloudy on Friday night with light to moderate northwesterly to variable wind speeds between 8 and 32 kilometers per hour. The weather on Saturday will be moderate to partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly to variable winds with speeds between 8 and 30 kilometers per hour. He expected maximum temperatures between 22 and 24 degrees Celsius and the sea will be light to moderate, with waves between 1 and 4 feet.

He pointed out that the weather on Saturday night will be cold with light to moderate northwesterly to variable winds with speeds between 6 and 26 kilometers per hour. He forecast a minimum temperature between 9 and 12 degrees Celsius. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A commercial airline flies over Kuwait City on Jan 18, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Special festivals in co-ops will help support Kuwait economy: Al-Mulla

Co-op chief holds talks with officials of Kuwait Society for Festivals

KUWAIT: The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Union of Cooperative Societies, Musab Al-Mulla, stressed the importance of national initiatives and the establishment of specialized festivals in cooperative societies throughout the year in support of the national product, encouraging national employment and owners of small and medium enterprises and strengthening the country's economy.

Al-Mulla made his remarks on Thursday after meeting with chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Society for Festivals Tariq Al-Obaid, the general coordinator of media festivals Nasser Al-Muhallil and members of the festivals team and marketing of national products in the association that the importance of this stems from the fact that cooperative societies are the largest market in the country for marketing national agricultural and industrial products.

He explained that the volume of sales of cooperative societies in Kuwait annually amounts to more than KD 1 billion (about \$3.3 billion), adding that the cooperation between the Union and the Society is of special importance and as a model in forming successful partnerships to support the national product

in accordance with the goals and visions that establish the principles of sustainability in society for sustainable development.

He pointed to the "Sustainable Agri-tourism" initiative launched by the Kuwait Society for Festivals in cooperation with the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources and a number of concerned authorities as a qualitative leap towards promoting sustainable green initiatives in society.

Al-Mulla underlined the keenness of the Union of Cooperatives and other associations to market and facilitate the purchase of national products subsidized by the state. "As cooperative societies are the main incubator for most agricultural and industrial products in the country, at a time when the union supports national industrial products in general and productive farms in particular."

Al-Obaid said that this is the second meeting with the federation and falls within the periodic meetings held by the Kuwait Society for Festivals with actors concerned with supporting tourism and entertainment tracks, including the marketing track.

"With the integration of these roles, it is possible to move forward towards achieving the state's vision



Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Festivals Association, Tariq Al-Obaid, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federation of Cooperative Societies, Musab Al-Mulla, and General Coordinator of Festivals, media personality Nasser Al-Muhallil. — KUNA

of transforming Kuwait into a financial, commercial and economic center in the region and focusing on the desired goal of supporting national agricultural and industrial products, initiatives and small and medium enterprises," Al-Obaid pointed out.



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Director General of KUNA Dr Fatima Al-Salem receives the Ambassador of the Republic of Peru to the country.

KUNA chief discusses media ties with envoys of Peru, Turkey

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr Fatima Al-Salem on Thursday discussed with Peruvian and Turkish Ambassadors to the country modes of bolstering media cooperation and bilateral ties. Dr Al-Sa-

lem, meeting with each ambassador separately, affirmed KUNA's intent on strengthening media cooperation with sisterly and friendly countries, contributing to the state's foreign policy.

On his part, Ambassador of Peru Carlos Mendiola hailed the Kuwaiti culture underling the necessity to extending cultural bridges between nations. As for the Turkish Ambassador, Tuba Sonmez, she noted that this year marks the 60th anniversary of Kuwaiti-Turkish diplomatic relations, indicating that relations between the two nations are in constant state of development across various fields. — KUNA



Director General of KUNA Dr Fatima Al-Salem receives the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the country.



Zionist entity jails war resisters

‘France should remain France’: Macron

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Ukraine allies launch ‘artillery coalition’

Kyiv warns of low ammunition as Russia claims to capture village near Bakhmut



KYIV: A woman lays flowers in colors of the Ukrainian flag to the Wall of Remembrance of the Memory Wall of Fallen Defenders of Ukraine in the Russian-Ukrainian War, on Jan 17, 2024. — AFP

PARIS: Ukraine’s defense minister warned Thursday that the country faced a “very real and pressing” ammunition shortage in its grinding near-two-year battle against Russia, as Western allies met in Paris to agree new artillery supplies. “A shortage of ammunition is a very real and pressing problem that our armed forces are facing,” Rustem Umerov posted on X after speaking by video link to the gathering led by France and the United States. “The artillery coalition is aimed at solving this issue,” he said.

Thursday’s meeting came as Russia claimed its forces had pushed Kyiv’s troops out of Vesele, a village near the hard-fought city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine. AFP was unable to verify the defense ministry’s claims. Meanwhile, a Ukrainian security source told AFP that Kyiv was behind an overnight drone attack on an oil depot in northern Russia.

A 23-nation effort, the “artillery co-

alition” is part of the so-called Ramstein contact group, which gathers more than 50 countries supporting Ukraine. “I spoke with (French President) Emmanuel Macron to thank France for launching the artillery coalition” and for its manufacture of guns and ammunition, Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on X.

The two leaders also discussed the “need to further strengthen Ukraine’s air defense”, he said, as it is targeted by Russian drones and missiles almost nightly. Paris on Thursday denied a Russian claim that a strike on the eastern city of Kharkiv on Tuesday had killed “French mercenaries”, saying it did not employ guns-for-hire.

New guns, more shells

Umerov told the Paris gathering that “there is no alternative to modern artillery, we have to keep up our efforts and increase munitions production”. Supply of the 155-millimetre shells used in West-

ern guns has become a critical issue. The European Union had promised to deliver one million shells by spring this year, but European Parliament lawmakers say only 300,000 have been delivered so far.

A French Senate report published Wednesday said Paris and other European governments were “not up to the challenge” of meeting Ukraine’s ammunition requirements, calling on Kyiv’s allies to “step up a gear”.

Senate foreign affairs committee chief Cedric Perrin said Ukraine was burning through 5,000 to 8,000 shells per day, compared with up to 15,000 on the Russian side. France’s defense ministry said Wednesday that its artillery ammunition output since Russia’s February 2022 invasion of Ukraine was expected to triple to a monthly rate of 3,000 this year.

France has also promised it can produce 78 new Caesar truck-mounted guns for Ukraine by early 2025, with

six paid for by Kyiv to be delivered “in the coming weeks”, the defense ministry said. Paris will pay for a further 12 of the cannons at a cost of 50 million euros (\$54 million), Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu said Thursday.

Costs for the remaining 60 guns amount to around 250 million euros, to be shared among other allies, he added. France has already sold or donated 30 truck-mounted Caesar guns to Ukraine, with a further 19 from Denmark. The Caesar can fire a 155mm shell over a distance of 40 kilometers (25 miles) before quickly changing position to avoid return fire from enemy artillery.

More missiles and bombs

Macron said he would visit Ukraine in February, the second time since Moscow invaded in 2022. Almost two years into the war, the front line has been largely fixed for months after a Ukrainian counterof-

fensive failed to make hoped-for territorial gains last year.

France is “in the process of finalizing an agreement” on security with Kyiv, similar to the 10-year deal signed with Britain last week, Macron added. Zelensky said he and Macron had told advisors “to expedite negotiations on the bilateral agreement” and were already discussing “items for France’s next military aid package”.

Macron’s new foreign minister Stephane Sejourne said in Ukraine on Saturday that France could work with Kyiv to “strengthen Ukraine’s capacity to produce (arms) on its own soil”. Macron on Tuesday announced further deliveries of “around 40” long-range SCALP missiles and “several hundred bombs”. Lecornu said France would provide around 50 AASM bomb guidance kits per month, which could also be adapted to be launched from Soviet-era planes used by the Ukrainian air force. — AFP

No normalization before Gaza war ceasefire: Saudi

DAVOS: Saudi Arabia is unable to pursue talks about a landmark deal to recognize the Zionist entity until there is a ceasefire in Gaza, the kingdom’s ambassador to the United States said Thursday.

“I think the most important thing to realize is the kingdom has not put normalization at the heart of its policy. It’s put peace and prosperity at the heart of its policy,” Princess Reema bint Bandar al-Saud told a panel at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. “The kingdom has been quite clear. While there is violence on the ground and the killing persists, we cannot talk about the next day.”

Saudi Arabia, home to Islam’s holiest sites, has never recognized the Zionist entity and did not join the 2020 US-brokered Abraham Accords that saw its Gulf neighbors Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates as well as Morocco establish formal ties with the entity.

US President Joe Biden’s administration has pushed hard for Saudi Arabia to take the same step. Under de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, son of the ageing King Salman, Riyadh had laid out conditions for normalization, including security guarantees from Washington and help developing a civilian nuclear program.

In an interview with Fox News in September, Prince Mohammed said that “every day we get closer” to a deal, although he also insisted the Palestinian issue was “very important” for Riyadh. That apparent momentum stalled soon after the ongoing escalation in the Zionist entity’s occupation of Palestine, which it claims is aimed at destroying Hamas. The relentless bombardment and a ground offensive have killed at least 24,620 Palestinians, around 70 percent of them



RAFAH: Palestinians mourn over bodies of victims of Zionist bombardment on Jan 18, 2024. — AFP

women, children and adolescents, according to updated figures from Gaza’s health ministry. In October, a source familiar with the normalization talks told AFP Saudi Arabia had paused the process.

‘Cooler heads must prevail’

Earlier this week, also in Davos, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said Riyadh was still “certainly” open to the possibility of future ties with the Zionist entity, but also stressed the need for a ceasefire and the creation of a Palestinian state. “We don’t see any real sign that any strategic objectives that (the Zionist entity) has

claimed are ... coming any closer,” he added.

Princess Reema elaborated on the Saudi position on Thursday, saying that “cooler heads must prevail”. “There’s trauma and pain on both sides. I can’t take that back. But what we can do is ceasefire now.”

The Saudi delegation’s appearance in Davos came amid fears of a regional conflagration, fears that have only grown after cross-border strikes between Iran and Pakistan and US military action targeting Iran-backed rebels in Yemen. Princess Reema said on Thursday she was “profoundly concerned” about escalation that could send the region “back to the stone age”. — AFP

NATO announces massive exercise with 90,000 troops

BRUSSELS: NATO announced Thursday that it would begin its largest military exercise in decades next week, involving 90,000 troops and testing the allies’ ability over months to engage in a conflict with an adversary like Russia. Steadfast Defender 2024 will run to late May and involve units from all 31 NATO member countries plus candidate-member Sweden, US General Christopher Cavoli, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe, told journalists. The exercise, composed of a series of smaller individual drills, will span from North America to NATO’s eastern flank, close to the Russian border. It will involve 50 naval vessels, 80 aircraft and over 1,100 combat vehicles.

The exercise — the biggest since the 1988 Reformer drill during the Cold War — comes as NATO overhauls its defenses in the face of Russia’s war on Ukraine. The US-led alliance has dispatched thousands of troops to its eastern flank and drawn up its most extensive plans since the collapse of the Soviet Union to protect itself from a Russian attack.

Admiral Rob Bauer, the chair of NATO’s military committee, said the scale of the exercise was a demonstration of the alliance’s new readiness. “That is a record number of troops that we can bring to bear and have an exercise within that size, across the alliance, across the ocean, from the US to Europe,” he said.

Bauer also warned that civilian societies in NATO’s member countries needed to better prepare for a potential future war with Russia. “We have to realize it’s not a given that we are in peace and that’s why we have the plans, that’s why we are preparing for a conflict,” he said. “We’re not seeking any conflict, but if they attack us we have to be ready.” — AFP

International

‘France should remain France’: Macron

French president adopts far-right rhetoric in rare press conference

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron borrowed lines from the far right for a press conference this week designed to relaunch his sputtering second term. Speaking to journalists Tuesday in his first major Elysee Palace set piece in years, Macron said his “clear line was that France should remain France”. “France should remain the nation of common sense, resistance and the Enlightenment,” he added.

It was the latest shift in emphasis from a president struggling in his final term to ensure his centrist legacy outlasts him in the face of a surging far right. Macron’s “France should remain France” line famously featured on posters for hard-right firebrand Eric Zemmour during the last presidential election in 2022. Zemmour is a proponent of “great replacement” conspiracy theories about non-white immigration into Europe.

When the same slogan was adopted by a contender for leadership of the conservative Republicans party in 2018, Macron’s minister Aurore Berge

excoriated him, saying “you might as well add the logo of the National Front” — Marine Le Pen’s anti-Islam, anti-immigrant far-right party since renamed the National Rally (RN).

Macron also picked up themes dear to the far right in detailed policy proposals Tuesday including a trial run for school uniforms and the possible extension of a “national service” program to all pupils. And the president offered further proposals to tackle falling birth rates, another question dear to the heart of France’s far right. Socialist party lawmaker Arthur Delaporte accused him of taking a “purely reactionary” turn.

‘Kind of homage’ to Le Pen

Macron “is clearly in a political showdown with the RN,” said constitutional expert Benjamin Morel. “Your official opposition is your best ally, because you actually have no voter overlap with them, and by setting up a kind of duopoly, you set up a concentration of voters around yourself,” he added.

The RN, led by Le Pen — who Macron defeated in 2017 and 2022 — and her young lieutenant Jordan Bardella, looks set to top the poll in June’s European Parliament election. Macron branded the RN the party of “lies” and “collective impoverishment” Tuesday. “At the same time, he’s not talking about values ... there’s a kind of normalization of the RN among center-right voters” who are in Macron’s sights, Morel said.

“They might not consider voting for them, but they don’t see them as the devil,” he added. Macron has danced around the political spectrum since first rising as an economy minister under Socialist former president Francois Hollande. As recently as 2022, he declared that “our lives are worth more than their profits” in a left-inflected sally against big business. “Who can believe him anymore?” asked Socialist party leader Olivier Faure.

After passing an immigration law late last year that skewed sharply to right-wing priorities, “how can (Macron) come and say he’s the one who will shut



PARIS: France’s President Emmanuel Macron reacts during a press conference to present the course for France’s newly appointed government at The Elysee Palace on Jan 16, 2024. — AFP

out the far right?” he added. Prominent RN lawmaker Julien Odoul was equally blunt. For him, Macron’s press confer-

ence was “a kind of homage” to the far right, “moving towards our proposals and our solutions”. — AFP

The restive border region at heart of Iran-Pakistan strikes

PARIS: Balochistan is a restive region shared by Iran and Pakistan where security forces on both sides of the border have for years battled militant groups but which now risks being the subject of escalating tensions between the neighbors.

Both Iran’s southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan and Pakistan’s western province of Balochistan are the most impoverished regions of their respective countries, vast and arid provinces constantly battling drought, with rampant unemployment.

They are home to the Baluch people, who number overall an estimated 10 million, the majority of whom live in Pakistan including also in the Sindh province, with several million in Iran and a much smaller minority in Afghanistan.

Iran and Pakistan share a border of nearly 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) along the provinces with smuggling activity, in particular of fuel, intense due to the porous nature of the frontier. The Baluch are Sunni Muslims, which in Iran makes them a religious as well as an ethnic minority, with the dominant religion in the Islamic republic Shiite Islam.

Security threat

Tensions have long simmered on both sides of the border but have rarely flared, as they have now, with both Iran and Pakistan striking what they call “terrorist” targets inside the respective provinces of the neighboring country.

Nine people were killed in Pakistani air strikes on Thursday, Iranian state media said, two days after Iran carried out strikes against “terrorist” targets in Pakistan, which

left at least two children dead.

There have been attacks inside Iran in recent months by the Sunni militant separatist group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice), which is blacklisted by Iran — but also its arch foe the United States — as a terrorist organization. Eleven police were killed in an attack claimed by the group in the town of Rask in December.

Jaish al-Adl was founded in the early years of the last decade after the disintegration of a similar group, Jundallah, which for years had carried out attacks against Iranian security forces but was weakened after the capture and subsequent execution of its leader Abdolmalek Rigi in 2010.

According to official Iranian media reports, he was arrested in extraordinary circumstances in February 2010 when Iranian fighter jets forced a passenger plane he was travelling on to Kyrgyzstan to land in Iran. He was hanged in June that year.

Situation in Pakistan

On the other side of the border, Pakistani forces have for almost two decades also been fighting the latest iteration of an ethnic Baluch separatist insurgency, which has killed hundreds in attacks targeting security forces, government personnel and ethnically non-Baluch civilians.

Baluch separatists and rights groups say the military’s crackdown on the insurgency has included widespread enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

Since 2014, the separatists have also targeted projects associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$58-billion project that is part of Beijing’s Belt and Road Initia-



PANJGUR, Pakistan: Commuters ride along a street at Panjgur district in Balochistan province on January 17, 2024. — AFP

tive (BRI) and large parts of which run through mineral-rich Balochistan.

Baluch separatists are far from the only group, however, to use the vast and largely ungoverned Pakistani region as a base. Western governments have in the past accused Pakistan of allowing Taliban leaders to enjoy a safe haven there while there has also been activity of a branch allied to the Islamic State group.

Grievances of the Baluch

Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan province faced new instability in 2022 when its residents joined in with nationwide protests that were erupting across Iran over the death of young woman Mahsa Amini in police custody.

While the protests had their own spark — the alleged rape of a teenager by a police commander in custody in the province — they reflected nationwide anger, and security forces cracked down on the demonstrations.

On Sept 30, 2022, over 80 people were killed, according to Amnesty, when security forces opened fire on

a protest in Sistan-Baluchistan’s main city of Zahedan in what became known as its “bloody Friday”.

Activists have long complained the region has been the victim of economic and political discrimination by Iran’s Shiite clerical leadership, with disproportionate numbers of Baluch hanged in executions, in particular on drugs charges.

Reflecting the economic impoverishment of the region, many Baluch work as fuel carriers — known as sookhtbar in Persian. They smuggle fuel over the border to Pakistan where it can be sold at a higher price.

Dozens have been killed by Iranian security forces in recent years, according to activists. Amnesty International said that in 2021 at least 19 percent of all executions in Iran were of members of the Baluch minority. Baluch on the Pakistani side of the border also complain of being disenfranchised, and of income from the province’s rich natural resources not being adequately spent on local governance and social needs. — AFP

Somalia rules out mediation with Ethiopia

MOGADISHU: Somalia said on Thursday there was no room for mediation with Ethiopia unless Addis Ababa cancelled a controversial maritime deal with the breakaway region of Somaliland. Tensions in the Horn of Africa have escalated since landlocked Ethiopia reached a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland on January 1 that gives it much sought-after access to the sea.

In return, Somaliland — which unilaterally declared independence in 1991 — has said Ethiopia would give it formal recognition, an assertion that has not been confirmed by Addis Ababa. “There is no space for mediation unless Ethiopia retracts its illegal MoU and reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia,” the Somali foreign ministry said in a statement posted on its official social media accounts.

The two countries have had a history of stormy relations and territorial feuds, fighting two wars in the late 20th century. On Wednesday, the African Union’s Peace and Reconciliation Council, a conflict resolution body, called on the two neighbors “to exercise restraint, de-escalate and engage in meaningful dialogue towards finding a peaceful resolution of the matter”.

East Africa grouping IGAD is also holding an extraordinary summit in Uganda on Thursday to discuss the feud, as well as the conflict in Sudan. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is in Kampala for the meeting along with other regional heads of state. But Ethiopia will not be attending because it was invited at “very short notice”, a foreign ministry spokesman said at a press conference in Addis Ababa. — AFP

Pak retaliatory strikes hit Iran...

Continued from Page 1

governor of the province. Iranian media carried images showing severely damaged homes, with one video showing people gathered around a crater. All those killed were Pakistanis and investigations were under way to determine why they were in the Iranian village, Marhamati said.

The raids targeted Baluch separatists, according to the Pakistani army. The military has been waging a decades-long fight against separatist groups in its sparsely populated border region. The foreign ministry said the strikes were carried out based on “credible intelligence of impending large-scale terrorist activities”, insisting it “fully respects” Iran’s sovereignty.

Iran condemned the action, and summoned Pakistan’s charge d’affaires “to protest and request an explanation from the Pakistani government”, foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said. The ministry described Pakistan’s strikes as “unbalanced and unacceptable” and said Iran expects Pakistan “to adhere to its obligations in preventing the establishment of bases and armed terrorist groups in Pakistan”.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has defended Iran’s strikes in Pakistan as a response to

recent deadly attacks on the security forces by the jihadist group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice). On Thursday, the ministry underlined that Iran understood that Pakistan’s “friendly and brotherly government is separate from armed terrorists”. “Iran always adheres to its neighborly policy and does not allow its enemies and terrorist allies to break these relations,” it said.

Formed in 2012, Jaish al-Adl has carried out several attacks on Iranian soil in recent years. Pakistan delivered a strong rebuke to Iran over the strikes, recalling its ambassador from Tehran and blocking Iran’s envoy from returning to Islamabad. China offered to mediate between the neighboring countries, both close economic partners of Beijing. The European Union expressed concern about the “spiral of violence in the Middle East and beyond”.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan — which borders both Iran and Pakistan, and is home to a small Baluch minority — said the violence between its neighbors was “alarming” and urged them to “exercise restraint”. On Thursday, Pakistan’s foreign ministry said Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar would cut short his visit to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, “in view of the ongoing developments”. Hours before the strike, Kakar had met the Iranian foreign minister on the sidelines of the forum and posed for photographs. Earlier this week, IRNA reported that the Iranian and Pakistani navies had carried out joint exercises in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf. — AFP

national Committee of the Red Cross said it played no role in implementing the deal, which also comprises humanitarian aid for Gazan civilians, but welcomed it as “a much-needed moment of relief”.

In the West Bank, violence has escalated to a level not seen since the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, of 2000-2005. Zionist troops and settlers have killed more than 360 Palestinians in the West Bank since Oct 7, according to the territory’s health ministry. Palestinian health officials reported a sixth death in a two-day Zionist operation in the northern city of Tulkarem and its refugee camp. The man shot dead in the camp was a civilian not involved in fighting between Zionist forces and fighters, local official Rami Elyan said. — AFP

‘Jordan’ strikes ‘drug traffickers’...

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The bodies of a man, his mother and aunt were found at the second house that was targeted, added the Observatory, which relies on a network of sources on the ground in Syria for its reports. The Suwayda24 news website reported that air strikes “likely to have been carried out by the Jordanian air force” killed at least 10 people in Urman.

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said Jordan’s armed forces often carry out deadly strikes

on civilian homes “on the pretext of fighting drug trafficking”. On this occasion, he said, it remained unclear if the two men targeted in the latest strikes were drug traffickers. Rayan Maarouf of Suwayda24, an outlet run by citizen journalists, said however that the men who were killed, along with family members, were believed to have been drug-traffickers.

On Jan 5, Jordan’s official Al Mamlaka television station said the country’s air force had carried out two raids in Syria “as part of the pursuit of drug traffickers”. Jordan was reportedly behind air strikes in Syria on Dec 18 that killed five people, including a woman and two children. One of the main drugs smuggled out of Syria is the amphetamine-like stimulant captagon, for which there is huge demand in the oil-rich Gulf. — AFP

US launches fresh strikes...

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their targeting of international shipping — struck a US-owned bulk cargo carrier in the wake of the designation announcement, and vowed to continue attacks they say are in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

US forces “conducted strikes on 14 Iran-backed Houthi missiles that were loaded to be fired in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen,” Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement. “These missiles on launch rails presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and US Navy ships in the region and could have been fired at any time, prompting US forces to exercise their inherent right and obligation to defend themselves,” CENTCOM said.

Hani Kayed, a 44-year-old resident of the Yemeni port city of Hodeida, told AFP he heard an explosion at around 2:16 am (2316 GMT Wednesday) in the east of the city near the airport. Hodeida and the city of Taiz were among the targets of the first round of US and UK strikes in Yemen last week. Houthi media outlet Al-Masirah TV said both were hit again in the latest strikes, along with three other areas.

The United States announced earlier on Wednesday that it would return the Houthis to a list of “terrorist” entities. “The Department of State today is announcing

the designation of Ansarallah, commonly referred to as the Houthis, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group, effective 30 days from today,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. “During the 30-day implementation delay, the US government will conduct robust outreach to stakeholders, aid providers, and partners who are crucial to facilitating humanitarian assistance and the commercial import of critical commodities in Yemen,” he said.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the designation “is an important tool to impede terrorist funding to the Houthis, further restrict their access to financial markets, and hold them accountable for their actions”. “If the Houthis cease their attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the United States will immediately reevaluate this designation,” Sullivan said in a statement.

The Houthis, however, said they would not call off their strikes. “We will not give up targeting (Zionist) ships or ships heading towards ports in occupied Palestine... in support of the Palestinian people,” the group’s spokesman Mohammed Abdelsalam told Al Jazeera TV, adding that they would respond to new strikes on Yemen by the United States or Britain.

While the Houthis say they have been attacking Zionist-linked vessels, Washington says dozens of countries have connections to the ships that have been targeted in the vital waterway. The rebels have also declared American and British interests “legitimate targets,” and Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said in televised remarks that they targeted a US vessel called the Genco Picardy in the Gulf of Aden. — AFP

Scores killed in brutal Zionist...

Continued from Page 1

In Gaza City in the north, displaced Palestinian Ibrahim Saada struggled to come to terms with the scene of destruction around him. “We are not part of this war and can’t bear it. We are being destroyed, dying from hunger,” he told AFP.

Officials from both sides confirmed a shipment of aid, including medicines for captives, had entered Gaza under a deal mediated by France and Qatar. The Inter-

International

Zionist entity jails war resisters

Activists refusing Zionist occupation of Palestine, Gaza war branded as traitors, threatened

TEL AVIV: Looking over his shoulder for eavesdroppers in a cafe, a Zionist anti-war campaigner leaned closer to a woman who plans to refuse military enlistment, risking jail time during the Zionist entity's unrelenting nearly four-month Gaza offensive.

"The decision to refuse is brave," said activist Nave Shabtay Levin, 20, who was jailed for 115 days until last March for refusing the draft. "It is more brave during wartime," he said, addressing 18-year-old Sofia Orr who sat next to him in an outdoor Tel Aviv cafe.

Last month, Zionist teen Tal Mitnick became the first "conscientious objector" to be imprisoned for refusing mandatory military service since the Zionist entity launched its war on Gaza in October of last year, killing more than 24,000 Palestinians, according to volunteer group Mesarvot.

Some of Mitnick's supporters from Mesarvot, Hebrew for "we refuse", have publicly declared plans to follow in his footsteps, voicing opposition to the war and the Zionist entity's occupation of Palestinian territories. Refusal to enlist is a lonely political position, especially as nationalist sentiment soars during wartime, in a country where the military is widely seen as a cornerstone of national identity and army service an important rite of passage.

Amid the war rhetoric of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, the refuseniks — as they are often known in the entity — say their stance has seen them branded as traitors and invited death threats.

Levin spoke in a whisper, his eyes darting around as he conceded that talking openly about opposing the war can be "dangerous". Both men and women have to enlist in the army at the age of 18. Orr appeared

undeterred, having declared her plan in public forums to refuse when she is up for enlistment in February.

"My conscience does not allow me to enlist," she told AFP, adding she does not believe eradicating Hamas's ideology — which does not recognize the Zionist entity's right to exist — was possible through military means.

'War of revenge'

Orr expects the same fate as Mitnick, 18, who received a 30-day initial prison sentence that was deemed harsher than usual after he refused to participate in what he called a "war of revenge". Zionists who refuse enlistment on political grounds are typically imprisoned for up to 10 days initially and receive additional jail terms if they continue to refuse, members of Mesarvot told AFP.

Conscription is mandatory for Jewish Zionists. Exemptions are sometimes granted for religious, medical or ethical reasons — but not on political grounds. Mesarvot has dozens of volunteers but the exact number of refuseniks remains unclear as many have not gone public. The army declined to comment when asked for statistics. "One massacre does not justify another one," Iddo Elam, 17, another volunteer who plans to refuse enlistment, told Britain's Sky News.

'Moral blindness'

Refuseniks are among Jewish peace advocates promoting coexistence with Palestinians who have organized protests demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, where they are often accosted by ultranationalist hecklers and police.



This photo shows destroyed buildings in the Gaza Strip on Jan 17, 2024. – AFP

They remain a minority in a country that has seen a rightward lurch in recent years, with polls showing limited support among Jewish Zionists for peace negotiations with Palestinians or a two-state solution. A small number of refuseniks are unlikely to dent the Zionist army, comprising hundreds of thousands of active-duty soldiers and reservists, which has defied global criticism

over rising deaths and destruction in Gaza. "There's not even one soldier or officer, pilot or artilleryman ... who has said: 'That's far enough. I'm not ready to continue taking part in the slaughter'," columnist Gideon Levy wrote in the Zionist left-leaning daily Haaretz, adding their silence reflected "moral blindness". Orr considers her refusal to enlist as a fight to stay human. — AFP



(From left) Axiom Space's chief astronaut and former NASA astronaut Michael Lopez-Alegria, Italian Air Force Col Walter Villadei, European Space Agency project astronaut Marcus Wandt of Sweden and Turkish Astronaut Alper Gezeravci pose during the preparation for their mission.

Erdogan's ambitions inflated by Turkey's first astronaut

ISTANBUL: When Turkey's first astronaut blasts off for the International Space Station (ISS) this week, he will embody his country's pride and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's grand geopolitical ambitions. Alper Gezeravci, a 43-year-old fighter pilot and colonel in Turkey's air force, was due to take off Wednesday from the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida for a two-week mission.

But lift-off was delayed by 24 hours until Thursday evening "to carry out technical checks", Turkey's Industry Minister Mehmet Fatih Kacir said from Florida, where he is leading an official Turkish delegation. Gezeravci is joining Swedish, Italian and Spanish astronauts aboard a shuttle provided by the private Axiom Space company, which is conducting its third flight under a partnership with NASA.

Erdogan has displayed a keen interest in the mission, which comes against the backdrop of a raging economic crisis at home and signs — despite his best efforts — of the Turkish leader's limited influence on world events, including the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

'Stronger and assertive Turkey'

Erdogan presented Gezeravci to the Turkish public ahead of his re-election last year, calling the 21-year air force veteran a "heroic Turkish pilot". "We see it as a new symbol of the growing, stronger and assertive Turkey," Erdogan said about the space mission on Tuesday.

Marc Pierini, a former diplomat and senior researcher at Carnegie Europe, said Gezeravci's flight illustrates "Turkish excellence in the aerospace field", which includes the creation of a world-leading combat drone company. But, Pierini added, it says little about Turkey's role in world affairs. "It doesn't have anything to do with Turkey's ability to be an ac-

tor that could influence the global political agenda," Pierini said. "Fluctuations in Turkey's foreign policies do not create hope for Ankara to have a leading role on the international scene."

In the run-up to last year's election, Erdogan prided himself on helping secure a grain deal that lifted Russia's naval blockade of Ukraine, the only major agreement signed by the sides since the Kremlin's February 2022 invasion of its neighbor.

That deal has since collapsed and Erdogan's attempts to restart peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv — or halt the Zionist war on Gaza — have fallen flat. In the meantime, Turkey has drawn the ire or its Western allies by stalling the approval of Sweden as a member of NATO, continuing to maintain close business ties with Russia, and branding the Zionist entity a "terrorist state".

'Turkey's turn'

Despite its economic and foreign policy challenges, Turkey has been leading an ambitious aerospace program. "This historic event will not only validate technological objectives and galvanize the national pride of the Turkish people, but also launch a new era of scientific innovation and international collaboration," said Halit Mirahmetoglu, general manager at the Gokmen Space and Aviation Training Centre in the northwestern province of Bursa.

"The aviation, space, defense and software industries are interconnected and mutually reinforcing," Mirahmetoglu said, pointing to the Baykar company, a drone maker headed by Erdogan's son-in-law. "The field of space exploration, long reserved for a club of developed nations, is now opening up to emerging countries," he said. "It is Turkey's turn to join the big club."

Gezeravci, for one, appears to be aware of the symbolic importance of his mission, saying he is ready to "take the dreams of the Turkish people into the depths of space". "This trip is not an end for us but a means for achieving the objectives of our space studies," he said in an interview with the official Anadolu news agency. According to NASA, the ISS has welcomed more than 275 astronauts on board, with missions tending to last several months. — AFP

Soldiers enter Ecuador prison amid drug war

GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador: The Ecuadoran army and police on Thursday launched an operation in a vast penitentiary complex in the port city of Guayaquil, the nerve center of a drug war between the government and powerful criminal groups.

Video released by the army showed hundreds of soldiers pouring into the prison, from which gang boss Adolfo Macias, alias "Fito", escaped last week. The jailbreak sparked a government crackdown and, in turn, fierce retaliation from the criminal groups who have made Ecuador a hub for the global export of cocaine from neighboring countries.

"Army and police personnel are carrying out a new intervention" to "control the external and internal perimeters of the penitentiary center," the army said in a press release. The operation comes a day after a prosecutor was gunned down in his car in Guayaquil, the latest in a series of high-profile assassinations in Ecuador.

Police Commander General Cesar Zapata said on social media Thursday that two suspects had been arrested. He said "evidence" against them included a rifle, two pistols, a firearm charger and two cars.

The slain prosecutor, Cesar Suarez, had been charged with leading the investigation into last week's dramatic, live-broadcast assault by gangsters on a state-owned TV studio, also in Guayaquil.

'State of war'

Once considered a bastion of peace in Latin America, Ecuador has been plunged into crisis after years of

expansion by transnational cartels that use its ports to ship drugs to the United States and Europe.

In response to the escape of Fito, President Daniel Noboa imposed a state of emergency and nightly curfew. Drug cartels reacted swiftly, threatening to execute civilians and security forces and taking hostage dozens of police and prison officials, since released.

On Jan 9, attackers stormed the TV station, firing gunshots and forcing staff to lie on the ground as a woman could be heard pleading: "Don't shoot, please don't shoot."

Police entered the studio after about 30 minutes of chaos, arresting 13 assailants, many of them teenagers. The live-televised attack caused widespread panic across Ecuador, with people leaving work early to seek shelter at home. Noboa then declared the country in a "state of war."

Prosecutors targeted

Attorney General Diana Salazar said the murdered prosecutor, Suarez, had received death threats from the powerful Los Lobos (The Wolves) gang — whose boss Fabricio Colon also escaped from prison last week.

Suarez had also investigated cases involving the infiltration of the mafia into the judicial system, and corruption scandals linked to the purchases of medical equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prosecutors have become a particular target of the gangs. In June last year, Leonardo Palacios was moved down in the town of Duran, near Guayaquil, and in 2022, two prosecutors and a judge were shot dead in other parts of the country.

Anti-graft and anti-cartel presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was killed in a barrage of automatic gunfire after a campaign speech just weeks before elections last year, won by Noboa. — AFP



GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador: Aerial view showing security forces during an operation at the Regional 8 prison complex on Jan 18, 2024. — AFP



MORONI: Opposition supporters throw stones during a demonstration on Jan 18, 2024. — AFP

Comoros post-vote clashes turn deadly amid call for protest

MORONI, Comoros: The post-election crisis in the Comoros has intensified with the first reported death in street violence and a call from the opposition for a national day of protest on Friday against the "masquerade" of President Azali Assoumani's victory.

The head of the emergency room at the El Maarouf hospital in the Comoros capital Moroni told reporters on Thursday that six wounded people had been admitted and that one 21-year-old had died, "very probably by gunshot". One of the wounded was in critical condition, Dr Djabir Ibrahim said.

The Comoros opposition has rejected the re-election of Assoumani, a former military ruler, alleging large-scale fraud, and demanded this week's vote be annulled. Riding the wave of discontent, the defeated challengers called for a national day of protest against "the electoral masquerade" to be held Friday after weekly Muslim prayers. "The situation is

extremely serious. There are victims among the resistant youth. We bow very respectfully to the memory of these valiant fighters for freedom, democracy and the rule of law," they said.

Disputed vote

But the opposition has denied being behind what the candidates said was a "spontaneous" uprising. Reports of the first serious casualties emerged two days after the electoral authorities announced Assoumani's win, triggering cat-and-mouse street battles between soldiers and angry opposition supporters.

Braving teargas and torrential rain, a man in his twenties, his face hidden by a surgical mask, told AFP on Thursday why violence has erupted once again on this Indian Ocean island chain. "We've been fighting for more than 24 hours because we don't agree with the election results. That's why we burned down government buildings," he said, after dodging a new salvo of gas. The youths have tried to block roads and streets in the capital Moroni, throwing stones at security forces, which in turn respond by driving them back to scatter and escape through alleys.

Assoumani's victory is expected to be confirmed by the Comoros' supreme court at the weekend, after the electoral commission declared he had won

more than 60 percent in the first-round vote. But the opposition points out that the unexpectedly low 16 percent turnout figure in the presidential vote falls far short of the figure for parallel governor polls.

Burned buildings

If the official tally is to be believed, 189,497 Comorans voted to choose governors for each of the three islands in the archipelago, but only 55,258 cast a vote for president. Assoumani, a 65-year-old former military chief of staff turned civilian ruler, has dismissed the concerns, and the interior ministry has declared a nightly curfew to curtail the spreading unrest.

On Wednesday, buildings were vandalized, looted and burned — including the home of a minister, a state-run business and a major rice warehouse. Internet services have been severely disrupted since Wednesday, and some sites are inaccessible.

Street protests are banned in the Comoros, a country that has seen more than 20 coups and attempted coups in its short period post-independence in 1975, and several arrests have been made. But the young demonstrators are not deterred, and they are organizing themselves. "This is the way we'll escape, we need to keep this route clear," suggested one young man, as a group prepared their latest hit-and-run from high ground in the capital. — AFP

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2024

Business

West Bank economy in tatters as Middle East war escalates

Zionist entity withdraws 130,000 work permits from Palestinians in West Bank

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: In the occupied West Bank, Hafeth Ghazawneh waits in quiet frustration for customers to visit his falafel stall, which has been deserted since the eruption of war on Oct 7, 2023. His breakfast and lunch offerings were popular with craftsmen from workshops near Al-Bireh, the twin city of Ramallah, before the war broke out.

"Now they're bringing their meals from home because the situation is so difficult," Ghazawneh tells AFP, fearing he will have to shut up shop if the war in the Gaza Strip continues. Ghazawneh says his income has plummeted from around 7,000 shekels (\$1,850) per month to just 2,000 (\$530).

His worsening situation reflects the current status of the West Bank economy, which is in tatters as the war in Gaza rages. Zionist entity's blistering attack has killed at least 24,448 people, around 70 percent of them women, children and adolescents, according to the Hamas government's health ministry in Gaza. The World Bank has estimated the West Bank's GDP could fall by six percent this year, while the International Labour Organization said 32 percent of jobs have already been lost. The unemployment rate has skyrocketed to 30 percent, up from 14 percent before the war, according to Taher Al-Labadi, a researcher at the French Institute for the Near East (Ifpo). Zionist entity has also withdrawn 130,000 work permits from Palestinians in the West Bank, leaving many with no source of income. The three million Palestinians living in the West Bank, which the Zionist entity has occupied since 1967, cannot travel to the Zionist entity without a permit.

Bishara Jubran, manager of a household products and cosmetics factory in Ramallah, considers him-

self lucky because he has been able to keep all 70 of his employees on the books. But his business has stopped producing soaps made from Dead Sea ingredients which he used to sell to hotels.

As the war rages and visitors stay away, he estimates his losses at \$200,000 last year. He keeps his factory afloat by selling washing powder and other household products on the Palestinian market. But none of his goods are allowed into Gaza, a key market that used to make up 20 percent of his sales. In the West Bank, transport costs have increased because of a growing number of checkpoints and the sealing off of certain towns by the Zionist army, Bishara says.

"Many times the truck leaves and it takes them like four or five hours to reach... the north in Nablus to find out that he cannot enter the city. So he just comes back," he says. Now he makes a delivery every two or three days, down from two a day before the war. Such factors have led to a contraction of the economy, which is now operating at 50 percent of its capacity, according to Abdo Idris, president of the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce.

The Palestinian economy was already "asphyxiated" and highly dependent on the Zionist entity before the war, researcher Labadi says. Under the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, it was agreed that a political status quo would be maintained and Palestinians were promised economic development.

But this status quo was undermined by the Zionist entity's "colonization of the West Bank", Labadi says, lamenting that Palestinian economic development "did not take place". As a result, in times of crisis, the increasingly fragile Palestinian economy finds itself "deprived of all its resources and with a very



AL-BIREH, Palestinian Territories: Hafeth Ghazawneh waits for customers to visit his falafel stall in the occupied West Bank city of Al-Bireh. — AFP

limited capacity for resilience", he says. The Zionist entity controls the borders of the West Bank and collects taxes on Palestinian products, which it must then pass on to the Palestinian Authority. But since October 7, those taxes have not been paid.

As of December, the Zionist entity had not paid two billion shekels in taxes imposed on Palestinian products, according to the Palestinian finance min-

istry. The Palestinian Authority has struggled to pay public servants since the taxes were withheld. Civil servants told AFP their salaries for December have still not been paid. In October, they received 50 percent of their wages, and 65 percent in November.

"The fear of the unknown is killing us," Jubran says. "We don't know if we'll be able to go to work tomorrow." — AFP



SEOUL: People look at Samsung Galaxy S24 series smartphones displayed during a media preview event at a Samsung store in Seoul. — AFP

Samsung turns to AI to regain smartphone throne

SAN JOSE: Samsung on Wednesday released its latest Galaxy smartphones with new artificial intelligence features as the South Korean giant seeks to win back its spot as the world's biggest phone seller from Apple. "Artificial Intelligence will bring about great change in the mobile industry," Samsung president TM Roh said as he kicked off an event in a sports center in the Silicon Valley city of San Jose, California.

Mobile devices will become the primary access points for AI, with Samsung aiming to be a leader on that path, Roh added. The premium S24 Ultra unveiled at the event was said to have the capability to translate foreign language phone calls and texts while they were taking place.

A Samsung executive likened it to having an interpreter taking part in multi-lingual phone calls. Available in 13 languages, the on-device function is powered by Samsung's own AI technology. Through a partnership with Google, which makes the smartphone's Android operating system, the S24 also offers an unprecedented search function.

This, also using AI, functions by allowing users to

simply circle a phrase or image they want to search. The feature eliminates the need to juggle between apps for searches with meddlesome cut and pasting, the company said. Messaging and car system features such as navigation were also augmented with AI to either recommend responses or tend to tasks while letting drivers focus on roads. AI also strengthens the phone's camera powers, with generative AI helping to fill in or remove backgrounds.

These AI features are powered both from the cloud or from the phone itself and several use Google's Gemini foundational model that also powers the search engine giant's Bard chatbot. Similar AI features are widely rumored to be part of the next iPhone 16, probably to be released later this year.

Much like Apple's already released iPhone 15, Samsung's S24 Ultra comes with a titanium frame, which the company said allowed for better durability. The Galaxy S24 series will begin shipping on January 31 with the top of line Ultra starting at \$1,299. The S24 came out just days after industry data showed that Apple's iPhone for the first time became the world's top selling smartphone after Samsung's 12-year run as leader. According to the International Data Corporation, the iPhone stole Samsung's crown in 2023 with 234.6 million units sold, compared to the South Korean firm's 226.6 million units.

Samsung also teased a smart ring at the end of the event, providing a glimpse on screen but giving no details. — AFP

It cited economic headwinds, tighter efficiency standards and growth in electric vehicles for the slowing demand growth, which was sharply down in the last three months of 2023.

Much of the slowing demand has mirrored falling demand for post-pandemic travel demand in China, which drives much of the world's oil demand growth. The pace of demand growth will continue to be led by China through 2024, the IEA said, with the world's second-largest economy accounting for almost 60 percent of this year's oil demand growth.

Meanwhile, the world's oil supply will continue to grow due to "record-setting output" from the United States, Brazil, Guyana and Canada, it said. This high production will lead to a new high in the

Apple loosens grip on iPhone apps, with a catch

SAN FRANCISCO: After a years-long legal battle, Apple says it will begin allowing iPhone app developers to use alternative payment systems—but they will still have to pay fees and meet various conditions.

The California company laid out its plan to relax control of apps on iPhones and iPads in a court filing late Tuesday related to its lengthy legal battle with Epic Games, maker of the highly popular Fortnite.

The move came after the US Supreme Court on Tuesday declined to hear appeals by Apple and Epic of a lower court ruling in which the iPhone maker was seen as the victor. Epic in 2020 launched a case aiming to break Apple's grip on the App Store, accusing the tech giant of operating a monopoly in its app shop, prompting complaints about an unfair "tax" for companies.

A federal court in San Francisco overwhelmingly rejected the lawsuit, offering only a concession that apps could indicate other ways of paying for services outside of Apple's ecosystem.

The high court announced Tuesday it would not hear appeals by either Apple or Epic, effectively putting an end to the legal saga. With its appeal off the table, Apple filed a plan to abide by the lower court's ruling that it let developers use outside payment systems for apps downloaded on the App Store—the lone gateway onto iPhones and iPads.

Apple said it will permit developers to include buttons or links in apps that direct users to alternative purchasing venues such as websites. However, it told the court it would still collect a fee of 27 percent on transactions made using payment systems other than its own.

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, Epic chief executive Tim Sweeney said the company will contest what he called Apple's planned "bad-faith compliance" with the court ruling.

Sweeney argued that the fee "kills price competition." Apple also said in its filing that it will require developers to qualify for "link entitlement" privileges that can be revoked if they don't abide by its rules. The iPhone maker contended the requirement is a way to reduce risks posed by external payment links.

world's oil supply this year, it said.

However, the IEA sounded a note of caution that conflict in the Middle East could cause serious disruptions in the market, particularly for oil flows via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. Some 10 percent of the world's oil trade by sea passes through the Suez Canal, and shipping delays add pressure to global supply chains, as well as pushing up freight costs. The IEA warned that "a rising number of ship owners are diverting course from the Suez Canal, delaying deliveries of oil and other commodities". The IEA said that the world added 50 percent more renewable energy capacity in 2023 over the previous year, but warned more is needed in the battle against climate change. — AFP

Hit again with US ban

A federal appeals court on Wednesday ordered Apple to halt US sales of its latest smartwatch models as part of a patent feud with health company Masimo. The ban on certain Apple smartwatch models will come into effect Thursday as the iPhone juggernaut is ordered to await the outcome of its appeal.

Masimo, based in southern California, filed a complaint to the US International Trade Commission (ITC) which decided in October to halt imports of the Apple Watch models over a patented technology for detecting blood-oxygen levels. A court temporarily lifted the ban last month.



LOS ANGELES: This illustration photo shows an Apple Watch 9 displaying the blood-oxygen level detection settings, in Los Angeles. — AFP

Apple manufactures the vast majority of its products overseas, predominantly in China, giving the ITC jurisdiction over the patent feud. According to reports, Apple is planning to remove the technology for now from the smartwatches in question—the Series 9 and Ultra 2 -- in a solution that Masimo has welcomed. Masimo contends it invented the technology and that Apple poached key employees to win access to the know-how.

But the iPhone-maker contends that the ITC finding was in error and should be reversed, and appealed the decision in the federal appeals court. The wait for that decision could reportedly last a year or more. Masimo chief executive Joe Kiani called the decision to allow the ban to be implemented a "victory" for the US patent system that shows even powerful companies such as Apple must respect intellectual property rights. — AFP

Oil demand growth to halve, supply to rise in 2024: IEA

PARIS: World oil supply will continue to rise this year, the International Energy Agency said Thursday, as it predicted that demand growth would continue a downward slide throughout 2024. The Paris-based IEA, which advises oil-consuming nations, said it expects increase in global oil demand to halve from 2.3 million barrels per day (bpd) last year to 1.2 million bpd in 2024.



Taiwan’s TSMC to launch Japan chipmaking plant in February

Semiconductor giant seeks to expand its global manufacturing footprint

TAIPEI: Taiwan's TSMC will open its latest chipmaking foundry on Japan's Kyushu island on Feb 24, its chairman said on Thursday, part of the semiconductor giant's plan to expand its global manufacturing footprint.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company—which counts Apple and Nvidia as clients—controls more than half the world's output of silicon wafers, used in everything from smartphones to cars and missiles. In recent years, the company has had to navigate geopolitical tussles between the United States and China as the two face off over technology import restrictions, trade and Taiwan—the primary manufacturing base for TSMC.

On Thursday, during an investors' call over fourth-quarter earnings, chairman Mark Liu announced the official date of the long-awaited Japan foundry's opening ceremony would be February 24. "In Japan, we are building a special technology (fabrication plant) in Kumamoto which will utilise 12- and 16-nanometre and 28- and 22-nanometre process technology," Liu said. "We will hold an opening ceremony for this fab on Feb 24 next month and volume production is on track for fourth quarter of 2024." He added that TSMC's expansion overseas is "based on our customers' needs and a necessary level of government subsidies for support".

"In today's fractured globalization environment, our strategy is to expand our global manufacturing footprint to increase our customers' trust, expand our future growth potential, and reach for more global talents," Liu said. Japan's government said last year it

plans to spend \$13 billion to boost domestic production of strategically important semiconductors and generative AI technology.

Part of that spending would be to support the construction of a second TSMC plant in Kumamoto, a Japanese trade ministry official had said in November. But Liu said on Thursday that the second plant is still in the "serious evaluation stage". "We are still discussing with the Japanese government, they are very cooperative," he said. "Nothing is definitive."

Besides a plant in Japan, TSMC also has a planned fab in Germany, which would be its first in Europe. Liu said on Thursday the fab construction in Germany, in Saxony's capital Dresden, "is scheduled to begin in Q4 (the fourth quarter) this year".

The company also reported a 19.3 percent drop in net profits in the October-December period to Tw\$238.7 billion (\$7.6 billion), while its revenues were "essentially flat". CEO CC Wei said that while 2023 was a "challenging year" for the global semiconductor industry, the rising demand for generative AI technology also means "we expect 2024 to be a healthy growth year for TSMC".

The chip industry has seen sluggish performance, which companies attribute to high inflation and slowing global economic growth caused in part by geopolitical tensions. TSMC had sought to quell investor fears in the past by pointing to the increasing demand for AI-related products, like ChatGPT, which needs high-performing silicon wafers to function. — AFP



TAIPEI: Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) Chairman Mark Liu (right) and Central Executive Officer CC Wei listen during the investors' conference in Taipei on Jan 18, 2024. —AFP

Meta’s Sheryl Sandberg to step down from board

SAN FRANCISCO: Meta's former chief operating officer, Sheryl Sandberg, announced that she is leaving the company's board after more than a decade.

One of the most influential women in Silicon Valley, Sandberg, 54, will depart the board as the tech juggernaut behind Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram faces increased regulatory scrutiny.

Sandberg said on Wednesday that she would not stand for re-election once her term ends in May, but would serve as an advisor to the company thereafter. "With a heart filled with gratitude and a mind

filled with memories, I let the Meta board know that I will not stand for reelection this May," Sandberg posted on Facebook. "Serving as Facebook's - and then Meta's - COO for 14½ years and a board member for 12 years has been the opportunity of a lifetime," she wrote.

Mark Zuckerberg, Meta CEO, thanked Sandberg for her work at the social media giant.

"Your dedication and guidance have been instrumental in driving our success and I am grateful for your unwavering commitment to me and Meta over the years. I look forward to this next chapter together!" Zuckerberg commented on her Facebook post. Sandberg resigned as Meta COO in June 2022 after a tenure that included helping steer Facebook to advertising dominance.

A Harvard-educated executive, Sandberg joined Facebook when it was still a startup, playing a formative and often public-facing role in its

development into a multi-billion dollar advertising empire that acquired Instagram and WhatsApp. In 2021, the company rebranded as Meta in an effort to focus on its virtual reality vision for the future and move past its reputation as a scandal-plagued social network faced with scrutiny over how it handles privacy and data, as well as accusations that its products may cause harm to teens, public discourse and democracy.

Facebook was about four years old in 2008 when Sandberg came on board as a mature, guiding hand at a tech firm with the motto "move fast and break things." Her job made her not only a recognizable face in tech but also a household name, particularly thanks to her 2013 book "Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead." The best seller encouraged women to "lean in" to their careers to reach their full potential and overcome workforce obstacles.

It drew applause from admirers, who credited her



Sheryl Sandberg

with articulating a modern feminist vision, and sharp criticism from detractors who said her lofty position made her out of touch with the grueling personal costs of combining career and family. — AFP

شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 18 JANUARY 2024

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	949	967	978	948	30	21,295,077	17	1.79%	8.17%	958	974	14.1	1.83	3.5%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	284	284	289	283	6	44,181,045	0	0.00%	1.07%	281	285	13.8	1.30	3.3%	1.28
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	162	161	163	159	4	29,850,241	-1	-0.62%	7.33%	160	164	16.8	0.61	2.3%	1.10
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	186	182	187	181	6	16,473,787	-3	-1.62%	5.81%	176	185	19.1	0.69	4.2%	1.34
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	778	772	784	768	16	45,092,352	-6	-0.77%	6.34%	725	784	19.1	1.98	2.2%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	633	628	645	628	17	10,655,070	-4	-0.63%	4.67%	616	644	39.0	2.54	0.9%	1.18
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	157	159	170	154	16	116,198,136	4	2.58%	25.20%	154	160	9.2	0.73	3.2%	1.88
204	National Investments	Financial Services	288	293	308	275	33	43,618,124	5	1.74%	22.59%	289	296	94.5	1.35	9.6%	2.07
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	107	109	112	107	5	48,782,871	2	1.87%	3.81%	107	110	27.3	0.63	0.0%	1.01
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	241	240	249	238	11	59,394,065	-1	-0.41%	14.29%	239	248	36.1	1.69	1.6%	1.22
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	187	184	189	181	8	30,748,475	-3	-1.60%	5.75%	180	190	9.2	1.25	4.1%	1.56
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	65.2	61.9	65.2	61.9	3.3	12,736,038	-3.2	-4.92%	9.56%	60.1	62	NM	0.40	14.4%	1.38
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	214	232	245	214	31	110,699,516	19	8.92%	13.17%	220	237	18.6	1.55	1.3%	1.11
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	813	783	821	783	38	6,011,473	-32	-3.93%	-7.12E-02	778	799	16.6	1.73	1.7%	0.97
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	108	108	109	106	3	14,657,290	0.0	0.00%	5.88%	105	108	21.2	0.65	2.7%	0.62
501	National Industries	Financial Services	223	229	232	221	11	33,162,926	7	3.15%	12.25%	226	232	21.0	1.08	2.1%	1.63
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,405	1,500	1,500	1,405	95	1,773,226	97	6.91%	14.50%	1,490	1,513	15.7	1.39	4.0%	1.05
506	HEISCO	Industrials	877	858	890	846	44	6,033,113	-13	-1.49%	4.63%	846	858	23.9	2.17	2.3%	0.91
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	628	607	629	605	24	4,349,717	-24	-3.80%	3.76%	604	633	13.2	1.28	9.8%	0.95
603	Agility	Industrials	552	540	557	539	18	13,788,450	-10	-1.82%	6.09%	536	566	16.4	0.78	0.0%	1.51
605	Zain	Telecommunications	522	521	529	518	11	18,264,417	-4	-0.76%	2.76%	512	528	10.5	1.82	6.7%	0.63
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,522	3,484	3,568	3,403	165	466,664	-66	-1.86%	2.50%	3,461	3,499	10.3	3.83	11.0%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	207	209	211	205	6	6,081,161	3	1.46%	16.11%	206	210	NM	0.90	0.0%	1.23
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,347	1,300	1,347	1,280	67	1,238,965	-47	-3.49%	-6.41%	1,300	1,405	23.1	8.69	5.9%	1.38
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	81.7	80.8	82.0	79.7	2.3	19,889,164	-0.9	-1.10%	5.90%	79.7	81.1	8.7	0.91	6.1%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	191	187	192	187	5	20,657,751	-5	-2.60%	0.54%	169	188	26.1	1.02	1.5%	1.11
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	569	594	598	547	51	2,681,521	-4	-0.67%	3.30%	590	600	14.3	1.69	2.1%	0.47
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	518	519	522	508	14	2,825,620	-1	-0.19%	1.76%	505	520	36.3	2.10	2.9%	0.69
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	181	177	181	175	6	5,341,934	-4	-2.21%	2.31%	176	178	13.9	1.50	6.7%	0.27
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,039	2,028	2,045	2,011	34	1,020,279	-11	-0.54%	17.63%	2,005	2,070	26.2	6.66	4.2%	1.39
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,185	1,184	1,205	1,150	55	2,029,450	-1	-0.08%	12.12%	1,175	1,220	12.7	4.36	5.8%	0.73

* As of end of week closing

Business

NBK hosts workshops for KFAED employees

Workshops focus on treasury, trade finance and money transfers

Ben-Ghareeb: Workshops underline NBK's dedication to developing the human capital of government entities

KUWAIT: In line with its strategic partnership with many government institutions across all sectors, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted a series of workshops for the employees of Kuwait Fund For Arab Economic Development (KFAED), which focused on key areas related to the Fund's activities including treasury, trade finance, and money transfers.

The series included two workshops held over four days at NBK headquarters and attended by 25 KFAED employees from Dec 10, 2023 to Jan 14, 2024.

The sessions included interactive discussions and knowledge sharing, with the aim of fostering a stronger connection between KFAED and NBK, and ensuring continued support for its vital contributions and strategic initiatives in global economic development. KFAED plays an active role in the international development efforts by providing technical assistance, as well as loans on concessionary terms to finance development projects in many developing countries.

Speaking on this, Ghena Ben-Ghareeb, head of HR Strategic Business Partners, Group Human Resources at National bank of Kuwait said, "These workshops underline NBK's dedication to actively engage in developing the human capital of gov-



NBK team with the participants of the workshops.

ernment entities, aligning with its role as the main banking partner of the government sector."

"NBK has unwavering dedication to developing human resources, within its partnerships with all institutions, especially in the government sector, in line with delivering its social and development responsibilities. This complements the bank's annual initiatives stemming from its belief in the profound impact of these purposeful programs in serving society and people, and reflecting its leading role

in this field over long decades," she noted.

"Disseminating the banking culture and familiarizing the government sector cadres with the banking business in general comes within NBK's endeavors to align the Group's economic sustainability goals with those of the country, which are also driven by highly trained and qualified human resources," she added. "NBK maintains solid relations with Kuwaiti government institutions, and the training plans for national cadres

come within this synergy and the bank's effective contribution in preparing a competitive and productive generation to elevate national workforce," she emphasized.

NBK's initiatives underline its profound strategy for investing in the human capital and raising financial awareness in all entities in Kuwait. To this end, the bank allocates a team of prominent banking experts to share their knowledge and expertise with the promising talents.

Fed: US business 'optimistic' about interest rate cuts

WASHINGTON: US businesses say they are "optimistic" about the prospect of falling interest rates, even as economic conditions have remained largely unchanged in recent weeks, the Federal Reserve said Wednesday.

The US Fed recently voted to keep interest rates at a 22-year high, while penciling in up to three interest rate cuts this year, citing progress made in tackling inflation. In past weeks, businesses have sounded optimistic about the likelihood of lower rates in the months to come, the Fed announced in its regular update of economic conditions known as the "beige book."

"The prospect of falling interest rates was cited by numerous contacts in various sectors as a source of optimism," the Fed said in the update, published Wednesday. This was despite the majority of the Fed's twelve regional districts reporting "little or no change in economic activity," since the last report was published in late November.

Contacts in almost all districts saw signs of a cooling labor market, while almost all of regions reported "decreases in manufacturing activity," the Fed report said.

Auto dealers reported concern about the cost of new vehicles—especially given the elevated cost of financing in a high interest-rate environment. In the Cleveland region, "auto dealers continued to report slow sales because of high interest rates and high vehicle prices," the Fed said.

Although vehicle prices are down slightly from the all-time highs seen in 2022, the average transaction price of a new vehicle was still almost \$49,000 in December, according to data from Kelley Blue Book.

In the Philadelphia district, one dealer reported that "higher overall price of new cars—especially given the rising mix of electric vehicles—is further bifurcating the new and used car market, with lower-income households unable to afford new cars." And in the Chicago district, dealers told the Fed that "many consumers were substituting toward smaller, more affordable models."

Another concern cited by respondents was the rising price of shipping, due to a drought impacting the Panama Canal, and disruption in the Red Sea, where Yemen's Houthi rebels have been targeting commercial and military ships in solidarity with Gaza. "Spot shipping rates to the East Coast increased as carriers were dealing with issues at both the Panama Canal and the Red Sea," the Fed said, citing respondents in the Richmond district. Meanwhile, in the Atlanta region, "a few logistics contacts hinted at re-emerging supply chain constraints resulting from drought conditions in the Panama Canal, as shippers are forced to deploy to the Suez Canal."

Retail sales

US retail sales accelerated more than anticipated in December, closing out a year marked by resilient consumption, government data showed on Wednesday. Sales picked up in the final month of 2023 by 0.6 percent to \$709.9 billion, up from a 0.3 percent bump in November, said the Commerce Department in its latest report. For the full year of 2023, total sales were up 3.2 percent from 2022, the report added. The strong showing comes even though consumer demand was expected to weaken in the face of higher interest rates. In part, a resilient job market has helped to support spending over the past year. The Federal Reserve rapidly lifted the benchmark lending rate since early 2022 and has in recent months held rates steady at a high level, in order to lower inflation sustainably.

While this is typically expected to hit consumption as borrowing becomes more expensive, retail sales has generally held up. Compared with December 2022, retail sales last month was 5.6 percent higher, according to the latest data. Among the different sectors, sales at motor vehicles and parts dealers rose 1.1 percent from November last month, and those at department stores jumped 3.0 percent, said the Commerce Department. But sales at gasoline stations were down by 1.3 percent between November and December 2023, while those at health and personal care stores slipped 1.4 percent.

"The stronger gain in retail sales in December was driven by robust sales at department stores and online retailers, which rounded out a solid holiday shopping season," said economist Michael Pearce at Oxford Economics in a note. But he noted that spending at restaurants and bars is "flatlining." — AFP

NBK warns customers of storing sensitive info on smartphones

KUWAIT: As part of its consistent efforts to promote financial culture and awareness among all segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to advocate the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this context, NBK focuses on increasing awareness about smartphone security and app safety providing key tips to be followed to avoid potential fraud. This is particularly crucial as smartphones have become an integral part of our daily lives, with the majority of customers relying on mobile banking apps for their daily transactions.

NBK advised customers to refrain from storing sensitive information like ATM card number, PIN or any other private information. It also urged them to download updates regularly as they are vital to pre-

vent fraud by addressing security vulnerabilities that may arise on smartphone operating systems.

The bank warned customers of downloading any apps from untrusted sources to avoid potential threats, advising them to check the reviews and ratings of these apps before downloading them, as well as using public Wi-Fi for downloading the apps to ensure the security of their devices and steer clear of any hacking attempts. NBK also advised customers to use strong and varied passwords for the smartphone and different apps and accounts installed on their devices, noting that password should contain upper- and lower-case letters, special characters and numbers, and to avoid using names, dates or common words that are easy to guess, as well as using the same password for all accounts.

NBK always warns customers of all types of fraud risks and the misleading methods followed by scammers, making consistent efforts towards educating customers, which is pivotal in its strategy. To this end, the bank always utilizes all communication channels to advise them to keep their passwords/PINs and financial/personal account information strictly confidential, and not to share them with any scammers impersonating bank employees.

NBK employs its strong customer communica-

Public sector strikes add to N Ireland's political crisis

BELFAST: Tens of thousands of public sector workers in Northern Ireland walked off the job on Thursday, in what one union boss said could be the biggest strike in the province. The mass strike, dubbed a "coordinated day of action", was predicted to cause havoc to already crumbling public services.

The walkouts come with no end in sight to a protracted political crisis that has left the UK province without devolved government for almost two years.

Around 16 trade unions representing teachers, civil servants, nurses and transport workers were expected to join picket lines and rallies, according to organizers. Six rallies were due to take place across Belfast with another two in Londonderry, also known as Derry, and one in Enniskillen.

Trades union chief Owen Reidy said he expected Thursday to be the "largest industrial dispute in the history of Northern Ireland". "Public service workers in Northern Ireland are being used as political pawns by this discredited Tory government," said Reidy, who is general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). "Many of these workers have not had a pay increase for three years despite... the cost of living crisis."

"The money is available but workers are being held to ransom." The ICTU estimated that 170,000 of the 220,000 public sector union workers would stop work to demand the release of held-up funding for pay increases. The department of health warned that there would be a "significantly reduced health service" and people were advised to take care "to reduce your chances of needing health service treatment". Authorities said healthcare services would be severely depleted, although essential and emergency care would remain available.

Schools were shut and transport services halted as several hundred service workers who salt roads



BELFAST: Medical staff stand on a picket line outside the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast on January 18, 2024, as tens of thousands of public sector workers took part in strike action. — AFP

during winter joined the strike, which coincided with a cold weather snap. The strike, which is estimated could cost the economy more than £10 million (\$12.6 million), comes as a political stalemate in the region approaches a two-year milestone. In February 2022, the largest pro-UK party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), withdrew from the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont because of post-Brexit trading rules it said undermined Northern Ireland's place in the wider United Kingdom.

The DUP lost its place as Northern Ireland's biggest party in 2022 elections, giving the post of first minister in the power-sharing executive to nationalists Sinn Féin, who want Northern Ireland united with the Irish Republic. UK Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris said Monday that a £3.3-billion package offered to the parties last month would be available on condition that the assembly restarts. But

on Wednesday—as the legal deadline for a return approached on Thursday—lawmakers failed to elect a speaker for the seventh time, as no candidate could command the required support.

Heaton-Harris said it was "disappointing" that no speaker was elected and indicated he would pass legislation to extend the deadline rather than call fresh assembly elections.

Of the £3.3-billion package on the table, £584 million is earmarked for public sector pay increases. The main unions say the money for pay rises should be released as soon as possible, regardless of the suspended assembly. But the DUP accuses London of using industrial unrest as a lever to end the party's boycott of Stormont. DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson says the UK government in London has the money and the power to implement the pay awards immediately. — AFP

India's Akasa Air orders 150 Boeing planes

NEW DELHI: India's newest airline, Akasa Air, said on Thursday it has ordered 150 Boeing 737 MAX planes as it looks to bolster its fleet and kick off international operations. The deal is a shot in the arm for US aviation giant Boeing, which is under intense global scrutiny over its 737 MAX 9 jet, after a scare on an Alaska Airlines jet in early January when a panel came off mid-flight and forced an emergency landing.

Akasa Air CEO Vinay Dube said the "historic" order for 737 MAX 10 and 737 MAX 8-200 jets would put the carrier on the path to "becoming one of the top 30 leading airlines in the world". Akasa has been a strong

Boeing backer, having ordered 72 aircraft in 2021, and another four in 2023, and Dube said Akasa's growth illustrates the "promise that India holds as an aviation market". But the order does not include Boeing's MAX 9 aircraft involved in the Alaska Airline scare. No Indian airline uses the Boeing MAX 9 plane. The country's aviation regulator said two weeks ago that its check of the 737 8 MAX aircraft had been completed satisfactorily.

Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia praised the order in a message on X, formerly Twitter. "Congratulations to Akasa Air for the landmark order of 150 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft," he wrote.

The carrier is "creating history by becoming the only Indian airline to reach a firm order book of 200+ aircraft within 17 months of operations," Scindia added.

India is now the third biggest buyer of planes after China and the United States, Scindia said, speaking at the "Wings India" aviation conference on Thursday. "India's Civil Aviation growth story is remarkable and poised for exponential growth," Scindia added on X. "The sector has become a key driver of economic de-



HYDERABAD: Visitors gathered near an Akasa Air aircraft during the 'Wings India 2024', an exhibition and conference on civil aviation, at the Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad on January 18, 2024, — AFP

Akasa—sky in Sanskrit—is pitching itself as an ultra-low-cost carrier with tickets cheaper than competitors. The carrier made its maiden flight in the Asian country's crowded aviation market in 2022. — AFP



A man holds his falcon during a training session in 2015.

Falconry blends tradition and technology in the modern era

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

The falcon holds a distinct cultural significance in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in Kuwait and the Gulf, where the tradition has evolved and embraced modern technologies rather than being abandoned. Falconry, once a crucial survival mechanism for ancient nomads, has transformed into a beloved hobby and a passionately pursued sport.

Falconry predates written history, with art depicting the practice created by the Hittites in the 13th century BCE. Originally a means of obtaining game for sustenance, the falconer would approach a trained hawk on a kill, offering a smaller piece of meat in their glove between the hawk's beak and the carcass.

Zubair and Azeez, in their publication in Millennium Zoology (vol 9), explain that the objective of falconry is to hunt prey with trained falcons, typically favoring female falcons. Successful efforts are rewarded by allowing the falcon to consume a portion of the captured quarry while the falconer retains the rest.

The bond between the falconer and the bird becomes especially close, particularly after the falcon achieves its first kill, marking the completion of training. To aid in locating falcons during hunting, small, lightweight bells are attached to their legs. In modern falconry, many practitioners attach transmitters to trained falcons, allowing them to be tracked using radio-receiver units.

Zubair and Azeez explain that birds are trained by highly skilled trainers to perfect their hunting skills. Radio transmitters having a range up to 50 km are used to avoid losing the expensive birds during training and hunting.

Falconry is concentrated in the Arabian Gulf region, extending from the UAE in the southern Gulf, northward through Qatar, Bahrain, and into Kuwait. During the Middle Ages, falconry spread to Europe as merchants, adventurers and Crusaders familiarized themselves with the practice in the Middle East. However, with the advent of the shotgun, enclosure of open lands and societal changes, falconry nearly died out.

But falconry successfully resisted extinction in the contemporary world. While the ancient nomads viewed it as a necessity for securing a meal, today it thrives as more than a hobby or passion, serving as a poignant reminder of yesterday's way of life.



A falcon performs during a hunting competition in 2020. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A man holds a falcon during a hunting competition.



A Kuwaiti inspects a falcon during an auction in 2021.



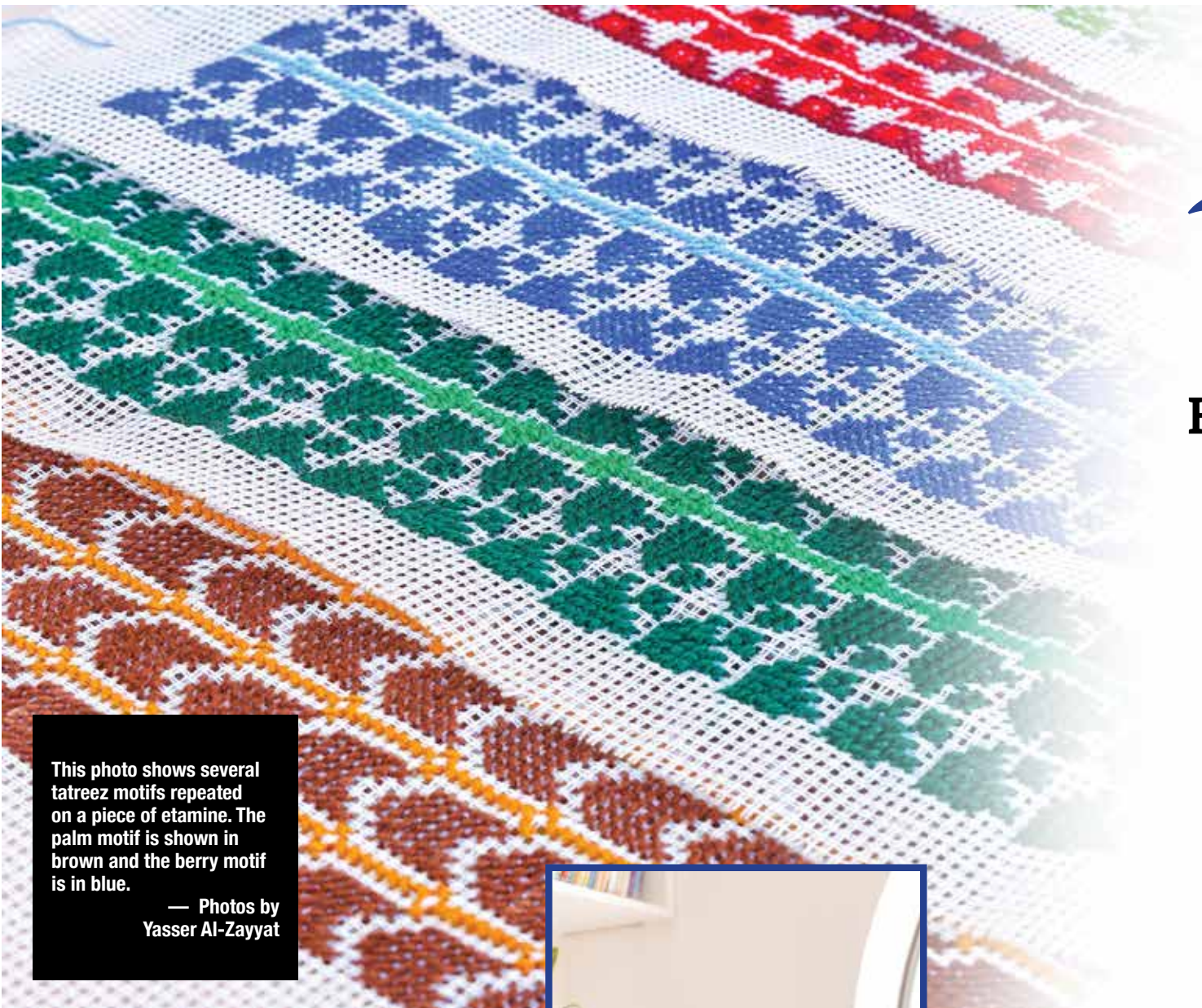
A man holds his falcon during a competition in Salmi in 2013.



A man kisses his falcon during a training session in Salmi in 2015 in preparation for a falconry competition.



Falcons attack a domestic guineafowl (left) and a turkey (right) during a training session at Mutlaa Ridge in 2021.



Tatreez

History in every stitch

Traditional Palestinian embroidery a symbol of nationalism, empowerment and resistance

This photo shows several tatreez motifs repeated on a piece of etamine. The palm motif is shown in brown and the berry motif is in blue.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Nebal Snan

Amna Salameh was about 12 years old when she first began learning tatreez. Once a week, Salameh would sit at her desk during home economics class and immerse herself into the world of Palestinian embroidery. She had just moved with her parents and sisters from Kuwait, where she was born, to Ramallah in Palestine.

As she got used to a new environment, tatreez, which is Arabic for embroidery, became one of her favorite activities. “Ever since then, tatreez has always been on my mind. I knew that when I grew up, I had to do something related to it,” she said.

Nearly 30 years later, Salameh, who returned to Kuwait in the early 2000s, is not only practicing the traditional Palestinian art form, but also teaching others how to do it through her small business,



Amna Salameh holds an embroidered piece of fabric in this submitted photo.

Tatreez is a way of documenting history — its patterns are inspired by Palestinians’ daily lives and surroundings. Each area of Palestine has its own distinct style and patterns. For example, embroidery from Jaffa, where Salameh’s paternal grandparents are from, often features the orange blossom motif — paying homage to the orange for which the city is famous.

An embroidered thobe’s colors and designs can also symbolize a woman’s regional identity and marital and economic status. Salameh is especially fascinated by the thobes in Ramallah. “They’re absolutely gorgeous. Until this day, elderly women in Ramallah wear their thobes when going out and about,” she said with excitement. “The tatreez heritage in Ramallah is one of the richest in Palestine.”

National unity tree

In the decades following the 1948 catastrophe, or “nakba” in Arabic, in which over 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced to facilitate the creation of the Zionist entity, the distinct tatreez motifs and designs became a visible and recognizable form of Palestinian nationalism, encapsulating identity, history and heritage.

Salameh said tatreez has been a way for people in Kuwait to connect with Palestinian culture during the ongoing escalation of the decades-long Zionist occupation of Palestine, in which the Zionist entity has killed more than 24,000 Palestinians in Gaza. “It’s very upsetting to watch the war unfold

on TV. I’ve seen Palestine go through a lot of wars all my life, but it’s never been this ugly,” she said.

In collaboration with several organizations, Salameh has held several workshops over the past three months, where she taught basic tatreez principles and shared some of its historical significance, with part or all of the proceeds going to aid Gaza. “I was broken and angry about the situation in Gaza, but I was so happy that while teaching my country’s heritage and history, I was able to donate the proceeds of the workshops. It meant so much to me,” she told Kuwait Times.

Salameh teaches participants in her level 1 workshop how to embroider one of her favorite motifs — the “saru”, which is Arabic for cypress tree. The motif, used in tatreez across Palestine but with regional differences, represents Palestinian national unity, she said. The labor-intensive craft can also be therapeutic. “It’s great for stress relief,” said Salameh. “While you’re embroidering, you’re solely focusing on counting stitches and bringing the design to life. So it helps you disconnect for a little while.”



mother have bonded over practicing embroidery together.

She also learns embroidery from her grandmother, who has embroidered thobes for 40 years and remains a treasure trove of tatreez knowledge. Salameh’s next goal is to pass down



The flower Palestinian tatreez motif.

Kashtban. Through her tatreez workshops, which she’s been offering since 2020 in Arabic and sometimes in English, Salameh has shared snippets of Palestinian history and culture with hundreds of people in Kuwait.

“Tatreez enchants me. I’ve been practicing it, reading books and looking at photos for years. You’d expect that I’d be sick of it by now but it’s the complete opposite for me. I’m still fascinated by it,” said Salameh, wearing a black jacket embroidered with vibrant red threads. “It gives me energy. I can feel the spirit of my ancestors wearing this piece.”

In Palestine, tatreez is an indigenous cultural art form that dates back centuries and has been preserved and passed down through generations, traditionally from mother to daughter. The embroidery adorns clothing, most commonly the traditional dress called thobe, as well as decorations.

Nowadays, you can find various everyday items embellished with the colorful designs, including laptop cases and makeup pouches. UNESCO recognized the art of Palestinian embroidery as an important expression of cultural heritage in 2021. “Every thobe tells a story. Every stitch unfolds a tale,” said Salameh.



Female-led art

More than anything, tatreez is a testament to the power of Palestinian women. “I’m in awe at how our grandmothers could translate their lived realities into embroidery and how they were able to preserve this art for so long,” said Salameh.

Tatreez can also be a form of resistance. During the first intifada, or uprising, that took place from 1987 until 1993, Palestinian women created what is known as the ‘intifada dress’ as a form of defiance against the Zionist ban on Palestinian symbols, such as the national flag. According to Palestinian researcher Wafa Ghnaim, the intifada dress was embroidered with Palestinian flags and other symbols such as the Dome of the Rock.

In addition to providing an outlet for self-expression, tatreez brings Palestinian women closer to each other. Every summer, Salameh spent quality time with her mother learning tatreez using motifs drawn on a piece of paper and a piece of fabric, called “etamine” in Arabic. Over the years, Salameh and her

the craft to her 8-year-old daughter. “She comes to my workshops sometimes and watches me practice tatreez, just like I watched my mother,” she said. “I hope she’ll grow up to love it. But even if she doesn’t, I’d be satisfied with teaching her the history and heritage of her ancestors.”



This photo shows the flower (top) and the moon Palestinian tatreez motifs.



The lily motif.

Offbeat in the offseason

Travelers recount their favorite winter sojourns

By Faten Omar

While beachy destinations and sunny countries often steal the spotlight in travel discussions, the charm of winter tourism deserves its due appreciation. Winter tourism provides a refreshing alternative for those seeking a different kind of adventure and a break from the usual warm-weather escapes. Kuwait Times spoke with travelers to explore their best destinations in winter.



Karim Aly poses with Korean women wearing hanboks.

Shahrulkh Ashfaquallah Khan told Kuwait Times about the wonders of Russia's Caucasus. "One afternoon, I suddenly left my residence to go alone on a bike ride 22,000 feet high, away from humans in search of those beautiful mountains and landscapes that I used to see in poetry books as a child and dreamt about. I slept every day in tents, ate noodles made on rocks, drank melting water from glaciers, slept in the snow under the stars and repaired my bike in the mountains. Yeah, it was all breathtaking because there is less oxygen up there," he recounted.

"It was an amazing adventure; high altitude gives less oxygen to the body and people faint. Even the tyre pressure on the motorcycle keeps fluctuating. I had to carry a small oxygen cylinder in my bag. No gas stations too, so I carried extra fuel cans too. I am fond of raw adventures. I travel, explore, meet people of different regions and nationalities, learn their language, experience their culture, and taste life," Khan added.

Meanwhile, South Korea was Karim Aly's favorite destination in winter. "I traveled to Seoul in 2019 in early winter. It's a perfect destination during the winter season, as you can visit many places, for instance, temples, forests and hiking trails. Indoor activities include virtual reality entertainment stores, national libraries and malls," he noted.

Aly said during his journey to South Korea, he was surprised that the airport was fully automated with modern machines. He was met by a "Dalek", a small robot that helped him reach the gate, offered him multiple services and asked if he needed transportation to the hotel or a recommendation for a place to stay.

"I visited a place called Gyeongbokgung Palace, which is famous for its historic shrines and beautiful nature. It's a place where you can experience the history of South Korea; moreover, you can wear traditional South Korean attire called the hanbok. The next day I was looking forward to visiting the virtual reality station in a place called Gangnam, where you can experience a thrilling world of rapid river adventures, go-kart competitions and alien space battles," he added.

"The following day I took the train to a city called Busan, which is nearly two hours from Seoul by KTX train. It was a little cloudy that day, but I enjoyed walking in the city in a place called Citizens Park. It's indeed a breathtaking place to walk and enjoy nature in the middle of the city," Aly recalled.

Koray thinks Barcelonnette, in the heart of the French Alps, beckons with its breathtaking landscapes, a symphony of nature that unfolds in every direction. Towering alpine peaks paint a majestic backdrop, inviting you to explore the untamed beauty that graces this

charming corner of France.

"As you embark on your journey, let the landscapes guide your narrative. Picture-perfect meadows adorned with wildflowers unfold like a vibrant tapestry under the shadow of snowcapped mountains. As the sun sets behind the mountains, casting a warm glow on the landscape, reflect on the journey. Your exploration of Barcelonnette isn't just a physical one — it's a sensory and emotional immersion

joyed the mild and sunny weather during the daytime and had to wear warm jackets after a breathtaking sunset by Fantas Lake from the top of the Temple of the Oracle, where Alexander the Great consulted Amun, and the Shali Fortress, a mudbrick citadel that dominates the town. The people were super friendly and hospitable, and the food was very delicious and organic," Abdulazeez enthused.

Abdulazeez indicated that Siwa Oasis of-



Shahrulkh Khan on the road.



Shahrulkh Khan rides his bike in the Russian Caucasus.



Karim Aly in Seoul.



Gehan Abdulazeez at Siwa Oasis.



Gehan Abdulazeez rides a desert bike in Siwa.



Koray in the French Alps town of Barcelonnette.

into a world where nature and culture dance in harmony," Koray explained.

Gehan Abdulazeez affirmed that Siwa Oasis is the best winter destination. "Siwa Oasis is a remote and mystical place in the Western Desert of Egypt near the Libyan border. It is one of the most ancient and culturally rich oases in the country, with a history that dates back to the 10th millennium BC," she told Kuwait Times.

"As a group of friends from different backgrounds who were looking for a new adventure and a relaxing authentic experience in Egypt, we found Siwa Oasis a perfect winter escape destination with its natural beauty, crystal-clear springs and vast dunes. We en-

fers a variety of activities, such as swimming in salt lakes and in the springs, exploring ancient tombs and temples, riding camels or bikes in the desert, going for handicraft and date shopping, or simply enjoying the tranquility and serenity of the oasis. She affirmed that Siwa Oasis is a real hidden gem in Egypt that deserves more attention and appreciation, and is a place where travelers can immerse themselves in the culture and nature of the oasis and discover a different side of Egypt that is often overlooked.

What's on



• **Event: Cars and Coffee**
Place: Dhah Complex
Date: January 19, 2024
Time: 8:30 am to 11 am

• **Event: Tareq Rajab Museum Tour**
Place: Aware Center
Date: January 20, 2024
Time: 9:30 am

• **Event: TK Market**
Place: Murouj
Date: January 18 to 20, 2024

• **Event: Sports Village**
Place: Mishref Sport Complex
Date: January 18 to 20, 2024
Time: 10 am to 7 pm

• **Event: Open Lab Activities**
Place: Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre
Date: January 19, 2024
Time: 5-6 pm

• **Event: Tours in Sadu House**
Place: Sadu House

Date: From Saturday to Thursday
Time: 6:30-7 pm, 7:30-8 pm

• **Event: Creative Printmaking Conference**
Place: Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center
Date: January 6 to 27, 2024
Time: 6 pm

• **Event: Al-Mikshat**
Place: North Island on Sheikh Jaber Causeway
Date: January 12 to April 12, 2024

• **Event: Quantum Con**
Place: Kuwait International Fairground, hall 6
Date: January 25 to 27, 2024

• **Event: Bugsha Market**
Place: Al-Shuwaikh Park, Al-Sadaqah and Al-Salam Park
Date: January 25 to 27, 2024

• **Event: Mirzaamiyat**
Place: The Arena - 360 Mall
Date: January 24 to 27, 2024

Sports

Captain Rohit stars as India outlast Afghanistan in second Super Over

Washington Sundar returns figures of 3-18 but the evening belonged to Rohit

BENGALURU: India edged Afghanistan in a dramatic second Super Over to sweep the Twenty20 series after the third match ended in a tie following Rohit Sharma's record-setting century on Wednesday. The India captain became the first batsman to hit five T20 international tons as his unbeaten 121 off 69 balls powered the hosts to 212-4 in Bengaluru after they had slipped to 22-4.

But Afghanistan put up a spirited response as Gulbadin Naib hit an unbeaten 55 off 23 balls to steer his side to 212-6, taking two off the final delivery to level the scores. The Super Over was also tied after Afghanistan made 16 and India got the same score as the situation brought back memories of the 2019 50-over World Cup final between England and New Zealand.

The final at the Lord's had ended level even after the Super Over and England won the trophy on a greater number of boundaries, prompting a rule change. India made 11-2 in the second Super Over with Rohit scoring all the runs off the opening three balls. Indian spinner Ravi Bishnoi conceded just one run and picked up two wickets to seal the game.

Earlier Rohit, out for a duck in the opening two wins, struck 11 fours and eight sixes and put on 190 runs with Rinku Singh, who hit 69 not out off 39 balls. "Rinku can show what he can do. Fearless, keeps himself calm, is very clear about his game plan and knows his strengths very well," said Rohit.

"He's coming of age, creates an impression every time he gets an opportunity. "In the last 10 in-

nings for India, he's done very well. We've wanted someone who can bat in the back end with a clear mindset. You saw how he's done well in the IPL, he's carried that forward here."

'Gave it their best'

Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran scored 50 each to put on 93 runs for the first wicket and set up the chase. Mohammad Nabi smashed a quickfire 34 to keep his side in the hunt and Naib helped get 18 runs off the final over from fast bowler Mukesh Kumar to tie the match.

"All the boys gave it their best in these three games," said Zadran. "We've never played this kind of cricket earlier against the Full Members, especially against India in T20Is. We were excellent in the batting department." Spinner Washington Sundar returned figures of 3-18 but the evening belonged to Rohit, who reigned supreme after he won the toss and elected to bat first. Rohit went past Australia's Glenn Maxwell and Suryakumar Yadav—both with four T20 tons.

It was raining sixes in the final five overs when India plundered 103 runs. Rohit and the left-handed Rinku smashed 36 off the final over, which included a six off a no-ball. The hosts, who clinched the series after two wins, played their final T20 international before the T20 World Cup in June. Left-arm quick Fareed Ahmad Malik returned figures of 3-20 and caused early damage with the wickets of Yashasvi Jaiswal (four), Virat Kohli and Sanju Samson,



BENGALURU: India's players pose with the series trophy after winning the second super over of third and final Twenty20 international cricket match between India and Afghanistan at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on January 17, 2024. — AFP

both removed for first-ball ducks.

Rohit rebuilt the innings and then tore into the opposition attack as he surpassed his previous T20

best of 118. India now host England for five Test matches before the Indian Premier League T20 tournament. — AFP

Hazlewood, Head put Australia in command against WI

ADELAIDE: An inspired spell of bowling from Josh Hazlewood and a brilliant attacking century from Travis Head put Australia in complete control of the first Test against the West Indies in Adelaide on Thursday. After Head smashed 119 from 134 balls to take Australia to 283 and a first-innings lead of 95, Hazlewood took four wickets for just two runs at the start of the West Indies second innings to deal a hammer blow to the visitors.

At stumps on the second day, the West Indies were 73-6, still 22 runs from making Australia bat again. Joshua Da Silva was not out 17, with Justin Greaves dismissed off the last ball of the day's play. Hazlewood removed the top four West Indies batsmen in a superb spell of seam bowling.

He dismissed Tagenarine Chanderpaul for a first ball duck, then in his next over he had captain Kraigg Brathwaite caught by Head at a deepish short leg. The West Indies were 7-3 when Alick Athanaze gloved a bouncer to keeper Alex Carey, then 19-4 when Kavem Hodge edged to Steve Smith at second slip.

Kirk McKenzie and Greaves tried to rebuild the innings and took the score to 40 before McKenzie tried an expansive drive off Cameron Green, only to spoon the ball to Marnus Labuschagne at short cover. Greaves and Da Silva batted sensibly and looked certain to take the West Indies safely to stumps, only for off-spinner Nathan Lyon to trap Greaves lbw for 24.

West Indies coach Andre Coley said his young



ADELAIDE: Australia's Travis Head (C) celebrates after scoring a century during day two of the first cricket Test match between Australia and the West Indies at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide on January 18, 2024. — AFP

side had to adapt to Australian conditions. "The pitches here have been very good, very different to back home, so our intent to score has always been evident," he said. "But that has to be matched with decision-making. With more bounce the ability to leave the ball more consistently has to be part of your repertoire."

On a pitch that troubled every other batsman, Head seemed to be playing on a different surface, bringing up his seventh Test century with a glorious cover drive to the boundary. He eventually fell after making a brisk century, caught brilliantly on the boundary by Kavem Hodge off the bowling of Alzarri Joseph, but by then the damage had been done and Australia were firmly in control.

The Australians were expected to dominate a below-strength West Indies, who have three players on debut in this match. But led by exciting newcomer Shamar Joseph, the visitors took regular wickets throughout the first two sessions to initially keep the Australians on the back foot. Joseph, playing only his sixth first class match, ended with 5-94 in a magnificent Test debut. "It's an amazing feeling," Joseph said. "It brings tears to my eyes knowing that I'm on this big stage and taking a five-wicket haul in Australia means a lot to me. "It's amazing. I'm just sticking to the basics and enjoying it." Australia had reshuffled their batting order on the retirement of David Warner, moving Steve Smith to opener so they could bring Green back into the side. — AFP



LA ROCHELLE: La Rochelle's New Zealand scrum-half Tawera Kerr-Barlow jumps over La Rochelle's Australian lock Will Skelton during the European Rugby Champions Cup Pool 4 rugby union match between Stade Rochelais (La Rochelle) and Leicester Tigers at The Marcel-Deflandre Stadium in La Rochelle, western France. — AFP

Holdings La Rochelle face 'crucial' week in Champions Cup

PARIS: Double Champions Cup winners La Rochelle are among a host of clubs battling for a place in the Champions Cup last 16 when they head to Sale in Pool 2 on Sunday in the final weekend of the group stage. The French club, who have won the last two editions, have claimed just one victory this campaign, hammering Leicester 45-12 last Sunday. Ronan O'Gara's outfit need just a draw in northern England to claim one of the eight spots remaining in the next round.

"It's a crucial week for the club and the squad," O'Gara told newspaper Midi Olympique after the win over Leicester. "My challenge this week will be to give ourselves the chance to play the knockout stages, if we do a good job on Sunday. "I will not accept being knocked out of this competition after a bad performance," the former Ireland fly-half added. Fleet-footed winger Teddy Thomas scored twice in

the Leicester victory but missed out on inclusion in France's Six Nations squad, named on Wednesday.

One La Rochelle player included in Les Bleus' set-up was No 8 Gregory Alldritt, who was named captain in Antoine Dupont's absence. "He's got X-factor," O'Gara said of Thomas. "When the ball falls, you give it to him and it's goodbye. "Few players are capable of doing that in the world," he added.

The five other Six Nations squads were also named this week with the tournament starting on February 2, leaving head coaches watching on wearily with a host of front-line players such as Ireland winger Mack Hansen, England centre Manu Tuilagi and Wales captain Jac Morgan having already been ruled out through injury.

Elsewhere this weekend, former champions Saracens, Ulster, Munster, Leicester and Toulon are also among the sides eyeing spots in the last 16. Three-time winners Toulon head to Glasgow in Pool 1 on Friday, needing to claim their first win of the season in the tournament and for Bayonne to fail to beat Exeter on Sunday, with the competition's new format still suffering from teething issues. "It's normal when you lose three games, your destiny is out of your hands," Toulon head coach Pierre Mignoni told reporters this week. — AFP

Dominant Odermatt dreams of Kitzbuehel victory, Kilde absent

KITZBUHEL: All eyes will be on Switzerland's runaway World Cup leader Marco Odermatt when racing on the hallowed snow of Kitzbuehel gets under way this weekend. The 26-year-old, a surprise winner of last year's downhill gold at the World Ski Championships in Courchevel where he also won the giant slalom, revealed he has upped his weight training and it has paid off in spades on the piste.

Odermatt has this season won seven races in three disciplines and is also atop the standings in the downhill, super-G and giant slalom. In Wengen, where Aleksander Aamodt Kilde and France's Alexis Pinturault both sustained season-ending crashes and FIS came under fire for staging an additional downhill in an already-packed schedule, Odermatt really showed his increasing prowess in the ultimate speed event.

He bagged a maiden World Cup downhill victory and followed that up with victory in the second downhill race to set himself up perfectly for the challenges of Kitzbuehel. "After the success in Wengen, a victory in Kitzbuehel is my biggest dream," Odermatt said.

"I also know how good I am at the moment and how close I am to this victory. In Kitzbuehel I have only been short by hundredths of a second." Odermatt and the rest of the 60-plus field will have their work cut out with back-to-back downhill races on Friday and Saturday, with a slalom scheduled for Sunday.

The 84th running of the downhill, which made its debut in 1931, will see racers reaching motorway-coasting speeds of 140km/h while negotiating sections that have an 85-percent gradient. While not the longest course on the circuit, racers are guaranteed a thigh-trembling descent of the 3.3km-long Streif course on the Hahnenkamm mountain where the vertiginous start sees them reach 100km/h in the first five seconds.

'A good action movie'

"The Streif is like a good action movie - exciting until the end," says Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Austrian bodybuilder/actor-cum-former California governor who is an ever-present during racing in the upmarket Tyrolean town. The reigning Olympic downhill champion is Beat Feuz, three times a winner in Kitzbuehel, where he symbolically called time on his glittering career after last year's race.

"It's the most famous and spectacular race of them all," the former Swiss racer said. "You have to be 100% committed to taking risks. "It's exhausting, but fantastic." Feuz added: "There are certainly more strenuous courses, in purely physical terms "But in Kitzbuehel, there's a lot more to it: the mystique, the race hierarchy..."

"There are so many outstanding athletes who reach their limits here." The course record of 1min 51.58sec was set by Austria's Fritz Strobl back in 1997. But it is safe to say that racers are more concerned about safely negotiating the piste with the right amount of so-called "risk management": how much a racer is able to push himself, much like a Formula One driver, in the knowledge that one slight error might mean hurtling into some of the 15km of nets and fencing down the course.

Last year's downhill winners were Vincent Kriechmayr and Kilde, with Switzerland's Daniel Yule claiming the slalom title. Racers are again vying for prize money of 100,000 euros (\$108,000), part of a 1m-euro pot on offer for three days of racing, something fully deserved in the eyes of former Norwegian racer Aksel Lund Svindal.

"At the Olympics, there can sometimes be an accidental winner. On the Streif, it's always the best who win," said Svindal, a three-time super-G winner at the Hahnenkamm. — AFP

News in Brief

Loeb's Dakar glory in ruins

YANBU: French rally great Sebastian Loeb's hopes of a first ever Dakar Rally success all but evaporated on Thursday after he was stranded in the desert for more than an hour due to a mechanical problem. The 49-year-old record nine time world rally champion trailed overall leader Carlos Sainz by just over 13 minutes at the start of the 11th and penultimate stage. However, his Prodrive Hunter car came to a halt 132 kilometres into the 480km special from Al-Ula to Yanbu regarded as the 'piece de resistance' of the second week of the gruelling rally. — AFP

Real Sociedad sign Becker

BARCELONA: Real Sociedad signed forward Sheraldo Becker from Union Berlin on Thursday for a reported three million euros (\$3.3 million). "(The club) have reached an agreement with the Surinamese player until the end of the 2025-26 season," wrote Real Sociedad in a statement. The rapid 28-year-old, able to play in various positions across the attack, scored 11 goals in the German Bundesliga last season to help Union Berlin qualify for the Champions League for the first time. Becker scored twice in the Champions League group stage this season, which were his and the club's first goals in the competition. — AFP

Schmidt to coach Wallabies

MELBOURNE: Former Ireland coach Joe Schmidt is set to be named as the new Wallabies boss to replace Eddie Jones with an announcement expected in coming days, Australian media reported Friday. Jones acrimoniously quit in October after their calamitous World Cup campaign, just 10 months into a five-year contract, having won just two from nine Tests. He has since been hired by Japan. The Sydney Morning Herald and broadcaster Channel Nine, citing sources with knowledge of discussions, said New Zealander Schmidt was set to succeed him with "only the paperwork to be finalised" and an announcement "in coming days". — AFP

Sports

Zain staff compete for top spot in fourth padel tournament

Enhanced teamwork and bonding, attended by executive management



Bader Al-Kharafi and Nawaf Algharabally award the first-place winners.



Al-Kharafi, Algharabally and Abdullatif Al Asfour with the participants.

KUWAIT: After a thrilling two-day race at OCEAN Padel Academy in Salmiya, Zain successfully concluded its fourth padel tournament for staff. The yearly competition enhanced the spirit of teamwork and out-of-office bonding between members of the Zain family and witnessed the participation of the executive management team.

The tournament was joined by Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi. Among the spectators were Zain Kuwait Acting CEO Nawaf Algharabally, OCEAN Padel Academy Co-founder & Manager Abdullatif Al Asfour, along with Zain executives and employees who eagerly followed the exciting matches and cheered their colleagues on.

Zain organizes many sports competitions for its employees under the

umbrella of its internal strategy communications that closely focuses on promoting health and sports programs. The company remains committed to the wellbeing of its staff by organizing similar programs throughout the year to promote an active and healthy lifestyle, while also enhancing the teamwork spirit and out of office bonding between members of the Zain family.

The fourth season of the competition witnessed great reception from Zain employees. The matches continued for two consecutive days at OCEAN Padel Academy's courts in Salmiya, where 18 two-player teams competed for the title. Returning champions 'team ZAIN' won the title, while team Heavyweights came in second place and team KOBE came in third place.

Last year, Zain partnered with OCEAN

PADEL Academy, a local sports club with world-class facilities, to support the academy's various programs and services offered to padel enthusiasts in Kuwait, including fully equipped courts and facilities, kids camps, seasonal championships, and special tournaments for employees.

The Academy covers over 3,000 square meters and overlooks the Arabian Gulf Street. It boasts several indoor and outdoor courts, the Zain Center Court with seats for 120+ spectators, state-of-the-art health and sports facilities, international trainers and more.

Zain spares no efforts to organize activities and programs that cater to its employees' talents and interests. The company is keen on encouraging employees to pursue healthier lifestyles and take part in different sports and health programs all year round.



The competition strengthened out-of-office bonding.

Morocco enjoy strong start at AFCON

ABIDJAN: Shock 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco cruised to a 3-0 win over 10-man Tanzania as they opened their Africa Cup of Nations campaign on Wednesday, while 2012 champions Zambia held the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Captain Romain Saiss, Azzedine Ounahi and Youssef En-Nesyri all netted for Morocco in the Ivorian coastal city of San-Pedro, while Tanzania had Novatus Miroshi sent off. Although an African powerhouse for decades, Morocco are seeking only a second Cup of Nations title, 48 years after lifting the trophy in Ethiopia.

Morocco sprang to international prominence just over a year ago in Qatar when they became the first ever African World Cup semi-finalists, eliminating Spain and Portugal along the way. Wednesday's victory over Group F outsiders Tanzania was anticipated as Morocco are ranked 13th in the world, 108 places above the Taifa Stars.

Morocco began with seven of the team that started in the 2-0 World Cup semi-final loss to France in Qatar. There were three La Liga players, two each from the Premier League and Ligue 1 and two with Saudi Pro League sides.

This contrasted sharply with Tanzania, whose line-up included Tarryn Allarakhia from English fifth-tier outfit Wealdstone. The winger struggled in sweltering conditions and was replaced after 38 minutes, by which time Morocco were already ahead.

Hakim Ziyech, on loan to Galatasaray from Chelsea, lifted a free-kick over the defensive wall and when goalkeeper Aisha Manula failed to grasp it, Saiss converted the loose ball. Tanzanian hopes of finding an equaliser suffered a huge blow with 20 minutes remaining when Miroshi fouled Ounahi and was sent off for a second booking.



SAN-PEDRO: Morocco's midfielder #7 Hakim Ziyach (C) fights for the ball with Tanzania's defender #4 Ibrahim Hamad (Down) during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 group F football match between Morocco and Tanzania at Stade Laurent Pokou in San Pedro. — AFP

Ounahi rounded off a fine move to make it 2-0 on 77 minutes, and the scoring was complete shortly after when En-Nesyri converted a low cross for a goal that was confirmed as onside following a VAR check.

"We're focused, we're on a mission here, and we have a status to live up to," admitted Morocco coach Walid Regragui. "People are waiting for us to deliver, but we are keeping our feet on the ground and we respected Tanzania in this game."

The spoils were shared in the second match of the day later on in the same group, played at the same stadium named after deceased Ivorian star Laurent Pokou. Kings Kangwa lobbed Zambia into the lead midway through the first half after Congolese goalkeeper Lionel Mpasi came racing out of his area and could not get back into position in time.

But Yoane Wissa, who has four goals in the English Premier League this season for Brentford, converted Cedric Bakambu's low centre to make it 1-1 before the half-hour mark, and that was how it finished.

Congo thought they had won a penalty just after the hour mark when the Ethiopian referee ruled that Tandi Mwape had blocked Arthur Masuaku's cross with his arm. However, the decision was correctly overturned following a review, with the official able to see that Mwape had made the block with his chest.

Zambia, coached by Avram Grant, were making their comeback after missing the last three editions of the AFCON and were looking for their first win at the tournament since lifting the trophy against the odds in 2012. The next games in Group F are on Sunday, with Morocco meeting the Congolese before Zambia take on Tanzania.

All teams at the Cup of Nations have now played once, and the action continues on Thursday with a triple-header of matches in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's economic capital. Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau meet at the Ebimpe Olympic Stadium at 1400 GMT before Group A rivals Nigeria and hosts Ivory Coast face off in a heavy-weight clash. — AFP

Asian Basketball for Disabled elects Shafi Al-Hajri as president

KUWAIT: The General Assembly of the Asian Wheelchair Basketball Confederation for the Disabled on Thursday recommended the representative of the State of Kuwait Shafi Al-Hajri as President of the Confederation of the Continental Federation for the next four years, at its meeting held in the Thai capital Bangkok with the participation of representatives of national associations in the continent.

He explained that the elections that took place on the sidelines of Thailand's hosting of the final qualifiers for the game qualifying for the next Olympic Games to be held in Paris next summer were characterized by a good atmosphere and constructive cooperation, expressing his deep thanks to all

members of the General Assembly for giving confidence to him to assume the presidency of the Federation.

He pointed out that the new Board of Directors of the Federation will work to develop wheelchair basketball in the countries of the continent and intensify the establishment of tournaments in all regions of the continent, in advance his thanks to the members of the Asian Federation. Al-Hajri dedicated this victory to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God protect and sponsor him, the first supporter of Kuwaiti disabled sports and for all members of the Kuwaiti club. He valued the support of the Public Authority for Sports and the Kuwait Paralympic Committee for Kuwaiti disabled sports, which had the greatest impact by achieving this achievement, which is added to many of the achievements achieved by Kuwaiti disabled sports at the sports and administrative levels. — KUNA



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, Aliza Alekar, holder of Indian Passport No. W7995539 having permanent address, India, Maharashtra, India - 402309. Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under (Given name) Aliza Akhlaque and (Surname) Alekar
(#4595) 19/1/2024

I, MAYANTI MUTHU, holder of Indian Passport no. Z2815759 having permanent address at S/o. Mayandi Kayavayal Melasem Bonmari Kallupatty post.

Siva Gangai district. Deva Kottai, Tamilnadu pincode 630306 residing in Kuwait at present here by declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given name - Pichaimuthu and surname Mayandi.
(#4582) 18/1/2024

I, Bayanaboyina Lakshmi Narasaiah, S/o Bayanaboyina Penchalaiah, R/of D.No. 2/65, Upparapalli, Kotha Madhavaram, Siddavatam(M), Kadapa, A.P - 516247, have changed my name from Binaboe-na 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

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988



MELBOURNE: Russia's Anna Blinkova hits a return against Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina during their women's singles match on day five of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 18, 2024. — AFP photos

MELBOURNE: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz hits a return against Italy's Lorenzo Sonego during their men's singles match on day five of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 18, 2024.

Russia's Blinkova makes history

Alcaraz marches on at Australian Open as Swiatek roars back

MELBOURNE: Unseeded Russian Anna Blinkova shocked last year's runner-up Elena Rybakina at the Australian Open on Thursday, winning the longest tie-break in Grand Slam history as world number one Iga Swiatek came back from the brink.

On a day of striking second-round upsets, women's fifth seed Jessica Pegula also crashed out, along with men's eighth seed Holger Rune. But the biggest drama was saved until late into the cool, breezy night in Melbourne, when Blinkova converted her 10th match point to beat third-ranked Rybakina 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (22/20).

The first two sets were completely forgotten in an astonishing 42-point tie-break that lasted more than half an hour. The previous tie-break record at a Grand Slam was 38 points, which happened on two occasions—at the 2007 Australian Open and at last year's Wimbledon.

Blinkova, 25, who saved six match points, said it was the "best day of my life so far". "I had so many

match points and I tried to be aggressive in these moments, but my hands were shaking, my legs too. I tried to be calm as far as I could and I am super happy to win.

"I was telling myself 'go for it'. I was also telling myself 'just stay solid, stay solid, solid, solid, and just putting the ball in the court, into the court, in the court', and finally it worked out." She will face 26th-seeded Italian Jasmine Paolini in the third round.

Swiatek fightback

The astonishing scenes on Rod Laver Arena overshadowed a remarkable comeback earlier in the day by women's world number one Swiatek. The Polish player was cruising at a set and a break up against Danielle Collins before faltering badly and slipping to a 4-1 deficit in the deciding set.

But just as she appeared to be heading home, she reeled off five straight games to win 6-4, 3-6, 6-4

and extend her winning run to 18 matches. "Oh my God, I was at the airport already," joked Swiatek, who has never won the Australian Open.

"It wasn't easy. I felt like I had the momentum going and then she started playing suddenly two times faster and I had no idea how to react to that for a couple of games. I came back, and I thought the only thing I could focus on was myself."

The four-time Grand Slam champion will face unseeded Czech player Linda Noskova next. Spanish world number two Carlos Alcaraz matched his best Melbourne result by reaching the third round with a 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) win against Italy's unseeded Lorenzo Sonego.

The two-time major champion, who struck 43 winners, found himself all square at one set apiece despite not facing any break points in the first two sets. But he brushed off the loss of the second set, breaking early in the third set, and came out on top in the fourth-set tie-break in windy conditions.

Alcaraz will meet Chinese wildcard Shang Juncheng next as he ramps up his drive towards a maiden title in Melbourne. "Even if I lost the second set, I think I played a good game," said the 20-year-old. "We put on a show, both of us, making good points and some hot shots as well. It was a great match."

Alcaraz, who missed the 2023 Australian Open due to injury, is aiming to become the third man in the Open Era to win three Grand Slams before the age of 21, after Bjorn Borg and Mats Wilander. He also has the chance to supplant Novak Djokovic as world number one.

Pegula was ousted 6-4, 6-2 by young French star Clara Burel and former US Open winner Emma Raducanu also crashed out. Denmark's Rune went down in four sets to French wildcard Arthur Cazaux. Sixth-ranked Alexander Zverev and Casper Rudd, the 11th seed, were pushed to the brink before both came through their matches in fifth-set tie-breaks. — AFP

Lakers win over Mavs despite Doncic return

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Lakers, fueled by a near triple-double from Anthony Davis, spoiled Luka Doncic's return from injury with a convincing 127-110 NBA victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday.

Davis scored 28 points with 12 rebounds and nine assists and D'Angelo Russell scored 29 for the Lakers, who withstood a triple-double from Doncic—who had missed three games with a sprained right ankle. Doncic scored 33 points with 13 rebounds and 10 assists. But Mavs star Kyrie Irving was limited to 12 points on four-of-16 shooting and Dallas never led after the first quarter.

It was just one of the lopsided victories on a night that saw the Cleveland Cavaliers rout the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks 135-95, the Boston Celtics top the San Antonio Spurs 117-98 and the Toronto Raptors beat the Miami Heat 121-97. However it was no blowout in Atlanta, where Dejounte Murray drilled a buzzer-beating jump shot to lift the Hawks to a 106-104 victory over the Orlando Magic.

At arenas round the league teams observed a moment of silence in memory of Golden State Warriors assistant coach Dejan Milojevic, who died Wednesday in Salt Lake City after suffering a heart attack. The Warriors' scheduled game against the Utah Jazz was postponed over what Golden State coach Steve Kerr called a "shocking and tragic blow" for the team and for the family of the 46-year-old Serbian, who played and coached in Europe where he worked with

a number of future NBA stars, including two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic.

"A lot of NBA players went through his hands and his influence," Toronto's Serbian coach Darko Rajakovic said. "He helped a lot of guys to make the next step in their career," added Rajakovic before his Raptors, fueled by a season-high 28 points from Gary Trent Jr., beat the Heat.

In Los Angeles, LeBron James said the Lakers' victory—which pulled them back to .500 for the season at 21-21 -- owed much to finally having a healthy squad. "The most important for our team is about health," said James, who scored 25 points with eight rebounds and eight assists. "If we get guys to be in uniform and be on the floor, we get the continuity, we could get some minutes together and see what we're about."

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points to lead the Cavaliers, who took full advantage of the absence of Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo to notch a sixth straight victory. The Cavs raced to a 22-2 lead as Antetokounmpo, nursing a bruised right shoulder, watched from the bench—just the second game that the two-time NBA Most Valuable Player has missed this season.

Georges Niang connected on 13 of his 14 shots from the field on the way to a career-high 33 points for Cleveland and Jarrett Allen posted his 10th straight double-double with 21 points and 13 rebounds. Damian Lillard led the Bucks with 17 points, making just seven of his 20 shots from the field. Khris Middleton had an even worse night, making just one of 10 shots on the way to two points.

"Obviously we know what Dame and Khris are capable of but I thought our guys came out and were very pointed, they were physical without fouling," Cavaliers coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "I thought our team defense was elite." — AFP



Kuwait wins four medals at fencing championship

MANAMA: Kuwaiti athletes on Wednesday won four medals at the 2024 Arab juniors fencing championship in Bahrain, pushing the tally

up to 10 diverse medals. Kuwait's U-13 female athlete Badriya Al-Dughishim managed a gold medal, while Khaled Al-Houli took silver in the Epee U-15 boys category. Two bronze medals were obtained by Laura Al-Roumi in the Sabre U-15 girls category, as did Abdul-Aziz Al-Duaj in the U-15 Sabre boys category. Previously, the Kuwaiti junior fencers managed an abstentious achievement with six medals obtained at the Bahraini Capital, Al-Manama's school sports community event. — KUNA

Sri Lanka clinch T20 series after low Zimbabwe total

COLOMBO: Wanindu Hasaranga's bottom-order demolition eased Sri Lanka to a 2-1 series win against Zimbabwe Thursday after the tourists were bowled out in Colombo for 82, their worst-ever T20 total. The home skipper's 4-15 included two scalps on his final two deliveries and Sri Lanka cruised to a nine-wicket victory inside 11 overs.

Pathum Nissanaka (39 not out) and Kusal Mendis (33) added 64 runs in 46 balls before a deceptive turner from left-arm spinner Sean Williams took the latter off-stump for Zimbabwe's sole breakthrough.

Nissanka sealed Sri Lanka's win by launching Sikandar Raza for six over long-on when the scores drew level. Zimbabwe had a creditable start

with 56-3 after the first six overs of power play but struggled to score boundaries once fielding restrictions eased.

Number three batsman Brian Bennett top-scored with 29 off just 12 balls, including four boundaries in the second over, before a Hasaranga catch off Angelo Mathews sent him back. But a quick collapse saw the tourists lose their last six wickets for just 11 runs including three in the final three balls of the innings.

Sri Lanka's fielding stepped up after a shambolic show in the second match handed them a four-wicket defeat and Zimbabwe their first T20 win in the island nation. Hasaranga's 4-15 was backed up with a return to form by ex-skipper Mathews, who shared the new ball and finished with two wickets.

Mathews had conceded 24 runs in the final over of the second match to gift Zimbabwe their come-from-behind win. Thursday marked the first T20 series win for Sri Lanka after a drought stretching back to their Asia Cup win in 2022. They next host Afghanistan for a one-off Test and six white-ball matches. — AFP



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's players pose with the series trophy after winning the third and final Twenty20 international cricket match between Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on January 18, 2024. — AFP