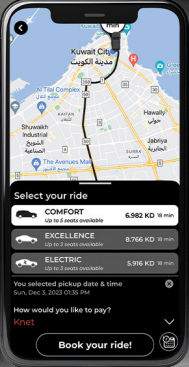



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2 With 190 accidents daily, reckless driving a concern



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Govt vows to work with judiciary

Premier hails professionalism and competence of judicial authority

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lawsuit filed over misdiagnosis

KUWAIT: A young Kuwaiti man, misdiagnosed with diabetes for 12 years, has suffered severe consequences, losing both sight and fertility due to prolonged use of unnecessary medications. His lawyer has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the victim, seeking compensation and accountability from the responsible doctor. The lawyer highlighted the profound impact on the victim's life, affecting his ability to drive and impacting his overall well-being. (See Page 4)

US sanctions Iraqi airline, militia

WASHINGTON: The United States announced sanctions Monday on Iraqi low-cost airline Fly Baghdad, saying it provided assistance to Iran's Revolutionary Guards and proxies, while also targeting leaders of a pro-Iranian Iraq militia for sanctions. The moves come as Iraq's powerful pro-Iranian armed group Kataeb Hezbollah has "carried out a series of sharply escalating drone and missile attacks against US personnel in Iraq and Syria," said the US Treasury Department in a statement. In a separate statement, the US State Department added that the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard and Iran-aligned militia groups "pose a significant threat to the Middle East region". — AFP

Canada to cut student permits

MONTREAL: Canada will temporarily cap new international student permits by one-third this year compared to 2023, the country's immigration minister announced Monday. The measure is aimed in part at easing soaring demand for housing and social services, with the number of international students set to triple from a decade ago. Under the cap, approximately 364,000 international students are expected to receive study permits this year, or a 35 percent net decrease from 2023. — AFP (See Page 7)

Iran, Pak envoys to resume duties

TEHRAN: Iran and Pakistan announced Monday that their ambassadors would resume their duties after the two countries agreed to de-escalate tensions following an exchange of deadly strikes last week. "It has been mutually agreed that the ambassadors of both countries may return to their respective posts by January 26," said a joint statement by the foreign ministries in Tehran and Islamabad. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is also due to visit Pakistan on January 29 following an invitation from his Pakistani counterpart Jalil Abbas Jilani. — AFP

US declares 2 SEALs 'deceased'

WASHINGTON: Two US Navy SEALs who went missing during an operation to seize Iranian weapons bound for Yemen's Houthi rebels have been declared dead after a 10-day search failed to locate them, the US military said Sunday. The Central Command (CENTCOM) had previously said that two SEALs who were reported as lost at sea were involved in the Jan 11 operation, in which the elite special operations personnel boarded a dhow off the coast of Somalia and seized missile components made in Iran. — AFP



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets President of the Supreme Judicial Council and Head of the Court of Cassation Justice Dr Adel Majed Bouresli, accompanied by Minister of Justice and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Faisal Al-Ghareeb, on Jan 22, 2024. — KUNA

Kuwait urges int'l stance against Zionist war crimes

CAIRO: Kuwait on Monday called on the international community to take a solemn stance against the Zionist occupation's war crimes against the Palestinian people and the continuous violation of international laws. This came during Kuwaiti Ambassador to the Arab League Talal Al-Mutairi's speech at the Arab League emergency meeting on Gaza, held at the league's headquarters in Cairo under the chairmanship

Zionists pressed on 2-state solution as Gaza pounded

GAZA: Gazans sheltered Monday from intense bombing and shooting in the city of Khan Yunis, as pressure built on the Zionist entity for an eventual two-state solution involving statehood long sought by Palestinians. Witnesses reported deadly strikes and fierce fighting between Zionist soldiers and Hamas fighters overnight in the southern city which has become the latest epicenter of the war.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza reported on Monday that more than 120 people had been killed in the previous 24 hours. "Artillery shelling has not stopped since 5:00 am," said Yunis Abdel Razeq, 52, sheltering with his family at the city's Al-Aqsa University. Mahdi Antar, 21, had sought refuge at Al-Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis. "The situation is terrifying. Tonight and today are very difficult, bombing and shooting. I do not know what to do. I think they will storm the hospital," he said.

Continued on Page 6

DeSantis ends presidential run, endorses Trump

WASHINGTON: Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, once the leading Republican rival to Donald Trump, ended his election campaign on Sunday and threw his support behind the former president. DeSantis's withdrawal, after months of weakening support, leaves only low-polling Nikki Haley standing between Trump and nomination as the Republican Party's candidate for the US presidential election in November.

In a video message, DeSantis said that following

KUWAIT: The government is keen on cooperating with the judicial authority in line with HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's directives and article 50 of the constitution, said HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Monday. This affirmation came after HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad's meeting with President of the Supreme Judicial Council and Head of the Court of Cassation, Justice Dr Adel Majed Bouresli.

HH the Prime Minister also expressed pride in the professionalism and competence of the judicial authority, which serves to protect the rights of individuals and state as stipulated by the constitution and law. He affirmed the judicial authority is an essential pillar to achieve justice in the land.

Minister of Justice and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Faisal Al-Ghareeb attended the meeting between the two top officials, held at the Supreme Judicial Council's headquarters. Article 50 of the constitution states the system of government is based on the principle of separation of powers functioning in co-operation with each other in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. None of these powers may relinquish all or part of their competence specified in the constitution, the article stipulates.

On Sunday, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad held talks at the National Assembly on 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. — KUNA

of Morocco, the current president of the Arab League.

Mutairi added the Palestinian people are going through difficult times due to the Zionist occupation army's constant violation of international laws, which requires a unified stand by the international community. Peace in the Middle East will not prevail until the Palestinian people are given their rights by forming an independent state according to the June 1967 borders, Mutairi said. Until such rights are given, then violence and hatred will continue for generations and from war to war, the Kuwaiti ambassador noted.

Mutairi called again on the international community to stand in unity in stipulating the two-state solution and giving the Palestinian people their legitimate rights. The Palestinian people have suffered

Continued on Page 6




GAZA: Palestinian families flee Khan Yunis on the coastal road leading to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Jan 22, 2024. — AFP

his second-place finish last week in the Iowa caucuses he could not ask "supporters to volunteer their time and donate their resources if we don't have a clear path to victory. Accordingly, I am today suspending my campaign." The decision came less than two days before the New Hampshire primary, where polls showed him far behind frontrunner Trump and former UN ambassador Haley.

"It's clear to me that a majority of Republican primary voters want to give Donald Trump another chance," DeSantis said, noting he has had differences with the former president, notably over the coronavirus pandemic. "He has my endorsement because we can't go back to the old Republican guard of yesterday or a repackaged form of warmed-over corporatism that Nikki Haley represents."

Continued on Page 6

Kuwaiti Ambassador to the Arab League Talal Al-Mutairi. — KUNA



Ron DeSantis

Local

Reckless driving: A growing concern

An average of 193 accidents per day

By Zainab Al-Mashoor

KUWAIT: Despite the strict traffic regulations in Kuwait, reckless driving is still being practiced on a daily basis, contributing to an average of 193 accidents per day. This reckless behavior not only poses a direct threat to public safety, but also pits citizens against each other. Whether it's racing other vehicles, passing on blind curves, cutting in and out of lanes, using the phone, not using indicators, running red lights, speeding, etc. These behaviors create risky situations for fellow drivers on the roads.

Kuwait Times spoke to various individuals who have suffered from reckless drivers. Waseem Choudry, riding pillion on a bike on Gulf Street, experienced a life-altering accident when a car abruptly appeared in front of them, resulting in significant injuries. "After I was thrown off the bike, I checked on my unconscious friend. Shortly after, I too lost consciousness and woke up in the hospital with both legs broken, a fractured hand and shoulder, and damage to my skull. It took me six months of recovery with limited movement, and to this day, I have screws in my body," Choudry recounted.

"Those days were difficult to endure, but it was worse watching my family suffer from agony, worried about me through the process," he added. After six months of recovery, Choudry pursued legal action, and the reckless driver was fined. Choudry emphasized the importance of driving responsibly and highlighted the true cost of an accident extends beyond the physical injuries to emotional and familial distress.

In another incident, Islam travelling on a highway with his pregnant wife, when suddenly a car ap-



peared in front of them, taking a free right at high speed and causing an accident. Islam's car windows shattered on their faces, resulting in severe injuries and damage to the car. Fortunately, the baby was safe, and Islam and his wife were blessed to live.

The driver responsible didn't have a license or insurance and has escaped accountability through their power and connections, leaving Islam to bear the financial costs of his damages. Islam hopes people are more careful while driving and hopes people pay for their wrongdoings, accept their mistakes and not cause harm to others.

In other cases, Zainab's car was hit by another driver cutting through the lane to attempt a U-turn with no signaling or communication. Mohamed's car was struck by a driver using his phone, ramming it into a traffic light and causing huge damage. A hit-and-run accident where the driver was speeding in an industrial area resulted in damage to Noor's car.

Beyond the immediate physical and financial



effects, reckless driving is discouraging other motorists from driving. The lack of accountability for those violating the rules contributes to a sense of injustice among law-abiding citizens. Drivers



should share the space and respect the safety of others and their properties by following rules to make it a safe environment for people to travel in their means of transportation.

Saudi Minister arrives in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Saudi Minister of State and Member of the Cabinet Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, arrived in Kuwait Monday on an official visit. The Saudi Minister was received by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah. — KUNA

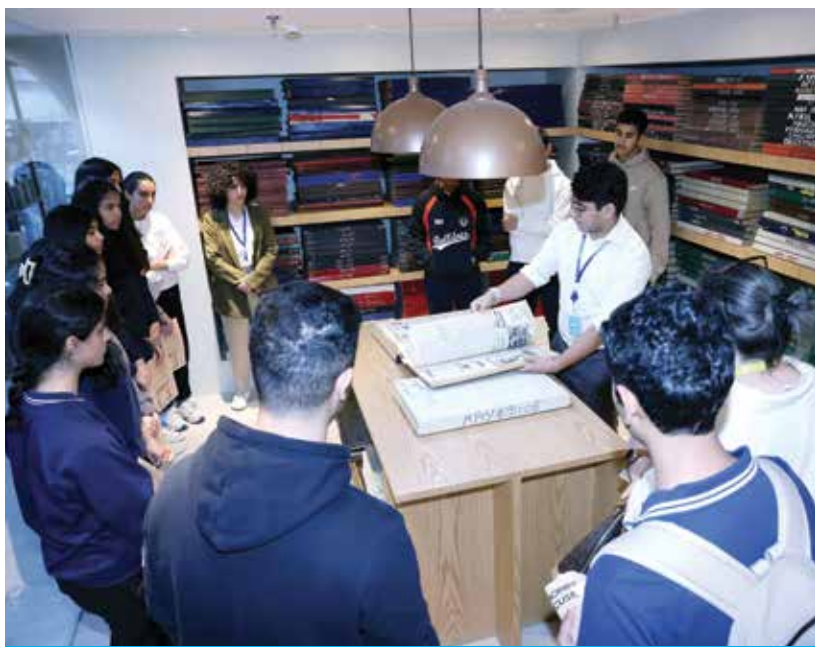
Listen to citizens' complaints, Kuwait leadership advises

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Meshaan said on Monday that there are directions from the leadership to inspect conditions in the security field and authorities to listen to citizens' complaints. The minister, speaking in a press release after a meeting with the chairperson and members of the Municipal Council, said she and her colleagues looked into a host of issues, set priorities, and addressed obstacles facing speedy solutions to the problems in the sector.

She expressed hope that aspired rules and

laws would be drafted for the sake of further progress at the national level, affirming keenness on upgrading personnel's performance and doing everything possible to attain Kuwait Vision 2035 for further development in utilities and other public services. Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Mehri, the chairperson of the council, said that the meeting addressed the enacted rules and those under consideration, namely the construction regulations.

Other topics on the table were cleaning contracts, in addition to other unresolved issues, he said. Munira Al-Amir, the council member, said the council officials would spare no effort to attain the development goals. Her peer, Alia Al-Farsi, said the minister expressed readiness to enhance cooperation with the council, noting that the discussed topics included matters related to public cleaning, waste management, recycling, and society's role in executing public tasks. — KUNA



BBS students exploring the archives room.



Group photo of Kuwait Times and Kuwait News staff with the BBS students in the printing press.

Exploring the world of Journalism: BBS students visit Kuwait Times, Kuwait News

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: A newsroom is where ideas are born, stories are crafted and global events are disseminated to the public. Unlocking the gates of this vibrant world, Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed students of Al-Bayan Bilingual School (BBS) for a visit on Monday, providing them with an exclusive look into the departments and functions of the newspaper.

Sharifa, one of the students, expressed her enthusiasm about the visit. "As soon as I walked in, I felt very excited about seeing how the news that I read every day whether on social media or newspapers is originally created," she said. Student Ahmad, who aims to be part of a publishing house in the future, echoed her words. "It was a spectacular experience, as I enjoyed learning what's behind the scenes of generating news, in addition to all the skills and jobs that are needed to build such a successful entity."

Starting with the archives, students learned more about Kuwait Times' rich heritage through its more than 62 years of documenting significant local and worldwide news, whose impact remains until this day. For instance, travelling back to 1982, students were shown how an event such as the World Cup was covered, and in 2005, they came across a life-changing event when women were given the right to vote in elections for the first time in Kuwait.

Moving to the editorial section, which is the core of Kuwait Times, students explored the process of gathering and writing news and the different roles needed to bring it to light, such as reporting, editing, proofreading and designing. With the constant evolution of the newspaper's technologies and peo-

ple's skills, Kuwait Times showed them how this has transformed the way of shaping news, from just simply black-and-white papers to tailoring news for all modern digital channels.

By seeing a printing press for the first time, students were also informed about the traditional process of printing the newspaper, from the moment of adding the ink until folding the paper and distributing it to people's doorsteps. Finally, regarding content production, they toured the studio where all Kuwait Times' reels and videos are created regularly. They were engaged in the technical and creative process of generating visually appealing and interactive content, as they learned how this area in particular counts as one of the current priorities of the newspaper to attract future generations.



Students in the newsroom, learning more about the process of writing news.



Students are handed the copies of first edition of Kuwait Times, published in 1961. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Kuwait underscores cooperation and amplified efforts to overcome crises

Amir Representative participates in G77 Third South summit

CAIRO: Kuwait has underscored the importance of bolstering cooperation and amplifying joint efforts to overcome and respond to current and foreseeable crises. This came in Kuwait's speech at the G77 and China Third South in the Ugandan capital of Kampala, relayed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's representative, Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai.

The Ambassador affirmed Kuwait's support for joint international cooperation in curbing the expansion of poverty and fortifying the international food security organization. He also highlighted Kuwait's role in alleviating the burden of loans, combating the ramifications of climate change and natural disasters, and addressing humanitarian suffering caused by conflicts and instabil-

ity. Al-Bannai hailed the vital and active performance of the G77, and China affirmed the necessity of furthering such efforts.

On the Palestinian issue, Ambassador Al-Bannai indicated that a great responsibility falls on them to abide by international laws and stipulations, commending member states' involvement in the deteriorating situation. He also urged member states to intensify efforts in support of Palestinian rights and aspirations.

Al-Bannai pointed out that the meeting is held amidst grueling conditions and complex hurdles that undermine the ability to achieve the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The Ambassador relayed to the congregation the greetings of His Highness the Amir and extended his thanks to Uganda for

hosting the summit and to Cuba for presiding over the last session.

The Representative of His Highness Amir headed Kuwait's delegation at the G77 Third South Summit, which kicked off earlier Sunday in Uganda. The summit was chaired by the President of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, with the participation of several leaders and heads of government of the member states of the Group of 77 and China.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes the Ambassador of Kuwait to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and non-resident of the Republic of Uganda, Nayef Al-Otaibi, in addition to the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Organization Affairs, Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah, and a number of senior ministry officials. — KUNA



Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai

KEPS promotes sustainable environment

KUWAIT: Jenan Behzad, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Society for Environmental Protection, emphasized that contributing to building a sustainable environment involves achieving a balance in procurement and consumption processes. This, in turn, contributes to preserving biodiversity and ensuring the continuity of natural wealth for both current and future generations. These remarks were made during a scientific lecture organized by the Environmental Affairs Department of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, focusing on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production).

"Goal 12 emphasizes the need to establish a sustainable consumption and production pattern, striving to strike a balance between the needs of present and future generations. The scientific lecture aimed



Dr. Jenan Behzad receives the award.

at reducing overconsumption, promoting sustainable production, and enhancing resource efficiency. It highlighted the importance of enforcing laws, discouraging the purchase of single-use products, promoting effective waste management and encouraging the recycling of resources to alleviate environmental pressure," explained Behzad.

To achieve sustainable consumption, Behzad

stressed the significance of educating consumers and encouraging informed consumption decisions. This involves supporting environmentally friendly products and initiatives that contribute to minimizing the environmental impact of consumption.

"The pursuit of Goal 12 is integral to the shift toward a more sustainable and equitable economy. The international community aims to realize this goal through cooperation, technology exchange and knowledge sharing to enhance environmental performance and foster sustainable practices globally," Behzad added. Behzad noted that a focus on sustainable purchasing raises awareness among consumers about the environmental impact of their choices. Informed consumers can play a pivotal role in influencing companies to improve their sustainability practices.

In conclusion, Behzad highlighted the critical importance of achieving a balance in buying and consumption for a sustainable environment. This balance encompasses various aspects that bring substantial benefits to both the environment and society, including the conservation of natural resources, reduction of waste and pollution and mitigation of climate change.



KUWAIT: Officials from the scientific center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and the environment public authority (EPA) released a number of birds in the Jahra Reserve with the aim of restoring ecological balance. — KUNA photos



Birds, endangered species released in Jahra Reserve

KUWAIT: The scientific center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and the environment public authority (EPA) released a number of birds in the Jahra Reserve with the aim of restoring ecological balance and preserving biodiversity in the country. The director general of the center, Musaid Al-Yasin, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the pharaonic eagle owl and other birds were released in the reserve and have been rehabilitated as a step towards protecting the environment and wildlife.

He added that this launch came within the framework of the fruitful cooperation between the center, the commission, and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, which has lasted for several years. He stressed the keenness of the center in maintaining a good environment and the importance of treating, studying, and rehabilitating these birds at the scientific center before returning them to their natural environment.

The event came as part of the Scientific Cen-

ter's efforts to preserve biodiversity and promote environmental awareness in Kuwait and demonstrates the center's commitment to supporting environmental activities and enhancing its role in society as a leading scientific institution. Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at the Environment Public Authority, Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan, said in a similar statement to KUNA that the Scientific Center is one of the most important strategic partners with the authority. The cooperation between the two sides has lasted for more than ten years to preserve biodiversity for future generations and spread environmental awareness to all spectrums of society.

Al-Zaidan said that this cooperation comes in line with the objectives of the international treaties ratified by Kuwait, including the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations program. He pointed out that some of the birds released are considered to be on the red list of endangered species.

The scientific center embraced these birds, rehabilitated them, and later released them into the reserve to ensure their peaceful reproduction. He pointed out that some of these birds are threatened with extinction and were subjected to poaching in March. He stressed that preserving biodiversity is a societal responsibility and a necessity. — KUNA



Kuwait residential sector to remain bearish: Experts

KUWAIT: Trades in the sector of residential properties are expected to remain limited in 2024, maintaining the bearish trend of 2023, which recorded a 30 percent fall compared to the previous year's transactions. Experts interviewed by KUNA revealed that statistics from the real estate and documentation division at the Ministry of Justice showed that there were 3,039 housing deals in 2023, in contrast to 4,362 transactions in 2022.

The total value of the dealings dropped from KD 1.927 billion (\$5.9 billion) in 2022 to KD 1.287 billion (3.9 billion) in 2023, down by 33 percent. The number of deals in the investment segment (apartment buildings) dropped by 16 percent last year compared to 2022, from 1,369 to 1,140 contracts; thus, the recorded value fell from KD 1.98 billion (\$3.34 billion) to KD 822 million (2.5 billion), down by 25 percent.

As to the commercial sector (offices, stores, and malls), the number of contracts

dropped by 27 percent last year, where 116 bargains were recorded compared to 161 in 2022. And the total value moved down by 29 percent from KD 605 million (\$1.9 billion) to KD 425 million (\$1.3 billion). Sulaiman Al-Dulaijan, manager of Al-Dulaijan Real-Estate Office, said in an interview with KUNA that the trend in the residential segment would remain low in 2024, noting that the authorities had enacted fresh laws to limit speculation in this particular sector.

Al-Dulaijan said the year 2023 witnessed a 5-15 percent drop in the residences' value, particularly in regions of noticeable activity, namely Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, Abu Fatira, Funaitees, Masayel, Salwa and Rumaithya. He clarified that the forecast downward trend would be in the regions eyed as far from the capital region, where activity would remain unchanged despite the enactment of new laws on undeveloped plots' monopoly.

In part, an owner of lands exceeding

1,500 square meters will be compelled to pay the state annual fees for each undeveloped plot. Al-Dulaijan noted that there has been a recession in the speculators' activity in the residential sector due to the banks' decision not to lend to a citizen who has more than two houses, in addition to the shift of their funds to the investment and handicrafts' fields.

Elaborating, he noted that the investment segment has recently shown a decline after authorities abstained from granting residency to some expatriates amid forecast instability. Plots' prices in the regions between the first and fourth road rings have remained high as compared to the other residential areas; however, the number of transactions has remained unchanged in these inner areas.

Qais Al-Ghanem, a realty expert, told KUNA that some of the reasons for the downward trend in the realty sector are funds' shift to the safe haven—the banks that offer lucrative interests. The recently issued land monopoly law is not expected to be effective in lowering prices in the near future; however, it may be so in the coming years, Al-Ghanem said. He proposed establishing new residential areas with a primary



role for the private sector.

He lauded the banks' decision not to fund nationals who own more than two houses, explaining that the move would stem speculation and nudge speculators to quit the sector, thus raising anticipations for bearish prices in the future. Alaa Behbehani, General Manager of Abraj Behbahani Real-Estate Company, dubbed as normal the fall in the field amid the soaring prices in the aftermath of the coronavirus' outbreak and the lucrative investments in the banks.

He singled out Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City as the region with the steepest fall, due to an upsurge of speculations. Since the third quarter of 2021, the housing sector has witnessed a drastic decline with respect to the total trade's value, while the investment segment has witnessed a slight rise. However, the commercial sector maintained balance. The lackluster atmosphere in the sector is forecast to hold in the current year in the shadow of geopolitical and economic conditions. —KUNA

In my view

A message to the finance ministry



Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Hope is renewed every day in Kuwait for a fresh start in overcoming the obstacles that have hindered the country's development for a considerable period. Despite these challenges, Kuwait takes pride in its unique achievements and innovations, with a prominent role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or public benefit associations in civil society. These entities actively contribute to fostering hope and raising community awareness, alleviating burdens from the government and exemplifying positive popular contributions.

Recently, the civil society received a shock as the ministry of finance issued warnings to vacate premises occupied by private societies. The basis for this directive stems from a comment by the Audit Bureau regarding the perceived discrepancy in the value of the premises granted to the societies by the social affairs ministry, as compared to the relatively low rent charged. Instead of providing a reasoned response to this concern, the finance ministry opted to instruct numerous NGOs to vacate their long-held premises.

These premises were initially allocated by the social affairs ministry to facilitate the work of these societies, allowing them to function as integral parts of the country's unity. Over the years, they have served as platforms for volunteers to contribute to nation-building. These societies, distinct from private companies focused on profit and loss, view their premises as an essential part of the country's identity and take pride in their accomplishments.

It appears that the social affairs ministry may not have a comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand. Moreover, there may be dissenting voices within the finance ministry regarding these warnings. Implementing such directives could bring a significant portion of the civil society to a standstill, jeopardizing the positive image that Kuwait maintains regionally.

In this new era of hope, there are individuals who, for reasons unknown, seem determined to extinguish the country's guiding lights. However, it is doubtful that Kuwait's leaders would accept such actions. There is optimism that the collective efforts of these societies can convince the finance ministry to reconsider its decision. A logical response to the Audit Bureau, emphasizing the irreplaceable value of these societies and their activities, is crucial. Kuwait is renowned for its volunteerism, and it is anticipated that the country will persist in upholding this esteemed tradition despite any challenges.

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P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com

Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

Wrong diagnosis causes infertility and blindness

KUWAIT: In one of the most serious cases of medical errors, a citizen lost his sight and also became infertile due to wrong diagnosis. A Kuwaiti lawyer filed a lawsuit in which he demanded compensation and accountability for the doctor responsible for the wrong medical diagnosis that caused the problems for his client. The victim had been taking the diabetes medicines for 12 years, only to suddenly discover that he had been infected with other diseases instead of cured.

The lawyer said his client (a young man in the prime of life) is still unmarried. "He visited the hospital for 12 years over a health condition and was surprised after he was told he had diabetes. The doctor told him to take the diabetes medications continuously. This he did throughout these years," the lawyer said.

"Few days ago, he visited the same hospital only to discover he does not have diabetes. The diabetes drugs have caused serious damage to his system, thereby causing him to be infertile. In addition to that, he lost his sight, and he is no longer able to drive his vehicle (even while in his early twenties). People's health is their most precious asset, and it is not for experiments. The wrong diagnosis is more dangerous than the disease itself," the lawyer added.

Teachers Association fumes over assaults

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Teachers Association has renewed its demands for the intervention of the Interim Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, as it urges the ministry to investigate the unfortunate and unjustified treatment of one of its teachers at Saeed High School in Taima. The teacher was attacked in the parking lot in front of students, colleagues, administrators and parents.

A delegation from the Board of Directors of the Association included the Secretary, Dr Obaid Al-Otaibi, and members of the Board of Directors



NBK executives and representatives of IE Business School, Madrid celebrate the graduation of the 8th cohort of its leadership development program 'NBK High-Fliers'.

NBK celebrates graduation of 8th cohort of 'High-Fliers' program

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) celebrated the graduation of the 8th cohort of its leadership development program "NBK High-Fliers" which is held in collaboration with IE Business School, Madrid. The closing ceremony was attended by NBK Executives, as well as representatives of IE Business School, Madrid. This cohort extended over a period of 6 months and graduated 21 participants from different areas in the bank including NBK Capital, as well as international locations (NBK KSA Wealth Management, London, Shanghai, Paris and Bahrain).

The program covered a variety of important topics including key leadership skills, new trends in marketing, negotiation skills, building a culture of

excellence, change management and innovation, measuring and managing performance, as well as management science, effective communication, developing new and unconventional thinking, and combining technical and leadership skills to cultivate strategic thinking in leadership.

The participating teams presented their projects for innovative banking themes and solutions; and the panel consisting of executives at NBK and representatives of IE Business School, Madrid, selected 3 winners in the top performance ranking, and a winning innovation project team, whose project will be implemented subject to a set of criteria and conditions set by NBK.

On this occasion, Najla Al-Sager, Head of Talent Management, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, said, "The NBK High-Fliers program for developing young banking leaders is part of the ongoing efforts to develop our human capital and talent. It also echoes the bank's vision of placing the sustainable development of human resources as a top priority, especially young leaders, who are considered essential for achieving the bank's long-term ambitions."

"NBK places the development of its people as a top priority, harnessing all its capabilities to contribute to their career progression by providing training and development programs held in

partnership with globally renowned educational institutions, in order to keep pace with the key changes in the banking business," she added.

NBK boasts a unique work environment that is comparable with international peers, where it harnesses all its capabilities to develop employees and stimulate their creativity and innovation. This reflects positively on employees' performance, and helps the bank maintain its leadership position, both locally and regionally. Founded in 1973, IE Business School is considered one of the leading and top ranked business schools in the world according to international magazines and newspapers including Forbes, The Economist, Financial Times and Bloomberg.

visited the teacher to check on his health and safety as well as his medical report. Dr Al-Otaibi pointed out that the board places full confidence in the Minister of Interior. Dr Al-Otaibi stressed that there is an urgent need to find ways to protect the teacher. The association hopes the Minister of Education, Dr Adel Al-Adwani, will put the issue among his priorities in order to protect teachers in cooperation with competent authorities.



Dr Obaid Al-Otaibi

Kuwait diplomacy and human rights extolled

KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah said on Monday that Kuwait's relationship with human rights dates back to the beginnings of independence. This was stated in a statement by Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after her participation in the introductory meeting of the members of the National Standing Committee to prepare reports and follow up on recommendations related to human rights. The program was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society institutions.

Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah explained that the first mention of human rights came in the speech of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah during the first anniversary of independence in 1962, in which he said that "Kuwait is a peace-loving country seeking to strengthen it, pursuing a policy of non-alignment, seeking to consolidate ties, and adhering to the Charter of the United Nations and the Bill of Human Rights" as enshrined in the constitution in 1962.

She added that with the accession of Kuwait to the United Nations in 1963, that relationship was framed. Kuwait believes in the active and vital role played by civil society

institutions for the growth and Renaissance.

The country is respecting human rights together with the relevant government agencies. She pointed out that Kuwait is a party to basic human rights conventions, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Civil Covenant on Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention Against Torture.

The committee is in the process of preparing the fourth report, which is supposed to be submitted in 2025, and Kuwait enjoys a special relationship with the United Nations and all its organs, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. She drew attention to the membership at the human rights council for the period 2024-2026 and its commitment to implement the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and strengthen cooperation with the human rights council and its mechanisms.

For his part, the assistant undersecretary for Social Development Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Dr Khalid Al-Ajmi, stressed, in a similar statement to KUNA, the keenness of the ministry and its cadres to listen to all the opinions and proposals, overcome obstacles in front of them, and support them in developing topics related to human rights. Al-Ajmi added that there are 200 associations that are under the supervision of the ministry. — KUNA



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KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah and other officials address the media.

Union of Coops presents plan to reduce prices

KUWAIT: The Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies has launched an integrated project to reduce the prices of goods in societies with the aim of reducing the financial burden on families and protecting the middle and vulnerable classes. The draft union presented to the Ministries of Social Affairs and Trade includes supporting the decision to reduce prices, setting a ceiling for renting shelves and free goods, supporting the national product, as well as intensifying control

over goods and subjecting vegetables, fruits, and family supplies to the union's pricing.

Moreover, the plan will authorize the president of the union to negotiate with suppliers on the facilities, reducing prices for citizens by 10 percent in exchange for those facilities. The Union called on the concerned authorities to reduce prices by reducing customs duties, fixing the rents of shelves and refrigerators to a maximum, and dividing them into three segments (privileged location, medium location, and back location).

Other plans include limiting free products with a maximum ceiling, canceling all items that entered coops without circulating the union, intensifying control, holding employees accountable for any suspicion of corruption, and exposing any board member who wishes to gain in a fraudulent way.



French doctors shocked by injuries of wounded Gazans

Trump eyes New Hampshire win



AYODHYA, India: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi walks into the Ram temple in this handout photo taken on January 22, 2024 by Indian Press Information Bureau (PIB). — AFP

Temple ushers in ‘new era’ for India

Opening of temple on site of razed mosque boosts Modi ahead of April vote

AYODHYA, India: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the opening of a temple Monday heralded a “new era” for India, at a ceremony that embodies the triumph of his muscular Hindu nationalist politics, galvanizing loyalists ahead of elections this year.

“Breaking the shackles of slavery, the country should rise, taking lessons from the past,” Modi said, speaking outside the temple to the Hindu deity Ram, built on grounds where a mosque stood for centuries before it was torn down in 1992 by Hindu zealots incited by members of his party. “A country creates new history only like this.”

That demolition triggered the worst religious riots since independence — killing 2,000 people, most of them Muslims — and shook the foundations of India’s officially secular political order. “Jan 22, 2024 is not merely a date in the calendar but heralds the advent of a new era”, he added, after praying at the feet of the black stone idol in the heart of the grand temple, garlanded in flowers and

decked in jewels. “It’s Ram’s supreme blessings that we are witnessing.”

Outside, tens of thousands of chanting and dancing devotees waving flags, honking horns and beating drums, packed the streets of the northern town of Ayodhya, as military helicopters showered flower petals from the sky.

Few members of Ayodhya’s Muslim community were seen joining the jubilant street party, and opposition leaders have stayed away. But for Modi’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the opening of the Ram Mandir temple is a landmark moment in a decades-long campaign to align the country’s governance with its majority faith. “The Lord has made me an instrument to represent all the people of India,” Modi had said ahead of the “auspicious” opening.

Tycoons, cricketers and actors

Excitement has reached a fever pitch, with thousands of Hindu believers dancing in packed streets as giant loudspeakers blast out religious tunes. Vijay

Kumar, 18, took four days to reach the town after walking and hitchhiking 600 kilometers (370 miles). “We just wanted to be here,” Kumar said. “We just wish to see the temple before we leave.”

About 2,500 musicians are performing on over 100 stages for the crowds of pilgrims around the elaborate temple, built at an estimated \$240 million that the project’s backers say was sourced from public donations.

The 140 kilometers (87 miles) between the town and Uttar Pradesh state capital Lucknow is a seemingly endless stream of billboards of blue-skinned Ram with bow and arrow — as well as of Modi and the region’s chief minister, the saffron-robed Hindu monk Yogi Adityanath. “It’s all because of Modi,” said Prem Sharan, 35, a resident of Ayodhya. “Some critics say that it is being turned into an election-like atmosphere; so be it. At least they are doing what they promised and one needs the power to do things for the people.”

Other attendees jetted into the

newly built international airport and will stay at a crop of hotels built to cater to the millions of pilgrims expected to visit each year. Celebrity guests include Indian tycoons, cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar and Bollywood titan Amitabh Bachchan.

‘Destruction’

Modi and the BJP have sought to bring the Hindu faith to the forefront of public life since sweeping to power a decade ago. Party luminaries regularly condemn earlier eras of Islamic rule over parts of India as a time of “slavery” when their own religion was oppressed, with Ayodhya a key plank in their narrative.

Devout Hindus believe Ram, one of the most revered Hindu gods, was born in the town more than 7,000 years ago, but that the Babri mosque was built over his birthplace by a 16th-century Muslim emperor. The BJP played an instrumental role in public campaigning that eventually led to the mosque’s demolition.

The destruction presaged the rise of the BJP and Modi as unstoppable electoral juggernauts, displacing the secularist Congress party that had governed India almost without interruption since independence from Britain.

Modi’s consecration of the temple alongside Hindu priests will again project him as a defender of the faith ahead of a general election expected to begin in April. The BJP is heavily favored to win a third successive landslide victory, in part because of Modi’s appeals to Hindu nationalism, and opposition parties are boycotting the temple ceremony, saying the event will be a thinly veiled campaign rally.

But many of India’s 200 million Muslims, already anxious in a climate of increased sectarian tensions, have watched the clamor around the temple with trepidation. Mohammed Shahid, 52, speaking to AFP last month in Ayodhya, recounted how his father was burned alive by a mob. “For me, the temple symbolizes nothing but death and destruction”, he said. — AFP

China’s rights record under spotlight at UN

GENEVA: A civil liberties crackdown, repression in Xinjiang and Hong Kong’s draconian national security law are among concerns expected to be raised during a UN review of China’s rights record on Tuesday. Beijing is likely to face intense scrutiny, especially from Western countries, during its regular Universal Periodic Review (UPR) — an examination of all 193 UN member states must undergo every four to five years to assess their human rights record.

“It is very important to hold China to account,” a Western diplomat said. The array of issues likely to be raised is vast, from the sweeping national security law imposed on Hong Kong in 2020 to quash dissent after pro-democracy protests, to alleged efforts to erase cultural and religious identity in Tibet.

Much focus is expected to remain on the situation in the northwestern Xinjiang region, where China is accused of incarcerating more than a million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. Beijing vehemently rejects the charges, which were already put forward during its last UPR in 2018.

Since then, more UN documentation has been provided, including a report released by UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet just minutes before her term ended in 2022.

‘Crimes against humanity’

That report, flatly rejected by China, cites possible “crimes against humanity”. But amid intense Chinese pressure, UN Human Rights Council members narrowly voted in Oct 2022 against even debating the report’s contents. “We haven’t seen a really substantive discussion about the report,” said Sarah Brooks, Amnesty International’s deputy director for China.

Rights advocates voiced hope the UPR could provide a chance for countries to back the findings and demand action from Beijing. “This is the perfect opportunity for countries to raise the issue and demand tangible action to stop the ongoing genocide,” Dolkun Isa, a Uyghur activist based in Germany and president of the World Uyghur Congress, told AFP.

Sophie Richardson, the former China director at Human Rights Watch, said Beijing should face pointed questions on the “substantiated concerns about crimes against humanity”. Questions are also expected to be raised on Beijing’s crackdown on civil society, which is sometimes felt as far away as Geneva.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the death of activist Cao Shunli, who was detained as she attempted to travel to Geneva ahead of China’s 2013 UPR. After being held for several months without charge, she fell gravely ill and died in March 2014. Richardson urged the diplomats coming to the UPR to delve into such concerns. “They must take the process seriously,” she said.

‘Politicization’

A large Chinese delegation, headed by Beijing’s ambassador to the UN in

Geneva, Chen Xu, will take part in the event and attempt to present its rights situation in a far more positive light. “We uphold respect for and protection of human rights as a task of importance in state governance,” Yuyun Liu, spokesperson at the Chinese mission in Geneva, told AFP in an email.

The spokesperson stressed that China “firmly opposes the politicization of human rights and double standards”. In a bid to control the narrative, Beijing has reportedly requested the UN ensure “anti-China separatists” are not granted access to the session, and that any “anti-China” slogans are excluded.

Observers also warn that China has been pressuring countries to express positive feedback and working to ensure more critical nations have little time to speak. Advanced questions submitted by some countries hint at pandering. Belarus, for instance, states that “China upholds that all ethnic groups are equal,” and asks Beijing to “share the efforts and practices by the Chinese government in protecting the rights of ethnic minorities”.

China’s critics accuse Beijing of pushing supporters to fill the allotted speaking time with praise. In total, 163 states have registered to speak during the half-day session, leaving each country with just 45 seconds on the clock. “How do we encapsulate our concerns regarding China in 45 seconds?” the Western diplomat said. US ambassador Michele Taylor agreed, telling an event at the UN in Geneva on Monday she had been “practicing my speed-reading” ahead of the UPR. “I will get all of my points across.” — AFP

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May her soul Rest in Peace

International

Trump eyes New Hampshire win

State make-or-break for Nikki Haley, who trails former boss in her strongest state

Spain police make arrest in 'love scam' triple murder

MADRID: Spanish police on Monday said they had arrested a Pakistani man in connection with the killing of three siblings in their 70s, over debts reportedly linked to an online romance scam. The 43-year-old suspect had "turned himself in" on Sunday night, "admitting his involvement in incidents related to the triple murder in a house in Morata de Tajuna", a police statement said.

Judicial sources said the suspect had previously been convicted for attacking one of the sisters. Police had on Thursday found the three bodies, which were partially burnt, lying in a heap inside their home in the village some 35 kilometers (20 miles) southeast of Madrid.

Neighbors raised the alarm after not seeing the two sisters and their disabled brother for some time, with police saying their deaths were being treated as murder over a suspected debt. Police on Monday said the man, referred to only as D.H.F.C., was the "main suspect" in the case as he had "previously injured one of the female victims last year", with the courts confirming his arrest and conviction.

Quoting local residents, Spanish media said the tragedy was likely linked to a fake online love affair, with the two sisters embarking on what they thought was a long-distance relationship with two apparent US servicemen. They were led to believe one had died and that the other needed money so that he could send them a multi-million-euro inheritance, causing the sisters to rack up huge debts. Initially they began borrowing money from neighbors with the town's mayor Francisco Villalain telling Spanish media they had rented out a room in their home to the Pakistani suspect for several months.

In scam denial

During that time, the suspect had reportedly lent the sisters at least 50,000 euros (\$55,000), which they had never repaid, prompting his violent attack on one of the sisters. According to a statement from the Madrid region's top court, he was arrested in February 2023 "for an offence of injury with a dangerous object involving one of the two dead women".

He was held in pre-trial detention without bail until his case came to court in September and he was sentenced to two years behind bars, slapped with a 2,900 euro (\$3,150) fine and banned from being within 500 meters (yards) of the victim for two years and six months.

But under Spanish law, anyone receiving a jail term of up to two years on a first offence automatically has their sentence suspended, so he was released after agreeing to pay the compensation, the statement said.

When they called the police last week, neighbors said they hadn't seen the siblings since before Christmas. Speaking to Spanish media, they said the sister had repeatedly asked to borrow large sums of money, refusing to believe it was a scam and saying they would pay it back when they got the seven-million-euro (\$7.6 million) inheritance payout. "They weren't asking for 100 euros or 20, they were asking you for 5,000 or 6,000 euros," one neighbor had told state-owned broadcaster TVE on Friday. Police did not comment on those reports. — AFP

MANCHESTER, US: Donald Trump aims to sew up the Republican presidential nomination after the contest narrowed to a two-horse race with Florida governor Ron DeSantis's withdrawal less than 48 hours before the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday. Short of a defeat in the Granite State, or a close second-place for his remaining rival Nikki Haley, the timeline to Trump's nomination as the candidate to face President Joe Biden in November could be greatly accelerated.

The ex-president won a crushing victory over DeSantis in Iowa last week, with Haley trailing in third, and no candidate has ever failed to claim the Republican crown after taking the two opening states. That makes New Hampshire make-or-break for Haley, Trump's one-time UN ambassador, who trails her former boss in polling for what is seen as her strongest state.

Trump, 77, has ramped up attacks on Haley over the last week, calling her "not smart enough" and claiming that she had not earned the respect of voters. He assailed her again Sunday and praised DeSantis as a "very capable person" as he accepted the governor's endorsement in front of cheering supporters. "Without the endorsement I think we would have got all of those votes," he said to raucous applause at his campaign headquarters in Manchester. "Because we have very similar policies — strong borders, great education, low taxes, very, very few regulations, as few as possible — things that (Haley) really doesn't talk about, because she's a globalist."

Haley had earlier taken aim at the front-runner's mental acuity after he confused her with veteran Democrat Nancy Pelosi during a rally. "He's just not at the same level he was at 2016. I think we're seeing some of that decline. But more than that, what I'll say is focus on the fact that no matter what it is, chaos follows him," she told CBS.

Haley's 'last stand'

With DeSantis out of the picture, Haley is seeking to rely on New Hampshire's high proportion of independents — who are allowed to vote in either party's primary and typically break for more moderate candidates — to mount what some analysts have described as her "last stand."

But it will be an uphill climb as she is 15 points

Biden, Harris put abortion rights on election frontline

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will push the fight for abortion rights in a series of events this week, highlighting what Democrats believe is political kryptonite for Donald Trump in November's election.

Harris is being promoted by the Biden campaign as the face of the reproductive rights issue, delivering a message that if Republican former president Trump makes a comeback, he will seek to impose further restrictions on abortion.

Harris travels to the swing state of Wisconsin to launch a nationwide tour on the issue on Monday, the 51st anniversary of the historic Roe v. Wade court decision legalizing abortion. A conservative-leaning Supreme Court featuring three Trump-appointed judges struck that ruling down in 2022.

Biden is meeting experts on reproductive healthcare at the White House. "On this day and every day, Vice President Harris and I are fighting to protect women's reproductive freedom against Republican officials' dangerous, extreme, and out-of-touch agenda," Biden said in a statement Monday.

Harris and Biden will then make their first joint appearance on the 2024 campaign trail with a major rally on the issue in Virginia on Tuesday, along with First Lady Jill Biden and "Second Gentleman" Douglas Emhoff, Harris's husband.

Biden's campaign increasingly sees the issue as

Mutairi reaffirmed Kuwait's supportive stance towards the Palestinian people to gain their legitimate rights that are guaranteed by international laws. He reiterated that Kuwait would exert all efforts possible to aid the Palestinian people with humanitarian aid and provide a decent living condition.

The ambassador welcomed South Africa's move in its case against the Zionist occupation authority at the International Court of Justice. The meeting comes after the Zionist military launched a devastating war on Gaza on Oct 7, 2023, causing a humanitarian crisis. About 1.9 million people, or more than 85 percent of the population of Gaza, have been displaced, according to Palestinian authorities and the United Nations. — KUNA

officer, DeSantis was elected in 2018 as governor in Florida after receiving Trump's valuable endorsement in the Republican primary.

Since then, he often distanced himself from Trump and gained notoriety for hard-right stances on education, immigration and LGBTQ issues. His state management of the pandemic, pushing for a rapid reopening of the economy during then-president Trump's term and opposition to policies of President Joe Biden's administration, made him an instant hit. He then sought a national platform, but appeared stiff and uneasy at candidate debates, media interviews and voter events. His runaway campaign spending and habit of relying on a close circle of advisors anchored by his wife, Casey DeSantis, also saw his bid begin to founder.

"I'm glad that he's dropped out. I think that it was inevitable," Lynne Mason, 60, who runs a small business in Keene, New Hampshire, told AFP. "We need a strong leader right now, with the state of the United States at this point." At an event in Seabrook, New Hampshire, Haley said DeSantis "ran a great race, he's been a good governor, and we wish him well." "Having said that, it's now one fella and one lady," she continued. "This comes down to 'what do you want?' Do you want more of the same or do you want something new?" Having previously avoided direct invectives against Trump, Haley later leaned into the frontrunner, telling CNN she's "not thin-skinned" like him and that she views him and 81-year-old Biden as "equally bad". — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump meets with Nikki Haley in the Oval office of the White House on Oct 9, 2018. — AFP

behind Trump in the RealClearPolitics and FiveThirtyEight polling averages for the contest, and a recent surge in momentum appears to have stalled. If Haley over-performs on Tuesday, however, that could see her regain the elusive buzz as a genuine threat to the ex-president heading into her home state of South Carolina in late February.

"I think it would be great for us to have Nikki Haley as president," Madison Gillis, an 18-year-old first-time voter and a Republican, told AFP at a diner in Manchester. "I think she's amazing. I love what she stands for. I think she has a shot here in New Hampshire."

Criminal trials

New Hampshire is a small prize in the grand scheme, allocating just 22 of the 2,429 delegates who nominate at the Republican convention in Milwaukee come July. But it

a vote winner after Trump repeatedly bragged that he should be given credit for the top US court's decision to overturn the federally protected right to abortion. "He is proud. Proud that women across our nation are suffering? Proud that women have been robbed of a fundamental freedom?" Harris was to say in Wisconsin according to excerpts released by her office. Since the court's decision, 14 US states have imposed outright bans on abortion, while seven others have imposed time limits, according to a tracker in the New York Times.

'Personal impact'

Biden and the other speakers on Tuesday will "underscore what is at stake for reproductive freedom in 2024 — including the threat of a MAGA Republican-led national abortion ban," the Biden-Harris campaign said. The Biden campaign is also launching television and social media ads targeting swing voters in battleground states, focusing on the "personal impact that Trump's abortion bans have on women and providers."

The issue remains a seismic fault line in US politics and society. Thousands of anti-abortion activists rallied in the snow Friday in Washington for an annual "March for Life." Democrats have particularly seized on the issue after Republicans lost a series of votes centered on abortion rights in off-year elections last year in Ohio, Kentucky and Virginia.

Polls repeatedly show a clear majority of Americans support continued access to safe abortion, even as conservative groups push to limit the procedure — or ban it outright. Democrat campaigners likely would target areas where abortion rights are under threat, as it is not as "broad brush" an issue as migration or crime, Melissa DeRosa, a

is a more reliable bellwether for nationwide electoral success than more conservative states, and is seen as setting the tone for the coming races.

So-called "Super Tuesday" voting on March 5, when 874 delegates are on the table, can get a candidate three-quarters of the way to the total required for the nomination. Aides expect Trump to be in a position to close out the race a week later and want it in the bag by April at the outside — almost certainly before any of his various criminal trials begin. Democrats have their own primary in New Hampshire on the same day as Republicans, but Biden is not on the ballot after local officials clashed with the national party over scheduling. Campaigners say they will vote for Biden anyway, writing his name on the ballot in hopes he can still beat Minnesota congressman Dean Phillips and self-help author Marianne Williamson. — AFP



DELAWARE: US President Joe Biden steps out of Saint Edmond Roman Catholic Church after attending mass on January 20, 2024. — AFP

Democratic strategist, told AFP. "Reproductive freedom is going to be an issue that matters in places where it's not already secure," she said. "This is going to be something that's going to be strategically deployed in areas where it matters."

Harris's appearances are also part of a Biden campaign strategy to get the vice president out in front of a public with whom she has, according to opinion polls, struggled to connect. Republicans have made her a particular target, criticizing her as being unprepared as next-in-line to the presidency should anything happen to 81-year-old Biden. But the campaign believes her voice could be crucial in swaying women, ethnic minority and young voters — and she won praise last week for her abortion messaging from an unlikely quarter. "What Kamala is doing, right or wrong, is very powerful among young women," Trump's former press secretary Kayleigh McEnany told conservative Fox News. — AFP

Kuwait urges int'l stance against...

Continued from Page 1

for a very long time and were forced to abandon their homes, leading to a life of despair and agony, the ambassador said. He pointed out the escalation of Zionist crimes in the occupied West Bank, the systematic destruction of Palestinian refugee camp infrastructure, the daily raids on dozens of Palestinian cities, villages and camps, and the Zionist blockade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

DeSantis ends presidential run...

Continued from Page 1

Trump stormed to victory in Iowa last Tuesday, with 51 percent of Republican voters choosing the twice-impeached former president over DeSantis, who gained only 21 percent, and Haley at 19 percent. No candidate has ever lost the race after claiming the first two states, and Trump would almost certainly declare the Republican nomination over with a win in New Hampshire.

His campaign said in a statement Sunday that he was "honored" by DeSantis' endorsement, and called for Republicans to rally behind him, dismissing Haley as "the candidate of the globalists and Democrats". "It's time to choose wisely," the statement said. In her own statement, Haley warned that the United States is "not a country of coronations". "So far, only one state has voted. Half of its votes went to Donald Trump, and half did not ... Voters deserve a say in whether we go down the road of Trump and Biden again, or we go down a new conservative road," she said. Many Republicans had pinned their hopes on DeSantis, who at just 45 was embraced by some as a rising star of the right. But his candidacy, announced at the end of May, struggled to establish itself as a threat to 77-year-old Trump. A former naval

Zionists pressed on 2-state solution...

Continued from Page 1

Victims of the latest Zionist strikes were brought to the hospital, at least one on a hand-pulled cart. The Palestinian Red Crescent said Zionist forces were "besieging" their ambulance center "and targeting anyone attempting to move in the area". At one building that had been hit, men walked over broken concrete with only torches casting a dusty light to help them search in the darkness for survivors.

The strikes came as European Union foreign ministers held meetings in Brussels with top diplomats from the warring sides and key Arab states. The 27 EU ministers first met the Zionist entity's Foreign Minister Israel Katz before sitting down separately with the Palestinian Authority's top diplomat, Riyad Al-Maliki.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told the Zionist entity "peace and stability cannot be built only by military means". "Which are the other solutions they have in mind? To make all the Palestinians leave? To kill off them?" Borrell said. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has drawn condemnation from the United Nations and defied the United States, which provides the Zionist entity with billions of dollars in military aid, by rejecting calls for a Palestinian state.

Maliki demanded the EU call for an immediate ceasefire and urged the bloc to consider sanctions against Netanyahu for "destroying the chances for a two-state solution". Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said "the whole world" sees a two-state solution as "the only way out of this misery". Katz ignored questions from journalists over a future two-state solution and said the Zionist entity was focused on returning captives and ensuring its own security.

The EU has struggled for a united stance on the conflict in Gaza as staunch backers of the Zionist entity such as Germany have rejected demands for an immediate ceasefire made by the likes of Spain and Ireland. But there is overall backing in the bloc for a two-state solution. "The two-state solution is the only solution,



SANAA: Armed Yemeni supporters of the Houthis movement rally during an anti-Zionist and anti-US rally in the Houthi-controlled capital on Jan 22, 2024. — AFP

and even those who don't want to know about it have not yet come up with any other alternative," said German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock.

Borrell circulated what he called a "comprehensive approach" towards finding peace involving the international community holding a conference that would come up with a plan to be put to both the Zionists and the Palestinians. The paper said the international community should then eventually "set out the consequences they envisage to attach to engagement or non-engagement with the peace plan" by either side.

The talks came a day after Hamas issued a 16-page report, in Arabic and English, explaining the background to the Oct 7 attacks against the Zionist entity. It called the attacks a "defensive act" and "necessary step" against Zionist occupation, "reclaiming the Palestinian rights and on the way for liberation and independence like all peoples".

The Zionist entity has carried out a relentless offensive that has killed at least 25,295 people in Gaza, around 70 percent of them women, young children and adolescents, according to the latest toll issued Monday by Gaza's health ministry. US intelligence agencies have estimated that the Zionist campaign has killed "around 20 percent to 30 percent" of Hamas fighters and is still far from its goal of destroying the Islamist movement, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday. — AFP

International



AL-ARISH: Military medical personnel and Palestinians, some on wheelchairs, are seated onboard the French LHD Dixmude military ship, which serves as a hospital to treat wounded Palestinians. -- AFP photos



A Palestinian youth walks with crutches onboard the French LHD Dixmude military ship.

French doctors shocked by injuries of wounded Gazans

French ship has received tiny minority of 62,000 patients injured in Gaza

AL-ARISH: On a French warship off the Egyptian coast, wounded Palestinians receive the healthcare that has become largely unobtainable in the besieged Gaza Strip after months of war.

Sitting in a wheelchair, Abdulrahman Iyad wrings his hands in his lap, resting them gently near pins protruding from his thighs. He scrolls through his phone, looking at photos of his family, all killed in the blast that tore his own face apart.

"I was sent flying through the air and hit the wall of our neighbors' house, my leg was trapped under the caved-in ceiling," Iyad told AFP on the French helicopter carrier Dixmude, which is being used as a hospital to treat wounded Palestinian civilians.

"When I woke up in hospital, my uncles told me they had visited me, but I couldn't remember a thing," Iyad's home, like much of the Palestinian territory where the Zionist entity has waged war since early October, has been reduced to rubble.

The Zionist entity's relentless ground and air military campaign has killed more than 25,105 people, around 70 percent of them women, children and adolescents, according to figures from Gaza's health ministry. The entity claims the bombardment is aimed at destroying Hamas after the Palestinian resistance group attacked southern Zionist communities and



A police car is parked in front of the French LHD Dixmude military ship as it docks at the Egyptian port of Al-Arish.

military bases on Oct 7, 2023. Around 1,140 people, mostly civilians, died in the attack and subsequent Zionist military operation aimed at regaining control of communities targeted by Hamas.

Search-and-rescue missions have become nearly impossible in the territory, meaning thou-

sands have been left trapped and presumed dead under the rubble, medics say. The healthcare system has almost entirely collapsed, with hospitals overwhelmed and doctors having to treat a growing number of casualties with dwindling resources.

New security network

The violence prompted ministers of Andean countries to create a new "Andean security network" against organized crime, according to a signed official declaration at an emergency meeting in Lima on Sunday.

The network will guarantee "a 24/7 service to provide and receive information, and/or request information from other countries ... on the activity of criminal groups that have, or may have, transnational operations," said the declaration from the Andean Community, comprised of members Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Bolivia. Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Gabriela Sommerfeld hailed the agreement as a "new chapter." "Fear paralyzes countries," she stressed. "We have seen that fear has paralyzed Ecuador, paralyzed investment, increased unemployment and migration."

Peru and Colombia had already tightened border controls, fearing an influx of criminals fleeing the crackdown in Ecuador. The United States also announced Sunday that a delegation would visit Ecuador to "consider options to accelerate bilateral security cooperation and discuss collaborative approaches to confront the threats posed by transnational criminal organizations."

Highlighting the extent of the drug trade in the region, authorities in both Colombia and Ecuador announced over the weekend that they had intercepted two semi-submersible vessels loaded with tons of drugs in their respective Pacific waters. Three people on each vessel were arrested. — AFP

Dozens arrested in Ecuador after hospital assault

QUITO, Ecuador: Police in violence-plagued Ecuador arrested 68 people Sunday who had attempted to take over a hospital in the country's southwest in the midst of a "war" between drug gangs and the security forces. The arrests came as Quito agreed with neighboring Andean nations Peru, Colombia and Bolivia to launch a new security network, with the deal reached at an emergency meeting held as the region watches bloodshed spiral in once-peaceful Ecuador.

"We neutralized alleged terrorists who were trying to take over the facilities of a hospital in Yaguachi, Guayas," police announced on social media. Those detained were believed to be trying to rescue a colleague who was admitted to the hospital with injuries hours earlier, it added. Firearms and drugs were seized.

Police said they also raided a "rehabilitation center" that housed a gang command center and brothel, and where several alleged gang members were hiding. Ecuadoran authorities have recently closed hundreds of such centers, essentially gang-run clandestine hospitals that officials say do not have proper facilities for patient care. Once considered a bastion of peace in Latin

America, Ecuador has been plunged into crisis after years of expansion by transnational cartels that use its ports to ship drugs to the United States and Europe.

After a recent spate of violence sparked by the prison escape of Adolfo Macias, a drug kingpin known as "Fito," President Daniel Noboa imposed a state of emergency and declared the country in a "war" against gangs. Drug cartels reacted swiftly, threatening to execute civilians and security forces and taking hostage dozens of police and prison officials, since released. There are some 20 criminal groups in the country of 17 million people, with membership thought to exceed 20,000.



GUAYAS: Arrested men who attempted to take over a hospital sit in a police bus in Guayas, Ecuador, on Jan 21, 2024. — AFP

'Extreme amount of work'

WHO member states decided in December 2021 to create a new international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, aimed at ensuring the flaws that turned Covid-19 into a global crisis could never happen again. WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan reminded countries how the pandemic "ripped apart our social, economic and political systems and became a multi-trillion dollar problem".

In the midst of major geopolitical conflicts, "this is one thing the world agrees on", he said. Roland Driec of the Netherlands, who is co-chairing the negotiations, said the project had condensed a seven-year process into two years. He said the accord should be ambitious, innovative and with clear commitments.

On the disagreements, he said European countries wanted more money invested in pandemic prevention, while Africa wanted the knowledge and financing to make that work, plus proper access to pandemic "counter-measures" like vaccines and treatments.

He said there were two sessions of two weeks left to do an "extreme" amount of work. Parallel negotiations are also going on to reform the International Health Regulations (IHR), which many countries felt had been found badly wanting.

Under these, Tedros declared COVID-19, a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020, the highest level of alert available under the regulations. But it was not until March 2020 when he described the worsening situation as a pandemic -- a word that does not exist in the IHR vocabulary -- that the world jolted into action, by which time the virus was already widespread. Tedros declared an end to the international emergency in May 2023. Ashley Bloomfield, the chief executive of New Zealand's health ministry during the pandemic, is co-chairing the IHR negotiations. Like Tedros, he slammed a "coordinated and sophisticated campaign" of misinformation and disinformation attempting to undermine the process. He said there were 300 proposed amendments to plough through during the talks. — AFP

WHO chief warns pandemic accord hangs in balance

GENEVA: The World Health Organization chief fears plans for a global pandemic preparedness agreement will fall apart amid wrangling and disinformation, warning on Monday that future generations "may not forgive us". Shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO's 194 member states decided more than two years ago to start negotiating an international accord aimed at ensuring countries are better equipped to deal with the next health catastrophe, or to prevent it altogether.

The plan was to seal the agreement at the 2024 World Health Assembly, the WHO's decision-making body, which convenes on May 27. But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the momentum had been slowed down by entrenched positions and "a torrent of fake news, lies, and conspiracy theories".

And he warned that if nobody is prepared to seize the initiative or give ground, the whole project risks going nowhere. "Time is very short. And there are several outstanding issues that remain to be resolved," Tedros told the WHO's executive board in Geneva.

Failure to strike an agreement would be "a missed opportunity for which future generations may not forgive us," he said. Tedros said all countries needed the capacity to detect and share pathogens presenting a risk, and timely access to tests, treatments and vaccines. He called for a "strong agreement that will help to protect our children and grandchildren from future pandemics". Tedros said claims that the accord would cede sovereignty to the WHO or give it the power to impose lockdowns and vaccine mandates were "completely false". "We cannot allow this historic agreement, this milestone in global health, to be sabotaged."

A tiny minority

The French warship began treating patients in November, off the coast of the port of Al-Arish, 50 kilometers (30 miles) west of the Egyptian border with Gaza. In the hull of the vessel, a handful of patients and their families gathered around a table, listlessly playing a card game.

Among them was Nesma Abu Gayad, a bright-eyed Palestinian who was seriously injured when her home was shelled. "I was treated at a few hospitals in Gaza, before arriving in Egypt," she told AFP, the stump of her right foot floating above the ground from her wheelchair. "The next step will be a prosthetic, but I have to get a referral and travel to get it abroad." French doctor Marine, who is serving aboard the Dixmude and only gave her first name, said the warship has so far received 120 patients, all serious cases who needed long periods of hospitalization. That is just a tiny minority of the more than 62,000 people who have been injured in Gaza, according to the territory's health ministry. Another French doctor on the Dixmude, Salle, said she was shocked by the injuries that she had come across. "I'm in the military, so I deal with the war wounds of our French and allied servicemen," she said. "But what shocked me was to find them on civilians." — AFP



SOA: Mothers with their children listen to a nurse giving advice at a hospital in Soa, Cameroon, on January 22, 2024. — AFP

Cameroon launches historic large-scale malaria jab campaign

SOA, Cameroon: Cameroon on Monday launched the first malaria vaccination program to be offered nationwide and as a matter of routine, AFP journalists saw, in a step the WHO has described as "historic". The mosquito-borne disease kills more than 600,000 people a year, mainly in Africa, according to the World Health Organization. Children under five years old account for more than 80 percent of deaths on the continent.

Following a pilot phase, the RTS,S vaccine is being rolled out at scale across Africa, starting in Cameroon. At a hospital in the town of Soa, 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the capital Yaounde, six-month-old Noah Ngah became the first to receive the injection at the facility. Cheered and encouraged by the nurses, the infant received the jab — much to the relief of his mother, who was waiting to have his twin sister vaccinated too. "Some parents are reticent but I know that vaccines are good for children," their mother Helene Akono told AFP.

It is one of many vaccine centers in 42 districts designated a priority across the vast central African nation of some 28 million people. The jab will be offered free of charge, according to the government, and systematically to all children under six months old at the same time as other obligatory or recommended vaccinations. The WHO, the UN children's agency UNICEF and the Gavi vaccine alliance said in November that the move was "a historic step towards broader vaccination against one of the deadliest diseases for African children".

Saving lives

More than 300,000 doses of RTS,S — the first malaria vaccine recommended by the UN's WHO — arrived in Yaounde in late November. It took two months to organize Monday's launch. Since 2019, more than two million children have been jabbed in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi in a pilot phase.

The drive resulted in substantial reductions in severe malaria illness and hospitalizations. Cameroon is the first large-scale and systematic program in the world, according to the WHO, the coordinator of the campaign which is largely financed by Gavi. "In Cameroon, 30 percent of consultations are linked to malaria," Aurelia Nguyen, chief program officer of the Gavi vaccine alliance, told AFP. "Having a preventative tool like the vaccine will free up the health system and result in fewer hospitalizations and deaths." — AFP

International student permits capped by one-third in Canada

MONTREAL: Canada will temporarily cap new international student permits by one-third this year compared to 2023, the country's immigration minister announced Monday. The measure is aimed in part at easing soaring demand for housing and social services, with the number of international students set to triple from a decade ago. Under the cap approximately 364,000 international students are expected to receive study permits this year, or a 35 percent net decrease from 2023. The 2025 limit will be assessed at the end of the year. The cap is meant to "improve program integrity, set international students up for success, (and) to maintain a sustainable level of temporary residence in Canada." Immigration Minister Marc Miller told a news conference in Montreal.

"It would be a disservice to welcome international students in Canada knowing not all of them are getting the resources they need to succeed and having them return home disillusioned and disappointed in Canada's education system," he added.

The cap will not apply to master's and doctoral students, nor elementary and secondary school students. Miller said the government will also restrict foreign students' eligibility to receive work permits and crack down on private colleges and sham institutions that charge international students high tuition fees but provide poor or no education at all. This practice, he said, "is unacceptable." "It is not the intention of this program to have sham commerce degrees and business degrees" that allow people to come into the country "and drive an Uber," he said. Speaking more broadly about Canada's study permit system, Miller said that "it's a bit of a mess, and it's time to rein it in." — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024

Zain recognized as 'Best Telecom' and 'Best Corporate Governance' company in Kuwait

International Finance's awards acknowledge Zain's strong regional position

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced that in recognition of its excellence and market leadership in Kuwait and across the region, the company was presented with two prestigious honors during the 11th annual Excellence Awards ceremony hosted by UK-based business magazine International Finance in Dubai, UAE.

Zain was named 'Best Telecom Company' in Kuwait for a fifth time, as well as 'Best Corporate Governance Telecom Company' in Kuwait for 2023. Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti was presented with both accolades during the event.

Zain Kuwait's naming as 'Best Telecom Company' adds to a list of other prestigious recognitions the company has received recently, which serve as a testament to the leadership position it enjoys domestically. The awards shed more light on Zain's outstanding success, digital innovation, and relentless pursuit of excellence to serve the nation's biggest customer base.

Zain Group's recognition as the 'Best Corporate Governance Telecom Company' reflects how seriously the company takes this area of its operations. Zain Group's Investor Relations and Corporate Governance framework is a cornerstone of its regional appeal and has attracted ongoing praise and admiration as its exemplary operation provides stakeholders, including shareholders, industry analysts, and regulatory authorities with the utmost confidence of



Waleed Al-Khashti receives Zain's awards in Dubai.

the company's state of being.

These awards reflect the strong operational and commercial leadership positions Zain enjoys locally and regionally, further highlighting its excellence in offering best-in-class digital solutions and innovative services to corporate customers and consumers alike. It also sheds light on the company's excellence across other indicators including customer base, revenue, market share, investment in 5G infrastructure, and compliance with the best global practices and quality standards.

Zain's Corporate Governance frame-

work helps the company to mitigate risks and facilitates an effective Board oversight over the company's executive management by monitoring the implementation of policies on a daily basis. Corporate governance promotes strong internal controls to improve integrity of financials and establishes a culture of compliance. This governance structure has helped Zain to win the confidence of the market and attract global investors.

Zain Group's Investor Relations, Sustainability and Corporate Governance departments are committed to raising



awareness on issues related to the environment, social, and governance (ESG) matters in response to global trends and best practices. Accordingly, Zain has developed new policies and is working to increase transparency in addition to focusing on social responsibility. Such policies and procedures are flexible and consider both short- and long-term

challenges and risks.

The International Finance Excellence Awards continues to provide a prominent stage to highlight the region's best industry players. Zain is honored to be recognized with the two accolades and is especially proud of the recognition of excellence among Kuwaiti companies over the years through this platform.

ECB to signal no rush to cut interest rates

FRANKFURT: European Central Bank policymakers are expected to keep interest rates steady on Thursday and signal they are in no hurry to start slashing borrowing costs despite progress against inflation.

The Frankfurt institute is tipped to pause for the third meeting in a row following a historic run of hikes to tame runaway prices, leaving the benchmark deposit rate at four percent.

ECB president Christine Lagarde said last week rates had likely reached their peak but that it was too



DAVOS: President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Christine Lagarde attends a session on the closing day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos. — AFP

soon to "shout victory" on inflation, citing economic uncertainties and the possible impact of rising wages on price pressures. She also pushed back against market bets of rate cuts as early as April, joining other ECB officials in signaling that borrowing costs would "likely" only start coming down in the summer—and if the latest economic data supported such a move.

The ECB is "in no rush yet" to change course and

governors may not even discuss cuts at this week's meeting, Deutsche Bank economists wrote. "We expect Thursday's ECB press conference to again highlight the exceptionally low possibility of a rate cut before the summer," agreed Unicredit in an analyst note. In the United States, where investors have been penciling in a first rate cut in March, Federal Reserve officials have also been tempering expectations, indicating more work remains to be done to return inflation safely to the long-term target of two percent. Atlanta Fed president Raphael Bostic last week said he saw rate reductions coming in the third quarter, or sooner if there was "convincing" evidence of inflation slowing more than expected.

After falling steadily for months, eurozone inflation reaccelerated to 2.9 percent in December. The increase was widely expected and mainly due to the comparison effect with a year earlier, when governments provided exceptional support to help households after Russia's invasion of Ukraine pushed energy prices higher.

Overall, Lagarde has said the battle against inflation was "on the right path" with the ECB forecasting a return to its two-percent target in 2025. But in an interview with Bloomberg television at Davos last week, she also expressed caution. She said the ECB was closely monitoring several risk factors that could drive inflation up again, including wage negotiations as workers seek pay rises to compensate for higher living costs. It will take several months to get a clearer picture of euro area wage agreements, she said, bolstering the case for a rate cut at the June meeting at the earliest. The ECB was also keeping a close eye on energy costs and supply chains, Lagarde said, in a nod to tensions in the Middle East and shipping delays in the Red Sea that could impact prices and weigh on economic growth.

The 20-nation eurozone economy, feeling the pain from higher interest rates and weaker exports, shrank by 0.1 percent in the third quarter of 2023. Although the ECB has forecast growth in the fourth quarter, analysts are more pessimistic. The latest "surveys and official data suggest that the economy is more likely to have contracted at the end of last year and there is little sign that things are going to improve" in the first quarter of 2024, said Jack-Allen Reynolds from Capital Economics. — AFP

passenger services and last until 1700 GMT on Monday. For cargo services, the stoppage will begin earlier, at 1700 GMT on Tuesday. State-owned Deutsche Bahn accused the union of "acting absolutely irresponsibly".

It will be the fourth strike by GDL since November as the union pushes its demands for higher salaries to compensate for inflation, as well as a reduced working week from 38 to 35 hours with no loss in wages. A three-day walkout earlier this month already caused travel chaos for thousands of passengers, with 80 percent of long-distance trains not running. GDL said it had rejected Deut-

sche Bahn's "third and allegedly improved offer" and decided to call a fresh strike because bosses had shown "no sign of a willingness to reach an agreement".

Deutsche Bahn said the latest strike would be the longest in its history, breaking the record of a May 2015 walkout called by GDL that lasted around five days. Deutsche Bahn criticized the renewed call to industrial action, saying it had offered pay rises of up to 13 percent and a one-off inflation bonus, as well as the chance to reduce the working week by one hour from 2026.

"The GDL is exacerbating the conflict," a spokesman said. "Anyone who

doesn't even come to the negotiating table with a new offer of up to 13 percent and the possibility of a 37-hour week with the same salary is acting absolutely irresponsibly." The company said it expected this week's strike to "again have a massive impact" on German rail transport. Passengers who had already booked to travel during the strike period would have the option to bring their trips forward or delay them, it said in a statement.

The disruptions to freight traffic meanwhile are likely to deal another blow to Germany's struggling economy, which is already facing supply chain upheaval as a result of shipping delays due to tensions

in the Red Sea. Transport Minister Volker Wissing slammed the GDL's latest strike announcement.

He said he had "zero understanding for this type of collective bargaining" and denounced the "increasingly destructive" nature of the talks between GDL and Deutsche Bahn. GDL chief Claus Weselsky was not "doing himself or his union any favours with this style", Wissing told broadcaster ZDF. Weselsky for his part said the union would return to the negotiating table only once Deutsche Bahn agreed to discuss "all the points we are demanding", in particular a "mandatory reduction in weekly working hours". — AFP



Al-Sharara oilfield, Libya.

Libya resumes oil production at major oilfield

TRIPOLI: Libya's state-owned energy firm said Sunday production had resumed at Al-Sharara oilfield, which provides a quarter of the country's daily oil output, two weeks after protests led to a shutdown. The National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced the "lifting of force majeure" and the resumption of "full production" at Al-Sharara, which normally produces up to 315,000 barrels per day.

The NOC on January 7 declared "force majeure" at the southwestern oilfield "due to the closure of the site by protesters". It did not elaborate at the time on the protesters' demands.

Repeated interruptions in crude production in the war-torn North African country have been caused by social and political protests amid clashes between rival factions. A local group in Oubari region, "Fezzan Gathering", announced earlier on Sunday they had reached an agreement with the NOC to end their

protest action at Al-Sharara. "In an agreement with the president of the NOC, in which he vowed to concede to our demands... we announce the suspension of our sit-in at the Al-Sharara field," a representative of the group said in a Facebook video.

Both the NOC and "Fezzan Gathering" did not share the details of the accord. According to the protest group, they have received "guarantees" from military strongman Khalifa Haftar, who backs one of Libya's two rival administrations. Declaring "force majeure" allows parties to free themselves from contractual obligations when factors such as fighting or natural disasters make meeting them impossible. Libya sits on Africa's largest oil reserves but production has been frequently disrupted during over a decade of chaos since a NATO-backed uprising led to the ouster and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Libya remains split between a UN-recognized government in the west and an eastern-based administration backed by Haftar. Oil revenues are vital to the economy, and the NOC is one of the few institutions in the troubled country to have stayed in one piece.

The Al-Sharara field, in the desert 900 kilometers (560 miles) south of Tripoli, is operated by a joint venture between the NOC and four European companies. — AFP

German train drivers to stage longest strike

FRANKFURT: German train drivers will stage their longest-ever walkout with a six-day strike this week, their union said Monday, escalating a dispute with rail operator Deutsche Bahn over pay and working hours. The walkout called by the GDL union is to start at 2:00 am (0100 GMT) on Wednesday for

Business

Mac computers could ride AI wave or be left behind

40th birthday comes at a time when PC market faces challenge from smartphones

SAN FRANCISCO: Forty years after igniting a PC revolution, Apple's Mac is stronger than ever and could reach new glory due to AI computing—or be left behind. Apple launched the Macintosh in 1984 with a history-making television ad pitching the machine as an anti-establishment blow against a dystopian future. The computer, referred to simply as a Mac, won fans with user-friendly features such as a graphical interface, clickable icons, and a mouse.

"The influence of the Mac is massive," Futurum Group research director Olivier Blanchard told AFP. "Every laptop and every PC (personal computer) has tried to emulate the Mac and its success."

Macs became the preferred choice for Apple fans along with artists, film makers and other creative professionals. Windows-powered computers, however, dominated business workplaces with lower cost machines that synced with ubiquitous productivity tools like data-bases or spreadsheets made by Microsoft and others.

More recently, Apple has been making inroads in business, getting help from iPhone lovers using their smartphones for work and Macs becoming more compatible with programs used on the job. The Mac's market has expanded to "basically everyone," Dag Spicer, senior curator at the Silicon Valley Computer History Museum, told AFP at an exhibit to mark its anniversary. "A lot of the advertising and marketing is directed at making people feel special for buying a Mac," Spicer said. "You know—be a rebel, be an outsider, fight the system, even from the first 1984 ad."

Even Apple's soon to be released "spatial computing" headgear, the Vision Pro, plays up work-related uses—and its compatibility with the Mac. "Apple

is doing more to get into businesses," said Creative Strategies analyst Carolina Milanesi. "It is clear that with Vision Pro they want to get into the enterprise space, and they linked the Vision Pro to the Mac."

The Mac's 40th birthday comes when the global PC market has sagged with the rise of smartphone lifestyles. But it is being reinvigorated by remote work trends as well as keen interest in upgrading to machines tuned to handle AI computing, according to analysts. The PC market for years now has been iterative, with incremental improvements that weren't sexy and gave users little reason to upgrade, according to Blanchard. "AI is a once-in-a-generation change in the PC market," Blanchard told AFP.

"PCs are about to become much more powerful and easier to use, putting generative AI capabilities we saw out in the cloud right on the PC," Blanchard likened the change to suddenly having a team of experts on your computer to help with whatever is being worked on. Data used for AI will remain on PCs, keeping it protected and saving cloud computing costs, he added.

PCs with the muscle to handle AI workloads on device will tap into a hot trend people are keen to exploit, and Apple has already taken to designing its own custom chips, the analyst noted. "Just because Apple doesn't talk about generative AI, don't think they are not going to be playing in that space," Milanesi said. Apple is expected to put its spin on AI computing the same way it put its world-changing spin on the smartphone.

Apple already uses AI in its camera, Siri digital assistant and more. While Apple appears to be lagging behind in the AI race, it is likely quietly designing its



MOUNTAIN VIEW: Part of an early model central processing unit is seen on display at the Computer History Museum on January 19, 2024 in Mountain View, California, as the museum celebrates Mac's 40th birthday. — AFP

own computer chip for "AI Macs," according to analysts. The overall PC market and Mac's share of it are poised to grow, even though Apple machines are at the high end of the price range, according to Milanesi. "There is definitely more opportunity for Apple than people give them credit for," Milanesi said.

When an AI Mac arrives, expect it to be tied to

Apple's "ecosystem" where Apple can control experiences and make money from offerings, according to analysts. "If Mac doesn't become an AI Mac in the next year, Apple will be facing some questions," Blanchard said, adding he believes Apple will play a unique role in the market. "AI is literally everything: Apple can't get around that."—AFP



The revolutionary Apple Mac in numbers

PARIS: Forty years ago Steve Jobs revolutionized personal computing by launching the Apple Macintosh, the first PC with a user-friendly mouse and graphical interface that helped the machines enter the everyday lives of people for the first time. Jobs, playing the showman inventor to perfection in a black suit and silver bow tie, opened a zipper bag in an auditorium in Cupertino, California, on January 24, 1984, and lifted out a lightweight computer that not only operated at the click of a button but also, thrillingly, talked.

Here is a look back at Apple's revolutionary machine in numbers. It all began two days before the official launch, at halftime during the Super Bowl, with a mysterious TV teaser advert. The haunting clip shot by "Blade Runner" director Ridley Scott evokes a dystopian world in the style predicted by George Orwell in his classic novel, "1984".

Though no names were mentioned, the all-powerful "Big Brother" in the clip was a swipe at IBM, which dominated the market at the time. The Mac was represented by an athlete, shown hurling a sledgehammer at that totalitarian future. Apple paid a whopping \$800,000 (\$2.5 million in today's money) to air the one-minute ad, seen by 77.6 million TV viewers, according to ratings specialist Nielsen. But it achieved its aim of creating huge hype around the launch.

The first Mac came with 128 kilobytes of memory space, one million times less than top-of-the-line MacBooks today. At the outset, a lack of memory was a common problem with PCs. Within a year Apple had replaced the 128K version with the "Fat Mac" with 512K, offering four times the space. The machine's weight, which Jobs boasted at the launch its owners could carry on a plane, was much lighter than the competing IBM model of 11.3 kg (25 pounds). Both offered a floppy disk drive, but only the compact Mac was all-in-one. Today's laptops are featherweights in comparison, with the latest MacBook Airs and MacBook Pros all weighing in at under 2 kg.

"The most powerful, most portable, most versatile computer not-very-much money could buy," boasted the 20-page insert ad that ran in Newsweek magazine about the first Mac. In fact, for a personal computer it was quite a lot of money: \$2,495 in 1984 is the equivalent of around \$7,400 today. It was \$1,000 more than Jobs had initially planned, but development costs, and the \$15 million spent on advertising, caused its price to balloon.

These days vintage 128Ks can fetch up to \$2,000 at auction. Jobs, who went on to the father the iMac, the iPod and the iPhone among other generation-defining creations, seemed to have the Midas touch.

Even the cardboard box that the first Macs came in seemed to be made of gold—or so it appeared when someone paid \$536 in 2002 on eBay to acquire one such empty box, according to Wired magazine. The winning bid beat 17 other offers. Within three months of its release, Apple had sold 50,000 Macs but sales really only took off after the release of the Fat Mac in October 1984. According to tech historian Jeremy Reimer, by the end of the year 372,000 units of the history-making model had sold. Fast forward 40 years and sales are many multiples of that. In 2023, Apple sold nearly 22 million Macs, including iMac desktops and MacBooks, according to the latest available data from analysts at Gartner and IDC market research groups.—AFP

Sony 'terminates' Indian merger with rival Zee

TOKYO: Sony "terminated" on Monday the \$10-billion merger of its Indian operations with local rival Zee Entertainment that would have created a new streaming giant in the world's most populous nation. The joint entity with mooted annual revenue of \$2 billion would have helped both firms better compete with Disney, Amazon and Netflix in the entertainment market of 1.4 billion people. But with reports that Sony was unhappy with Zee's performance since the merger was agreed in late 2021, the Japanese giant said Monday that conditions to close the deal "were not satisfied".

Another stumbling block was reportedly Zee's insistence that its chief executive Punit Goenka, son of founder Subhash Chandra, run the combined entity. Both men are being probed by India's financial markets regulator over alleged fraud. They deny any wrongdoing. Zee said Monday that Goenka "was agreeable to step down in the interest of the merger" and that it proposed an extension of up to six months to close the deal. It added in a statement that Sony was also seeking a "termination fee" of \$90 million for alleged breaches by Zee, a claim that the Indian company said it "categorically refutes".

Goenka said on X, formerly Twitter, that "the deal that I have spent two years envisioning and working towards had fallen through, despite my best and



TOKYO: This file photo taken on Oct 31, 2022 shows a man walking past the Sony logo outside the company's headquarters in Tokyo. Sony confirmed on Jan 22, 2024 that it is pulling out a merger of its Indian business with local rival Zee Entertainment. — AFP

South African miners see gold in hills of waste

JOHANNESBURG: In Johannesburg, illegal miners and mining companies are in a race to tap golden riches hidden in hundreds of heaps of mine waste, many taller than a 20-storey building. The hills that scar the city's landscape are now coveted by South African mining companies whose underground gold deposits have become harder to exploit with every passing year. The region is dotted with slag heaps, shafts and deep trenches left by generations of miners, whose arrival in a gold rush in the 1880s led to the birth of the city. South Africa has lost its decades-old crown as Africa's biggest gold producer to Ghana, but still has more than 100 active mines, including 44 around Johannesburg.

"Production peaked around 1,000 tons in 1970 and has been steadily declining ever since," John Reade, chief market strategist with the World Gold Council (WGC), told AFP. By 1993 the southern African nation was producing at around half of its peak rate, just 619 tons a year. By 2022 it was at less than one tenth of its 1970 production levels, just over 90 tons. Johan-

nesburg was once known as "eGoli" or the "place of gold" but the city and the Witwatersrand region now produce only a quarter of the country's gold output each year.

But now, a growing amount of gold comes from the hills of waste. Many are decades old and were left when much gold dust and many chunks went undetected as miners searched for richer seams. Artisanal miners and the illegal mining gangs, whose members are commonly known as "zama zamas", scavenge, recycle, and rework leftover gold ore—often while battling with each other.

In July, five people were found shot dead near an abandoned shaft west of Johannesburg. Illegal operations also affect active mines, something that mining companies have long complained costs them money and is a threat to their staff. The "zama zamas" are mainly immigrants who come to South Africa to try to earn money from clandestine pits, living and working in arduous conditions.

"Initially the artisanal miners would go into these tailing dumps and find what they could," Dale McKinley, a researcher in development studies at the University of Johannesburg, told AFP. "And when it was clear that there was a lot of money to be made, the zama-zama syndicates started moving in." And then the big mining companies, despite abandoning their dumps decades ago, decided to take another look at the waste themselves.—AFP

Stocks advance as optimism for US economy grows

LONDON: Stocks rose in Europe and on Wall Street on Monday, lifted by expectations the US economy will shake off geopolitical concerns to continue expanding this year even if the Federal Reserve holds off on cutting rates while waiting to see inflation come down. Wall Street stocks built on recent gains early Monday, with the broad-based S&P 500 adding to its record close last week while major companies get ready to report their financial results. About 10 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average advanced 0.3 percent to 37,994.04. The S&P 500 climbed 0.5 percent to 4,862.07, while the Nasdaq Composite Index added 0.7 percent to 15,414.03.

Technology stocks drove a US market rally on Friday that saw the S&P 500 index reach an all-time high, and earning reports from heavyweights including Netflix and Tesla are expected this week. Investors will also see on Thursday data on fourth quarter growth in the United States, which could offer clues on when the Fed might ease interest rates. "Persistent US inflation, fuelled by sticky services inflation, is poised to delay Fed rate cuts until the third quarter, and even then, the cuts may be limited," said Luca Santos, a currency analyst at ACY Securities.

And while the European Central Bank is unlikely to cut rates at its policy meeting on Thursday, all eyes will be on its president Christine Lagarde after she said last week that rate cuts could be coming this summer. "European indices are pushing higher... as optimism over the direction of US earnings provide a tailwind behind tech stocks in particular," said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at trading firm Scope Markets.

Wall Street's rally on Friday was helped by a closely watched survey from the University of Michigan showing a surge in consumer confidence and optimism about falling inflation.

However, analysts warned that traders may have run a little ahead of themselves at the end of last year as they forecast the Fed will cut rates up to six times before December, with the first coming in March. A string of data in recent weeks has shown inflation remains sticky and well above the bank's two percent target, while the jobs market continues to show resilience despite borrowing costs sitting at two-decade highs.

Minutes from the Fed's most recent meeting also showed decision-makers were happy to keep monetary policy tight until they are confident prices are under control.

On Friday, San Francisco Fed boss Mary Daly said it was likely too early to think of moving just yet. Atlanta Fed chief Raphael Bostic said that while he was open to changing his mind, he did not expect a tweak until the third quarter, while his Chicago counterpart Austan Goolsbee added that decision-making was "fundamentally about the data". The chances of a reduction before the end of the first quarter fell last week to less than 50 percent, having been above 80 percent the week before, Bloomberg News reported. Asian equities closed mixed, with Japanese stocks extending gains since the start of the year thanks to a weaker yen and rising Japanese inflation, ahead of a Bank of Japan policy decision later this week.

But Shanghai and Hong Kong saw heavy selling because of worries about ongoing weakness in China's economy and a lack of measures aimed at kickstarting growth.

Oil prices reversed early gains to move lower after the International Energy Agency slashed its demand growth forecast.—AFP

Business

French farmers threaten more protests ahead of PM meeting

Govt postpones reform package amid rising tension

PARIS: France's powerful farming union on Monday threatened a week or more of protest action as it was poised to meet with Prime Minister Gabriel Attal.

The unions have demanded concrete government action to address their grievances, which they say include excessive financial charges and environmental protection rules.

The growing anger of farmers, some of whom have already taken to direct action to express their frustration, is shaping up to be the first major challenge of President Emmanuel Macron's newly appointed government. Hours before its meeting with Attal, scheduled for 6 pm (1700 GMT), the FNSEA union's leader, Arnaud Rousseau, said that "there will be a certain number of protests today, all this week, and for as long as necessary".

The meeting with Attal comes after France's agriculture minister announced that a long-delayed reform package had again been postponed. This week's protests would affect every part of France, Rousseau told the France Inter broadcaster.

"Tension is rising strongly, which is why we need concrete measures," he said. The Young Farmers union leader Arnaud Gaillot—who is also invited to Monday's meeting—told France 2 television that "we could be on the eve of a massive farmers' movement" if the government's response was not deemed satisfactory. Over the weekend, Attal insisted that he was on the side of the farmers.

"Our farmers are not bandits, polluters, people who torture animals, as we sometimes hear," he told a meeting on Saturday in the southern Rhone region. The latest action by farmers in the southern Occitanie region gave a measure of their anger. They started a blockade of the A64 motorway late

on Thursday at Carbonne, around 45 kilometers (28 miles) southwest of Toulouse.

In addition to financial charges and environmental protection rules, farmers are also angry about progressive tax increases on the non-road-use diesel that is essential to their work.

Similar issues have led farmers in other European nations to also take action. Fleets of tractors have brought traffic to a standstill in Germany and Romania, and farmers have also protested in the Netherlands and Poland. They all face the challenge of inflation—caused in part by Russia's invasion of Ukraine—and what some see as unfair competition from Ukrainian agricultural imports.

In Britain on Monday, fruit and vegetable producers will again demonstrate in front of parliament against what they say are the unfair terms of their contracts with the main supermarkets.

The French government's relations with the sector have not been helped by the repeated postponement of farming reforms first announced by Macron more than a year ago. Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau announced yet another delay Sunday to a package that had been due to go before the government later this week. "Give us a few weeks," he told RTL radio and other news media. More work needed to be done to simplify the measures, he said, an issue raised by many of the farmers currently protesting.

In comments to AFP, FNSEA vice-president Luc Smessaert made it clear they would need to hear "very concrete" measures. They want an end to what they call the excessive "copy-pasting" of European norms into the French system—and for the full implementation of a 2021 law aimed at protecting farmers' wages.



MASSAY: French Agriculture and Food Sovereignty Minister Marc Fesneau poses next to cows as he attends a visit at a farm in Massay, central France. — AFP

Less than five months out from the European elections, opposition parties are already courting the farmers' vote. Political leaders on all sides have leapt to the defence of farmers over the issue of rising diesel costs. And if the FNSEA does not emerge satisfied from its meeting on Monday, they have not

ruled out action to hammer home their grievances.

There are expectations that Macron's visit to the annual Agriculture Show in Paris—which begins February 24 and has historically seen farmers speak their mind directly to French leaders—might not go smoothly. — AFP



LONDON: UK fruit and vegetable farmers held a scarecrow protest outside of Parliament on Monday morning.

Straw deal: UK farmers stage scarecrow protest

LONDON: Dozens of scarecrows stood outside Britain's parliament on Monday as UK fruit and vegetable farmers protested against "unfair" treatment by the country's six largest supermarket chains. The demonstrators placed 49 scarecrows opposite the British legislature in London to represent the 49 percent of farmers who say they are on the brink of leaving the industry. The 49 scarecrows standing outside Parliament represent the 49 percent of fruit and vegetable farmers who say it's likely they will go out of business in the next 12 months, with many blaming supermarkets and their buyers as a leading threat to their livelihoods, according to research by organic veg box company, Riverford.

Supermarkets are "bringing British farming to its knees," Guy Singh-Watson, founder of fruit and veg box delivery firm Riverford Organic and one of the protest organizers, told AFP. Singh-Watson, whose company initiated a petition that has received 112,000 signatures, says government policies have failed to provide adequate support for farmers and were rarely enforced.

"It is really up to our politicians to accept responsibility and have some sort of policy rather than just abdicating policy to our big retailers who are contractually bound to act in the interests of their shareholders," he added.

The farmers want the supermarkets to adhere to "fair" purchasing agreements, including buying agreed quantities and paying the agreed amount on time "without exception". They say unfair purchasing agreements by the chains Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, Aldi and Lidl will drive many of them out of business in the next 12 months.

The protest was held as lawmakers debated a petition by the farmers to overhaul the grocery supply chain code of practice. The petition asks the government to ensure that retailers "buy what they agreed", "pay what they agreed" and to pay on time. "The continued pressure from retailers to produce food at cheaper prices... (is) just unsustainable for a lot of farmers," British farmer Ben Andrews told AFP.

Emily O'Brien, a Green Party spokesperson, warned that the disappearance of significant numbers of farmers could have serious consequences for Britain's food supply.

"If our smaller farmers, our family farms, go under, we're going to see shortages on the shelves. We need that UK production, particularly of fruit and veg," she said. A spokesperson for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said fruit and vegetable farmers are crucial to the resilience of the UK's food system to the wider economy.

"It is only right that British farmers and growers should be paid a fair price, and our review into the fairness of the supply chain will help address these concerns," it said. Farming and food leaders sent an open letter to the supermarkets last year, saying their buying practices were "all too often imbalanced, short term and wasteful". Supermarkets sometimes reject whole crops "at the last minute", the letter said. — AFP

Gulf Bank first Kuwaiti bank to partner with Coach Hub

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank takes pride in its leadership role in the Kuwaiti banking sector, showcased through its partnership with Coach Hub for mentorship programs dedicated to leadership development. This partnership reflects the bank's commitment to developing leadership in a rapidly changing environment through interactive and measurable one-on-one sessions, with a focus on senior management. Coach Hub's platform takes pride in offering over 3,500 certified coaches, in addition to coaching programs in 60 different languages. The platform provides high-level coaching opportunities for individuals to develop their leadership skills. At Coach Hub, coaches have the flexibility to

customize their guidance, aligning it with the specific needs and goals of individual learners by understanding their strengths and weaknesses.

Salma Al-Hajjaj, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, expressed her contentment in partnering with Coach Hub. Leveraging its capabilities and broad network of certified coaches, the bank aims to enhance the skills of its leaders. She envisions this partnership playing a crucial role in improving the performance and management effectiveness of the leadership team.

Al-Hajjaj emphasized the significance of continuous development for the bank's workforce, recognizing them as the foundation of success in the



Salma Al-Hajjaj

Shadow of political instability lingers on Libya's oil industry

TRIPOLI: The temporary closure of Libya's largest oilfield this month following protests underlines the lingering shadow of political instability on the North African country's embattled oil and gas industry. The Sharara oilfield, with a capacity of 300,000 barrels per day, resumed production on Sunday. The oilfield was shut down on Jan 7 following protests by residents demanding better infrastructure and economic opportunities.

Libya's state-owned National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced the resumption of operations at the facility on Sunday. The field represents roughly a fourth of the country's total output of about 1.2 million barrels per day. Such protests, which target the country's vital oil infrastructure, may affect the OPEC member's ability to meet its lofty production target and grow its gross domestic product over the next few years, according to analysts. Despite having Africa's largest crude reserves, a third of Libya's population lives below the poverty line and parts of the country suffer chronic shortages of petrol and gas due to inadequate investment in pipelines and refining capabilities.

Last week, the country's oil minister said that the continued shutdown of the key oilfield could potentially impact the nation's GDP and undermine Libya's reputation as a reliable energy supplier. "We believed the country had achieved stability, and customers had confidence in receiving consistent oil quantities. Losing customers is a real risk, jeopardizing the future for everyone," Mohamed Oun told reporters at an event in Tripoli.

"It's crucial for people in Libya to understand that the NOC and the ministry of oil and gas are primarily focused on oil and gas exploration, extraction, production, and contributing revenue to the country's state treasury," he said. The last time Libya suffered a major supply disruption was in 2022.

Libya has remained divided since the civil war that

ensued following the 2011 revolution. The western part of the country is governed by the internationally recognized administration known as the Government of National Unity (GNU), which was established through a UN-led political process ahead of elections scheduled for December 2021.

However, these elections did not take place, leading to challenges from opponents questioning the legitimacy of the GNU's authority. In the eastern region, a rival government called the Government of National Stability emerged in March 2022, taking control of about three-quarters of the country's oil production capacity.

NOC, which restored its output to 1.2 million bpd last year, said in October that it planned to increase its crude production to 2 million bpd over the next three to five years.

The state-run energy company, seeking to reactivate old oil wells and launch fresh exploration activity, aims to bring in IOCs. Bengdara has indicated that the planned output increase would necessitate \$17 billion in investments across 45 projects.

"[It is] a huge commitment for IOCs when it comes to Libya, considering the unstable atmosphere," Rystad Energy said. "Additionally, Libya currently still has two parallel governments with no centralized decision-making body, making announcements such as elections potential triggers that could once again lead to production losses," the Norway-based consultancy said. Rystad Energy expects Libya to reach a production level of 1.4 million bpd by 2027 in its base case scenario and 1.8 million bpd in its high case scenario. Wood Mackenzie said the target of 2 million bpd would not be reached even in the US-based consultancy's most bullish case.

"The specter of oil production shut-ins continues to hang over Libya. And alongside outages from ageing infrastructure, investment will remain too low to achieve significant increases in the short to medium term," Wood Mackenzie said in November. "If Libya can improve security and fiscal terms, then there is significant longer-term upside," it said.

Before the protests this month, there had been renewed interest from energy companies in the country's oil and gas industry. Last year, Eni, BP and Algerian energy company Sonatrach announced the resumption of their operations in the country after a 10-year absence. In January 2023,

complicated. Many street vendors and markets in Lagos use styrofoam containers to serve and deliver food or produce and the plastic and other containers litter roads and block drains in the megapolis.

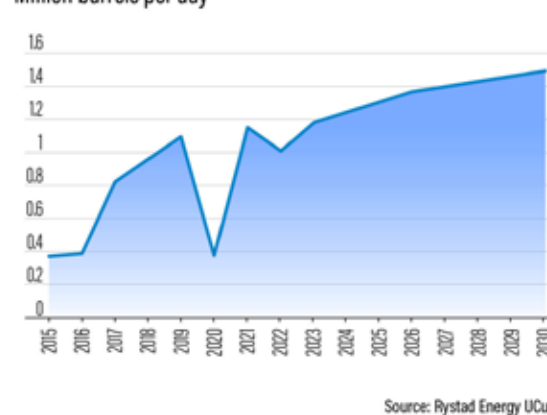
"Following the menace which single-use plastics especially non-biodegradable Styrofoam are causing on the environment, the Lagos State government... is hereby announcing a ban on the usage and distribution of Styrofoam and other single-use plastics," the Lagos environment commissioner said on X. Some Nigerians welcomed the initiative, but others questioned its implementation and what the Valternative would be for traders and manufacturers. Folawemi Umunna, co-founder of Climate and Ecological Protection Initiative, said the move was positive if the program was properly implemented. — AFP



banking sector. The bank is committed to empowering its employees for excellence, and elevating their professional capabilities. The primary focus is on cultivating leaders within Gulf Bank, ensuring they remain informed about the latest technological advancements and are equipped with the experiences and skills required to navigate substantial changes in the banking industry, both at a local and global level.

In alignment with its support for Kuwait's 2035 vision, Gulf Bank commits to achieving significant progress in sustainability, encompassing environmental, social, and governance aspects. This dedication is showcased through diverse strategic sustainability initiatives, undertaken both internally and externally by the bank, in alignment with the "New Kuwait" vision.

LIBYA'S CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION OUTLOOK



Eni and NOC signed an \$8 billion gas production deal, which could result in a production of up to 760 million cubic feet of gas. Libya is set to conduct a licensing round in the fourth quarter of this year, its first in almost two decades.

Crude oil and natural gas export revenue account for a significant part of Libya's economy. In 2021, oil revenue accounted for 56.4 per cent of the country's GDP, compared with 42.8 per cent for Iraq and 23.7 per cent for Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, the World Bank said.

For Nigeria, Africa's largest crude exporter, oil revenue only made up 6.2 per cent of its GDP in 2021.

Libya's real GDP is projected to rise by 7.5 per cent this year, after growing an estimated 12.5 per cent in 2023, the International Monetary Fund said. Its economy contracted by 9.6 per cent in 2022. Following the devastating floods that hit the country in September last year, the IMF said Libya's medium-term economic outlook remained positive due to high oil prices.

The floods in Libya inundated about a quarter of the city of Derna after torrential rain from Storm Daniel caused two dams to collapse near the eastern port city. However, it did not disrupt the country's crude output. Libya plans to increase its GDP to about \$250 billion and have oil and gas as 40 per cent of the economy, Economy Minister Mohamed Al-Hweij said during the Tripoli event last week. He did not provide a timeline or any further details. — Agencies



TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024



Actors perform "Projet Polytechnique," a documentary play, at the Theatre du Nouveau monde in Montreal. — AFP photos

REALITY TAKES CENTER STAGE IN QUEBEC DOCUMENTARY THEATER

Mass shootings, artificial intelligence and genetically modified foods are topics not often associated with theater. But audiences in Canada's Quebec province are flocking to documentary plays that seek to take on difficult topics and spur debate. "Bringing reality to a stage is challenging," especially when "tackling complex subjects," says Marie-Joanne Boucher, an actress who co-produced a play about the 1989 Ecole Polytechnique massacre, an anti-feminist university mass shooting that left 14 people dead and deeply scarred the nation.

In the play, "Project Polytechnique," two main actors recount the horrors of the attack and press the audience to consider what can be done to prevent more mass shootings. The words of one

of the survivors and of a police officer who was among the first to arrive at the grisly scene are recited, along with comments from a firearms enthusiast and anti-feminists who continue years later in online forums to justify the attack and adulate the killer.

"We say to the spectator: Come to the theater and you will be entertained, but you will also leave with a better overview of today's society," says Annabel Soutar, co-founder of Porte Parole, a pioneer of the genre in Quebec. Over the past two decades, her theater company has produced about 20 plays on themes as diverse as hydroelectricity, genetically modified foods and health care. Since then, many other docu-theater companies have followed suit.

One in four plays

Debuting in the 1920s, in Germany and then in Russia, documentary theater initially developed to support communist ideology. It then spread during the 20th century throughout the world and moved away from propaganda to focus on social topics. In Canada, it was more in the English-speaking part of the country that the genre was embraced in the 1970s, but it has now taken on new life in Quebec.

Approximately one in four theater productions in Quebec today is a docu-play, according to Herve Guay, an academic who edited a book on the genre. Part of the reason for this runaway success is the broad "aesthetic variety" of docu-plays, says Guay. Montreal resident Emilie Cabouat-Peyrache recently saw "Project Polytechnique"

and loved it. "Documentary theater allows you to explore a lot of subjects, sometimes surprising ones," she said.

'Apotheosis of documentary theater'

Another popular docu-play, "Run de lait" (Milk Run), deals with the disappearance of small Quebec farms, Canada's milk quota system and the mental health of farmers. "We are at the apotheosis of documentary theater and Quebec society is ripe to be challenged in this way on social issues," believes Justin Laramée, who produced the show. In an interview with AFP, he said he was pleased to perform it for both urban dwellers and farmers alike. "It started conversations, and we need that in our society now."

Allowing audiences to explore new worlds were key objectives for the creators of "Pas perdus," a documentary play about identity, heritage and memory featuring non-actors performing tasks silently while a recording of their voices plays over speakers. "We live in a society with a lot of noise, a lot of positions taken, not necessarily a lot of depth, and I think we need a return to authenticity," explains the play's co-writer Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette.

The play has elicited strong responses from audiences. "We get a lot of feedback," Emile Proulx-Cloutier, who wrote the play with Barbeau-Lavalette. "Spectators often tell me that they leave shaken." —AFP

'Mean Girls' fetches top spot at North America box office

The Plastics rule North Shore High once again in Paramount's musical remake of "Mean Girls," which won most popular at the North American box office for the second weekend in a row, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. The tale of high school survival starring Angourie Rice, Renee

who played Gretchen Wieners in the Broadway musical. With no major new releases to shake things up in the Friday-through-Sunday period, the order of the top five films remained unchanged from the prior weekend. Hollywood is hoping for a boost from Tuesday's announcement of Oscar nominations.

Hanging tight in third in its sixth week out was Warner Bros.' "Wonka" at \$6.4 million. The fantasy musical, starring Timothee Chalamet as the eccentric chocolate maker, has taken in \$187.2 million in North America and \$344 million internationally.

Sony rom-com "Anyone But You" placed fourth at \$5.4 million. A sleeper hit, the film has just passed the \$100 million mark globally, making it the highest-grossing R-rated comedy since "Bridget Jones's Baby" in 2016, according to the Hollywood Reporter.

Sydney Sweeney and Glen Powell play two people who meet and instantly connect before being tripped up by a series of crossed signals. And in fifth was "Migration," a family-friendly animation from Universal and Illumination about a goofy family of mallard ducks flying from New England to Jamaica, at \$5.3 million. Rounding out the top 10 were:

"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" (\$3.7 million)
"I.S.S." (\$3.0 million)
"Night Swim" (\$2.7 million)
"The Boys in the Boat" (\$2.5 million)
"Poor Things" (\$2.0 million) —AFP



Rapp, Auli'i Cravalho, Avantika and Bebe Wood topped the box office with an estimated weekend take of \$11.7 million.

Tina Fey, the writer behind this and the 2004 original, plays math teacher Ms. Norbury, in a cameo-studded film featuring drop-ins by original lead Lindsay Lohan, as well as Ashley Park

In second place was Amazon and MGM's action picture "The Beekeeper," at \$8.5 million. Jason Statham stars as a former commando seeking vengeance against a criminal group whose cruel scams lead to the suicide of an elderly woman, a friend of his, played by Phylicia Rashad.

'The Meg' shark was actually quite thin, scientists say

The prehistoric megalodon is known as one of the most fearsome creatures the world has ever known, a horrifyingly giant shark immortalized in the monster movie "The Meg". But after re-analyzing the fossil evidence, scientists said on Monday they now think the shark was significantly thinner than previously thought. While the 2018 B-movie starring Jason Statham depicted a megalodon preying on modern-day humans, the shark actually went extinct around 3.6 million years ago.

Previous research has suggested it could have been up to 20 meters (50 feet) long. But size estimates have varied widely because they were based on the only remaining fossils of the shark, which are teeth and vertebrae. And scientists had assumed that the megalodon had a similar stocky body shape to its modern descendant, the great white shark.

However a better model may be the thinner mako shark, according to an international team of researchers behind a study in the journal Palaeontologia Electronica. "Our team re-examined the fossil record, and discovered the mega-



This handout picture released by Metazoa Studio shows an artist's impression of the prehistoric shark Otodus megalodon. —AFP

lodon was more slender" than had been thought, University of California, Riverside biologist Phillip Sternes said in a statement. But in bad news for Jason Statham in the next Meg movie, the shark actually may have been even longer than previously believed. "It still would have been a formidable predator at the top of the ancient marine food chain, but it would have behaved differently based on this new understanding of its body," Sternes added.

In better news for the hapless human victims in a possible future Meg movie, the megalodon "may not have been

a powerful swimmer" compared to the great white shark, said study co-author Kenshu Shimada, a paleobiologist at DePaul University in Chicago. It also may have had to hunt less due to a longer digestive canal.

This could also affect the mystery of the megalodon's extinction. It was previously theorized that the shark died off because there was less prey around. But its updated body image could point towards a different culprit. —AFP



US-Austrian actor and former Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger speaks about clean energy during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

Arnie's 'customs adventure' watch sells for \$290,000

The Swiss watch that got Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger in trouble with German customs officials has been sold for 270,000 euros (\$290,000), the actor's charity said. The action hero-turned-environmental campaigner was held at Munich airport Wednesday for failing to declare the bespoke Audemars Piguet timepiece that was being auctioned for his climate charity.

Schwarzenegger called his brush with the law a "wild experience" at the charity dinner Thursday where the watch was auctioned, cracking raunchy jokes about a female official who he said "was going to put me in handcuffs", according to a video posted on entertainment website TMZ. "Usually I pay \$500 for that," said the 76-year-old actor, a former governor of California.

Schwarzenegger was held for three hours, according to the German media, before being allowed to take the watch to the dinner. The fundraiser for his Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative was held across the border in his native Austria in the Alpine resort of Kitzbuehel, with US climate envoy John Kerry said to be among the guests. "The world's most famous watch was auctioned off for 270,000 euros," the charity said Friday. "Arnold Schwarzenegger's customs adventure had a happy ending," it added. Duty should have been paid on the watch because Schwarzenegger was intending to sell it in the European Union, German customs spokesman Thomas Meister said.

The star had to pay "several thousand euros" in taxes, according to the German daily Bild, which said the watch had been specially made for the actor. The glitzy auction raised 1.31 million euros, the actor's charity said, with works of art and a personal training session with Schwarzenegger himself also going under the hammer. —AFP

Eisenberg sells 'dream' film as Sasquatch saga prompts Sundance walkouts

Jesse Eisenberg sold his whip-smart road trip movie to Disney for a reported \$10 million Sunday—as his second film at the Sundance festival, a bizarre scatological tale about Sasquatches, caused audience walkouts. It has been a busy weekend at the Utah-based indie movie fest for the actor, best known for his Oscar-nominated portrayal of Mark Zuckerberg in "The Social Network," but who is increasingly turning his hand to directing. "A Real Pain" is Eisenberg's second feature as director, and the first in which he also stars—alongside Kieran Culkin, who is fresh off his Emmy win last weekend for "Succession."

The heartfelt comedy about two American cousins visiting Poland to honor their late grandmother who survived the Holocaust was inspired by Eisenberg's own Polish family's backstory. "I think if I wrote something that was not (personal), I don't think I would feel anything for it, and it probably wouldn't be as good," Eisenberg told AFP. "Or maybe I'd be happier and I wouldn't feel nervous about everything! I don't know."

Less than 24 hours after its well-received premiere, "A Real Pain" was bought by Disney-owned Searchlight, in the festival's biggest deal so far, and will hit theaters later this year. Eisenberg and Culkin star as wildly different cousins who are brought back together by the trip.

Eisenberg's David is happily married and successful while Culkin's Benji is unemployed and drifting. Yet David is nervous and aloof while Benji's blunt, outspoken charisma endears him to everyone around them. "I connected with the character immediately, which almost never happens," said Culkin. "I think it's happened three times ever, in my life," including his beloved role as Roman Roy in "Succession," he added. —AFP



Jesse Eisenberg attends the "A Real Pain" Premiere during the 2024 Sundance Film Festival at Eccles Center Theatre in Park City, Utah. — AFP

Quiet and not-so-quiet luxury at PARIS FASHION WEEK



Balmain's fashion designer Olivier Rousteing (third right) acknowledges the audience with British model Naomi Campbell (center) at the end of his ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection show.



BALMAIN

The Paris Fashion Week menswear shows draw to a close on Sunday. Here are some of the highlights among the 40-plus runway shows of the past few days.

Quiet luxury
The watchword of high-end fashion last year was quiet luxury, thanks in large part to the success of TV show "Succession". Whether out of guilt at deepening social inequality or for the love of classic tailoring, the trend showed no sign of abating in Paris this week.
Fashion site Culted said AMI was a leading example, highlighting the "timelessness of a garment and rejecting the trend cycle altogether", with its expertly tailored suits and trench coats in autumnal tones. Online fashion firm Hypebeast argued that it was Hermes who should be seen as the "epitome of quiet luxury", with its long leather coats and heavy knitwear in a sombre palette of blacks, greys and browns. Dior was also a classy affair, as designer Kim Jones used a show dedicated to Rudolf Nureyev to present some haute couture takes on kaftans, turbans and stage costumes beloved of the ballet legend.

And not-so-quiet
There were lots of roses, red lips and polka dots among the sparkly reworkings of tuxedos and classic suits at Balmain's first menswear show in several years. "It's luxury, but it's definitely not quiet," designer Olivier Rousteing told fashion site WWD. The show, which he described as a celebration of African style, was full of bold colors, innovative shapes, luxurious facial jewelry and gold bags—tasteful but very bling, and ended with an appearance by the queen of divas, Naomi Campbell.
Every goth's favorite designer, Rick Owens, is always a highlight for fashion experts. His latest show was more low-key than normal in its setting—at his Paris atelier—but there was the usual shock factor. Alongside the familiar stilts, pagoda-like shoulders and dilated black pupils were a new highlight: huge rubber boots—something between a condom and a missile warhead—that the designer himself called "grotesque and inhuman" in their proportions.



German filmmaker Wim Wenders (left) presents a creation by Yohji Yamamoto.



YOHJI YAMAMOTO





Zinedine Zidane (third right) and his wife Veronique Zidane (second right), attend Yohji Yamamoto for the Menswear Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection.



US actor Norman Reedus presents a creation by Yohji Yamamoto.



German filmmaker Wim Wenders (left) presents a creation by Yohji Yamamoto.



Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto acknowledges the applause at the end of his Menswear Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection.



US actor Norman Reedus presents a creation by Yohji Yamamoto.

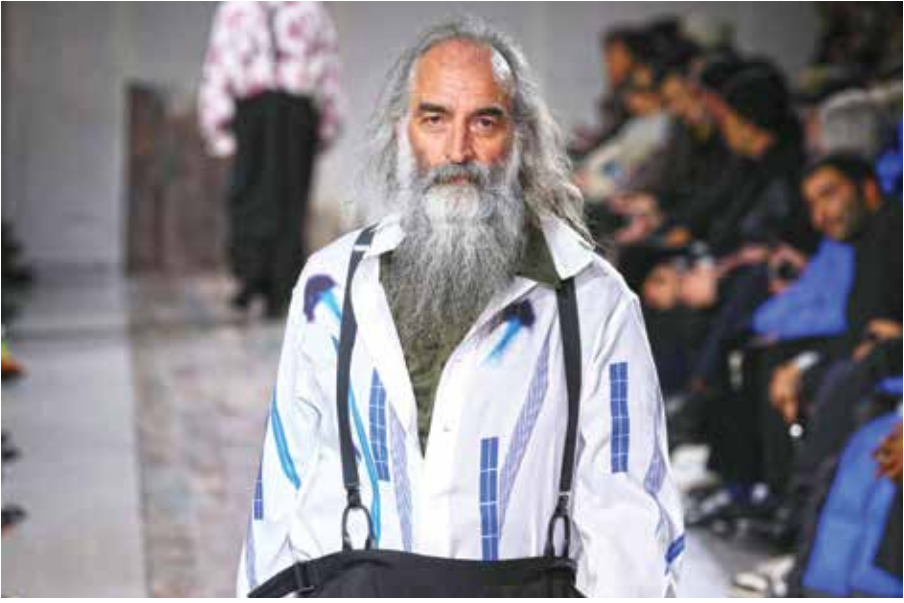


Celeb-spotting

Celebrity presence has always been a big part of the fashion game, with sporting tie-ups playing an increasingly big role. New York label KidSuper scored big by convincing Brazilian footballer Ronaldinho to walk the catwalk.

Loewe is always a celebrity hotspot, and Saturday's show saw actors Jamie Dornan and Nicholas Hoult and popstar Zayn Malik on the front row. Louis Vuitton has gone a step further, naming a celebrity from outside the fashion world as its creative director last year, hip-hop star Pharrell Williams.

His American West-themed show, full of cowboy hats and rhinestones, attracted Bradley Cooper and rapper Playboi Carti, while British trad-rockers Mumford and Sons debuted new song "Good People" at the after-party. Perhaps the coolest A-listers were reserved for 80-year-old Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto, who featured cult German director Wim Wenders and "Walking Dead" star Norman Reedus on the catwalk, while football legend Zinedine Zidane watched from the front row.—AFP



Sports

Dunlap becomes first amateur since 1991 to win PGA Tour event

Dunlap will not take home any money from the win

LOS ANGELES: Reigning US Amateur champion Nick Dunlap became the first amateur since 1991 to win a PGA Tour title, winning a back-nine showdown on Sunday to capture the American Express tournament. Dunlap, a 20-year-old sophomore at the University of Alabama, sank the winning par putt from just inside six feet at the 18th hole to fire a two-under-par 70 at the Pete Dye Stadium Course—one of three courses used this week. Despite his one-stroke victory, however, Dunlap will not take home any money from the win.

As an amateur, the American is ineligible for the winner's prize of \$1.51 million, which goes to runner-up Christiaan Bezuidenhouit of South Africa. Dunlap finished on 29-under 259 to set a 72-hole record low winning score, breaking the mark of 28-under set by Patrick Reed in 2014.

"I felt this script today was already written," Dunlap said. "I was going to give it everything I had whether I shoot 75 or 65 or 70. 'I'm so happy to be standing here.'" Dunlap became the first amateur to win a US PGA Tour event since Phil Mickelson captured the 1991 Northern Telecom Open in Tucson, Arizona.

Dunlap also became the second-youngest PGA Tour winner in the past 90 years, trailing only Jordan Spieth's victory at 19 at the 2013 John Deere Classic, and the youngest amateur winner since 1910. The historic victory didn't come without tension-packed drama. Dunlap sank a 10-foot birdie putt at the par-5 16th to share the lead with 24th-ranked American Sam Burns, who found water off the tee at the par-3 17th on the day's toughest hole.

Dunlap made a routine par while Burns stumbled with a double bogey and the amateur led by

two with the par-4 18th remaining. But ahead of him on the 18th green, Bezuidenhouit birdied to pull within one. At 18, Dunlap's tee shot went way into the right rough and his approach stopped 75 feet from the hole down a slope. "I thought I had a two-shot lead," Dunlap said. "I hit somebody, I'm sorry for whoever that was, got a great break and was able to give myself a good look."

Dunlap pitched his third to just inside six feet and then sank his par putt for the victory "Nothing like I have ever felt," Dunlap said. "It's so cool to be out here and experience this as an amateur. 'Whether I had made that or missed that, if you would have told me Wednesday night I would have a putt to win this golf tournament, I wouldn't believe you.'"

'A hell of a player'

Bezuidenhouit finished on 260 after a closing 65 and praised Dunlap. "He's a hell of a player and congrats to him," Bezuidenhouit said. "Hopefully he can be out on the PGA Tour soon and we all can get to play with him."

Sharing third on 261 were Taiwan's Kevin Yu, who matched his career-low PGA round with a 63, and Americans Xander Schauffele and Justin Thomas. Despite missing out on the winner's check, Dunlap will become eligible to take PGA Tour membership at any time in the 2024 PGA campaign.

Then he would receive the benefits of any PGA Tour winner, which include membership through the 2026 season plus entries into the Masters and PGA Championship and any unplayed "signature" events.

Dunlap already has berths in this year's Masters, PGA and British Open from his US Amateur triumph if he is an amateur when the events tee off. A social



LA QUINTA: Nick Dunlap of the United States poses for a photo with the trophy alongside parents Charlene and Jim, Girlfriend Isabella Ellis and Coach Jay Seawell after winning The American Express at Pete Dye Stadium Course in La Quinta, California. — AFP

media video posting of Dunlap's Alabama golf squad showed his teammates go berserk when the winning putt dropped.

Dunlap led by three when the day began, kept that margin with a birdie at the par-5 fifth but made a double bogey after finding water off the seventh

tee. "Hitting that ball in the water on seven tested everything I had," Dunlap said. "I missed a couple putts I thought I was going to make." Dunlap made a six-foot birdie putt at the eighth and an eight-foot putt to save par at nine, fell behind after Burns made a birdie-birdie back-nine start. — AFP

Maarafi: Kuwait riders will get their rights

KUWAIT: State Minister for National Assembly Affairs, State Minister for Youth Affairs, State Minister for Communications Affairs Dawood Maarafi said he will review the decision that were issued in regards to Kuwait equestrian sport, that affect a large number of riders.

Maarafi who spoke during the closing ceremony of the International Atiyah Al-Marshoud show jumping tournament which concluded on Saturday and was won by Kuwait Club and Asia Champion Ali Al-Kharafi, he said "I took over the youth ministry few days ago, and the equestrian files will be reviewed, and anyone who has a right will get it, and we will play our role in containing the riders and support them in a suitable manner, as we will discuss the legal reasons behind the decisions related to equestrianism, to be amended, and we will not over look the issue which should be studied from the legal aspect.

Minister Maarafi along with the tournament sponsor Waleed Al-Marshoud, and Kuwait Equestrian Federation President Masoud Hayat awarded



Minister Dawood Maarafi and Masoud Hayat

rider Ali Al-Kharafi, and listened to requirements of Kuwait riders and the problems they are currently suffering from, bearing in mind that Kuwait will host two international championships of the "3" stars category, and they qualify for the World Cup to be held in Saudi Arabia.

Minister Dawood Maarafi thanked the championship organizers and said "the tournament continued for 10 years, and it is an important one for the support of riders who exert all efforts to have Kuwait's name in prominence in all international arenas, and the current activities has a positive effect on our local and international arenas".



PARIS: (FILES) The Arc de Triomphe reflects in an official's store window for the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris on December 15, 2023. One hundred years after the black-and-white Olympic Games of 1924, France is putting its image on the line by hosting the Summer Olympics (July 26-August 11) in the heart of the French capital. — AFP

Olympics bashing?

Paris 2024 organisers remain confident that sights such as beach volleyball in front of the Eiffel Tower, swimming in the river Seine, or the marathon through the capital's fabled streets will lift spirits once the flame is light on July 26.

They make a distinction between the often noisy and attention-seeking media and political debate and wider public opinion. A survey by the Odoxa group for RTL radio in November suggested that 65 percent of French people were in favour of the Games—a fall of 11 points in two years but still a large majority with positive views. In the Paris region, slightly more than half of people were in favour. Organisers also point to the orderly preparations, as well as their budget restraint in comparison with other modern editions. Most of the sporting infrastructure is finished. The athletes' village is almost ready to be furnished. Crucial metro and train line extensions will be ready in time, they insist.

"What if everything went ok?" asked a headline in the left-wing Liberation newspaper at the start of the year. "France is ready for the Olympics... but given the country's gloomy mood and its unpopular leaders, there is no sign of popular fervour," it added. Tony Estanguet, the head of the Paris organising committee, has criticised "Olympics bashing" in the media and the former canoeing champion despaired of his compatriots' tendency to look on the downside. — AFP

Youth minister: Working on youth creativity development

KUWAIT: Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Dawood Maarafi affirmed work to develop and sponsor the sports movement in the coming period and support sports youth by providing them with all means for creativity and excellence.

This came in a speech by Minister Maarafi conveyed by a press release of the authority on the occasion of his visit and meeting with the Director General of the General Authority for Sports Youssef Al-Bidan and his deputies, and in the presence of members of the investigation committee formed by a ministerial decision to study violations.

Maarafi said that everyone must abide by the directives and ensure the application of laws with all impartiality and accountability of negligent persons, pointing out that many topics were discussed, most notably the decisions of the authority to cancel the publicity of some sports clubs and listen to the authority's officials and members of the investigation committee in this regard, as all the legal grounds for these decisions were clarified.

He explained that the concerned parties have the right to appeal against these decisions in accordance with the regulating laws and that these grievances are filed if they are submitted by legal means to the Minister's Office and under his supervision and follow-up in his capacity as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the General Sports Authority.

Chiefs and Lions grab spots in NFL's championships

NEW YORK: The Kansas City Chiefs reached the AFC Championship game for the sixth straight year while the Detroit Lions will play their first NFC Championship game in 33 years after victories in the NFL playoffs on Sunday. Patrick Mahomes's Chiefs emerged with a 27-24 win from a gruelling battle at Buffalo while the Detroit Lions defeated the visiting Tampa Bay Buccaneers 31-23.

The Chiefs will play at the Baltimore Ravens on Sunday for a chance to defend their Super Bowl title while the Lions will be looking to reach their first Super Bowl when they travel to the San Francisco 49ers. The Buffalo Bills were looking to avenge their epic divisional-round defeat to the Chiefs in 2021 and with quarterback Josh Allen in inspired form, they gave themselves a real chance.

After the teams exchanged field goals in the first quarter, Allen put the Bills in front with a five-yard touchdown run. The Chiefs responded with a field goal and grabbed the lead through a familiar combination—Mahomes finding Travis Kelce on a 22-yard touchdown pass.

Allen powered over from two yards just before halftime with the extra-point sending the Bills into the break ahead 17-13. Mahomes again found Kelce, who squeezed into the corner of the end zone. The touchdown was their 16th post-season scoring connection—a record for any quarterback-tight end partnership.

But Allen zipped a pass into the corner of the end zone to Khalil Shakir, who pulled in a brilliant catch for a 13-yard touchdown as Buffalo took a 24-20 lead. The Chiefs, playing their first road playoff game in the Mahomes-era, restored their advantage early in the fourth with Isiah Pa-



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dawood Maarafi and Director Al-Bidan. — KUNA

He added that these grievances will be studied in all impartiality and transparency, indicating that if it is proven that any of these decisions violate the laws, the right will be returned to its owners.

Maarafi stressed his keenness and the authority's officials to care for young athletes and provide them with all means to practice sports activity and provide all facilities and support to encourage sports investment in accordance with the provisions of the law without neglecting the regulatory aspect. He explained the importance of digital transformation in the implementation of transactions between the authority and all government agencies and sports bodies, pointing out that he was briefed on the achievements made by the national teams recently and the support provided to them by the authority after the regulations were amended to increase financial support for distinguished athletes. — KUNA

checo's powerful four-yard rushing score, which proved decisive.

Buffalo got the ball with 8:23 left and Allen drove upfield on a 16-play, 54-yard drive over 6:40, but it ended in despair as Tyler Bass pulled the potentially game-tying 44-yard field goal wide right. Pacheco ran for a first down and the Chiefs ran out the clock, moving one win from their fourth Super Bowl in five seasons.

Lions pounce on Bucs

Lions quarterback Jared Goff threw for two touchdowns and 287 yards as Detroit set up a showdown with the 49ers in California. The victory extended Detroit's emotion-fueled playoff run, which has seen the Lions win back-to-back playoff games for the first time since their 1957 championship season.

Tampa Bay kicker Chase McLaughlin's 43-yard field goal cancelled out Michael Badgley's early 23-yard three-pointer for Detroit. Detroit's offense made the breakthrough early in the second quarter when Goff fired a bullet nine-yard pass to the back of the end zone to Josh Reynolds for the touchdown.

Bucs quarterback Baker Mayfield popped a short pass to tight end Cade Otton to gather and cruise in for the touchdown. McLaughlin slotted the extra point to make it 10-10 at half-time. The second half started in similar fashion with Tampa Bay punting twice either side of a Detroit punt.

But the game exploded into life with a flurry of touchdowns that began when Reynolds grabbed his second score of the game, barging over from close range on fourth down as Detroit took a 17-10 edge. Tampa Bay's response was immediate, with Mayfield leading a drive that ended with Rachaad White romping into the end zone from 12 yards out. Detroit reclaimed the lead on the next possession with an electrifying 31-yard run from Jahmyr Gibbs, to make it 24-17 after the extra point conversion. Goff stretched Detroit's lead to 31-17, picking out Amon-Ra St. Brown for a nine-yard touchdown pass. — AFP

French gloom clouds Paris Olympics, six months from start

PARIS: Political bickering, ongoing grumbling about ticket prices and disruption to everyday life are souring the mood in the build-up to the Paris Olympics this July—something organisers blame on typical French pessimism.

Several recent announcements have led to a spike in negative publicity for the sporting mega-event which will start in just six months and draw a television audience of billions. Many Parisians were dismayed in December by news that transport ticket prices are set to double for the duration of the event and that they should work from home to free up seats on busy metros and buses.

The unveiling of planned security measures led to claims some parts of the city would face Covid-style lockdowns, while controversy erupted about the environmental impact of a judges' tower at the surfing venue in French Polynesia. On top of it all, Paris's Socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo and President Emmanuel Macron's centrist government fell out publicly after Hidalgo claimed that planned Paris transport upgrades would "not be ready".

"There have been a succession of issues that have been badly handled from a communication point of view," said Philippe Moreau Chevrolet, a lecturer in communication at Sciences Po university in Paris and the founder of the MCBG Conseil PR agency. "Instead of getting people behind the Games, they have created mistrust," he told AFP.

France's association of hoteliers and restaurants owners issued an unusual statement earlier this month, condemning French politicians for their "anxiety-inducing" announcements around the Games and urging them to come together. "In general, we would strongly urge all of our public authorities, collectively and with solidarity, to speak positively and responsibly," the statement added. Other recent complaints centre on the construction work that snares traffic daily around the capital, while resentment lingers over the handling of ticket sales last year that saw many locals priced out.

Paris will see "the most expensive ticket prices in an athletics arena that we have witnessed at an Olympic Games," said World Athletics president Sebastian Coe in December. Coe, who oversaw the 2012 London Olympics, added he was worried the families of some athletes would be unable to attend.

Sports

Morocco coach admits to AFCON blunders after DR Congo draw

Tanzanian hopes of historic AFCON victory dashed by 10-man Zambia

KORHOGO: Morocco coach Walid Regragui said he blundered as his team drew 1-1 in an Africa Cup of Nations Group F draw against the Democratic Republic of Congo on Sunday. Achraf Hakimi gave the Atlas Lions a perfect start as his sixth-minute volley flew into the net in the southwestern coastal city of San-Pedro.

But after Cedric Bakambu missed a penalty for the Leopards, they levelled on 76 minutes through a shot from substitute Silas Katompa Mvumpa. Tanzania and 10-man Zambia later drew 1-1, leaving all four with a chance of making the knockout stage.

It is a similar situation in Group E after South Africa put a loss to Mali behind them with a 4-0 triumph over Namibia in Korhogo, where veteran Themba Zwane scored twice. Morocco, who two years ago in Qatar became the first World Cup semi-finalists from Africa, have four points from two matches, DR Congo and Zambia two each and Tanzania one.

Regragui, named African Coach of the Year at the annual CAF awards last month after his World Cup achievements, told reporters that his second-half substitutions did not work. "After making changes to introduce freshness, we did not manage the match well. We retreated and allowed the Congolese back into the game.

"We left too much space between our lines. Tactically we should have been better. Perhaps we respected our opponents too much. "DR Congo are the most difficult team in the group. They were motivated and dangerous and deserved to draw," said Regragui, who played for Morocco in a 2004 final loss to Tunisia.

Silas, who plays for Bundesliga outfit Stuttgart and prefers to be known by his first name, was

voted man of the match, despite only coming on with 26 minutes left. He said he was "happy with the award but not the result".

"There were opportunities toward the end of the match for us to collect all three points. We noticed the Moroccans were tired and we created scoring opportunities.

Relief from heat

"I would like to start games, but that decision is not mine. I follow the instructions of our coach and prepare mentally for whatever task I am assigned." The match was the last in the tournament to kick off at 1400 local (GMT) time, which will be a huge relief to teams forced to endure 36 Celsius (97 Fahrenheit) heat at times.

Aliou Cisse, coach of defending champions Senegal, has called on the organisers to rethink match times for future Cup of Nations, starting with the 2025 finals in Morocco. Tanzania thought they had finally won a Cup of Nations match 44 years after making their debut in Nigeria only to be thwarted by star Zambia forward Patson Daka.

Daka's near-post header flew past Aisha Manula with just two minutes of regular time remaining. The Taifa Stars, the second lowest ranked team at the tournament, took an 11th-minute lead when clubless Simon Msuva slammed a close-range shot past goalkeeper Lawrence Mulenga.

Zambia were reduced to 10 men just before half-time when captain Roderick Kabwe was shown a second yellow card, then a red after elbowing rival skipper Mbwana Samatta. Amid furious Zambian protests, coach Avram Grant, the former Chelsea and West Ham United manager, was yellow-carded by the Beninese referee. Themba Zwane, whose international career appeared over after coach



SAN-PEDRO: DR Congo's forward #19 Fiston Mayele (L) fights for the ball with Morocco's defender #5 Nayef Aguerd during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 group F football match between Morocco and DR Congo at Stade Laurent Pokou in San Pedro on January 21, 2024. — AFP

Hugo Broos said he was "too old" for international football at 32, was the two-goal South African star against Namibia.

After Percy Tau atoned for a penalty miss against Mali by converting a spot-kick in the 14th minute, Zwane netted twice to give the former champions a three-goal half-time advantage. Now 34, Zwane

was replaced in the closing stages by Thapelo Maseko, who scored to give South Africa a record winning margin in a Cup of Nations match. Despite the biggest win so far in the tournament, South Africa are not assured of a last-16 place. Mali have four points, South Africa and Namibia three each and Tunisia one. — AFP

Rampant Girona keep Liga lead, Madrid and Barca triumph

BARCELONA: Artem Dovbyk struck a hat-trick inside seven minutes as minnows Girona powered back to the top of La Liga with a thumping 5-1 win over Sevilla on Sunday. After Real Madrid scraped a controversial 3-2 win over bottom side Almeria and a treble by Ferran Torres helped Barca win 4-2 at Real Betis, Girona demonstrated their title credentials.

The Catalan club, in the top flight for only the fourth season in their history, are shock challengers for the Spanish title and lead second-place Madrid by a point, having played one extra game. Madrid's victory over winless Almeria, which took them temporarily top before Girona played, was steeped in drama and controversy.

Dani Carvajal rammed home the winner in the 99th minute to settle a wild and hugely entertaining clash at the Santiago Bernabeu where Madrid had trailed 2-0. Almeria took a two-goal lead through Largie Ramazani's 38th minute strike and a screamer from Edgar Gonzalez.

Madrid battled back to triumph as Jude Bellingham converted a penalty and Vinicius Junior used his upper arm to divert home an equaliser, before Carvajal's last-gasp winner. Madrid had three key VAR adjudications go in their favour, including Vinicius' goal which Almeria considered handball, a goal of their own ruled out and a penalty given to Madrid.

"(We leave) with the feeling we've been robbed," complained Almeria midfielder Gonzalo Melero. Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti disagreed. "I understand Almeria's anger with the VAR decisions, but I think they were well judged," Ancelotti told reporters.

"Tired team"

Madrid won the Spanish Super Cup last Sunday by thrashing Barcelona in Saudi Arabia and then lost 4-2 against Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey in midweek. "It was a tired team," explained Ancelotti, who said the



MARID: Real Madrid's English midfielder #5 Jude Bellingham (R) kicks the ball during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid CF and UD Almeria at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on January 21, 2024. — AFP

first-half display was one to forget.

Madrid came roaring back after that, with Bellingham at the heart of it. La Liga's joint top scorer with Dovbyk firing home from the spot for his 14th goal of the campaign. After Vinicius nudged in to level, Bellingham had a goal ruled out for offside and sent a superb overhead kick narrowly wide.

The England international helped create the winner by nodding the ball to the back post for Carvajal to smash home and spark jubilant celebrations after another epic Madrid comeback. Barcelona, third, let a two-goal lead slip against Betis but recovered to stay in the title race.

Torres scored twice to put Barca two ahead but they

surrendered their lead as former Real Madrid playmaker Isco struck a brace of his own. Joao Felix finished deftly in the 90th minute and Torres netted again to secure victory for the Catalans, who trail neighbours Girona by eight points.

Torres, reaching a century of appearances for Barcelona since joining from Manchester City two years ago, was decisive and said he had worked hard for his moment. "It's the fruit of hard work, discipline, consistency, of believing in yourself," Torres told Movistar.

Barcelona handed young defender Pau Cubarsi his first start and with Lamine Yamal also in the team, lined up with two 16-year-olds. — AFP

Stimac looks to late show in must-win Asian Cup clash

DOHA: Igor Stimac said his goal-shy India will try and wear down Syria and look to hit them late on in a must-win Asian Cup clash on Tuesday. India face Syria in Qatar with the knockout rounds still a possibility for both teams despite neither yet winning a match or even scoring a goal after two games.

Australia have sealed one of the spots out of Group B but with the top two and possibly even third place also qualifying, it is all to play for. Uzbekistan are sec-

ond, ahead of Syria and India. India were beaten 2-0 by Australia and 3-0 by Uzbekistan, but their Croatian coach sees a chance against a "physical" Syria who have relied so far on a small core of players.

"What is interesting about Syria is that they have a short bench, making only two or three changes and are obviously limited from the bench," said Stimac on Monday. "We will try to exhaust them and take them to the last 30 minutes and see how fresh they are," added the coach, who has a full squad to choose from for the first time in Qatar.

If India are to pull off a win and sneak into the last 16, they will need veteran talisman Sunil Chhetri to start firing. The striker has 93 international goals, behind only Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo among active players.

"Come the Syria game I hope we can fix this

problem," the 39-year-old told reporters of India's lack of goals. "And the next time I see you, I can say we did fix this problem." Syria sit third in the group with one point from a 0-0 stalemate with Uzbekistan and are hoping to make the knockouts for the first time.

Their veteran Argentine coach Hector Cuper told his men to seize the moment. "Qualifying for the last 16 will be historic for the Syria national team and we hope to bring joy to the Syrian people through qualifying," he said.

But he warned his players against wilting under the pressure of expectations. "All the players and coaching team know the importance of this match and the pressure on the players," he said. "But when you are under more pressure it means you are trying to defend the image of your country. — AFP

Vlahovic double lifts Juventus to top of Serie A

ROME: Juventus won 3-0 at Lecce on Sunday to move to the top of Serie A and bring down the curtain on a weekend dominated by racist abuse aimed at Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan in Udine. With leaders Inter away in Saudi Arabia preparing for their Italian Super Cup final against Napoli on Monday, Juventus and Dusan Vlahovic stayed hot at home.

Juventus struck three times in the second half in Lecce to give coach Max Allegri his 300th Serie A victory. They stretched their league unbeaten run to 16 matches, winning a fifth straight and moving to the top of the table for the first time since they ended the 2019-20 season as champions.

Vlahovic put Juventus ahead after 59 minutes with an ungainly volley that bounced inside the far post. Nine minutes later, Weston McKennie out-jumped the home defence at the far post. His header was crossing the line as Vlahovic flicked a boot at it to claim the goal.

Vlahovic also scored a brace on Tuesday against Sassuolo. Gleison Bremer completed an decisive victory with an emphatic header five minutes from time. "We had to be patient against a solid team that is very effective at home, so it's an important win for us," said Vlahovic, who took his league tally to 11 this season, one more than in last year's campaign.

"I'm feeling good physically, much better than last year, we've got to keep going like this," he said. Juventus visit Inter, who are a point behind, on February 4. AC Milan are seven points back in third after they came from behind to win 3-2 at Udinese on Saturday in a game halted when Maignan left the field in the first half following persistent racist abuse. — AFP



LECCE: Juventus' Brazilian defender #6 Danilo (L) fights for the ball with Lecce's Montenegrin forward #9 Nikola Krstovic during the Italian Serie A football match US Lecce vs FC Juventus on January 21 2024 at the Via Del Mare - Ettore Giardiniero. — 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, Kashem Ali, holder of Indian passport no-N4107434 issued at Kolkata having Indian permanent address Chatar Purandarpur, Kandi, Murshidabad, pin-742140 West Bengal, India present hereby declare that hence forth my name will be reads as under given name Kasem and Surname SK. **(#4596) 23/1/2024**

Alcaraz races into Australian Open quarters, Medvedev wins

Emotional Svitolina retires injured from Australian Open



MELBOURNE: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz hits a return against Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic during their men's singles match on day nine of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 22, 2024. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Carlos Alcaraz demolished unseeded Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic to storm into the Australian Open quarter-finals on Monday as Daniil Medvedev stayed on track for a third final in four years. The Spanish second seed, who will next face sixth seed Alexander Zverev, is locked in a fierce battle with Novak Djokovic for the world number one spot and is also after his Melbourne crown.

The two-time Grand Slam winner produced some scintillating baseline hitting at Rod Laver Arena to sweep Kecmanovic aside 6-4, 6-4, 6-0 in one hour 49 minutes. The 20-year-old, who missed last year's Australian Open with an injury, has dropped just one set so far in Melbourne, where he had previously never been past the third round.

"I pushed him to the limit in every ball, every point," said Alcaraz. "He has played a lot of tough matches before this one, so probably physically he wasn't 100 percent. "I could take my chances in ev-

ery set and it was a pretty good match for myself. "I'm feeling better and better every day. Every match I play here on Rod Laver (Arena) I feel more comfortable. Pleasure to play here, amazing court."

Zverev overcame a fierce challenge from British 19th seed Cameron Norrie to pull through 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (10/3) in a punishing match lasting more than four hours. He racked up 54 winners, including 15 aces, as he chases his first Grand Slam title.

'Feeling 100 percent'

Russian third seed Medvedev was made to work hard by Portugal's Nuno Borges before prevailing 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 5-7, 6-1 after more than three hours. The 27-year-old will meet Polish ninth seed Hubert Hurkacz for a place in the last four.

"Before this match I was feeling 100 percent," said Medvedev, defeated by Djokovic in the 2021 final and by Rafael Nadal the following year. "But he

made me run third set and that's why I missed a little bit too much. I was pretty dead to be honest. In the fourth set I managed to raise my energy levels."

Big-serving Hurkacz ended the dream run of French wildcard Arthur Cazaux 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 to advance to his first quarter-final in Melbourne. Earlier, Ukrainian qualifier Dayana Yastremska fought off two set points in the first set and came from a break down in the second against two-time champion Victoria Azarenka to win 7-6 (8/6), 6-4.

Her reward is a clash with unseeded Czech Linda Noskova, who went through when Ukraine's Elina Svitolina retired with a bad back while trailing 3-0 in the first set. "I need to take a little bit of time to breathe because my heart I feel is going to jump out of my body," said Yastremska, who hammered Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova in the first round.

"I always felt like I was running behind the train, but I think because I am a little bit of a fighter that's

why I won this match." Noskova, 19, barely broke a sweat to progress after former world number three Svitolina was unable to complete her match on Margaret Court Arena.

The 19th seed needed a medical timeout at 2-0 down in the first set, during which she received treatment for her lower back, and she pulled out after being broken for the second time on her return. "I got a spasm, or I don't know exactly what it is, but like shooting pain in the first game, the last two points," said Svitolina. "Couldn't do anything, completely locked my back."

Noskova, ranked 50 in the world, is enjoying a breakout tournament, including a stunning win against world number one Iga Swiatek in the third round. Chinese 12th seed Zheng Qinwen routed unseeded French player Oceane Dodin 6-0, 6-3. She will face unseeded Russian Anna Kalinskaya, who beat Italian 26th seed Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 6-2. — AFP

Jokic nets season-high 42 points to lead NBA Nuggets over Wizards

WASHINGTON: Nikola Jokic scored a season-high 42 points and grabbed 12 rebounds to power the reigning NBA champion Denver Nuggets over Washington 113-104 on Sunday. The Serbian superstar center, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player, made 15-of-20 shots from the floor and 12-of-14 free throws while adding eight assists, three blocks and a steal against the host Wizards.

"It's never easy. Not 42," Jokic said. "It's just a mindset. We needed this win. For us, every game is a must-win game." Jamal Murray and Michael Porter Jr. each added 19 points for the Nuggets (30-14), who rose within a game of the Western Conference lead, while Kyle Kuzma's 17 points led Washington (7-35).



WASHINGTON: Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets shoots in front of Marvin Bagley III #35 of the Washington Wizards during the second half at Capital One Arena on January 21, 2024 in Washington. — AFP

Jokic's wife and daughter attended the game, bringing special joy to his performance. "It's amazing. My family means everything to me. It's something that I'm really proud of," he said. "Wherever they go, whatever they do, I know they're on my side."

NBA overall leader Boston, paced by 32 points from Latvian forward Kristaps Porzingis plus Derrick White's 21 points and 12 rebounds, won 116-107 at Houston. "Early on I just got a lot of open looks," said Porzingis, who scored 15 points in the first quarter. "Missed the first two but stayed aggressive. I knew they were going to fall sooner or later."

The victory came two nights after Denver edged Boston 102-100, delivering the Celtics' first home defeat of the season. "We know if we want to be a championship-calibre team we cannot lose multiple games in a row," Porzingis said.

"We had a tough one the other night against Denver at home, another championship-calibre team. We came up a little bit short and took some lessons from that one and wanted to bounce back tonight."

The Celtics improved the NBA's best record to 33-10, stretching their lead atop the Eastern Conference to 3.5 games over Milwaukee. Boston's Jayson Tatum added 18 points and Jaylen Brown had a triple double for the Celtics with 13 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

Turkish center Alperen Sengun had a triple double for the Rockets with 24 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists. Phoenix's Kevin Durant scored 40 points on 18-of-25 shooting to spark the Suns over visiting Indiana 117-110, the Pacers playing without star guard Tyrese Haliburton over sore hamstring concerns. Devin Booker added 26 points for the Suns and Bradley Beal had 25 points as Phoenix improved to 24-18, level with Dallas for sixth in the West.

James Harden had 24 points and a game-high 10 assists while Russell Westbrook added 23 points and nine rebounds off the bench to spark an incredible fightback 125-114 victory for the Los Angeles Clippers over visiting Brooklyn. — AFP



MANAMA: The jubilant Kuwait's handball team. — KUNA

Kuwait's handball team is one of big four teams in Asia

MANAMA: Abdullah Al-Theyab, Assistant Secretary of the Kuwait Handball Association, said on Monday that The Kuwaiti national team's players have expressed readiness for the next matches in the Asian Handball Championship, which Bahrain is hosting.

In a statement provided to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Theyab added that the Kuwait handball

team players had demonstrated a great performance and at a higher level, noting that "the team proved to be one of the big four teams in Asia." "We came back after 15 years and qualified for the World Cup to prove that the team is willing to fight till the end," he added. The team's injuries, he said, "did not prevent us from achieving the objective and presenting the best image of the Kuwaiti handball and proving our efforts in the Asian continent." Al-Theyab congratulated the State of Kuwait's leadership, government and people on the qualification of the team to the World Cup to be organized by Croatia, Denmark and Norway as of January 14, 2025, after an absence of 15 years, thanking everyone who supported the team to reach the World Cup. In the semi-finals, Kuwait will face Qatar on Tuesday. — KUNA