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Kuwait to hold polls April 4

Decree inviting voters to be issued March 3

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet decided on Tuesday to hold snap parliamentary elections on April 4, which coincides with the last 10 days of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, government spokesman Amer Al-Ajmi said. Ajmi said that during its meeting on Tuesday "the Cabinet approved a draft Amiri decree inviting voters to elect the National Assembly on Thursday, April 4". The draft decree has been sent to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber

Al-Sabah.

He said that the decree will be issued on March 3 and registration of candidates will start the following day. The registration of hopefuls for a seat in the 50-member National Assembly will continue for 10 days, in accordance with the Kuwaiti elections law. Ajmi said that the last day for the withdrawal of candidates will be March 28. Voting will start at 12 noon and end at 12 midnight, based on the elections law issued by the Cabinet last week because elections will be held in Ramadan.

His Highness the Amir, who became ruler on December 20, dissolved the National Assembly on February 15. Under Kuwaiti law, fresh elections must be held within two months of dissolving the Assembly. The dissolved opposition-dominated Assembly was elected on June 5 and lasted for under nine months. It was the third Assembly to be dissolved since August 2022.

Since 2006, the National Assembly has been dissolved nine times and nullified by the Constitutional Court on three occasions, mainly due to political

disputes. A candidate for parliamentary elections must be Kuwaiti by birth as naturalized citizens are barred from running in polls, at least 30 years of age and had not been jailed for a crime unless he/she had been rehabilitated.

A majority of the 50 members of the dissolved house are expected to seek re-election. Poll campaigns are expected to start after registration of candidates is completed. There are about 800,000 eligible male and female voters in Kuwait as servicemen in the military and police

Zionist troops kill 3 in West Bank raid

TUBAS: Zionist troops killed three Palestinians in an overnight raid in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said Tuesday. It was the latest in a surge of violence in the restive Palestinian territory since the outbreak of the Zionist-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip on October 7. The Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah said the three men were killed "by Zionist occupation bullets" during clashes in the Faraa refugee camp near the town of Tubas in the northern West Bank.

The military did not immediately respond to requests for comment about the raid. Video footage posted on social media showed military vehicles entering Faraa under the cover of darkness. "Dozens of young men and armed men from the camp confronted the forces before they called for more reinforcements, including bulldozers that dug the camp's streets and struck the water and sewage networks," said Assem Mansour, head of the camp's popular committee. One of the three men killed was a militant, he said, while the other two were civilians "in their homes and were killed by snipers deployed in the camp". The Zionist military has conducted frequent arrest raids in the West Bank.

Since the war in Gaza began, at least 403 Palestinians have been killed by troops or settlers in the West Bank, according to the Palestinian health ministry. Zionists captured the West Bank — including east Jerusalem, which it later unilaterally annexed — in the Arab-Zionist war of 1967. The Palestinians claim the territory along with the war-torn Gaza Strip for their future independent state — AFP



TUBAS: Relatives and friends mourn by the body of Ussama Jabr Zait who was killed in an overnight Zionist raid on the Al-Farea camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank. — AFP

Residents laud ban on water balloons

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The environmental law that penalizes the act of throwing water balloons has been welcomed by many citizens and residents in Kuwait. While many people support the stringent measures as necessary for upholding environmental protection and resource conservation, few others oppose the law, expressing concerns about its potential infringement on personal liberties and viewing it as excessive.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Hadia Ali, 42, expressed her delight about this year's celebration, recalling the joyous occasions of the past when National Day was marked with genuine camaraderie

during processions, devoid of any harmful activities or frivolous water play. She fondly recalled the beauty of those moments and expressed appreciation for the collaboration between the Ministry of Interior and the Youth, highlighting a sense of unity and purpose during the festivities.

Talal Hamedan, 24, reflected on this year's celebrations, drawing parallels from those of the 1980s. He noted the sense of joy and satisfaction among the people, reminiscent of a bygone era. "One notable difference was the absence of the fear of water projectiles damaging cars or injuring passengers when opening car windows. This change was attributed to the effective measures and organization implemented by the Ministry of Interior," he said.

Additionally, Hamedan appreciated the kindness of the young men distributing sweets, lollipops, and chocolates to the citizens and residents, adding

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KUWAIT: A child waves a Kuwaiti national flag from a car, during the country's 63rd National Day celebrations in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait condemns Zionist atrocious crimes, brutality

GENEVA: Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya stated Tuesday that the atrocious crimes of Zionist occupation forces in Gaza Strip had shocked the conscience of humanity but instigated no serious response from the international community. Minister Al-Yahya made these remarks while heading the Kuwaiti delegation at the 55th session of UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), held over a span of two days in Geneva.

The minister affirmed Kuwait's unwavering and steady commitment to themes of freedom, justice, equality, tolerance, peace, and principles of the UN and its agencies. He pointed out that the Council is convening in the midst of ongoing catastrophe and human suffering in Gaza Strip but the international community has yet to take up serious action to put an end to blatant violations of international laws.

Since beginning of war on Gaza Strip, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, infrastructure

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: A Palestinian man carries a badly injured child into the Kuwait Hospital in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, following Zionist air strikes. — AFP

Jordan air-drops aid into Gaza

AMMAN: The Jordanian army said it had carried out a series of humanitarian aid drops of food and other supplies into the besieged Gaza Strip, one of them by a French army plane. Jordanian forces made "four air drops carrying aid for the people of Gaza", under the directive of Jordanian King Abdullah II, a statement said.

The operation came on the same day that two human rights groups accused Zionists of further limiting humanitarian aid into Gaza - where the UN has warned of famine - despite an order from the UN's top court. Jordan has conducted a total of 16 air-drop operations since the war broke

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: A Jordanian military aircraft (not pictured) drops humanitarian aid over Rafah and Khan Yunis in the skies of the southern Gaza Strip on February 27, 2024, amid the ongoing conflict between Zionists and the Palestinian Hamas militant group. (Right) A handout picture shows Jordan's King Abdullah II (left) on board a military aircraft during an operation to drop humanitarian aid over the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP photos



Local

Emergency lane system vital for saving lives: Aliaa Al-Farsi

Municipal council member proposes 'corridor' on main roads with at least 2 lanes

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality member Aliaa Al-Farsi submitted a proposal to the Municipal Council to designate an emergency lane on main roads. In a statement posted Tuesday on her X account Farsi says her proposal is aimed at implementing an "emergency corridor" system, which involves creating a lane that ensures emergency vehicles have quick and safe access to expressways and motorways during heavy traffic.

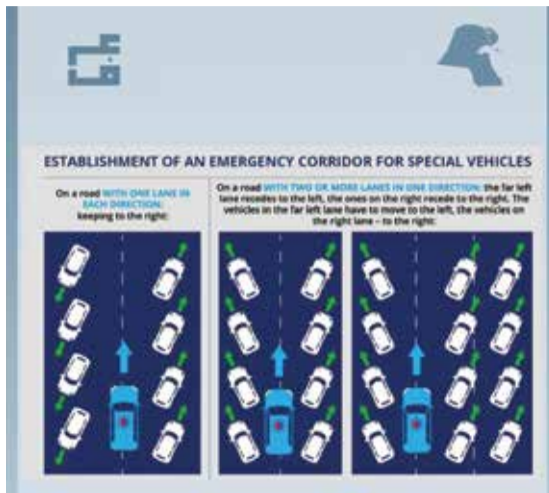


Aliaa Al-Farsi

The emergency corridor system is required by law in a handful of EU countries, including Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Switzerland. According to a study conducted in Austria, an emergency corridor may speed up the arrival of emergency medical vehicles and fire brigades to the scene by up to four minutes and increase the chances of survival by 40 percent. A document published by the European Transport Safety Council in 2018 explains how the corridor works in these countries.

In countries where the system is adopted, drivers are obliged to clear the way in a systematic, organized way when an emergency vehicle is approaching and before traffic comes to a standstill. The corridor is created on dual lane roads in the middle, or next to the leftmost or rightmost lane, depending on the number of lanes and country.

It should be at least three meters wide to allow



This photo, shared by Aliaa Al-Farsi on her X account, illustrates how an emergency corridor could work in Kuwait.

emergency/rescue vehicles to pass on a possibly congested road and reach the road collision scene (or other time critical situation) without unnecessary delay. "The three-meter requirement is the absolute minimum; a fire brigade vehicle can easily be three meters wide," the document says. In Kuwait, Farsi says the system will have marked emergency corridors on main roads with two or more lanes going in the same direction. When hearing an emergency vehicle's siren, drivers will be expected to make way for the vehicle by moving to the left side of the road if they were driving in the left lane, and to the right side if they were driving in the right lane. This mechanism leaves the middle of the road



KUWAIT: A traffic jam brings a main road in Kuwait to a standstill in this file photo.

clear for emergency vehicles to pass.

Farsi lists several goals she hopes the system would achieve, including ensuring medical emergency vehicles or ambulances arrive at the site of a report in the shortest time possible within international standards, which she says go up to eight minutes, thereby saving more lives. The proposal, she adds, would improve the emergency corridor

culture in the country if it's adopted.

The corridor system, says Farsi, requires coordination between Kuwait Municipality and several entities, of which she specifies: the interior ministry, the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation and the health ministry. Farsi also mentions that implementing the system must go together with educating the public on how it will work.

More emergency cases over holidays: Ministry of Health

KUWAIT: Some 136 people were taken by ambulance to health care facilities over the last three days during the national celebrations, including 17 taken to the hospital and 119 cases treated at the clinics, the Ministry of Health said Tuesday. Speaking to KUNA, Director of the Emergency Medical Services Department (EMS) Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti said there was an increase in the number of people who received emergency care during the celebrations. It was not clear whether the increase was in comparison to national days in previous years or to the days before the celebrations.



Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti

Despite an increase in injuries taken by ambulance, Dr Al-Shatti said there was a decrease in the number of traffic accidents compared to 2023. Dr Al-Shatti pointed out that the number of traffic accidents decreased from 12 accidents in the same period in 2023 to only three accidents this year, attributing this to the traffic awareness campaign launched by Ministry of Interior, in addition to the rainy weather which kept many people at home and off the roads.

Municipality: 2024 national holidays less wasteful than 2023

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Municipality praised, Tuesday, the public, both citizens and residents, for keeping public facilities clean during National Day celebrations last Sunday and Monday. The Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations Manager and Spokesperson, Mohammad Al-Mutairi, said this year's celebrations' cleanliness was noticeable with less waste accumulated throughout the Arabian Gulf Road compared to 2023.



Mohammad Al-Mutairi

Mutairi elaborated that 2023's waste amounted to 140 tons because of excessive use of water balloons, plastic bags, and plastic water bottles, among others. The celebrations were met with a great sense of responsibility by celebrators which underscored the little amount of time sanitation workers had to spend cleaning on both Sunday and Monday, added Mutairi. He affirmed that the celebrators' responsibility helped health inspectors carry out their field work as they managed the festivities. Mutairi extended his gratitude to the people who showed commendable manners regarding sanitation and cleanliness during times of celebrations. — KUNA

Shako Marco? Chef combines Italian, Kuwaiti cuisines

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Marco Fiorot's journey from pizza and pasta to machboos is a tale that reflects his decade of living in Kuwait while appetizing tongues and bellies. Fiorot, an Italian chef, more commonly recognized as Marco Vigonovo, is known for infusing Italian and international ingredients with Kuwaiti flavors.

Fiorot told Kuwait Times that during the past year, he immersed himself in the study of Kuwaiti cuisine, crafting new recipes almost every day, which blend Kuwait and Italy in a single dish. He refers to such dishes as 'Kuwaitaly dishes'. Today, Marco is pushing the boundaries of the Kuwaiti cuisine alongside a team of talented chefs to blend local flavors with ingredients from all around the world. "I am using international ingredients but flavoring them with Kuwaiti flavors. Each chef is introducing their own dish, while I am positioning myself at the crossroads of international and Kuwaiti cuisine to create a delicious harmony to the taste of both the international cuisines and Kuwaiti cuisine," he said.

Fiorot is highlighting his passion for cooking on the show 'Shako Marco' which is airing on AlRai TV in Ramadan. The show's title "Shako Marco" is inspired by Kuwaitis questioning why an Italian chef would add a 'Machboos,' which is traditional Kuwaiti dish, to his menu.

This random yet unique combo of flavors, is best summed up by the Kuwaiti term 'Shako,' captures meanings of confusion, humor, and curiosity towards this unexpected cuisine mash up.



Marco Fiorot poses for a photo with the AlRai team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Marco Fiorot gestures on the filming set of his show "Shako Marco".



One of the chefs Fiorot works with preps ingredients combining Kuwaiti and Italian flavors.



KUWAIT: Two students pick up trashes as part of the clean-up campaign. — KUNA

Youth authority aids municipality clean-up efforts after holidays

KUWAIT: Youth Public Authority, in partnership with the Kuwaiti diving team, announced on Tuesday a campaign aiding the municipality in the cleaning up process after celebrations and marches, in honor of Kuwait's National Day and Liberation Anniversary. In a statement to KUNA, Waleed Al-Ansari, director of the Youth Public Authority's Volunteer Work Department, stated that the campaign's goals were to increase participants' awareness of the value of environmental preservation and

to express gratitude for the outstanding work done by the municipality during the period of national holiday celebrations.

The campaign, organized by the Academy of Volunteer Work at the authority, was part of a series of events and programs organized in collaboration with government agencies and civil society organizations during national celebrations. He affirmed that the authority was committed to collaborate with citizens and residents to safeguard the environment.

Head of the Kuwaiti diving team, Waleed Al-Fadhel, said in a similar statement that the campaign came within a series of environmental campaigns held in partnership between the Public Authority for Youth and the Kuwaiti diving team, which took it upon itself to carry out various environmental awareness campaigns. — KUNA

International experts to attend annual medical lab forum

By Abdellatif Sharaa

Head of Medical Laboratories Departments Council at the Health Ministry Dr Ibtisam Al-Jumaa said the annual conference of "Medical Laboratories" under the theme "Clinical Advances in the Science of Biochemistry" will be held under the patronage of Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi on March 3-4.



Dr Ibtisam Al-Jumaa

She said the conference is organized by Medical Laboratories Departments Council and Biochemistry Laboratories, adding that the conference aims at introducing the recent scientific developments in medical labs, and to focus on clinical advances in biochemistry.

Jumaa said there will be several lectures by seven experts in biochemistry from several countries including Canada, Britain, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman that in addition to eight local lecturers.

She said the lectures will deal with important topics such as "effective management in medical laboratories, consumption policies and quality of analysis in addition to other topics such as chemical changes following obesity operations, toxins discovery and addictive medicines.

Local

Zain maintains region-leading carbon emission disclosure CDP score of A- for 3rd straight year

Only telecom operator in the MEA region to achieve the A- rating in CDP

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has maintained for the third year in a row its leadership position of A- score in the 'CDP Score Report – Climate Change 2022'. This grade, first achieved in 2021, positioned Zain as the highest ranked and only telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa to achieve this high rating. This score re-affirms Zain's commitment to setting emissions targets that are in line with the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) guidance (@sciencetargets) to halve carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Zain's activities to mitigate the negative impact of its operations on the environment are in line with the reductions required to keep global warming to the 1.5C goal set by the Paris Agreement by 2050. CDP is a global non-profit organization that works to encourage companies and governments to disclose their environmental impacts, particularly re-

lated to climate change. The organization provides a platform for investors, companies, cities, states, and regions to measure, manage, and disclose their environmental data.

Jennifer Suleiman, Zain Group Chief Sustainability Officer stated: "Climate change is a key priority for Zain as we target halving our carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050. This alignment with global best practices and standards, reinforces Zain's position as a leader in corporate sustainability." Suleiman added, "There are few more important topics affecting the world as climate change, and it is incumbent for organizations like ours that can contribute to a meaningful reduction in harmful emissions to do so. We shall continue to be active and transparent about our efforts and hope more organizations in the region will be inspired to follow our example."

In 2022, Zain developed a comprehensive Climate Change Compliance Framework to structure its climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives,



with the aim of becoming Net Zero by 2050. The Framework encompasses key energy efficiency initiatives and covers Zain's entire value chain, including eco-design principles; energy-efficient equipment adoption; renewable energy deployment; supplier and partner engagement; and waste management.

Aligned with recommendations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) and the GSM Association (GSMA), Zain's Compliance Framework will continue to assess the progress of each of the company's operations toward the Net Zero goal, reducing climate change risks, and capitalizing on potential opportunities.

Zain's performance in comparison to other orga-



nizations and regions is impressive, ranking amongst the 31 percent of companies that reached Leadership level in the media, telecommunications, and data center group, with Zain scoring A in six categories, namely Business Strategy, Financial planning and Scenario Analysis, Emissions reduction initiatives and low carbon products, Governance, Opportunity Disclosure, Risk Disclosure and Scope 1 & 2 emis-

Kuwait's architectural renaissance: Innovation and sustainability

By Zaina Najj Al Ali



KUWAIT: In shaping Kuwait's architectural narrative, architects emerge as crucial catalysts not merely for cultural preservation, but also for driving economic diversity, particularly in line with the goals outlined in Vision 2035. Sustainability has become critical for Kuwait in minimizing the environmental impact of its oil production, which accounts for nearly 43 percent of its GDP. Architects leading urbanization and sustainable infrastructure development play a role in attracting foreign investment and enhancing construction-related industries, generating employment opportunities and fueling economic growth.

NBK Headquarters - Fin-Wrapped Skyscraper
Issam Al Sager, group CEO of the National Bank of Kuwait claimed that NBK endeavors to develop ESG



(Environmental Social Governance) methods to become the central considerations in planning long term and sustainable strategies. The design integrates environmentally responsible elements, coupled with architectural advancement culminating in an energy-efficient architecture that safeguards workplaces from Kuwait's extreme weather conditions.

The northern boundary of the skyscraper presents an artfully curved design, offering an extensive and picturesque vista of the Arabian Gulf. A succession of fins are incorporated along the sun path of the building, and extend to the complete height of the skyscraper. Vertical fins serve a dual purpose as structural elements, and optimizing material usage. Vertical fins intelligently track the sun's trajectory, providing sufficient shade in the summer and maximizing sunlight exposure in the winter.

The constructive employment of fins minimizes the reliance on air conditioning systems, contributing to efficient energy usage. This architectural plan increases floor spaces on upper floors "by tapering the floorplates inwards towards the base, and provides self-shading with the overhanging floor plates above the offices below." Additional environmentally conscious components include a gray water recycling system. According to the National Bank of Kuwait, such recycling systems are utilized to compensate for approximately 60 percent of WC flushing water consumption, and diminishing the use of HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems to avert ozone depletion and alleviate global warming impacts.

Kuwait University College of Life Sciences
The building's design, crafted in accordance with intensive environmental analysis, draws on the ancient science and appeal of traditional mashrabiya screens, which offer natural ventilation, shading, and privacy. According to Cambridge Seven, traditional mashrabiya screens in Islamic design are architectural components for privacy. In contrast, these screens have been strategically oriented on the building to fulfill their primary function of solar shading.

The subtle inclination of the exterior metal panels contributes to a self-shading design, facilitating outward views while avoiding any unnecessary heat to enter and harm the interior of the building. Complementing this, the interior of the building is protected from harsh sun



it stems from a thirst for knowledge, leading some to pursue academic jobs that keep them in an avid learning process; it's a way of achieving a sense of freedom through financial independence; or maybe it's derived from the desire to change the world or add value to others' lives, which is often found in professions such as teaching, medicine, or journalism.

While these are some of the healthy motives, she highlighted others that aren't. For instance, escaping reality might be a very common motive, where one can distance themselves from family-related problems or from other social issues by immersing themselves in their professional life. Sometimes, it also serves as a form of painkiller, silencing inner voices and preventing negative emotions from surfacing. If someone realizes that their reasons for working are rooted in negative emotions, Habib recommends finding alternative ways to address these feelings instead of risking becoming overly consumed by work at the expense of other aspects of their lives.

Additionally, she highlighted one of the most toxic motivations that may drive individuals, wherein many seek a sense of self-actualization through work-related achievements, perceiving themselves as heroes in the eyes of those around them. The environment that we have grown up in plays a great role in shaping the personality of the hero that we want to maintain, she said. Maybe being burdened with responsibilities that are heavier than your shoulders since a young age or being blamed by your parents for not achieving high grades might be possible reasons for driving this desire. "If you notice that any of these are one of the reasons motivating you for success, You must stop determining your worth based on how others perceive you because your sense of self-worth should always come from inside," she said.



Fatma Habib

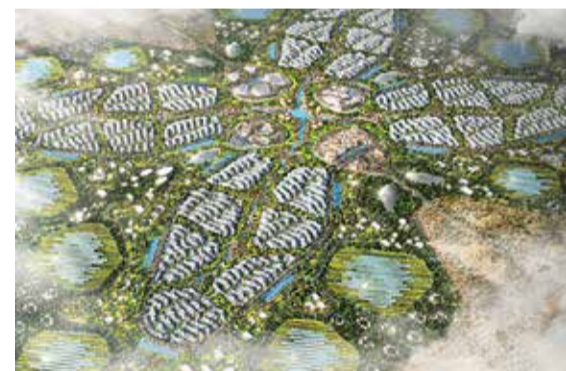
rays by a series of diamond shaped structures, crafted from perforated metal panels, to guide views towards the outside and counteract the effects of solar glare. To manage light from different cardinal directions, louvers adorn each face of the building. This deliberate arrangement ensures that areas like the north receive optimal indirect light, creating an ideal environment for art studios.

XZero City: Sustainable Architecture in Future XZero City

Kuwait's blueprint for a self-reliant smart city, embodies sustainability through its focus on pedestrian-centric urban planning, green infrastructure, and cutting-edge technological fusion. Employing blue-green infrastructure, the project aims to simulate natural water cycles while enhancing public spaces. The landscape hosts a plethora of engineered natural areas, fostering biodiversity, capturing rainwater, curbing floods, and purifying air and water.

This vision prioritizes pedestrian accessibility, utilizing meticulous urban density to maximize green spaces, alleviating urban heat and promoting a salubrious climate. Centralized multi functional zones minimize travel distances, while sensor technology fine-tunes indoor environments for optimal comfort and efficiency. Economic Significance of Sustainable Architecture Green economy practices not only avoid impeding economic growth, but also promote new markets and business opportunities, elevating GDP growth and job creation while having a positive influence on the environment and society.

Corporate commitment is vital in this shift, as incorporating sustainability into corporate practices reveals the potential for profitability and societal-environmental well-being. The National Bank of Kuwait Headquarters is Kuwait's first LEED Gold-certified building, having received the LEED v2009 Certificate for Building Design and Construction from the USGBC. It is additionally the third largest structure in the MENA area to acquire this certificate, as well as one of the top 2 percent of the world's largest structures in this category. As epitomized by landmarks like the NBK Headquarters, Kuwait University COLS, and the visionary proposal of XZero City, Kuwait's commitment to a self-sufficient city represents a forward-looking paradigm, where sustainability across social, economic, and environmental dimensions converges to shape a resilient, thriving future.



In pursuit of finding 'work-life balance'

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Your life is happening now, right in front of you, in the stolen moments that you spend with your family, friends, or even with yourself, but you are too busy to appreciate it, as your mind is entirely occupied with the next task of work that you must finish. In a world that excessively promotes productivity and celebrates successful icons and entrepreneurs, the phenomenon of overworking is becoming increasingly prevalent day by day, diverting our attention from the present moment and fixating it only on the future.

This trend raises a fundamental question: Is our relentless drive to work truly motivated by ambition, or are there deeper, perhaps unconscious, motives at play? Fatma Habib, a content creator and coach, embarked on a ninety-minute group discussion titled "The Philosophy of Balancing Life and Work" to find answers to this question.

Habib is one of the many people who struggle with this conflict, which she shared with the audience at the beginning of the session. "It started when my son was younger, when I used to leave the house in the morning and return at midnight for the sake of running my personal business," she said. That's when she felt like standing in the middle of two lanes, unable to choose which voice to follow—the voice that told her, "It's fine. You are doing it for your son's future," and the other questioned, "Does your son really need your work, or does he need you to be there for him?"

From being solely a source of income, work has transformed into an addiction from which many struggle to recover. According to Habib, the motives fueling their extreme productivity appear to stem from a deeper purpose that gives alternate meaning to their existence. She said that perhaps



Unfortunately, many individuals are unaware of the underlying motives driving overwork, leading them to experience burnout before realizing the need to address this internal struggle. Habib emphasized the importance of recognizing these motives as the initial step toward change, followed by taking action to embark on a transformative journey. "There's no quick fix for reconciling the conflict between work and life. Simply take one small step and let your mind adapt to the upcoming change," she advised. For instance, she suggested gradually reducing work hours, such as leaving the office an hour earlier if you are accustomed to 12-hour days, with the belief that eventually significant shifts will occur.

Habib further emphasized her point by referencing a quote from the Christopher Robin movie: "I always get to where I am going by walking away from where I have been," which explains that the only way of overcoming the problem is by embarking on a new path to follow, letting go of the old habits that have been holding them back from becoming the person they aspire to be.

In my view

How Kuwait's society reacts towards mental health of teenage girls

By Ghazal Al-Hisham



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As a now author, I have released my first book called "Navigating the storm". This book dives into the challenges faced by teenage girls in Kuwait. What began as a school project transformed into a powerful tool to shed light on important issues affecting young women in our society. In Kuwait, conversations about body image, cultural beauty standards, and the impact of social media on self-esteem are often brushed aside. But these are topics that need attention.

With "navigating the storm", I aim to start these conversations and provide support to teenage girls who may feel alone in their struggles. The inspiration of this book came from numerous hours of research like watching videos and reading stories of young girls going through these issues, and obviously through my own experiences and observations. As being a teenage girl in Kuwait, I've seen how girls see themselves. It's not easy growing up in a world where perfection is constantly promoted, and I wanted to create something that could help girls navigate these challenges.

"Navigating the storm" is more than just a book, it's a message of empowerment and solidarity. Through personal stories, practical advice, and words of encouragement, I hope to show teenage girls in Kuwait that they are not alone in their struggles. It's okay to talk about how you feel, and it's okay to ask for help. One of the things that set "Navigating the storm" apart is its origin as a school project. What started as an assignment quickly became a passion project, as I realized the importance of addressing these issues in our society.

I've poured my heart and soul into this book, and I hope it will make a difference in the lives of teenage girls in Kuwait. In "Navigating the storm", I tackle topics like body image issues, cultural beauty standards, and the pressure to fit in. I also discuss the impact of social media on self-esteem and offer the tools they need for building confidence and resilience. My goal is to provide teenage girls with the tools they need to navigate the challenges of adolescence with strength and grace. I also want to challenge the stigma surrounding these topics.

In Kuwait, there is often a reluctance to talk about issues like body image and mental health. But by breaking the silence and speaking out, we can create a more supportive and understanding community for everyone. Through "Navigating the storm", I hope to empower teenage girls in Kuwait to embrace their uniqueness and prioritize their well-being.

Beauty is not about conforming to impossible standards, it's about being true to yourself and celebrating what makes you special. As I release my book to the world now, I am filled with hope and excitement for the impact it will have. I believe that by coming together and supporting one another, we can create a brighter and more inclusive future for all teenage girls in Kuwait.

Eye injury cases down by 95.8% during national celebrations

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health announced that the number of cases received by the ophthalmology departments of public hospitals went down 95.8 percent compared to last year. Chairman of the ministry's council of ophthalmology departments Dr. Ahmad Al-Foderi said in a press conference on Tuesday that ophthalmology departments throughout the country's governorates received 14 cases of eye injuries, compared to 331 cases during 2023's national celebrations. He added that the cases received were: one in Al-Bahar Ophthalmology Center, five in Al-Adan hospital, seven in Al-Jahra hospital, and one in Al-Farwaniya hospital. Jaber Hospital and Shamiya Health Center recorded no eye injuries.

Dr. Al-Foderi applauded the efforts by the state authorities of securing the celebrations and keeping them civilized and ridding them of the negative aspects that could cause harm. He made note of the Kuwaiti people's awareness and adherence to the legal framework which had a positive effect in lowering the number of eye injuries. In that regard, Dr. Al-Foderi thanked all the medical staff of various ophthalmology departments for being fully prepared for any emergency during the national holidays. — KUNA

IN MY VIEW

The culture of peace

By Nermin Al-Houti

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The third forum on Just Peace was inaugurated earlier in Egypt, organized by the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Establishment in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, under the patronage of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. On February 20, the forum commenced with the distinguished presence of renowned dignitaries at the political, cultural and literary levels. In addition to the elite group invited by the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation to participate in the forum, each of these dignitaries deserves not only recognition but an entire encyclopedia, given their significant scientific and practical achievements.

Our focus is on the sessions and papers presented by researchers and speakers for the cause of just peace. Following the opening ceremony, characterized by peace and a culture of inclusivity, I extend my thanks to the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation for their excellent organization and warm reception, which is consistent with the high standards set by the late Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's legacy.

The forum's first session commenced after the opening ceremony, discussing "peace and political development", divided into two parts. The first part centered on the "competencies of government administration and development," featuring participants Sir Tony Baldry from England and Dr. Mohammad Al-Rumaihi from Kuwait. The session included many suggestions, focusing on the reasons and solutions, with systematic approaches seeking political development for the sake of just peace.

The second part of the "peace and political development" session was titled "popular participation and development", with speakers Dr. Arben Cici from Albania and Dr. Motaz Salamah from Egypt. The session delved into several topics, notably the importance and effect of popular participation in achieving peace, the significance of a peace culture in society and the importance of society's participation in achieving a just peace culture.

My gratitude extends to all the employees and officials of the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Foundation for their kind invitation, warm reception, outstanding organization of the event and thoughtful selection of topics and speakers. It undoubtedly presents a bright image of Kuwait and Arab and international culture. May Allah bestow His mercy on Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain and accept him into His heavenly abode.

NUKS' UK branch holds 57th annual conference

LONDON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK, Bader Al-Awadhi, commended the role of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) and Kuwait Cultural Office in facilitating matters for approximately 10,000 students. At the 57th annual conference of NUKS UK Branch held yesterday, Al-Awadhi underscored the importance of students focusing on academic excellence and utilizing British education to contribute to Kuwait's development after graduation, echoing the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The conference this year aligns with celebrations marking 125 years of Kuwaiti-British partnership and national holidays, he pointed out, extolling Britain's role in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. He emphasized the significance of Kuwaiti students in the UK and their pivotal role in bilateral relations, noting the historical importance of the Kuwait Cultural Office, established in 1958, and NUKS, founded in late 1964, as key pillars of bilateral relations.

The Kuwaiti Embassy in the UK guaranteed support for student activities, he said, expressing gratitude to the Cultural Office, NUKS, and British authorities for their assistance. In his speech, Cultural Attache of Kuwait Cultural Office Dr. Abdullah Al-Meshal announced internships for graduates in Kuwaiti companies in the UK, with details to be announced in June.

The office will also organize courses for students to secure admission to prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. Regarding admissions and certification, Dr. Al-Meshal mentioned redesigning the office's system for faster processing and explaining the office's involvement in educational policy-making to shape Kuwait's future. On his side, Head of NUKS UK Branch Salem Al-Shibail emphasized NUKS' role in defending Islamic, national, and political issues, particularly during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Chief of Corporate Communications and Relations at Zain Kuwait, Waleed Al-Khashti, a major sponsor of the conference, underlined the company's commitment to education and youth, highlighting the importance of transparent dialogue with young people to determine future paths. — KUNA

Surgical team records medical achievement

Enlarged abdominal aortic aneurism fixed



Members of the surgical team.— KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital announced the success of a Kuwaiti surgical team's local and regional medical achievement in enlarged abdominal aortic aneurism repair using endovascular laser fenestration. Dr. Adel Al-Ali, head of the catheterization and interventional radiology unit at the hospital, told KUNA that the medical team treated a complex aortic aneurism by using laser technology to create holes in the kidneys to irrigate them and add stents in place of the holes.

For the Fenestrated Endovascular Aortic Repair procedure, Dr. Al-Ali explained that this required

high-level laser technical skills and a renowned medical team that holds certifications from the United States and Canada to perform with the utmost precision. The conventional alternative to this new laser procedure is an open abdominal surgery that is not suitable for high-risk patients, Dr. Al-Ali said. He pointed out that the conventional procedure was available for cardiac (heart) catheterization through the purchase of stents with exact patient measurements, explaining that the stents are made-to-order and are only available after six to 12 weeks. Some patients, however, require immediate medical intervention.

Dr. Al-Ali added that there are few facilities equipped to perform this laser procedure; therefore, it is taking place in Mubarak Hospital, which speaks volumes about the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health, which strives to provide the best and latest technology and medicine for its patients. The surgical team that led this achievement consisted of Vascular Surgery Consultant Dr. Abdullah Al-Fawaz, Dr. Adel Al-Ali, Catheterization and Interventional Radiology Consultant Dr. Hussain Jeraq, Anesthesiologist Dr. Fatima Dehrab, and Intensive Care Consultant Ali Malik. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The International Friends Club organized an art workshop for the members in cooperation with the Kuwait Artists and Media Union.

Google celebrates Kuwait National Day



KUWAIT: Google celebrated Kuwait's 63rd National Day by decorating its main page with the Kuwaiti flag. The Kuwaiti flag takes over Google's main page, flying high with a green frame and a sky blue background and the word "Google" beneath it in red and white, inspired by the flag. By clicking on the image, the webpage is redirected to a page that contains information on Kuwait's National Day and a variety of archives from different sources on the anniversary, linked to Kuwait's values of belonging, loyalty, sacrifice, and giving. Kuwait celebrates the 63rd National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day on Sunday and Monday.

Families celebrate

Meanwhile, the activities of the National holidays began with the participation of the ministries, government institutions, and public associations, with performances and popular songs. The Gulf



Street's atmosphere was filled with joy and happiness, which embodied the special memories of this day for Kuwait and its history. Amid a large public presence of people of different ages and nationalities, Arabian Gulf Street witnessed various activities

to celebrate the national days, which spread the spirit of patriotism. Crowds of families celebrate the national holidays, during which Kuwait gained its independence and announced the beginning of a new era. — KUNA



Dutch drug kingpin gets life in prison

Rat on a plane sparks worries for Sri Lanka's airline

Economic pain casts dark shadow as Iranians vote

Candidates promise to 'fight corruption, fix the economy'

TEHRAN: As Iranians head to the polls for legislative and other elections on Friday, candidates have promised them on campaign posters to "fight corruption" and "fix the economy". In the minds of many voters, economic hardship is indeed the most burning issue as the Islamic republic suffers under punishing international sanctions and rapid inflation. At Tehran's storied Grand Bazaar, many shoppers are simply wandering the warren of aisles without buying anything, as prices have skyrocketed in recent years.

Many doubt that a quick solution is in sight - among them 62-year-old retiree Aliasghari, who said he wished the politicians would "stop the empty slogans". "The economic situation is extremely troubling," said the pensioner walking through the labyrinthine market, who asked not to be fully named as he discussed the sensitive issue.

Citizens "are hearing a lot of fabrications and they have lost their trust in voting," he said, adding that "none of my family members are willing to take part in the elections". Voters are due to pick new members of Iran's 290-seat legislature and the Assembly of Experts, a key body that appoints the supreme leader, a post held by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 84. The vote comes amid high regional tensions as Iran's arch foe fights the Palestinian militant group Hamas in Gaza and related conflicts have flared across the Middle East.

But for many in Iran, a country of over 85 million people, the biggest issue is much closer to home: annual inflation near 50 percent, high consumer prices and a falling currency. Just because Iranians elect a new parliament, "things won't become cheaper," said fashion vendor Fatima, 21, who complained that many people can no longer afford new clothes. "People's economic situation is terrible," she said, adding that she would cast her vote anyway, despite having only slim hopes for meaningful change.

'People's pockets are empty'

Iran has reeled under crippling US sanctions

since Washington's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 from a landmark deal that had promised sanctions relief in return for curbs on Iran's nuclear program. Before the then-US president Donald Trump pulled out of the agreement, Iran had hoped for an influx of foreign investment and to reintegrate into the global trading and financial systems.

Instead, the sanctions sharply reduced Iran's oil revenues and further restricted trade, helping to harden the decades-old enmity with the United States and Zionist entity. Across Iran, the economic pain has fuelled political malaise. A recent poll conducted by Iran's state television found that more than half of respondents were indifferent to the elections. "These past years, it has been proven to us that the campaign slogans are empty," said 40-year-old housewife Masoumeh. "It was just words and no action."

Mohsen Omidbakhsh, 40, who works in the private sector, also complained that "prices have dramatically changed... People's pockets are empty, they can't buy what they want." Iran's current parliament has faced other challenges including nationwide protests following the September 2022 death in police custody of Mahsa Amini. Amini, 22, an Iranian Kurd, died after being arrested for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code for women, and the protests continued into last year.

Candidates vetted

Centrist candidate Mohammad Bagher Nobakht, who is running for the Moderation and Development party, said the conditions for Iran ahead of the election are "not favourable". "There is dissatisfaction that sometimes overflows onto the street, like the one we witnessed last year," he said, in reference to the protests.

Analysts expect the elections to be dominated by conservative and ultra-conservative candidates, similar to the current parliament. Jurists in charge of



TEHRAN: Men hold an election campaign poster of Iranian reformist candidate Afif Abedi along a street in Abuzar, south of Tehran. — AFP

vetting candidates have approved 15,200 - fewer than one third of the 49,000 hopefuls who applied - to run for parliament, local media reported. Only between 20 and 30 of the reformists who submitted applications have been approved to run, said reformist politicians. Nobakht charged at a press conference last month that this had further dampened voter enthusiasm.

The current parliament "does not represent all the diverse legitimate interests of the country," he said,

adding that "it no longer has an important place" among the people. Fatima, the fashion vendor, has little hope that the new parliament will be any different. "The parliament only represents the powerful and wealthy class and not the impoverished," she said. Ali Mohammad Abshari, a 78-year-old pensioner, said he has some hope. "Maybe the situation gets better if some qualified and decent people enter the parliament," he said. "I will only vote because it is our Islamic duty to do so." — AFP

Hezbollah fires rockets after Zionists hit east Lebanon, killing two

BAALBEK: Hezbollah on Monday fired a volley of rockets at Zionist military base, the Lebanese group said after first strikes on Lebanon's east in months of hostilities linked to the Gaza war. It was the first Zionist attack on Hezbollah outside Lebanon's south since war erupted on October 7 between Zionist and Palestinian militant group Hamas, a Hezbollah ally.

Hezbollah and arch-foe have exchanged near-daily



BAALBEK: People stand next to the rubble at the site of a Zionist air strike in the vicinity of Baalbek city in the central Bekaa plain, amid ongoing cross-border tensions as fighting continues between Zionists and Hamas militants in Gaza. — AFP

fire, but strikes have been largely contained to the border area. Two Hezbollah members were killed in the strikes in the eastern Baalbek area, two security officials in Lebanon and a source close to the Iran-backed group told AFP. "In response to the Zionist aggression near the city of Baalbek," fighters targeted an army base in the occupied Golan Heights "with

60 Katyusha rockets", Hezbollah said in a statement.

The Zionist army told AFP that "dozens of rockets" had been launched from Lebanon. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Earlier the army said its strikes near Baalbek targeted Hezbollah "aerial defense" sites in retaliation for the group's downing one of its drones in south Lebanon. One of the Lebanese security sources said Zionist strikes hit a building used by Hezbollah in a Baalbek suburb, and a warehouse near Baalbek belonging to the group. Both sources requested anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the press.

'Determination'

Later Monday a strike on a car in southern Lebanon killed at least one person, local rescuers told AFP, without providing further details. Hezbollah said a third fighter had been killed by Zionist fire. The Zionist army said in a statement that the strike killed a Hezbollah fighter who "commanded recent terrorist activities... against civilians and soldiers". Hezbollah announced several other attacks on Zionist sites and troops on Monday, with local media also reporting Zionist strikes on south Lebanon villages. During a funeral procession for one of the group's fighters, Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah lambasted the strikes on Baalbek, a bastion of the Shiite Muslim movement near the border with Syria.

"This Zionist encroachment will not push us to retreat, it will rather increase our determination," Fadlallah said in a televised address. The cross-border hostilities have killed at least 281 people on the Lebanese side, most of them Hezbollah fighters but also including 44 civilians, according to an AFP tally. On the Zionist side, 10 soldiers and six civilians have been killed since October, according to the army.

Residents on both sides of the border have been displaced by the fighting, and Zionist officials have threatened military action to restore security in the country's north. On Sunday, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said there would be no let up in action against Hezbollah even if a ceasefire were secured in Gaza. Hezbollah has said it will stop launching attacks if the Zionist military ends its Gaza offensive. — AFP

ner of a cafe protecting her face with her hands. Crowds were later heard chanting: "The only punishment for blasphemy is beheading." "There was a confusion and nobody was willing to listen to us. We feared that if the dialogue didn't begin, the woman's life would be in danger," Naqvi added.

In the end, Naqvi appealed with the crowd to let police determine whether Pakistan's blasphemy laws had been breached. Officers then formed a human chain to help lead the woman out of the restaurant. The woman was in fact wearing a shirt with the Arabic word for "beautiful" written on it. "We have experienced at least two such events before in Lahore. Religious crowds are always pretty charged and we had no idea what we were going to deal with," Naqvi said.

The officer has since been recommended for an award by the chief of Punjab police. On Monday, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the first woman to be chief minister of a Pakistani province, took her oath as the head of Punjab's province assembly. In her inaugural address, she highlighted Naqvi's actions: "I want to praise the lady officer who has saved the life of a woman." Police have not made any arrests of those involved in the mob aggression, while the victim gave a video statement apologizing for causing offence. — AFP

Policewoman praised for rescuing a woman from blasphemy mob

LAHORE: A police officer who saved a woman accused of blasphemy from a mob of 200 men in eastern Pakistan has described how she had to negotiate with the crowd to lead her to safety. The woman, who has not been named for security reasons, was surrounded in a Lahore restaurant by men who wrongly claimed her shirt was adorned with verses from the Quran. Blasphemy is an incendiary charge in ultra-conservative Pakistan, where mobs have lynched people they deem to have insulted Islam.

Syeda Shehribano Naqvi, an assistant superintendent with Punjab police, was among the first officers on the scene on Sunday. "The crowd was pretty charged, and they were chanting slogans. They were talking about how people who commit blasphemy must be punished," Naqvi told AFP. A video shared on social media showed the woman sitting in a cor-

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Sunflower Oil 1.5Ltr 2's
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International

Attacks on mosque, church kill dozens in Burkina Faso

Catholics, Muslims, military targeted

OUAGADOUGOU: An attack on a mosque in eastern Burkina Faso has killed dozens of Muslims on the same day as another deadly attack on Catholics attending mass, local and security sources told AFP on Monday. The two attacks struck on Sunday in different regions of the junta-ruled country caught for several years in a spiral of jihadist violence. "Armed individuals attacked a mosque in Natiaboani on Sunday around 5:00 am, resulting in several dozen being killed," a security source said.

"The victims were all Muslims, most of them men" who had come for morning prayers, a local resident said by telephone. Another local source said "the terrorists entered the town early morning. They surrounded the mosque and shot at the faithful, who were gathered there for the first prayer of the day." "Several of them were shot, including an important religious leader," the source added. Soldiers and members of the Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland (VDP), a civilian force that supports the military, were also targeted "by these hordes who came in large numbers", the same source said.

The source described it as a "large-scale attack" in terms of the number of assailants, who also wreaked substantial damage. Natiaboani is a rural community about 60 kilometers south of Fada N'Gourma, the main town in Burkina's eastern region, which has seen regular attacks by armed groups since 2018. On the same day as the attack on the mosque, at least 15 civilians were killed and two others wounded in an attack on a Catholic church during Sunday mass in northern Burkina Faso, a senior church official said.

Jean-Pierre Sawadogo, vicar of the Dori diocese, said in a statement that the "terrorist attack" occurred in the village of Essakane while people were gathered for Sunday prayer. Essakane village is in what is known as the "three borders" zone in the northeast of the country, near the common borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Pope Francis on Monday deplored the "tragic terrorist attack on a Catholic church in Essakane" and expressed his "pain" over the attacks on Muslims in a telegram sent by Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State.

Burkina Faso is ruled by a military junta led by Captain Ibrahim Traore, who seized power in 2022. It was the country's second coup in less than a year - both were triggered in part by discontent at the government's failures to quell jihadist violence. Burkina Faso is part of the vast Sahel region, which has been locked in a battle against rising violent extremism since Libya's civil war in 2011, followed by an Islamist takeover of northern Mali in 2012. The jihadist insurgency spilled over into Burkina Faso and Niger from 2015.

Several military detachments also came under attack on Sunday in different parts of the east and north of Burkina Faso. According to security sources, several hundred "terrorists" were "neutralized" in operations responding to the attacks. Mosques and imams have in the past been the target of attacks blamed on jihadists. In August 2021, the grand imam of the northern town of Djibo was found dead three days after gunmen stopped the bus he was travelling on and kidnapped him. Churches in Burkina have



OUAGADOUGOU: Men walk through the Nagrin cemetery in Ouagadougou. — AFP

also at times been targeted in the attacks and Christians have been kidnapped.

In January 2021, the body of priest Abbot Rodrigue Sanon from the Notre Dame de Soubagayedougou parish was found two days after his disappearance in a forest in southwestern Burkina Faso. And in March 2019, a priest in Djibo was kid-

napped and is still missing. A year earlier, in February 2018, a Catholic missionary, Cesar Fernandez, was murdered in the centre of the country. NGOs including the ACLED analysis group say around 20,000 people in Burkina Faso have been killed in the jihadist violence. The UN says over two million have been displaced. — AFP

Dutch drug kingpin gets life in prison

AMSTERDAM: Dutch drug kingpin Ridouan Taghi received a life sentence Tuesday for a series of murders his gang committed between 2015 and 2017, in one of the Netherlands' largest trials. Taghi, 46, is the alleged mastermind of the Amsterdam-based group that is thought to be one of the Netherlands' largest cocaine distributors. "We are sentencing all the suspects. Ridouan Taghi gets life in prison," said a judge at the Amsterdam District Court.

Sixteen other suspects were handed sentences between one and nine months. Taghi was arrested in Dubai in 2019, but despite being held at an ultra-secure prison, prosecutors say Taghi continued pulling the strings, sending secret messages to henchmen on the outside. Commentators say the "Marengo" trial, named after a judicial codeword for the operation that saw Taghi charged with 16 others, is unprecedented for the Netherlands.

Security around the trial has been extremely tight with judges and prosecutors asking not to be identified. At least three people directly connected to the mega six-year trial have been assassinated. Heavily-armed police on Tuesday threw a ring of steel around the courthouse on the outskirts of Amsterdam, nicknamed "The Bunker". Officers armed with automatic rifles and wearing face masks to protect their identities were guarding the court, while drones and a police helicopter circled overhead.

Taghi and 16 other accused did not face charges for the three murders that occurred during their trial, but faced six other counts of murder and attempted murders - including ordering some 13 hits - carried out between 2015 and 2017 mainly against people suspected of becoming police informants. In one case, a man called Hakim Changachi was gunned



AMSTERDAM: A Dutch police helicopter flies over the extra-secure court, during the verdict in the Marengo criminal case, in Amsterdam on February 27, 2024. — AFP

down in Utrecht in 2017 in what prosecutors say was a case of mistaken identity. Shortly afterwards police made a breakthrough in the case, when one of the suspected gang members called "Nabil B." handed himself over and agreed to become the prosecution's main witness.

A new wave of violence followed after Nabil B. turned state witness, leaving three people dead in scenes that shocked the nation. Nabil B.'s brother was murdered in 2018, his lawyer Derk Wiersum was shot dead outside his house in 2019, and the prominent Dutch crime journalist Peter R. de Vries was killed in 2021. Shot dead in broad daylight in central Amsterdam as he left a television studio, De Vries had said before he was on Taghi's hit-list.

De Vries acted as Nabil B.'s confidant at the time of his murder. Taghi's gang was nicknamed the "Morocco-mafia" because its members are mainly of Moroccan and Antillean origin. A Dutch subscription channel even made a fictional series named after the gang, set in Amsterdam. Taghi has denied all charges, and has said money spent on a "sham trial could rather have gone to employing more teachers and police and health care," Het Parool newspaper reported. — AFP

Police find bodies of TV presenter and boyfriend

SYDNEY: Australian police found the bodies of a TV presenter and his flight attendant boyfriend in a rural area outside Sydney on Tuesday, acting on information from a police officer charged with their murder. The discovery ends an almost week-long high-profile search for the remains of entertainment journalist Jesse Baird, 26, and Qantas flight attendant Luke Davies, 29.

A 28-year-old serving police constable who had previously been in a relationship with Baird has been charged with two counts of murder. "We are very confident we have located Luke and Jesse," said the head of New South Wales police Karen Webb, noting the families of the two victims had received the news with relief and sadness. "This information did come with the assistance of the accused," Webb added.

Police believe the pair were shot at a home in central Sydney before being loaded into surfboard bags and transported to a rural property about two hours' drive from the city. Ballistics tests showed a projectile found at the apartment matched that of a police-issue firearm. The weapon was later found inside a police station safe. Police allege the killings were "of a domestic nature" and not a "gay-hate crime." The bodies of the couple have yet to be formally identified and a post-mortem will be held to confirm the cause of death, police said.

The suspect had been a celebrity chaser and blogger before joining the police force. He had been photographed with scores of stars including Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, Lady Gaga and Ben Stiller. He was previously investigated over the aggressive ta-



PADDINGTON: Floral tributes left by mourners are seen outside the shared residence of entertainment journalist Jesse Baird in the Sydney suburb of Paddington on February 27, 2024. — AFP

sering of an Aboriginal man in 2020 after a video of the incident emerged online.

News reports from 2014 indicate that he came out publicly as gay by throwing a letter onstage at a Lady Gaga concert, which the star read out to a crowd that included his sister. The couple's deaths have shocked many Australians, notably within the LGBTQ community. Organizers of Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras asked police not to join the annual parade this Saturday, one of the city's biggest festive events. People needed "space to grieve" for the couple, they said in a statement, with LGBTQ communities across Australia "devastated".

'Enormous tragedy'

The state's police chief said officers had taken part in Mardi Gras for 20 years. "I would hate to see that this is the year we are excluded because of the actions of one person that is not gay-hate related," Webb said. "That would be a real travesty for this organization to be excluded." — AFP

Kuwait condemns Zionist atrocities...

Continued from Page 1

completely demolished, vital facilities, homes, and worship places all destroyed, relayed the Minister, adding that the occupation has made targets of workers in relief, health or media sectors. Minister Al-Yahya spoke of Kuwait's immediate response to the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and payloads of living essentials and medical necessities it sent out and campaigns it organized, emphasizing that such operations will remain underway to alleviate even a fraction of the suffering.

He took the time to restate Kuwait's position by Palestinian right of self-determination, saying that there's no resolution in light of continuing oppressive practices, use of brute force, and double standards. He called for resolving the crisis as per previously agreed upon references to guarantee Palestinians' full legitimate rights, and their right of establishing an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Foreign Minister highlighted Kuwait's keenness on human right principles and their applications especially as the Kuwaiti constitution sets out to instate principles of democracy, guarantee of individuals, and ensure peaceful coexistence. On the occasion of Kuwait commencing its three-year membership in the Council, Al-Yahya affirmed Kuwait's intent on assuming an active role, becoming a positive contributor, and cooperating with member states to address and resolve tabled issues.

Investing in humans a vital necessity and focal point towards achieving sustainable development goals, underscored the minister, saying that this is in line with Kuwait 2035 vision of a prosperous and sustainable future geared towards guaranteeing individuals a better life. Since its establishment, Kuwait had secured rights to free education, healthcare, food security, equal opportunities for both genders, women empowerment, support for people with disabilities, childcare, as well as public and political participation. He once again reiterated Kuwait's adherence to international commitments, stemming from its sense of responsibility, partnership and solidarity.

Meanwhile, Qatar is "hopeful" of a Gaza war ceasefire and is pushing for an agreement before Ramadan, its foreign ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday. The gas-rich Gulf state, which hosts Hamas' political bureau, has been a key mediator in negotiations involving the Palestinian militants, Zionist entity, the United States and Egypt. "We remain hopeful, not necessarily optimistic, that we can announce something soon, but we remain hopeful that we can get to some kind of agreement," Majed Al-Ansari told a regular briefing.

"Obviously, we said that Ramadan is going to be a point of contention. We are going to push for a pause before the beginning of Ramadan. "We are all aiming towards that target, but the situation is still fluid on the ground," he added. Ansari was speaking after US President Joe Biden said a new ceasefire and hostage release could start as soon as Monday, ahead of the Muslim holy month that will begin around March 11. "Till now we don't have an agreement, we are still working on the negotiations on all sides," Ansari said. — Agencies

the population directly and drop it along the coast of the Gaza Strip from north to south," the Jordanian army statement said. It comprised "relief and food supplies, including ready-made meals of high nutritional value, to alleviate the suffering of the people of the Gaza Strip", the statement added. "Four C-130 aircraft, one of them belonging to the French armed forces," carried out the deliveries, it said. The cargo floated down on parachutes from the transport aircraft, including over the southern Gaza Strip where around 1.4 million Gazans have converged. In November Zionist entity said it had coordinated an air drop with Jordan. — AFP

SMS fraud, a headache for telecom operators

BARCELONA: SMS fraud, or "smishing", is on the rise in many countries, fuelled by the increasing use of smartphones. This is a challenge for telecom operators who are meeting at the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the sector's biggest annual gathering, in Barcelona this week.

What is smishing?

Smishing is a cybersecurity attack carried out over mobile text messaging, also known as SMS phishing which target both individuals and corporations. The name is a play on the term "phishing", the fraudulent practice of sending emails purporting to be from reputable companies in order to induce individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers "In a smishing attack, cybercriminals send deceptive text messages to lure victims into sharing personal or financial information, clicking on malicious links, or downloading harmful software or applications," Stuart Jones of US cybersecurity firm Proofpoint told AFP.

Scale of the phenomenon

It has grown rapidly in recent years, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic due to the explosion in the use of smartphones for administrative procedures and internet purchases. According to a study carried out in ten countries by the Mobile Ecosystem

Forum (MEF), a telecoms industry trade association, 39 percent of consumers were confronted with at least one SMS scam attempt last year.

"It is a very serious issue globally," said Janet Lin, head of development at Taiwanese cybersecurity firm PINTrust, during a panel discussion on the subject at MWC on Monday on the first day of the congress. An average of between 300,000 to 400,000 SMS attacks take place every day, according to cybersecurity firm Proofpoint, and that figure is expected to rise. In the United States alone, "smishing" cost consumers \$330 million in 2022, more than double the losses reported in the previous year and nearly five times the amount lost in 2019, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Why is it so worrying?

Smishing is considered more dangerous than e-mail scams because it is more difficult to identify the perpetrators, and because victims tend to think that their number can only be used by known people or organisations. "Many people still have a high level of trust in the security of mobile communications," said Jones.

"Click rates on URLs sent in mobile messaging are as much as eight times higher than those for e-mail," he added. The authorities also point to the growing sophistication of SMS attacks, with fraudsters using companies that specialise in the sale of personal data, or devices reserved for the army or police. Smishing rings have been known to use so-called IMSI catchers, also known as "stingrays", which mimic cell phone towers to intercept communications from smartphones over a radius of 500 metres. — AFP

Jordan air-drops aid into...

Continued from Page 1

out on October 7 between Zionists and Hamas militants in Gaza. Previously announced air drops, including a joint operation with the Netherlands, sent medical and other aid to the Jordanian field hospital in northern Gaza.

Monday's operation "aimed at delivering aid to

Residents laud ban on water...

Continued from Page 1

to the festive atmosphere. Meanwhile, Mahmoud Ghazal, 33, expressed relief following the celebrations, noting a marked difference from the usual aftermath of such events in Kuwait as she was accustomed to seeing streets strewn with garbage and remnants of water balloons and empty bottles.

Ghazal found the post-celebration scene surpris-

ingly different this time. Living opposite the Al-Blajjat Street, she credited the effectiveness of the new regulations and laws in not only preserving the environment but also transforming the perception about celebration into one that is civilized and aesthetically pleasing.

However, Sarah Al-Farhan, 39, voiced her disagreement with the law. She emphasized that these activities fostered a sense of camaraderie among strangers, bringing people together in a unique way. Agreeing with Al-Farhan, Um Abdallah, 43, said many visitors come to Kuwait specifically to participate in this celebration, adding that this year's celebration was unique and not as before.

International

South Korea empowers nurses as doctors' strike continues

Hospitals struggle to cope after junior medics quit

SEOUL: South Korea granted nurses new powers and legal protections Tuesday, and launched an investigation into a patient's death, as hospital chaos caused by striking trainee doctors entered a second week. Major hospitals are struggling to provide services after thousands of junior medics handed in their resignations and stopped working last week to protest against government plans to sharply increase medical school admissions in the face of a rapidly ageing society.

The government said Tuesday it has launched an investigation after a patient died of a cardiac arrest in an ambulance after struggling to find a hospital. Emergency services contacted seven different hospitals but "were told there were no trainee doctors", the daily JoongAng Ilbo reported. "The government is conducting an on-site probe with related agencies into the death," Health Minister Cho Kyoo-hong said.

The government has set a Thursday ultimatum for doctors to return to work, saying that legal action - including prosecution and the suspension of medical licences - will be taken against those who refuse. The ministry also requested on Tuesday that police launch a probe into people connected to the strike, including five linked to the Korean Medical Association. The mass work stoppage has resulted in cancellations and postponements of surgeries for cancer patients and C-sections for pregnant women, with the government raising its public health alert to the highest level.

Nurses will now be allowed to perform some medical procedures previously reserved for doctors, and offered immunity from potential lawsuits linked to their new scope of work, Second Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo said. This "will le-

gally protect the nurses who are filling the medical vacuum created by trainee doctors' walkouts at hospitals", Park said. The government said it needed to protect nurses because there were some "grey areas" about what medical treatments could be performed by particular staff. Each hospital's administrators can work with nurses to decide which tasks they can perform.

Nurses' fears

Nurses told AFP that the changes did not offer enough protection to them in life-or-death cases. "Although it is claimed that legal protection is provided, I do not find it specific enough to feel safe," said Lee Hye-ok, a nurse at one of the five biggest hospitals in South Korea. "Legal protective measures need to be much more specific and comprehensive." Other nurses said they had no option but to perform certain tasks if no doctors were working. "We nurses cannot refuse when they are told to help the patient on the spot when there is no one else available," said Park Na-rae, a nurse and union member of the Seoul National University Hospital. "The worrying part is whether they will be held accountable if the patient's condition worsens."

'Destroy medical care'

Doctors are restricted from strikes by South Korean law but the medics have said they have no option but to stop working to show their fierce opposition to the government's plan. The Korean Intern Resident Association said in a social media post Tuesday they believed the medical reforms would "destroy medical care". South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said Tuesday "medical reform can-



SEOUL: A medical worker walks past the Seoul National University Hospital in Seoul. - AFP

not be subject to negotiation or compromise". "No reasons can justify acts that hold lives and health of the people hostage," he said at a meeting.

Polls suggest up to 75 percent of the South Korean public supports the increase in medical school admissions. Seoul says South Korea has one of the

lowest doctor-to-population ratios among developed countries and the government is pushing hard to admit 2,000 more students to medical schools annually from next year. Junior doctors say the reforms are the final straw in a profession where they already struggle with tough working conditions. — AFP

The Indians hired for Russia's Ukraine war

NEW DELHI: An apple farmer, an airline caterer and an out-of-work graduate are among the Indian nationals hired by Moscow, with the help of recruiters around the world, for the Russian army in Ukraine. Two years into the war tens of thousands of Russian soldiers have died in Ukraine, and Moscow is on a global quest for more combatants, sometimes with the assistance - complicit or oblivious - of informal intermediaries.

An Indian translator working in a military recruitment centre in Moscow told AFP journalists in New Delhi that his facility was one of a network across Russia. "Every major city has a recruitment centre where foreign nationals are processed," he said. He had personally overseen the enlistment of between 70 and 100 Indian citizens, he said, adding that the number of Nepali hires was significantly higher.

"Only last week, 10 Indians came to my centre," said the man, who asked for anonymity for fear of reprisals for speaking to the media. Some Indian recruits told AFP they were promised non-combatant roles, but they were trained to use Kalashnikov assault rifles and other weapons before being sent to Ukraine. And a Russian-lan-

guage defense ministry contract seen by AFP refers to "military service in the armed forces of the Russian Federation", with a requirement to "participate in hostilities" and "serve the Russian people without limit".

India is a longstanding ally of Russia which has shied away from explicit condemnation of the invasion of Ukraine. Analysts say Russian efforts to target recruits from India are just one facet of a global recruitment drive, alongside a vast campaign at home. AFP spoke to five Indians recruited to join the Russian war effort, all of whom said they had responded to social media videos promoting jobs as "army helpers" for salaries of around \$1,200 a month. None had prior military experience.

'I am scared'

The clips were posted by a Dubai-based recruitment agent, Faisal Khan, who has a presence on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok as Baba Vlogs. In one video Khan walks down a street in Russia's St Petersburg, spelling out the offer: pay him \$3,600 and get a job as a helper in the Russian army. "You don't have to fight," he says, filming himself on his mobile. "All you have to do is to clear demolished



SIVERSK: Photo shows the bodies of Russian soldiers lying on the ground on the frontline near the town of Siversk, Donetsk region. - AFP

buildings, look after armouries and after a year of service you'll be eligible for permanent residence."

In no time, he said, he received an avalanche of enquiries from India where despite rapid economic growth unemployment is at a record high. By his own account, he facilitated 16 Indian passport holders to go to Russia in November and December, most from India and some from Dubai. "I am into social media and help people find jobs," Khan told AFP. "A friend from Russia got in touch with me saying that the military there was looking for helpers. I thought

it was a good opportunity and I made a video." In a subsequent conversation he said he had been "taken aback" when recruits were issued weapons, and when "reports began coming in of bodies being sent back, and some returning injured... we decided to put a stop to the recruitment process." But his St Petersburg video, headlined "Russia Army Jobs", has remained online. One of Khan's recruits, an unemployed graduate from Uttar Pradesh in northern India, told AFP he had fought on the frontline in Donetsk region in Russia-occupied Ukraine. — AFP

What does Sweden's NATO entry mean?

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's NATO membership bid, submitted in the wake of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, cleared its final hurdle as Hungary's parliament voted to ratify it on Monday. Accession to the US-led alliance means stark changes for both Sweden's defense and the geopolitical balance in the region.

Why did Sweden decide to join NATO?

At the end of the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century, Sweden adopted an official policy of neutrality. Following the end of the Cold War, the

neutrality policy was amended to one of military non-alignment. While Sweden has sent forces to international peacekeeping missions, it has not gone to war for more than 200 years.

The last conflict it fought was the Swedish-Norwegian War of 1814. Despite its neutrality it pursued an active foreign policy, championing human rights and being a top aid donor per capita, sometimes being a labeled a "humanitarian superpower". But while remaining outside NATO, Sweden has formed ever-closer ties to the alliance, joining the Partnership for Peace program in 1994 and then the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997.

However, a majority of Swedes were long opposed to full membership and it was considered a taboo among the Social Democrats - Sweden's largest political party. Former Social Democrat defense minister Peter Hultqvist even declared in the fall of

2021 that he could "guarantee" that he would never participate in a process to join NATO. Only months later, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine led to a dramatic shift in both public opinion and among political parties. A broad majority of the Swedish parliament voted to apply for membership, which the country did - along with Finland - in May 2022.

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What does Sweden bring to NATO?

For a long time, Swedish policy dictated that the country needed a strong military to protect its neutrality. But after the end of the Cold War, it drastically slashed its defense spending, turning its military focus toward peacekeeping operations around the world. In 1990, defense spending accounted for 2.6 percent of gross domestic product, shrinking to 1.2 percent by 2020, according to the government. — AFP

Macron 'not ruling out' sending Western troops to Ukraine

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron triggered a shockwave in Europe on Tuesday by refusing to rule out the dispatch of Western ground troops to Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion. Macron had hosted a conference of European leaders on Monday - just over two years to the day after Russia invaded Ukraine - seeking to rally greater support for Kyiv, which faces increasing battlefield challenges and dwindling munition stocks.

He painted a grim picture of Russia under President Vladimir Putin, arguing there had been a "change of posture" even in the last months that had seen a hardening of its stance both domestically and in Ukraine. "Nothing can be excluded to pursue our objective: Russia cannot and must not win this war," Macron said after the conference gathering leaders including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Polish President Andrzej Duda that ended with a midnight press conference.

While there was "no consensus" on the send-

'Can't rule out anything'

Macron had refused to say more about France's position, citing the need for "strategic ambiguity" but saying the issue was mentioned "among the options". "We are convinced that the defeat of Russia is indispensable to security and stability in Europe," Macron said. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, accused by critics of being too cosy with Moscow, said after the meeting that there was disunity on the issue at the meeting.

"There are countries that are ready to send their own soldiers to Ukraine, there are countries that say never - Slovakia is among them - and there are countries that say that this proposal should be considered," he said. Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson of Sweden, which is set to join NATO, poured initial cold water on the idea, saying "it's not on the cards at all for the moment".

"For the moment, we're busy sending advanced (military) equipment to Ukraine,"

Kristersson said. Macron was criticized at home by the party leader of the far-right National Rally Jordan Bardella who accused the president of "losing his cool" by raising "the spectre of a committing of our troops against a nuclear power".

But French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal Tuesday reaffirmed Macron's comments, saying "you can't rule anything out in a war". Macron even took an apparent swipe at France's ally Germany, which had been mocked in the first months of the war for its relatively soft promises of military support. "I recall that two years ago many around this table said we will offer sleeping bags and helmets and now they say we need to do more and quicker to have missiles and tanks." "Let us have the humility to note that we have often been six to twelve months late."

'Against us all'

Macron argued that the hardening of Russia's approach had been "cruelly" manifested in the death in an Arctic prison on February 16 of President Putin's top opponent Alexei Navalny. "There is in our eyes a change of posture on the part of Russia," Macron said. "Russia is adopting an attitude that is more aggressive not just in Ukraine but against us all in general." Macron said a new coalition would be set up to supply Ukraine with "missiles and bombs of medium and long range to carry out deep strikes". There

Rat on a plane sparks worries for Sri Lanka's airline

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's national airline on Tuesday blamed a rat for grounding a plane for three days, sparking chaotic delays and fears it will scare off investors for the cash-strapped carrier. The stowaway rodent enjoyed the Sri Lankan Airlines Airbus A330 flight from the Pakistani city of Lahore on Thursday, triggering an aircraft search to ensure it had not chewed through critical components. An airline official said the plane has now resumed flights, but that the grounding had a knock-on effect on the entire schedule.

"The aircraft was grounded for three days at Colombo," an airline official said, declining to be named. "The plane could not be flown without making sure that the rat was accounted for. It was found dead." The state-owned airline, which had accumulated losses of more than \$1.8 billion at the end of March 2023, has three other aircraft grounded for over a year out of a fleet of 23. The carrier has no foreign exchange to pay for mandatory overhauling of the engines.

Aviation minister Nimal Siripala de Silva told reporters the errant rodent might scare off "the few investors" interested in taking over the debt-burdened airline. Successive governments have attempted to sell it without success. A previous government offered the airline for one dollar, but there were no takers. The International Monetary Fund, which bailed out Sri Lanka last year with a \$2.9 billion loan spread over four years, has stressed that such state-owned enterprises are a heavy burden on the national budget.

The airline was profitable until a management agreement with Emirates was scrapped in 2008, following a dispute with then-president Mahinda Rajapaksa. The carrier had refused to bump fare-paying passengers and give their seats to 35 members of Rajapaksa's family, who were returning from a holiday in London. Ironically, one of the airline's most profitable years was in 2001, when the Tamil Tigers separatist movement destroyed several aircraft in an attack - with the insurance payouts and the removal of excess capacity boosting its income. — AFP



French President Emmanuel Macron

was a "broad consensus to do more and quicker", he added, saying there was also a consensus to ramp up joint production of armaments with Ukraine and boost its own military industry. Czech Premier Petr Fiala meanwhile said there was "great support" for an initiative to help Ukraine buy munitions outside the EU. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said his country would contribute and others would follow. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky complained Ukraine only received 30 percent of a million shells the EU had promised. "It is clear that we did not have this million," Macron responded, acknowledging an "imprudent commitment". — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024

WTO approves services trade rules, overcoming objections

Battles on fisheries and agriculture loom during UAE talks

ABU DHABI: The World Trade Organization on Tuesday enshrined new rules facilitating trade in services between more than 70 member states, the European Union's trade commissioner said, despite initial objections from India and South Africa. The set of rules will streamline authorization requirements and ease procedural hurdles faced by businesses, according to a press release.

It will help reduce the costs of global services trade by more than \$119 billion every year, it added. The integration into the WTO implies all 164 members have approved, given the body's rules requiring full consensus. "Reaching this outcome...and integrating it into the WTO has not been an easy pass," EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said during the WTO's 13th ministerial conference in Abu Dhabi.

"We faced opposition from two WTO members" but a "spirit of compromise" eventually cleared hurdles, he said without naming any country. WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, meanwhile, thanked "India and South Africa for finding a way forward," calling services the "future of trade."

Global services exports are valued at more than \$6.5 trillion, representing 23 percent of total world trade, according to the EU. The latest WTO agreement applies to 71 member states who signed the initiative but businesses from other member states can also benefit.

China, the United States and the EU are among the 71 signatories. India and South Africa have not

signed. Costa Rica, which led the negotiations on the initiative, called it "a significant milestone" for member states and the WTO. This "is the first WTO result in the field of services in more than 25 years. A real success story for this organization," said Costa Rica's foreign trade minister Manuel Tovar.

Many eyes were trained on India—which is often described as an obstructionist element in trade talks—but its Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has yet to arrive in Abu Dhabi. The closed-door negotiations were taking place on the second day of the World Trade Organization's 13th ministerial conference which is scheduled to run until Thursday but could go into over-time amid divisions.

With WTO rules requiring full consensus between all member states, there is little hope for major breakthroughs, apart from a new global agreement on fisheries subsidies. After a 2022 deal which banned subsidies contributing to illegal, unregulated and unregulated fishing, the WTO hopes to conclude a second package focusing on subsidies which fuel overcapacity and overfishing.

"We're close. It's doable for sure," said a diplomatic source. "The final push needs a little bit of compromise, a little bit of political will," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity, calling a potential agreement a "very good outcome".

The 2022 agreement has yet to take effect as not enough countries have ratified it. But it was seen as a major achievement, marking just the second accord concluded by the WTO's full membership since the



ABU DHABI: Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala addresses delegates during a session on fisheries subsidies during the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

global trade body was created in 1995, and the first focused on environmental protection.

Negotiations in recent months at the WTO headquarters in Geneva have enabled a draft text

to be brought forward for a second fisheries deal. It essentially divides member countries into three groups, with the largest subsidy providers subject to greater scrutiny. — AFP

Kuwait Airways: New era of aviation development

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways celebrates its 70th anniversary on Tuesday by launching its new logo and expanding its services, which reflect their vision for achieving their goals. Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan said in a press conference that Kuwait Airways seeks to develop its systems by using the latest technology in the fields of aviation. He added that Kuwait Airways is collaborating with national food companies to improve the food quality on their aircraft and launching a luggage home delivery service for passengers arriving in Kuwait.

Al-Fagaan also stated that they launched the 'Blue Bird Channel' on all airplane screens, which contains programs and documentaries that meet the passengers' entertainment needs. He also added that the company is operating 50 flights to 46 destinations daily during the current winter season, noting that the number will increase to 54 destinations during the upcoming summer season. Flights to London will increase to two daily, four weekly flights to Munich and Vienna, three weekly flights to Barcelona, Malaga, Bodrum, Sarajevo, and Salalah, two flights weekly to Antalya and Nice, and a flight to Taif in Saudi Arabia, he said.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways celebrates its 70th anniversary on Tuesday. Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan said in a press conference that Kuwait Airways seeks to develop its systems by using the latest technology in the fields of aviation. — KUNA

Al-Fagaan added that Kuwait Airways will operate a flight to Madrid weekly, which may increase to two weekly flights based on its demand. For his part, Director of the company's Operations Department Abdulhameed Al-Ali stated that the company is offering two scholarship plans for students

wishing to study aviation for qualification and training under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education. Kuwait Airways was established in 1953 and operated its first flight on March 16, 1954, noting that it is wholly owned by the government of Kuwait. — KUNA

French, Asian shipping giants extend alliance

PARIS: Shipping giants CMA CGM of France, China's Cosco Shipping, Taiwan's Evergreen and Hong Kong-based OOCL said on Tuesday they were extending the sector's biggest operational alliance to 2032.

CMA CGM, the world's third biggest shipping company, said the Ocean Alliance, in place since 2017, enables its members to provide fast transit times and a broad range of ports. The partnership covers the seven main East-West routes linking Asia with northern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the coasts of North America.

The current agreement was due to end in 2027. "The decision to extend our cooperation for at least five more years underlines our commitment to meeting the needs of our customers and building even more secure, reliable and sustainable supply chains," CMA CGM chief executive Rodolphe Saade said.

Evergreen said the extension would allow alliance members to "continue providing customers with stable and high-quality shipping services on the same cooperative basis". Cosco Shipping said the documents signed by the companies extend the alliance until March 31, 2032. "We are convinced that as a sustainable alliance, we can provide continuous high-quality transportation to our customers and contribute to a stable supply chain," the Chinese group said. — AFP

Global economy on track for soft landing: IMF

ISTANBUL: The global economy appears on track for a soft landing, but activity and growth prospects remain weak, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Monday in a report. "The cyclical position of G20 countries has proven stronger than previously anticipated as disinflation has so far proceeded without triggering a recession and emerging market economies have demonstrated improved resilience," said the G20 Surveillance Note, which was published before the G20's Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting in Sao Paulo, Brazil from Feb 28-29, according to Anadolu Agency.

A soft landing is a situation where a central bank raises interest rates too much and too high, leading to an economic slowdown but avoiding a recession. "Looking ahead, monetary policy is expected to loosen somewhat in 2024. However, medium-term growth prospects remain subdued—reflecting secular trends and challenges including weak productivity growth, ageing, geo-economic fragmentation and climate vulnerabilities," said the report.

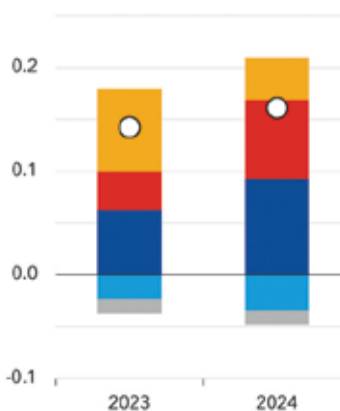
The IMF said global economic growth could be higher than expected if the pace of disinflation is faster than anticipated and brings forward easing in monetary policy. The institution, on the other hand, warned that additional

Growth and inflation

Forecasts for growth have been revised upwards, while inflation has been marked down and is continuing its downward trend.

World real GDP growth revisions (vs. Oct 2023 WEO; percentage points)

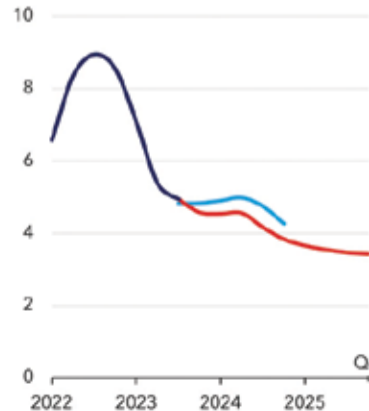
■ US ■ Euro area
■ Other AEs ■ China
■ Other EMDEs ■ Total



Sources: IMF, World Economic Outlook; and IMF staff calculations.
Note: Headline inflation excludes Argentina.

Headline inflation (percent; quarterly; y/y)

— Actual inflation — Oct 2023 forecast
— Jan 2024 forecast



limited so far, the situation remains volatile. Core inflation could prove more persistent. The price of goods remains historically elevated relative to that of services. The adjustment could take the form of more persistent services—and overall—inflation. Wage developments, particularly in the euro area, where negotiated wages are still on the rise, could add to price pressures. Markets appear excessively optimistic about the prospects for early rate cuts. Should investors re-assess their view, long-term interest rates would increase, putting renewed pressure on governments to implement more rapid fiscal consolidation that could weigh on economic growth.

Policy challenges

With inflation receding and growth remaining steady, it is now time to take stock and look ahead. Our analysis shows that a substantial share of recent disinflation occurred via a decline in commodity and energy prices, rather than through a contraction of economic activity. Since monetary tightening typically works by depressing economic activity, a relevant question is what role, if any, has monetary policy played? The answer is that it worked through two additional channels. First, the rapid pace of tightening helped convince people and companies that high inflation would not be allowed to take hold. This prevented inflation expectations from persistently rising, helped dampen wage growth, and reduced the risk of a wage-price spiral. Second, the unusually synchronized nature of the tightening lowered world energy demand, directly reducing headline inflation. — Agencies

spikes in commodity prices, persistent tightness in the labor market, or renewed supply chain tensions could reignite inflationary pressures.

"An appropriate combination of fiscal and monetary policy will be critical to delivering debt, price, and financial stability," the report said. The IMF, in addition, said G20 policymakers must step up efforts to mitigate the threat of climate change, help unlock Africa's

growth potential, strengthen the resilience of the international monetary system, and ensure the benefits of artificial intelligence adoption.

New commodity and supply disruptions could occur, following renewed geopolitical tensions, especially in the Middle East. Shipping costs between Asia and Europe have increased markedly, as Red Sea attacks reroute cargoes around Africa. While disruptions remain

UK's 'net zero' economy bucks recession: Study

LONDON: Britain's green economy grew in 2023 to buck a broader recession, a report showed Tuesday that urged politicians heading into a general election to stick by climate-friendly investments. The UK's "net-zero economy"—from electric cars to carbon capture and renewables like solar and wind power—increased nine percent to £74 billion (\$94 billion) year-on-year, said the study by think-tank Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit in conjunction with business lobbyists CBI and The Data City research group.

The overall British economy slipped into recession in the last six months of 2023, according to official data. "Against the backdrop of economic stagnation, the net zero economy is bucking the trend," said ECIU director Peter Chalkley. "Thousands of jobs depend on net zero... right across the country. The question now is will political parties provide the leadership, stability and investment needed to generate further growth or shy away from the global race for net zero?" Chalkley questioned.

The Conservative government's long-standing target is to achieve net zero carbon emissions for the UK by 2050. The Tories, however, are widely predicted to lose power to the main opposition Labour party in a general election expected this year. Tuesday's report added that net zero businesses, supply chains and employee spending together totaled 3.8 percent of Britain's GDP last year, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs. "The UK's transition to net zero brings immense opportunities for our economy," said CBI chief economist Louise Hellem, urging more sector investment in the government's budget update next week. — AFP

Business

Oil spills pile on pressure for Iraqi farmers

Puddles of viscous black liquid render vast swathes of farmland barren

AL-MEAIBDI, Iraq: Iraq enjoys tremendous oil wealth but many hard-scrabble farmers in the north say crude spills have contaminated their lands, piling on pressure as they already battle drought. Amid the hills of Salaheddin province, puddles of the viscous black liquid pollute the otherwise fertile and green fields, rendering vast swathes of farmland barren.

"The oil has damaged all that the land can give," said one farmer, Abdel Majid Said, 62, who owns six hectares (15 acres) in the village of Al-Meaibdi. "Every planted seed is ruined. This land has become useless." Oil spills in Iraq—a country ravaged by decades of conflict, corruption and decaying infrastructure—have contaminated farmland in the northern province, especially during the winter rains.

Authorities blame the jihadists of the Islamic State group who overran large swathes of Iraq and Syria in 2014 and were only defeated in Iraq three years later. The IS group blew up oil pipelines and wells and also dug primitive oil storage pits, causing crude to seep into the ground, from where annual rains wash it out again. But the local farmers also complain that the state has been too slow to clean up the mess.

In Al-Meaibdi and the nearby hills of Hamrin, authorities are struggling to find a sustainable solution to the problem, which adds to a litany of environmental challenges. Iraq, also battered by blistering summer heat and severe drought, is ranked by the United Nations as one of the five countries most vulnerable to key impacts of climate change.

In Hamrin, layers of sludge pile up as excavators build up dirt barriers—a temporary measure to stem the flow of contaminated water onto farmland below. The oil not only damages the soil and crops but can also pollute groundwater in the water-scarce country. Said, the farmer, said "the soil is no longer fertile—we have not been able to cultivate it since 2016". Some other farmers had already abandoned their lands, he added. He pointed to a green plot of land so far untouched by the spills and said: "Look how the crops have grown there—but not even a grain has sprouted here."

Oil spills have contaminated 500 hectares of wheat and barley fields in Salaheddin, said Mohamed Hamad from the environment department in the province. Hamad pointed to the reign of IS, which collected revenues from oil production and smuggling by building makeshift refineries and digging primitive oil storage pits.

He said the group blew up the pipelines and wells of the oil fields of Ajil and Alas, causing crude oil to flood and collect in the Hamrin hills' natural caves. Earlier this month, due to heavy rain, oil remnants again poured into agricultural lands. Hamad said, and "unfortunately, the leak damaged land and crops". Authorities have buried IS's makeshift storage pits. Amer al-Meheiri, the head of the oil department in



NAHIYAH, Iraq: An Iraqi farmer squats and checks an oil spill into an agricultural land in the region of Hamrin, north of Tikrit, in the province of Salaheddin. — AFP photos



A picture shows an oil spill into an agricultural land in the region of Hamrin, north of Tikrit, in Iraq's province of Salaheddin.

Salaheddin province, told Iraq's official news agency INA last year.

Yet during the heavy rains, the oil continues to seep out. Iraq's crude oil sales make up 90 percent of budget revenues as the country recovers from years of war and political upheaval, leaving it overly reliant on the sector. The country boasts 145 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, amounting to 96 years' worth

of production at the current rate, according to the World Bank. But for many farmers, oil has been a scourge.

Abbas Taha, an agriculture official in Salaheddin, said "oil spills have been occurring frequently since 2016". "Farmers suffer a great loss because they no longer benefit from the winter season to grow wheat," he said. Some farmers have filed complaints against the state demanding compensation, only to find themselves lost in Iraq's labyrinthine judicial system, tossed from one court to another.

But Taha insists that authorities plan to compensate those affected in a country where agricultural lands are shrinking as farmers are abandoning unprofitable plots hit by drought.

Due to the severe water scarcity, authorities are drastically reducing farm activity to ensure sufficient drinking water for Iraq's 43 million people. Hamad said his department had contacted the relevant authorities to remove oil remnants that would eventually seep through the soil to contaminate groundwater and wells. The soil also needs to be treated by removing the top layer and replacing it, he said. "We urged the prime minister, the agriculture minister and the oil minister to compensate the farmers suffering from this environmental disaster," said 53-year-old farmer Ahmed Shalash. "But nothing has happened." — AFP

EU to examine Microsoft tie-up with AI Mistral

BRUSSELS: Microsoft's partnership with French startup Mistral AI faces inspection by EU regulators, who are already probing the world's largest digital companies' ties to AI developers, the EU said Tuesday.

Microsoft said Monday it sealed a "multi-year partnership" that would allow Mistral to use its platforms including Azure AI, which enables businesses to build apps using AI.

A Microsoft spokesperson said the company was pouring 15-million-euros (\$16 million) into the collaboration with Mistral. Mistral, established last year by former Google and Meta researchers, is a rare European player in a field dominated by US firms.

A spokesperson for the European Commission, which is the EU's powerful antitrust regulator, said it would look into the new partnership. "As you know, the commission is looking into agreements that have been concluded between large digital market players and generative AI developers and providers," the spokesperson said. "In this context, we have received the mentioned agreement, which we will analyze," the spokesperson added. While this could lead to a formal investigation, it is still early days. Microsoft did not comment on the commission's statement.

The commission in January started a preliminary study of Microsoft's multi-billion-dollar investment in ChatGPT developer OpenAI to see if it could be a disguised merger. Britain is also conducting a similar study. When ChatGPT burst onto the scene in late 2022, it heralded the popular arrival of the generative AI revolution, and saw the EU race to approve the world's most comprehensive law regulating the technology. Generative AI can produce text, images and audio that are often indiscernible from those made by humans. The EU's AI law is expected to be formally adopted later this year. — AFP



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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 22 FEBRUARY 2024

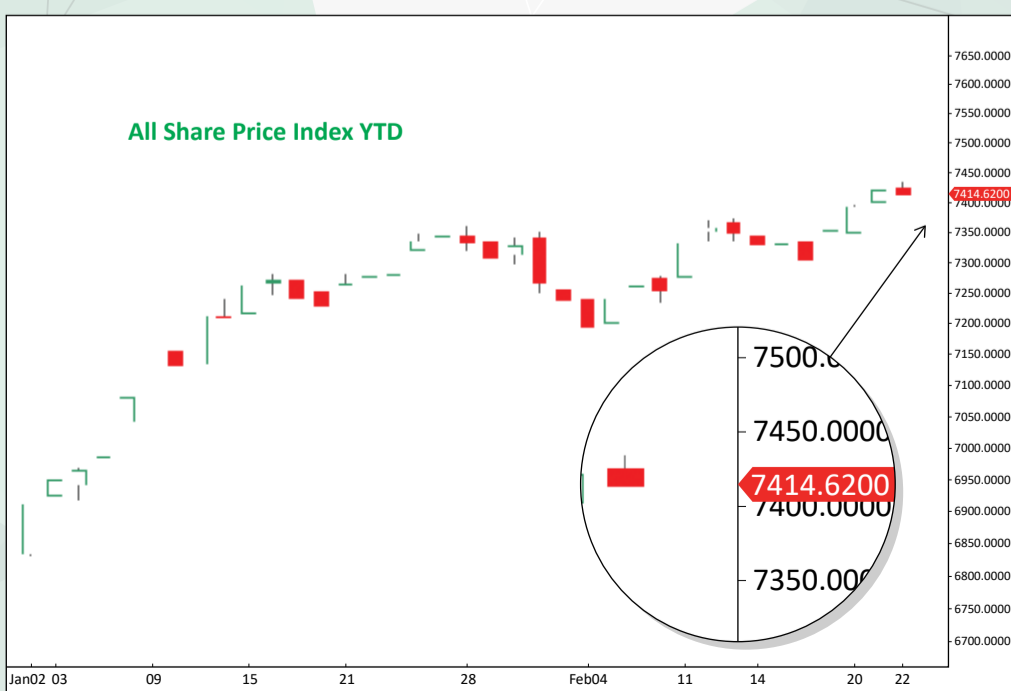
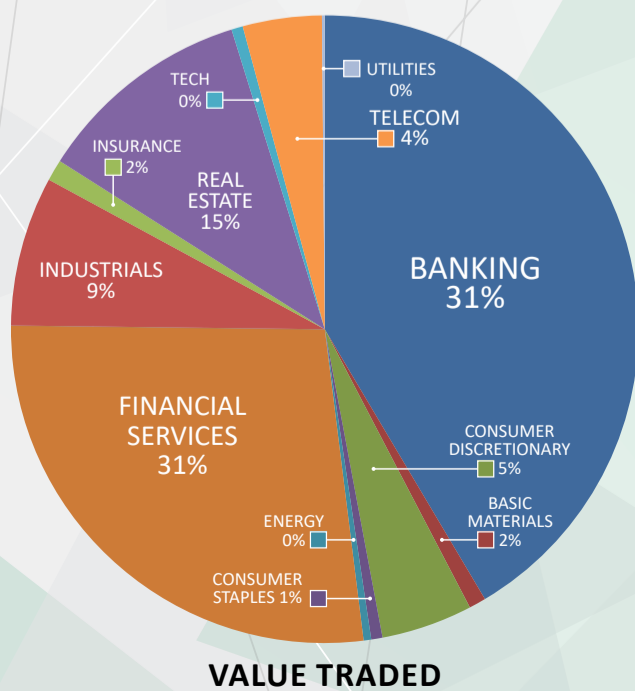
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- al-safat-investment-company

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	37,032	8,128.07	1.1%	2.1%	8.7%	698,794,400	222,474,247	40,578	18.0	1.4	80.8%
Main Market	8,797	6,074.09	1.1%	1.7%	9.1%	673,913,595	76,598,023	37,602	12.8	0.8	19.2%
All Share	45,829	7,414.62	1.1%	2.0%	8.8%	1,372,707,995	299,072,269	78,180	14.5	0.9	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	27,662	1,798.98	1.2%	2.4%	9.2%	199,529,124	92,637,089	14,719	17.7	1.2	60.36%
Basic Materials	448	794.06	3.9%	4.5%	6.5%	8,259,504	4,965,880	1,526	10.4	2.3	0.98%
Consumer Discretionary	1,136	1,652.00	-0.3%	4.4%	3.0%	38,306,877	13,945,031	5,226	13.2	1.4	2.48%
Consumer Staples	214	703.54	-0.1%	-0.2%	6.8%	3,818,977	2,134,467	371	106.6	1.3	0.47%
Energy	220	1,052.43	-2.4%	2.9%	10.9%	5,662,784	642,320	840	10.4	0.8	0.48%
Financial Services	4,980	1,388.65	2.7%	2.2%	14.6%	625,261,335	92,560,433	22,992	21.1	0.9	10.87%
Health Care	234	472.77	0.7%	-2.0%	-1.9%	3,979	1,742,802	1	12.5	0.9	0.51%
Industrials	3,554	1,027.05	0.8%	4.3%	13.1%	71,787,994	28,224,382	8,106	14.1	1.0	7.75%
Insurance	997	2,439.79	5.1%	3.3%	6.4%	58,647,331	6,240,820	4,129	9.8	1.3	2.18%
Real Estate	2,725	1,269.20	-0.5%	3.7%	4.6%	335,856,455	45,499,941	16,426	16.5	0.7	5.95%
Technology	28	2,007.90	-4.5%	-0.4%	247.2%	1,459,201	408,731.84	157	NM	2.3	0.06%
Telecommunications	3,447	1,128.01	-0.5%	-5.2%	2.1%	21,720,328	11,411,476	3,293	10.2	1.4	7.52%
Utilities	185	442.11	1.8%	-1.2%	-2.9%	2,394,106	399,955	394	13.0	1.4	0.40%

Top Gainers						Top Losers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
TAHSSILAT	79.5	107.57%	36,113,807	2,478,777	2,305	PAPCO	175	-16.67%	833,209	163,048	513
WETHAQ	54.4	40.57%	51,665,815	2,680,465	2,573	HAYATCOMM	86.7	-9.97%	704,106	65,852	109
KUWAITRE	432	30.91%	22,644	9,770	19	GFC	80	-9.09%	102,905	8,371	28
KPROJ	131	19.09%	137,077,598	16,785,165	2,244	KRE	224	-6.28%	44,138,960	10,135,295	1,809
SULTAN	114	12.87%	1,842,315	197,968	203	ABK	264	-6.05%	8,176,934	2,242,169	902

Top Volume						Top Value					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KPROJ	131	19.09%	137,077,598	16,785,165	2,244	KFH	801	1.91%	50,733,190	40,338,785	5,211
KINV	198	1.54%	66,508,249	13,158,727	1,283	NBK	975	-0.20%	17,292,824	16,918,747	3,021
URC	56.6	2.91%	61,942,451	3,524,864	2,021	KPROJ	131	19.09%	137,077,598	16,785,165	2,244
ARZAN	218	-3.96%	55,749,456	12,338,863	1,857	GBK	294	2.08%	45,531,530	13,310,194	1,475
WETHAQ	54.4	40.57%	51,665,815	2,680,465	2,573	KINV	198	1.54%	66,508,249	13,158,727	1,283



Market Summary:

- Premier volume increased by 1%, while value dropped by 20%. Main market volume and value dropped 2% and 15%, respectively.
- Both the Premier and Main indexes bounced back, marching towards regaining previous support levels.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7414, with support levels at 7379, 7318, and 7286, and resistance at 7417. The Premier index closed at 8128, with support levels at 8116, 8083, and 8044, and resistance at 8188. The Main index closed at 6074, with support levels at 6058, 6023, and 5990, while resistance was at 6083.

Smartphone makers highlight better batteries at MWC show

Device makers racing to develop batteries that can charge faster and last longer



BARCELONA: A visitor tests the transparent display of new Lenovo ThinkBook laptop on the first day of the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the telecom industry's biggest annual gathering, in Barcelona on Feb 26, 2024.



BARCELONA: Visitors use their phone next to UAE state-owned telecommunications company Etisalat by e& corporation's stand during the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the telecom industry's biggest annual gathering, in Barcelona on Feb 27, 2024. — AFP photos

BARCELONA: A smartphone that can be charged in fewer than 40 minutes. Even better: a tiny nuclear battery that could keep it running for 50 years. Facing consumers who are fed up with having to plug in their phones all the time, device makers are racing to develop more potent batteries that can charge faster and last longer.

Telecom firms highlighted some of the progress they've made at the industry's biggest annual show, the four-day Mobile World Congress (MWC), which got underway in Barcelona on Monday. "All manufacturers are looking to have better performing batteries. There is a sense that it is an area that is lagging behind, that we have to move forward," Forrester Research analyst Thomas Husson told AFP.

As smartphone models have become increasingly similar, having a better battery is a way to "stand out from the crowd,"

he added. Since the first smartphones hits the market in the 2000s, there have been several advances in the battery field, such as wireless charging, but there is still much room for improvement. The growing popularity of power-hungry applications such as gaming and social media is fuelling demand for "mobile batteries with high battery capacity" and spurring the race for innovation among manufacturers, Allied Market Research wrote in a research note.

The majority of smartphones currently run on lithium-ion batteries that are made up of rare materials such as lithium, cobalt and manganese whose prices have soared and which degrade as time passes.

To get around this problem, manufacturers are exploring alternatives using lithium sulphur or graphene which may last longer and rely on less rare elements.

Chinese handset maker Honor has de-

veloped a new higher capacity battery technology which uses silicon-carbon for its new AI-infused flagship Magic 6 smartphone, which it says can fully charge in less than 40 minutes and last longer than those of its main competitors. It is the top smartphone battery in a ranking compiled by DXOMARK, a commercial website that scientifically assesses handsets.

As AI features use more energy "of course we need a powerful battery life," Honor CEO George Zhao said at the global launch of the phone in Barcelona on Sunday. South Korean giant Samsung is reportedly developing a solid-state battery which can store more energy, charge faster and offers greater safety. It aims to launch it in 2027.

Its main rival Apple—which last year overtook Samsung as the world's top sell-

er of smartphones—is developing its own battery technology with a view to introducing its designs into mobile devices, perhaps as soon as 2025, according to South Korean newspaper ET News. Battery making had usually been outsourced but device makers are now increasingly seeking to "reduce their dependency on certain suppliers" as they are already doing with chips, said Husson.

Chinese startup Betavolt Technology unveiled a new nuclear battery in January which it said it can power a smartphone for 50 years without the need for recharging. The Beijing-based company said the next-generation battery is the first in the world to realize the miniaturisation of atomic energy, placing nickel-63 isotopes into a module smaller than a coin. The company, which is not attending the Barcelona event, did not say when

the battery would be mass produced for commercial applications, saying only that it was in the pilot testing stage.

The improvements are sometimes required by legislators. The European Union parliament approved new rules in June to make batteries more sustainable by imposing minimum levels of recycled content which they must use and be more durable. "There is more money being spent on battery technology than ever before because of the electric vehicle development. So it is quite an exciting time for batteries," Ben Wood, chief of research at CCS Insight, told AFP.

"If someone could crack the battery problem, it would be a game changer. Imagine having a mobile phone that lasts two weeks, it would be amazing. But we are years and years away from that happening." — AFP

Kuwait Telecommunications Co achieves a 400% reduction in customer response time

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company, one of the top telecom operators in Kuwait, has announced successful transformation of its customer support operations, resulting in an unprecedented 400 percent reduction in customer response time. The telecom company could bring in this major transformation with the seamless integration and deployment of the IT Service Management (ITSM) solution by leading enterprise IT management company, ManageEngine. This is a remarkable achievement for Kuwait Telecommunications Company, in its commitment to provide exceptional service to its growing customer base of more than 2.4 million.

With the significant influx of customer support requests, and with manual IT operations, Kuwait Telecommunications company was struggling to address customer concerns. The company recognized the need for a cutting-edge solution to expedite response time and enhance operational efficiency. Implementation of ManageEngine's ITSM solution has proven to be instrumental in achieving a fivefold increase in response time and empowered the company with visibility to make informed, data-driven decisions.

"One of the perennial challenges for us is to ensure the IT infrastructure keeps up with the demands of the telecommunication market, as the technology used is always changing. For the customer support team, this means having an IT infrastructure that can adapt to changing customer needs and market

dynamics," said Saud Al-Akili, head of customer support at Kuwait Telecommunications Company. "Dealing with sensitive customer information and ensuring data security and compliance was paramount, and meeting these requirements without disrupting operations was a continuous challenge."

Prior to this deployment, Kuwait Telecommunications Company's IT support team relied on manual IT operations for tracking and managing support requests from the customers' end. "This can lead to disorganized and inefficient processes, making it challenging to prioritize and resolve issues in a timely manner," said Saud Al Akili. As the organization grew, it became all the more important for an effective ITSM system to be put in place to cater to the delivery of services more effectively and with less downtime.

After evaluating various solutions, Kuwait Telecommunications Company selected ServiceDesk Plus based on the solution's ability to effectively streamline workflows and deliver seamless customer service. The company's primary concern was data accuracy, security and compliance, since the company needed to ensure that the information of its millions of customers remains secure, accurate and easily accessible even while standardizing and streamlining an ITSM solution, which the ManageEngine team promptly facilitated.

"ManageEngine's ITSM solution ServiceDesk Plus successfully reduced the workload of Kuwait Telecommunications Company's customer support team. Our



Saud Al Akili



Prasanna Venkatesh Srinivasan

solution enhanced the team's ability to effectively monitor and resolve problems, enabling early identification of issue patterns and offering solutions for similar issues in the future," said Prasanna Venkatesh Srinivasan, Regional Manager at ManageEngine.

"The implementation has been a game-changer at Kuwait Telecommunications Company, enhancing workload visibility and reducing overall turnaround time and issue resolution for end users. Remarkably, over 90 percent of the customer issues were resolved within specified SLAs in the past year. We are convinced by and satisfied with the overall results we have achieved. This is a successful ITSM project—one we can claim as a benchmark in Kuwait," said Saud Al-Akili.

With the successful implementation of ServiceDesk Plus, Kuwait Telecommunications Company has also invested in other ManageEngine products, including OpManager's Enterprise edition, Applications Manager, and Analytics Plus.

Gulf Bank advises customers to avoid unknown calls, messages

KUWAIT: In line with its social responsibilities and ongoing support for the Let's Be Aware "Diraya" campaign, Gulf Bank continues its efforts to educate both customers and the banking community about the risks associated with electronic crimes targeting their information and bank accounts.

AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar, the Corporate Communications Officer at Gulf Bank, urged bank clients to exercise caution when dealing with emails, text messages, and phone calls from unfamiliar sources, to safeguard their banking details from theft. He emphasized that banks never request personal information from customers via email, text messages, or phone calls, advising against responding to such communications as they frequently serve as fraudu-

lent attempts to obtain banking information for illicit purposes. Clicking on links in such messages could unintentionally expose sensitive banking information to theft. Al-Nassar pointed out the increase in fraudulent activities, especially through fake donation pages established following disasters, as opportunistic fraudsters aim to exploit people's compassion and steal their funds. He recommended that bank customers refrain from storing confidential information such as ATM card numbers, credit card details, or PIN codes on their mobile devices and cautioned against writing PINs directly on credit cards. Additionally, he discouraged the sharing of one-time passwords (OTPs) and emphasized the importance of logging out from the bank's mobile application or website immediately after completing a transaction.

Emphasizing the pivotal role of customer awareness in safeguarding banking data, particularly amid the widespread of electronic services, Al-Nassar advised customers to verify the authenticity and licensing of institutions before making donations.

It is noteworthy that the Central Bank of Kuwait, in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association, initiated the Let's Be Aware "Diraya" banking awareness campaign in 2021. The campaign aims to familiarize bank customers with essential banking services, enhance their ability to conduct secure transactions, ensure transactional safety, and promote financial inclusion, monetary stability, and economic resilience through comprehensive awareness of customer rights and obligations. Additionally, the campaign introduces the advantages of electronic financial transactions, strategies to reduce associated risks, and the importance of cybersecurity.



AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar

Japan inflation falls to BoJ target of 2%

TOKYO: Japanese inflation slowed less than expected to two percent in January, data showed Tuesday, hitting the central bank's target and firming expectations of an end to its outlier negative rates policy. Other

major central banks including the US Federal Reserve have hiked borrowing costs because of rising prices since Russia's invasion of Ukraine two years ago, and may soon start cutting again. But haunted by decades of deflation, the Bank of Japan has stuck to its unorthodox sub-zero interest rates.

The nation slipped into a technical recession in late 2023, and the bank views current inflation as driven by temporary factors like higher energy costs. Instead, it wants to see more evidence of a "virtuous cycle" of price increases fuelled by demand and higher wages. According to gov-

ernment data released Tuesday, consumer prices rose 2.0 percent year-on-year in January from 2.3 percent in December, the third straight monthly easing.

The dip in the core consumer price index (CPI), which does not include volatile fresh food prices, was slightly less pronounced than expected, with economists polled by Bloomberg predicting 1.9 percent. But the reading continued a broad trend of cooling inflation over the past year.

The last time CPI stood below the Bank of Japan's two-percent inflation target was in March 2022, when prices rose 0.8

percent year-on-year. Since then, inflation had increased to as high as 4.2 percent in January 2023 before gradually easing to 2.3 percent in December. In 2023, it averaged 3.1 percent—the highest since 1982.

The January data "will support market speculation for an April rate hike", ING economists said, although inflation could still be "choppy" in coming months. "Moreover, Governor (Kazuo) Ueda mentioned last week that he believes that the Japanese economy is in a virtuous cycle where inflation will rise and wage growth and employment will strengthen," ING added.



NBK Wealth unveils monthly 'Thought Leadership' series

KUWAIT: NBK Wealth, a leading wealth management group, announced the unveiling of its "Thought Leadership" series. This monthly publication will showcase comprehensive articles and insights spanning various topics related to investment and wealth management solutions.

The Thought Leadership series from NBK Wealth aims to provide a broad audience with valuable insights, knowledge, and access to insightful information as they navigate the ever-evolving investment landscape. The series will feature contributions from a team of seasoned professionals at NBK Wealth, offering insights, analysis, and innovative ideas to a diverse audience. Each article covers different subjects and is written in a way that is intended to appeal to readers with different levels of sophistication and knowledge about financial and economic matters, as well as industry trends.

It is a precious resource that aims to educate, inspire, and empower individuals on their learning journey. It also serves as a guide for anyone seeking to expand their knowledge and stay tuned on the latest trends in, and insights on, the world of investment management and wealth creation.

Moreover, the series will offer a wealth of suggestions, expert opinions, and perspectives on investment strategies and solutions, empowering readers to make informed decisions and stay updated on both current and emerging investment trends. NBK Wealth, one of the largest regional groups in wealth management, offers a comprehensive range of solutions. The Group's private banking services include financial planning, wealth management, investment management, and advisory services. Operating through an extensive global network, integrated operations span nine cities across five countries worldwide.

The Group, boasting personal financial assets of approximately \$37.6 billion as of the end of 2023, is supported by an elite team of over 100 investment professionals and traders, each with extensive experience in their field. Under its umbrella, NBK Wealth offers a diverse array of services and products. This encompasses the private banking services of NBK - Kuwait, Watani Investment Company, Watani Wealth Management Company (Saudi Arabia), NBK Banque Privée (Suisse), along with National Bank of Kuwait (International) PLC and Watani Financial Brokerage Company (WFBC).

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024



A woman takes a 'selfie' picture outside the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.



A child learns to ski at the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.



Skiers use a chairlift in the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.



People smoke water pipes outside the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.



People slide on a slope outside the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.



Skiers slide on a snow slope at the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024. — AFP photos

Lebanese escape Zionist-Hezbollah war to ski slopes

Days ago, Tala Assaad could hear Zionist strikes near south Lebanon's coastal city of Sidon. Now, she's having lunch at a packed ski resort, eager to disconnect from news of war. This winter, more well-heeled Lebanese have been hitting the slopes north of Beirut as Lebanon's Hezbollah and arch-foe exchange near-daily fire in the country's south, amid fears of all-out conflict as the Gaza war rages.

Assaad, 17, said her house in Shehim shook after Zionists struck just some 15 kilometers (nine miles) away - a rare bombardment deep into Lebanon that wounded at least 14 people, mostly Syrian workers. Zionist entity said it targeted Hezbollah weapons depots. "Skiing is an outlet that helps us disconnect from the situation we're in," said Assaad in Kfardebian, around 80 kilometers from border areas where the violence has displaced nearly 90,000 people, according to the United Nations.

Lebanon's powerful Iran-backed Hezbollah movement says it has been acting in support of ally Hamas and Palestinians in Gaza with its attacks on Zionist entity since October 8. But in the mountain town of Kfardebian, recently crowned the region's winter tourism capital for 2024 by the Arab Tourism Organization, a semblance of normalcy prevails. Long queues criss-cross the snow-covered slopes leading to the ski lifts, while skiers and snowboarders glide past. Edwin Jarkedian, 21, said he was fearful after Hezbollah and Zionists began exchanging fire the day after the Zionist-Hamas war erupted. "But what

are we supposed to do? If we constantly think about it, we can no longer live," he said, while taking a short break from snowboarding.

'We want to live'

The cross-border violence has killed at least 284 people in southern Lebanon, most of them Hezbollah fighters but also including 44 civilians, according to an AFP tally. On the Zionist side, 10 soldiers and six civilians have been killed, according to the army, while tens of thousands have been displaced.

Military campaign has since killed at least 29,878 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-ruled territory's health ministry. Nicole Wakim, marketing manager at Kfardebian's Mzaar ski resort, said that "Lebanese need to escape to the mountains to forget what's happening in the south." More people have been skiing this year compared to the previous season, she told AFP.

Skiing is a luxury in a country hit by a four-year economic meltdown that has pushed most of the population into poverty. Marcel Semaan, 41, said a one-day skiing trip for him and his three children cost over \$150. The monthly minimum wage in Lebanon is around \$100. "We've lived through wars and we don't want our kids to go through the same experience," Semaan said, referring to Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil conflict and the last Zionist-Hezbollah war in 2006. "Our hearts are with them," he said, referring to residents of the south, "but we want to live our lives."



The image of skiers is reflected in the goggles of a man at the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.

Before the violence erupted, the World Bank had forecast economic growth in Lebanon for the first time since 2018, driven by tourism. Now, the body expects the struggling country to slip back into recession. Walking in the snow with her three children, Sara Jomaa said she appreciated the escape, but expressed regret that it felt disconnected from reality. "When you're here, you feel like there aren't any economic or political crises," said Jomaa, a Lebanese citizen who usually lives in Paraguay. "It's like the south isn't part of the country," she added. — AFP



Skiers queue to enter the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.



Skiers use chairlifts in the Lebanese ski resort of Faraya, in Mount Lebanon north of Beirut, on February 23, 2024.

What's in a leap year? Eternal youth, wedding bells and tech bugs

An extra day every four years, what's not to love? The calendar quirk of February 29 keeps us in sync with the seasons but it has also spawned a host of rituals and superstitions, not to mention computer glitches, which AFP unpacks here:

Why one day more?

Leap years have been with us since the 16th century, an invention of the Gregorian calendar, introduced to deal with a troublesome fraction in the solar year. Bearing in mind it takes around 365.2422 days each year for the Earth to revolve around the sun, the extra snippet (around six hours a year) adds up over time.

Leap days regulate things—without them we would fall out of sync with the seasons, causing havoc for farmers and their crops as well as school holidays. Most leap years fall every four years, but as the extra snippet is not exactly six hours, they exclude years exactly divisible by 100. However, years such as 1600, 2000 or 2400 are leap years as they are exactly divisible by 400.

Forever young

For leap day babies, or leaplings, being born on 29 February may mean four times fewer birthdays, but it is also, as some like to claim, the key to eternal youth. At least, that's what much-loved French screen star Mi-

chele Morgan liked to say during her lifetime, which lasted till the ripe old age of 96.

Among other famed or notorious leaplings are Spanish premier Pedro Sanchez, US rap star Ja Rule and serial killer Aileen Wuornos, incarnated by Charlize Theron in her Oscar-winning performance for "Monster". With the chance of babies being born on a leap day at one in around 1,500, there are an estimated five million leaplings in the world today.

Marry me!

In Ireland, February 29 is known as Bachelor's Day or Ladies Privilege, when, tradition has it, women can propose to men rather than waiting to be wooed. While some claim only a "Yes" answer is allowed, others say the man can decline, but must buy his admirer a gift. The tradition received the Hollywood treatment in 2010 with "Leap Day" starring Amy Adams who follows her beau to Dublin in a bid to ensnare him into marriage by popping the question on the day. The Irish government in 2004 celebrated the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family by gifting 100 euros to every child born on 29 February.

Freebies

Rare days on the calendar are also a chance for businesses to try to drum up trade. In northeastern US, the Legal Sea Foods restaurant chain is offering discounts on the region's beloved dish, lobsters, on February 29. Pizza chain Papa John's in 2008 used leap day to launch its Perfect Pan Pizza with the tag line: "One Giant Leap for Pankind." Leap years also generate special deals in hotels and on flights. As US flyer Virgin America put it with one of its promotions: "Why leap when you can fly?" —AFP

Record-breaking projections light up Tokyo skyscraper

The imposing towers of Tokyo's city government headquarters are now home to the world's largest permanent projection mapping display, which officials hope will become a new tourist draw. Soaring birds, traditional patterns and illustrations of landmarks including Mount Fuji are among the designs adorning the skyscraper in a nightly spectacle.

The evening light show began on Monday, the day after an opening event was held with live instrumental music. Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) hopes the bright lights on its twin-towered building in central Shinjuku will "add color" to the capital's skyline year-round.

The city government, which already offers free viewing floors with large windows at the top of each tower, also hopes to create a new tourist attraction with the display. Visitor numbers to Japan have surged since pandemic-era border closures ended, with the number of foreign tourists hitting a record for December last year. Guinness World Records has certified the attraction, called "Tokyo Night and Light", as the "largest architectural projection-mapped display (permanent)", TMG said. —AFP



TOP TRENDS TO WATCH FROM MILAN FASHION WEEK

Milan Fashion Week's catwalk shows wrapped up Sunday, providing an early glimpse into women's looks for Fall/Winter 2024-2025. Here are a few of the top trends.

Transparency

Despite chilly fall and winter temperatures, designers went all out for the see-through trend, whether at Armani, Prada, Gucci or Alberta Ferretti and more. At Dolce & Gabbana, it wasn't just supermodel Naomi Campbell on the catwalk and Eva Mendes in the front row supplying the wow factor, but a series of chic, skin-bearing looks — all in black and inspired by the classic tuxedo.

The design duo devoted nearly their entire collection to the trend. Inky-black transparent silk skirts came tied at the hip or front and were paired with Bolero-style tuxedo jackets, while sheer black blouses were set off with satin belts and fringed with feathers. Especially daring were dresses made from fishnet, revealing black hot pants and triangle bras underneath.

Giorgio Armani provided a softer, gentler ver-



Fendi



Giorgio Armani

sion, with sheer baby blue blouses in silk knotted at the neck peppering the Japan-influenced collection, some with printed floral motifs. A hot pink robe — an uncharacteristic burst of color from the master of muted tones — was a boudoir look ready for the nightclub, transparent but with embroidered flowers near the hem. At Tom Ford, a stunning long sheath in grape may have fully enclosed the body with long sleeves and a high turtleneck, but it was entirely sheer, with just bikini bottoms peeking from beneath.

Faux Fur

The ethical debate over the use of fur continues, as day one of the shows was marked by the storming of the Fendi catwalk by a protester, while animal rights groups similarly targeted Max Mara in an ongoing campaign. — AFP



Models walks the runway during the Giorgio Armani collection show at the Milan Fashion Week Womenswear Autumn/Winter 2024-2025 on February 25, 2024 in Milan. — AFP photos



Dolce & Gabbana



Giorgio Armani



Dolce & Gabbana



Giorgio Armani



Dolce & Gabbana



Giorgio Armani



Dolce & Gabbana



Fendi



Giorgio Armani



Giorgio Armani



Dolce & Gabbana



Giorgio Armani

A model walks the runway during the Emporio Armani collection show at the Milan Fashion Week Womenswear Autumn/Winter 2024-2025 on February 22, 2024 in Milan. — AFP photos

Dolce & Gabbana



Emporio Armani



Fendi

MOB WIFE AESTHETIC

The resurgence of 'mob wife' fashion - Embracing vintage glamour and modern boldness



Accessorizing with Confidence

Accessories play a crucial role in the 'mob wife' style. Statement jewelry, designer handbags, and luxurious shoes are staples of this look. They should be chosen carefully to complement the outfit and add an extra layer of opulence. The right accessories can elevate a simple ensemble to a standout look.

The Attitude of a Mob Wife

More than just fashion, the 'mob wife' aesthetic is about embodying a certain attitude. It's about confidence, charisma, and owning your presence. This style is for the woman who isn't afraid to stand out and make a statement, who embraces her femininity and strength with equal fervour.

The Impact of Mob Wife Fashion

As this trend continues to gain popularity, it's clear that the 'mob wife' aesthetic is more than just a fashion statement. It's a movement, a celebration of boldness and luxury that's captivating a new generation of style enthusiasts. It represents a shift away

from minimalism, embracing a more expressive and confident approach to fashion.

Conclusion: A Bold Fashion Statement

The 'mob wife' aesthetic is a testament to the power of fashion as a form of self-expression. It's a style that empowers women to express their individuality and embrace their strength. So, step into this world of glamour and power, and let your fashion choices reflect the unstoppable woman you are. This bold fashion movement is not just about looking good; it's about feeling powerful and confident in your own skin. Get more inspiration by visiting our website dashebeauty.com or follow up on our beauty blog. — Dash Beauty Kuwait



The 'mob wife' aesthetic, a captivating blend of vintage glamour and modern audacity, is making a bold comeback in the fashion world. This trend, inspired by the lavish lifestyles of iconic TV characters, exudes a luxurious and confident appeal. It's a style that allows women to express themselves through a unique combination of classic elegance and contemporary boldness. At Dashe Beauty Kuwait, we embrace this trend.

The essence of mob wife style

At the core of the 'mob wife' aesthetic are luxurious materials, dramatic colours, and bold prints. Imagine fur coats, silk dresses, and leather jackets, each piece

telling a story of power and allure. The colour palette is dominated by deep reds, blacks, and metallics, creating an intense and sophisticated atmosphere. This style isn't just about the clothes; it's about making a statement and being unapologetically bold.

Crafting the perfect mob wife wardrobe

To embody the 'mob wife' aesthetic, start by mixing extravagant pieces with elegant basics. A bold animal print blouse can be perfectly paired with a sleek pencil skirt, while a voluminous fur coat complements a form-fitting dress. The key is to strike a balance between eye-catching extravagance and refined sophistication, creating outfits that are both glamorous and tastefully composed.

Sports

Five bright new talents who shone in India-England series

'They'll leave at the end of this tour with their heads held very high'

RANCHI: India beat England by five wickets in the fourth Test on Monday to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series. The series has featured a number of debuts on both sides with new talent shining in the absence of seasoned campaigners such as Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant and Jack Leach.

AFP Sport highlights five emerging stars who look to have a bright future in Tests:

Dhruv Jurel

Wicketkeeper-batsman Jurel marked his debut in Rajkot's third Test with a first-innings 46 to give a glimpse of his promise. Jurel then displayed nerves of steel to rescue India from trouble twice in the fourth Test in Ranchi with 90 in the first innings to guide his side from 177-7 to 307 and then a match-winning 39 not out. The 23-year-old faced a hat-trick ball when he joined Shubman Gill at 120-5 chasing 192 but calmly blunted England's spinners to guide his side to a five-wicket triumph that showed "composure and maturity", said captain Rohit Sharma.

Sarfraz Khan

Middle-order batsman Sarfraz also made his debut in Rajkot and was emotional as he received his Test cap with his teary-eyed father and wife watching. The 26-year-old immediately repaid the selectors by cracking 62 off 66 balls in the first innings before being run out. Sarfraz remained unbeaten on 68 off 72 balls in the second to help set up India's declaration as they won by a massive 434 runs.

Akash Deep

Fast bowler Deep made an instant impact with the new ball on debut in the fourth Test, despite shouldering the burden of replacing world number one Jasprit Bumrah who was rested. In his second over, Deep splattered Zak Crawley's stumps with a darting in-swing, only for it to be called a no ball as he had overstepped. Undaunted, the 27-year-old went on to rip through the England top order with Ben Duckett caught behind and Ollie Pope trapped lbw second ball. The sweetest moment came when he smashed Crawley's stumps for a second time, but this time the delivery was legal and he dedicated his maiden wickets to his father who died in 2015.

Tom Hartley

Doubts surrounded England's inexperienced spin attack as the series began but left-arm Hartley marked his debut in Hyderabad with nine wickets in a match-winning display. The 24-year-old took the key wickets of Shubman Gill and KL Rahul in India's first innings. He then spun his team to victory with figures of 7-62, including four of the top five in India's batting order, as they folded for 202 in their second innings, chasing 231 to win. Hartley's 20 wickets in four matches are more than any other bowler - Bumrah has 17 - and he has also contributed 159 useful runs down the order with a best of 36.

Shoaib Bashir

Bashir, who has Pakistani heritage, missed the first Test due to a visa delay but was then thrown straight in for his debut in the second despite having played only six first class matches. The 20-year-old just-



RANCHI: England's Shoaib Bashir bowls during the fourth day of the fourth Test cricket match between India and England at the Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) Stadium in Ranchi. — AFP

fied his selection in his fourth over when he induced India captain Rohit Sharma to flick to Pope at short leg for his maiden Test victim and went on to take four wickets in the match. The 1.93 metre (6ft 4in) tall off-spinner sat out the next but used his height

to exploit the variable bounce in Ranchi for his first five-wicket haul on his way to eight in the match. "They'll be able to leave at the end of this tour with their heads held very high," said Stokes of Hartley and Bashir. — AFP

Namibia's Jan smashes fastest T20I hundred

PARIS: Namibia all-rounder Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton set a new record for fastest T20I international hundred on Tuesday by hammering a 33-ball ton against Nepal in Kirtipur. In the opening game of a tri-series also featuring the Netherlands, Loftie-Eaton smashed 11 fours and eight sixes before being dismissed for 101 from 36 deliveries.

The previous record was held by Nepal's Kushal Malla, who reached a T20I hundred from 34 balls against Mongolia last year. Namibia posted 206-4 batting first, before Loftie-Eaton also took two wickets as hosts Nepal fell short in their chase, losing by 20 runs. The three teams competing in the tri-series have all qualified for the T20 World Cup to be held in June in the Caribbean and United States.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh on Tuesday named former Glamorgan cricketer and Bermuda international David Hemp as the batting coach of the national men's team for two years. Former New Zealand all-rounder Andre Adams will join the team as bowling coach for the same duration, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said in a statement.

The duo will begin their tenure with the home series against Sri Lanka in March, the BCB said. Hemp, 53, who scored more than 15,000 runs in first-class cricket for Glamorgan, Free State and Warwickshire, and represented Bermuda in 24 one-day internationals, is currently in charge of Bangladesh's high-performance team.

He was the head coach of the Pakistan women's team from 2020 to 2022, and was also the head coach of the Victoria State women's team and the Melbourne Stars in the Women's Big Bash League. New bowling coach Adams, 48, who replaces South African great Allan Donald in the role, represented New Zealand in 47 matches across all formats. He also worked as the New Zealand bowling coach in the recent Twenty20 series against Pakistan, and was Australia's assistant coach in the 2022-23 series against South Africa. Former Sri Lanka batsman Chandika Hathurusinghe is currently the head coach of the Bangladesh men's team. — AFP

'New-look' England risk familiar Six Nations failings

LONDON: For all the talk of a post-World Cup reset, England face the prospect of yet more Six Nations stagnation after a stark wake-up call against Scotland. If Steve Borthwick's men lose against champions Ireland next month and fall to France, they would end up with two wins and three defeats in the tournament for the fourth year in a row.

England finished third at last year's World Cup, raising hopes they were at last on the right track. They followed that up with narrow victories over Italy and Wales in their opening two matches of the Six Nations, arguably the easiest of their fixtures.

But Saturday's 30-21 defeat at Murrayfield suggests England's run to the closing stages of the global showpiece may have been as much to do with a lopsided draw as their own qualities. Since Borthwick succeeded Eddie Jones as England coach in December 2022, the team have yet to beat a side above them in the world rankings.

And they have not scored more than two tries in

South Korea's Ko eyeing world hat-trick

SINGAPORE: Defending champion Ko Jin-young is aiming for an unprecedented "three-peat" when the HSBC Women's World Championship tees off in Singapore on Thursday. After finishing tied for 20th at the LPGA Thailand event on Sunday, Ko returns to her happy hunting ground hoping to become the first player to win three consecutive titles at the tournament dubbed "Asia's major".

The world number six from South Korea won both the 2022 and 2023 editions by just two shots and expects another closely fought contest as she aims for a 16th LPGA Tour title. "There are a lot of good players in the field and everyone is looking to win this tournament, including myself," the 28-year-old Ko told reporters at Sentosa Golf Club.

"I cannot control how they play but the only thing I can do is to try my best and see what happens from there. "I played the back nine today, and there

has been a little bit of changes in the pin positions from last year. The bunkers also seem a little bigger.

"It's not easy to play this golf course but if I can hit a lot of fairways, and greens and make many birdies like last year, I'll be okay," said the former world number one. Having struggled with wrist injuries in recent seasons, Ko is pleased to be back and healthy as she defends her title against an elite field that features 15 of the world's top 20, including world number one Lilia Vu from the United States.

"I had a lot of injuries the last three years. But I feel it's getting better in the last two years," she said. "I'm just very happy that I'm injury-free now and able to play golf." In-form Patty Tavatanakit is hoping to overcome fatigue as she chases her own treble of victories after winning back-to-back titles in Saudi Arabia and Thailand in the past fortnight.

"I'm tired. There has been a lot of

the preparation so far. We're in this moment where all the operational plans are ready.

"We have learned from the test events, and we are now in the moment where what we need to focus on is the fine-tuning of some of the operations. We are all focused on the promotion of the Games," he added. To achieve the goal of full stadiums in Paris, the IPC are deploying a myriad of campaigns through different channels such as social media, traditional media and national Paralympic committees to spread the word and "(make) people raise the excitement around the Games... (and be) aware, informed, wanting to buy tickets and to watch it on TV". Contrary to the Olympics, ticket sales for Paralympics typically soar closer to the start of the Games. At the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, organizers reported a strong spike in purchaser appetite in the weeks leading up to the event, with the overall number of tickets sold doubling over a 48-hour period two weeks before the Games opened.

If ticket sales are currently following "a normal graphic line for the Paralympics", Parsons said media coverage for the Games had already surpassed that of previous editions. Broadcasting agreements have been secured in more than 160 nations and territories, constituting the "biggest number ever", he said.

Paralympics chief hopes for full stadiums, extensive TV coverage

PARIS: International Paralympic Committee president Andrew Parsons has told AFP he hopes the Paralympics in Paris will take place in full stadiums and predicted the TV coverage would be the most extensive in history.

The 16th Summer Paralympics take place in the French capital from August 28 to September 8, just over two weeks after the Olympics. In an interview six months before they open, Parsons said his priority was to ensure the competition attracts packed audiences.

Less than one million tickets out of a total of 2.8 million have been sold so far, but the IPC president insisted that was a "normal" situation this long before a Paralympics. "We are working with the organizing committee to make sure that we have full stadiums in Paris," said Parsons, a Brazilian who has been in charge of the IPC since 2017.

"We have some sports that are nearly sold out. We are satisfied where we are, but of course we need to push for more. "We are very pleased with

a game since defeating minnows Chile in September. Saturday's reverse in Edinburgh meant England had lost four successive Championship matches against Scotland — a country with just two professional clubs — for the first time since 1896.

In pleading for patience, Borthwick is repeating a refrain that became all too familiar to England fans during the latter stages of Jones' reign. And while he often refers to his "new side", nine of England's 23-man matchday squad against Scotland on Saturday were aged 29 or over.

Half-backs Danny Care and George Ford were winning their 99th and 94th England caps in Edinburgh, with a front row featuring captain Jamie George boasting a combined tally of more than 250 appearances. Borthwick's men surged into an early 10-0 lead at Murrayfield thanks to a well-worked try by George Furbank. But a series of mistakes followed in a match in which they made a similar number of handling errors.

"We have to look at what changed after (the first 20 minutes)," Borthwick said. "What I want (to discover) when we debrief the players, is after that first 20, why we went and played in a manner that was not the way we played the first 20.

"What changed? What in the thought processes altered to try and do something different, that led to that spike in the error rate?" — AFP



SINGAPORE: South Korea's Ko Jin-young attends a press conference ahead of the HSBC Women's World Championship golf tournament at Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore on February 27, 2024. — AFP

travelling and golf. But I'm really excited to be back in Singapore to tee it up in front of the Singapore fans this weekend," said the 24-year-old Thai. "I feel like everything is coming together and I have been performing really well," she added.

"I've been working very hard on making everything a little bit sharper off the tee, approach and around the greens." The US LPGA Tour completes a three-tournament Asian swing in China next week at the Blue Bay tournament on Hainan Island. — AFP

Geopolitical ramifications

In the wake of the decision to partially ban the Russian and Belarusian national committees from the Paralympics over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Parsons said the IPC were still ironing out the final details that will allow some athletes to compete as neutrals. "The decision also tasked the governing board to develop the eligibility criteria and the conditions that will be placed on neutral athletes," he said. "So, we are still working on that. We still have time." He said the IPC "cannot only copy and paste what the IOC did" in banning most Russian and Belarusian competitors from the Paris Olympics over the situation in Ukraine. "But, of course, we can learn from them and see what is feasible in our movement and what is not."

Conversely, Zionist entity and Palestinian competitors are both set to participate in Paris despite the ongoing war in Gaza, according to Parsons. "The national Paralympic committees of Palestine and of Zionist entity have not used the Paralympic movement (for) any kind of political messages. So far there is nothing to report on both NPCs. No investigation, no suspension, anything like that," he said. The IPC president also addressed potential fears regarding security in Paris, saying he was confident in the authorities' ability to "provide a safe environment, not only for our athletes but for spectators, volunteers, everyone working in the Games". — AFP



EDINBURGH: Scotland's wing Duhan van der Merwe (R) tackles England's wing Tommy Freeman (C) during the Six Nations international rugby union match between Scotland and England at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, Scotland. — AFP

Sports

Dybala hat-trick lifts Roma as Lazio slip-up in Tuscany

Roma are sixth with 44 points, four points off Bologna

ROME: Paulo Dybala scored his first hat-trick in a Roma jersey in a 3-2 win over Torino in Serie A on Monday to keep the capital city side's Champions League ambitions alive. But Lazio stuttered in Tuscany, missing a chance to close the gap on their city rivals with a 2-1 defeat at Fiorentina.

Roma are sixth with 44 points, four points off Bologna who occupy the final Champions League berth. Fiorentina move up to seventh, three points behind Roma after overtaking Lazio, who drop to eighth spot.

England defender Chris Smalling got his first start for Roma in nearly six months. But former Juventus forward Dybala was in sparkling form days after the Romans advanced past Feyenoord into the Europa League last 16.

"The talent of the champion came out. Players like Paulo are decisive and for me they should never be questioned," said Roma coach Daniele De Rossi. "We knew that it would be tough after the hard work on Thursday."

Dybala got his opening goal from the penalty spot three minutes before the break in a tight game in the Stadio Olimpico. Duvan Zapata revived Torino hopes two minutes later, heading

into goal to keep the visitors in the game at the half-time whistle.

Dybala once again came to the rescue, curling in a second after 57 minutes, completing his hat-trick 12 minutes later following good work from substitute Romelu Lukaku. For Dybala it was the seventh hat-trick of his career, and first since October 2018 in the Champions League for Juventus.

Dean Huijsen inadvertently turned the ball into his own net with two minutes to go setting up a tense finale. But De Rossi's side held on for back-to-back wins after their painful 4-2 defeat to leaders Inter Milan two weeks ago. "Of course we could have suffered less, there are games to kill off, we could have managed it a little better until the end, but I'm satisfied, I saw good things," said De Rossi.

Meanwhile Fiorentina came from behind to see off Lazio despite rattling the woodwork three times and missing a penalty. Luis Alberto put Lazio ahead after 45 minutes but Michael Kayode and Giacomo Bonaventura hit back with two goals in an eight minute spree after the hour mark. — AFP



ROME: Roma's Serbian goalkeeper #99 Mile Svilar makes a save in front of teammate Roma's English defender #06 Chris Smalling during the Italian Serie A football match between AS Roma and Torino. — AFP

Women's World Cup holders Spain eye Nations League title

SEVILLE: Reigning world champions Spain can claim another title on Wednesday when they face France in the final of the inaugural UEFA Women's Nations League, while the Netherlands and Germany meet to decide who will join them in qualifying for the Paris Olympics.

Spain's World Cup triumph in Sydney last August ended up being somewhat overshadowed by Spanish football federation boss Luis Rubiales's forced kiss on midfielder Jenni Hermoso after the final against England.

Rubiales recently had a three-year ban from football upheld by FIFA and is also set to go in trial over the kiss, while the Spain team—led by Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati—have tried to keep the focus on football. Under new coach Montse Tome, Spain comfortably topped their Nations League group ahead of Italy, Sweden and Switzerland, and then defeated the Netherlands 3-0 in Seville in last Friday's semi-final.

Winning through to the final also allowed them to take one of two qualifying spots open to European nations for the women's football tournament at the Olympics. It is the first time they have qualified for the Games.

However, star Barcelona midfielder Bonmati believes Spain's World Cup success has not had the hoped-for impact on the women's game in the country. "Unfortunately I can't say a lot of things have changed," Bonmati said in an interview with French sports daily L'Equipe. "We have the example of the English, when they won the Euro (in 2022). We saw a real change following their success at a nationwide level."

'Served no purpose'

"It had repercussions, and there was more investment in the domestic league. The stadiums are full when England play. It makes me jealous



SEVILLE: Spain's midfielder #03 Vicky Lopez and teammates celebrate their victory at the end of the UEFA Women's Nations League semi-final football match between Spain and Netherlands at the La Cartuja stadium in Seville. — AFP

because I can't say the same thing has happened here. "There are still so many things to do here and I have the impression that the World Cup has not served any purpose."

She complained that the match against the Netherlands was moved at short notice from Cadiz to Seville, where the final will also be played. "We were supposed to play in Cadiz and in the end we changed the venue to La Cartuja. That wouldn't happen with the boys."

France had already qualified for the Olympics automatically as the host country and Herve Renard's team are now hoping to win a first international title in the Nations League to set them up for the Games.

The Netherlands entertain Germany in Heerenveen in the third-place play-off with the winner of that game also progressing to Paris 2024. Ger-



TOKYO: Japan's players take part in a training session ahead of their AFC Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament 2024 football match against North Korea at the National Stadium in Tokyo on February 27, 2024. — AFP

ter Japan's football association asked Asian officials to move it from Pyongyang over a lack of operational transparency and a scarcity of flights.

The venue was not confirmed until just days before the game and Japan captain Saki Kumagai criti-

cised officials for leaving it so late. The North Korean team arrived in Tokyo for the return leg a day earlier than Japan and were greeted at the airport by a large group of their fans.

North Korean supporters are also expected to come out in force for the game and Ri said "it won't be like an away game—it will be like we're coming home". "We have a lot of young players and this is their first time in Japan," he said. "They are in a foreign country so they feel some anxiety but our compatriots coming to meet them at the airport really made them happy."

After flopping at last year's World Cup, in which they exited in the group stage, their form has improved under veteran interim coach Horst Hrubesch, who took Germany's men to the final of the 2016 Olympics.

However, the Dutch — whose coach Andries Jonker used to manage Wolfsburg in the men's German Bundesliga—are hoping to make the most of home advantage at the Abe Lenstra Stadion. "We still have a chance," of reaching the Olympics, said captain Sherida Spitse after the semi-final. "We are very happy with that. We are playing at home with the crowd behind us." — AFP

Japan won the silver medal at that year's tournament but they missed out on qualification for the Rio Games four years later. They were eliminated in the quarter-finals at the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021. — AFP

Japan stay focused

North Korea returned to international football at last year's Asian Games for the first time since before the coronavirus pandemic and lost 4-1 to Japan in the final in Hangzhou. They have qualified for the Olympics twice before, with their most recent appearance coming at the 2012 London Games.

Japan won the silver medal at that year's tournament but they missed out on qualification for the Rio Games four years later. They were eliminated in the quarter-finals at the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021. — AFP

Bayern's Eberl says Alonso pursuit counts for nothing

MUNICH: New Bayern Munich sporting director Max Eberl said Tuesday that his previous attempt to sign Xabi Alonso for Borussia Moenchengladbach does not necessarily mean the German champions will target the Spaniard.

Bayern on Monday named Eberl as managing director of sport until 2027. The 50-year-old held similar roles at Borussia Moenchengladbach and RB Leipzig, where he was known for spotting exciting young players.

But Eberl's first task is to find Bayern a new coach, with Thomas Tuchel set to leave in the summer. "We have to put the puzzle together, with players and a new coach," Eberl told reporters. Former Bayern midfielder and current Bayer Leverkusen coach Alonso, who has his unbeaten side on course for a first-ever Bundesliga title, has been heavily linked with the job.

Eberl tried to bring Alonso to Gladbach in 2021, when he was in charge of Real Sociedad's B team. Eberl on Tuesday said he "was not going to comment on names" but admitted he was a long-term admirer of the former Spain international.

"During my talks with Xabi three years ago, he was the coach of the (Real Sociedad) second team. "He told me it was a touch too early, 'I have to get some more experience here', and that's what I really liked about him."

"But you can't draw any conclusions between that and today." In addition to Alonso, German media have linked former Real Madrid coach and France's 1998 World Cup winner Zinedine Zidane with Bayern.

Eberl said rebuilding the club was "not rocket science" but insisted he is "not the saviour". Eberl came through Bayern's youth system and played one senior match for the club before leaving for Bochum. "It's a huge joy for me—it's great to come home," he said.

A run of three straight losses cost coach Tuchel his job. Bayern said Tuchel would leave the club "by mutual consent" but the coach told reporters on Saturday he would have liked to stay at the club. Bayern sit eight points behind Leverkusen with 11 games to play this season and are in danger of a last-16 exit in the Champions League, with a 1-0 deficit after the first leg against Lazio. — AFP



MUNICH: (From left) Bayern Munich's President Herbert Hainer, New Sport director Max Eberl, Bayern Munich's CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen and Bayern Munich's board member Michael Diederich pose in the Allianz stadium after a press conference to present Eberl as sport director of the German first division Bundesliga football club FC Bayern Munich in Munich on February 27, 2024. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics

Clinics

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

Change of Name

I, MOHAMED SHAFIQUE, Holder of Indian Passport No. Z5425958 Having Permanent Address Khajamiya Chl Bandra Plot Nr Mahfile Mohamadi Jogeshwari, Mumbai, Pin: 400060, Maharashtra, India, India Residing In Kuwait At Present, Hereby Declare That Henceforth My Name Will Be Read As Under: Given Name MOHAMMED SHAFIQUE And Surname SHAIKH. (# 28/02/2024)

I, ANTONIO JOSE D CUNHA, holder of passport No. M6716579 do hereby change my name to ANTONIO JOSE (as given name) DA CUNHA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name ANTONIO JOSE DA CUNHA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#5167 28/02/2024)

I, RAHUL, holder of Passport No. R5199093 do hereby change my name to Rahul Krishan (as given name) Krishan (as surname) for all purposes I will henceforth be known in the name Rahul Krishan and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. My address H. No. 106 Amar Garden bypass Jalandhar, Pin-144004, Punjab, India (#5168 28/02/2024)

I, CHRISTOPHER ALBERT D CUNHA, holder of Passport No. M4635571 do hereby change my name to CHRISTOPHER ALBERT (as given name) DA CUNHA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name CHRISTOPHER ALBERT DA CUNHA. And I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#5166 28/02/2024)

Bowen hits treble as West Ham sink Brentford to end barren run

Ending their longest winless streak in all competitions since 1997



LONDON: Brentford's English striker #17 Ivan Toney attempts a diving header during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Brentford at the London Stadium, in London. — AFP

LONDON: Jarrod Bowen ended his goal drought with a hat-trick as West Ham beat struggling Brentford 4-2 to secure their first win in nine games on Monday. Bowen hadn't scored in the Premier League since December 23, but the England forward got back on track with a stylish treble at the London Stadium.

The 27-year-old struck twice in the first seven minutes before Neal Maupay got one back for Brentford in a frantic opening 13 minutes. Bowen completed the first hat-trick of his career after the interval before Emerson's superb long-range blast made it four. Yoane Wissa reduced the deficit late on, but David Moyes' side were able to celebrate their first victory since winning at Arsenal on December 28.

Ending their longest winless streak in all competitions since 1997 was essential for Moyes, who has come under fire from frustrated fans in recent weeks. Moyes is yet to decide whether to accept the club's

offer of a new contract, with his present deal expiring at the end of this season.

After losing their last three league games, including a 6-0 embarrassment against Arsenal, and crashing out of the FA Cup at second tier Bristol City, West Ham's climb to eighth place was a welcome boost for the beleaguered boss. "We needed to get three points. We played in a much more aggressive fashion tonight," Moyes said. "Jarrod was back to his best. He started the season really well, then got injured. If he keeps scoring he'll be in that England squad for the Euros."

On his future, Moyes added: "The big thing for me is to see what happens until the end of the season. I've enjoyed it here." Relegation-threatened Brentford had slipped down a place before kicking a ball on Monday after Everton's punishment for breaching Premier League financial rules was reduced from

10 points to six after an appeal. Brentford have now lost five of their last six league games and sit below Everton in 16th place, five points above the relegation zone. Asked about Brentford's perilous position in the table, boss Thomas Frank said: "I'm unbelievably irritated with our performance so that's my only focus. It's two steps back again. It's an inconsistent season so far."

Bowen sparkles

Bowen ended his drought in the fifth minute when Emerson's cross reached the forward 12 yards from goal and he lashed a fierce strike past Mark Flekken at his near post. He netted again two minutes later with a clinical first-time finish that arrowed into the far corner from Vladimir Coufal's low cross.

Brentford were on the ropes but they punched back in the 13th minute. Keane Lewis-Potter's pass

was perfectly weighted for Maupay, who surged into the West Ham area and stretched to lift his shot past Alphonse Areola from 10 yards.

West Ham blew a half-time lead in their 3-2 defeat at Brentford in November. But their determination to hold the lead this time might have been heightened by an angry exchange in the tunnel between West Ham assistant coach Kevin Nolan and Maupay when the teams came out for the second half.

Bowen put West Ham in complete control in the 63rd minute. Mohammed Kudus dinked a cross into the six-yard box, where the unmarked Bowen had found space to bury a clinical header past Flekken. Moyes' men got the fourth in the 69th minute when Kudus' cross was cleared to Emerson, who lashed a brilliant strike into the top corner from 25 yards. Wissa's 82nd minute curler was no consolation as Brentford slumped deeper into the relegation battle. — AFP

Williams slams refs after Pistons slump to agonizing defeat

NEW YORK: Detroit coach Monty Williams slammed NBA refs for making the "worst call of the season" after the Pistons slumped to an agonizing last-gasp 113-111 defeat to the New York Knicks on Monday. A thrilling clash at Madison Square Garden swung decisively in favor of the Knicks in the closing seconds, when officials failed to penalize New York's Donte DiVincenzo for a blatant foul on Pistons forward Ausar Thompson as the two tussled for a loose ball with Detroit leading 111-110.

The Knicks recovered possession in the chaos, allowing Jalen Brunson to move the ball to Josh Hart who drove in what turned out to be the winning layup before adding a free throw to seal victory. NBA referee James Williams later admitted officials had blundered and should have called a foul on DiVincenzo.

"Upon postgame review we determined that Thompson gets to the ball first, and then was deprived of the opportunity to gain possession of the ball," Williams told a pool reporter. "Therefore a loose ball foul should have been whistled on New York's Donte DiVincenzo."

But the official's mea culpa was unlikely to placate Pistons coach Williams, who was incandescent at the officiating howler in his post-game press conference. "We had a chance to win the game and the guy dove into (Thompson's) legs and there was a no call," Williams fumed.

"That's an abomination. You cannot miss that in an NBA game. Period," Williams said Detroit — who are bottom of the Eastern Conference with a league-worst 8-49 record — had raised officiating grievances with the NBA through formal channels earlier this season.

"The absolutely worst call of the season," Williams said. "Enough is enough. We've done it the right way. We've called the league. We've sent in clips. We're sick of hearing the same stuff over and over again.



NEW YORK: Josh Hart #3 of the New York Knicks heads for the net as Quentin Grimes #24 of the Detroit Pistons defends during the fourth quarter at Madison Square Garden in New York City. The New York Knicks defeated the Detroit Pistons 113-111. — AFP

"That situation is exhibit A to what we've been dealing with all season long ... You cannot dive into a guy's legs in a big-time game like that and there be a no-call. It's ridiculous and we're tired of it. "We want a fair game and that was not fair."

Brunson led the scoring for New York with 35 points, and 12 assists, with Hart adding 23 points and DiVincenzo 21. Shooting guard Cade Cunningham led Detroit's scorers with 32 points. In other games on Monday, a short-handed Miami Heat overturned a double-digit deficit to defeat the Sacramento Kings 121-110 in California.

Miami, missing the suspended Jimmy Butler, outscored Sacramento 36-19 in the third quarter to set up the win. Bam Adebayo was the pick of the Miami scorers with 28 points, while Jaime Jaquez Jr. added 26 in what was the Heat's fourth straight win.

The Kings' Domantas Sabonis finished with

14 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists to bag his league-leading 21st triple-double of the season. In Indianapolis, the Toronto Raptors upset the Indiana Pacers with a 130-122 win on the road.

R.J. Barrett led the Toronto scoring with 24 points on a night when seven players finished in double figures for the visitors. Gradey Dick produced a dazzling cameo from the bench with 18 points in just under 23 minutes, making 4-of-4 from three-point range and shooting 7-of-9 from the field.

Benedict Mathurin led the scoring with 34 points for the Pacers, while Tyrese Haliburton was held to nine points. Elsewhere, the Brooklyn Nets romped to a wire-to-wire 111-86 road win over the Memphis Grizzlies. The Nets led by 30 points at one stage after dominating the Grizzlies' shaky defense. Dennis Schroder led Brooklyn with 18 points—one of seven Nets players to finish in double figures. — AFP

US stunned by Mexico in women's Gold Cup upset

LOS ANGELES: Mexico stunned the United States with only their second-ever victory over the four-time world champions on Monday in the CONCACAF women's Gold Cup. Lizbeth Ovalle fired Mexico into the lead on 38 minutes, pouncing on a blunder by veteran US defender Becky Sauerbrunn before lifting a cool finish over goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher at Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California.

Substitute Mayra Pelayo-Bernal put the seal on the victory for Mexico with a superb individual goal two minutes into stoppage time, curling a long-range effort beyond Naeher to make it 2-0. The win was only the second victory for Mexico against the US women in 43 games since the teams first met in 1991. The Americans had won 40, with one draw and a lone defeat in 2010.

Ovalle's well-taken opener was also the first time that the US have conceded a goal against CONCACAF opposition in 33 games. Mexico's win means El-Tri will finish top of Group A in the 12-team tournament, with the US women advancing to this week-end's quarter-finals as runners-up. "I am proud of my players. They came out with daring, courage and enthusiasm to play a great game against a power like the United States," Mexico coach Pedro Lopez said. The Spaniard challenged his players to build on the victory for the remainder of the tournament as they head into the quarter-finals.

"I hope that this result is not something sporadic for Mexico but that we can repeat it," Lopez said. "This win won't mean anything if we don't advance to the semi-finals." The result was another jolt to the confidence of the US women as they attempt to rebuild in the wake of their earliest World Cup exit last year, to Sweden in the last 16. "We just didn't play nearly our best," veteran US striker Alex Morgan said afterwards. "I think we found some pockets here and there, but not nearly enough. "We didn't execute on the chances we had. I don't think we tested their goalkeeper. I think we got broken down way too easily and Mexico came to play today — they played really well. — AFP