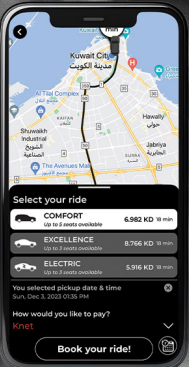



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Dominant Sabalenka crushes Zheng to defend Open title



PM visits troops north of Kuwait, Abdali port

Prime Minister conveys Amir's greetings to all security personnel



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Prime Minister HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah takes a group photo with the troops. — KUNA photos

Kuwait foils attack on worship places

KUWAIT: The Public Prosecution ordered remanding a number of suspects in custody on charges of association with a banned group and planning terrorism acts inside the country. The defendants entered the country with the intention of carrying out terrorist acts against Shiite targets, the prosecution said in a press release on Friday.

They sought to conduct surveillance on Shiite places of worship and the number of worshippers, and then started training on making explosive charges. They agreed that each of them would carry an explosive charge to a Shiite place of worship. During interrogations, the prosecution charged the suspects with association with a banned group, aiming to undermine the basic systems with illegitimate means and jeopardizing national interests.

The suspects were also charged with training in making and planning to use explosive devices for illegitimate purposes and abusing the means of communication. They confessed to the crimes, the statement said, noting that investigators are continuing probes into the case to finalize the legal measures.

The prosecution has also ordered the remanding of two citizens in custody. One of the suspects received (at his home) two of the suspects who hold the nationality of a Gulf country, while the other facilitated their travel to a foreign country to join the ranks of combatant members of the group. One of the two defendants stated a desire to take part in the combatant activities and transferred money to the group, while the other facilitated communication with leading members, the statement added.

Kuwaiti security forces successfully thwarted a terrorist operation targeting Shiite worship places, the interior ministry announced late Thursday. Security personnel closely monitored the cell's activities, leading to the arrest of Arabs affiliated with a terrorist organization. — KUNA

Kuwait welcomes ICJ order, urges end to Gaza carnage

KUWAIT: Kuwait welcomed the interim ruling, adopted by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), to order Zionist entity to prevent the genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip. The

Gaza battles rage as Zionists vow to close UN agency

GAZA: Intense fighting raged Saturday in the Gaza city of Khan Yunis, the main theatre of conflict where the Zionist army is targeting the Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas. The unabated hostilities came a day after the UN's International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled Zionists must prevent possible acts of genocide in the conflict but stopped short of calling for a ceasefire.

Tensions rose between Zionist entity and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees after Zionists alleged several UNRWA staff were involved in the Hamas attack of October 7, leading some key donor countries to suspend funding. Foreign Minister I Katz said

In his speech during the visit, HH the Prime Minister conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, to all army personnel. His Highness Sheikh Dr Mohammad urged the personnel to keep defending their dear homeland as their ancestors did, stressing the government's readiness to provide the army with resources needed to achieve its duties in a perfect manner.

In another development, His Highness the Prime Minister

emergency ruling on the case, brought to the ICJ by South Africa, indicates that the aggressive acts of the occupation forces are in breach of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, according to a press release from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Appreciating the South African initiative in bringing the genocide case to the ICJ, Kuwait urges the international community to pressurize the occupation entity into halting the ongoing brutalities that claimed more than 26,000 civilian lives, mainly women and children, over more than three months.

Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also visited the Abdali port and was briefed about the monitoring and surveillance systems. His Highness conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, to all police personnel. He stressed the key role of the Ministry of Interior's personnel and their efforts to maintain the country's security, affirming the government's readiness to enhance the ministry's capabilities to help its personnel achieve their duty in a perfect manner. — KUNA

Kuwait reiterates the call for collective and decisive action to impose ceasefire and prevent forcible displacement of the Palestinian citizens and ensure immediate delivery of humanitarian aid to needy people in Gaza, the statement added.

The UN's top court ruled on Friday that the Zionist entity must prevent genocidal acts in Gaza and allow humanitarian aid into the territory, in a closely watched decision that stopped short of calling for a ceasefire. The International Court of Justice was not deciding whether the Zionist entity was actually



US and British forces have launched joint strikes aimed at reducing the Houthis' ability to target vessels transiting the key Red Sea trade route - attacks the rebels say are in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Washington has also carried out a series of unilateral air raids, but the Houthis have vowed to continue their attacks. The US military's Central Command (CENTCOM) said it had carried out another strike early Saturday on a Houthi "anti-ship missile aimed into the Red Sea and which was prepared to launch". "Forces subsequently struck and destroyed the missile in self-defense," it said on social media platform X. The Houthi's Al-Masirah television on Saturday said the US and the UK launched two air strikes on the port of Ras Issa in Yemen's Hodeida province, which hosts the country's main oil export terminal. There was no immediate confirmation from the United States or Britain, and the Houthis did not provide details on the attack or the extent of the damage. The previous evening, the British oil tanker the



US strikes Houthi target in Yemen

SANAA: US forces struck an anti-ship missile in Houthi-held Yemen that they said was ready to fire early Saturday, hours after the Iran-backed rebels caused a fire on a British tanker in the Gulf of Aden with a similar munition.

Continued on Page 6

KEPS event raises awareness of bird species in Kuwait

Adults, children take part in bird counting, with numbers serving as indicator of environmental safety



KUWAIT: People take part in activities planned by the Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) to raise awareness of bird populations in Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) organized an event at Sulaibikhat Beach on Saturday, Jan 27, 2024, aimed at conducting a bird counting exercise and fostering public awareness regarding the diverse species of birds during this season.

During the event, Mohammad Shah, Head of the Bird Monitoring and Protection at KEPS, told Kuwait Times that the purpose of this work is primarily aimed at raising awareness among individuals and fostering a closer connection to birds, while promoting environmental conversation.

The endeavor revolves around conducting bird counting activities. "Within this bird population, various categories are observed, including resident birds and migratory birds, including those that arrive during the colder months and subsequently depart when the weather gets warm."

KEPS chose to hold the event during this time because Kuwait serves as a temporary home for many species during the winter months. "Consequently, this provides an optimal occasion for acquiring more precise information regarding bird populations," Shah added.

He also said that Sulaibikhat Beach is known for the presence of flamingos, along with other migratory birds like black seagulls, diverse gull species, sea crows, Andalusian sparrows, and starlings. Thus, this location has been chosen for the event. The event in-



Mohammad Shah



cluded multiple activities, such as engaging children in coloring pictures of birds featured in brochures to instill awareness and interest from an early age.

Additionally, birdwatching platforms were set up, allowing children and adults to participate in the counting process, which serves as a data source for KEPS annual reports that are given to interested parties both within the state of Kuwait and beyond Kuwait's borders.

The presence of birds can also be a sign of environmental safety, providing KEPS with another indicator to monitor. An abundance of birds generally indicates a healthy environment. On the other hand, few birds indicate environmental unsustainability, resulting from several factors such as illegal hunting and construction. In instances where threats to environmental safety are observed, the relevant authorities are immediately notified.



KUWAIT: An artist paints traditional Chinese art at the Lunar New Year celebration. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Chinese Cultural Center celebrates Lunar New Year

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: In a heartwarming gathering of the Chinese and Kuwaiti community, Chinese Cultural Center ushered the Lunar New Year, through cultural activities to summon positive energy and festive vibes of that solemn celebration.

The event, which took place on Thursday, welcomed diplomats, politicians, artists, and guests from all walks of life to engage in the traditional rituals of this day. As they joined hands to bid farewell to the past year and embrace the new one, attendees wrote their warm wishes, created unique art pieces through Chinese paper-cutting and Chinese paintings, and got to explore the authentic flavors of China's food and drinks.

Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei said he felt delighted to reunite with his people and the Kuwaiti community to celebrate one of the most popular and important festivals since ancient time.



Zhang Jianwei



Xia Jianfeng



Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei (left) and Cultural Attaché Xia Jianfeng (right) honor Sheikh Dr Alanoud Al-Sabah.

"Amid all the current conflicts and wars happening around us, I wish that this festival will bring with it hope and happiness to all people of the world, as I wish for peace and stability to prevail," he said.

Xia Jianfeng, cultural attaché and director of the Chinese Cultural Center, echoed the significance of this day, as he believes it's considered a legacy of mankind. "There is a cultural acceptance of this rich heritage around the globe, as the Chinese New Year was declared last year as a United Nations holiday," he said in his opening speech.



An attendee writes his new year's resolution on red paper.



Chinese calligraphy



Children engage in Chinese paper-cutting.

Kuwaiti aid vital for people across Palestine: Official

KUWAIT: President of the Palestinian Medical Relief Association Dr Mustafa Barghouti confirmed on Wednesday that Kuwaiti aid is one of the most important forms of assistance received by the Palestinian people. Barghouti said in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after meeting with Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, that the Kuwait Red Crescent has sought and continues to strive to get aid to all those affected in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip, which is being subjected to total destruction by the Zionist entity.

Barghouti said that the destruction in the Gaza Strip affected about 70 percent of houses, residential towers, places of worship, health centers, and educational centers, pointing out that many hospitals have been evacuated, including the Shifa Hospital, the Jordanian Field Hospital, the Baptist Hospital, the Turkish Friendship Hospital, and the International Eye Hospital. The rest could shut down any minute as the Zionist entity continues to block the arrival of medicines and fuel. He added that Zionist bombings have killed of more than 25,000 martyrs, most of them women and children, and injured more than 65,000 people.

Regarding the work of the Palestine Relief Society, Barghouti explained that the society is working to provide its health and preventive services through 28 health centers in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as working in 500 villages, camps, and cities to serve more than 1.5 million Palestinians. He added that the association has worked to train and graduate 46,000 paramedics, including 2000 volunteer paramedics working with field relief crews.

Barghouti pointed out that his visit to Kuwait comes within the framework of exchanging cooperation with the Kuwaiti Red Crescent because of its effective experiences at the humanitarian level and its immediate aid response in all Palestinian areas, praising the role of the Kuwaiti leadership, government, and people alongside the Palestinian people at all levels and in all international forums.

Chairman of the board of directors of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, stressed the firm position of Kuwait's leadership and people in supporting the Palestinian people in all international forums, indicating that urgent assistance comes as confirmation of this firm position.

As for the projects implemented by the association in the Gaza Strip, he said that urgent food assistance was provided, including the distribution of daily meals and flour, as well as medical and vital assistance and ambulances. The Palestine Medical Relief Association was established in 1979 and is a national non-governmental health association that provides primary health care services throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. — KUNA

Local

Spanish, a bridge between the Arab and Latin cultures

A gateway for other languages

KUWAIT: Spanish is the official language or one of the official languages of 20 countries in Europe and Central, South, and North America, with more than 540 million native speakers, making it one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. Arabic speakers seem close to the Spanish language considering the history between Arabs and Spain, as the Andalusian Islamic conquest from 711 AD to 1492 spanned 800 years.

There are 4,000 Spanish words of Arabic origin — for example, Albondiga (hazelnut), Aceite (oil), Arroz (rice), and Azucar (sugar). Although it is a phonetic language, meaning it is pronounced as written, there are differences in the Spanish language, although few, in dialects between regions and countries. There are Spanish language enthusiasts in Kuwait who can learn the language in many centers, one of which is Kuwait University's Department of Community Service and Continuing Education.

Kawthar Al-Qallaf, a student who loves to learn new languages, started with Spanish because she has many friends from Puerto Rico, a country in South America, speaking the language. Al-Qallaf thinks learning Spanish will help her understand the Porto Rican culture, and talking to her friends in their mother tongue will allow her to know them better. "The Spanish language was a start for me



Spanish Ambassador in Kuwait, Miguel Moro Aguilar



Dr. Afrah Mulla Ali

because, in my mind, Spanish is the first step to learning Portuguese and French languages," Al-Qallaf said. Anfai Al-Houli took a Spanish class while she was in college.

Al-Houli found herself drawn to the Spanish language and started to watch movies and shows. After learning Spanish, Al-Houli wants to learn French or Italian to keep herself familiar with another culture through the language. She did not stop there; she applied for online classes and finished level one. Al-Qallaf and Al-Houli were studying level one online. They are both at level two in the Kuwait University Department of Community Service and Continuing Education, taught by Dr. Afrah Mulla Ali.

Dr. Mulla Ali, a graduate from the University of Salamanca, the oldest university in Spain, 900 years old, was the first Kuwaiti and Arab woman alumni of the Spanish University. "Teaching is a beautiful hobby for me, and more people have been interested in learning Spanish in the past few years," said Dr. Mulla Ali, who has been teaching Spanish since 2012. She believed the number of enthusiasts of the Spanish language in Kuwait would increase because it is "beautiful, musical, and worthy to learn."

Dr. Mulla Ali advised those who want to learn Spanish to be confident in learning a new language. "It is not hard but not easy, and they will love the sound of listening to Spanish," she said. The Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait, Miguel Moro Aguilar, said Kuwait was a pioneering country in the cultural realm in the Gulf region. In an interview with KUNA, Aguilar said Spain boasts a rich cultural background and that both countries share a common history, which makes cultural cooperation "natural and fluent."

Aguilar said that Kuwaiti and Spanish societies share many interests, such as music, flamenco, gastronomy, cinema, and sports. "The cultural cooperation the Spanish Embassy has developed with Kuwait has been very successful and has led to a better understanding between both people," he said. "We appreciate the work of the Nation-

al Council (of Culture, Arts, and Letters), Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyah, Al-Babtain (the Central Library for Arabic Poetry), the National Library, JACC (Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center), and many other actors in the cultural sector of Kuwait because, without their continuous support," Aguilar said, this cooperation would not be possible. Spain combines tradition and modernity, and it shows in its cultural landscape.

"That is the reason why the cultural activities implemented by the Embassy have been so diverse, ranging from flamenco, classical guitar, and bel canto to promising young writers in Spanish or a conference regarding the first circumnavigation around the world carried out by Magallanes and Elcano." Regarding the Spanish language, Aguilar said, "We are delighted to see how interested the Kuwaiti people are in our language. It is another example of how close we are as countries."

"Private initiatives have satisfied the demand for learning Spanish, and just very recently, we acknowledged an official examination center for the DELE (Spanish Language) examinations in Kuwait within the French Institute. Lastly, the Embassy is eager to participate in fairs and festivals regarding Spanish culture and tradition, such as Feria de Kuwait or the coming soon People's World Forum at Kuwait University." — KUNA



Kuwait mosques host rain-seeking prayer

KUWAIT: In more than 100 mosques all around Kuwait, Istisqaa prayers (rain-seeking prayers) were on Saturday (at 10:30 am). The prayers, held in supplication to his Almighty Allah for rain, are also in line with Prophetic Sunnah. The two-rakaas prayer is led by an imam. The first rakaa begins with reciting Allahu Akbar seven times, and the second starts with five. Worshippers, after the prayers are addressed with a sermon, then the imam and the attendees pray to Almighty to bless the country with rain. — KUNA



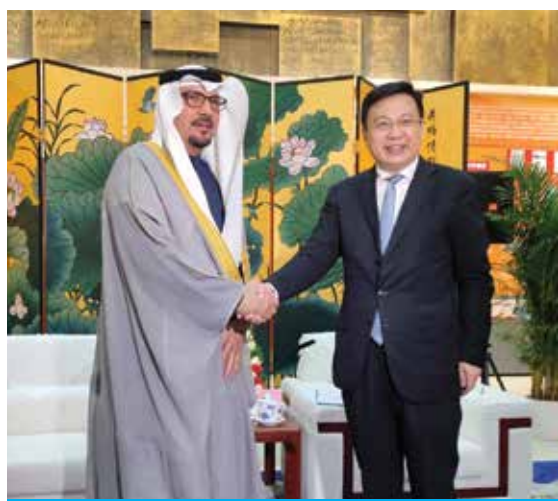
China, Kuwait promote ties

KUWAIT: Kuwait was among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with China in 1971, said a Chinese official on Friday, lauding strategic ties with Kuwait. President of Chinese News Agency (Xinhua) Fu Hua made the remark during a meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador to China, Jassem Al-Najem, the Kuwait Embassy to China said in a statement of which KUNA obtained a copy. Kuwait is the first country in the Middle East region to join the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, Fu said. Fu commended the important visit made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China last September, when he served as the Crown Prince.

The Chinese official said that the visit caught the attention of China's media, expressing the readiness

of Xinhua to boost and develop cooperation with KUNA in a manner that suits the distinguished ties between the two countries. He affirmed that fruitful cooperation between media outlets is an essential part of pushing relations between the two countries to wider horizons. Meanwhile, Al-Najem extolled the historical visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China, where he attended the 19th session of the Asian Games.

During the visit, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held official talks with the Chinese President, and seven memoranda of understanding on development and infrastructure projects were signed following the talks. Kuwait-China ties are witnessing the best phases, especially because Kuwait is paying much attention to the Belt and Road Initiative, which is compatible with Kuwait Vision 2035, the ambassador noted. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two sides in 1971, Kuwait has been supporting and sticking to the One China principle, he said. — KUNA



President of Chinese News Agency (Xinhua) meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem.



Indian Ambassador Dr. Adarsh Swaika addresses the gathering during the Republic Day function on Friday.

India Embassy marks 75th Republic Day

KUWAIT: Indian Embassy, Kuwait marked 75th Republic Day of India on Friday at the embassy premises. Indian Ambassador Dr. Adarsh Swaika unfurled the national flag and read out Indian President Droupadi Murmu's address to the nation. A large number of Indian nations attended the ceremony.

In his address on the occasion, the ambassador extended his warm greetings to all Indian nationals in Kuwait. He also expressed profound gratitude to all well-wishers and friends of India in Kuwait, particularly the leadership, the government and the



Indians attend the Republic Day function at the Indian Embassy.

people of the State of Kuwait, for their steadfast commitment to close and friendly relations between India and Kuwait. "I would like to reiterate India's commitment to further strengthen and expand the long-standing and time-tested partnership with the State of Kuwait," he said.

"This year marks the 75th year of coming into force of India's constitution. The Indian constitution is the longest written constitution in the world and is a living document that has evolved over time to incorporate necessary changes. The constitution declares India as a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic and assures its citizens justice, equality and liberty of thought and action. This constitutional guarantee is an article of faith for all Indian citizens in India and abroad," he pointed out.

Talking about India-Kuwait bilateral relations, Dr. Swaika said, "We continue to make steady progress in our multi-faceted engagement with the State of Kuwait. We look forward to greater engagement with both Government and at people-to-people level in the coming times. The vibrant Indian community in Kuwait continues to be the living bridge of our bilateral ties with Kuwait." The Ambassador said the embassy places highest priority to the welfare and well-being of the large Indian Community in Kuwait. He thanked all the community associations, professional bodies, cultural groups and members of the Indian community for joining hands with the embassy for not only contributing to the welfare of the community but also undertaking activities that contribute to the strengthening of bilateral relations with Kuwait.

Lawmakers commend outcome of talks with Austrian counterparts

VIENNA: Members of the fifth parliamentary friendship group of Kuwait's National Assembly have hailed the outcome of talks held in Vienna with Austrian peers. "The parliamentary group's visit to Austria was a success," head of the parliamentary group MP Osama Al-Zaid told KUNA and Kuwait TV, adding that all the visit goals were achieved. Al-Zaid pointed out that the Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation has gained Austria's support for Kuwait in a number of important issues, mainly the Khor Abdullah waterway navigation agreement, which was signed between Kuwait and Iraq in 2012.

He stated that the talks with the Austrian lawmakers tackled a wide array of key political, economic, and educational issues. Al-Zaid pointed out that they touched upon the ongoing Zionist occupation's aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Despite disagreement, there was a desire to bring views closer on this issue, he said. The Kuwaiti lawmaker reiterated Kuwait's support for the Palestinian people's struggle to get their legitimate rights. He stressed the need to differentiate between terrorism and the occupied people's right to defend themselves.

Al-Zaid said that an invitation was presented to the Austrian lawmakers to visit Kuwait for further talks. For his part, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Austrian Parliament, Dr. Christoph Matznetter, said in a similar statement that Kuwait is an important partner of Austria, and they have diplomatic relations that date back decades. He recalled Austria's support of Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation in 1990. Matznetter said that during the talks, the Austrian lawmakers expressed their country's support for Kuwait's position regarding the Khor Abdullah navigation agreement.

On the Gaza War, he pointed out that the Austrian parliament backed the draft UNSC resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza last October, in line with Austria's position as a neutral country. He stated that the Austrian and Kuwaiti sides held fruitful talks and that there was a consensus in views on the need to stop the Gaza war as soon as possible. He renewed his country's position in support of the two-state solution to settle the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. He welcomed the invitation extended to Austrian parliamentarians to visit Kuwait.

During this visit, Austrian economic experts and investment companies in the field of solar energy and recycling will be accompanied, he said. On his part, Kuwaiti MP Shuaib Shaaban hailed the visit to Austria as very successful, saying it focused on parliamentary cooperation on various issues of common concern. The Austrian PMs promised to support a draft resolution, to be presented by Kuwait to the coming session of the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) this March, regarding the Kuwait-Iraq agreement on maritime navigation through Khor Abdullah, he said.

The talks with the Austrian MPs dealt with the question of Khor Abdullah, Kuwait's stance on the Palestine cause, and the efforts to halt the Zionist aggression on Gaza and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories, Shaaban noted. Dealing with economic cooperation, Kuwaiti MP Abdul-Wahab Al-Isa highlighted, in similar statements to KUNA, the importance of encouraging Austrian investors to do business in Kuwait.

The meeting reviewed the promising investment opportunities in such areas as solar energy and other renewables and waste recycling technologies, he said, expressing Kuwait's desire to draw on Austria's experience and hi-tech in those areas. While Austria has a competitive edge in hi-tech, Kuwait enjoys ample investment opportunities in the fields of renewable energies and waste recycling, Al-Isa explained.

MP Hamad Al-Alian said the talks also dealt with Austria's educational system, which somehow differs from those of other European countries, noting that he will brief the leaders of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education on Austria's experience in this field. The meeting with the Austrian parliamentary committee on education focused on bilateral cooperation regarding the draft legislation on education, scholarships, training, and joint scientific research, Al-Alian added. — KUNA

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AIoT can 'improve living standards'

ABU DHABI: Applying Artificial Intelligence of Things (AIoT) would enable several sectors in Kuwait to enhance efficiency and may also improve living standards, the head of the Kuwaiti AIoT association, Sheikh Mohammad Ahmad Al-Sabah, said. The AIoT is the combination of AI technologies with the internet of things (IoT) infrastructure to achieve efficient IoT operations and improve human-machine interactions.



Sheikh Mohammad Ahmad Al-Sabah

This, in turn, will foster competition, improve economic and social development, and elevate living standards by creating more job opportunities, Sheikh Mohammad told KUNA while participating in an AI conference held in Dubai. The forum discussed AI-related matters and explored ways of enabling institutions and government bodies to efficiently and strategically utilize AI to increase productivity.

Sheikh Mohammad also pointed to the potential of AI across different fields, including manufacturing, medicine, education, and others, if properly utilized, and the association's role in developing the technology and its effects on the community. He added that the association was working on providing educational courses and workshops for individuals and institutions in hopes of raising standards and awareness in this domain. — KUNA

Arab parliament praises Al-Babtain Foundation's cultural role

CAIRO: The Arab Parliament on Friday praised Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation as a pioneer in culture and education in the Arab world. The foundation plays a role in enriching the Islamic and Arabic cultures, it said in a statement that came on the heels of a meeting between President of the Arab Parliament Adel Al-Asoomi and Vice President of the Al-Babtain Council Saud bin Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's board of trustees.

During the meeting, Al-Asoomi lauded its role in spreading the culture of peace in the Arab world and throughout the world as a noble message that aims to support humanitarian activities. He added that this great cultural foundation evokes pride for the Arab and Muslim nations because it contributes to many fields, such as science, knowledge, and human development. — KUNA

Islamic civilization inspired the art of Arabic calligraphy



KUWAIT: The Islamic civilization has largely inspired and enriched the art of Arabic calligraphy, and throughout the decades of Islamic rule, it has become on par with poetry and music. Natives of the Arabian peninsula since pre-Islamic ages had a special attachment to the Arabic language, marveling at eloquent verbal poetry until the Quran revelation upon Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that stated in the first verses, "Recite, and your lord is most generous. He who taught by the pen."

Another verse of the Quran says, "Noon (or Nun), the pen and what they write..." a divine inspiration for writers, chroniclers, and calligraphers for centuries since this verse was revealed upon the Prophet (PBUH). The early form of calligraphy is the Kufic style, distinguished by straight letters that make many words look like a square or a rectangle, but with time, Muslim calligraphers broadened the art as they mingled with peers from other civilizations, freeing themselves from rigid patterns and embracing various shapes and forms.

Calligraphy scripts are based on well-woven architectural shapes; however, "it is not lifeless; rather, it is a living creature inspired by diverse arts and formed with the artistic elements of coherence, balance, light, shadow, volume, and emptiness," said Farid Ali, the head of the Kuwait Center for Islamic Arts at the Grand Mosque, in an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). Al-Ali, a polymath, narrated how he merged Arabic calligraphy with his formative art works, and after studying architecture, he expanded them, mingling factors from the three realms and producing a hybrid exclusive art.

Al-Ali has been involved in Arabic calligraphy since 50 years ago, and some of his works have been distinguished with 99 black-and-white forms of His Almighty's (Allah) name that have been applauded worldwide. He had also created 500 forms for the messenger's name and published a book titled "Mohammadiat," available in many countries — in addition to a number of exhibitions he has held in Kuwait.



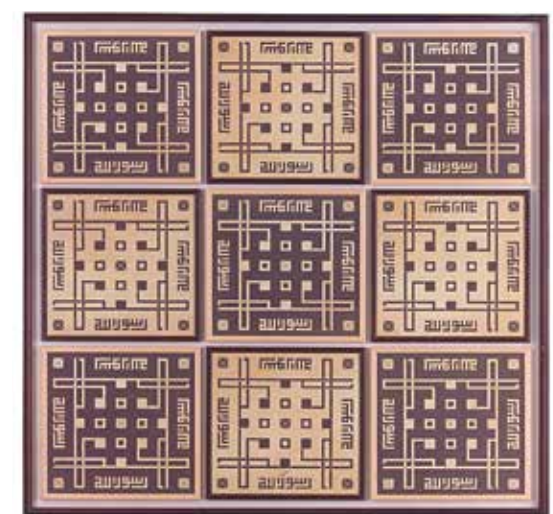
Photos show some of the art works. — KUNA photos



Al-Ali, founder of the center, has organized since 15 years ago many exhibitions, competitions, courses, gatherings, seminars, published a number of books, hosted calligraphers from abroad, and supported calligraphy centers abroad. Some of his works adorn mosques, statues, including the Islamic dome at Bayan Palace, the "Al-Hamdoallah" sculpture situated on the sixth ring road, and effigies in Kufic letters. The art has noticeably grown, and now there are a number of famous non-Arab calligraphers, namely Mohammad Zakaria, the US; Fuad Honda, Japan; Hajj Noureddine, China; and Noria Garcia, Spain.

In East Asia alone, there are more than 200 accredited calligraphers. Several countries have embraced the art. Sharjah, the UAE, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Iran regularly hold international competitions. Teacher Mohammad Al-Saddani said Arabic calligraphy is distinguished by creativity unseen in other languages' scripts. It is a main part of "our heritage as it adorns old palaces and mosques." Farid Abdal, an architecture teacher at Kuwait University, says that Arabic calligraphy and architecture are intertwined, both derived from the philosophy of beauty and harmony.

He noted that development in this art took a special turn during the Abbasite dynasty at the hands of Abu Ali Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muqla (also widely known as ibn Muqla), who composed the theory of dimensions of written characters, keeping them in harmony and symmetry with each other. Arabic calligraphy is a double-dimensional art, while architecture is an art of three or multiple dimensions' art, said Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, Secretary General of the National Council of Culture, Arts, and Letters.



lecture is an art of three or multiple dimensions' art, said Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, Secretary General of the National Council of Culture, Arts, and Letters.

His assistant, Musaed Al-Zamel, said that the council held a number of Arabic calligraphy exhibitions in March, including a special one displaying the name of His Almighty, affirming the council's standing policy of encouraging calligraphers. Sara Khalaf, an official at the free studio, said that several calligraphy exhibitions had been held at the facility, noting that the art has been mingled into several others, namely architecture and painting. — KUNA

EPA highlights role of private sector in sustainability

DOHA: The acting director general of the Kuwait Environment Public Authority (EPA), Sameera Al-Kandari, stressed the importance of shedding light on the efforts of the private sector in sustainability and environmental projects. Al-Kandari, also commissioner general of the Kuwait Pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha for Horticulture, made the statement to KUNA after a conference made by Kuwait's pavilion at the expo titled "The Role of the Private Sector Toward Sustainability."

She noted that Kuwait pays special attention to sustainability, adding that welfare and development cannot be achieved without exerting efforts to maintain human and environmental resources and make them sustainable. Kuwait's pavilion shows the role of the country and its government agencies in environmental projects and modern technological sustainability, referring to Kuwait's private sector's role in this matter.

"Through this conference, we review environment policies and different efforts of the private sector to partake in sustainability and social responsibility,"



Acting director general of Kuwait Environment Public Authority, Sameera Al-Kandari.

she elaborated. Kuwait's pavilion held several effective activities and lectures relating to the environment and sustainability with different bodies, she made clear. — KUNA



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India fetes France's Macron at annual military parade

Exhausted by long war, Ukraine's frontline troops seek 'bit of rest'



NEW YORK: Writer E Jean Carroll (center) leaves federal court after the verdict in her defamation case against former US president Donald Trump in New York on Jan 26, 2024.

Trump ordered to pay \$83m for sex assault defamation

Ex-president calls verdict 'ridiculous', vows to appeal

NEW YORK: A jury in New York ordered former US president and 2024 candidate Donald Trump on Friday to pay \$83.3 million to compensate the writer E Jean Carroll, whom he was found to have sexually assaulted and defamed. The civil order, which prompted an audible gasp in the federal court, far exceeds the more than \$10 million in damages for defamation that Carroll had sought.

Trump lashed out almost immediately, calling the verdict "ridiculous" in a statement and promising to appeal. The jury reached its decision after slightly less than three hours of deliberations.

Trump had been in court earlier, storming out at one point but subsequently returning for closing arguments. He was not in court when the level of compensatory and punitive damages were read out by a court clerk. "This is a great victory for every woman who stands up when she's been knocked down, and a huge defeat for every bully who has tried to keep a woman down," Carroll said in a statement.

A juror exchanged a smile with Carroll as the nine men and women left the courtroom after the judge encouraged them to protect their privacy. "It's clear to me... you paid attention," Judge Lewis Kaplan told the jury following the verdict. The order was comprised of \$65 million in punitive dam-

ages after the jury found Trump acted maliciously in his many public comments about Carroll, \$7.3 million in compensatory damages and \$11 million for a reputational repair program.

"I was not surprised (by the award) partly because his egregious misbehavior during the trial could actually have alienated the jury," said Carl Tobias, a professor at the University of Richmond School of Law. "(Trump) is unlikely to prevail on appeal, because the (appeal) judges have great respect for Judge Kaplan, who is a very experienced federal jurist."

Trump — whom a jury found liable for sexually assaulting Carroll in a separate federal civil case in New York — used his Truth Social platform to fire off a spate of insulting messages attacking Carroll, the trial and the judge, whom he called "an extremely abusive individual."

"We were stripped of every defense — every single defense — before we walked in there," said Trump's lawyer Alina Habba outside the court. "I am proud to stand with president Trump... We will immediately appeal." Trump, 77, briefly took the stand on Thursday to deny he instructed anyone to harm Carroll with his statements.

During Trump's testimony, Kaplan limited him to

three questions from his lawyers, to which he could only answer yes or no — a precaution taken to prevent the Republican leader from returning to his custom of disparaging the court or Carroll in public. "This is not America," Trump said as he left the courtroom following his short appearance. He was not required to attend the trial or to testify. However, he has used the case, as well as others he faces, to generate heated media coverage and to fuel his claims of being victimized as he campaigns for a return to the White House in November's election. Trump separately faces multiple criminal cases, including his alleged attempt to overthrow the results of the 2020 presidential election, which he lost to Joe Biden, and a civil business fraud case.

Habba sought to have the case thrown out Thursday on the grounds that threatening messages targeting Carroll, which have been aired in the case, began on social media before Trump's 2019 comments. Her request was denied. Jurors were shown Trump's October 2022 deposition during which he confused a picture of Carroll for his former wife Marla Maples, which threatened to cast doubt on his claim Carroll was not his "type." Last year, another federal jury found Trump liable for sexually assaulting Carroll in a department store dressing room in 1996 and sub-



NEW YORK: Former US President Donald Trump departs for his sexual assault defamation trial in New York on Jan 25, 2024. — AFP photos

sequently defaming her in 2022, when he called her a "complete con job."

Trump had been in court while he campaigned ahead of the New Hampshire primary, which he won handily over his only remaining challenger Nikki Haley, as he closes in on becoming the Republican candidate in the November election against Biden. — AFP

US, Iraq open talks on foreign troops in Iraq

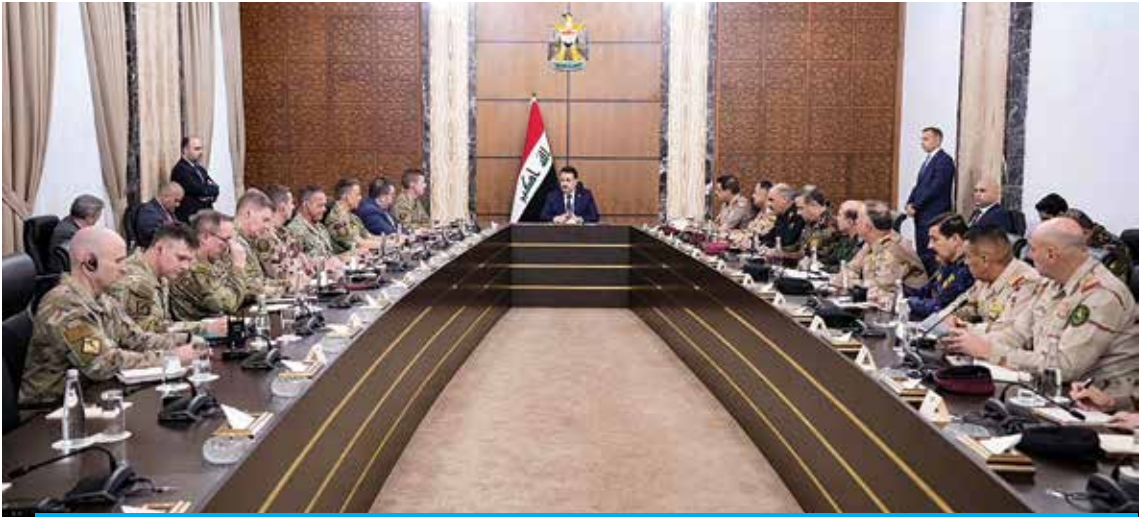
BAGHDAD: Iraq and the United States on Saturday held a "first round" of talks on the future of American and other foreign troops in the country, with Baghdad expecting discussions to lead to a timeline for reducing their presence.

The office of Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani issued a photograph of the head of government with top-ranking officials both of the Iraqi armed forces and of the international coalition set up by Washington to fight the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group. Sudani "is hosting the start of the first round of bilateral dialogue between Iraq and the US to end the mission of the international coalition in Iraq," the office said in a statement. "The talks and whatever progress made will determine the length of these negotiations," Sudani's foreign affairs adviser, Farhad Alaalidin, told AFP.

"Iraq is engaging the other countries taking part in the international coalition for bilateral agreements that serves the best interest of Iraq and these countries."

Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh acknowledged that the US military footprint in Iraq "will certainly be part of the conversations as it goes forward", indicating that Baghdad's desire for a reduction in these forces is on the table. For Iraq's foreign ministry, the aim would eventually lead to formulating "a specific and clear timeline... and to begin the gradual reduction of its (the coalition's) advisers on Iraqi soil".

The talks — which have been planned for months —



BAGHDAD: A handout picture released by Iraq's Prime Minister's Media Office on January 27, 2024, shows Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani (center) meeting with top-ranking officials of the Iraqi armed forces (right) and the international coalition set up by Washington. - AFP

come at a time of heightened tensions in Iraq and the region linked to the war by Zionist entity which has sparked a surge in attacks on American and other coalition forces. There have been more than 150 attacks targeting coalition troops since mid-October, many of them claimed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, a loose alliance of Iran-linked groups that oppose US support for Israel in the Gaza conflict. There are roughly 2,500 US troops deployed in Iraq and about 900 in Syria as part of the anti-IS coalition formed in 2014 - the year the jihadist group overran around a third of Iraq.

Meanwhile, China and the United States said on Saturday that top diplomat Wang Yi and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan held "candid, substantive" talks in Thailand's capital Bangkok, with the issue of Taiwan central after recent elections there. Beijing and Washington have clashed in recent years on

flashpoint issues from technology and trade to human rights, as well as over the self-ruled island and competing claims in the South China Sea. Relations have somewhat stabilized since US President Joe Biden met Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in San Francisco in November for talks that both sides described as a qualified success.

Wang and Sullivan "had candid, substantive and fruitful strategic communication on implementing the consensus reached at the San Francisco meeting... and on properly handling important and sensitive issues in China-US relations", a statement on China's foreign ministry website released Saturday evening said. The two sides will work to set up a call between Xi and Biden, the White House said in a statement released Saturday, as part of efforts to pursue "high-level diplomacy". — AFP

King Charles spends second day in London hospital after surgery

LONDON: Britain's King Charles III spent a second day in hospital on Saturday where he was visited by his wife Queen Camilla following scheduled prostate surgery.

Camilla was seen arriving by a back entrance at the London Clinic, a private hospital in the capital, where he underwent the procedure on Friday. Charles's daughter-in-law Catherine Princess of Wales, 42, is currently also at the hospital where she has spent 12 days following abdominal surgery.

Reports have said Charles, 75, was expected to spend two days in hospital and that he was "doing well" after the surgery. Royal officials took the unusual step last week of issuing a bulletin on the king's health, disclosing that he had an enlarged prostate but the condition was benign.

The 75-year-old monarch, who is also head of state in 14 countries outside the UK, arrived at The London Clinic earlier on Thursday accompanied by his wife, Queen Camilla.

Royal officials took the unusual step last week of issuing a bulletin on the king's health, disclosing that he had an enlarged prostate but that the condition was benign. It came soon after news that Kate, 42, had undergone successful abdominal surgery for an unspecified condition. She was expected to spend up to two weeks recuperating, then several months away from public duties. Charles travelled to his private Sandringham estate in eastern England on January 19 to prepare for what royal officials said would be a "corrective procedure", before returning to London on Thursday. — AFP

International

Exhausted by long war, Ukraine's frontline troops seek 'bit of rest'

Two Ukrainians killed in cross-border Russian raid

NEAR KUPIANSK, Ukraine: After spending another night on watch duty, a Ukrainian soldier near the country's northeastern front crashed out on a bunk inside his dugout, a cap resting over his closed eyes. It is -8 degrees Celsius (18 Fahrenheit) outside, snow crunching underfoot as troops from the 41st Mechanized Brigade shuffle around their trenches, east of the town of Kupiansk. "It's hard, but we're holding on," said Vadim, a 31-year-old member of the brigade.

"We have no choice," he added. Nearly two years of unrelenting trench warfare have pushed Ukraine's troops to the brink of exhaustion.

Its army is struggling to find men for the front, in contrast to the outpouring of patriotic volunteers at the start of the war. Kyiv has kept its losses secret, but the latest US estimates published in August by the New York Times put the death toll at nearly 70,000 and the number of wounded at up to 120,000.

The town of Kupiansk and surrounding Kharkiv region were liberated from Russian occupation in September 2022 following a lightning push by the Ukrainians. But since the summer, Russian forces have again been on the offensive here without making any major progress.

"They're constantly carrying out attacks, advancing," Vadim said. He said

adrenaline got them through the first year, when they "weren't afraid of anything". "But now, we're simply tired. Because two years in, we haven't seen the light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky warned in December the military wanted to mobilize up to half a million people to battle the 600,000 or so Russians deployed in Ukraine. But earlier this month, parliament refused to debate a controversial bill aimed at mobilizing more soldiers, amid fierce criticism from the public and lawmakers. For an army that has been struggling to fill its ranks, let alone relieve its long-serving frontline troops, this was a painful blow.

"Of course we want demobilization, because it's hard. I haven't seen my family in six months," said Vadim. But he added: "It's not a matter of them giving us 10 days. That wouldn't be of any use... What kind of rest would that be?"

"If they gave us at least six months off, that would be better," he said. Calls to demobilize troops come at a difficult time for the army, which is now facing renewed Russian pressure across the eastern front.

After a year of grinding warfare that has failed to yield major territorial gains on either side, Moscow is throwing more manpower into the conflict and has been upping strikes on Ukrainian positions.

"The intensity of the hostilities aimed at us is now quite high, and there are more wounded than we'd like," said Oleksandr, a 20-year-old soldier who also refused to give his last name for security reasons.

Oleksandr pointed out that "today, generally speaking, it's older men who are mobilized", so there are reserves that can be called up. "We need mobilization and we have the means to do it."

But the patriotic impetus of the early months, when Ukrainians went en masse to the front voluntarily, is no longer there. "Since the first days of the invasion, we've almost always been on the front line..." said Vadim. "The guys are tired. Mentally, physically, they can't take it anymore," he said.

Two people were shot dead in a Ukrainian border village on Saturday morning in a cross-border incursion by a Russian "reconnaissance and sabotage group," local officials said. The attack happened in Ukraine's Sumy region inside a five-kilometer (three mile) buffer zone along the border with Russia - an area where Kyiv had asked residents to evacuate.

"This morning, an enemy reconnaissance and sabotage group brutally and cynically shot a brother and sister," the Sumy regional administration said in a statement. The incident happened in the village of Andriivka, four kilometer (2.5 miles) from the border with Russia's



MYRNOHRAD, Ukraine: A woman walks her dog outside a damaged residential building following an overnight shelling in Myrnohrad, Donetsk region, on January 26, 2024, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

western Kursk region, it added.

Though infrequent, such cross-border attacks and incursions by guerilla-style fighters have been recorded throughout the nearly two-year war.

Russian authorities have also accused Ukrainian groups of armed raids into towns and villages on its side of the border, killing civilians. Ukrainian authorities

on Saturday renewed their appeal for residents to leave border areas.

"Russian terrorists continue to kill civilians. By evacuating from dangerous areas, you will save your life," Sumy Governor Volodymyr Artyukh said. At least three other civilians were killed in Russian attacks in the east and south of the country, local officials said Saturday.— AFP

Former Pakistan PM Khan, party erased from poll campaign

MIANWALI, Pakistan: Pakistani cricketer legend turned world leader Imran Khan is wildly popular in his constituency and ancestral homeland of Mianwali, but the political posters that line the streets do not bear his face and flags do not fly his colors. A relentless crackdown widely attributed to Pakistan's powerful military has seen him and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party almost erased from the election campaign ahead of the vote.

"Our party workers are facing harassment, and I personally have received death threats," says 61-year-old Jamal Ahsan Khan, who is standing for PTI in Mianwali in place of his leader.

"Throughout my life, I have never witnessed an election as intense and threatening as this one," Khan, currently in jail facing dozens of legal challenges, is barred from contesting elections on February 8 because of a graft conviction — cases he claims are politically motivated. Across the country, PTI has been obstructed from holding rallies and the heavily censored media is restricted in its coverage of the opposition, pushing the party's campaign almost entirely online.

Dozens of candidates nationwide have also had their nomination papers rejected by the electoral commission. Like many other party candidates, loyalist Ahsan Khan has been in near hiding in the build-up to the election, unable to hold meetings or distribute leaflets.

"It feels disheartening that as a candidate of Pakistan's leading political party, I am unable to conduct my

campaign in a meaningful way," he told AFP. With two weeks until the vote, there is none of the fervor and excitement that usually marks an election in the country of more than 240 million people. It was from Mianwali, a largely rural district in the central province of Punjab, that Khan built his political career and was elected three times as MP. PTI's national victory in 2018, driven by its promises to put an end to corruption and the family dynasties which have ruled the country for generations, propelled him to prime minister.

In Mianwali, where he notably built a hospital and a university, the 71-year-old "is not just a political figure, he is a hero", Rana Amjad Iqbal, editor-in-chief of local newspaper Nawa-e-Sharar, or the Daily Spark, tells AFP. "However, the primary and most significant reason for his enduring political relevance lies in his anti-establishment stance," underlines the journalist.

Khan was widely believed to have been backed by the military in his rise to power, but became emboldened during his leadership and began to push against the control of the mighty generals.

Eventually, he lost their favor and was ousted in a parliamentary no-confidence vote in 2022 after dozens of his MPs defected. His subsequent arrest in May 2023 brought supporters onto the streets who protested against military symbols — sparking the start of a widespread crackdown against PTI.

Thousands of supporters were arrested and around 100 — half from Mianwali — are awaiting trial before military courts, while senior party leaders were detained and forced underground before defecting in their dozens. Khan "is still popular with the public, but he is unacceptable" to the army, retired schoolteacher Ijaz Khan said.

Earlier this month, PTI suffered a crucial blow when the Supreme Court banned it from contesting elections with its electoral symbol: the cricket bat. In a country where millions of people cannot read or write, symbols

reject it". Zionist entity stressed during the hearings that it was acting in self-defense after the Hamas attacks of October 7 and was doing all in its power to ease the plight of civilians. While steps to help civilians "are to be encouraged, they are insufficient" to protect the rights of the Palestinians, the court ruled.

Outside the court, hundreds of protesters on both sides gathered, shouting slogans and waving banners. Noyeiyb, a 32-year-old entrepreneur, who declined to give his last name, told AFP: "It's crazy how the survivors of one genocide are being put on trial for committing a genocide." Pro Palestinian demonstrator Nikita Shabazy, 48, told AFP: "It really breaks my heart that there is no ceasefire in place."

'Grossly distorted'

Over two days of hearings earlier this month, lawyers from both sides battled it over the interpretation of this Convention. South Africa accused Zionist entity of "genocidal" acts that were intended to cause the "destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group." Zionists dismissed the case as a "grossly distorted story."

The question now is whether the court's rulings will be obeyed. Although its rulings are legally binding, it has no mechanism to enforce them and they are sometimes completely ignored—it has ordered Russia to stop its invasion of Ukraine for example. Netanyahu has already hinted that the Zionist entity would not abide by any ruling saying "no one will stop us", not even a verdict in The Hague. But experts believe that aside from the significant symbolic impact of the ruling, there could be tangible consequences on the ground. — AFP

(DDG 64) and other coalition ships have responded and are rendering assistance."

Trafigura said on Saturday no injuries or casualties had been reported, adding however that the fire on the vessel had yet to be extinguished. "The crew is continuing efforts to control the fire in one of the ship's cargo tanks with support from military vessels," it said in a statement on its website. On Friday, the Houthi also fired an anti-ship ballistic missile from Yemen towards the Carney in the Gulf of Aden, CENTCOM said. "The missile was successfully shot down by USS Carney. There were no injuries or damage reported," it added.

Risk monitor Ambrey said earlier that a Panama-flagged oil tanker "reported seeing two blasts" in the Gulf of Aden,



MIANWALI: In this picture taken on Jan 16, 2024, an armed man places an election poster of independent candidate Malik Athar Yar Khan Awan during an election campaign meeting in Mianwali, the native town of Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan in Punjab province. — AFP

are crucial for voters to identify their preferred party and candidate. The election commission instead ordered Ahsan Khan to use a bottle, an emblem viewed with disdain in rural areas because it is associated with alcohol. Khan's rival in Mianwali, Obaid Ullah Khan, is indifferent to the punishment meted out to his rival political party. "When would it be justified if not now?" he said of the crackdown.

Unlike PTI candidates, Ullah Khan, who is standing for Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), meets openly with villagers, whose leaders assure him of the support of the entire community, in hope of future favors. The PML-N is the party of another former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, who was jailed ahead of the 2018 election and later forced into self-imposed exile. As Khan has fallen, Sharif has risen, returning to his country and into the arms of the military, analysts say. — AFP

Gaza battles rage as Zionists vow to...

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Saturday that the Zionist entity wants to ensure the UN agency "will not be a part of the day after" the bloodiest ever Gaza war.

Alarm has grown over the plight of civilians in Khan Yunis, the southern hometown of Hamas's Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar, the suspected mastermind of the October 7 attack. AFP TV images showed thousands of civilians, among them women and children, fleeing the city on foot as tanks loomed behind them. "They besieged us, so we fled," said Tahani Al-Najjar, who left Khan Yunis with her daughter. "We call on the UN to intervene, to stop the war. Enough of fear and terror!"

Gaza civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal said the displaced endured incessant cold rain and warned of the "spread of contagious diseases". The army said its "troops continued to kill numerous armed terrorists from close range" and raided a weapons storage facility in Khan Yunis. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said at least 135 people were killed in Khan Yunis overnight. The Hamas government said "massive tank bombardment" targeted a refugee camp in the city and its Nasser hospital.

With Gaza's humanitarian crisis growing, the UN says most of the estimated 1.7 million Palestinians displaced by the war are crowded into Rafah on the southern border with Egypt. At Khan Yunis's Nasser Hospital, the largest in the besieged city, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said surgical capacity was "virtually

a report that was corroborated by the British navy's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO). No damage was reported. The security firm said the missiles exploded about a mile from the India-affiliated oil tanker and 200-300 meters above the waterline. UKMTO said they detonated in the water. The Houthis began targeting Red Sea shipping in November, saying they were hitting Zionist-linked vessels to show solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

They have since declared US and British interests to be legitimate targets as well. The United States is leading a coalition to protect Red Sea shipping - an effort the Pentagon has likened to a highway patrol for the waterway. Washington is also seeking to put diplomatic and financial pressure on

non-existent". The charity said the hospital's services had "collapsed" and the few staff who remained "must contend with very low supplies that are insufficient to handle mass casualty events". The World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said 350 patients and 5,000 displaced people remained at the hospital as fighting continued nearby.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said tanks targeted the Al-Amal hospital, another of the city's few remaining medical facilities, and that it was "under siege with heavy gunfire". "There is no longer a healthcare system in Gaza," MSF said. There were 300 to 500 patients trapped at the Nasser hospital with "war-related injuries such as open wounds, lacerations from explosions, fractures and burns". The military accuses Hamas of operating from tunnels under Gaza hospitals and of using the medical facilities as command centers.

Meirav Eilon Shahar, Zionist ambassador to the UN in Geneva, accused WHO this week of collusion with Hamas by ignoring evidence of Hamas's "military use" of Gaza hospitals. Tedros rejected the accusation, saying it could "endanger our staff who are risking their lives to serve the vulnerable". Relations between Zionists and UNRWA soured further after the UN body said tanks had shelled one of its shelters in Khan Yunis on Wednesday, killing 13 people.

UNRWA said it had sacked several employees accused of involvement in the October 7 attack. The allegations have prompted the United States, Canada, Australia and Italy to suspend funding to the agency. Zionist entity said it would seek to stop UNRWA from operating in Gaza after the war. Hamas urged the international community to ignore Zionist "threats", while the Palestinian Authority said the agency needed "maximum support" from donors. — AFP

the Houthi, re-designating them a terrorist organization last week after previously dropping that label soon after President Joe Biden took office.

The attacks by the rebels - who are part of an anti-Zionist, anti-West alliance of Iranian proxies and allies - have disrupted trade in the Red Sea, which carries around 12 percent of international maritime traffic. Several shipping firms are avoiding the waterway, instead taking the longer and more expensive route around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. This new pressure follows difficult years for the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, when freight rates reached unprecedented levels due to disruptions to supply chains. — AFP

Kuwait welcomes ICJ order, urges...

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committing genocide with its military campaign in Gaza — that process will likely take several years.

But it ruled that the "catastrophic humanitarian situation" in Gaza was "at serious risk of deteriorating further" before a final decision, so it issued a series of emergency measures.

Zionists must "take all measures in its power" to prevent genocidal acts and also stop officials making declarations inciting genocide, the court said. Concretely, the court urged Zionists to take "immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance".

The case was brought by South Africa, which has accused Zionists of breaching the UN Genocide Convention. Speaking to reporters on the steps of the gilded Peace Palace in The Hague, where the court sits, Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor said the measures were tantamount to a call for a ceasefire.

"How do you deliver humanitarian aid without a ceasefire? How do you provide water, access to energy? How do you ensure that those who are injured have healthcare and so on?" she said. "Without a ceasefire, not one of these things can be done."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the charge against Zionist entity "is not only false, it's outrageous, and decent people everywhere should

US strikes Houthi target ...

Continued from Page 1

Marlin Luanda operated on behalf of trading giant Trafigura Group was hit by missiles fired by Yemeni naval forces, said the Houthi's military spokesman, Yahya Saree. "The strike was direct, and resulted (in) the burning of the vessel," he added. CENTCOM later confirmed the hit, saying: "The ship issued a distress call and reported damage. USS Carney

International



NEW DELHI: Indian President Droupadi Murmu (second right), France's President Emmanuel Macron (second left), Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) and Indian Vice President Jagdeep Thakkar pose for a picture during a high tea reception at the Presidential Palace Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on January 26, 2024. - AFP photos



NEW DELHI: France's President Emmanuel Macron (front, second left) visits a mausoleum at the Nizamuddin Dargah in New Delhi on January 26, 2024.

India fetes France's Macron at annual military parade

Macron's presence brought great impetus to Indo-French ties: Modi

NEW DELHI: President Emmanuel Macron was guest of honor Friday for India's pomp-filled annual military parade, in a state visit aimed at bolstering France's strategic ties with the world's fifth-largest economy. The annual Republic Day event in the heart of New Delhi is a highly choreographed spectacle featuring tank columns, fighter jet fly-pasts, acrobatic motorbike stunts and mounted camel units.

This year it coincides with a two-day diplomatic tour that reflects a growing partnership between India and France, after Macron hosted Prime Minister Narendra Modi at last year's Bastille Day celebrations in Paris.

Modi said in a social media post that Macron's presence at one of India's main national celebrations had brought "great impetus to Indo-French relations". Macron has pushed for greater French involvement in the Asia-Pacific at a time when Washington and its Western allies are courting India as a military and economic counterweight to China.

France also hopes to build on its military contracts with India, which is already a buyer of French-made Rafale fighter jets and Scorpene-class submarines in multibillion-dollar deals. India in turn has been working to modernize its armed forces and has solicited French help to grow its indigenous defense industry, allowing it to diversify arms purchases beyond its traditional supplier Russia.

"The idea is to build defense supply chains that can meet India and France's defense needs," New Delhi's top foreign ministry bureaucrat Vinay Kwatra told reporters. Both leaders in talks had "reiterated their commitment to further deepening" defense industrial cooperation, a joint statement on the visit said.

No deal was reached on additional Rafale purchases by the Indian navy, nor had there been movement on a long-standing cooperation agreement on civil nuclear energy production in India. But both leaders welcomed a decision by Europe's Airbus and local conglomerate Tata to jointly build civilian helicopters in India.

A contingent of French soldiers including a Foreign Legion marching band joined the parade, which marks the adoption of India's constitution in 1950. Indian troops marched down the Champs-Élysées under Modi's watch during last year's Bastille Day parade.

Macron was welcomed in India on Thursday with a parade of elephants and a banquet hosted by Modi — who greeted the French leader with his customary bear hug — at an ornate hilltop maharaja's palace in the city of Jaipur. India's economy and its huge market have helped the Modi government sidestep questions around its human rights record at home, differences over the war in Ukraine and its traditional ties with Russia.

Modi's government has been accused of stifling independent media, with India falling 21 places to 161 out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index since Modi took office a decade ago. French journalist Vanessa Dougnaç was told this month that she is facing expulsion after more than two de-

cades in India for what authorities have termed "malicious and critical" reporting.

"The matter is being dealt with by the relevant department," Kwatra said. "This has been brought to our attention by the French side both prior (to) and during the visit." The visit also comes days after Modi opened a Hindu temple, 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.

Modi said the temple heralded a "new era" for India after a ceremony that embodied the triumph of his muscular Hindu nationalist politics, galvanizing loyalists ahead of elections this year. He gifted Macron a miniature replica of the temple as the pair toured Jaipur together on Thursday evening.

A Macron adviser signaled ahead of the visit that rights issues would be discussed, adding that there were "no taboo subjects". "But the goal is to discuss them with respect and with the aim of achieving concrete results," they added. — AFP

Taiwan detects 33 Chinese aircraft around island

TAIPEI: More than 30 Chinese military aircraft were detected around Taiwan in a 24-hour window, Taipei's defense ministry said Saturday, marking the largest show of force around the island since it held crucial elections. China claims Taiwan as part of its territory, and has never renounced the use of force to try to bring the self-ruled island under its control. Ahead of Taiwan's Jan 13 poll, Beijing warned voters that presidential candidate Lai Ching-te — the current vice president whom China has called a "dangerous separatist" — would bring "war and decline" if chosen to lead. Lai still won the election, securing an unprecedented third term for the Democratic Progressive Party, which has long rejected China's territorial claim on Taiwan.

In the 24 hours leading up to 6 am Saturday (2200 GMT Friday), the Ministry of National Defence detected 33 Chinese military aircraft and seven naval ships operating around Taiwan, it said in a statement. Thirteen of the aircraft "crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait", it said. Taiwan's armed forces have "monitored the situation and employed (air patrol) aircraft, Navy vessels, and coastal missile systems in response to the detected activities".

Two Chinese balloons were also detected crossing the sensitive Taiwan Strait, which separates China from the island. The show of force also came after a visit by two US lawmakers to Taipei to meet president-elect Lai and his running mate Hsiao Bi-khim — criticized by Beijing as an "independence duo". Lai has in the past been outspoken about the issue — a red line for China — calling himself a "pragmatic worker of Taiwan independence". But he has moderated his stance and vowed to follow President Tsai Ing-wen's path of maintaining the status quo while bolstering the island's defense capabilities. — AFP

China, N Korea key officials meet in Pyongyang

SEOUL: China's vice foreign minister met with North Korea's top diplomats in Pyongyang on Friday, state media said, as the nuclear-armed state has accelerated its weapons testing and threats toward Seoul in recent months.

Beijing is North Korea's biggest economic benefactor and a traditional ally, and leader Kim Jong Un has sought to shore up his country's relationship with China while intensifying his aggressive rhetoric toward the South. The weapons tests and Kim's designation of Seoul earlier this month as the North's "principal enemy" have raised tensions in the region and led South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol to pull closer to long-standing ally Washington.

The United States has also warned of "growing and dangerous" military ties between Pyongyang and Moscow and called on Beijing to restrain the North. AFP photos showed China's Sun Weidong and his delegation meeting with North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong Ho and others at the People's Palace of Culture in the capital.

Pak greeted Sun with a smile as the Chinese vice foreign minister entered a room in the venue in the North Korean capital. While the two shook hands, photographers at the scene captured the moment, AFP videos showed. North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui was present, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said early Saturday in a brief readout of the meeting.

The members of the Chinese delegation were seen taking notes during the meeting, AFP footage showed, as they sat across from their North Korean counterparts in a spacious room adorned with a large painting of a wooded valley, with each participant provided a water bottle and a glass. The two sides agreed to "continue to strengthen tactical cooperation and keep pace with each other to defend the common core interests", KCNA said in its report. Sun's visit comes as US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan was set to meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Thailand, as the two powers seek to improve relations after years of tensions. — AFP



PYONGYANG: China's Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong (left) shakes hands with an official of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs as he departs Pyongyang International Airport in Pyongyang on January 27, 2024. - AFP

News in Brief

Biden to receive Scholz at White House

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will welcome German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the White House on February 9 for talks focused on Ukraine and the Zionist entity-Hamas war, according to a statement released Saturday. The two leaders will reaffirm "their resolute support for Ukraine's defense of its land and its people against Russia's war of aggression," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement. The announcement comes as money for US aid to Ukraine has run out due to Republican opposition in Congress, leaving the key US ally short of ammunition as its war against Russia's invasion is about to enter its third year. — AFP

Magnitude 6.1 quake hits Guatemala

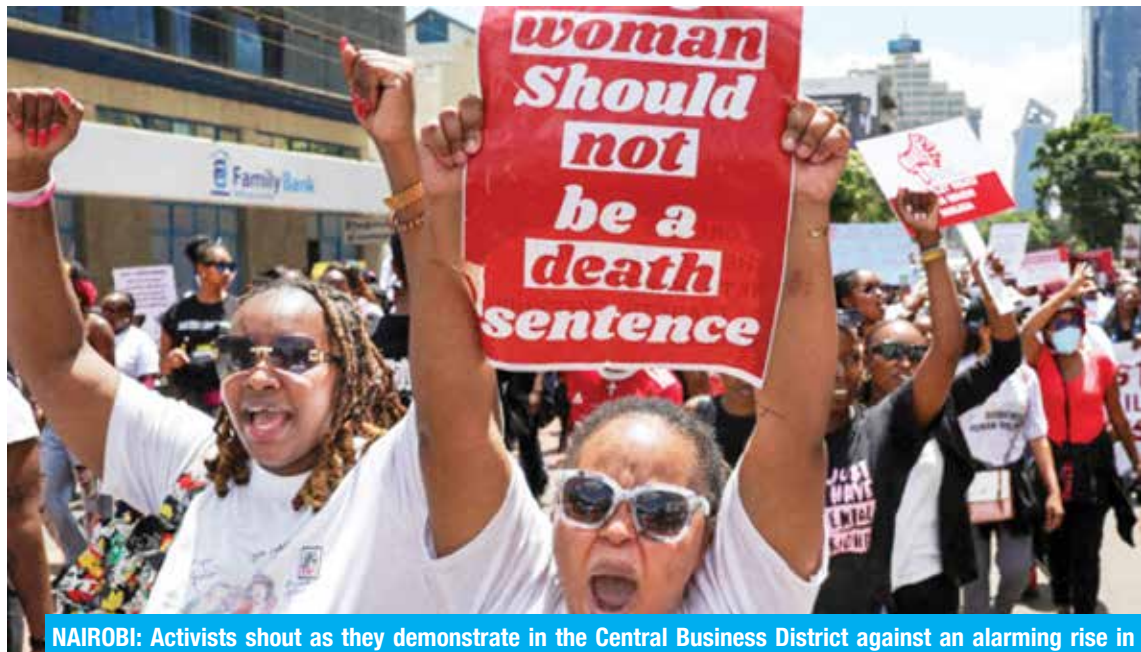
GUATEMALA CITY: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake hit southern Guatemala on Friday night, with officials reporting no casualties or material damage. The quake struck at 11:52 pm (0552 GMT), seven kilometers (four miles) from the town of Taxisco at a depth of 108 kilometers, according to the US Geological Survey. Guatemala's Seismology Institute, which measured the tremor as 6.0, said it was felt in the south of the country, as well as in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Antigua Guatemala, 45 kilometers southwest of the capital Guatemala City. "No casualties or damage have been reported so far", civil protection spokesman Rodolfo Garcia told reporters. Authorities were monitoring the situation at the national level, he added. — AFP

Huge damage in Colombia forest fires

BOGOTÁ: Forest fires have destroyed more than 17,000 hectares in Colombia since November, authorities said Friday, as the country faces its hottest January in decades. More than 340 fires have been recorded in that period, spurred by prolonged drought, record heat, and the El Niño weather phenomenon, Environment Minister Susana Muhamad said, adding that 26 fires were still blazing. Colombia has been battling several fires near the capital since Monday, including some in the mountains overlooking Bogotá, and authorities have advised residents living close to burnt areas to avoid going outside because of the poor air quality. — AFP

100th victim identified in Maui fires

LOS ANGELES: A 100th victim has been identified from the wildfire that ravaged the Hawaiian island of Maui over the summer, police said Friday. Lydia Coloma, 70, was initially listed on a tally of missing persons that has since dwindled to just a handful of individuals. The Aug 8 fire largely destroyed the city of Lahaina, the old capital of the Kingdom of Hawaii. Among the charred debris and buildings reduced to ashes, the search for and identification of human remains has been difficult, often requiring DNA samples from living relatives of those listed as missing. The death toll from the fire has fluctuated, rising above 100 and then falling to 97 in September. — AFP



NAIROBI: Activists shout as they demonstrate in the Central Business District against an alarming rise in murders of young women in Nairobi on Jan 27, 2024. — AFP

Hundreds march against gender violence in Kenya

NAIROBI: Several hundred people marched in Nairobi on Saturday to protest against femicide in Kenya where over a dozen women have been killed this month in cases that shocked the nation. The campaigners took to the streets of the capital holding placards that read "Being a woman should not be a death sentence", "Patriarchy kills" while others featured names and photographs of the victims.

"Stop killing us," they chanted as they marched towards parliament, bringing traffic to a halt in Nairobi's central business district. At least 16 women have been killed in Kenya this year, according to media reports, shining a spotlight on violence against women which the government has described as "rising".

In one of the cases that gained nationwide attention, a 26-year-old woman was killed on January 4 at

a short-term rental apartment by a suspect who police say is part of an extortionist gang which targets women through dating sites. Barely a fortnight later, a 20-year-old woman was strangled, dismembered and her remains stuffed into a plastic bag. Two men are in police custody over the case but are yet to be charged. "Femicide is the most brutal manifestation of gender-based violence," Amnesty International's Kenya chapter said in a statement ahead of the march.

"It is unacceptable and must never be normalized," the rights group said, calling on authorities to expedite investigations and prosecution of the perpetrators. At Saturday's protest, Terry Wangare, a communications officer, said it was "time for Kenya to stand up and make a decision".

"Nobody cares. If you complain, you are bad," the 32-year-old told AFP. Twenty three-year-old student Faith Claire Wanjiru who was at her first protest said she was "angry" and was not going to tolerate the violence. "Taking someone's life should not be anyone's work," she said. More than 30 percent of women in Kenya experience physical violence and 13 percent experience some form of sexual violence, according to a government report released last year. — AFP

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024

Business

Zain and Samsung introduce Galaxy S24 series in Kuwait

Executive management and dedicated customers attend special event



Nawaf Al-Gharabally and Doohee Lee with executives from Samsung Gulf and Al-Babtain.



Galaxy S24 series ushers in the era of mobile AI.

• **Al-Gharabally:** Exceeding customer expectations bolstered our leadership in the market, and Zain’s award-winning network complements the S24 lineup’s innovations.

• Samsung enthusiasts got to experience the new devices up-close prior to official launch.
• All-new Galaxy AI unleashes new era of AI-powered mobile experiences.



Al-Gharabally speaking at the event.



Samsung Gulf President Doohee Lee speaking.

KUWAIT: Zain hosted a special event at its headquarters in Shuwaikh to celebrate the launch of the all-new, highly-anticipated Samsung Galaxy S24 series. The event was attended by executive management teams from Zain, Samsung Gulf, and Al-Babtain, along with Zain's dedicated customers, Samsung enthusiasts, and content creators from the local tech community. Users got to experience the new devices up-close prior to their official launch to learn more about the lineup's top innovations and best features.

In attendance were Zain Kuwait Acting CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Samsung Gulf President Doohee Lee, Samsung Gulf Head of Branch for Kuwait and Qatar Yong Jae Lee, Zain Kuwait CCO Meshal Al-Kandari, Samsung Gulf Senior Sales Director Fadi Abu Shamat, Al-Babtain Business Development and Investment Specialist Abdulwahab Al-Babtain, and other executives and team members from the three companies.

The special event gathered Zain's most dedicated customers, Samsung fans, and content creators from the local tech community for an exclusive opportunity to experience the all-new lineup, which includes the flagship Galaxy S24 Ultra, Galaxy S24+, and Galaxy S24. Guests were introduced to revolutionary features from the three AI-powered devices, with Samsung's team of specialists available to answer all queries.

During the event, Zain Kuwait Acting CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally said: "This exclusive experience comes under our strategic partnership with Samsung Gulf and Al-Babtain. Their presence today ce-

ments our years-long relationship that brings to our market the best innovations and technologies."

Al-Gharabally added: "Kuwait's market is a relatively small one in size, but the private sector's contributions, with partnerships like this one that is fueled by Zain's ambition and Samsung's innovation, placed it on the map as one of the most mature and leading markets in the telecom and ICT space, both regionally and globally."

"Two years ago, Zain became the first operator globally to commercially launch voice over 5G (Vo5G) with nationwide coverage on the Samsung Galaxy S series, bringing crystal-clear voice calls over 5G on the nation's biggest network. This was an incredible milestone, not only for Zain, but for Kuwait as a key player in the global telecom community as well," he continued.

Al-Gharabally concluded by saying: "Exceeding customer expectations bolstered the leadership position we enjoy in the market today. Zain's Ookla Speedtest award winning network complements the S24 lineup's innovations, making it the first and best choice for a seamless digital experience."

During the event, Zain's most dedicated customers who preordered the new devices were given a special opportunity to collect their orders earlier than the official delivery date in appreciation of their loyalty. Guests also excitedly joined a draw on multiple Galaxy S24 Ultra flagship devices. In addition, an interactive keynote was presented by Samsung's expert trainer, Marvel Fredo, who went through the Galaxy S24 series' most anticipated features.



Event gathered Zain's dedicated customers and tech content creators.

Samsung Electronics recently unveiled the Galaxy S24 Ultra, Galaxy S24+ and Galaxy S24, unleashing new mobile experiences with Galaxy AI. Galaxy S series leads the way into a new era that will forever change how mobile devices empower users. AI amplifies nearly every experience on Galaxy S24 series, from enabling barrier-free communication with intelligent text and call translations, to maximizing creative freedom with Galaxy's ProVisual Engine, to setting a new standard for search that will change how Galaxy users discover the world around them.

Galaxy AI introduces meaningful intelligence aimed at enhancing every part of life, especially the phone's most fundamental role: communication. When you need to defy language barriers, Galaxy S24 makes it easier than ever. Chat with another student or colleague from abroad. Book a reservation while on vacation in another country. It's all possible with Live Translate, two-way, real-time voice and text translations of phone calls within the native app. No third-party apps are required, and on-device AI

keeps conversations completely private.

Galaxy S24 series' ProVisual Engine is a comprehensive suite of AI-powered tools that transforms image capturing abilities and maximizes creative freedom every step of the way, from setting up a shot all the way to sharing it on social. As AI becomes a more prominent part of everyday life, performance power must excel to meet the demands. Gaming. Heavy-duty video recording and editing. Jumping between five apps to plan a trip. Whatever the task, Galaxy S24 provides an incredible experience thanks to enhancements in its chipset, display and more.

Galaxy S24 Ultra is the first-ever Galaxy phone to feature a titanium frame, enhancing device durability and longevity. Galaxy S24 Ultra's significantly thinner body enables better on-the-go experience with more comfortable grip. On Galaxy S24+ and Galaxy S24, a streamlined One-mass design satisfies a more aesthetic standard with seamless connection between the device's rear cover and side frame.

UK facing Brexit realities after failed Canada talks

LONDON: The UK's failed free trade talks with Canada show that it is struggling to deliver on its promises to thrive after Brexit, experts said on Friday. London has been seeking to sign new trade pacts around the world to show it was right to sever ties with its nearest neighbors nearly four years ago.

But negotiators paused talks with Ottawa late Thursday, with sources pinpointing British cheese imports to Canada and Canadian beef exports to the UK as major sticking points to agreement.

"We will only negotiate deals that deliver for the British people, and we reserve the right to pause ne-

gotiations where progress is not being made," said a spokeswoman for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

"We're open to restarting talks with Canada in the future." The main opposition Labour party, which is widely expected to win this year's general election, called it "another significant failure from the Conservatives to honor their promises".

Keith Pilbeam, economics professor at City, University of London, said the pro-Brexit government had overplayed its cards. "It undermines the UK and shows that the Brexiters considerably overstated how easy trade deals would be to do alone in the world with our much smaller economy compared to that of the EU," he told AFP.

"The UK did well rolling over existing EU deals but is finding it very hard to negotiate its own trade deals as the concessions that other countries like Canada and the US want from us are not acceptable to UK citizens, businesses and farmers."

King's College London economist Jonathan Portes

talked down the direct impact on UK trade, given that Canada is not one of the UK's biggest trading partners. But he added: "More broadly it shows the limitations of the government's trade strategy... to use post-Brexit trade deals to offset the negative impacts of Brexit on trade. "That was never realistic."

Brexiters have repeatedly talked up the benefits of leaving the EU since Britons voted narrowly in favour of quitting the bloc in 2016. They promised "sunlit uplands" of economic prosperity, while Boris Johnson, the former prime minister, said Brexit would free the UK to project itself on the world stage.

Opponents, though, claim that alongside restrictions to freedom of movement and increased red tape, departure has helped fuel rampant inflation and worsen a cost-of-living crisis.

Some trade deals have been signed, including with faster-growing economies such as Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. The UK also joined 11 Asia-Pacific countries who are members of the

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

A much sought-after free trade deal with the United States remains elusive. With Canada, an interim deal with the UK preserved many of the same conditions as under the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU. But its provisions for British cheese imports to Canada expired last month, leaving some UK exporters facing customs duties of 245 percent, according to the British Chambers of Commerce. "Some exporters will not find it competitive to export to Canada anymore... They are in a worst position than they were before Brexit," BCC head of trade policy William Bain told AFP. Added to the picture, the rules of origin — which stipulate how much of the value of UK car exports must be produced in Britain — are due to expire in March. That could slap customs duties of 10 percent on car exports heading to Canada, the BCC says. — AFP

Business

Burgan Bank exceeds Kuwaitization requirements in 2023, reaching 83 %

Bank sets an example for human capital and local talent investment in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Building on its institutional belief and realizing its vision for community development, Burgan Bank announced recording an impressive 83 percent Kuwaitization rate among its workforce – surpassing the minimum regulatory requirements by 13 percent – and marking one of the highest rates in Kuwait and across the banking sector.

In adherence to the nationwide Kuwaitization strategy, this accomplishment cements Burgan's commitment to its human capital investment strategy and its efforts towards the development of local aspiring talents within the banking and financial sector, ensuring that Burgan remains a top employer of choice in the market.

Believing in the unique potential that every talent holds, the Bank continues to emphasize the development of young Kuwaiti talents who are driven by ambition and creativity, which echoes the Bank's strat-

egy for serving a top-notch banking experience to its customers and amplifying positive change across society. Burgan's investment in local professionals of a variety of experience levels also aligns with its adherence to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) industry standards and practices, which guide the Bank towards holistically sustainable business success and growth.

Commenting on this impressive achievement, Naqeeb Amin, General Manager – Human Resources and Development for the Group at Burgan Bank, said: "On behalf of Burgan's management, I would like to express my utter pride in the great Kuwaitization feat that we have collectively achieved in 2023. As we strive towards our vision of becoming the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait, driven by our employees, customers, and community, we remain relentless in our search for the market's top

Kuwaiti talents - whether they are undergraduates, seasoned professionals or experienced managers - who hold the key to a brighter future for Burgan Bank and the local economy."

In 2023, female employees accounted for 48 percent of the workforce at Burgan Bank. Moreover, 95 percent of all new hires during the year were Kuwaitis. In addition to the dedication to recruiting Kuwait's brightest professionals, Burgan's Human Resources and Development (HRD) Department sought to ensure that all employees continued to grow and hone their personal and professional skills, setting them up for a great and prosperous future. In the same year, the Bank dedicated 94 percent of all training hours to the development of all Kuwaiti talents.

To ensure the highest levels of involvement in and benefit from the learning and development resources, Burgan Bank made sure to offer its employ-

ees different educational channels that suit their different learning styles and preferences, which further bolstered learning ownership and motivation among the different departments and job grades. In addition, it ensured that staff are up to date on all vital information about financial and banking transactions, as well as customer and bank rights, ensuring that every employee is an ambassador of financial literacy and a successful representative of the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) banking awareness campaign.



Naqeeb Amin

Airbus to open helicopter assembly line in India

PARIS: Airbus will build a helicopter assembly line in India with Indian conglomerate Tata, the European aircraft manufacturer said Friday. The deal was announced during a two-day visit to India by French President Emmanuel Macron.

Airbus said the facility — which will take two years to set up — would be the first such operation to be run by a private group in India. It will assemble and test the major components of the H125 Ecureuil helicopter, and deliver the helicopter to customers in India and neighboring countries.

Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury said making the helicopter in India would "unlock the true potential of the helicopter market in the country". The H125 is a light civilian helicopter which can transport up to six people. In 2021, Airbus decided to set up an assembly line for C295 military transport aircraft in the western Indian state of Gujarat, also together with Tata.

Macron has pushed for greater French involvement in the Asia-Pacific at a time when Washington and its Western allies are courting India as a military and economic counterweight to China. — AFP

China announces fresh bailouts for property sector

BEIJING: China will offer more bailout loans for its struggling real-estate sector with the first funds expected to become available in the coming days, its housing ministry said Friday, in the latest move to help kickstart stuttering growth.

Troubles in the property industry have been one of the main headwinds facing the world's second-largest economy, with a government clampdown on excessive borrowing in 2020 leaving several developers grappling with massive debt and flagging demand.

"In view of the current financing difficulties of some real estate projects," the official newspaper of Beijing's housing ministry quoted officials as saying, local governments would "propose a list of real estate projects that can be given financing support".

"It is understood that loans will be available for the first batch of project lists before the end of the month," it added. A national body will be set up to oversee the loans, the report said.

Officials this week pledged new measures to stimulate the economy — which in 2024 expanded at one of the slowest rates in decades — with the People's Bank of China on Wednesday slashing the portion of cash banks must hold in reserve. China has issued several rounds of bailout funds for its embattled property sector, with Beijing saying this week that its banks had provided nearly 10 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion) in loans to real estate last year.

The property sector — which long accounted for around a quarter of the economy and experienced dazzling growth for two decades — has been beset in recent years by spiraling debt crises at some of its top developers. Financial woes at major firms such as Evergrande and Country Garden are now fuelling buyer mistrust against a backdrop of unfinished housing developments and falling prices. — AFP

Boeing 737 MAX delivered to China lands in Guangzhou

BEIJING: The first Boeing 737 MAX delivered to China since 2019 landed Saturday at Guangzhou's Baiyun International Airport, according to tracking website FlightRadar24. The aircraft, a 737 MAX 8 belonging to China Southern Airlines, landed at 10:23 am local time (0223 GMT), according to the website.

Boeing has rated China a crucial growth market, but deliveries ceased throughout the lengthy grounding of the 737 MAX following two deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019.

The delivery of the plane to China is a rare bright spot for the American company, which is facing intensifying scrutiny over its quality control practices in the aftermath of a near-catastrophic Alaska Airlines flight three weeks ago. A panel blew off one of the carrier's Boeing 737 MAX 9s mid-flight, leaving a hole in the fuselage and forcing an emergency landing. Alaska Air-

Gulf Bank: WISE records outstanding returns in 2023

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has revealed that WISE, Kuwait's leading digital investment platform following the Nobel Prize-winning investment methodology, delivered exceptional performance in 2023, surpassing customer expectations. Conservative portfolios saw an average return of 10.7 percent, high-risk portfolios achieved 20.9 percent, and WISE's Islamic portfolio emerged as the top performer with a remarkable 22 percent return. The income portfolio demonstrated solid results, attaining a 9.2 percent return, supported by substantial annual dividends of 6 percent.

Ruqayya Al-Rifai, the Executive Director of Investment Advisory, expressed pride in the significant success of WISE in 2023, highlighting the platform's innovative digital investment solutions and considerable competitive advantages in consistently exceeding customer expectations. Al-Rifai emphasized WISE's ability to provide tailored investment solutions, whether for moderate or high-risk investments or shariah-compliant investments. Clients have full control of their portfolios, with the flexibility to invest, withdraw, or redeem on a daily basis. Additionally, they benefit from the convenience of monitoring their portfolios effortlessly from any location, and at any time, using smart devices.

Al-Rifai clarified that WISE is built on a foundation of long-term investment in a carefully crafted, diversified global portfolio. This strategy is designed to attain returns consistent with the level of risk, by assessing the client's investment objectives, time horizon, and acceptable risk ratio through a



straightforward questionnaire. Subsequently, WISE suggests the most appropriate portfolio tailored to the client's needs. Over the investment duration, investment managers diligently monitor client portfolios, conducting regular meetings to ensure alignment with the client's specified goals.

She emphasized that WISE stands as the optimal solution for global market investments, offering affordability, ease, and transparency. It empowers investors to reach their investment and savings goals, through well-diversified international portfolios. This is done while considering each investor's unique investment objectives, time horizon, and acceptable risk rate.

Al-Rifai concluded by attributing the success of WISE to its innovative portfolio design and allocation, tailored uniquely for customers to aid them in achieving their investment objectives and fostering wealth growth. She also highlighted the collaborative efforts of a team of professional investment advisors. WISE is accessible to both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis holding accounts with Gulf Bank, with a minimum opening amount of \$10,000.

In line with Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy and a dedication to serving high-net-worth individuals, the bank provides tailored products to address the specific needs of this customer segment. Noteworthy among these offerings is WISE Investment Service, Gulf Bank's leading digital portfolio management platform, as well as a range of investment adviso-

Alaska Airlines' Boeing 737 MAX 9 resumes flight

NEW YORK: Alaska Airlines gradually resumed flights with its Boeing 737 MAX 9 fleet on Friday, three weeks after a mid-flight blowout of a panel and emergency landing prompted sweeping inspections of the aircraft, the company said.

The first trip was flight 1146 from Seattle to San Diego, which left 90 minutes past its scheduled 2:20 pm departure time and arrived in California at 6:14 pm.

The voyage comes after the Federal Aviation Administration on Wednesday announced a maintenance and inspection program to clear the MAX 9 to resume service. Alaska Airlines said it expects inspections on its fleet of 65 MAX 9 planes to be completed by the end of next week, allowing for a resumption of its schedule. "Each of our 737-9 MAX will return to service only after the rigorous inspections are completed and each plane is deemed airworthy according to FAA requirements," the company said.

"The individual inspections are expected to take up to 12 hours per aircraft."

The FAA grounded 171 MAX 9 planes with a similar configuration to the one in the January 5 incident, in which a door plug blew out mid-flight.

While nobody was seriously injured in the incident, inspectors have said the episode could have been catastrophic. The grounding resulted in 3,000 Alaska Airlines flight cancellations in

lines resumed flights with its 737 MAX 9 fleet on Friday, after sweeping inspections.

The January 5 incident followed months of earlier, smaller problems with the same aircraft. The Alaska Airlines episode represents the most serious operational problem for Boeing since the crashes in 2018 and 2019, which resulted in 346 casualties. China was among the first countries to ground the plane after the two fatal accidents involving its flight control software and was the last major Boeing market to rescind the ban.

Boeing executives have at times suggested that diplomatic tensions between Beijing and Washington played a role in the pause on deliveries of new jets even after Chinese officials moved to allow MAX planes already in China to resume service. In addition, China's zero-tolerance COVID-19 policies in the first three years of the pandemic had "reduced demand for airplanes in general", Boeing chief executive Dave Calhoun said in 2022.

But in December, China's Juneyao Airlines took delivery of a 787 Dreamliner, the first Boeing craft to be delivered since 2019. The new 737 MAX 8, meanwhile, left Seattle this week and made stopovers on the islands of Hawaii and Saipan en route to China, according to flightRadar24. — AFP



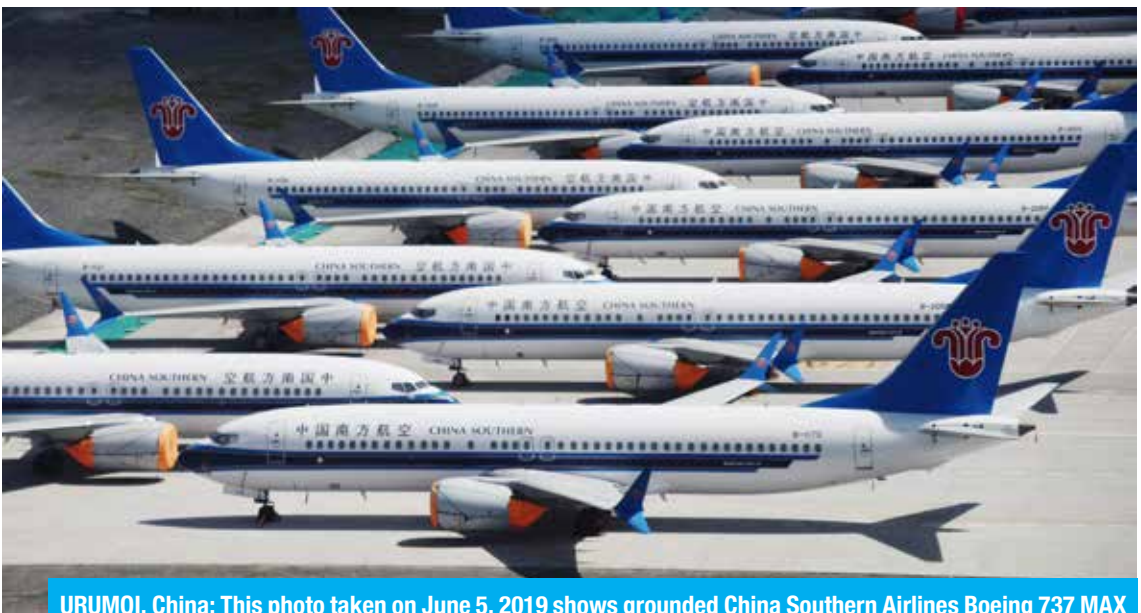
RENTON, United States: Boeing workers are pictured exiting a gate below an image of a Boeing 737-800 aircraft as Boeing's 737 factory teams hold the first day of a "Quality Stand Down" for the 737 program in Renton, Washington on January 25, 2024. -- AFP

January. The company said Thursday that it expects a \$150 million hit from the grounding.

United Airlines, which has the largest fleet of Boeing models affected by the grounding order, said Thursday that the first flight of one of its aircraft was scheduled for Sunday, but did not rule out an earlier return to service. The US Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), tasked with de-

termining the circumstances surrounding the January 5 incident, told AFP on Friday that one of its investigators was due to return to Boeing's Renton plant in Washington state the same day.

The team of investigators will establish a chronology from the production stages to the in-flight accident, the agency said. A report on the investigation is expected next week. — AFP



URUMQI, China: This photo taken on June 5, 2019 shows grounded China Southern Airlines Boeing 737 MAX aircraft parked in a line at Urumqi airport, in China's western Xinjiang region. — AFP

Business



Mohammed Al-Othman during the panel discussion for Tamakan program trainees.

Al-Othman: NBK's digital excellence is result of a forward-looking vision

Bank hosts panel discussion within Tamakan training program for Kuwait's fresh graduates

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted a panel discussion for Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking with Tamakan program trainees, in which he shared his extensive experience gained through a long career in the banking industry. Tamakan is an immersive and innovative training initiative designed for young Kuwaiti graduates organized by Creative Confidence with a strategic partnership with NBK for the fifth year in a row. This program offers a unique opportunity for Kuwaiti fresh graduates to benefit from the expertise of the members of bank's executive management.

The session saw remarkable interaction, as Al-Othman shared the milestones of his career in Kuwait's leading banking institution, and the challenges he faced throughout this journey. He also answered a number of questions posed by the participants, as well as exchanged ideas and visions, and raised issues preoccupying the youth during their early career.

Joining NBK

Al-Othman talked about his early career when he worked as a teller at NBK branches and his progression in the branches, saying: "I joined NBK in 2006, where I started in branches. I enjoyed working in the branches because of direct contact with customers, as I always had a passion for serving people and meeting their needs. Working in branches gave me great experience in identifying customer problems and the ways to solve them."

"From day one, I had a great passion for continuous development and learning, and working in the branches was a two-shift system. I used to stay at work between the shifts to continue working on developing my skills. So, the key advice I can give to young people at the beginning of their career is to be committed to learning, development and enhancing their skills, especially at a young age, as learning at this stage is better and easier," he added.

"After moving from the branches to the head office, I sought to serve people and meet customer needs in a broader way, especially after the experiences I gained from working in branches and understanding the needs of customers from different segments and ages," he continued.

"I participated in many training courses at Harvard and Columbia Business Schools, which represented a major turning point in my career, as it helped to upskill me in different area, which was reflected in my perfor-

mance and had a significant impact on my career development, and made me more passionate and determined to succeed," he noted.

Mistakes are the key to learning

Al-Othman talked about the fear of making mistakes at early career saying, "There is no work without mistakes. The employee will not learn without making mistakes, but what is most important is the effort made and the added value that the employee gives to the work team and the organization he works for."

- Kuwait is a regional leader in digital banking and payment solutions
- The young nature of Kuwaiti society enabled faster spread of technology and wider adoption of digitization
- I always strive to make my mark in every workplace and add value to the organization and customers
- Weyay Bank echoes NBK's digital transformation culture and strategy

"Be brave and let go of the fear of making mistakes in your work. Work to acquire new skills every day, and try to benefit from the experienced and professional colleagues at the workplace, whether they are juniors or seniors," he advised the youth. "Learning and development create self-confidence and upskilling yourself makes you stand on solid ground. Therefore, the easiest way to progress to leadership positions is to acquire the necessary experience and skills and be prepared to seize the available opportunities," he remarked.

"At NBK, career progress is based only on employee's competence, commitment, dedication, productivity, added value provided to the organization, and his role in improving the quality of the bank's products and services," he emphasized.

Work environment

Listing the key factors that enabled him to reach this position, Al-Othman said: "The work environment at NBK is ideal for those who have passion and ambition for advancement by accommodating creativity and innovation. The bank also helps employees to achieve their ambitions, thanks to the unique opportunities for continuous professional development, through the high-quality training programs provided both to employees and fresh graduates, in partnership with globally reputable educational institutions."

"Working at NBK has instilled in me the culture of continuous development, creativity, innovation, and always looking for solutions to develop work and provide high-quality products and services. I always strive to make my mark in every position, and to add value to the organization, customers, and my team members," he added.

"NBK has a set of principles defining work culture and all the details related to the work environment and communication between team members, which represents a melting pot for all ideas and different manage-

ment approaches on all levels, with open-door policy and one-team spirit representing key characteristics of NBK's work environment.

Finding passion in NBK

Answering a question from one of the participants about whether he was offered positions in the public sector, Al-Othman said: "Working in the private sector gives me more room for creativity, innovation and continuous development, especially in an institution like NBK. Conversely, the public sector is still characterized by rigidity and routine, so I always follow my passion and choose the place where I feel able to develop work and provide added value."

Al-Othman advised the youth not to focus on job grade or financial returns only, but most importantly the passion and love of their job. Success is not limited to finding a specific job in a large organization, but you must from day one set your goals and work to achieve these goals by doubling effort and continuing education and training so that you can add value to your team and organization.

Al-Othman mentioned that the ambitious Kuwaiti youth are highly interested to join the private sector, and from our side, we are seeking to attract national talent to join NBK, the largest banking institution in the private sector. "Supporting the youth is instrumental in

NBK's strategy, as we are always keen to attract national talent and provide a series of professional training courses and academic programs to develop upskill and qualify them to take on leadership roles in the future," he added.

Advancement of payment systems

On a question about the future of payment systems, Al-Othman said: "The payment landscape will see significant advancement during the coming period, as we always strive to develop the services provided to the public, using cutting-edge technology." Al-Othman mentioned that Kuwait is a regional leader in digital banking and payment solutions, as the young nature of Kuwaiti society enabled faster spread of technology and wider adoption of digitization among all segments.

Speaking on Weyay, Kuwait's first digital bank, Al-Othman said, "The launch of Weyay Bank echoes NBK's digital transformation culture and strategy, as well as our endeavors to stay relevant to the needs of the youth by providing them with all innovative banking services. The idea of establishing Weyay was primarily to attract a segment of young people whose preferences we have studied very carefully according to specialized research and data analysis using advanced scientific methods."

"The huge digital advancement and boom in banking services over the past years was the fruit of years of work by all departments in the bank, as we developed plans and strategies and set goals to provide customers with the best innovative and advanced products that serve their needs and expectations," he added. "Today, we are reaping the fruits of long years of hard work and successful strategies that fostered our excellence in the area of cutting-edge digital services and payment solutions. These results also prove our prudent management and forward-looking vision for the changes now taking place in the banking industry," he noted. "The ideal work environment at NBK propels everyone to do their best to maintain the bank's leadership among local banks, and ensure its superiority in providing the most advanced digital banking services," he concluded.

It is worth mentioning that "Tamakan" is part of NBK's CSR contributions and strategy to achieve sustainable development, which depends on building an innovative, hardworking and responsible generation. The bank also always places the youth as a top priority being the cornerstone for creating a prosperous future for Kuwait.

Paris stocks hit record thanks to luxury

NEW YORK: Europe's main stock markets shot higher Friday, with Paris closing at a record as shares in LVMH surged on record annual profits at the French luxury group. Wall Street stocks finished mixed at the end of a meandering session. The Dow eked out a fresh record, but the S&P 500 dropped after notching four straight records. "European indices are on the rise, as stronger commodity and banking stocks help the FTSE 100, and French luxury retailers basked in the glow of a 10-percent (plus) gain for LVMH," noted Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

The world's largest luxury goods group soared 2.3 percent, with the Paris CAC 40 closing above 7,600 points for the first time, thanks to the rise in LVMH shares. The group's results were lifted by the continued strength of its fashion brands, which include Louis Vuitton, Dior, Celine, and Fendi. Besides clothing and leather goods, LVMH also posted sales growth in perfumes, cosmetics, watches, and jewelry, with wines and spirits being the only unit to shrink, down 4 percent for the full year. Frankfurt rose only slightly Friday after a survey showed consumer sentiment had soured at the start of the year in Germany, Europe's biggest economy.

In the United States, the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation — the personal consumption expenditures index — held steady last month at 2.6 percent on a headline bases, in line with expectations.

The core PCE Price Index — which excludes volatile energy and food prices — fell to 2.9 percent from 3.2 percent in November. Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare noted that the inflation figure was the lowest since March 2021.

"The key takeaway from the report should be more Goldilocks than anything else: consumer spending is strong and core inflation, which the Fed is targeting, is moving toward the two percent target," he said. Analysts are looking ahead to a busy period next week that includes a Fed meeting and earnings from Amazon, Microsoft and other large technology companies. — AFP



CHICAGO: Grocery items are offered for sale at a supermarket in Chicago, Illinois. - AFP

US Fed's favored inflation gauge up before rate decision

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve's favored measure of inflation ticked higher last month, according to government data published Friday, indicating that its long-running battle against rising prices is not over yet. The latest announcement will likely ensure the US central bank keeps interest rates on hold at its next decision announcement on Wednesday, as policymakers continue talks on when to start cuts.

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose at an annual rate of 2.6 percent last month, unchanged from November, the Department of Commerce said in a statement.

On a monthly level, headline PCE inflation rose by 0.2 percent in December, up from a 0.1 percent decline a month earlier. This was in line with market expectations, according to Briefing.com.

"We learned this morning that inflation was at the pre-pandemic benchmark of two percent over the last six months of 2023," US President Joe Biden said in a statement. "That's an important milestone that means more breathing room for working families,"

he added. Biden is running for reelection this year, and appears set to face former president Donald Trump, who is the front-runner in the fight for the Republican nomination.

The closely watched "core inflation" measure, which strips out volatile food and energy costs, continued to ease, rising by 2.9 percent in the year to December, and by 0.2 percent from a month earlier. This will likely reassure the Fed that trends are moving in the right direction, despite the latest uptick in headline prices.

"The inflation data support a shift in the FOMC's policy stance this year, from holding rates steady to lowering them over time," High Frequency Economics' chief US economist Rubeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients, referring to the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee.

"The exact timing will depend on incoming data, on the labor market, inflation and growth," she added. Fed officials have taken to the airwaves recently to indicate that it is probably too soon to start lowering rates. "While I think it's appropriate for us to look forward and ask when would policy adjustments be necessary so we don't put a stranglehold on the economy, it's really premature to think that that's around the corner," San Francisco Fed president Mary Daly said this month.

But there is more clarity on next week's decision: Futures traders currently assign a probability of more than 97 percent that the Fed will remain on pause, according to CME Group. — AFP

Spain to invest \$2.6bn to expand Madrid airport

MADRID: Spain will invest 2.4 billion euros (\$2.6 billion) to expand Madrid airport and turn it into one of the biggest in the European Union, Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Friday. The expansion will allow the airport to move 90 million passengers per year by 2031, a 28 percent increase from current traffic volumes, as well as generate "thousands" of new jobs, he said during an address at Madrid's FI-TUR tourism congress.

It will also consolidate the airport as Europe's leading hub to Latin America and develop its connections to Asia with new routes, he added. "This will be the biggest investment in the last decade in airport infrastructure in Spain," Sanchez said.

"We are going to convert Madrid airport into one of the biggest airports in the European Union and thus the world." Spain is the world's second-most visited country after France and tourism is crucial for the domestic economy, making up 12.8 percent of gross domestic product in 2023.

The country received a record number of foreign tourists last year, over 84 million, and the amount is expected to rise in 2024. Some 60 million passengers passed through Madrid airport last year. The facility, run by state-controlled airport operator Aena, had its last major expansion in 2006 with the opening of a fourth terminal.

The announcement of the expansion was welcomed by Spanish airline giant Iberia, with its chief executive officer Fernando Candela calling it "excellent news" which will allow the airport to "play in the top European division". But hard-left party Sumar, the Socialists' junior coalition partners, came out against the project, saying it went against Spain's environmental commitments.

The airport expansion is "economic and ecological nonsense and means a return to models of the past," said Sumar's spokesman in parliament, Inigo Errejón. He recalled that the coalition government agreement signed between Sumar and the Socialists included a commitment to ban short-haul flights that can be done instead by train. — AFP

‘Literally the plot of the movie’: Fans outraged by Barbie snubs

The announcement of Oscar nominations always generates a bit of buzz, with fans weighing in on which movies and which actors deserved recognition and didn’t get it. But few snubs have provoked as much on-line outrage as those delivered to summer blockbuster “Barbie”, a deft satire on the difficulties women face in being recognized for their talents, whose female director and female lead did not make the shortlist.

Especially as the male actor playing Ken did. “Nominating Ken but not Barbie is literally the plot of the movie,” novelist Brad Meltzer wrote on social media. Greta Gerwig’s fizzing audience-pleaser, which took over \$1 billion at the box office with its effortless melding of social commentary and bubblegum pop culture, had been seen as a lock for many of the biggest categories when the Oscars nominations were announced on Tuesday.

Both Gerwig as director and star Margot Robbie had already garnered a suite of nominations in earlier awards and were expected to feature in the line-up for Hollywood’s top prizes. But while the film notched an impressive eight nods, including the coveted Best Picture, Gerwig and Robbie were left off the lists for director and leading actress.

Ryan Gosling, who earned a supporting actor nomination for his efforts as Ken, was among the first to speak out. “No recognition would be possible

for anyone on the film without their talent, grit and genius,” he said. “To say that I’m disappointed that they are not nominated in their respective categories would be an understatement.”

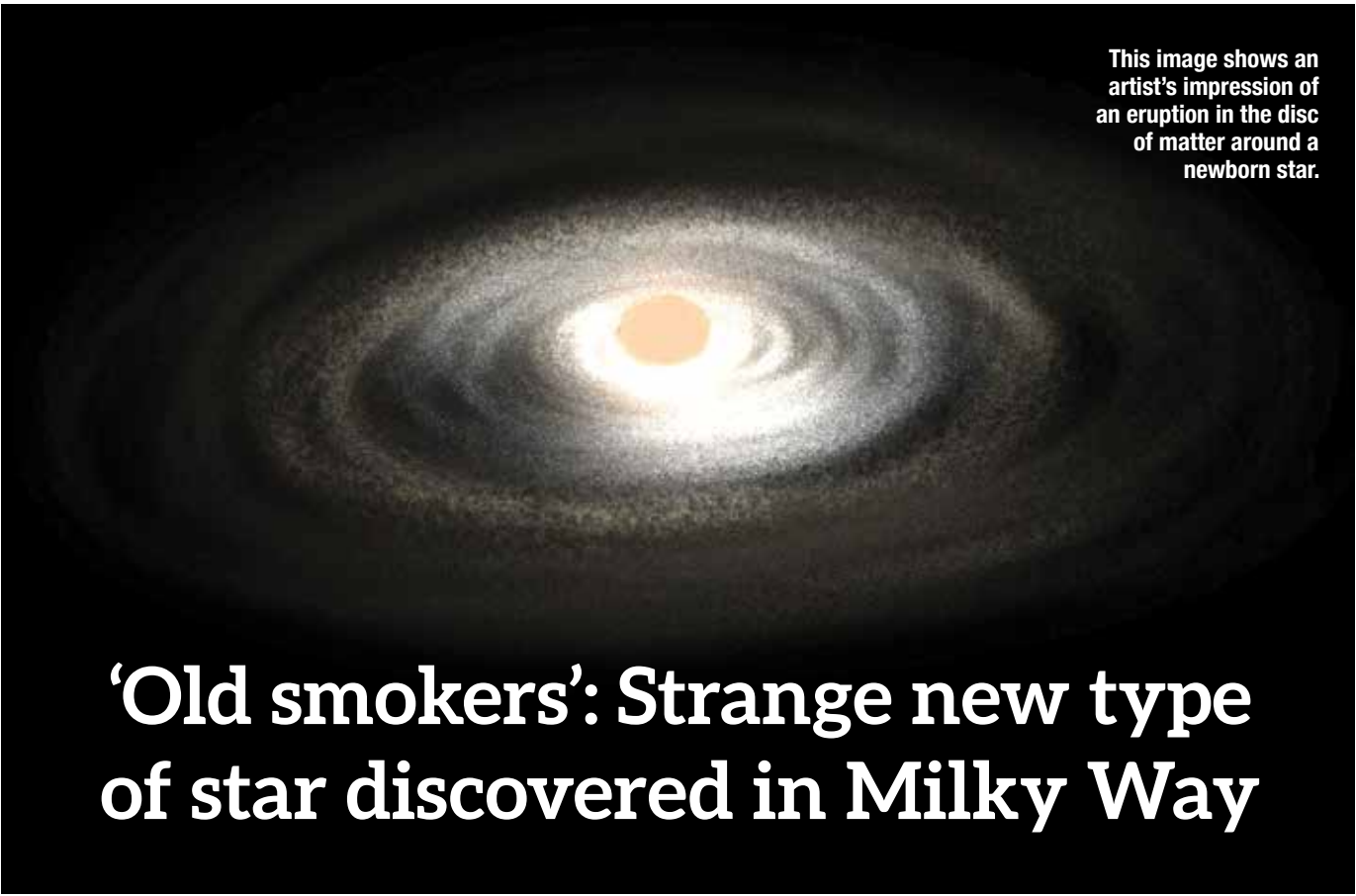
Fellow Ken actor Simu Liu lauded the way the two women had fought to make “Barbie” the movie it was. “Together they started a movement, touched the world and reinvigorated the cinema. They deserve everything. They ARE everything,” he wrote on social media.

And it wasn’t just those involved in the movie who were annoyed. “Let me see if I understand this: the Academy nominated ‘Barbie’ for Best Picture (eight nominations total) — a film about women being sidelined and rendered invisible in patriarchal structures — but not the woman who directed the film,” wrote Charlotte Clymer on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

As the outrage spread on Wednesday, one-time US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton weighed in. Clinton lost the 2016 election to Donald Trump because of the mathematics of the electoral college system, despite having a significant majority of the popular vote. “Greta & Margot, While it can sting to win the box office but not take home the gold, your millions of fans love you. You’re both so much more than Kenough. #HillaryBarbie,” she wrote on X. — AFP



Greta Gerwig (left) and Margot Robbie accept the Best Comedy Award for ‘Barbie’ onstage during the 29th Annual Critics Choice.



This image shows an artist's impression of an eruption in the disc of matter around a newborn star.

‘Old smokers’: Strange new type of star discovered in Milky Way

Nearing the end of their life, they sit quietly for long periods of time, barely noticeable, before suddenly puffing out a cloud of smoke. A mysterious new type of star nicknamed “old smoker” has been discovered hiding in the heart of our Milky Way galaxy, astronomers revealed on Friday.

The “peculiar” puffing behavior of these stars has never been seen before in such red giants, astrophysicist Philip Lucas told AFP. The international team of scientists behind the discovery had not been looking for such old stars during their 10-year survey, which took in hundreds of millions of stars across the sky.

Instead, they were using the VISTA telescope in the Chilean Andes to search for newborn stars — called proto-stars — which are prone to frequent, exuberant eruptions. They spotted 32 proto-stars, “the largest number anyone has ever found before in one batch”, said Lucas, a professor at the UK’s University of Hertfordshire and lead author of a new study. But lingering in the background was a “nice surprise”, he added.

‘We don’t fully understand’

The old smokers were puffing right in the center of the Milky Way, a dense-

ly packed and metal-rich region called the Nuclear Stellar Disc. “What was surprising about this new discovery is that we’re seeing stars that were just sitting doing nothing at all,” Lucas said.

Then abruptly the stars would become between 40 to 100 times dimmer, sometimes so faint that the telescope’s

infrared vision could barely spot them. A couple of years later, seemingly without warning, they would return to their former brightness. “Everything we have been able to learn about them suggests that this is a case of stars throwing off puffs of smoke — for reasons that we don’t fully understand,” Lucas said.

Those smoke puffs are thought to temporarily obscure the stars from our sight. There are many more “heavy elements” — anything heavier than hydrogen and helium — in this region of the galaxy, which could create more dust in the star’s atmosphere, Lucas said.

Exactly what puffs that dust out remains a mystery. But if this theory is correct, then the amount of matter being thrown off by these stars could play a significant role in how heavy elements are spread throughout our galaxy — and beyond, he said.

Lucas emphasized that these were just early best-guesses. “We’re just sort of scrabbling around trying to see what makes the most sense,” he said. The researchers spotted at least 21 old smokers but suspect there are many more out there. The study was published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society. — AFP



This handout image by the University of Hertfordshire shows an artists' impression of a cloud of smoke and dust being thrown out by a red giant star. — AFP photos

AWW, CUTE: NEW LONDON SHOW EXPLORES WORLD OF THE ADORABLE

From cats and plushies to emojis, a new central London exhibition which opened on Thursday is exploring the “irresistible force” of “cuteness”. Even before the doors to “CUTE” opened at Somerset House, social media influencers in Japanese schoolgirl uniforms, “Hello Kitty” dresses and Pikachu hats playfully posed for photos, to charm their social media followers.

The exhibition blends art with an array of musical clips, video games and memes from social media, exploring a largely virtual culture that has swept across the globe with the explosion of the internet. One room of “CUTE” is a tribute to cats, which make up some of the most viewed content on the internet, contrasting 19th century black and white feline photographs with futuristic AI-generated rainbow kitten portraits. Further on, a collage of curly-haired Renaissance cherubs — the original “cute babies” of art history — intermingles with plush toys, mangas (Japanese comics) and iconic figures from the “kawaii” or cute culture that emerged in 20th-century Japan.

For Claire Catterall, the exhibition’s curator, the concept of “cute” is so vast that she struggles to define it. “The exhibition unpacks what cuteness is, so it’s a very slippery scene,” she told AFP. “It’s very hard to define. It’s very tricky.



Gallery employees look at an artwork called “Go on and hit a lick of benevolence” by artist US artist Sean-Kierre Lyons at the exhibition “CUTE” at the Somerset House, central London. — AFP photos

And in many ways, that’s the power of it. It’s so many different things all at once.”

Lucrative business

In sections divided by cat-shaped or rainbow arches, contemporary works share space with commercial products such as Tamagotchi toys or Sylvanian Family figures, reminding visitors that “cuteness” is a lucrative billion-dollar business. The “Cute” exhibition is sponsored by Japanese company Sanrio, which globally markets merchandise of

the beloved feline-inspired character “Hello Kitty,” created nearly 50 years ago. Visitors meander under an archway adorned with the character’s likeness, walls blanketed in colorful plush toys, before shimmying under the “Hello Kitty” disco’s glitter ball.

“Cuteness and capitalism are so closely intertwined,” Catterall says. “There is this kind of quite queasy quality about that which makes people feel really uncomfortable.” Although cuteness lives “within the capitalist structures which spawned it”, it could also be what disrupts it the most, she adds.

‘It’s a feeling’

The aesthetics of cuteness were once mocked or adopted ironically but its values and dress codes are now championed by many young people as they allow for an “existence outside the norms,” particularly for women and the queer community, Catterall says.

“I think for a long time, cuteness has been considered childish and inconsequential and not serious, but this exhibition will hopefully show that there’s so much more to it than that,” the curator says. “It’s actually really something to be taken seriously, and can tell us so many things about us and the world around it.”

“CUTE” also touches on a more political dimension of “cuteness,” in a section



An artwork called “Cat-tharsis” by British artist Andy Holden.

featuring a fuchsia pink balaclava from the Russian feminist punk rock group Pussy Riot, known for their provocative protests against President Vladimir Putin.

As immersive exhibitions and museums proliferate around the globe, “CUTE,” open to the public until April 4, also emphasizes interactivity. Visitors can enjoy vintage Japanese video games in an arcade room or relax at a “pajama party” in a vast teen bedroom complete

with bean bags and pop music, created by British artist Hannah Diamond.

“It’s exuberant, it’s exhilarating, it’s empowering,” says Catterall. “We wanted to create a space where people could come in, dance, feel really happy, cover themselves in Hello-Kitty-glow of goodness.” Cuteness is not just an “aesthetic”, she insists. “It’s a feeling.” — AFP



An artwork called “Playing dress-up with AI”, created by British design consultancy Graphic Thought Facility using AI software Lexica Aperture.




A gallery employee poses next to a Hello Kitty installation.



CHRISTIAN DIOR



Balletcore, dunes and vamps at PARIS HAUTE COUTURE WEEK



Czech model Michaela Tomanova presents a creation for the Julien Fournie show.



US actress Margaret Qualley presents a creation for Chanel during the Women's Haute-Couture Spring/Summer 2024 Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP photos

Haute couture week in Paris showcases the fashion world's most elite outfits — one-off, made-to-measure creations that the labels hope will adorn red carpets and high society events around the world. Here are some of the highlights from four days of shows in the French capital.

Balletcore
Ballet is hot right now. Andie MacDowell's daughter, actress Margaret Qualley, in a neck ruff and white tights, was the catwalk star as Chanel marked 100 years since founder Gabrielle Chanel first dressed the Russian Ballet in Paris.

It came just a few days after Dior paid homage to ballet icon Rudolf Nureyev during the menswear week, and Chanel offered the ultra-chi-chi women's version, with lots of tutu skirts, translucent whites, leotards and dance pumps.

Fendi, Dior fabrics
Fendi's show, graced by Zendaya and Reese Witherspoon, in the front row, was one of the more delicately fabulous. Shimmering, almost liquid, dresses in silk, sequin and mohair. Glasses that you wouldn't want to accidentally sit on, since they are made from 18-carat gold and white diamonds. Designer Kim Jones said he was inspired by his predecessor Karl Lagerfeld's "futurism" but with "a humanism at the heart of this future".

Christian Dior, meanwhile, put on a varied show with everything from brown trench coats to white Grecian-goddess-style dresses and velvet



pantsuits. But there was an impressive tribute to a classic from the Dior archive, the La Cigale dress of 1952, and the unique rippling effect of its moire fabric.

Eastern journeys
France's Stephane Rolland recreated the atmosphere of a Marrakesh garden, with women dressed like Middle Eastern princesses in beige, gold and blue, set against a background of desert dunes and a soundtrack by trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf.

Rolland told AFP he was thinking about the collection before the Zionist war on Gaza broke out in October and had decided to stick with it in order to promote "tolerance and positivity".

Giorgio Armani plucked ideas from



STEPHANE ROLLAND

all over the world to take an audience including Gwyneth Paltrow and Glenn Close on an "imagined journey from West to East" that included decorative peacock motifs and kimono-style gowns. Rahul Mishra latest evocation of his native India was inspired by insects, with huge glittering moths and bees adorning some outfits, and several turbans and maharajah outfits in the collection.

Theatrical Fournie
One of the most spectacular shows came from Julien Fournie, who sought to recreate the atmosphere of fashion's heyday, packing out a Paris theatre for a tribute to vamps and femmes fatales. Cocked bowler hats and beige trench coats recalled film noir classics

and cabaret, alongside dizzying stiletto heels that tested the balance of the models as they put on much more of a show than the usual up-and-back catwalk strut.

Model Michaela Tomanova, seven months pregnant, stood out in a black gala dress made from a harness, while Fournie paid tribute to landmark styles over the past century, from suits to pencil skirts and big shoulders, all with modern twists. "With this collection I wanted to return the joy, fantasy and lightness that we miss so much today," said Fournie, who joined the models on stage for an ecstatic finale in their arms. — AFP



FENDI



GIORGIO ARMANI PRIVE



Sports

‘Absolute masterclass’ as ton-up Pope pulls England into lead

India finished their first innings on 436 with a lead of 190

HYDERABAD: Ollie Pope struck a defiant century to help England bounce back with a lead of 126 after their batting stutter against a persistent Indian attack in the opening Test on Saturday. England's second innings reached 316-6 at stumps on day three in Hyderabad with Pope (148) and Rehan Ahmed (16) at the crease.

India finished their first innings on 436 with a lead of 190 and had England in trouble at 163-5 when Pope anchored a 112-run stand with wicket-keeper Ben Foakes, who made 34. Pope reached his fifth Test ton and first against India with three runs off Ravindra Jadeja, removing his helmet and raising his bat to soak in the applause.

“A brilliant day for a number of reasons,” veteran batsman Joe Root told reporters. “The way that Popey has played today... honestly it's an absolute masterclass on how to bat in these conditions as an overseas player,” he added.

“We've laid down some good markers and shown that we have got the tools and skills to really compete in these conditions.” Pope dug in as he played back-and-forth sweeps to good effect, neutralizing India's forceful spin attack.

He survived one misjudged reverse sweep to backward point while on 110 when Axar Patel dropped the catch off Jadeja. Axar's left-arm spin dispatched Foakes to end the partnership but Pope made the day his own in a marathon knock featuring

17 boundaries. Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took two wickets each.

Ashwin's bunny Stokes

Zak Crawley fell to Ashwin's off-spin early but England raced to 89-1 at lunch after Ben Duckett's sweep shots defied the Indian attack to keep the scoring rate above five per over. Bumrah bowled a sensational spell after lunch to get Duckett out for 47, soon after the batsman survived an lbw call off Bumrah that would have been upheld if reviewed. He then got Root lbw for two to raise the volume of a raucous weekend crowd.

Jadeja bowled Jonny Bairstow for 10 and Ashwin got his second after he bowled Stokes out on six with a well-crafted flighted ball, which bamboozled the captain to rattle his off-stump. It was the 12th time that Ashwin got left-hander Stokes out in Tests.

“It still has something for the bowlers,” India's bowling coach Paras Mhambrey said on the pitch. “There's still turn but it's not the usual turn on Indian sub-continent where as the game progresses there's sharp turn. But first things first, we want to get them out as quickly as possible.” India resumed the day on 421-7 in response to England's first innings total of 246 and overnighters Jadeja and Axar started cautiously, with just six runs scored in the first half-hour. Root, who posted 4-79, got



HYDERABAD: England's Ben Foakes (C) is clean bowled by India's Axar Patel during the third day of the first Test cricket match between India and England at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on January 27, 2024. — AFP

Jadeja out and bowled Bumrah on the next ball but Mohammed Siraj avoided the hat-trick.

Jadeja top-scored for the hosts with 87. Leg-spinner Ahmed cleaned up Axar on 44 to end

the innings inside the first hour. Spinner Jack Leach, who injured his knee while fielding on day one and again on day two, took the field heavily bandaged and bowled just one over in the morning. — AFP



BRISBANE: West Indies' Kavem Hodge (L) bats on day three of the second cricket Test match between Australia and the West Indies at the Gabba in Brisbane on January 27, 2024. — AFP

Smith guides Australia to healthy position

BRISBANE: Steve Smith capped off “a pretty good day” for Australia, guiding the hosts to 60-2 at stumps on the third day of the second Test against the West Indies in Brisbane on Saturday. Australia need another 156 runs for victory to take a clean sweep of the two-Test series with eight wickets in hand.

At stumps, Smith was on 33 with a struggling Cameron Green alongside him on 9. Australia's hopes of taking the win, however, may be hampered by predicted heavy rain for the next two days. Australia had wrapped up the West Indian second innings for 193 shortly after the tea break when No.11 Shamar Joseph had to retire hurt after being hit on the toe by a Mitchell Starc bouncer.

Joseph was taken for scans on Saturday night and although he hasn't fractured his toe, it is unknown whether he will bowl on Sunday. The West Indies went into the final session six wickets down, but lost the last four, including Joseph, for just 10 runs.

“I thought the bowling attack did exceptionally well today,” Australian off-spinner Nathan Lyon said. “In pretty hot and humid conditions I thought we stuck at our job pretty well.” We pride ourselves as a bowling unit on staying calm and building pressure. All in all, a pretty good day.”

Chasing 216 for victory, Australia lost an early wicket when Usman Khawaja was caught down the leg side off Alzarri Joseph. Marnus Labuschagne, who has had a lean summer, failed for the second time this match, edging Justin Greaves to third slip

where Kevin Sinclair took a sharp catch to leave Australia 42-2.

Joseph said the West Indies were still thinking of pulling off an unlikely win. “We still have eight wickets to get — you never know what can happen on the fourth day,” he said. “If we bowl in the right areas, we can still win this game.”

On an oppressively hot and humid afternoon in Brisbane, Australia's pace bowlers were forced into three-over spells throughout the day, followed by time off the field to recover. Every time a dangerous partnership started to develop, Australia managed to take a wicket to keep the deficit in check.

After resuming Saturday at 13-1, West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite and No.3 Kirk McKenzie were intent on keeping the Australians in the field as long as possible. McKenzie in particular looked in great touch as he punished anything loose from the Australian pace attack.

Brathwaite was not as fluent and after scraping his way to 16, he played a poor shot to an innocuous Green delivery and chipped a simple catch to Labuschagne at cover. However, he and McKenzie had put on a 50-run partnership to lay a good foundation for the visitors. McKenzie has had a good tour and the stylish left-hander moved comfortably to 41 before he tried to sweep off-spinner Nathan Lyon and was trapped leg before, leaving the West Indies 86-3. Alick Athanaze and Kavem Hodge consolidated and reached the first break with few troubles.

Lyon struck again after dinner, drawing an edge from Athanaze (35) before a brilliant piece of fielding from Travis Head saw Hodge run out for 29. Hodge moved forward and played the ball straight to Head at short leg, who flicked the ball onto the stumps and although Hodge's bat was over the line, it had bounced up and was in the air when the stumps were broken. — AFP

these baseless accusations, and look forward to clearing my name,” McMahon said in a statement.

“However, out of respect for the WWE Universe, the extraordinary TKO business and its board members and shareholders, partners and constituents, and all of the employees and Superstars who helped make WWE into the global leader it is today, I have decided to resign from my executive chairmanship and the TKO board of directors, effective immediately.”

WWE is a ratings blockbuster that owes much of its success to entrepreneur and promoter McMahon, a longtime friend of Donald Trump. After buying what was then the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) from his father in 1982, McMahon turned the second-rate league into an entertainment giant. Transformed into World Wrestling Entertainment in 2002, the league passed the billion-dollar mark in annual sales last year and on Tuesday Netflix sealed a 10-year, \$5 billion broadcast deal with WWE.

But McMahon has come under scrutiny before. He stepped down as WWE chief executive officer in 2022 amid an internal investigation into allegations he had an affair with an employee and paid her \$3 million to keep the matter secret. His daughter Stephanie McMahon was named interim CEO as the investigation continued amid widening allegations of misconduct and payments of millions of dollars to women formerly associated with WWE to keep quiet about affairs and alleged misconduct. — AFP

Germany's Jaeger leads Euro pack at Torrey Pines

LOS ANGELES: Germany's Stephan Jaeger heads into Saturday's final round of the PGA Tour's Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines with a one stroke lead ahead of a trio of fellow Europeans. Jaeger, who shot one-over par 73 on the South Course, sits on 11-under for the tournament with France's Matthieu Pavon and Denmark's Nicolai Hojgaard both a shot back.

Belgian Thomas Detry led going into the 18th hole but he found water and was left with a double bogey and a round of 73, two strokes behind Jaeger. The 34-year-old from Munich has yet to taste victory on the PGA Tour. He has six wins on the secondary Korn Ferry Tour but said that won't be much to lean on as he tries to hold on to his lead on Saturday.

“It's great to have some past success, but really that doesn't really get you anything. I'm going to feel it tomorrow, I'm going to be nervous,” he said. “It was nice to kind of get some of that out today, some of those nerves. I felt like for me internally I handled it really well,” he added after a round which saw him make five birdies, including on the 18th, but six bogeys.

“Super happy with how mentally kind of attacked the golf course in different places now. I didn't have my best stuff today, so I'd love to putt a little better, hit a little more fairways tomorrow,” he said. Detry paid the price for a cautious approach on the par-5 18th, as he put his third shot on the edge of the green

and watched it roll agonizingly down the bank and into the water.

“It's been a very long day. I think we played in 5 hours 45, I had a little bit of mud on the ball, the lie wasn't perfect, light was...it was starting to be dark. “There was a couple of different factors that were not in favor. Obviously short is a no-go. So we decided to be smart and there we go. I got punched in the face,” he said. “I've been working on a lot of things mentally as well and I feel I'm doing everything the right way and it still seems to happen,” he added.

Still wide open

While Detry looked distraught at his misfortune on the final hole, the tournament remains wide open for him and the large chasing pack. A total of 17 players are within four shots of the lead after what was a gruelling, high-scoring day littered with bogeys.

Pavon, who shot an even-par 72 with three bogeys and three pars, managed his round well, finishing with six straight pars and said it had been a struggle. “It is tough out there. Even yesterday I had a good round, but that was tough. The rough are thick, the wind switched a little bit, it brings some north wind today, it was a little bit cooler, too, windier,” he said. “Overall, it was tough to catch the fairways, it was streaky out there. Also, the greens, we've been playing on them for three days now, they got a little bit bumpy and they are quite fast, so it makes making some putts a little bit tricky,” he added.

Hojgaard was close to joining overnight leader Jaeger at the top of the leaderboard but his birdie putt on the last lipped out. “Hit a lot of good putts coming in and saved a couple good ones as well out there, which you have to do on a day like this. I would have loved to hole the putt on 18. There's a good chance tomorrow,” he said. — AFP

Norway's Mowinckel wins World Cup downhill at Cortina

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: Ragnhild Mowinckel won Saturday's alpine skiing World Cup downhill at Cortina d'Ampezzo, claiming the honours in a race blighted by interruptions for crashes and driving winds. Norwegian Mowinckel claimed her first ever World Cup downhill win with a time of one minute and 33.5 seconds, beating American Jacqueline Wiles by 0.35sec.

Reigning downhill champion Sofia Goggia, who finished 0.44sec off the pace in third, had been leading when the race was interrupted for over half an hour due to winds judged dangerous for competitors just 17 runs into the event. Goggia is still on course for a fourth straight World Cup title in the discipline as she leads the standings by 89 points from Friday's downhill winner Stephanie Venier.

Mowinckel trails Goggia by 208 points in the downhill standings and is 11th in the overall race for the crystal globe. “It wasn't the best descent, technically speaking, but there was character and grit. I got hit with a lot of wind... I made some mistakes because it moved me around,” Goggia said to RAI.

“I had to deal with a lot of wind... having to wait for so many minutes and the conditions changing made a big difference to the final result,” she added later after being knocked off top spot. The long stoppage was one of several on a difficult day in Cortina, with Isabella Wright having to be taken away by helicopter after slamming into the safety netting after losing control at the difficult Delta jump.

However the American was spared any serious injuries and was later seen chatting with fellow skiers outside the finishing area. Mowinckel won a race missing American skiing icon Mikaela Shiffrin and reigning downhill Olympic champion Corinne Suter after both suffered painful crashes on Friday.

Suter was ruled out of the rest of the season after suffering serious ligament damage to her left knee during the first of two downhill races in Cortina. A three-day run of races at Cortina, which is co-hosting the 2026 Winter Olympics, ends with Sunday morning's super-G.

Meanwhile, French skier Nils Allegre claimed his first World Cup win in the super-G at Garmisch-Partenkirchen on Saturday, as the race favourites were pushed from the podium. Allegre, a



CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: Norway's Ragnhild Mowinckel, first, celebrates during the podium ceremony of the Women's Downhill event of FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy on January 27, 2024. — AFP photos



GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN: Winner France's Nils Allegre reacts after the men's Super G event of the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, southern Germany, on January 27, 2024.

30-year-old Frenchman finished 0.18sec ahead of Italy's Guglielmo Bosca with Swiss Loic Meillard third 0.25sec off the pace.

Marco Odermatt and Cyprien Sarrazin, who have dominated the speed events in the past month, finished off the podium. Allegre has been on the circuit since 2016, but has never made it to the podium in 102 starts. He has been in top form this season, coming fourth at Val Gardena in December.

“What happened? I don't know,” Allegre told Germany's ZDF network. “Honestly, I just had a good feeling on the snow, and my skis are some of the best in these conditions.” Allegre said he “didn't feel too good this morning, a little bit tired. But with my experience, I know you should not trust how you feel sometimes.” — AFP

Sports

Ake strikes late as Man City oust Spurs from FA Cup

Chelsea held to a 0-0 draw by Aston Villa as both sides squandered opportunities

LONDON: Manchester City moved into the FA Cup fifth round in dramatic fashion as Nathan Ake's controversial late goal clinched the holders' 1-0 win against Tottenham on Friday. As the football world digested the stunning news that Jurgen Klopp will step down as Liverpool boss at the end of this season, the club who might benefit most from his exit finally ended their wait for a first victory at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

City had lost all five of their previous visits to Tottenham's plush arena without scoring a goal since the stadium opened in April 2019. But Dutch defender Ake ensured City would leave north London on a high at last when he stabbed home with just two minutes left in the fourth round clash.

"Today we performed incredibly well. Everything pleased me, from minute one to the end," City boss Pep Guardiola said. Guardiola's side have won their last seven games in all competitions to maintain their renaissance after a pre-Christmas wobble.

They are five points behind Premier League leaders Liverpool but hold a game in hand and will hope to capitalize on any uncertainty created by Klopp's bombshell announcement. "He's been my biggest rival so I think he will be missed. I'm a little bit pleased because without him I will sleep a little bit better the night before we play against Liverpool," Guardiola said.

Klopp and Guardiola have fought an intense rivalry during their time in England, with the City boss largely coming out on top in the silverware stakes. City won all three major prizes last season and remain firmly in the hunt to retain the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

With star striker Erling Haaland still sidelined by

injury, Guardiola's men were initially profligate in north London. Oscar Bobb teed up Phil Foden late in the first half but his strike flashed wide. Julian Alvarez looked certain to score when he latched on Bobb's superb pass in the Tottenham area, but Micky van de Ven threw his body in the way to deflect the shot wide. Guardiola sent on Kevin De Bruyne and Jeremy Doku for the last 25 minutes as the Belgian duo step up their returns from injury.

Chelsea held by Villa

Bernardo Silva's shot was repelled by Guglielmo Vicario before De Bruyne dragged his effort wide after Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg gave the ball away. But City's pressure was finally rewarded in the 88th minute as Vicario, under pressure from Ruben Dias, made a hash of catching De Bruyne's corner.

Ake prodded in from close-range and the goal survived a prolonged VAR check. "I'm sure they had a good look at it and the referee and VAR didn't see anything wrong with it. We have to accept it," Tottenham boss Ange Postecoglou said. In the other fourth round action on Friday, Chelsea were held to a 0-0 draw by Aston Villa as both sides squandered opportunities at Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea had scored six in their previous outing, dispatching Middlesbrough to reach next month's League Cup final against Liverpool. But Mauricio Pochettino's men found Villa a tougher nut as a combined 23 shots from both sides failed to yield a winner. In a rematch of the 2000 FA Cup final won by Chelsea, John McGinn spurned Villa's best chances in each half.

Emiliano Martinez made fine saves from Chelsea's Noni Madueke and Cole Palmer to set up a replay at



LONDON: Manchester City's Portuguese midfielder #20 Bernardo Silva (L) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder #10 James Maddison (C) during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

Villa Park. "The performance was good, we just weren't clinical enough. To face a team like Aston Villa who are doing fantastic in the Premier League, I think it's a very good signal that we are improving," Pochettino said. Nottingham Forest were held

to a 0-0 draw by Championship giant-killers Bristol City at Ashton Gate. City enjoyed a shock win over West Ham in a third round replay earlier in January and once again they made life difficult for Premier League opponents. — AFP

Klopp to quit as Liverpool manager at end of season

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp shocked the football world on Friday by announcing he will leave the club at the end of the season because he is "running out of energy". Klopp, who has restored Liverpool to one of European football's powerhouses since taking over at Anfield in 2015, said the decision was taken after realizing his "resources are not endless".

The 56-year-old plans to take at least a year's sabbatical from management come May and promised to Liverpool fans that he will never coach another English club. "I can understand that it's a shock for a lot of people in this moment, when you hear it for the first time," Klopp said in an interview on Liverpool's website.

"I love absolutely everything about this club, I love everything about the city, I love everything about our supporters, I love the team, I love the staff. I love everything. But that I still take this decision shows you that I am convinced it is the one I have to take. "It is that I am, how can I say it, running out of energy."

Klopp led Liverpool to their first league title for 30 years in 2020 and to Champions League glory in 2019 among seven trophies during his time at Anfield. He could add a few more in the coming months as he aims to go out on a high.

Liverpool are five points clear at the top of the Premier League, face Chelsea in the League Cup final next month and are still involved in the FA Cup and Europa League. Klopp said he had taken the

decision in November when discussions with the club about potential signings for next season began. After years of battling with Manchester City at the top of the Premier League and reaching the later stages of the Champions League, Liverpool struggled to match their usual standards under Klopp in the 2022/23 season. But Klopp said it was vital for him to not leave on that sour note.

Guardiola to 'sleep better'

"For me it was super, super, super-important that I can help to bring this team back onto the rails. It was all I was thinking about," said Klopp on Liverpool's return to form this season. "When I realized pretty early that happened, it's a really good team with massive potential and a super age group, super characters and all that, then I could start thinking about myself again and that was the outcome. It is not what I want to (do), it is just what I think is 100 percent right."

Klopp has spoken in the past of his desire to manage the German national team, but he hinted that those ambitions will be put on hold until he is refreshed. "Whatever will happen in the future I don't know now but no club, no country for the next year. No other English club ever, I can promise that," he added.

Klopp's biggest rival during his reign has been Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola, who saluted the German after his side's FA Cup victory at Tottenham on Friday night. "Of course he will



MADRID: (FILES) Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (C) raises the trophy after winning the UEFA Champions League final football match between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur at the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium in Madrid on June 1, 2019. Klopp surprised the football world by announcing on January 26, 2024 that he would leave Liverpool at the end of the season. — AFP

be missed. It was a shock to everyone. At Manchester City, we cannot define our period without him," Guardiola said.

"He is the best rival I have had in my career. I will sleep better. Before playing against Liverpool was always a nightmare!" The US-based Fenway Sports Group (FSG), who own Liverpool, paid tribute to Klopp and said work will begin immediately on looking for his successor. Xabi Alonso, the Spanish former Liverpool player who has guided Bayer Leverkusen to the top of the Bundesliga this season as coach, is the bookmakers' favourite. Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi is also in the running after

leading the Seagulls into Europe this season for the first time.

"It goes without saying that we will be hugely saddened to lose not just a manager of such calibre, but a person and leader for whom we have enormous respect, gratitude and affection," said FSG president Mike Gordon. Klopp's first match since the bombshell news comes against Norwich in the FA Cup fourth round at Anfield on Sunday. Norwich are fitting opponents as they are managed by Klopp's friend David Wagner, who was best man at the wedding of the Reds boss. — AFP

would be the host nation's skipper who does it.

On the eve of Palestine's first game, which ended in a 4-1 defeat to Iran, Battat described what being at the Asian Cup meant to him and his teammates. "We as players are part of the Palestinian people and live through the same suffering as the people," said Battat.

'Tonne of respect'

Battat plays for his hometown club of Shabab Al-Dhahiriya SC in the West Bank Premier League and, except for a period in Egypt, has spent his whole career in Palestinian football. He has won 61 caps, scoring once and making six assists, since his debut over a decade ago.

He has played every minute of the Asian Cup campaign and won more tackles than any other play at the tournament with 12, according to stats experts Opta. He has also created seven chances—second only to Paris Saint-Germain's Lee Kang-in, with eight for South Korea. — AFP

Korda grabs two-stroke LPGA Drive On lead with late birdie binge

MIAMI: Reigning Olympic champion Nelly Korda birdied three of her last four holes to fire a four-under par 67 for a two-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the LPGA Drive On Championship. The 25-year-old hometown hero and daughter of former Australian Open tennis champion Petr Korda stood on 10-under 132 after 36 holes at Bradenton Country Club.

"I've hit it pretty well the past two days, drove it well, given myself some opportunities," Korda said. "At the end of the day, made some putts." South Korean rookie Lee So-mi, making just her seventh tour start, fired a 65 to grab second on 134 with New Zealand's Lydia Ko, China's Lin Xiyu and Japan's Ayaka Furue sharing third on 135.

World number four Korda, who shared the 18-hole lead with Ko after opening 65s, began on the back nine and answered a bogey at the par-3 11th with a birdie at 13. Korda birdied the par-3 15th and par-5 17th holes to seize the solo lead at the turn.

She stumbled with a bogey at the fifth but responded with birdies on the par-5 sixth and eighth holes and a closing birdie at the par-3 ninth to seize command. "I just knew that I could probably take advantage of the two par-5s. If I had good drives, they're both reachable," Korda said. "Everyone is going to make mistakes. It's all just about minimizing it."

Lee, a 25-year-old in her first event as an LPGA member, had her best tour finish in her debut, sharing fourth at the 2019 BMW Ladies Championship in South Korea. The world number 58 birdied the second and fourth holes and added a birdie at the par-3 seventh and a bogey at the par-5 eighth.

Lee began the back nine with a birdie, added back-to-back birdies at 13 and 14 and had another at the par-5 17th. "My birdie putts dropped more today," Lee said. "There was a short par putt I missed, which was unbelievable, so it's a little disappointing, but I'm not a robot. I'm a human and can make mistakes." Ninth-ranked Ko, coming off her 20th career LPGA triumph on Sunday at the season-opening Tournament of Champions, shot 70. "I didn't have my A-game, but to shoot under par on a day where you don't feel like it's as solid is a good place to be," Ko said.

Furue, fourth last week, fired a 67 to leap into the hunt. She birdied four of the first six holes to charge into contention. "I just concentrated on my play," Furue said. "I was pretty good." Lin opened with a birdie at 10, then made four bogeys in five holes from 12-16 before a birdie at the 17th. She birdied the first three holes after the turn then closed with four consecutive birdies. — AFP

Skipper Battat leads Palestine on and off pitch at Asian Cup

DOHA: Musab Al-Battat has led Palestine on the pitch with his all-action performances and off it as the voice of a team who have battled the odds to reach the Asian Cup knockout rounds for the first time. The 30-year-old captain will be the man his team look to once again for inspiration when Palestine face hosts and reigning champions Qatar in a daunting last-16 tie on Monday.

Palestine's first time in the knockout rounds of the regional championship was sealed with their first ever victory in the tournament, 3-0 over Hong Kong. The attacking defender set up two of the goals and was named man of the match.

"He is the kind of captain who leads by example," said Bassil Mikdadi, founder of the Football Palestine website. "The story or the journey of Palestinian football over the last 10 years can be told through Musab Al-Battat," added Mikdadi.

The right-back made his international debut in 2013 and is at his, and the team's, third Asian Cup.

The side ranked 99 in the world have progressed into the next round despite a deeply troubled build-up overshadowed by the Zionist entity-Hamas war in the Palestinian territory of Gaza.

Some of the players have lost loved ones and have family trapped in Gaza. The team trained and played matches abroad in the build-up to their third Asian Cup. As skipper and a highly respected senior player, Battat has been the public voice and face of the team in Qatar.

Wearing the traditional Palestinian keffiyeh headscarf along with his team tracksuit, he emerged at the opening ceremony to deliver the players' oath in front of more than 80,000 spectators. Normally it

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, LEO SEQUEIRA STEPHEN MELWYN, holder of passport no. R8112751 do hereby change my name to STEPHEN MELWYN LEO (as given name) SEQUEIRA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will hence forth be known in the name STEPHEN MELWYN LEO SEQUEIRA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

(#4599 26/01/2024)

Dominant Sabalenka crushes Zheng to defend Australian Open title

Bopanna, Ebden crowned Australian Open men's doubles champions



MELBOURNE: Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka poses with the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup after defeating China's Zheng Qinwen during their women's singles final match on day 14 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 27, 2024. — AFP photos



MELBOURNE: India's Rohan Bopanna (L) and Australia's Matthew Ebden celebrate with the trophy after victory against Italy's Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori during their men's doubles final match on day 14 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 27, 2024.

MELBOURNE: Aryna Sabalenka said the Australian Open will always be her "special place" after blowing China's Zheng Qinwen off court on Saturday to become the first woman to defend her title in more than a decade.

The Belarusian world number two proved too strong for the 12th seed, administering a 6-3, 6-2 drubbing in 76 minutes to claim her second Grand Slam crown on Rod Laver Arena. It capped an incredible display of power and poise from Sabalenka over the past fortnight, with the 25-year-old surging to the title without losing a set through her seven matches.

The last time the tournament witnessed a successful women's title defence was in 2013, when fellow Belarusian Victoria Azarenka achieved the feat. "Like every player, you want to win them all (Slams), but Australia will definitely always be my special place and it's going to be in my memory for the rest of my life," she said.

"I think the first (title) is always special because it is so emotional when you win for the first time, second time it's just such a relief. "I've been under a little pressure these two weeks and I'm super happy I was able to handle it and compete at such a high level."

With her latest exploits, Sabalenka cemented her reputation as one of the game's most consistent contenders at Grand Slams, reaching at least the semi-finals in her past six majors, making three finals and winning twice. She had words of encouragement for Zheng, who was in her first major final.

"I know this feeling — it is tough to lose in a final but you are such an incredible player, such a young girl. You are going to be in many more finals and you

are going to get it," she said. In vivid red, she overwhelmed Zheng with her crushing groundstrokes deep into both corners and a consistently reliable serve. Zheng had reached her first Grand Slam final without meeting a seed after a host of players crashed out early on her side of the draw, and the gulf in class was exposed.

Amazing memory

"It's my first final and I'm feeling a little bit of pity," said Zheng. "I feel very complicated because I feel like I could've done it better. "But I really enjoyed playing in this Australian Open, it's an amazing memory for me. I'm sure there is going to be more and better in the future."

The Belarusian opened with a comfortable serve then got a look at two break points at 15-40 in Zheng's opening service game when the Chinese star sprayed a backhand wide. She seized the chance, attacking her opponent's second serve for the break.

Sabalenka consolidated for 3-0, but only after saving three break points as Zheng's nerves settled and she worked to get into the contest. The Chinese player finally got on the board as her serve hit its mark in game four, with two big aces and a forehand winner giving her confidence.

But she had few answers to the booming Sabalenka serve, struggling to get the ball back and get into any rallies. Zheng saved three set points with a pair of aces and a winner to hold for 3-5, but it was delaying the inevitable as Sabalenka closed out the set on serve in 33 minutes.

Three double faults, including on break point, immediately put Zheng on the back foot in the

second set as the pressure took its toll. And there was no way back as she conceded another break to slump 4-1 behind when Sabalenka executed a perfect drop shot.

Fighting until the end, she saved four championship points before the second seed closed out the match to bank her 14th career title. "My aggressive game and that I put her under pressure a lot on the serve, that was the key to this match," said Sabalenka. "And I of course also served well, which is very important."

Despite the loss, it was a breakthrough tournament for Zheng, who will climb into the top 10 in the new rankings. Sabalenka will remain at number two behind Iga Swiatek, who crashed out in the third round.

Earlier, India's Rohan Bopanna celebrated becoming the oldest number one in men's doubles history by winning the Australian Open with his partner Matthew Ebden on Saturday. The second seeds claimed a 7-6 (7/0), 7-5 victory over unseeded Italian pair Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori on Rod Laver Arena.

It was their maiden title as a team and Bopanna's first in men's doubles after 60 previous Grand Slams — a record for most attempts before winning. The 43-year-old will become the oldest number one in men's doubles history when the new rankings are released next week.

Bopanna's only previous Grand Slam win was at the 2017 French Open in mixed doubles, with Canada's Gabriela Dabrowski. It was Ebden's second men's doubles title after winning Wimbledon in 2022 with fellow Australian Max Purcell. — AFP

Dazzling Doncic scores 73 as Mavs down Hawks

LOS ANGELES: Luka Doncic matched the fourth-highest scoring performance in NBA history Friday, pouring in 73 points to lead the Dallas Mavericks to a 148-143 victory over the Atlanta Hawks. A masterful individual performance saw the Slovenian star set a Mavs record with 41 first-half points, then obliterate his own franchise scoring record of 60 set against the New York Knicks in 2022.

Doncic added 10 rebounds and seven assists. He connected on 25 of 33 shots from the floor — including eight three-pointers — and made 15 of his 16 free throws. "It was just exciting," said Doncic, who was cheered even by Hawks fans. "Sometimes I couldn't believe it." Doncic ranked the performance "probably at the top" of his career, but with the Mavs coming in on a three-game losing streak he was just focused on getting a victory. "We've been struggling lately," he said. "Mindset was get a win." His sensational performance spoiled the return of Trae Young, who led the Hawks with 30 points after missing two games in concussion protocol.

Doncic's effort pushed him into rarefied NBA territory. Only Wilt Chamberlain and Kobe Bryant have scored more points in a game, Chamberlain with the league record 100 in 1962 and the late Lakers star Bryant with 81 in 2006. Chamberlain also owns a 78-point performance and two of 73 — a number also reached by David Thompson and, now, Doncic.

"It feels special to be in that conversation with those names," Doncic said, calling it "amazing" that his big night came on the fourth anniversary of Bryant's death in a helicopter accident. "We all loved Kobe," Doncic said. Mavs coach Jason Kidd said it was something "extra special" from a player who delivers "special" on a regular basis. "What he does on the court is different than anybody else," Kidd said, adding that Doncic's ability to keep feeding his teammates amid his own red-hot scoring made the victory possible.

It meant he never feared Doncic's hot hand would pull the Mavs out of their game plan. "He is the game plan," Kidd said. The Hawks had pulled within three points with less than two minutes to play, but Doncic drove for a layup, drew a foul and converted the free throw to help push the lead back to seven with 58 seconds left.

A Young basket cut the deficit to three with 10 seconds to play, but Tim Hardaway Jr. sealed it at the free throw line for Dallas, who were without injured Kyrie Irving. Josh Green, who scored 21 points for Mavs, said he'd never seen anything like it.

"It felt like I was in a (video) game of 2K," he said. "Whoever was controlling Luka did a good job, I'll tell you that." Doncic's effort came less than a week after Joel Embiid poured in 70 in a Philadelphia 76ers win over San Antonio — and it wasn't the only eye-popping outburst of the night. Phoenix guard Devin Booker's 62-point performance, however, came in a losing effort as the Indiana Pacers triumphed 133-131 to halt the Suns' seven-game winning streak. Phoenix led by as many as 17 but the Pacers tied it up with less than a minute to play. — AFP

Tajikistan 'want more' in Asian Cup last 16

DOHA: Tajikistan have made history by qualifying for the Asian Cup last 16 on their debut but coach Petar Segrt said they "want more" when they face the United Arab Emirates on Sunday. The world's 106th-ranked side drew with China and beat Lebanon to advance as group runners-up in Qatar and now face a team that reached the semi-finals at the last two Asian Cups.

Segrt is a larger-than-life character who has won friends at the Asian Cup, making a point of shaking hands with every reporter in the room before Saturday's press conference. But he said his team are "not here for smiling and celebrating".

"The group stage was a very sensational success for Tajikistan, but now we want more," said the Croat. "I cannot go and talk to the players and say we are now happy, let us go home. We will look for our chances."

Nuriddin Khamrokulov scored in the 92nd minute to give Tajikistan a 2-1 win over Lebanon and confirm their place in the knockout rounds. The final whistle sparked wild celebrations, with Segrt's glasses being smashed in the melee.

Wearing a new pair as he spoke to reporters, the 57-year-old said his players were "the heroes of this tournament". But the coach said he must also "find new solutions", with several players injured and midfielder Amadoni Kamolov still suspended after being sent off against Qatar. "We will look how much petrol we have in our tank, how much energy we have for this game," said Segrt. "We will try to give United Arab Emirates a very good fight. We believe in us."



DOHA: Tajikistan's Croatian coach Petar Segrt celebrates with his players after the Qatar 2023 AFC Asian Cup Group A football match between Tajikistan and Lebanon at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha. — AFP

No space for mistakes

UAE also came through their first-round group as runners-up, beating Hong Kong before drawing with Palestine and losing to Iran. Paulo Bento's side looked set to finish third until Yahya Al-Ghassani scored a crucial goal in injury time against Iran.

The Portuguese coach said it would be "a big mistake" to underestimate newcomers Tajikistan. "We don't have space to make mistakes because we don't have that possibility as we had in the group stage,"

he said. "I'm sure that our players are going to show the right attitude and the wish to keep doing well and go to the quarter-finals." Bento will be back on the bench after serving a one-match suspension for a red card against Palestine. He was also sent off while coaching South Korea at the 2022 World Cup but insisted his actions had "no impact on the players". "This doesn't mean that it's a good situation but it's something that happens sometimes," he said. "We didn't show the most appropriate behaviour." — AFP