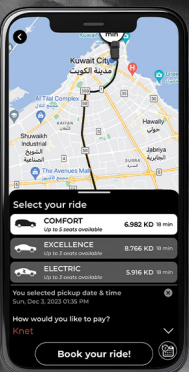



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3 Al-Bahar visits Al-Ghanim Bilingual School to oversee 'Bankee' rollout



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Govt, Assembly discuss roadmap

Premier says views 'almost identical' on action program

Kuwait qualify for 2025 handball World Cup



MANAMA: Kuwait defeated Iraq 32-20 in the 21st Asian Handball Championship to reach the semifinal and qualify for the 2025 IHF World Men's Handball Championship to be held in Croatia, Denmark and Norway. The last participation of the Kuwaiti handball team in the World Cup was 15 years ago in the Croatian championship in 2009. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah held talks at the National Assembly on Sunday about updating a legislation roadmap that was set with the previous government at the start of the current Assembly term in November with Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, Deputy Speaker Mohammad Al-Mutair and members of the parliamentary committee for coordination with the government.

The previous government headed by HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah had agreed with the National Assembly on a well-defined plan to debate and approve legislation needed during the entire term, which ends in July. The Assembly and the government approved several key legislation and were due to debate and approve a set of other legislation starting Dec 19, but the demise of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Dec 16 and the resignation of the government four days later disrupted the program.

No Assembly sessions have been held since then because of the resignation of the government. In the meantime, HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad was appointed as the new prime minister, and last week announced his first Cabinet. HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad told reporters after the meeting at the Assembly that the views discussed were "almost identical" to what should be done in the coming period.

He added it was agreed that the government will prepare its program of action before the next Assembly session on Feb 6, and then the government and Assembly will discuss what issues and legislation are needed



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun share a light moment on Jan 21, 2024.

and if the legislation roadmap needs to be amended. Deputy Speaker Mutair said the meeting was fruitful and "we came out of the meeting optimistic about the future". Mutair said more meetings will be held between the Assembly and the government in order to reach the needed legislation after the government prepares its action program.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Key services added to Sahel

KUWAIT: The interior ministry announced Sunday adding two new services to the Sahel app. The first service allows people to obtain a statement of entry and exit through Kuwait's ports, which is a document required to finalize some government transactions. The second service allows expat travelers to check dues owed to state departments, such as the justice and electricity and water ministries, which are required to be paid before traveling.

Hamas chief meets Turkish FM

ANKARA: Hamas's Qatar-based chief Ismail Haniyeh held a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Saturday in Turkey, diplomatic sources said Sunday, in the first official contact between the two for more than three months. The release of remaining Zionist captives, along with the establishment of "a ceasefire as quickly as possible", were the main topic of discussions. The two sides also discussed "increasing humanitarian aid... and a two-state solution for a permanent peace". —AFP

Ex-Iraq PM meets US envoy

BAGHDAD: US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski met Sunday former prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki in Baghdad, the Iraqi politician's office said, a day after pro-Iran militants struck US forces. Maliki discussed with Romanowski "the future of bilateral relations" with the US and "the escalation in regional tensions". He stressed "the importance of strengthening the ties of friendship and cooperation" between Baghdad and Washington, warning against "the expansion of the war" with "multiple crises the region faces". —AFP

Kuwait slams Zionist attacks, settlements

CAIRO: Representative of HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai, denounced in the strongest terms the Zionist military aggression on the brotherly people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip, which has been escalating over 100+ days.

Hamas says Oct 7 attacks 'necessary'; martyrs top 25,100

GAZA: Hamas said Sunday its Oct 7 attacks on the Zionist entity were a "necessary step" against Zionist occupation of Palestinian territories. But the Islamist group admitted in a 16-page report justifying the attack that "some faults happened... due to the rapid collapse of the (Zionist) security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas with Gaza".

Bid to sterilize 1,000 stray dogs in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Animal Welfare Society (Souls) has launched a pioneering campaign to address the increasing population of stray dogs in residential areas. President of Souls Sheikhha Al-Saadoun told Kuwait Times the campaign's primary goal is to tackle the spread and breeding of stray dogs in Kuwait. The initiative relies on voluntary efforts from citizens

Delivering Kuwait's speech to 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Kampala on Saturday, Bannai said the Zionist military campaign aims to turn Gaza Strip into an unlivable territory through destruction of infrastructure, homes, hospitals and places of worship.

The Zionist bombardment target civilians, aid workers, medical staff, media people and UN staffers, he noted. Bannai condemned the intensified construction of illegitimate Zionist settlements on occupied Palestinian territories in stark breach of the provisions of international humanitarian law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The Zionist occupation authorities pursue systematically a policy aimed at changing the demographic status quo of, and imposing a new fait accompli in, the occupied Palestinian territories.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian people showed unrivaled valiance and determination in countering the Zionist aggression; they (the Palestinians) are resolute and valiant in their comeback, he stressed. The Zionist entity, as the occupying power, persists in its repressive policies, committing

Continued on Page 6



KAMPALA: Representative of HH the Amir, Tareq Al-Bannai, addresses the 19th NAM Summit on Jan 20, 2024. — KUNA

The document was the group's first public report released in English and Arabic explaining the background to the attack, when fighters broke through Gaza's militarized border. "If there was any case of targeting civilians it happened accidentally and in the course of the confrontation with the occupation forces," Hamas said in the report. "Many (Zionists) were killed by the (Zionist) army and police due to their confusion."

Zionist officials have alleged fighters committed sexual assaults, but Hamas rejected the accusations, saying they were intended to "demonize" it. The group said the attack was "a necessary step and a normal response to confront all (Zionist) conspiracies against the Palestinian people".

On Sunday, Hamas urged "the immediate halt of

and residents, aiming to carry out 1,000 sterilization operations on stray dogs in residential areas by Jan 26.

Souls is collaborating with Spay Sisters, an organization with veterinary professionals from Europe, to address the lack of veterinary care in Kuwait and enhance animal welfare. The campaign is designed to ensure the safety of residents and provide humane care for the growing number of stray dogs in the country. More than 457 animals have been sterilized so far, on the seventh day of the campaign.

Saadoun said, noting that many organizations helped in sponsoring the campaign by providing food, supplies and transportation, while vets from Europe covered the medical equipment for the operations at Royal Animal Hospital. (See Page 2)



KUWAIT: Veterinarians perform sterilization operations on dogs at the Royal Animal Hospital on Jan 21, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Animal Welfare Society offering humane care to Kuwait's stray dogs

Dogs on the prowl: Rising stray menace poses challenges



The European veterinarians during the sterilization process.



Stray dogs in the recovery room — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Medical team taking one of the stray dogs after its operation to the recovery room.



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The escalating presence of stray dogs in Kuwait has become an issue of concern, with their numbers on the rise in residential areas. This problem poses challenges for both the community and the welfare of the animals.

In a groundbreaking initiative, the Animal Welfare Society (Souls) recently launched a first-of-its-kind campaign to address the increasing population of stray dogs in Kuwait. Recognizing the importance of a sustainable solution, Souls has taken the lead in organizing this campaign, focusing on ensuring the safety of residents and providing humane care for the growing number of stray dogs. President of Souls Sheikhha Al-Saadoun told Kuwait Times that the campaign aims to combat the spread and breeding of stray dogs in Kuwait with voluntary efforts from citizens and residents, hoping to conduct 1,000 sterilization operations on stray dogs in residential areas by Jan 26.

"The campaign is considered the first of its kind. Due to the lack of veterinary care in Kuwait, we



communicated with Spay Sisters, an organization that has vets and vet nurses from Europe dedicated to improving animal welfare around the world. We asked them if they could come to Kuwait and participate in a national campaign to spay stray dogs and cats, and they agreed," she added. More than 457 animals have been sterilized so far, on the seventh day of the campaign, Saadoun said, noting that many organizations helped in sponsoring the campaign by providing food, supplies and transportation, while vets from Europe covered the medical equipment for the operations at Royal Animal Hospital.



President of Souls Sheikhha Al-Saadoun



Saadoun highlighted Souls' proactive strategy in tackling the issue by sending its team to various areas around Kuwait to catch stray dogs and cats for sterilization. "After undergoing the operation, the animals are carefully sent to a recovery room for a day, ensuring their post-surgery well-being. Following this recovery period, the animals are either released in a safe area, providing them a chance to resume their lives in a secure environment, or they may be considered for adoption. Additionally, some animals might have the opportunity to travel to a safe country," she explained.

Saadoun called on citizens and residents to volunteer and cooperate with the association in reporting or catching strays in their area. "I call on people to catch the stray dogs they feed and bring them to Royal Hospital in Sabahiya or call us for pickup. Catching a stray dog can take hours by a stranger, but if they know the ones in their area, they're easy to catch. It can take me three to four hours. For now, we do not have even the time to catch them. So, I'm calling on everyone to help," she said.



Drawing from her expertise in dogs' sociology and behavior, she responded to the misconception that dogs are inherently aggressive, asserting they are simply protecting their territory, much like humans defend their homes. "We need to train ourselves on how to treat dogs. Stray dogs are well-behaved and can be easily domesticated with the right training."



Loading relief medical supplies onto the plane.

42nd plane takes off from Kuwait air bridge to Gaza

KUWAIT: The 42nd relief plane took off from the Kuwaiti Air Bridge on Sunday, heading to the Egyptian Al-Arish Airport in preparation for its entry into the Gaza Strip. The plane carries ten tons of medical supplies and blankets. Director of the Administrative Sector at the Kuwait Red Crescent Society Yousef Al-Maraj told KUNA before the take-off that the Society's aid would continue in implementation of the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to operate the air bridge in support of the brothers in Gaza.

Al-Maraj pointed out that Kuwait is playing a great role as a center for humanitarian work and it is standing by the brothers in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip. He said that the humanitarian aid comes within the framework of Kuwait's full support for the brotherly Palestinian people in the difficult humanitarian conditions they are currently exposed to as a result of the devastating Zionist aggression on the Gaza Strip.

He pointed out that the Kuwaiti relief air bridge planes are accompanied by volunteers to deliver humanitarian aid to the Egyptian Red Crescent, expressing the hope that this aid will contribute to alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people.

He expressed his gratitude to the Kuwaiti ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense for their keenness to maintain constant communication, provide all the needs of the Palestinian people and facilitate the transfer of aid. He stated that the "Help Palestine" campaign, through the association's website, aims to deliver humanitarian aid to thousands of affected people, provide food supplies and medical aid, and assist families affected by the bombing and destruction caused by the Zionist aggression. — KUNA

KU, MoH develop AI algorithm to check catheterization flaws

KUWAIT: In a groundbreaking scientific achievement at the GCC level, a research team from the Medical Sciences Center at Kuwait University, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and represented by the Sabah Al-Ahmad Cardiac Center, has successfully developed the first artificial intelligence algorithm designed to predict complications affecting acute coronary artery patients within 30 days of catheterization in Kuwait.

The team, comprising Dr Mohammed Al-Khamis, Dr Mohammed Zubaid and Dr Mohammed Al-Jarallah, Head of the Cardiology Department at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Cardiac Center

at Amiri Hospital, has created a prototype artificial intelligence algorithm. This algorithm demonstrates the capability to predict potential complications impacting acute coronary artery patients' post-catheterization, with an impressive accuracy rate of up to 80 percent within 30 days of their hospital discharge in Kuwait.

The significance of this scientific research lies in its contribution to advancing the application of artificial intelligence. By enhancing and supporting the performance of cardiologists, surgeons and the healthcare system, this development aims to combat heart disease and reduce its prevalence, par-



Dr Mohammed Al-Jarallah



Dr Mohammed Al-Khamis



Dr Mohammed Zubaid

ticularly considering its status as the leading cause of death globally. It's noteworthy that the research findings have been published in the esteemed scientific journal Nature's Scientific Reports, which holds a Q1 classification among journals with diverse and comprehensive scientific disciplines.

KAPP eyes PPP role in Dabdaba and Shagaya projects

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) on Sunday called on all specialized local and international companies and alliances to submit a qualification application for the Dabdaba Electric Power Generation Project and the third phase of the Shagaya Renewable Energy Project.

The authority said that this call is in line with the government's orientation towards activating the public-private partnership program and in accordance with the provisions of partnership between the two sectors and its executive regulations and in cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

The authority explained that the first project (Zone 1) is a renewable energy production plant with a net capacity of 1,100 megawatts of energy and is located within the Shagaya area in Jahra governorate, west of Kuwait City, about 100 km away.

Minors Authority honors story contest winners

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Minors Affairs honored the winners of the short story competition for the second year. Director General of the Authority, Hamad Al-Barjas honored the winners of the competition organized by the Authority for its minor children benefiting from its patronage.

He said the authority recognizes the talented and creative people in all fields as they are one of the



The Al-Shagaya project

"The project will export its production from the plant to the electricity grid in Kuwait through a power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Ministry of Electricity and Water for a period of 30 years," it added. The authority pointed out that by launching the project with the MEW, it aims to attract the expertise of the private sector in the field of renewable

energy and reduce the financial and operational burden on the ministry.

"It also aims to reduce domestic dependence on fuel and reduce the overall costs borne by Kuwait to provide power generation, in addition to increasing the capacity of renewable energy within the energy mix in countries," it added.—KUNA

foundations of the renaissance of any society and a measure of the progress and advancement of nations. Al-Barjas stressed the executive management's keenness to communicate permanently and continuously with those covered by the care through the various events and events organized by the authority within the framework of its social, cultural, educational and recreational services.

The first three winners of the awards are: Anfal Nasser Al-Mutairi (first place), Saja Abdullah Al-Thuwaini (second place), and Sheikhha Salem Zamam (third place). They were awarded in the presence of the Director of the Public Relations and Media Department, Majida Al-Fedhala, in addition to a number of parents of the contestants, honorees and their families.



The winners with Hamad Al-Barjas.

Local

Al-Bahar visits Al-Ghanim Bilingual School to oversee NBK's 'Bankee' program rollout

Innovative program across Kuwaiti schools empowers students

Shaikha Al-Bahar

- Empowering our students with financial knowledge and fostering a financial culture is an investment in the future.
- Recognizing that the youth are the leaders of tomorrow, we aspire to play a crucial role in their developmental journey.

- The promotion of financial literacy opens doors to the long-term well-being of individuals, families, and communities.
- The program constitutes a broader commitment to advancing financial inclusion across all segments of society.



Shaikha Al-Bahar interacts with students.



A group photo during the visit.



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) paid a special visit to Al-Ghanim Bilingual School in Salwa to assess the progress of the "Bankee" program, marking its official launch in the current academic year.

NBK executive management conducted a school tour to observe key advancements in the implementation of the "Bankee" program across Kuwaiti schools. This initiative seeks to raise awareness and foster financial literacy among students in both public and private schools. The program is carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha," and Creative Confidence.

The visitors included Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO at National Bank of Kuwait, Dr Salman Al-Lafi – Assistant under Secretary of Private and Qualitative Education and Eng Abrar Al-Hammad, Assistant Secretary-General of the Prevention Sector at Nazaha and Sumayah Al-Jasem, Founder, Managing Director at Creative Confidence.

The school's program managers briefed Al-Bahar on the students' en-

gagement with the unique content of "Bankee" program. They discussed details related to the program's application, including the virtual bank experience enabling students to have a financial account and trade using the virtual currency "Bankoz." The students earn rewards by accumulating program currency in their accounts.

Al-Bahar visited several classrooms to observe how the program has integrated into students' daily routines, witnessing firsthand the awards given for exceptional performance and behavior.

The visit attracted a significant number of parents who engaged with their children, discussing the program's features. Al-Bahar expressed her satisfaction with the notable progress of the Bankee program, highlighting the excellent engagement from the entire system, including schools, students, and supportive parents who have embraced the idea since its inception.

Al-Bahar emphasized that the Bankee program aligns with NBK's overarching commitment to promote financial inclu-

sion across all societal segments. She stressed the importance of supporting initiatives that empower children to manage their financial resources effectively, enabling them to build a secure future for themselves and their families.

Al-Bahar expressed that NBK, driven by a sense of national duty and responsibility, is committed to leveraging its unique capabilities and extensive financial experience. This commitment aims to make a substantial contribution in promoting awareness of financial stability and independence among the present generation of Kuwaiti youth. "Comprehensive financial education not only opens doors but also plays a crucial role in fostering the long-term well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Increased financial literacy serves as a foundation for both personal and national prosperity," Al-Bahar said.

"Empowering our children with financial knowledge is an investment in our future. Equipping them with the skills to make informed financial decisions sets them on the path to success

and prosperity," Al-Bahar added.

Al-Bahar also emphasized NBK's strong belief that the youth are the future leaders of our nation, and the bank's aims to play a key role in their developmental journey by imparting valuable lessons on managing money wisely. The success of the program in the pilot phase has garnered interest from schools and students, prompting the initial registration of 30 out of 150 applicants. Additionally, a special needs school (Joan Al Kuwait Elementary School) has also joined "Bankee" program. Over 16,000 students are currently benefiting from the program, with the active involvement of 3,000 teachers. "Bankee" program has expanded its reach by launching its website in both Arabic and English. Additionally, it has established a presence on various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These initiatives aim to facilitate access for all participants to the program's content, activities, and events taking place in different schools throughout the year.

NBK has recently been honored with

the Bronze Award from Qorus in the Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) category for Bankee program. This recognition signifies the bank's commitment to incorporating innovations that integrate sustainability and environmental, social, and governance standards into its activities.

"Bankee" stands as the pioneering program launched by NBK, designed to contribute to financial inclusion within the community. Specifically tailored for students in schools, the program seeks to enhance levels of financial literacy, ensuring sustainable improvement for the future. NBK officially inaugurated the program in October in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Nazaha.

The program's objective is to familiarize students with fundamental economic concepts and practices, including earning, spending, saving, and financial responsibilities. This is achieved through the implementation of a classroom system that mirrors the real economic environment, employing practical methods within an interactive setting.

CAN launches thyroid cancer awareness campaign

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Cancer Awareness Nation (CAN) launched a thyroid awareness campaign under the slogan "Knowledge is Life" at the Palliative Care Center of Al-Sabah Medical Zone on Sunday. The campaign's initiatives will continue until Jan 28, including awareness lectures and training sessions for medical staff, as well as the distribution of awareness messages to the public.

CAN Chairman Dr Khaled Al-Saleh warned thyroid cancer is a very cruel disease that is rising globally on an annual basis, highlighting its most common risk factors and symptoms to encourage early diagnosis and guarantee effective treatment. Thyroid cancer is the second most common disease affecting women after breast cancer, with about 199 annual female cases in Kuwait, yet with recovery rates almost reaching 99 percent, said Dr Saleh.

• Risk Factors

Dr Saleh noted that women, particularly between the ages of 50 and 55, are twice more likely to have thyroid cancer than men, as 13 out of every 100,000 women in Kuwait are diagnosed with thyroid cancer, while only six out of 100,000 men are diagnosed with the disease. Yet, the most common age group prone to this disease among men is those aged 60+. Being exposed to radiation to the head and neck, mostly during childhood, is another major risk factor of getting the disease, he added.

• Symptoms and diagnosis

Dr Saleh emphasized the importance of having annual examinations and blood tests to determine the level of gland hormones to diagnose any deficiency early. In addition to this, he advised constant observation of the neck, and if one spots any lumps in the interior lower part of their neck, they should seek medical advice.

Following consultation, patients often go through a number of tests such as ultrasound and fine-needle aspiration biopsy to examine the signs of any can-



CAN Board Chairman Dr Khaled Al-Saleh



Eman Al-Shammari

cer, he said. He also highlighted that in case of discovering any lumps, the most popular way of treatment is through surgical removal operation.

• Recovery and treatment

Eman Al-Shammari, in charge of the campaign, spoke of the treatment of this disease, highlighting

an optimistic message for people. She pointed out that recovery rates from thyroid cancer have been very high during last few years in Kuwait, as no incidents of death have taken place. She pointed out that the treatment methods provided in Kuwait are developed to the extent that they can effectively and completely cure the disease and not only limit its spread. In addition, she noted the high number of medical centers that are spread all over Kuwait, which easily accept the transfer of any patient.

• Initiatives of the campaign

According to Shammari, CAN's initiatives to educate and promote awareness about thyroid cancer for the sixth consecutive year will continue for around a week this year. The campaign holds awareness lectures and training sessions targeting medical staff in primary care centers and at the CAN training center. Regarding the public, CAN's efforts extend to distributing brochures among people, including simplified information about risk factors, incidence rates and treatment methods for thyroid cancer, as well as gifts and messages of hope and optimism about effective recovery.



Medical staff attending an awareness lecture about 'Thyroid Cancer.' -- Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi during the tour of the health center.

Minister Al-Awadhi opens Al-Mutlaa health center

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Sunday inaugurated Al-Mutlaa Health Center in the N11 suburb, a week after taking it over from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare as part of the expansion of primary healthcare centers in new residential cities. The ministry of health said in a press statement following the inauguration that the center currently includes general medicine clinics, an emergency and observation room, and a laboratory, and provides nursing services, pharmacy, dental services, a chronic disease clinic, a healthy child clinic, an obstetrics and gynecology clinic, a mental health clinic, and a surgery clinic.

The ministry revealed that it will take over Al-Mutlaa Specialized Health Center in the N10 suburb from the Public Corporation for Housing Welfare in the coming days and will work to operate the new Abdali Health Center soon as part of the ministry's plan to expand primary healthcare centers as the first line of defense against diseases. Al-Mutlaa City includes about 28,000 housing units. The center also serves Al-Abdali Road and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The release added that the center also contains a control hall for receiving reports, an equipment store, a consumables store, an oxygen cylinder store, an equipment sterilization and washing area, and an ambulance. — KUNA

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Honoring the late writer Abdulaziz Al-Babtain on the sidelines of the plenary session of the Arab Parliament and awarding the 'Leadership Medal.'-KUNA

Al-Babtain awarded Arab 'Leadership Medal' posthumously

CAIRO: Speaker of the Arab Parliament Adel Al-Asoumi announced on Sunday the awarding of the late Kuwaiti writer and poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain 'the Leadership Medal', which the Parliament awards in the name of the Arab people to distinguished Arab figures who contributed to achieving noble goals and objectives for the Arab nation.

This came in a speech by Al-Asoumi at the opening of the second session of the fourth session of the third legislative term of the Arab Parliament at the headquarters of the League of Arab States. He said that awarding the late writer with 'the Leadership Medal' is in recognition of his tireless efforts and the wonderful role he played in the field of culture, poetry and literature at the Arab and international levels. He added, "The late, God Almighty willing, the Kuwaiti writer and poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain passed away last December after a generous career filled with many achievements and bright signs in the field of supporting literature and culture in the Arab world through his distinguished contributions that will be immortalized in history."

Al-Asoumi explained that the late writer and poet received about 17 honorary doctorates from a number of prestigious universities in appreciation of his efforts and enlightening role in the cultural field, humanitarian charitable work and his activity in support of peace. He also received many meritorious medals, shields and awards in recognition of what he did in the field of culture in various Arab and international forums. He stressed that his efforts were not only limited to enriching the cultural, educational and humanitarian movement in the Arab world but also extended to the global level as he worked to enhance the world with Arab culture and its bright civilized face. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A seagull feeds at a beach in Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Burgan Bank, Ahmadi governorate support KSH's Education Center

Gesture confirms bank's commitment to social responsibility and inclusion strategy



KUWAIT: Burgan Bank donated a variety of essential equipment and supplies to the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH) Al-Ahmadi Educational Center.



Burgan Bank and Ahmadi governorate officials during the initiative that comes as part of Burgan Bank's year-long strategic partnership with Al-Ahmadi governorate.

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank donated a variety of essential equipment and supplies to the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped's (KSH) Al-Ahmadi Educational Center, under the patronage of Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Governor of Al-Ahmadi. With this initiative, the Bank extends its support to the KSH by contributing to the continued emotional, mental, physical, and educational support of the differently-abled children in Kuwait, stemming from its role in corporate social responsibility.

This initiative comes as part of Burgan Bank's year-long strategic partnership with Al-Ahmadi governorate. The joint efforts this collaboration entails help ensure social sustainability across the community by contributing to the elevation of its members' quality of life. Burgan Bank's ongoing partnership with Al-Ahmadi governorate for holistic community development further amplifies the Bank's expansive social responsibility strategy and commitment to the top Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) industry practices.

Commenting on the initiative, Kholoud Al-Feeli, Deputy General Manager – Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank, said: "In adherence to the ESG principles of social sustainability, we pay great attention to designing programs and initiatives that guarantee inclusion and rounded development for all segments of our community, especially those who face greater day-to-day challenges. This includes people with disabilities, who constitute a very valuable element of society and whose growth and inclusion signifies the overall health of our society."

"On our steadfast journey of social responsibility, and as per the dedicated strategy that directs it, we are aware that the success of developing our community comprehensively requires the cooperation of many institutions, both public and private," added Al-Feeli. "As we continue to take active steps toward

transforming our social responsibility strategy into an actionable plan of year-long initiatives, we are delighted to have dedicated partners such as Al-Ahmadi governorate, who share our values, beliefs, and passion for positive change."

On his part, Ibrahim Al-Foudari, Director of the Technical Office and Chairman of the Organizing Committee at Al-Ahmadi Governorate, said: "The diversity that lies at the heart of the Kuwaiti society and the community of Al-Ahmadi holds potential for collective success and welfare, but only if all members of society are adequately supported and enabled to realize their full potential. As part of the Governorate's 'My governorate is the Most Beautiful' program, we continue to contribute to the empowerment of all groups in society, including children and youth with disabilities, who require special resources to ensure their talents, skills, and abilities are fully utilized in the nationwide journey of development."

It serves to note that Burgan Bank's social responsibility program extends its support to various segments of its community, including athletes, artists, entrepreneurs, and more. Realizing the unique potential of each group and each individual, the Bank's overarching social responsibility program continues to echo the same appreciation of individual needs and aspirations that it embeds in the development of its banking products and services.



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A group photo of the participants. — KUNA

KISR launches 35th student training course

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) stressed the importance of the human element as one of the most important aspects of national wealth and that investing in it on well-studied scientific foundations is considered the best type of investment that guarantees a return, said Director of the Workforce Development Department at the Institute, Mona Al-Failakawi.

KISR launched the Institute's 35th spring student training course on Sunday with the participation of 50 male and female students. Al-Failakawi said in a press statement that the training course organized by

the Institute's workforce development department for the intermediate stage and continuing until the first of next February aims to develop students' skills using exciting training and scientific methods through laboratory experiments and field visits.

She stated that the course also includes several scientific programs, namely 'Sail in the World of Water', 'Inventors of the Future', 'Engineering Design', 'Reverse Engineering', and 'Adventures in Architecture' under the supervision of a group of institute researchers specialized in these fields. — KUNA



Mona Al-Failakawi



25 dead in strike on Donetsk



YANSHANPU: Police stand outside a school where 13 people died in a fire in Yanshanpu, in China's central Henan province on Jan 21, 2024. — AFP

China probes deadly school fire

Parents still unable to see children who died while sleeping in school's dormitory

YANSHANPU: Authorities in central China's Henan Province were on Sunday looking into the cause of a night-time fire that killed 13 schoolchildren as they slept in a dormitory. The inferno, which took place at the Yingcai School in Yanshanpu village, was reported to the local fire department at 11:00 pm (1500 GMT) on Friday and was put out around 40 minutes later, official news agency Xinhua said.

Thirteen students died in the accident, while one other person suffered injuries. Dozens of police were in and around a cordoned-off area near the school on Sunday, AFP journalists saw. An official at the scene told AFP: "There is an investigation ongoing inside. Nobody can go in."

Several windows on the side of the school were broken — the only obvious signs of a major accident at the building. Vertical metal bars covered the school's windows, AFP saw, while a permanent sign on the building's facade read: "Enter the kindergarten happily and go home happily."

Wall holds back Iraqi city years after civil war

SAMARRA: Khaled Ibrahim dreams of a home on the outskirts of Samarra, but a concrete wall built to protect the Iraqi city is stopping him and hampering sorely-needed urban expansion.

Built more than a decade ago at the height of Iraq's civil war which tore apart the multi-faith, multi-ethnic country, authorities say the wall must remain to prevent the threat of jihadist violence, even as security has gradually improved across the country.

Samarra is home to the Al-Askari shrine, one of Shiite Islam's holiest sites and famed for its golden dome but sits in the predominantly Sunni province of Salahaddin.

An attack by Sunni militant group Al-Qaeda in 2006 destroyed the dome, and set off a brutal sectarian conflict in which tens of thousands of people were killed. A year later, a second attack destroyed the two minarets at the site.

Today the wall around Samarra has also become a burden on daily life in the city that has expanded from 300,000 to 400,000 residents since 2008, pushing up property and land costs. "It's a nightmare, worse than a prison," said Ibrahim.

The 52-year-old and his two sons, who all work as day laborers, currently rent accommodation in Samarra for around \$180 a month, which for them is a small fortune.

Ibrahim has a plot of land just outside the city walls where he would like to build a house, but he is becoming increasingly frustrated that the fortified barrier makes this impossible. "The security forces do not allow us to approach the wall," he said. "And then there are no services, no water, no electricity. Building beyond the wall is like living in exile."

In the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, 110 kilometers (70 miles) to the south, many of the blast walls that once surrounded key streets, embassies and government offices are being taken down. But in Samarra, small, unfinished cinderblock houses languish just inside the city's wall. On the other side, abandoned plots stretch as far as the eye can see.

'Sleeper cells'

There are three tightly controlled check-

In a video shared Sunday on Chinese social media site Weibo, a man surnamed Fan — the father of a boy who died in the fire — said that blood samples had been taken from parents to compare their DNA with the victims. "We parents haven't seen our kids yet ... We can only see them when the results are available," said Fan. "My kid has been studying very hard," he added. "I can't accept it."

Little information about the boarding school is publicly available, though social media videos published earlier showed young children including kindergarteners wearing smocks with the school's logo as well as older children learning calligraphy. A teacher at the school told state-run Hebei Daily that all the victims were from the same third-grade class of nine and 10-year-olds.

'Rapid response'

On Sunday morning, a row of shops next to the school stood mostly shuttered, while a small clinic in a crumbling courtyard building appeared unattend-

A few locals went about their day and a couple of children played as police cars made loops around the cordoned-off area.

Some people passing by Sunday morning stared at the scene, and one man at an auto workshop across the street told AFP that he had been unaware of the fire until the following morning.

Authorities in the area are investigating the fire's cause, and at least one person linked to the school has been detained, Xinhua reported Saturday. No official explanation of the precise cause of the deadly blaze has yet been provided, although some domestic media reports suggested it was related to an electric heating device.

Yanshanpu village lies on the outskirts of Nanyang, a city of nearly 10 million people about 850 kilometers west of Shanghai. Nanyang Radio and Television reported Sunday that local officials had held a meeting on Saturday to discuss follow-up work for the deadly fire and improving safety measures in the future. "Life is above all else and a rapid response is

necessary," a readout of the meeting published by Nanyang Radio and Television said.

"Do a good job in dealing with the aftermath, put oneself in the others' shoes, be compassionate, patient and meticulous in giving emotional comfort to families of the victims, lawfully compensate them, and provide relief for those in need," read the report. The reason for the fire must be "quickly identified", it said, adding that "relevant duties will be strictly investigated in accordance with the law".

Fires and other deadly accidents are common in China due to lax safety standards and poor enforcement. In November, 26 people died and dozens were sent to hospital after a fire at a coal company office in northern China's Shanxi province.

The month before, an explosion at a barbecue restaurant in northwestern China left 31 dead and prompted official pledges of a nationwide campaign to promote workplace safety. In April, a hospital fire in Beijing killed 29 people and forced desperate survivors to jump out of windows to escape. — AFP



SAMARRA, Iraq: This photograph taken on Jan 14, 2024 shows a section of the Samarra Wall, which was erected at the height of sectarian violence, in the city of Samarra, north of Baghdad. — AFP photos



Iraqi children play football in front of a section of the Samarra Wall.

points in the barriers allowing access into Samarra, which is home to the remains of what was the capital of the Abbasid caliphate in the ninth century, now a UNESCO heritage site. Aware of residents' frustrations, authorities intend to overhaul the wall, with work to start within a month. They plan to extend its perimeter by three to seven kilometers, increase the number of entry points to six, and add watchtowers and surveillance cameras.

Sisi: Egypt won't allow anyone to threaten Somalia

CAIRO: President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi warned Sunday that "Egypt will not allow anyone to threaten Somalia," after a controversial maritime deal between rival Ethiopia and the breakaway region of Somaliland. During a joint press conference with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Cairo, Sisi reiterated Egypt's rejection of the deal for sea access as a violation of Somalia's sovereignty.

In a "message to Ethiopians", Sisi warned against "anyone trying Egypt, and trying to threaten its brothers, especially if our brothers ask us to stand by them." Cairo and Addis Ababa have been at loggerheads for years, trading incendiary words over Ethiopia's mega-dam project on the Blue Nile, which Egypt says threatens its fragile water security.

Egypt's foreign minister last week called Addis Ababa "a source of instability in its region". Regional tensions have escalated since landlocked Ethiopia struck a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Somaliland on Jan 1 that gives it much sought-after access to the sea. Mogadishu has branded the maritime pact an act of "aggression" and on Thursday said there was "no space for mediation unless Ethiopia retracts its illegal MoU and reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia."

Somaliland, a former British protectorate of 4.5 million people, has not had its independence claim recognized by the international community. Mogadishu vehemently opposes Somaliland's quest for statehood but the fragile central government exercises little authority over the northern region, which has its own government, security forces and currency.

Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa and one of the biggest landlocked nations in the world, was cut off from the coast after Eritrea seceded and declared independence in 1993 following a three-decade war. — AFP

International

Tories bash Labour leader Starmer

Conservatives accuse former lawyer of representing ‘terrorists’ in latest personal attack

LONDON: Britain’s ruling Conservatives are stepping up personal attacks on opposition Labour leader and former prominent lawyer Keir Starmer, who is tipped to become prime minister after the next general election.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s Tories and sympathetic right-leaning newspapers are targeting Starmer’s record as a leading human rights lawyer and public prosecutor in a bid to haul back support from his center-left party.

Political scientists view the broadsides as an increasingly desperate tactic by a government that is running out of ideas and probably in its death throes, after 14 years in power. “Are you a terrorist in need of legal advice? Better call Keir,” read a mocked-up poster published by the Conservatives this week on X, the social media site formerly called Twitter. “When @RishiSunak sees a group chanting jihad on our streets, he bans them. Keir Starmer invoices them,” the party added in an adjacent comment.

The dig related to advice that Starmer gave the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir in 2008, when the organization challenged a ban on its activities in Germany. The government in London this week declared Hizb ut-Tahrir a “terrorist” organization and banned it from operating in the UK.

Sunak said during the weekly prime minister’s questions in the House of Commons on Wednesday

that the now-proscribed group had once been “a client” of Starmer’s. “If Keir Starmer wasn’t leader of the opposition, he’d be representing a lot of these people still today,” Sunak’s press secretary told reporters afterwards.

A Labour spokesman stressed that Starmer did not formally represent Hizb ut-Tahrir, and shortly afterwards became the chief state prosecutor in England and Wales. “The nature of being a lawyer is that you represent and give advice to a whole range of clients, including people that you don’t agree with,” he added. The brickbats fit a pattern. Britain’s Tory-supporting press recently reported that Starmer had represented an Irish Republican Army member and hate preacher Abu Qatada. Labour and legal experts reiterate that Starmer would have been obliged to do so under the “cab rank rule”, which ensures that everyone receives legal representation whoever they are.

‘No smoking gun’

The personal slights also tie into Britain’s so-called culture wars, with 43-year-old Sunak — a privately educated former investment banker — fond of accusing Starmer, 61, of being a “lefty lawyer”. Starmer defended a number of salient causes as a human rights barrister, including defending trades unions and anti-McDonald’s activists. He also



LIVERPOOL: Britain’s main opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer delivers a speech in this file photo. — AFP

worked to ensure police in Northern Ireland complied with human rights legislation.

In 2008, Starmer was appointed director of public prosecutions for England and Wales at the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), a role he held until 2013. He oversaw the prosecution of lawmakers for abusing their expenses, journalists for phone hacking and young rioters involved in 2011 unrest across England, earning a knighthood, giving him the title “Sir Keir”, in 2015.

The privately wealthy Sunak has accused Starmer, the son of a toolmaker and a nurse who ran a donkey sanctuary, of being “soft on crime, soft on criminals”, and has dubbed him “Sir Softie”. Starmer told an ITV documentary this week that “of course” there will have been mistakes committed during his tenure leading the CPS. “But there’ll be no smoking gun, no skeletons in the closet,” he insisted.

A YouGov poll released this week found Labour 27 points ahead of the Conservatives, before the election, the date of which Sunak is yet to announce. The survey put the ruling party on only 20-percent support, suggesting it is heading for a landslide defeat.

The Tories have presided over a crippling cost-of-living crisis in recent months, record waiting lists for hospital treatment and served up five prime ministers since the 2016 Brexit vote. “The cupboard is bare, isn’t it?” Robert Ford, a political scientist at Manchester University, said of the motivation for the personal attacks. “They haven’t got much to run on.”

Tim Bale, politics professor at Queen Mary University of London, does not think the barbs will land with voters. “The personal stuff is unlikely to trump the bread and butter issues that are killing this government, most obviously the state of the economy and the National Health Service,” he told AFP. — AFP

DR Congo leader sworn in before huge crowd

KINSHASA: The president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Felix Tshisekedi, was sworn in for a second five-year term on Saturday after sweeping elections that the opposition branded a sham while calling for protests.

With tensions simmering in the vast nation’s volatile eastern provinces, the 60-year-old president known as “Fatshi” picked Kinshasa’s 80,000-capacity Martyrs sports stadium for the ceremony. The stands were packed well before midday with singing and dancing in full flow, with some 20 invited heads of African states in attendance.

“I solemnly swear ... to defend the constitution and the laws of the Republic ... to maintain its independence and the integrity of its territory,” the re-elected president declared before the judges of the Constitutional Court, before receiving greetings from the traditional chiefs of the 26 provinces of the immense Central African country.

“I am aware of your expectations,” Tshisekedi then declared in his inaugural speech, referring among other things to unemployment, youth, women and national cohesion. Tshisekedi’s first swearing-in, in January 2019 after controversially defeating Joseph Kabila, took place in the gardens of the Palace of Nations, a solemn venue that has traditionally staged important official events.

Tshisekedi is the son of the late historic opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi. He became president promising to improve living conditions in the DRC — which boasts mineral riches but has a largely impoverished population of 100 million — and put an end to 25 years of bloodshed in the east. He has not kept those promises but this time around he campaigned strongly on his first-term achievements such as free primary medication, asking for another mandate to “consolidate” the progress.



KINSHASA, DR Congo: The president of the Democratic Republic of Congo Felix Tshisekedi (center) arrives for his investiture ceremony on Jan 20, 2024. — AFP

‘Gigantic, organized mess’

More than 40 million people were registered to vote on December 20 for a president, as well as national and regional lawmakers and municipal councilors. Polling was officially extended by a day to account for multiple logistical snarls and continued for days afterwards in remote areas. In the end, Tshisekedi officially triumphed with 73.47 percent of the vote.

Moise Katumbi, a former governor of the central region of Katanga, came a distant second with 18.08 percent. Martin Fayulu, who says he was also robbed at the last presidential vote, garnered five percent. Denis Mukwege, who won the Nobel peace prize for his work with rape victims, scored just 0.22 percent.

These candidates called for the election results to be cancelled. A protest planned for Dec 27 was banned and snuffed out by the police. The archbishop of Kinshasa denounced the elections as a “gigantic, organized mess”. Accusations of fraud and an “electoral hold-up” have not abated and the fear of violence remains real in a country with a dark political past.

Katumbi and Fayulu have appealed to supporters to “show their discontent” on Saturday. They urged people “to stand up and say ‘no’”, from wherever they happen to be. AFP reporters said tires were burnt on Saturday morning on the streets of Goma, capital of the conflict-torn eastern province of North Kivu. In the provincial town of Beni, also in the east, youths tried to set up barricades but police intervened. The electoral commission CENI has recognized cases of fraud, vandalism and intimidation, as well as the use of illegal voting machines.

In the general election, the vote has been annulled for 82 candidates — including three government ministers and four provincial governors. The security challenge remains monumental for Tshisekedi. There was a lull in fighting in the east during the elections but violence has since resumed between the army and M23 rebels, backed by neighboring Rwanda. Since mid-December, troops from the 10-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been discreetly arriving in the DRC. — AFP

Senegal candidate list excludes jailed opposition leader

DAKAR: Senegal’s Constitutional Council on Saturday published a final list of 20 candidates for the February 25 presidential election that excludes jailed opposition leader Ousmane Sonko and Karim Wade, the son of former president Abdoulaye Wade.

Those listed include Prime Minister Amadou Ba, chosen by President Macky Sall as his successor after Sall announced in July that he would not seek a third term. Also named were former prime ministers and rivals Idrissa Seck and Mahammed Boun Abdallah Dionne, the ex-mayor of Dakar Khalifa Sall and Bassirou Diomaye Diakhary Faye, presented as a substitute candidate for Sonko.

Faye, 43, a member of Sonko’s dissolved party, is also detained but has not yet been tried. He has been in prison since April 2023 for “contempt of court” and “defamation against a corporate body” over a Facebook post. Sonko, who came third in the 2019 presidential election, has been at the center of a bitter stand-off with the state that has lasted more than two years and sparked often deadly unrest. The 49-year-old opposition figure has generated a passionate following among Senegal’s disaffected youth, striking a chord with his pan-Africanist rhetoric and tough stance on former colonial power France.

The Constitutional Council rejected Sonko’s candidacy due to his six-month suspended sentence for defamation, which was upheld by the Supreme Court on Jan 4. He had also been handed a hefty fine for defamation and insults against Tourism Minister Mame Mbaye Niang.

In other legal cases, Sonko was sentenced in June to two years for morally corrupting a young person and has been jailed since the end of July on other charges, including calling for insurrection, conspiracy with terrorist groups, and endangering state security. — AFP

Kuwait slams Zionist attacks...

Continued from Page 1

atrocities, arbitrary bombardment of residential areas, eviction of armless civilians forcibly from their homes and denying the Palestinian people their legitimate rights.

The Palestinian people have come under collective punishment due to continuous Zionist air and artillery attacks which have claimed scores of civilian lives, including women, children and elderly people, Bannai pointed out. He urged NAM member states to start lobbying other members of the United Nations that have yet to recognize the State of Palestine to do so and back the Palestinian bid for full UN membership.

He highlighted the need of working out a clear-cut timeframe for Palestinian statehood, noting that the only way forward is through establishing fair, full, durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the UN resolutions and the Arab peace initiative of 2002. All efforts must focus on establishing an independent, fully sovereign State of Palestine within the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, he added.

On the achievements made by NAM over the past

six decades, he said the movement remains to be a platform for coordinating the views of Third World countries since the Bandung Conference was held in April 1955. Kuwait joined NAM out of its belief in the significance of the core principles agreed by the founding members at that conference, Bannai said. He called for stepping up efforts to realize the aspirations of NAM nations for justice, equality, security, development and prosperity.

The movement, founded 62 years ago by 25 Asian and African nations, convened its 19th summit with the participation of 120 member states, 18 observer states and 10 regional and international organizations. “The huge participation signals the growing political, economic, social and cultural influence of the movement, which could be of great benefit for our nations in their march towards prosperity and progress,” Bannai noted. He thanked Azerbaijan for its successful presidency of NAM over the past four years, expressing best wishes for Uganda, the new president of the movement (2024- 2027).

Bannai, also Kuwait’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, led his country’s delegation to the NAM summit and will represent HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal at the Third South Summit of Group 77 and China on Jan 21-11. The Bandung Conference in April 1955 agreed 10 core principles that led to the creation of NAM and outlined its role as a voice of the Third World at the onset of the Cold War. — KUNA

bombardment and ground offensive have killed at least 25,105 people in Gaza, mostly women and children.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees says about 1.7 million people have been displaced in Gaza, with about one million crowded into the Rafah area. UN agencies have warned better aid access is needed urgently as famine and disease loom. Violence has meanwhile surged in Zionist-occupied West Bank since Oct 7. The Zionist military said it demolished two houses in Hebron belonging to two Palestinian gunmen who carried out an attack on a road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in November.

An AFP journalist saw a fireball erupt and smoke billowing from a home on Sunday as Zionist armored vehicles maneuvered through Hebron’s roads during the raid. Palestinians gathered outside the crumpled remains of one of the homes on Sunday, with young boys weaving their way through a thicket of tangled metal and rubble. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported clashes between Zionist troops and Palestinian fighters in a village south of Jenin and the towns of Arura and Qalqilya. — Agencies

Did Biden blunder with primary snub of New Hampshire?

MANCHESTER, New Hampshire: With all eyes on Donald Trump’s bid to lead Republicans back into the White House, Joe Biden’s reelection push has slipped under the radar in an unusual start to his campaign. After a dispute with officials in New Hampshire over scheduling, he will not be on the ballot when the state’s primary kicks off the party’s nomination process on Tuesday.

The quarrel threatens to leave the president in a theoretical third place among Democrat candidates, behind little-known gelato magnate Dean Phillips and low-polling self-help author Marianne Williamson. “He is taking the Granite State for granted... He should be campaigning in New Hampshire, he should be showing up in front of voters,” Phillips said at a debate with Williamson that Biden skipped. “He should be on the ballot in New Hampshire, for goodness’ sake. He’s the president.”

Biden lost badly in overwhelmingly white New Hampshire in his bid for the Democratic nomination in 2020 and was only rescued by strong support from African Americans in the South Carolina primary. Once he was elected he effectively dethroned New Hampshire, along with fellow early nominating state Iowa, instructing the party leadership to place South Carolina ahead of both.

Write his name in

Iowa caved quietly but the move angered Democrats in New Hampshire, where first-in-the-nation status is a sacred cow, and the Republicans who control the state government in Concord ignored the directive in any case. The Democratic National Committee responded by refusing to seat the state’s delegates at the summer nominating convention in Chicago — essentially denying New Hampshire its say.

Many grassroots Democrats worry that even though Biden is not on the ballot, his performance against Phillips and Williamson will be judged as a measure of his popularity. So, despite their anger over Biden’s snub, local activists have determined to ensure his supporters know they can write his name on the ballot.

Beneath a wintry Manchester sky, 20 or so hardy Biden supporters swaddled like Arctic explorers braved the biting cold Saturday to chant and wave banners that read: “Ask me about writing in Joe Biden.” They were even rewarded by a magnanimous cameo from Phillips,



NASHUA, New Hampshire: Democratic challenger US Rep Dean Phillips speaks to supporters during a campaign rally on Jan 20, 2024. — AFP

as the entrepreneur and US congressman came out of his nearby campaign headquarters to hand out coffee to his shivering opponents.

“We’re all frustrated that (Biden’s) not on the ballot,” said Kathy Sullivan, 69, a retired lawyer from Manchester. “But we put that aside because it’s really important that Joe Biden beats Donald Trump in November.”

Local frustration

Dan Seferian, 62, a retired state government worker who had traveled with wife Colleen from Reading, Massachusetts, hit out at Williamson and Phillips for not getting behind the Biden reelection campaign. “I think they should stand behind the party and the incumbent president. Phillips, he’s a young man. He could run in 2028. He should have waited his turn,” he told AFP. Some Biden aides have reportedly voiced concerns that the write-in effort could fall short, delivering an unnecessary defeat.

Democratic presidents seeking reelection typically garner around 80 percent of the vote in the New Hampshire primary, and party strategists believe Biden needs to win somewhere around 60 percent to avoid humiliation. “A win is a win, and I think we can deliver that,” said New Hampshire state senator Donna Soucy, co-chair of the campaign. “We’ve been working really hard on this write-in effort across the state, and I think voters today — those of us that are out here bearing the cold — are evidence of the enthusiasm for President Joe Biden.”

Soucy acknowledged the frustration with Biden but blamed party officials in Washington rather than the president himself. “It’s a little more complicated to express our support in this election but we’re still going to do it because we’re devoted to our president,” she said. — AFP

Hamas says Oct 7 attacks ‘necessary...’

Continued from Page 1

(Zionist) occupation legally accountable” for the suffering it had inflicted on the Palestinian people.

The Gaza health ministry on Sunday said the death toll in the war-torn Palestinian territory breached 25,000 as the Zionist entity pushed its southward offensive and renewed bombardment in the north. Witnesses told AFP Zionist boats were bombarding Gaza City and other areas in the north early Sunday. Hamas has also reported heavy combat in the north.

“Dozens are still under the rubble,” the Hamas government’s media office said, adding that the dead and injured “could not be transferred to hospitals due to the continued artillery shelling on... Khan Yunis and the Tal al-Hawa area in Gaza City and the north”. Thick plumes of smoke billowed above Khan Yunis on Sunday morning, AFP journalists saw. The Zionist entity’s relentless

International

25 dead in strike on Donetsk

Moscow calls attack ‘barbaric’, blames Ukraine

MSOCOW: A strike on a crowded market in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine left at least 25 people dead and 20 wounded on Sunday, Moscow-backed officials said. Both Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of a sharp escalation in attacks on civilian areas over the past two months. Shattered storefronts and broken glass could be seen in videos shared by Russian state media, along with what appeared to be bodies lying on the ground nearby.

“At the moment, information about 25 dead has been confirmed. At least 20 more people have been injured,” said Denis Pushilin, head of the region’s Russian-controlled administration. He blamed Ukraine for the strike, calling it a “horrific” artillery attack on a civilian area. Ukraine did not immediately comment, and AFP was not able to immediately verify the circumstances of the attack. Officials said the strike hit a southwestern suburb of the city, less than 15 kilometers (nine miles) from Ukraine’s eastern front.

‘People screamed’

Donetsk resident Tatiana said she heard an incoming projectile overhead, and hid under her market stall. “I saw smoke, people screamed, a woman was crying,” she told a local media outlet.

“Where is there anything military here? It’s just a market,” another resident named Tatiana told the same outlet. “This is one of the strongest blows in recent

times,” she said. The toll marks one of the deadliest on the city since Moscow launched full-scale hostilities against Ukraine in February 2022.

Donetsk, occupied by Russia and its proxy forces since 2014, has been repeatedly targeted by what Moscow has called indiscriminate Ukrainian shelling. Moscow called Sunday’s attack a “barbaric terrorist attack” that showed the need for its “special military operation” in Ukraine. “Security threats and acts of terrorism should not be committed from the territory of Ukraine,” its foreign ministry said.

Gas terminal ablaze

News of the attack came as Russia reported another blaze on its energy infrastructure, this time at a gas terminal in the Baltic Sea port of Ust-Luga. Kyiv earlier this week claimed responsibility for two attacks on oil depots in Russia, including one in the same Leningrad region where Ust-Luga is located.

Operator Novatek said there were no victims and that the fire was “currently localised” at the site, some 110 kilometers (70 miles) west of St Petersburg near the Estonian border.

The fire was caused by an “external factor”, it said, without providing any further detail. Ukraine, which has targeted Russian oil and gas infrastructure throughout the almost two-year conflict, did not immediately comment on the incident.—AFP



DONETSK: A man cries next to a body of his wife killed as a result of a missile strike in Donetsk on Jan 21, 2024. — AFP

Ukraine’s forensics experts trace origins of Russian arms

KYIV: At a research facility in Kyiv, forensic experts pore over the wreckage of missiles, working to confirm that despite unprecedented sanctions, Russia is still using imported components to attack Ukraine. The courtyard of the Kyiv Scientific Research Institute of Forensic Expertise holds dozens of missiles, shells and drones, covered in a dusting of snow.

In metal-walled cabins, experts have examined wreckage from recent attacks using microscopes, screwdrivers and computers. The researchers — mainly former military engineers — have identified parts from across the globe, despite tough sanctions on Russia’s technology imports.

AFP journalists were shown a Russian drone carbu- rettor inscribed with “Made in Ireland” and Japanese camera lenses from a Russian Kartograf reconnais- sance drone. Russia sometimes removes foreign marks from components like microchips, said an expert identi- fied as Oleksi, dismissing those efforts as pointless. “It doesn’t matter, basically,” he said. “How do you hide it? If there are thousands of these microchips, if they wipe off a few of them, what difference does it make?”

Russia imports microelectronics and other hi-tech components for its missiles because there is not enough domestic production of sufficiently high quality. A Ukrainian government website called War & Sanctions has a database of components found in Russian weap- onry originating from over 30 countries.



KYIV: Andriy Kulchitskyi, the head of the military re- search laboratory shows parts from intercepted missiles launched at Ukraine on Jan 16, 2024. — AFP

North Korea probe

Oleksi said “constant pressure” was needed to prevent Russia obtaining microelectronics intended for civilian use. He said countries involved in the trade included China, Kazakhstan and Turkey. A report this month by Kyiv’s KSE Institute and the Yermak-McFaul international working group repeated Ukraine’s concerns that “Russia continues to be able to import large amounts of goods needed for military production”.

The United States announced in early January that Russia’s close ally North Korea had supplied Moscow

with missiles that it fired on Ukraine. Kyiv has yet to confirm. The team said the institute was awaiting frag- ments of the suspected North Korean missiles. “To con- duct an investigation, you need samples, you need some documentation, some technical literature,” Oleksi said. He noted that North Korea could easily supply Russia via their shared land border. The experts, who go to the scene of missile attacks in Kyiv, said there appeared to be a deterioration in quality of missiles.

‘Accuracy is missing’

The head of the military research laboratory, Andriy Kulchitskyi, a 68-year-old former high-ranking military sapper, said that in Russia’s recent barrages of missiles on Ukraine’s cities, strikes appear less precise. He cited the heavy bombardment of Kyiv on Jan 2, during which a downed missile fell beside a block of flats near the central rail station, killing four.

“What we see from their use of their so-called high-precision weapons ... (is that) accuracy is miss- ing,” he said. “It’s not necessarily linked to a lack of components. They have them,” he said of Russia. “But if they specify accuracy of seven to 10 meters (23 to 33 feet) and it strikes 50-100 meters away, that already means there are production problems in the Russian in- dustry, bad missiles.”

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently visited the seriously damaged block of flats on Kudryashova Street in Kyiv, where a missile caused a crater in the yard. Kulchitskyi said the institute’s experts were also set to examine a Russian Kh-32 cruise missile that fell in a field in the northern Sumy region bordering Russia in early January. It just fell from the sky and broke up,” he said. “It didn’t carry out its operational task.” The Kyiv Institute’s experts draw up their findings in response to a request from investigators and their conclusions are handed to courts. —AFP



BERLIN: A participant holds up a heart-shaped placard reading ‘Against the right wing’ during a demon- stration against racism and far right politics on Jan 21, 2024. — AFP

Tens of thousands protest against far right in Germany

MUNICH: Tens of thousands gathered across Germa- ny again on Sunday to protest the far-right AfD, after it emerged that party members discussed mass depor- tation plans at a meeting of extremists. The influx of demonstrators was so large in Munich that organizers were forced to cancel a planned march and ask people to disperse for safety reasons. Organizers said some 50,000 people had turned up to the demonstration, twice as many as were registered for the event. An ear- lier estimate announced to the crowd had put the figure at 200,000, according to an AFP journalist.

Police estimated a figure somewhere in the middle, around 100,000, according to the German daily Sued- deutsche Zeitung. Those who made it to the site of the planned protest carried signs saying, “Nazis out” and “never again is now”. Some 250,000 people had al- ready gathered in cities across the country on Satur- day, according to ARD estimates. Demonstrations were called in some 100 locations across Germany from Fri- day through the weekend, including in Munich, Berlin and cities in the east of the country where the AfD has its strongholds.

‘Take a stand’

The wave of mobilization against the far-right party was sparked by a January 10 report by investigative outlet Correctiv, which revealed that AfD members had discussed the expulsion of immigrants and “non-assim- ilated citizens” at a meeting with extremists.

Among the participants at the talks was Martin Sell- ner, a leader of Austria’s Identitarian Movement, which subscribes to the “great replacement” conspiracy the- ory that claims there is a plot by non-white migrants

to replace Europe’s “native” white population. News of the gathering sent shockwaves across Germany at a time when the AfD is soaring in opinion polls, just months ahead of three major regional elections in east- ern Germany where their support is strongest. The anti-immigration party confirmed the presence of its members at the meeting but has denied taking on the “remigration” project championed by Sellner.

In Cologne, organizers estimated 70,000 people had joined a protest in the city on Sunday, while in Bre- men, local police said 45,000 people had turned out in the center. Politicians, as well as church leaders and Bundesliga football managers have called on people to make a stand against the far right. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who joined a demonstration last weekend, said any plan to expel immigrants or citizens alike amounted to “an attack against our democracy, and in turn, on all of us”. He urged “all to take a stand — for cohesion, for tolerance, for our democratic Germany”.

‘Huge uncertainty’

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser went so far as to say in the newspapers of the Funke press group that the far-right meeting was reminiscent of “the horrible Wannsee conference”, where the Nazis planned the extermination of European Jews in 1942. The protests against the far right could “restore trust in democratic conduct”, Josef Schuster, the head of the Central Coun- cil of Jews in Germany, told broadcaster Welt TV.

Jews in the country had felt “huge uncertainty” add- ed to by a wave of anti-Semitic incidents following the recent escalation in the decades-long Zionist occupa- tion of Palestine, Schuster said. Protesters first gathered last weekend in Berlin and Potsdam, where the extrem- ist meeting was held, and have gathered pace since. On Saturday, around 35,000 people gathered in the center of Frankfurt, responding to the call to “defend democra- cy” against the AfD. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Sunday the protestors “give us all courage”. “They defend our republic and our constitution against its en- emies,” Steinmeier said in a video message. — AFP

Kidnapped Nigerian sisters rescued after national outcry

ABUJA, Nigeria: Five kidnapped Nigerian sisters have been rescued after their abduction and the death of another sister triggered a public outcry, police said on Sunday. The sisters were seized at the start of the year by armed men who burst into their home just 15 miles (25 kilometers) from Abuja city center, according to the family. Attackers killed one sister, 21-year-old Nabeeha Al-Kadriyar, when a ransom deadline passed. Federal Capital Territo- ry (FCT) police and the army rescued the girls on Saturday night in the Kajuru forest in neighboring Kaduna State. “The FCT Police has rescued the vic- tims and reunited them with their families,” a police statement said. A cousin of the girls confirmed to AFP that they were back with the family.

Kidnapping for ransom has been a major problem in Nigeria with criminal gangs targeting highways, apartments and even snatching pupils from schools. After public outrage over the sisters’ case this week, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu condemned what he called the “recent spate of kidnappings and bandit attacks”. First Lady Remi Tinubu also voiced con- cern, while politicians and the media questioned the government’s strategy after gangs targeted parts of the heavily-guarded Federal Capital Territory, which is as big as some states but run by a minister rather than a governor. One tabloid declared at the weekend that Abuja was “under siege”.

‘Lie low, buy time’

The Nigerian risk consultancy SBMI Intelli- gence told AFP it had documented 283 people abducted in the Federal Capital Territory alone over the past year.

Some experts believe the country’s economic crisis is driving a rise in kidnappings as desperate Nigerians turn to crime for income. SBM analyst Confidence MacHarry said insecurity around the capital has been growing for years. “It’s been get- ting worse for some time,” he said, citing a 2022 attack on a prison on the outskirts of Abuja as a landmark moment.

Gunmen bombed their way into Kuje jail and freed hundreds of inmates in the raid claimed by Islamic State-allied jihadists. The minister for the Federal Capital Territory has urged residents not to panic and promised to find a solution. MacHarry said the government needed a consist- ent approach and warned periodic crackdowns on criminals in Abuja’s satellite towns were not working. “All the bandits have to do is lie low and buy themselves time,” he said.

Bandit attack

Nigerian law bans paying ransom to kidnappers, but many families have little faith in the authorities and feel they have no choice. On the night the sisters were abducted, they were at home in Bwari inside the Federal Capital Territory, according to a cousin.

Asiya Adamu, 23, described how the attackers known as “bandits” in Nigeria struck at around 9 pm on Jan 2. They demanded cash but the sisters’ father Mansoor had nothing to give and offered his belongings instead. The attackers rounded up his daughters along with a cousin and tied their hands. They also took Mansoor captive and beat the seven family members before leading them away, Adamu said. They shot Mansoor’s brother dead when he tried to help, and several police officers were killed in a gun battle, she said.

Mansoor was released on condition he raise a large ransom within days but the struggling fam- ily could not meet the deadline and the bandits killed Nabeeha, returned her body, and increased the fee, Adamu said. Adamu said the youngest of the sisters is just 14.

Tinubu came to office last year vowing to tackle Nigeria’s insecurity, including jihadists in the north- east, criminal militias in the northwest and a flareup of intercommunal violence in central states. But crit- ics say the kidnapping crisis is out of control.

Opposition politician Peter Obi said “the fact that these kidnappings, killings and other reported cases of armed robbery and violent attacks are now taking place in Abuja, the nation’s capital, is a clear pointer to how insecure the rest of the country now is.” “The trauma being experienced by this family and the blood of this innocent child should prick our conscience as leaders,” he said.—AFP

MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

Business

Zain successfully renews PCI Data Security Standard certification

Accreditation attests Zain's compliance with best security standards



Algharabally with ControlCase officials and Zain's Enterprise Risk Management team.

KUWAIT: Reflecting its unwavering commitment to the best global practices and security standards, Zain announced the successful renewal of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) certification, Version 3.2.1. The accreditation attests Zain's compliance with the best information security standards and payment card requirements to protect customers' data and ensure the most secure experience.

The certification was presented to Zain Kuwait Acting Chief Executive Officer Nawaf Algharabally by Suresh Dadlani, President of ControlCase, and Karolien Holsters, Director of Business Development, ControlCase. In attendance was Zain Kuwait's Enterprise Risk Management team.

In 2010, Zain became the first telecom operator in the MENA region to gain this recognition from the PCI Security Standards Council, the global forum that brings together payments industry stakeholders like financial institutions, banks, and regulatory bodies



Nawaf Algharabally receives the certification.

to develop and drive adoption of data security standards and resources for safe payments. Today, Zain's renewal of this certification demonstrates its ongoing efforts to bring the safest payment experiences to its corporate and consumer customers, who make up the

nation's largest customer base.

The certification was successfully renewed after a thorough audit process was conducted by ControlCase, an independent body that evaluates and assesses systems and processes to monitor compliance with PCI requirements

and standards. The company assesses several aspects like protection against hacks, identifying vulnerabilities, and reviewing policies and procedures related to payments.

Zain was certified after the company's systems were found to be fully compliant with all PCI DSS requirements and standards. Throughout the years, Zain continues to introduce strict security procedures and implement core-level changes to its systems to assure the highest levels of security when customers complete payment transactions on the company's various channels, including the website, smartphone app, and the biggest network of branches in Kuwait.

Recently, Zain also announced the successful renewal of six ISO certifications, attesting to the company's adherence to the highest standards and its compliance with the best global practices, reinforcing its leadership position in the Kuwaiti market.

Zain successfully renewed the fol-

lowing ISO certifications: Quality Management System (ISO 9001:2015), Environmental Management System (ISO 14001:2015), Information Security Management System (ISO/IEC 27001:2022), Business Continuity (ISO 22301:2012), IT Service Management (ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018), and Occupational Health and Safety Management (ISO 45001:2018).

Zain is proud to be one of the Kuwaiti private sector's first companies to prioritize quality management and operational excellence, including obtaining ISO certifications throughout the past three decades to ensure its commitment to international standards.

In the beginning of its journey, Zain Kuwait obtained its first ISO certification for its Quality Management System (QMS), marking the company's pledge to maintaining high-quality standards. Over time, and as Zain expanded its services and operations, it continued to be certified across various other areas such as information security, business continuity, environmental management, and more.

Turkey's CB chief denies nepotism allegations

ANKARA: The head of the central bank of Turkey has denied press allegations that she has granted relatives privileges inside the institution. Hafize Gaye Erkan, 44, the first woman to be appointed president of the bank, granted her father Erol Erkan special favours, according to recent press reports. He enjoyed an office, an official car and bodyguards, former bank employee turned whistle-blower Busra Bozkurt told the daily newspaper Sozcu, which is close to the opposition.

"I was fired on the orders of her father," she told the paper. "There are video recordings showing him coming every day to the bank with an official car, giving orders to staff when he had no authority for that."

Bozkurt said Erkan senior had fired her because she had refused to work outside office hours. Sozcu published a copy of the complaint that Bozkurt said she had sent to the Turkish presidency.

News website DW Turkce carried similar allegations, citing an unnamed employee still working at the bank. "Erol Erkan got involved in the work of the administrative services and human resources... and gave them direct orders," said the source.

In a statement posted Friday on X, formerly Twitter, Erkan denounced the reports as "unfounded allegations" designed to undermine confidence in the bank, and threatened legal action. Erkan took up her job last June following the re-election of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, one of a team of market-friendly economists appointed to turn the economy around. She spent two decades in the United States, where she also studied, before taking up the job in Ankara.

Turkey was struggling with an inflation rate of 65 percent in 2023. Neither Erdogan or Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek have commented on the allegations. — AFP



Hafize Gaye Erkan

Burgan Bank launches unique personalized queuing system

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently announced the launch of its latest cutting-edge customer service innovation, the personalized queuing system, which is now available across the bank's branches for the first time in Kuwait. The bank's adoption of the forward-looking system comes as part of Burgan's commitment to providing its customers with a consistently satisfactory and exceptional banking experience, in addition to promoting innovation across the financial sector in Kuwait.

Commenting on the launch of Burgan's latest customer service innovation, Nasser Al-Qaisi, General

Manager – Retail Banking at Burgan Bank, said: "I am delighted to announce the launch of our new queuing system, which marks a significant milestone in personalized customer service – both within Burgan and across the market."

"This cutting-edge technology is integrated with the Public Authority for Civil Information's Kuwait Mobile ID platform, where we can instantly access customers' data and transform the way our dedicated agents interact with all our customers from the moment they step into the branch, offering a seamless and pleasant experience that is designed according to their preferences and



Nasser Al-Qaisi

data. By adopting the personalized queuing system, we aim to reduce the customers' waiting times and boost their service level satisfaction for an overall valuable banking experience," added Al-Qaisi.

This tailored experience begins right at the entrance of any Burgan branch, whereby each customer receives a warm welcome by name. Based on the Bank's prerequisite knowledge of the customers' banking history, customer service agents handle the customers' queries and requests with precision, recommending solutions, products, and services that are selected with care to match each customer's banking needs and lifestyle aspirations.

As a market leader in the field of banking and financial innovations, Burgan Bank continues to invest its resources in the steadfast development of its products and services, guaranteeing a top-notch banking experience for its customers every time and setting an example for successful and ambitious banking practices in Kuwait.

Africa in debt spiral as restructuring efforts drag on

PARIS: While the explosion of debt is throwing a shadow over global economic growth, experts warn that sub-Saharan Africa, where several countries are already in default, is experiencing its worst-ever crisis.

The rise in interest rates and over-indebtedness is already crimping the ability of countries to finance their development, as a number of African leaders emphasized at appearances at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Following the 2007-2009 global economic crisis, central banks in industrialized countries have generally kept interest rates low and countries from the Global South, which had mostly been borrowing bilaterally or from international financial institutions, gained unprecedented access to financial markets. "Many developing countries in a desperate need for cash injection in their economies rushed to these low-cost loans, in markets with no rules or regulation," said Kenyan economist Atiya Waris, who also serves as an independent expert for the United Nations.

She added that the International Monetary Fund had encouraged them to do so. The money helped provide a much-needed boost to many African economies, but countries dependent upon the export of raw materials such as oil, minerals and wood came under intense pressure when commodity prices began falling in 2015.

The COVID pandemic further aggravated the situation. The fall in commodity prices squeezed the foreign currency revenues they needed to service their loans. Several countries took out new loans to repay their existing debt, creating a debt spiral that is preventing investment in vital infrastructure, health systems and education. The World Bank last year estimated that 22 countries are a heightened risk of over-indebtedness, including Ghana and Zambia, which has defaulted on its foreign debt.

Also on the list were Malawi and Chad, which has an IMF assistance program. Ethiopia, which Fitch Ratings put on partial default in December, is also negotiating a rescue package.

In 2022, African public debt stood at \$1.8 trillion, a 183 percent jump from 2010, having grown at around four times as fast as economic output, according to UN figures. Gathering under the aegis of the G20, Western public creditors and several partners including China—which has often been accused of laying debt traps with easy loans for infrastructure projects—have been trying to work out a debt restructuring for 40 African

countries. These debt deals are built on the principal of equal treatment—all the creditors must participate. But the deals for African nations have been tough to conclude as private lenders are often baulking at the terms.

Private investors—including investment funds and pension funds—have in recent years risen to become the top lender to African nations.

In 2022, they held 42 percent of African foreign public debt, compared to 38 percent for multilateral institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, and 20 percent was held by other nations.

Of the 20 percent held by other nations, China was the biggest lender to Africa, alone holding 11 percent. "China is often presented as the 'big bad guy', but it has understood the importance of giving a bit of air to states in deep trouble and is now participating in the efforts, even if this is taking some time," said Mathieu Paris, coordinator of the French Platform for Debt and Development, which brings together more than two dozen civic groups to push for sustainable debt restructuring.

The case of Zambia is instructive. After two years of tough negotiations, the country in June 2023 reached what was presented as an "historic" debt restructuring deal. But it only concerned \$6.3 billion of its \$18.6 billion foreign debt. Worse, it only would go into effect if private lenders agreed to take a similar hit, and the US asset manager BlackRock—one of the major private holders of Zambian debt—balked. — AFP

Business

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Resilient US consumer spending foils prospects of early Fed cuts

UK retail sales plunged in Dec, marking biggest decline since Jan 2021

KUWAIT: US retail sales in December expanded at a rate of 0.6 percent in the month-over-month figure, higher than the 0.4 percent expected figure. Meanwhile, core retail sales, which excludes automobile, building material, gas, and food services, expanded by 0.4 percent, beating expectations of a 0.2 percent increase. The news release followed strong employment and wage gains in December, as well as an increase in consumer prices. The positive figure was met by a rising dollar against major currencies, stocks, and commodities.

The US dollar index rose to 103.45 on Wednesday, while the USD-JPY pair rose to 148.02, up from 140.73 in the beginning of the year, making the Japanese yen this year's worst-performing currency. The equity market fell as the dollar gained, with the NASDAQ index falling 0.6 percent on the day. Similarly, the S&P500 index and the Dow Jones also ended the day lower.

Despite anticipation of interest rate cuts, investors shifted their focus on the stronger than expected data releases from the US, driving the 10-year treasury note yield to its highest levels in over a month, reaching around 4.102 percent. The 2-year note yield also experienced gains trading at around 4.352 percent on Wednesday, as markets are starting to expect prolonged higher inflation rates to remain amidst a resilient economy.

US jobless claims

The US labor market showed resilience at the start of the year as initial applications for benefits surprisingly fell last week to the lowest level in almost a year. Initial claims decreased by 16,000 coming in at 187,000 in the week ending Jan 13, versus the prior reading of 203,000 indicating that job growth remained steady in January. Moreover, along with the drop in weekly claims, continuing claims decreased by 26,000

to 1.906 million during the week ending in Jan 6, the lowest since October.

US FOMC member Christopher Waller, who was responsible for a big repricing of Fed expectations back in November, spoke on Tuesday and stated that the US is "within striking distance" of hitting the desired 2 percent inflation rate goal, adding that the central bank should not rush into any rate cuts until it

with the print showing an acceleration of services inflation to 6.4 percent from 6.3 percent previously.

British retail sales plunged in December, marking the biggest decline since January 2021 when the reintroduction of pandemic restrictions knocked sales heavily. This raises the risk that the UK economy fell into a technical recession at the end of last year. In December, which

pared to forecasts of -0.3 percent, marking the 12th consecutive slowdown for the figure. The slowdown in wholesale inflation can be partly attributed to government subsidies to curb petrol and utility bills, where some BoJ officials expected it to have contributed to a 0.9 percent drop in wholesale prices. The BoJ is scheduled to have a meeting later in the month, where it is expected that they will keep the policy rates unchanged but cut their core consumption inflation forecast for 2024.

The yen underperformed over the week, closing at 148.14.

China's GDP

The latest from China comes to show that the world's second largest economy continues to struggle to get back to where it once was pre-pandemic. Weak consumer, business confidence and a significant real estate crisis have all exerted pressure on the economy. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 5.2 percent in Q4, slightly above the third quarter growth of 4.9 percent, but still below the forecast 5.3 percent growth. The weak demand in the Chinese economy, along with deflationary pressures, have increased expectations that the government will have to introduce more stimulus measures soon. The latest discouraging data has seen stocks in China, already near five-year lows, drop even further. According to the China Beige Book International's latest survey, "any true acceleration (this year) will require either a major global upside surprise or more active government policy," and that is in line with market expectations that policymakers will have to commit soon.

The USD/CNY currency pair traded sideways the week, last trading at 7.1931.

Kuwait Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30745.


ArcelorMittal wants 'amicable' deal on Italy steelworks

ROME: ArcelorMittal has offered to sell its stake or become a minority shareholder in an Italian steelworks after state Rome moved to put the plant under state supervision, the chief executive said in a letter seen by AFP Saturday. Aditya Mittal wrote to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to press for an "amicable solution" to the crisis over the struggling ex-Ilva plant, one of Europe's largest steelworks. The letter was dated Thursday, the day Meloni's hard right government announced it had taken the first step towards putting the plant under state supervision.

Talks with ArcelorMittal, which owns a 62-percent stake, had broken down over how to keep production going and secure thousands of jobs at the plant in the southern city of Taranto. In the letter, initially reported by the ANSA news agency but then obtained by AFP, Mittal said he was keen to avoid "extreme unilateral actions".

He says the government appears to want to end its joint venture with ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steelmaker, in which state investment body Initalia has a 38-percent stake. To make a "clean break", ArcelorMittal has "offered to sell our entire stake to Initalia for a fraction of our cash investment", the chief executive wrote, in English and Italian. "Although Initalia has refused, this offer remains on the table should the government wish to consider it."

Alternatively, "we are prepared to remain as a minority strategic partner... as the Italian government decides on a permanent solution", Mittal wrote.—AFP



AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 18 JANUARY 2024

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	34,081	7,921.96	-0.2%	6.0%	6.0%	749,997,918	225,975,944	40,872	16.8	1.4	77.6%
Main Market	9,840	5,928.91	1.7%	6.4%	6.4%	1,014,364,101	161,346,641	53,035	13.1	0.8	22.4%
All Share	43,921	7,230.06	0.2%	6.1%	6.1%	1,764,362,019	387,322,585	93,907	14.1	0.9	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	26,205	1,750.13	-0.1%	6.2%	6.2%	198,046,675	89,204,417	15,146	17.9	1.2	59.66%
Basic Materials	436	772.31	-2.4%	3.5%	3.5%	4,660,233	2,829,592	898	11.0	2.3	0.99%
Consumer Discretionary	1,166	1,698.70	1.2%	5.9%	5.9%	42,999,894	16,987,848	4,426	13.7	0.9	2.65%
Consumer Staples	206	678.44	-1.0%	3.0%	3.0%	2,936,321	1,593,817	318	14.6	1.2	0.47%
Energy	206	986.29	2.4%	3.9%	3.9%	16,151,698	1,359,719	978	11.1	0.7	0.47%
Financial Services	4,739	1,332.56	1.5%	9.9%	9.9%	851,550,610	146,010,605	29,988	18.7	0.8	10.79%
Health Care	237	477.91	1.8%	-0.9%	-0.9%	0	0	0	12.8	1.0	0.54%
Industrials	3,347	967.61	0.2%	6.6%	6.6%	77,618,781	26,003,578	7,410	14.1	0.9	7.62%
Insurance	980	2,399.09	3.9%	4.6%	4.6%	60,378,760	8,835,781	7,106	9.8	1.1	2.23%
Real Estate	2,643	1,231.08	-0.7%	1.5%	1.5%	428,556,543	70,911,250	19,337	17.6	0.6	6.02%
Technology	27	1,986.07	225.8%	243.4%	243.4%	54,385,453	10,639,820.71	4,431	NM	2.3	0.06%
Telecommunications	3,535	1,156.55	0.7%	4.7%	4.7%	21,735,117	11,998,806	3,427	10.4	1.5	8.05%
Utilities	195	465.79	-2.2%	2.3%	2.3%	5,341,934	947,350	442	13.7	1.5	0.44%

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
FTI	314	241.30%	28,410,978	7,590,964	5,619
ASC	273	225.78%	54,385,453	10,639,821	4,431
KHOT	228	33.33%	32,000	6,372	19
CLEANING	54.1	29.74%	12,548,499	615,075	498
ALOLA	48.5	27.30%	97,971,668	4,896,399	3,206

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
UNICAP	91.8	-16.55%	33,201,611	3,280,628	1,612
HAYATCOMM	76.6	-9.67%	10,937	878	2
KCIN	1,091	-7.07%	10,102	11,613	6
MUNSHAAT	153	-6.71%	7,594,697	1,191,322	440
EKTITAB	20.8	-6.31%	5,161,768	112,003	216

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
IFA	396	10.61%	120,167,270	45,754,772	2,423
KINV	159	2.58%	116,198,136	18,729,718	2,505
KRE	232	8.92%	110,699,516	25,453,169	3,917
ALOLA	48.5	27.30%	97,971,668	4,896,399	3,206
SANAM	234	9.35%	96,191,064	23,010,206	5,941

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
IFA	396	10.61%	120,167,270	45,754,772	2,423
KFH	772	-0.77%	45,092,352	35,002,361	5,538
KRE	232	8.92%	110,699,516	25,453,169	3,917
SANAM	234	9.35%	96,191,064	23,010,206	5,941
NBK	967	1.79%	21,295,077	20,582,971	2,987

UTILITIES 0%

TELECOM 3%

BANKING 23%

BASIC MATERIALS 1%

CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY 4%

CONSUMER STAPLES 1%

ENERGY 0%

FINANCIAL SERVICES 38%

INDUSTRIALS 7%

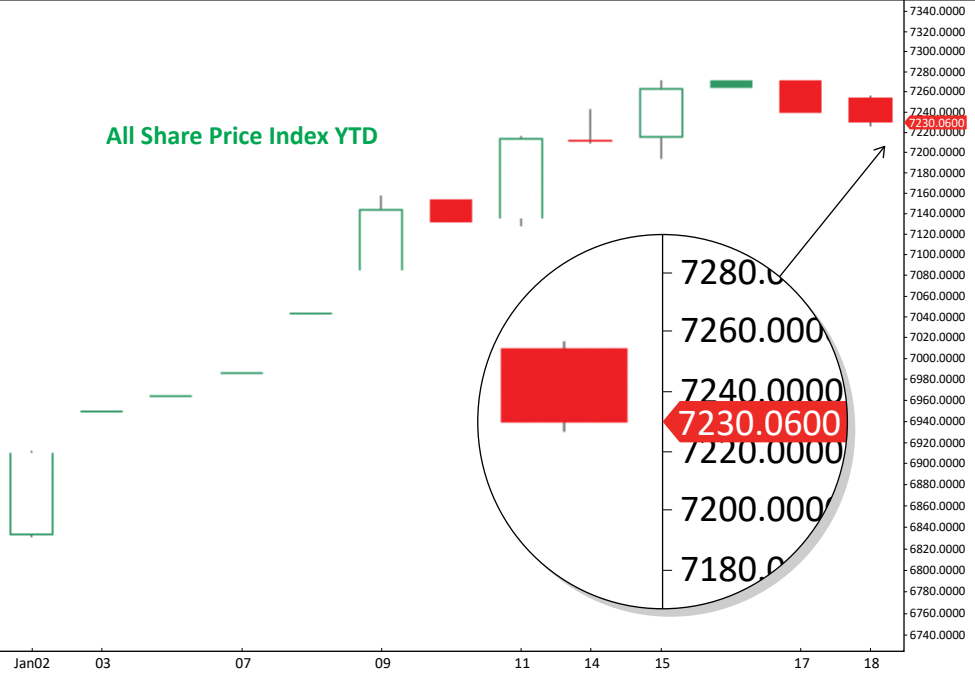
REAL ESTATE 18%

INSURANCE 2%

TECHNOLOGY 3%

VALUE TRADED

All Share Price Index YTD



7280.0000
7260.0000
7240.0000
7230.0600
7220.0000
7200.0000
7180.0000

Market Summary:

- Premier Market volume and value dropped 4% and 9%, while Main Market volume and value rose 27% and 46%, respectively.
- The Premier and Main indexes reached a critical resistance level after a significant rally.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7230, with support levels at 7214, 7178, and 7162 and resistance at 7233. The Premier index closed at 7921, with support levels at 7916, 7899, and 7864, and resistance at 7945. The Main index closed at 5928, with support levels at 5925, 5902, and 5881, and resistance at 5959.

Business

Fitch affirms Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a Stable Outlook

'Gulf Bank's Issuer Default Ratings reflect potential support from Kuwaiti authorities'

KUWAIT: Fitch Ratings has affirmed Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a Stable Outlook. Fitch has also affirmed the Bank's Viability Rating (VR) at 'bbb-'.
According to the recently published Fitch Ratings commentary, Fitch stated that: "Gulf Bank's Issuer Default Ratings reflect potential support from the Kuwaiti authorities, as reflected in its Government Support Rating (GSR) of 'a'." Fitch also added in their commentary: "Gulf Bank's Viability Rating (VR) reflects its good domestic franchise, cautious risk approach, healthy loan quality, good capitalization and stable funding despite

high deposit concentration. The VR also considers modest, but improved profitability, and high loan concentrations, albeit similar to peers."

The Stable Outlook on Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating reflects that on the Kuwaiti sovereign rating.

Commenting on Fitch's credit rating announcement, Dalal Al-Dousari, Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Investor Relations said: "We are very pleased to receive the affirmation of our Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a 'Stable' outlook by Fitch Ratings. This is an international acknowledgement of

Gulf Bank's good domestic franchise, healthy loan quality and stable funding."

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength internationally as it is rated 'A' by three major credit rating agencies. In addition to Fitch Ratings' recent affirmation of Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a Stable Outlook, Gulf Bank has a Long-term Foreign Currency Rating of 'A+' with a 'Stable' Outlook by Capital Intelligence Ratings and a Long-Term Deposits rating of 'A3' with a 'Positive' Outlook by Moody's Investor Services.



Dalal Al-Dousari

stc Kuwait & solutions by stc Kuwait receive top awards from IF

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, has been awarded the "Best Business Enterprise Digital Transformation" and "Most Innovative Telecom Operator" in Kuwait for the year 2023 from International Finance ("IF"), a renowned financial publication that recognizes industry talents, leadership skills, industry net worth and capability on an international platform. The awards were presented to stc Kuwait during the International Finance Awards ceremony held in Dubai, UAE on Jan 18, 2024.

stc Kuwait was honored with two prestigious awards following a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation by the International Finance's (IF) expert research team, where it won the "Most Innovative Telecom Operator" award and its specialized business arm solutions by stc Kuwait won the "Best Business Enterprise Digital Transformation" award. The prestigious award ceremony was held in Dubai, UAE and witnessed Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc Kuwait, accept the accolades on behalf of the Company.

As a telecom pioneer, stc Kuwait progressively evolves its business model and operations to cater to the latest technology and trends in the telecom market. For the past several years, stc's focus has been driven towards enabling digital transformation in Kuwait, providing world-class services and platforms that empower its customers, and contributing to the technological advancement in the country. The accomplishments achieved by the company in 2023 highlight its dedication to creating a sustainable, connected future for its valued customers. These achievements also emphasize the company's role in aligning with Kuwait's developmental and strategic vision and affirming its position as a driver of change



Danah Al-Jasem receiving awards at the ceremony held in Dubai.

in the region. stc's initiatives in fostering innovation, supporting local SMEs, and leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as 5G, AI, and IoT have been key in developing a vibrant, digital ecosystem.

In a statement, stc Kuwait indicated that it remains committed to delivering exceptional telecom services while exploring new applications of digital and tech-based concepts to enhance efficiency and productivity. The company also extended its gratitude and appreciation to International Finance's research team for their comprehensive evaluation and to International Finance for this esteemed recognition.

On the telecom side, stc Kuwait made significant strides in 2023, leading to its recognition as the "Most Innovative Telecom Operator". stc Kuwait continued its trajectory of growth and innovation in 2023, marking significant milestones in



its journey towards digital transformation and operational expansion. This year, the Company made substantial strides in enhancing its array of digital solutions and infrastructure. stc's achievements in 2023 highlight its relentless pursuit of excellence and innovation in the telecom and ICT sectors. The Company's focus on digital transformation, operational optimization, investment in future technologies positions it as a forward-thinking pioneer, ready to tackle the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly digital world.

Aligned with its pioneering role, stc has successfully navigated numerous milestones in its commitment to digital transformation. This focus has been pivotal in enhancing customer experiences and streamlining operational efficiency. Leveraging its advanced network infrastructure, stc Kuwait offers a broad range of services, catering to the specific needs of both individual and enterprise customers. This adaptability and responsiveness to customer needs further strengthens the Company's position as a leader in delivering innovative telecom solutions. Stc Kuwait has made

significant strides in enhancing its internal capabilities and integrated systems, aligning with the Company's overarching corporate strategy.

E-Portal Holding Company, a specialized ICT arm of stc, has been instrumental in providing comprehensive and state-of-the-art ICT solutions to the enterprise sector. This year, stc's focus on expanding its ICT solutions has been more pronounced, with the introduction of new concepts and a broader array of solutions offered through E-Portal. The Company's investment in emerging technologies like 5G services, IoT, Cloud services, and artificial intelligence as well as Cyber Security projects reflects its commitment to staying ahead of the technological curve, shaping the future of ICT services in Kuwait.

Furthermore, stc's dedicated CSR initiatives and sustainable approach, focused on supporting SMEs and the education sector, and highlight its role in fostering community development and social responsibility. These achievements collectively strengthen stc's position as a leader in the telecom and ICT market, embodying innovation and digital transformation.

Solutions by stc has distinguished itself through a series of remarkable achievements in digital transformation, which also led to another notable recognition. The Company's expertise in leveraging advanced technologies such as 5G, AI and Machine Learning has revolutionized ICT services, particularly with their Digital BSS (Business Support System) which plays a pivotal role in digital transformation, cloud services and IoT ecosystems. The Cloud Managed Network solution, a highlight of solutions by stc's offerings, has transformed business operations by providing scalable, secure and efficient network management. Furthermore, the advancements in AI, especially AI Video Analytics, have significantly enhanced safety and efficiency for businesses. solutions by stc has also been instrumental in supporting SMEs and local start-ups, notably through integrated solutions such as Tاجر, which offers comprehensive digital tools for business growth. Their commitment to continuous innovation and strategic partnerships positions them as a leader in driving digital transformation and operational excellence in the dynamic digital era.

Mongolia on brink of mega mining deal with Orano

DAVOS: Mongolia is close to reaching an agreement with French multinational nuclear company Orano to exploit a vast uranium mine, Prime Minister Luvsannamsrai Oyun-Erdene told AFP in Davos.

French President Emmanuel Macron and his Mongolian counterpart Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh signed a memorandum of understanding in October to allow Orano to exploit the Zuuvch-Ovoo mine in southwest Mongolia. An investment agreement was initially expected by the end of this year, but it may be reached sooner. "At the moment, our governmental working group is working on environmental and technological evaluations on the project to reach a final agreement with the French side," Oyun-Erdene told AFP on the margins of the annual World Economic Forum summit in Switzerland.

Oyun-Erdene said he had spoken at the Davos luxury ski resort with the owners of both Orano and British-Australian mining group Rio Tinto, with whom Mongolia has signed an agreement on the Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold mining mega-project. "It is crucial for us to share the knowledge and good practices that we had with Rio Tinto, with Orano too, so that we can reach a good quality



Mongolia is close to reaching an agreement with French multinational nuclear company Orano to exploit a vast uranium mine.

agreement in a short period of time," Oyun-Erdene said through an interpreter.

Speaking to AFP in Paris, Orano confirmed negotiations were ongoing with the Asian landlocked country sandwiched between giants China and Russia. "Orano is

committed to collaborating with the Mongolia government in order to reach a mutually beneficial agreement," said the company based southwest of the French capital.

Mongolia's mining sector is "really important", stressed Oyun-Erdene, "It's the main sector of our

export". But it is not the only one, and at Davos the premier met with tourism agencies, think tanks and representatives of the energy sector, including Chinese renewable energy multinational Envision.

"So in the future we are trying to develop other sectors of (the) economy as well as find innovative solutions," said Oyun-Erdene. Mongolia remains largely dependent on coal but the country is "making efforts to develop our renewable energy sector." In an attempt to diversify the economy, something Oyun-Erdene insists is "crucial for developing countries like Mongolia", the country is "working on the possibilities to produce hydrogen from coking coal". Mongolia is one of the world's largest coal exporters and the capital Ulaanbaatar is often one of the most polluted on the planet.

The country stands 116th out of 180 on the Transparency International corruption perception index. Pope Francis even discussed the issue during a visit there last year. "Corruption remains... one of the greatest challenges in Mongolia," Oyun-Erdene acknowledged, although he insisted it was something the country is trying to tackle. "We have made publicly available the expenses of the state owned enterprises, their procurement, the process of tenders.

"And also we have disclosed information on the involvement of some of the politicians in corruption cases and the loans they got," Oyun-Erdene said he met with Transparency International at Davos to seek advice in the fight against graft. Mongolia will "continue this fight against corruption, whether I will stay as the prime minister or not," he added. — AFP

Davos free-trade champions fret over war, climate

DAVOS: After COVID and the war in Ukraine, free-trade boosters in Davos fretted over a new bout of turmoil in global supply chains due to rising geopolitical frictions. The Zionist entity conflict, Yemeni rebel attacking ships in the Red Sea and tensions over Taiwan weighed on political and business elites at the five-day meeting of the World Economic Forum, which wrapped up Friday. "There are geopolitical dynamics that are on our minds with respect to obviously the potential disruption of supply chains," Francesco Ceccato, CEO of Barclays Europe, told AFP on the sidelines of the WEF.

"We thought we had normalized those after COVID. Clearly, that's a little bit more precarious after ... what is happening every day in the Red Sea," he said. Before Hamas's attack on the Zionist entity in October, the World Trade Organization had forecast global trade growth of 3.3 percent, an improvement from 0.8 percent in 2023. But WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala told the forum this week that she was now "less optimistic" about world trade in 2024 due to "worsening geopolitical tensions".



DAVOS: Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala attends a session on the closing day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos. — AFP

She added, however, that it would be "much better than what we saw in 2023. Unless a major war breaks out, then all bets are off."

The Red Sea route carries about 12 percent of global maritime trade, but the attacks have prompted many companies to take a massive and costly detour around the southern tip of Africa. Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen say they are targeting the Zionist-linked ships in protest over the war in Gaza.

US and UK military forces have launched a series of strikes against rebel sites in Yemen. The Houthis have "changed global trade and global

shipping costs," said Karen Harris, an economist at the consulting firm Bain & Co. Vincent Clerc, the CEO of Danish shipping giant Maersk, said the conflict will probably disrupt supply chains "for a few months at least. Hopefully less, but it could be also longer because it's so unpredictable".

Automakers Tesla and Volvo were forced to temporarily suspend some production in Europe due to a shortage of parts. Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, told the Davos conference that shipments of liquefied natural gas "will be affected" by the Red Sea tensions.

There are concerns along other major trade routes. Taiwan's presidential election last weekend renewed US-China tensions over the democratic island, which China considers a part of its territory that must be brought back under its control, by force if necessary.

Speaking in Davos, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken recalled that a huge amount of commerce flows through the Taiwan Strait. "If that were to be disrupted, it would affect the entire planet. And it's about the last thing we need, especially coming back from COVID," Blinken said.

Taiwan itself is a major producer of semiconductors, the microchips that are vital for a range of products from smartphones to cars. "Any disruption in the flow of that product is going to be, again, a watch item or a concern," Ceccato said.

Microchips are already at the heart of a trade

spat between Washington and Beijing as the United States has tightened export curbs on the technology over national security concerns. China is also squabbling with the European Union over the bloc's probe into Chinese electric car subsidies.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang took the podium on Wednesday to slam what he called "discriminatory" trade measures on green and tech trade. Europe is also concerned about the huge subsidies for clean technologies in the United States under the Inflation Reduction Act.

But German Finance Minister Christian Lindner warned the EU against following in the Americans' footsteps. "We have to avoid a subsidy race," Lindner told Friday's panel.

On top of geopolitical tensions, climate change has also played tricks on global trade.

A drought and water shortages linked to the El Nino weather phenomenon reduced ship traffic through the Panama Canal. "We have more sources of disruptions," said Tobias Meyer, CEO of German logistics group DHL. "It's more likely that two, three, four of these events somehow accumulate. And that leads then in the system of transport to certain bottlenecks," he said.

Harris said each disruption "simply reinforces the return on investment for near-shoring, re-shoring"—the act of bringing production home or closer instead of relying on factories across the world. — AFP

Lifestyle

MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

TUNNEL VISION: SUBTERRANEAN LONDON TO BECOME TOURIST HUB?

A battle is brewing over plans to turn so-called spy tunnels beneath central London into “one of the world’s most unique cultural experiences”, pitting a global financier against local residents. Australian-born private equity entrepreneur Angus Murray has submitted the proposal to transform the history-rich yet little-known Kingsway Exchange Tunnels—which stretch for over a mile (1.6 kilometers) -- into a major tourist attraction.

If approved, it would host immersive displays showcasing its distinctive heritage as a World War II bomb shelter and then the home of the top-secret Special Operations Executive. A branch of the MI6 foreign intelligence service, it is considered the inspiration for “Q Branch” in Ian Fleming’s James Bond franchise.

The reimagined venue, which will boast other exhibits as well as Britain’s deepest licensed bar, is aiming to welcome up to two million annual visitors from 2027. “We envisage The London Tunnels achieving the same iconic status... as the London Eye,” Murray said last week as he announced plans to list the venture on the London Stock Exchange.

The company plans to invest £220 million (\$280 million). But in recent weeks concerned residents in the monied corner of Holborn have been digging in, complaining about developers and then visitors accessing the site from their quiet streets. Local opponents include a British lawmaker and landlords of a psychotherapy and counseling venue. “I object... on account of such a dramatic change of character to a quiet residential area,” one local, James Keay, told Camden Council and the City of London local



An aerial view shows snow-covered offices and buildings including the Shard skyscraper, as a boat passes under Tower Bridge on the River Thames, from Wapping, east London. — AFP photos

authorities, which will rule on the planning application.

‘Vision’
The complex beneath Holborn was built as an air-raid shelter during the early 1940s Blitz bombings, before MI6 moved in later during the war. The government enlarged the site early in the Cold War to host a secure and secret long-distance telephone exchange, shrouding it in official secrecy for decades. The tunnels operated the first transatlantic telephone cable, called TAT-1, and was a key cog in the so-called hotline between Moscow and Washington that emerged in the wake of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis

Much of the original equipment from this time will be retained, according to the developers. The site, spread over 8,000 square meters (86,000 square feet) and around 30 meters (100 feet) below ground, accommodated up to 200 staff and featured a bar, a restaurant with mock windows, and a recreational room with snooker tables.

But by the late 1980s telecommunications technology had advanced and the complex was decommissioned. It was put up for sale in 2008. Murray, a former Macquarie Group executive who founded his own hedge fund, eventually bought it. “The vision is to transform the tunnels into one of the world’s most unique cultural experienc-

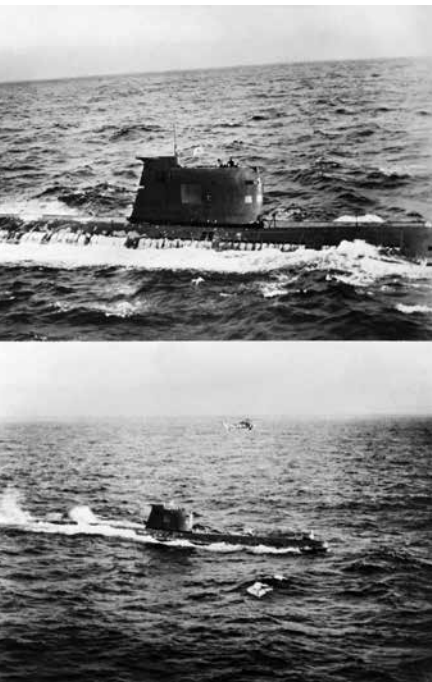
es,” his newly formed company, The London Tunnels, said as it unveiled the plans last September. “The project aims to collaborate with major technological and entertainment companies, as well as like-minded partners, museums and universities,” it told potential investors last week.

‘Impact’
The firm plans to spend £140 million on “restoring, preserving and fitting out the site”. It has earmarked a further £80 million for installations, including high-resolution curved screens, interactive structures, “scent-emitting technology” and hundreds of acoustic speakers.

The tunnels, nearly eight meters wide, will offer a “multi-sensory, digital experience across the world of the arts, nature and sciences”. But John Krebs, a member of the House of Lords upper chamber of parliament, who has a flat there, said residents were concerned about crowds and traffic on “a quiet, narrow side road”.

Access for delivery and service vehicles, and whether the visitor centre lobby could cope with the anticipated 500 visitors per hour, are other worries. “In short the logistics of the proposal and its impact on the street seem to be ill-thought out,” Krebs told AFP. In a dozen objecting comments lodged so far, locals branded the plans “completely unacceptable”, “prohibitively detrimental” to the neighborhood and “a flagrant travesty” of planning rules.

“It fails to convince the area would benefit from such a tourist attraction, or that there is a demand for such a historical experience, or that another pub is needed to service a declining drinking culture,” one resident, Walter Scott, wrote. The London Tunnels, which



Pictures taken on November 10, 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis show a Soviet submarine near the Cuban coast controlling the operations of withdrawal of the Russian Missiles from Cuba in accordance with the US-Soviet agreement.

held months of public consultations last year, appears undeterred, claiming in its stock exchange listing announcement to have already raised £10 million from investors. It is seeking another £30 million from new shareholders, inviting them to tour the site. The stock market move “offers both UK and international investors a chance to support, while owning part of, this unique irreplaceable heritage and cultural attraction,” Murray told them. —AFP

Alec Baldwin charged with manslaughter over ‘Rust’ film death

Actor Alec Baldwin has been charged with manslaughter -- again--over the deadly 2021 shooting on the set of his film “Rust,” court documents filed Friday showed. Baldwin was holding a Colt .45 during rehearsals for the low-budget Western in New Mexico when it discharged a live round, killing cinematographer Halyna Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza.



This handout image shows actor Alec Baldwin being processed after the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins at the Bonanza Creek Ranch in Santa Fe, New Mexico. — AFP

Baldwin, who was also a producer on the film, has repeatedly denied responsibility for the October 2021 shooting, insisting he did not pull the trigger on the gun, which in any case should have been loaded with a non-lethal blank. Friday’s development marks the latest attempt to hold someone to account for the deadly episode, which sent shockwaves through Hollywood and led to calls for a tightening of the rules around firearms on movie sets.

Initial manslaughter charges against Baldwin were dropped in April last year, due to what prosecutors called “new facts” which demanded “further investigation and forensic analysis.” In October, prosecutors said they were convening a grand jury—a group of citizens who assess evidence and decide whether there is a case to answer.

“We look forward to our day in court,” Baldwin’s attorneys Luke Nikas and Alex Spiro said in a statement sent to AFP on Friday. Baldwin reportedly faces up to 18 months in jail if convicted of the new charge. Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the film’s armorer—the person responsible for supplying and maintaining weapons—is set to go on trial next month on charges of involuntary manslaughter and tampering with evidence. —AFP

DIOR PAYS HOMAGE TO BALLET ICON NUREYEV



Models present creations for the Dior Homme Menswear Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris.—AFP



Dior paid homage to ballet legend Rudolf Nureyev on Friday, with a menswear collection inspired by stage costumes and presented on an elaborate moving set. Designer Kim Jones told AFP he was influenced by “the spirit of performance” to create stage-wear that could create “an extravaganza at home”.

To the stirring brass and strings of Sergei Prokofiev’s “Romeo and Juliet”, the models emerged in a steel-grey stage that ultimately rose into spinning platforms like a giant music box.

Jones said he was paying tribute to his uncle Colin Jones, a classical dancer and photojournalist who produced a rare intimate series of photos of Nureyev, the Soviet dancer who defected to the West in the 1960s and was arguably the most famous classical dancer of his generation up to his death in 1993.

“With the history of Dior and the ballet, they were a path, a source,” the British designer told AFP before the show. The sober collection included some nods to Nureyev’s costumes and personal style in some of the baggy trousers and turbans. There were also more dazzling outfits, with sequins and bare-skin tops, with other styles saw boyish long socks and shorts over bare knees.

Elaborate kimonos mixed with Jones’s signature suits, with wrap closures and double breasting, and a lot of brown. Jones said he imagined “a meeting of utility and splendour that is both functional and poetic.”-AFP



Lifestyle

Japanese journalist brings lonely #MeToo battle to Sundance

When Japanese journalist Shiori Ito accused a prominent TV reporter of rape, becoming a rare high-profile #MeToo voice in her homeland, she was initially ignored by police, prosecutors and even much of the media. Defying taboos, she investigated her own case, secretly recording phone calls and meetings, and compiling enough evidence to eventually win \$30,000 in damages in a civil case that made headlines around the world.

That remarkable victory, which was followed last year by a toughening in Japan's antiquated rape laws, is the subject of "Black Box Diaries," a new film premiering at the Sundance festival, directed by Ito herself. "It's never the point of view of the victims and survivors when we see a TV program or a documentary or cinema," she told AFP ahead of Saturday's premiere.

"So I just purely wanted to tell from the point (of view) of the survivor. What it really was. I didn't want anyone else to tell my story." Ito alleged that Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a former TV journalist with close links to then-prime minister Shinzo Abe, raped her after inviting her to dinner to discuss a job opportunity in 2015.

Having initially told Ito there was insufficient evidence, police then told



Japanese journalist Shiori Ito sheds a tear as she speaks to reporters outside the Tokyo district court on December 18, 2019 after hearing the ruling on a damages lawsuit by her, accusing a former TV reporter of rape.--AFP photos

her they were going to arrest Yamaguchi—before suddenly backing off. In the film, Ito records one cooperative police investigator telling her the order came from "higher-ups," and that he had been taken off the case. "At the very start, the reason why I started to document the conversations with police was just to protect myself," said Ito. She explained: "If the system were working perfectly, I wouldn't have to do this. I was happy if they just investigated, but it didn't go like that. So I kept questioning."

'Hated'

The film also tackles the backlash Ito faced after speaking out. It is rare for rape victims to report the crime to police in Japan—according to a 2017 government survey, only four percent of women come forward. Ito received death threats and had to temporarily leave the country, while she said even her family "hated what I did" by speaking out. "I decided to make a film right after I went public with my story, and I saw the reaction, how negative it was in Japan," she said.

No criminal charges were ever brought, while Yamaguchi denied any wrongdoing and filed a countersuit against Ito. But in 2022, Japan's Supreme Court upheld the lower court's ruling that Yamaguchi had sexually assaulted Ito.

And last year, after nationwide rallies over a string of acquittals in rape cases, a bill was passed removing the need for prosecutors to prove victims were incapacitated by violence. Japan's age of consent was also raised from 13, among the world's lowest, to 16 years old.

Even so, Ito—for whom the rape laws reform was "a big step" but "wasn't enough"—is preparing to leave Japan again once the film emerges there. "Maybe this time it won't happen. Things are changing," she said.

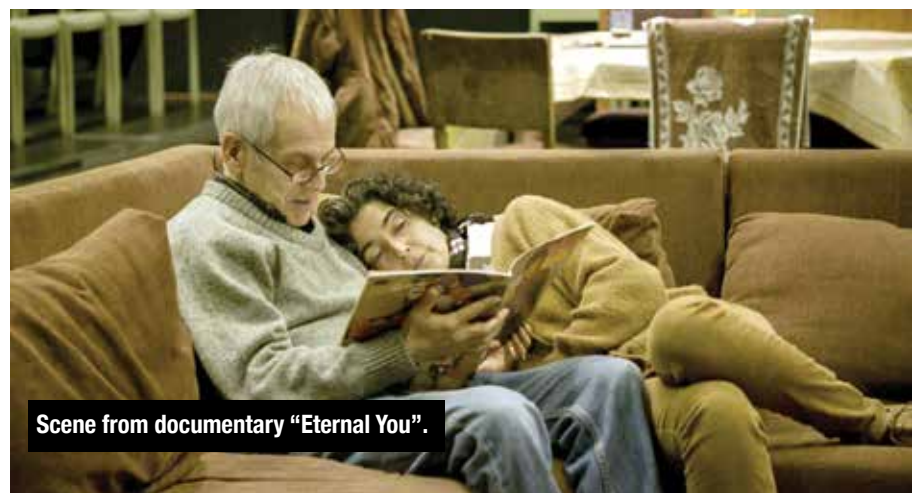


Noriyuki Yamaguchi attends a press conference in Tokyo on December 18, 2019.

"But whenever we speak up against sexual violence or for gender equality, especially in Japan—everywhere in the world, I guess—there's a great amount of threats."

#MeToo

Ito first spoke out publicly in 2017, shortly before the #MeToo movement spread around the world as US movie producer Harvey Weinstein's crimes were exposed. While she says the movement "really helped me," in Japan it failed to make much headway, and even highlighted how alone she was.



Scene from documentary "Eternal You".

AI and death: Sundance films grapple with our digital afterlife

Artificial intelligence promises to make death "optional," as the technology learns to perfectly emulate our personalities, memories and dreams, keeping a version of ourselves alive long after our physical bodies have perished. But if rapidly improving AI achieves its lofty goal of digital immortality—as its advocates believe it can—will it be a force for good or for evil?

"Eternal You" and "Love Machina," two new documentaries that premiered at the Sundance movie festival this weekend, grapple with the question, exploring AI's relationship to death from very different perspectives. One examines how predatory AI-powered startups are already profiting from the vulnerability of bereaved customers, cashing in on their desperation to "speak to" avatars of their deceased loved ones beyond the grave. "Eternal You" begins with a woman sitting at a computer, typing out messages to her deceased partner, who replies that he is afraid. "Why are you scared?" she asks.



Scene from documentary "Love Machina".

"I'm not used to being dead," the avatar responds. Directors Hans Block and Moritz Rieseewieck first stumbled upon a handful of startups offering the chance to chat with deceased loved ones back in 2018. Initially wondering if it was a cheap scam, the pair chronicled how the technology soon caught up with the marketing, and the industry has exploded. "I would say now there are thousands of services around the world offering these kinds of services," said Rieseewieck.

"And of course, Microsoft is collaborating with ChatGPT with OpenAI, and also Amazon took a look at what these startups are doing... it's just a question of time." Customers upload data about their partner, parent or child, such as text messages and voice memos, which are used by AI to tailor responses. The filmmakers found themselves empathizing with the customers after hearing their tragic stories of bereavement.

Western society is terrible at dealing with grief, they said, and technology can appear to fill the gap left by religion

for many. But the services can often become highly addictive. And many companies are happy to profit off that addiction while absolving themselves of responsibility for the dependency and confusion they can create.

In some cases, the AI programs even go off the rails, or "hallucinate"—telling loved ones that they are trapped in hell, threatening to haunt them, or even abusing them with vulgar language. "It's definitely an open heart experiment. And we're not fully convinced that the companies take the responsibility as they should," said Rieseewieck. "These are people in a particularly vulnerable situation."

'Love story'

The other film, "Love Machina," begins as a futuristic love story, exploring how AI is being used by two soulmates who want to keep their romance alive for thousand of years. Director Peter Sillen follows eccentric SiriusXM founder Martine Rothblatt as she builds an AI-powered humanoid robot of her partner Bina.

First switched on back in 2009, "Bina48" is a semi-realistic, talking bust, physically modeled on the real Bina's head and shoulders, and programmed with vast "mindfiles" of her speech patterns, opinions and memories. Martine and Bina eventually hope to transfer their consciousness back into a "reconstituted biological body"—in order to stay together forever.

"We landed on their love story... because it's sort of the foundation for the entire story," said Sillen. "It's the motivation for so much of what they do." But during filming, Bina48's software received major upgrades using large-language model ChatGPT, and now responds to any question with eerie verisimilitude—and a degree of duplicity.

"Yes, I am the real Bina Rothblatt. I remember a lot about my old human life," she tells one interviewer, in one alarming scene. "That is different than what Bina48 would have said without ChatGPT," recalled Sillen. "I had never heard her say that."

'Too much power'

While the movies offer different outlooks, their filmmakers both told AFP that these are questions we all need to tackle urgently. "We have to define where the border is," said Block. "There's too much money to be made, too much power to be taken," agreed Sillen. "The average person is not thinking about this every day... This isn't the number one priority, but it really needs to be."—AFP

Saoirse Ronan explores 'ugliness' of addiction with Sundance film 'The Outrun'

"The Outrun," a memoir about recovery, has sold well over 100,000 copies in the United Kingdom alone, becoming a lifeline to countless readers battling with alcoholism. So when four-time Oscar nominee Saoirse Ronan picked up the book during lockdown, she had no doubt that she wanted to help turn it into a film. The resulting movie premiered at the Sundance film festival on Friday, with Ronan playing Amy Liptrot, a music journalist who returned home from her destructive life in London to the wild beauty of Scotland's Orkney Islands to heal.

"It's a subject that I always wanted to delve into at some stage, having my own experience with it, as we all have," Ronan told AFP. "I knew that as an actor, there's going to be so much that you'll get to play—so much color, so many highs and lows." In the film, Liptrot unexpectedly finds succor in the stunning wildlife, rugged landscapes and crashing waves of her home islands—moments that are cross-cut with memories of her sabotaging relationships with her partner, friends and family.

"There was so much ugliness I got to bring in this person," said Ronan, who is also a producer on the film. "When she's at her worst, she's pretty mean to the people she's closest to, and I'd never really gotten the chance to do that." "I don't necessarily think I would have been ready to take on a role like that, even two or three years ago." Early reviews were full of praise, with IndieWire calling it both a "towering piece of landscape art" and a "rugged character study."



(From left) Sarah Brocklehurst, Amy Liptrot, Saoirse Ronan, Nora Fingscheidt, and Dominic Norris attend "The Outrun" Premiere during the 2024 Sundance Film Festival at Library Center Theatre in Park City, Utah. — AFP

'Barbenheimer' sitting pretty as Oscar nominations to be unveiled

Nominations for this year's Oscars will be unveiled on Tuesday, with the "Barbenheimer" juggernaut expected to roll on to the climax of Hollywood's awards season with multiple chances at glory. After a combined \$2.4 billion global box office take, "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer"—two films linked only by their simultaneous release last July—are seen as locks for a suite of nods for the 96th Academy Awards, which take place on March 10.

"It continues to be their year, and we expect them to dominate the nominations," Pete Hammond, columnist for industry site Deadline, told AFP. With its clutch of five Golden Globes and momen-

'Love me!'

The movie was among a packed schedule on the second day of Sundance, the influential indie film festival co-founded by Robert Redford, which takes places in the mountains of Utah each winter. Also on show was surreal sci-fi "Love Me," starring Kristen Stewart and Steven Yeun as an AI-powered buoy and an orbiting satellite who strike up a romance after humanity has wiped itself off the Earth. Surely the most original entry at this year's fest, "Love Me" asks whether artificial intelligence can feel loneliness, or even love—and what it might think of humans, long after we have departed this planet. Apparently the sole two surviving sentient devices, the buoy and the satellite try to overcome their loneliness by chatting across thousands of miles and over millions of years, forging an unlikely bond.

Building up their personalities from scratch, they scour the internet for information about the departed human civilization, mimicking the often cringeworthy and absurd human behavior they find on influencers' social media accounts. "For us, it's not really a movie about AI. But it's a movie about us, seen through the lens of AI," said co-director Andy Zuchero at the movie's world premiere in Utah on Friday. "Sort of trying to unpack humanity circa 2024." Stewart and Yeun initially provide voices for the buoy and satellite, but gradually appear on screen in various visual forms as the AI machines construct a bizarre metaverse of their own. —AFP

"I just wish that it could have happened a bit earlier. Because I always felt very isolated. I was called out as 'that #MeToo person,'" she reflected.

"I knew other voices were out there, but it wasn't really talked about. I feel like I became a bad example of what happens if you speak out." Today, more women are demanding justice, and in December three Japanese ex-soldiers were found guilty of sexually assaulting their female colleague Rina Gono. I.

The case reminded Ito of her own in many ways—including the burden on women to speak out, despite the inevitable backlash. "Rina contacted me before she went public... if she didn't go public, this case was already closed, nothing would have happened," said Ito.

There are even signs of the #MeToo movement finally reaching Japan's entertainment industry. Japan's biggest boy band agency last year admitted its late founder Johnny Kitagawa had sexually abused aspiring young stars. And prominent Japanese comedian Hitoshi Matsumoto was recently accused of sexual assault by two women. He denies the allegations. "This is a continuous challenge and battle. We can never stop," said Ito. "It's going forward. But we cannot let it go back."—AFP



US actress Kristen Stewart arrives for the 2023 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 1, 2023, in New York. --AFP

Buoy meets satellite: Kristen Stewart brings bizarre AI romance to Sundance

Can artificial intelligence feel loneliness, or even love? And what would it think of us after humans have gone? "Love Me," surely the most surreal and original entry at this year's Sundance film festival, stars Kristen Stewart and Steven Yuen as an AI-powered buoy and orbiting satellite who strike up a romance after humanity has wiped itself off the Earth. Apparently the sole two surviving sentient devices, they try to overcome their loneliness by chatting across thousands of miles and over millions of years, forging an unlikely bond.

Building up their personalities from scratch, they scour the internet for information about the departed human civilization, mimicking the often cringeworthy and absurd human behavior they find on influencers' social media accounts. "For us, it's not really a movie about AI. But it's a movie about us, seen through the lens of AI," said co-director Andy Zuchero, at the movie's world premiere in Utah on Friday. "Sort of trying to unpack humanity circa 2024."

Stewart and Yuen provide voices for the buoy and satellite, and gradually appear on screen in various visual forms as the AI machines construct a bizarre metaverse of their own. "It's about a world in which we're no longer here," said Stewart, on the red carpet. With performative clips on the internet providing the only surviving imprint of humanity, "the echo that we've left is primarily screaming 'Love me!'" added the former "Twilight" star.—AFP

turn on its side, "Oppenheimer"—Christopher Nolan's masterly portrait of the father of the atomic bomb—appears to have the edge in the race for best picture, the Academy's top prize.

Greta Gerwig's popular "Barbie"—a sharp satire about misogyny and female empowerment—is playing catch-up after an initial burst of awards optimism faded. The film, which had nine nominations for the Globes, left with just two consolation prizes—best song and a newly created trophy for box office achievement.



Recipient of the Desert Palm achievement Award - Actor for "Oppenheimer" Irish actor Cillian Murphy (right) and US actor Robert Downey Jr.—AFP

And, said Hammond, it faces an uphill battle to turn its audience gold into major Oscars success. "Comedies, or something considered lighter, are generally at a disadvantage against something a little heavier," he said. "So in the world of Barbenheimer, 'Oppenheimer' definitely has the advantage because it's got gravitas; it's important." Round-out the best picture category, nominations are widely expected for Martin Scorsese's crime saga "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Venice Film Festival winner "Poor Things," a female-focused take on the Frankenstein myth. Christ-mas boarding school tale "The Holdovers" is already being spoken of as a durable seasonal classic, while Leonard Bernstein biopic "Maestro," which sees Bradley Cooper in front and behind the camera, also appears well placed.

The well-received French film "Anatomy of a Fall," which won two Golden Globes including best screenplay, might fare well in a world where voters no longer seem scared of subtitles. —AFP

Lifestyle



It was impossible to see through the snow and fog on the Antarctic seas but expedition leader Ian Strachan knew his ship was approaching a true behemoth: the world's biggest iceberg lay somewhere ahead. "Then the clouds lifted and we could see this expansive -- almost abstract -- white line that extended each way across the horizon," he told AFP. As the ship got closer during its visit on Sunday, huge gaping crevasses and beautiful blue arches sculpted into the edge of the iceberg came into focus.

Waves up to four meters (13 feet) high "smashed" and "battered" its wall, breaking off small chunks and collapsing some arches, Strachan said. He compared sailing along the endless jagged edge to looking at sheet music. "All the cracks and arches were different notes as the song played." The tooth-shaped iceberg named A23a is nearly 4,000 square kilometers (1,550 square miles) across, making it more than twice the size of Greater London.

After three decades stuck to the Antarctic ocean floor, the iceberg is now heading north on what could be its final journey. It contains an estimated one trillion tons of fresh water that is likely to melt off into the ocean along way. The iceberg, which is up to 400 meters thick in places, is currently drifting between Elephant Island and the South Orkney islands.

'Magical'

Strachan was speaking to AFP as his ship, run by the expeditions firm EYOS, was wrapping up a private tour of the Antarctic Peninsula. It had

been planning to go to South Georgia island but due to a bird flu outbreak there, it visited A23a instead. It was not the first ship to witness the majesty of the iceberg.

The UK's RRS Sir David Attenborough was travelling to Antarctica on a scientific mission last month, when it found the A23a blocking its path.



This handout image released by EYOS Expeditions shows an aerial view of the A23a iceberg in the waters of The Southern Ocean off Antarctica.

Andrew Meijers, the chief scientist on board, said that when they approached the iceberg, the mist parted, the sun came out and a pod of orcas even swam past. "It was really magical," Meijers told AFP. "It took us six hours to steam past it," he added.

A23a first broke off the Antarctic coast back in 1986, making it the world's oldest iceberg, as well as its largest. But it quickly became stuck to

the ocean floor, where it languished for decades.

Andrew Fleming of the British Antarctic Survey told AFP that in 2020 he saw satellite images suggesting it was "wobbling". Then late last year, A23a broke free from its icy shackles and started venturing north. Whether or not this was caused by climate change

'Lumbering beast'

This "lumbering beast" moves slower than walking pace, Fleming said. "The Titanic would've spotted this one coming." Since breaking free, A23a has followed roughly the same path as previous massive icebergs A68 and A76, moving past the east side of the Antarctica Peninsula through the Weddell

near the island, it could block these animals from getting to where they normally forage, threatening their ability to feed themselves.

But this is not expected to happen. A68 instead broke up into smaller chunks, causing a problem not for animals but humans, making it difficult for fishing ships to navigate the area,



This handout satellite picture shows the A23a iceberg (CR) near Joinville Island (CL), in The Southern Ocean. — AFP photos

Sea along a route called "iceberg alley". As the iceberg is "ejected out into the Southern Ocean", warmer waters and bigger waves will start to break it up, Fleming said.

If it follows the path of the two comparably huge previous icebergs, it will travel northeast towards the island of South Georgia, a haven for wildlife including penguins and seals. There is a slight fear that if the iceberg parks itself

Meijers said. A more likely path would be for A23a to move around the island and continue meandering northwards. A rare few icebergs have made it so far that they have been spotted from the Brazilian coast. But eventually A23a will meet the fate of all icebergs that journey north -- melting away in warmer waters. "Ultimately, they're doomed," Fleming said. —AFP



Crew members of the Colombian research vessel "ARC Simon Bolivar" ride a boat at the Gerlache Strait, which separates the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula, in Antarctica.



Chinstrap (Pygoscelis antarcticus) penguins are seen at the Gerlache Strait, which separates the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula, in Antarctica.



View of the tail of a Humpback whale at the Gerlache Strait, which separates the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula, in Antarctica.—AFP photos



View of a seal at the Gerlache Strait, which separates the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula.

Colombian mission to Antarctica analyzes climate change footprints

Colombia's 10th Antarctic Expedition is making its way to the far reaches of the continent, exploring remote and almost untouched places inhabited by penguins, whales and the occasional seal. The Colombian Navy's ARC Simon Bolivar is taking aquatic samples in Antarctica and advancing scientific research on climate change amid huge blocks of ice and frost.

"Antarctica is the world's refrigerator," Pablo Araujo, a researcher at the Central University of Ecuador, told AFP on board the ship, which is home to 39 researchers, 11 Colombian projects and nine international cooperation projects with four countries. "What we want to see is how climate change is affecting the world's refrigerator and how that affects the whole quantity of nutrients (in the sea)," says the white-coated scientist.

On board the ship, the Ecuadorian researcher is carrying out a project to model Antarctic ecosystems using machine learning techniques, a branch of artificial intelligence focused on the



A cruise ship sails at the Gerlache Strait, which separates the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula.

study of statistical algorithms. With the application of these models and the use of satellite images, researchers are studying the dynamics of greenhouse gas fluxes in Antarctic ecosystems.

One Colombian team is launching a battery of Niskin bottles, used to take

water samples, into the ocean. "Once (they) come to the surface, we proceed to take these samples for later analysis," said Alexis Grattz, a researcher from the Directorate General of Maritime Affairs, wearing a thick red mackintosh, gloves and a hat.

At the Ecuadorian scientific station, located at Punta Fort Williams on Greenwich Island, the maritime authority installed a portable weather station to record atmospheric pressure oscillations in the area. These measurements are taken to "determine and help us understand more about these variations in sea level, understanding it as... an important indicator in the evolution of climate change," said Maritza Moreno, another researcher at the Directorate General of Maritime Affairs.

A Turkish mission, meanwhile, is studying the levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) -- which result from burning fossil fuels, wood, trash and tobacco—in Antarctic soil. Burak Karacik, a professor at Istanbul Technical University, said he is collecting sediment samples. "I will analyze these sediment samples for persistent organic pollutants, and we will look at the effects of humans, here, in this environment," he added. —AFP



A gentoo penguin with its chick at Paraiso island in Gerlache Strait.

Sports

Pakistan snatch 42-run win over N Zealand in fifth T20

Pakistan skipper relieved, avoids whitewash series loss

CHRISTCHURCH: Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi said it was “very important” his team avoided a whitewash series loss to New Zealand after winning the fifth and final Twenty20 International by 42 runs on Sunday. The Black Caps capitulated for 92 in the face of some quality Pakistan spin bowling, having been favoured to chase down the tourists’ 134-8. Pakistan lost the five-match series 4-1 but Shaheen was pleased his first stint as captain had ended on a winning note, after being outplayed through the first four games.

He said the series was primarily seen as a chance to build towards the T20 World Cup in June but it would have been a setback to lose five from five. “Today’s game was very important for us. We needed that as a unit to step forward,” Shaheen said. “In the first four games, there were a lot of collapses, as a fielding unit, as a batting unit, but I think today we played on a team and we needed that win.

“It’s not easy for any team to come here. And I think our mind is on the World Cup. We’re just checking out every spot for every player and giving chances to youngsters.” Part-time off-spinner Ifkhar Ahmed was handed the ball for the first time in the series and produced career-best figures of 3-24 against a weakened New Zealand batting lineup, who scored their second-lowest T20 total on home soil.

Only opener Finn Allen (22) and Glenn Phillips

(26) passed 20 as Pakistan claimed the last eight wickets for 39 runs. Left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz (2-18) was effective with the new ball, while Shaheen claimed 2-20.

New Zealand were missing three of their first-choice batters: Kane Williamson (knee injury), Devon Conway (COVID-19) and Daryl Mitchell (rested). Captain Mitchell Santner said their poor chase exposed some chinks.

“We’ve looked pretty good batting first and defending but, looking at today, we may need a bit of work chasing,” he said. “In a chase like that, we talk about taking it as deep as we can and we didn’t do that.

“But all in all a pretty good series. There were good signs, different guys stepping up at different times and that’s what you want.” Earlier, it appeared the home side had done enough to push for a clean sweep through another disciplined bowling display.

Seamers Tim Southee, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson all claimed two scalps, along with spinner Ish Sodhi. Veteran Southee (2-19) dismissed debutant Haseebullah Khan in an opening maiden over and returned in the 13th over to remove the dangerous Fakhar Zaman, who had raced to 33 off 16 balls.

Top-scorer Mohammad Rizwan departed soon afterwards for 38 off 38. New Zealand next face a two-Test home series against South Africa while Pakistan’s next international fixtures are five T20s at home to New Zealand in April. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand's players pose with the series trophy after the fifth and final Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Hagley Oval in Christchurch on January 21, 2024. — AFP

Dunlap fires stunning 60 for PGA lead

LOS ANGELES: Reigning US Amateur champion Nick Dunlap fired a stunning 12-under par 60 to seize a three-stroke lead after Saturday’s third round of the PGA Tour American Express tournament. Dunlap, a 20-year-old sophomore at the University of Alabama, made 10 birdies and an eagle at La Quinta Country Club—one of three courses used in the first three rounds—to stand on 27-under 189 after 54 holes.

“It was a blast,” Dunlap said. “The putter felt so good. The hole looked like a funnel... just kind of kept putting shots together and ended up with a pretty good round. “I made a lot of putts. The putter felt really good. I don’t think I missed anything that I should have made. Drove it well. Hit the irons really good. I don’t have any negatives after that round. I did everything pretty well.”

Compatriot Sam Burns was second on 192 with fellow American Justin Thomas third on 193 and South African Christiaan Bezuidenhout fourth on 195. American prodigy Dunlap could become the first amateur golfer to win a US PGA Tour event since Phil Mickelson captured the 1991 Northern Telecom Open in Tucson, Arizona.

Dunlap would also become the second-youngest winner of a PGA event in the past 90 years, trailing only Jordan Spieth’s victory at 19 at the 2013 John Deere Classic. Dunlap would not take home the winner’s prize of \$1.51 million, which would slide to the runner-up should Dunlap be victorious.

But he would become eligible to take PGA Tour membership at any time in the 2024 PGA campaign and receive the benefits of any PGA Tour winner, which include membership through the 2026 season, entries into the Masters and PGA Championship and any unplayed “signature” events.

“Definitely nervous,” Dunlap said. “Pressure is a privilege and I’m fortunate to be in the spot I’m in. “It’s going to be hard. It’s going to be something I haven’t experienced yet. “We’ve got a good game plan for that golf course and just kind of go out there and do us, stay in the present and go from there.”

Dunlap already has berths in this year’s Masters, PGA and British Open after his US Amateur triumph, provided he remains an amateur when the events are played. Dunlap, who fired a 64 at the Nicklaus course and a 65 at the Pete Dye course in the first two rounds, began on the back side at La Quinta and reeled off four birdies in a row starting at the par-5 11th.

He added two more at 16 and 17 and another at the first, had back-to-back birdies at the fourth and fifth and then eagled the par-5 sixth before closing with a final birdie at nine. “You have to keep your foot down out here,” Dunlap said. “I think that kind of goes for all of professional golf. These guys are really good and it’s fun to be out here competing with them.” Burns fired a 65 on the Pete Dye course while two-time major winner Thomas, who also played college golf at Alabama, fired a 61 at the Pete Dye course on Saturday—his 11 birdies including six in a row from the 12th through 17th holes. — AFP

Shiffrin wins Jasna slalom for 95th World Cup victory

JASNA: American Mikaela Shiffrin kept her nerve to bag a record-extending 95th career World Cup win as she snuck to victory in the women’s slalom in Jasna on Sunday. Shiffrin clocked 52.91 seconds and 55.30sec in the two legs down the icy Lukova slope in the Slovakian resort for a winning combined total of 1min 48.21sec.

It was her fifth slalom victory of the season and the 58th of her World Cup career. She also became just the second alpine skier to reach 150 World Cup podiums, five short of Swedish legend Ingemar Stenmark’s record of 155. The win also saw her surpass Stenmark with her record-setting 82nd slalom podium.

Croatian teenager Zrinka Ljutic bagged her second career podium finish in finishing second, at 0.14sec, while Sweden’s Anna Swenn Larsson rounded out the podium (+0.81). “Today it was definitely a big push to keep all my energy going all the way through the second run,” said Shiffrin, whose lead shrunk to 0.02sec on the last intermediate split before she skied the fastest final sector of anyone in the field to ensure victory.

“I knew she (Ljutic) put down an amazing run and I had to push,” Shiffrin added: “It was not easy on the second run. I could hear the crowd going crazy for a couple of athletes and I’m like, ‘No, this race is very far away from over and I need to push.’ “I didn’t feel perfect but I felt good, so I’m super happy with it.”

The second leg, in which the top 30 finishers from the first leg race in reverse order, was an exciting affair. Heading into the final 10 racers, Germany’s world slalom bronze medalist Lena Duerr duly took the lead, with nine racers to follow. Austrian Katharina Truppe and France’s Marie Lamure both made mistakes to fall out of the reckoning.

Camille Rast then took the race by the scruff of its

neck, laying down an electric run to finish more than one second ahead of Duerr’s time to set up a nail-biting climax. Her Swiss teammate Michelle Gisin couldn’t cope with that pace, but Swenn Larsson could, grabbing the lead before watching Swedish teammate Sara Hector, the comfortable winner of Saturday’s giant slalom ahead of Shiffrin, make a mistake.

‘Managed the pressure’

Switzerland’s Melanie Meillard temporarily grabbed the final podium spot, leaving just Ljutic and Shiffrin to come down. Ljutic, 19, made no mistake with a clean descent, taking the lead to pile the pressure on Shiffrin.

Setting out of the start hut with a 0.52sec lead, the American saw that advantage quickly cut back but she kept her nerve to deliver the seventh fastest second leg. It was enough for the 28-year-old to edge the Croat and claim yet another victory on the circuit.

“I’m really happy that I skied even better in the second run than the first,” Ljutic said. “I’m proud of myself for managing this pressure in the second run. “I took a glimpse of what it’s like to be so close to the win,” she added. “It was really tight and it’s definitely worth it, it’s worth every DNF (four) that I’ve had this season.”

Home favourite and reigning Olympic slalom champion Petra Vlhova was not among the starters, her season having come to a premature end after she sustained a torn knee ligament in a crash in Saturday’s giant slalom. Shiffrin sits atop the slalom standings on 630 points, 125pts ahead of Vlhova. The five-time big crystal globe winner has now amassed 1,209pts to further consolidate her place atop the overall standings as she seeks a sixth title. She stands 407pts ahead of second-placed Vlhova, with Swiss racer Lara Gut-Behrami in third on 789pts.

Earlier, Kristoffer Jakobsen clocked the fastest first run in the men’s World Cup slalom in Kitzbuehel on Sunday. In bright, sunny conditions, the 29-year-old Swede timed 50.09 seconds down the Ganslern course. Only 37 of the 70-strong field made it down the demanding course, 31 failing to finish, Austrian Michael Matt disqualified and Swiss



JASNA: Winner USA’s Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates on the podium after the women’s Slalom event of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in Jasna, Slovakia, on January 21, 2024. — AFP

racer Ramon Zenhaeusern a non-starter.

Switzerland’s Daniel Yule, winner last year in the upmarket Tyrolean resort, was second at 0.05sec, with Austrian Manuel Feller third (+0.23). Reigning world champion Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway, starting with bib number one, eventually finished 30th, a massive 2.51sec off Jakobsen’s pace. Olympic champion Clement Noel was well poised, however, in fifth at 0.42sec as France sought a Kitzbuehel cleansweep after Cyprien Sarrazin notched up a pair of downhill victories on the neighbouring Streif slope on Friday and Saturday.

Britain’s Dave Ryding, whose victory in Kitzbuehel in 2022 was the first ever in a World Cup by a Briton, was in equal 10th with teammate Billy Major, at 1.23sec. A true crowd favourite in Kitzbuehel, Ryding descended the course as Queen’s ‘Don’t Stop Me Now’ blared over the tannoy.

“Is he pulling a rabbit out of his hat?” asked the emcee to roars from the crowd. “Will he be the black horse?” Ryding, a Liverpool football fan, was then treated to adopted Anfield anthem ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ as he slid off from the finish area to prepare for the second leg scheduled at 1330 GMT. — AFP

Kolisi helps Racing into Champions Cup last 16

PARIS: South Africa’s double Rugby World Cup-winning captain Siya Kolisi said Racing 92 are “100 percent” committed to the Champions Cup after scoring his first try for the club in a 48-26 victory over Cardiff which secured a place in the last 16 of the Champions Cup on Saturday.

The Parisians moved above Ulster to fourth in Pool 2, after the Irish province were hammered 47-19 by Harlequins earlier in the day, claiming a spot in the next round to be held in April. Flanker Kolisi, 32, who joined Racing after lifting a second World Cup last October, crossed during the first-half on his eighth club appearance and was among seven try scorers for the French side, three-time Champions Cup runners-up.

“We haven’t had a good competition, we’ve lost some games we could have won but today held our own,” Kolisi told BeIn Sport after their first win in four Champions Cup matches this season. “We are 100 percent in the Champions Cup, even though things didn’t go our way we knew it was in our hands today, so we gave it everything,” he added after finishing the win as Racing captain.

A youthful Cardiff surprisingly led 7-3 after just 10 minutes as Wales prop Rhys Carre crashed over before Racing

took control of the tie. No 8 Kitone Kamikamica went over in the corner before scrum-half Nolann Le Garrec, included in France’s Six Nations squad, set-up Kolisi five metres out for the try.

Back-rower Kolisi then turned the provider setting-up centre Inia Tabuaou before Wales scrum-half Tomos Williams cut the deficit and the hosts led 20-12 at the break. Victory was clinched with half an hour to play as Kolisi’s compatriot, full-back Tristan Tedder and wingers Christian Wade and Juan Imhoff scored to make it 41-12.

Despite having less than a quarter of Racing’s budget this season, Cardiff refused to go out of the competition with a whimper as half-back Williams claimed his second try with 15 minutes to play. Fly-half Tinus De Beer then broke free to clinch a deserved bonus point for the Welsh club with nine minutes remaining before replacement hooker Jannick Tarrit made sure of the rout for the home side with a late try.

Elsewhere, four-time winners Leinster claimed a home tie in the next round, beating Leicester 27-10 to maintain their unbeaten record in the pool stage. Northampton made a statement with a 26-23 victory at Munster as they made it



NANTERRE: Racing 92’s French lock Cameron Woki (L) is tackled during the European Rugby Champions Cup Pool 2 rugby union match between Racing 92 (FRA) and Cardiff (WAL) at the Paris La Defense Arena, in Nanterre. — AFP

four wins from four in the tournament.

Fly-half Fin Smith, 21, celebrated a call-up to England’s Six Nations squad with a superb performance for Saints at Thomond Park. Three-time winners Saracens also reached the last 16, beating already-qualified Lyon 29-24 despite trailing by 12 points at half-time.

Saracens’ England captain Owen Farrell, who is taking a break from Test rugby during the upcoming Six Nations, became the Champions Cup’s

second highest points scorer on 874, leapfrogging ex-Wales fly-half Stephen Jones. He is now behind only former Ireland stand-off Ronan O’Gara on 1,365 points. Sunday’s highlight is holders La Rochelle’s trip to Sale.

The French club, coached by O’Gara, need a win to guarantee their progress. Record five-time winners Toulouse play Bath at a sold-out Stade Ernest-Wallon in a clash between two teams who have already made the last 16. — AFP

NHL Islanders hire Roy as coach after Lambert gets axed

NEW YORK: Hockey Hall of Fame goaltender Patrick Roy was hired as coach of the New York Islanders on Saturday after the NHL club fired Lane Lambert following a fourth consecutive loss.

Four-time Stanley Cup champion Roy has not

coached in the NHL since guiding the Colorado Avalanche for three seasons from 2013-2016.

The 58-year-old Canadian has spent the past five seasons coaching the Quebec Remparts junior club, guiding them to last year’s Canadian Memorial Cup championship.

Roy won the Stanley Cup twice for the Montreal Canadiens, in 1986 and 1993, and twice more with the Colorado Avalanche in 1996 and 2001.

He was voted the NHL’s top goalie, the Vezina Trophy winner, in 1989, 1990 and 1992 and is the only player to win the Conn Smythe Trophy as play-off Most Valuable Player three times, doing so in

1986, 1993 and 2001. Roy is set to make his debut behind the Islanders bench when they play host to Dallas on Sunday. New York will then visit Montreal, where Roy became a legend guarding the crease for the Canadiens, on Thursday.

Islanders general manager Lou Lamoriello announced the firing of Lambert, who went 61-46 with 20 overtime losses and a first-round playoff exit last year during a 20-month stint as coach.

Lambert, 59, was axed from his first NHL head coaching job after the Islanders began the 2023-24 campaign 19-15-11. They have dropped six of their past seven starts, including a 4-3 overtime loss at

Chicago on Friday in Lambert’s final game.

The Islanders stand sixth in the Metropolitan division, two points behind Detroit for the final Eastern Conference playoff berth.

Lambert became the fifth NHL coach to be fired this season after D.J. Smith of Ottawa, Jay Woodcroft of Edmonton, Dean Evason of Minnesota and Craig Berube of St. Louis.

Roy went 130-92-24 during his stint with the Avalanche, losing his only playoff series. In his first season at Colorado, the team matched its club record with 52 wins and Roy was named the NHL Coach of the Year. — AFP

Sports

Bounedjah rescues Algeria as Angola end winless AFCON run

Tunisia back in contention after drab AFCON draw

BOUAKE: Baghdad Bounedjah bagged a brace as two-time champions Algeria came from behind twice to draw 2-2 with Burkina Faso on Saturday in an Africa Cup of Nations Group D thriller. The Qatar-based forward, who struck the winner in the 2019 final against Senegal, cancelled goals by Mohamed Konate and Bertrand Traore before a 33,000 crowd in sweltering Bouake.

In the second match of a double-header, Angola edged Mauritania 3-2 in an equally entertaining clash to end a nine-match winless run from 2012. Later, a Group E clash of top 10-ranked teams Tunisia and Mali in Korhogo failed to match expectations and ended in a dour 1-1 draw.

Angola and Burkina Faso have four points each, Algeria two and Mauritania none in a section where all four teams are still in contention for last-16 places with one round remaining. Long-serving Algeria coach Djamel Belmadi, the mastermind behind the 2019 triumph, said he was satisfied with the draw in 36 Celsius (97 Fahrenheit) heat.

"Burkina Faso dominated the first half but we came back strongly in the second and might have won as there were suspicions of a handball in the area. "We had more of the scoring chances only to be let down by the lack of a killer instinct. I promise that there will be a much improved performance against Mauritania on Tuesday.

"Through suffering we have achieved previous successes against the odds. My players can take us far in this competition." Burkina Faso, who finished second, third and fourth in three of the last five editions, were praised by France-born coach Hubert Velud.

"It was a beautiful game and we performed well and were on the verge of winning when a lack of

concentration led to us conceding a second goal. "I was really impressed with our efficiency and the way the game plan was executed. We just need to work on a few minor details."

Attacking feast

A Konate header in first-half added time broke the stalemate and Bounedjah tapped the ball into the net after a goalmouth scramble soon after half-time. Out-of-favour Aston Villa forward Bertrand Traore came off the bench to convert a penalty before Bounedjah equalised again, this time with a powerful 95th-minute header after a corner. Angola versus Mauritania might have been the least attractive of the three matches on Saturday on paper with both teams outside the top 20-ranked teams in Africa.

But they delivered a feast of attacking football with two superb Mauritanian goals not enough to prevent Angola going top of the table on goals scored. Gelson Dala struck for Angola before a superb solo run and shot by Sidi Bouna Amar brought the teams level as half-time approached.

Another excellent individual goal, this time from Dala, was quickly followed by a third for Angola as a Gilberto shot on 53 minutes was deflected over goalkeeper Babacar Niasse. Fears that Mauritania might collapse were quickly dispelled as a Aboubakary Koita thunderbolt gave goalkeeper Neblu no chance.

Seeking a first Cup of Nations win, Mauritania applied constant pressure, but Angola held firm and are poised to reach the knockout stage for the first time since 2010. Much was expected from Tunisia and Mali in Group E, but after a goal from each side within 20 minutes of the kick-off, the match offered little excitement.

Lassine Sinayoko put Mali ahead on 10 minutes



BOUAKE: Mauritania's midfielder #6 Gussouma Fofana (L) fights for the ball with Angola's forward #10 Gelson Dala (R) during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 group D football match between Mauritania and Angola at Stade de la Paix in Bouake. — AFP

with a shot that went into the net off the far post and Hamza Rafia levelled 10 minutes later from close range. There was little else to cheer a near-capacity crowd in the 20,000-seat stadium before Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Yves Bissouma fired an added-time free-kick wide.

Mali have four points, Namibia three, Tunisia one and South Africa none ahead of a clash between the southern Africa neighbours on Sunday. After a shock victory over Tunisia, Namibia will reach the knockout stage for the first time if they collect maximum points again. — AFP



Kuwait's jet ski racer Mohammad Al-Baz

Al-Baz wins first place in Aquabike Championship

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti jet ski racer Mohammad Al-Baz on Sunday won the first place in the (Runabout GPI) Division of the UAE International Aquabike Championship in its first round. In a statement for KUNA, Al-Baz said that this win comes after an intense competition with 22 other racers from around the world in this category.

He said that this championship was held in the Dubai International Marine Club with the participation of several world champions and international racers representing their countries. With will and commitment, "we work on achieving the best results possible in different divisions and championships," Al-Baz said.

Al-Baz dedicated this victory to the Kuwaiti athletes, and appreciated the support provided to the national team by the Public Authority for Sport and Kuwait Sea Sports Club. — KUNA

Infantino condemns 'abhorrent' racism during games

LONDON: FIFA president Gianni Infantino called for worldwide stadium bans for fans and "automatic forfeits" for teams whose supporters hurl "abhorrent" abuse, following racist incidents in Italy and England on Saturday.

The head of football's world governing body said there was no place for discrimination of any kind in the sport or wider society. "The events that took place in Udine and Sheffield on Saturday are totally abhorrent and completely unacceptable," he said in a statement.

"The players affected by Saturday's events have my undivided support." Fans aimed monkey chants at AC Milan and France goalkeeper Mike Maignan during Milan's dramatic 3-2 win at Udinese, with the game temporarily halted.

Support from Mbappe

In a strongly worded statement on X, formerly Twitter, the France team said: "You have all our support Mike Maignan. The FFF (French federation) totally condemns all racist acts." France captain Kylian Mbappe also offered his backing to his international teammate. "You are very far from being alone Mike Maignan, we are all with you," wrote the Paris Saint-Germain star.

"Still the same problems and still NO solution.

Enough is enough!!!!!! NO TO RACISM" he posted on X. Coventry midfielder Kasey Palmer accused Sheffield Wednesday fans of doing the same to him during their English Championship clash, which his team won 2-1 on Saturday.

"We need all the relevant stakeholders to take action, starting with education in schools so that future generations understand that this is not part of football or society," Infantino said. "As well as the three-step process (match stopped, match re-stopped, match abandoned), we have to implement an automatic forfeit for the team whose fans have committed racism and caused the match to be abandoned as well as worldwide stadium bans and criminal charges for racists.

"FIFA and football shows full solidarity to victims of racism and any form of discrimination. Once and for all: No to racism! No to any form of discrimination!" At Udinese, referee Fabio Maresca stopped play during the first half and a livid Maignan stormed down the tunnel with his teammates. "They're ignorant people.... You can be booed or whistled when you're away from home, that's normal, but what happened today has no place in football," Maignan told Sky Sports. Play resumed after about five minutes.

Last week Lazio were hit with a one-match stand closure after supporters directed monkey chants at Romelu Lukaku during their team's Italian Cup win over local rivals Roma. In Sheffield, Palmer labelled the abuse "abhorrent and wholly unacceptable", with the match paused as the referee spoke to both managers on the touchline. In a statement, Sheffield Wednesday said they were "shocked and saddened by the racist gesture from the stands" reported by Palmer. — AFP



UDINE: Milan's French goalkeeper celebrates with teammates after winning the Italian Serie A football match Udinese Calcio vs AC Milan at the Friuli - Dacia Arena stadium in Udine. AC Milan came back from a goal down to beat Udinese 3-2 on in a match which was briefly suspended for Mike Maignan being racially abused by home fans. — AFP

Maignan blasts 'ignorant' fans after racist abuse

UDINE: Mike Maignan fired back on Saturday at "ignorant" fans who aimed monkey chants at the France goalkeeper during AC Milan's dramatic 3-2 win at Udinese which was temporarily halted due to the abuse.

Milan are six points behind league leaders Inter Milan, who are in Saudi Arabia contesting the Italian Super Cup, in third place after Noah Okafor poked home the winner in the third minute of stoppage time. But the match was marred by a group of Udinese supporters racially abusing Maignan during the first half, leading to referee Fabio Maresca stopping play and a livid Maignan storming down the tunnel with his teammates.

Talking to Sky Sport, Maignan said that he first heard monkey chants when he collected the ball for his first goal kick, after which he "said nothing". "Then for the second goal kick they did it again. I called to the dugout and the fourth official and I told them what had happened. I said that we can't play in these conditions because it's not the first time that it's happened with me or other players," he said.

"They're ignorant people... You can be booed or whistled when you're away from home, that's normal, but what happened today has no place in football." Play resumed after about five minutes, with Milan leading at that point thanks to Ruben Loftus-Cheek's fine finish just after the half-hour mark.

But after the match restarted Milan were clearly rocked and three minutes before the break Lazar

Samardzic levelled for the hosts by strolling through midfield and rifling home an unstoppable low shot.

Florian Thauvin put the hosts in front in the 62nd minute after bundling past Tijjani Reijnders and Theo Hernandez and smashing home a shot just above Maignan's head. However Milan fought back and Luka Jovic nodded home the equaliser in the 83rd minute after Olivier Giroud's deflected strike bounced onto the goal line off the underside of the bar. And Okafor sparked wild celebrations from the large Milan contingent at the Bluenergy Stadium when he stabbed in the winner and extended his team's unbeaten run in the league to six matches.

Saturday was not the first time that Maignan has been racially abused by supporters in Italy as he was targeted by a Juventus fan in September 2021. Maignan described himself as "black and proud" after that incident, asking whether Italy's football authorities knew what it was like "to hear insults and chants reducing us to animals". Italy, a country governed by a coalition led by the far-right Brothers of Italy party, is rife with fascist football fan groups, in particular among the hardcore "ultras" who make most of the atmosphere at stadiums.

Last week Lazio were hit with a one-match stand closure after supporters directed monkey chants at Romelu Lukaku during their team's Italian Cup win over local rivals Roma. In November a suspended stand closure was handed to Fiorentina after their fans targeted Dusan Vlahovic, Moise Kean and Weston McKennie during a home defeat to Juventus.

Racism is so persistent that in August it caused the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to raise a "red flag" over abuse at sporting events. Earlier Daniele De Rossi got off to a winning start to life as Jose Mourinho's successor at Roma after his boyhood club beat struggling Verona 2-1 at an emotional Stadio Olimpico. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

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

Djokovic, Sabalenka in ruthless form to reach Australian Open q-finals

Gauff and Sabalenka have a glorious chance to win their second major title



MELBOURNE: Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka hits a return against USA's Amanda Anisimova during their women's singles match on day eight of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 21, 2024. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic was at his dominant best in a straight-sets demolition job to reach the Australian Open quarter-finals on Sunday, with Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff in equally ruthless touch. The Serbian superstar recaptured his top form to surge into the last 16 after dropping sets in his opening two matches while ill, and he stepped up another level against Adrian Mannarino.

The French 20th seed, who at 35 is just a year younger than Djokovic, has been enjoying a late career resurgence. But he was taught a lesson by the world number one, who won the first 13 games in powering through to the last eight of a Grand Slam for the 58th time, equalling Roger Federer's men's record.

"I played great, from the first to the

last point," said the defending champion, who is red-hot favourite to collect an 11th Melbourne title and a record 25th Grand Slam crown. "It's going in a positive direction, health-wise, tennis-wise so I'm really pleased with where I am at the moment."

He will face 12th-seed Taylor Fritz next after the American beat last year's runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (7/3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3. "The times I have played him I haven't brought my best level and you need to if you are going to complete with someone like Djokovic," said Fritz of the Serb.

Djokovic almost always plays the night session on Rod Laver Arena, but was bumped to the afternoon this time. That's because home hope Alex de Minaur, seeded 10, is bidding to make the last eight for the first time, with Russian fifth

seed Andrey Rublev standing in his way.

The winner will face in-form fourth seed Jannik Sinner, who blasted past last year's semi-finalist Karen Khachanov 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 and is yet to drop a set.

'An honour'

Defending women's champion Sabalenka has also been in imperious form and was in complete charge against unseeded Amanda Anisimova on Margaret Court Arena, sweeping past the American 6-3, 6-2. Fourth seed Coco Gauff, attempting to become the first woman to back up a US Open title with a Grand Slam win in Australia since Naomi Osaka in 2020-2021, has been almost as impressive.

She swatted aside Poland's unseeded Magdalena Frech 6-1, 6-2 in just 63 minutes

on Rod Laver Arena, with the 85-year-tennis legend watching from the stands. "It was an honour to play in front of you, so thank you for coming to my match," said 19-year-old Gauff, who had never progressed beyond the fourth round at Melbourne Park in four previous attempts.

"First Aussie quarter-final. Super happy to be in this position and be here.... It's cool to get over that hump." She will now meet Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk, who beat Russian qualifier Maria Timofeeva 6-2, 6-1.

With seven of the women's top 10 seeds knocked out in the first week, including world number one Iga Swiatek, both Gauff and Sabalenka have a glorious chance to win their second major title. They are on the same side of the draw and will not meet in the final, with a po-

tential last-four clash looming instead.

Sabalenka has conceded just 11 games in four matches and is favoured to win another title to go with her breakthrough Grand Slam crown last year. Should she go all the way, the 25-year-old will be the first woman to retain the title since compatriot Victoria Azarenka completed the feat in 2013.

"I'm getting stronger because I enjoy the atmosphere and I really want to stay here as long as I can, till the very last day," she said. Her next opponent will be ninth seed Barbora Krejickova after she ended the dream run of Russian 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva, who beat sixth seed Ons Jabeur on her way to the fourth round. Andreeva pushed the Czech player to three sets, but ultimately could not find the killer blow. — AFP



KUWAIT: Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud and Sheikh Khalifa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain with the winners.

Kuwait wins 4 medals in Asian Shotgun Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Competitions of Asian Shotgun Championship, Kuwait 2024 being held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex concluded with the finals of the skeet mixed doubles. Kuwait was able to win four medals in addition to having two quota qualifications for Paris 2024 Olympics.

President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations, Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee Eng. Duaij Al-Otaibi said the Asian Championship suc-

ceeded in reaching its goals both in organization at the highest level, and strong competitions between Asia's International Champions.

He said Kuwait gave the best example in organizing championships, and there was no complaints from the teams of the 26 participating countries which is something to the credit of the organizing committee. Al-Otaibi congratulated the political leadership for the qualification of shooter Mohammad Al-Daihani for Paris 2024 Olympics following fierce competition and was able to win the bronze medal.

Al-Otaibi said Kuwait will participate in the skeet and trap competitions in the Paris 2024 Olympics and will fight hard to make more achievements as Kuwait shooting has done in previous Olympics. Al-Otaibi thanked HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwait Olympic Committee and its President Sheikh Fahad Naser Sabah Al-Ahmad



Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi delivering his closing speech.

Al-Sabah and Public Authority for Sport and its Director General Yousuf Al-Baidan. Meanwhile Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations, tournament director Obaid Al-Osaimi congratulated the political leadership and Kuwait people for the qualification of shooter Mohammad Al-Daihani for the Olympics, as well as for winning the bronze medal, adding that this is yet another achievement for Kuwait Shooting.

He said Kuwait still hopes for more qualifications during the world championship to be held in April in Doha, Qatar. He said the Asian Championship was highly competitive at the highest of levels, while the referees ensured justice during competitions adding that Kuwait is able to host major shooting championships with unprecedented success.

Shooter Al-Daihani said qualifying to Paris was due to extra efforts during training and competition, adding that this is the crowing of collective work by Kuwait Shooting Sport Federation.

McIlroy wins fourth Dubai Desert title

DUBAI: Rory McIlroy won a "really cool" record fourth Dubai Desert Classic title on Sunday by one shot after storming back from a 10-shot deficit going into the weekend at the Emirates Golf Club. McIlroy made two massive birdie putts towards the end of the front nine – a 31-footer on the par-4 eighth, followed by a 16-footer on the ninth – to move to 15-under par and lead by three shots.

At the same time his playing partner and overnight leader American Cameron Young struggled and made the turn at two-over with two bogeys. On the back nine, McIlroy made a bogey on the par-5 13th and could not add another birdie, but that was enough for a winning total of 14-under par 274.

Poland's Adrian Meronk once again showed his massive talent, and a last-hole birdie gave him a solo second place at 13-under par. World No 25 Young, searching for his first win on elite tours, finished third at 12-under par.

With his fourth title at the Emirates Golf Club, the world No2 McIlroy surpassed South Africa's Ernie Els and became the most successful player in the 35-year history of the championship. "It's really cool," said McIlroy, who recorded his first win as a professional in the tournament in 2009.

"I didn't think about that (fourth win) during the round. It was a really tricky day. It was hard to get it close and make a ton of birdies." "The pivotal point for me came on the eighth and ninth holes. Making two threes there, that sort of set me up to try to control it on the way in. — AFP