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COP26 nations urged to adopt 'balanced' deal

Talks stumble on emission cuts, climate cash 'cliffhanger'

GLASGOW: Britain yesterday urged compromise among feuding COP26 delegates as it touted a "balanced" package to help avert the worst effects of climate change in what was meant to be the Glasgow summit's final hours. COP26 president Alok Sharma told delegates from nearly 200 countries that a draft summit text attempted to reconcile yawning gaps between rich emitters and developing nations that have hobbled the fortnight's discussions.

"Everyone has had a chance to have their say. I hope that colleagues will appreciate what is on the table," he said, presenting a third draft text. "While not every aspect will be welcomed by everyone, collectively, this is a package that really moves things forward for everyone," Sharma added. He added "it is my intention that we will close this COP this afternoon" - while allowing more time for haggling over technical issues.

After three nights of all-night negotiations that have blown COP26 past its scheduled finish of Friday, delegates are still trying to agree a deal to deliver greater emissions cuts and vital finance for vulnerable states. The new draft text released by Sharma's team urged nations to accelerate efforts to phase out unfiltered coal and "inefficient" fossil fuel subsidies.

Large emitters such as China, Saudi Arabia and Russia had tried to remove the mention of polluting fuels, according to delegates. But after resistance

from rich nations led by the United States and European Union, the draft text omitted any reference to a specific finance facility for "loss and damage" - the mounting cost of global warming so far - which has been a key demand of poorer nations.

The text noted "with deep regret" that wealthy nations had also failed to stump up a separate annual sum of \$100 billion they promised over a decade ago. It urged countries to pay up "urgently and through 2025". Greenpeace International chief Jennifer Morgan told AFP that the language on fossil fuels "is far from what is needed but sends a signal - I dare countries to take that out of the text right now".

"The US has to support the most vulnerable on the issue of loss and damage. They cannot avoid this issue any longer. Nor can the European Union," she added. "I would call on President (Joe) Biden to do what's right, and support the most vulnerable in helping them deal with their losses." There was no immediate comment from the US, but EU Commission vice president Frans Timmermans denied that the rich world had turned its back on the countries most at risk. "We have increased substantially our financial contribution, both in terms of the \$100 billion but also in terms of the adaptation fund," he told reporters. "But if there is more we can do, we will certainly try and help."

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GLASGOW: Performers from the Blue Rebels conduct a funeral ceremony at Glasgow Necropolis to symbolize the failure of the COP26 process at Glasgow Cathedral yesterday during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference. — AFP

Qatar to handle US interests in Afghanistan



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Al-Thani shake hands during a signing ceremony at the State Department on Friday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The United States said Friday it would set up an interests section in Afghanistan under Qatar, creating a more direct way to assist US citizens and engage with the Taliban after the embassy in Kabul was shuttered. The step marks the latest diplomatic win for Qatar, the wealthy Gulf state that has increasingly positioned itself as the pivotal US ally on Afghanistan.

Blinken signed an agreement with his Qatari counterpart to establish Qatar as the US protecting power in Afghanistan, an arrangement in which a third nation handles a country's interests in the absence of diplomatic relations with the host country. The United States has voiced cautious optimism about dialogue with the Taliban but has made clear that reopening the embassy - which would imply recognition - is not on the cards.

Qatar, home to a major US military base, has played a significant role both in diplomacy and evacuations as the United States ended its 20-year war in Afghanistan. Around half of the 124,000 Westerners and Western-allied Afghans

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5 protesters killed in Sudan crackdown

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces killed at least five demonstrators yesterday in a crackdown on anti-coup protests, medics said, after the military tightened its grip by forming a new ruling council. "Two more people were killed including an 18-year-old... and one 35-year-old... by bullets of the putschist military council," the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors said. Earlier, the committee had said that three other

protesters were killed during yesterday's rallies.

The pro-democracy protests come nearly three weeks after top general Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan ousted the government, detained the civilian leadership and declared a state of emergency. Gunshots were heard and tear gas fired as security forces sought to break up demonstrations in Khartoum and neighboring cities, witnesses and AFP correspondents said. "No, no to military rule", "Civilian (rule) is the people's choice", and "Down with the entire council", protesters in southern Khartoum shouted.

Tens of thousands rallied nationwide, with protests taking place in the cities of Atbara, Port Sudan and Wad

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KHARTOUM: People gesture and chant slogans as they protest against the military coup in Sudan yesterday. — AFP

Sara Duterte to run for vice president

MANILA: Philippines "First Daughter" Sara Duterte yesterday entered the vice presidential race for the 2022 elections, in a surprise move that could boost the chances of presidential hopeful Ferdinand

Marcos Jr winning the country's highest office. Outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term, also flagged plans to contest the vice presidency - triggering chaotic scenes at the Commission on Elections office handling last-minute changes to candidacies ahead of a Nov 15 cutoff.

The elder Duterte "will file his certificate of candidacy for the vice presidency on Monday, that's what he said," presidential communications chief Martin Andanar told local broadcaster ABS-CBN. But he added: "I would like to believe that that is the

plan for now. We don't know if this will be the same plan by tomorrow or by Monday."

Sara Duterte, 43, had been widely expected to seek the presidency in a bid to succeed her father, and potentially protect him from criminal charges in the Philippines and International Criminal Court investigators probing his deadly drug war. Her tilt for the country's second-highest office was immediately endorsed by the party of Marcos Jr, the son and namesake of the former dictator, to be his running mate in the poll.

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Tunisia town revolts over trash crisis

AGAREB, Tunisia: As tear gas and protest cries filled the air in the Tunisian town of Agareb, Mabrouka Ben Ibrahim vowed to demonstrate for her daughter, whose death she blames on a nearby rubbish dump. Younsa, 21, died in 2019 after being bitten by a mosquito that came from the toxic trash site, Ben Ibrahim said. "I lost my daughter and I don't want other families to lose their children because of the filth in this landfill," the 59-year-old said.

Residents say rubbish dumped at the site, including dangerous industrial and medical refuse, has

caused a string of diseases from cancer to vision problems and infertility. Authorities decided to close the site in September after declaring it full but reversed course on Monday, prompting angry street demonstrations that degenerated into clashes with security forces.

In the early hours of Tuesday, a protester died of what relatives said was tear gas inhalation, although authorities have blamed his death on an unrelated health condition. The protests come amid a garbage crisis across Sfax province that has seen refuse piling up on pavements after the closure of the Agareb site, the province's main dump.

Residents say the site, around three kilometers from the town center and stretching over 35

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TUNIS: Maamoun Ajmi, a 29-year-old architect, displays a caricature during a sit in on Nov 11, 2021 to express solidarity with the town of Agareb over the reopening of a rubbish dump. — AFP

Local

Kuwait renews Arabs' commitment to Libya's unity: Foreign Minister

'Arabs reject external interference into Libya's affairs'

PARIS: Kuwait, as head of the Arab League Council for the 156th session, renewed the Arabs' commitment to Libya's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said on Friday. This came during Sheikh Ahmad's speech at the international conference on backing Libya held in the French capital, Paris. He said that the Arabs reject all kinds of external interference into Libya's affairs, affirming the commitment of the Arab League to continuing fully support to Libya's presidential council and the government of national unity to help them implement the roadmap hold presidential and parliamentary elections as planned on December 24, 2021. They also support the outcomes of the Skhirat Agreement and Libya's stability initiative to implement the Security Council Resolutions 2510, 2570, 2571 and the results of the Berlin 1 and Berlin 2 conferences, he added.

He noted, "We welcome, in this context, Libyan High Elections Commission's announcement of opening the door for presidential and parliamentary elections to hold them as planned". The conference comes in continuation of the international efforts aiming to back Libya and reiterate commitment of the international community towards Libya to achieve its security and stability, he said. The inter-

national community renewed its full commitment to supporting everything that would lead to Libya's security and stability, he pointed out. "We followed with great attention the positive developments made over the past period that included the ceasefire, the unification of military and security institutions and others," he said.

In this context, Kuwait has lauded efforts, supported by the international community and made by brothers in Libya, aiming to end the split of institutions that threatens Libya's stability and its neighbors for more than a decade, he stated. "We extolled results of the joint military committee (5+5) held in Cairo earlier this month on establishing a communication and coordination mechanism to support the implementation of an action plan of the withdrawal of mercenaries, and foreign fighters and forces from Libya in a balanced gradual process," he said.

He expressed hope that security, prosperity and peace would prevail in Libya to meet aspirations of Libyans. The Kuwaiti minister conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who wished a successful conference. He expressed appreciation to the French President Emmanuel Macron and his people for the reception, hospitality and distinguished preparation for the conference. — KUNA



PARIS: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah is seen in a group photo with world leaders at the international conference on backing Libya, held in Paris, France. — KUNA

First Kuwait PPP conference kicks off virtually tomorrow

KUWAIT: The proceedings and the accompanying exhibition of the '1st Kuwait PPP Conference' commence virtually tomorrow. "We are pleased that the efforts of NoufEXPO and the KFECH brought us successfully to commencement of the conference, which kicks off tomorrow, Monday and continues until Tuesday. The PPPKW will discuss issues related to the various aspects of public-private partnership projects," said Badr Al-Salman, President of the Kuwait Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses.

High-level sponsorship

Salman added, "On this occasion, we extend our gratitude and appreciation to the conference's patron, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait. We are also pleased to host Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, representing His Highness at the opening ceremony. We extend our sincere thanks for his support for the conference. It is also our pleasure that Dr Rana Al-Fares, Minister of Public Works, Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology, will share her opening keynote with the audience."

Conference proceedings

Speaking about the Conference proceedings, Salman said that the conference hosts speakers in various legislative, legal, financial, planning, and implementation aspects of partnership projects. In addition, PPPKW will discuss bidding mechanisms, dispute resolution methods and procedures, and transparency requirements. The conference will host many global, regional, and local leaders of partnership organizations, including the United Nations and institutions involved in implementing partnership projects. PPPKW represents a significant opportunity to bring together regulatory bodies, government institutions, and private sector institutions to contribute and develop an optimum road map towards implementing the new Kuwait Vision 2035.

Invitation specialists

Salman also invited academics and specialists to share

proposals or summaries of their research (up to two pages) related to partnership projects with the PPPKW's Scientific Committee on info@noufexpo.com.kw. Their input will help the Committee formulate the final conference's recommendations, which will be presented to related higher authorities.

Acknowledgment message

At the end of his statement, Salman thanked all the institutions that contributed to the conference: sponsors, government agencies, private sector organizations, speakers, and guests. In particular, he noted the sponsors: the Strategic Sponsors Burgan Bank and Kuwait Finance House (KFH), The Platinum Sponsors SSH and Ahmadiyah Contracting and Trading Co., the Gold Sponsors Boubyan Bank, Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN), and Alghanim International, and the Silver Sponsor Gulf Consult. A thanks message also went to the participating organization in Kuwait: the Ministry of Public Works, the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Kuwait



Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah



Badr Al-Salman

Municipality, and Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP). Salman also sent a gratitude message to the international, regional, and local specialists who shared extensive expertise during the event and all participants and attendees through cyberspace from inside and outside Kuwait. Finally, he thanked Al-Hamad Legal Group - PPPKW Knowledge Partner, Al-Anba Newspaper - the exclusive media sponsor, and the organizing teams from NoufEXPO and KFECH. Salman invited those wishing to participate and attend the conference to register via this link <https://events.meetworld.com/pro/login/97950651>.

5 protesters killed in Sudan...

Continued from Page 1

Madani, as well as in the states of Kassala and North Kordofan, witnesses said. "The military should not have anything to do with politics, they should safeguard the constitution which Burhan himself has turned against," said protester Ahmed Abdelrahman in Khartoum.

The military's Oct 25 takeover drew widespread international condemnation, as did a deadly crackdown on demonstrators demanding it restore Sudan's democratic transition. Any hopes the demonstrators had that the military would back down were dashed on Thursday, when Burhan named himself as the head

of a new ruling Sovereign Council that excludes the country's main civilian bloc, triggering more condemnation from the West.

The protests occurred despite the heavy presence of military, police and paramilitary forces in Khartoum, where bridges connecting the capital to neighboring cities were sealed off. The security forces also blocked roads in the capital leading to the army headquarters, the site of a 2019 mass sit-in that led to the ouster of autocrat Omar Al-Bashir.

Information Minister Hamza Baloul, who was briefly detained in the military takeover, took part in yesterday's protests in Khartoum. "The Sudanese people have decided to create a civilian nation and there is no will stronger than that of the Sudanese people's," he said in a video posted online, urging them to press on with "peaceful demonstrations until the fall" of the coup leaders.

Demonstrations were also organized elsewhere around the world. — AFP

decades. "The number of cancer cases has shot up." Even as the smell of tear gas dissipates, the stench of refuse still hangs over the town of 40,000. "During the summer and throughout the year, the mosquitos and the disgusting smell never leave us. We can't even open our windows," demonstrator Adel Ben Faraj said. The dump, situated in the middle of a nature reserve, receives more than 620 tons of waste every day, according to Ines Labiadh of the FTDES rights group.

Ben Ammar said the site was a destination for "waste of all kinds, including medical waste, amputated body parts and even fetuses". The environment ministry said medical waste was treated before going into the dump. — AFP

Amadou Sebery Toure, head of the G77+China negotiating bloc, told AFP the proposal was "put forward by the entire developing world, representing six of every seven people on Earth". Alden Meyer, senior associate at climate policy think tank E3G, said loss and damage talks were a "cliffhanger moment" that could jeopardize the UK's goal of wrapping the summit up.

Developing nations say it is unfair for the summit to produce an unbalanced agreement heavily weighted toward "mitigation" - how economies can ditch fossil fuels by 2050. They want specific instruction on how they can meet the bill of decarbonizing while also adapting to the natural disasters supercharged by global warming.

Another key sticking point are rules governing carbon markets. Countries that benefited from a global framework predating Paris want to be able to carry over credits into the new deal. There is still disagreement over rules preventing double counting of carbon savings and to what extent the private sector is governed by guidelines agreed between nations. — AFP

Sara Duterte to run for...

Continued from Page 1

"This is to confirm that Mayor Inday Sara Duterte through her representative, has filed her Certificate of Candidacy for Vice President under Lakas-CMD (party)," her spokeswoman Christina Garcia Frasco said on Facebook, confirming the Commission on Elections' announcement. For months, Sara had insisted she wanted to serve another term as Davao City mayor in the family's southern bailiwick - the position her father held before he was elected president in 2016 - despite leading in surveys of voter preferences for the next president.

Speculation about her plans intensified this week after she suddenly withdrew from the mayoral contest. She also quit her regional party and joined Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, the national political party of her close ally and former president Gloria Arroyo. Sara's decision to run for vice president leaves Marcos Jr in a strong position in the presidential race.

Qatar to handle US interests...

Continued from Page 1

blown out of the country in the waning days of the US military involvement transited through Qatar.

"Let me again say how grateful we are for your leadership, your support on Afghanistan, but also to note that our partnership is much broader than that," Blinken told Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. "Qatar is a crucial partner in promoting regional stability," he said, pointing as well to Qatari assistance to the Palestinians.

Blinken said that the State Department has reached out to all verified US citizens or permanent residents still in Afghanistan with offers to leave, arranging the departure of more than 580 people since the Taliban victory. But the issue remains politically sensitive and has become the top US priority with the Taliban, although Washington says that any future relationship also would depend on the Islamists addressing concerns on the treatment of women and the role of Al-Qaeda.

The US pointman on Afghanistan, Thomas West, met Thursday in Islamabad with Taliban foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi alongside representatives of Pakistan, Russia and China - three nations that have

Popularly known as Bongbong, Marcos Jr has been a front runner in voter polls, ahead of celebrity mayor Francisco Domagoso, boxing great Manny Pacquiao and incumbent Vice President Leni Robredo. In the Philippines, the president and vice president are elected separately. There was speculation Sara had sought to persuade Marcos Jr to slide back into the vice presidential race, as the two clans sought to form a formidable alliance.

The Marcos family stronghold stretches across the country's north and center, while the Dutertes enjoy widespread support in the south. But Marcos Jr, who was seen walking arm-in-arm with Sara at a wedding south of Manila on Thursday, told reporters, "I will continue with my plan. I entered this race to run for president". Political analyst Richard Heydarian told AFP: "Duterte running for the vice presidency... more or less seals Bongbong Marcos' position as the top contender, the candidate to beat in these elections."

The elder Duterte had previously said he would contest the vice presidency, before changing his mind and announcing plans to retire from politics. But yesterday, Duterte accompanied his close aide Senator Christopher Go to the Commission of Elections office. Go officially entered the presidential contest, after previously registering for the vice presidential race. — AFP

encouraged greater cooperation with the militants. A joint statement called for continued engagement to encourage "moderate and prudent policies".

Qatar has sent 15 charter flights into Afghanistan since the Taliban victory and, along with Turkey, has offered to repair the Kabul airport, which officials warn may soon be in complete disrepair. "They have a dire need for help, especially when the winter is coming," Al-Thani said of Afghanistan. "Abandoning Afghanistan would be a big mistake," he said. "We believe engaging with the Taliban, since they are in power right now, is very important for us to ensure that our facilitation for humanitarian assistance is moving smoothly."

Qatar took on the expanded role on Afghanistan just as Saudi Arabia, backed by other Gulf Arab monarchies including the United Arab Emirates, was trying to isolate it over concerns that included Doha's relationship with Iran. Despite Qatar's historic support of engagement, Al-Thani voiced objections to another initiative also opposed by the United States - normalizing relations with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on Tuesday met in Damascus with Assad, part of the momentum to restore relations amid a growing conclusion that Assad has won after a brutal, decade-long civil war that has left nearly half a million people dead. "We hope that countries will be discouraged from taking further steps with the Syrian regime," Al-Thani said, while saying that others had the "sovereign right" to their own decisions. — AFP

Tunisia town revolts over...

Continued from Page 1

hectares (85 acres), has become a public health disaster since it opened in 2008. "Two years after it was opened, we started seeing an increase in allergies, respiratory diseases and miscarriages as a direct result of burning of trash and the release of toxic gases" from the site, said Bassem Ben Ammar, a doctor who has worked in the town for two

COP26 nations urged to adopt...

Continued from Page 1

Saleemul Huq, director of the ICCCAD climate NGO, said the British COP26 presidency had been "bullied" overnight into rejecting specific loss and damage funding. "The UK's words to the vulnerable countries have been proven to be totally unreliable," he said. The delegates in Glasgow are trying to hammer out how to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement goals to limit temperature rises to 1.5-2 degrees Celsius.

Countries already battered by climate disasters such as record-breaking drought, flooding and storms are demanding they be compensated separately for loss and damage, and have made it a red line issue. However, a proposal to include the creation of a dedicated facility to administer financial support was quashed by the United States and EU, delegates said.

Local

Diabetics could reach 784 million worldwide by 2045

Diabetes in Kuwait reached around 23 percent in 2019

KUWAIT: Diabetes is a ruthless chronic illness affecting the lives of millions across the world. According to the tenth report by International Diabetes Federation (IDF), the number of diabetic patients around the world are expected to rise from 537 million adults today to 784 million by 2045. The United Nations' General Assembly in 2007 chose November 14th to be the International Day for Diabetics, to recognize the urgent need to further multilateral efforts and encourage the betterment of human health by facilitating the attainment of medication, and education in field of healthcare. Diabetes imposes a grave danger to all efforts made to achieve internationally agreed upon objectives, aiming to boost healthcare systems, and put forth national preventive policies.

On the occasion of the International Day for Diabetics, Consultant of Endocrinology and Diabetes, Fellow of Joslin's Diabetes Center in Harvard University, and Chief of Kuwait Diabetes Society, Dr Waleed Al-Dhahi said yesterday that diabetes is one of the most widespread non-infectious diseases in the world, and the gulf region ranks high in terms of diabetic numbers. Dr Dahi clarified that currently there are 537 million diabetic people around the world, ages between 20-79 and it is expected that numbers will rise to 784 million by 2045. He also indicated that the disease is responsible for around 6.7 million deaths this current year, i.e. one death every five seconds. Furthermore, he indicated that the disease caused the spending of around \$966 billion, or a 316 percent increase within the last 15 years.

A report in 2019 revealed that diabetes' spread in Kuwait has reached around 23 percent; up from 19 percent the previous year when there were nearly 400,000 diabetic patients in the country. Dr Amna Shaghoul, Consultant of Internal Medicine, Endocrinology and diabetes in the Ministry of Health (MoH), said meanwhile that according to the IDF report, the average of diabetes' spread in Kuwait reached 14.2 percent in 2006, which means that one in every seven people has diabetes. She also indicated that the percentage could reach 20 percent in case of people older than 79 years. Dr Shaghoul also pointed out that recent studies explore the deep-rooted connection between a person's lifestyle and the probability of becoming diabetic, adding that the probability of avoiding type two diabetes could reach 60 percent via a change of daily lifestyle.

Three types

Dr Dahi explained that there are three types of diabetes: Type one, type two, and gestational diabetes. Type one diabetes affects children and is quite widespread in Kuwait, as it ranks first in the Arab world and third globally. He indicated that it happens at an early age because of the pancreas ceasing to work and therefore comprising its ability to produce insulin. As for type two, it generally affects middle-aged people and is most prevalent type in Kuwait, as it is considered one of ten countries with highest numbers in cases around the world. Dr Dahi stated that this type could be a



Dr Waleed Al-Dhahi



Dr Amna Shaghoul



Dr Qais Al-Duwairi

result of genetics, obesity, or lack of movement and exercise, and it does not happen suddenly. Type two diabetes happens due to insufficient insulin production. The third type, gestational diabetes, is diagnosed during pregnancy and ends with giving birth.

Dr Dahi cited the genetic factor as the main reason for rising numbers of diabetics in Kuwait, as well as lack of exercise and poor nutritional habits. He also indicated that patients must have complete comprehension of the nature of the disease to avoid future complications. Dr Dahi recommended exercising for no less than 150 minutes per week, reducing fast absorbing carbohydrates and fats intake. He also urged patients at home to commit to routine check-ups to know



One death every five seconds

whether medication is working properly or the dosage must be adjusted. Patients must also follow up with diabetic foot examination, testing cholesterol levels, diabetic eye screening and measuring blood pressure.

Dr Dahi also touched on latest developments in the field of treating diabetes. He mentioned newly developed smart bumps for type one diabetes: it measures sugar levels and stops insulin secretion. The smart bump is available in Kuwait in addition to the adhesive patches. As for type two diabetes, Dr Dahi stated that many medications are available, some are weight reducing injections that adjust sugar levels in blood and is considered one of the best options, as well as new tablets that work on getting rid of sugar via urine, and are safe for the heart and kidneys. He stated that research on stem cells shows a bright future in treating type two diabetes, but has yet to be approved by scientific centers. However, Dr Dahi added, many centers override science and use it commercially. Dr Dahi cau-



KUWAIT: The Dasman Diabetes Institute. — KUNA



A machine used at a research lab in the Dasman Diabetes Institute.

tions against commercial use as long-term effects are not yet known. He indicated that Kuwait is a pioneer in the area in terms of combating diabetes, as it provides all types of medications, from tablets and bumps, to providing blood glucose monitors, and overseeing programs that aim to raise awareness on the matter in cooperation with Ministry of Health and Kuwait Diabetics Society.

Diabetes research

Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, General Director of Dasman Diabetes Institute, stated meanwhile that the institute is considered a comprehensive institute for research, treatment, and awareness in regards to diabetes. He added that the institute works in collaboration with MoH, many universities, and esteemed international institutions to prevent and combat dangers associated with the disease. Dr Duwairi illustrated the institute conducts research

and runs many projects revolving around diabetes and its various complications, amongst which is beating type two diabetes clinic, for patients with certain qualifications.

He also touched on ongoing research regarding the effect of diabetes on the brain, a study on the effects of lifestyle, and a study on effects of resistance training at home on body composition, muscle strength and diabetes management for type two patients. Dr Duwairi also mentioned that the institute is developing national record for diabetes in coordination with all primary medical centers and hospitals in Kuwait and conducting studies revolving round role of immunity, genetic factors and environmental components, obesity and lifestyle in relation to diabetes. He stated that more than 3,500 patients visited the institute in around 34,000 appointments since the beginning of this year. —KUNA

Kuwait Airways increases flights, resumes others in December

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways announced yesterday increasing commercial flights to some destinations and re-launching other flights effective December. Fayeze Al-Enezi, the KAC Public Relations and Media Director, said in a statement that the corporation rose the number of commercial flights to London at a rate of one per day, along with three to Cairo, four flights to Dubai and three others a week to New York. The KAC will resume flights to Bangkok at a rate of four per week as of November 29, in addition to four to Tehran on a weekly basis in December, along with two a week to Shiraz effective January. Moreover, it will re-stage flights to Alexandria and Sohag at a rate of three per week in December, added Enezi. Furthermore, the corporation has a plan to operate new routes and increase the commercial flights to a number of destinations starting early 2022. Enezi has affirmed that the KAC will continue to hike the number of its flights to meet mounting demand to destinations favored by the clients. — KUNA

Man dead after vehicle crashed into lamppost

KUWAIT: A man died when his vehicle crashed into a lamppost and flipped over, Kuwait Fire Force said yesterday. Mangaf firemen extracted the body and handed it to forensics, it added. An investigation was opened into the accident.

Meanwhile, a man was injured in a gas explosion caused by a leak in the diwaniya of his house, KFF reported yesterday. Sour fire station men responded, ventilated the place and secured it. The citizen was taken to hospital, it noted.

In the meantime, Hawally firemen put out a fire in an apartment in an eight-storey building. KFF also reported. The fire was on the eighth floor. The building was evacuated and no injuries were reported, KFF noted, adding that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.



Kuwait successful in combating coronavirus: Ambassador

BRUSSELS: There are several indicators proving that the steps and measure taken by the State of Kuwait to combat and face the coronavirus pandemic were successful, Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium, the EU and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi told a webinar titled "Pursuing Global Health Security after COVID-19", organized by the Brussels-based think tank Bussola Institute on Friday. He listed a number of these positive indicators, including an infection rate of less than two

percent, average daily deaths below one percent, and full vaccination rate of more than 80 percent for all people that are eligible. Budaiwi noted that Kuwait was rapidly approaching a complete return to normalcy and is in its fifth and final phase in combatting COVID-19. He pointed out that the Ministry of Health in Kuwait took necessary and creative measures in order to provide the medical staff with the essential equipment to deal with those infected with COVID-19.

The inter-governmental agencies took advanced steps in order to establish tracking programs and a well-organized medical monitoring system was established at all borders in Kuwait during the massive evacuating operation. Kuwait was one of the first countries that was able to secure vaccines and began vaccinating its population in December 2020. Moreover, Kuwait ensured that food security in the country was not affected by the pandemic. He said that Kuwait continues to support international efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Its total

contributions amounted to \$327.4 million, the latest of which was providing \$40 million dollars to the GAVI Alliance and the COVAX facility initiative, to enhance and fortify global health security.

Finally, Budaiwi said the international community needs to deal with a major problem that developing countries are facing in securing vaccines for their nationals, which unfortunately has attained crisis level in the African continent is below two percent which the international community seriously needs to take measures to protect those people. On a brighter note, the lesson learned from this pandemic is that humanity prevails under any circumstances, he concluded. Secretary General of Bussola Institute John Dennehy in his introductory remarks said the webinar would discuss how the development of good practices in Europe and the Gulf states through the course of the pandemic could assist in building effective leadership for global cooperation and multilateral action to ensure better preparedness for the next pandemic. — KUNA

News in brief

Kuwait records 11 days without COVID deaths

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 11 straight days without a single COVID-19 death after the country reported zero deaths on Friday. The last time Kuwait recorded a coronavirus-related death was on November 1, when the health ministry announced that total deaths reached 2,462. Meanwhile, the ministry announced only 24 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, bringing the total to 412,960. The number of patients receiving treatment at ICUs stood at four as of Friday, while there were 290 active cases and 17 patients at COVID-19 wards in hospitals, the ministry noted.

Kuwaitis in Netherlands urged to follow precautions

BRUSSELS: Kuwait's embassy in the Netherlands on Friday appealed to its nationals to abide by all precautionary measures and follow up health requirements imposed by Dutch authorities. The embassy urged Kuwaitis to call at any emergency at +31 6 39 37 41 57, the embassy said in a press statement. Dutch caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced Friday a partial lockdown in the Netherlands for three weeks to control the soaring number of COVID-19 cases.

Kuwait crude oil at \$82.57 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait crude oil fell 33 cents during Friday's trading to reach \$82.57 per barrel (pb) Friday, compared with \$82.90 pb the previous day, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said (KPC) yesterday. Brent crude fell 70 cents to reach \$82.17 pb and West Texas Intermediate went down 80 cents to \$80.79 pb.

Local

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Book highlights Suad Al-Sabah's human rights efforts

KUWAIT: Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House has published a book on veteran Kuwaiti poet Dr Suad Al-Sabah titled "Suad Al-Sabah... the human being... lover of homeland", written by former Egyptian minister and secretary general of the Arab Human Rights Organization (1986-2008) Mohammad Faeg.

"There are personalities who enrich our lives with joy, love and appreciation, and there is no doubt that Suad Al-Sabah is one such unique person who leaves

such an effect in all fields of activities that they get involved in," Faeg wrote in the book. "Suad Al-Sabah has dealt with many fields related to our lives through her poetry, writings and her many contributions to seminars and conferences that were held to discuss the concerns of our nation."

The book comes out as a panoramic journey on which Faeg takes the reader, moving between many phases in Suad Al-Sabah's

life of over 50 years of hard and continued work in many fields that were distinguished by challenges, perseverance and solid determination.

The 200-page book includes several comments by Arab writers and diplomats on the various aspects of Dr Suad's personality, including culture, of which she has been a supporter, financier, publisher and award giver, as well as a poet who proved to have a strong presence in the Arab creative scene. She is also a respected activist in the field of human rights and had an active role in establishing the Arab Organization for Human Rights. Furthermore, she is an exceptional lover of her homeland Kuwait and the Arab world in general, and is committed since the start to loyalty, truthfulness, simplicity and giving.

Many Arab personalities are quoted in the book, speaking about Dr Suad Al-Sabah's contributions, including Talal Abu Ghazaleh, who referred to her as "the lady of initiatives", the late novelist Ismail Fahad Ismail, who pointed to Dr Suad Al-Sabah's interest in human rights, and Yahya Al-Jamal, who commented on the establishment of the Arab Human Rights Organization.

Online registration for NBK Run continues

KUWAIT: The registration for National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) Run continues online through nbk.com/nbkrun. NBK Run is scheduled to kick off on Saturday December 4, 2021. NBK will award six participants alongside the grand draw for a new Nissan X - TERA car from the strategic partner, Al-Babtain Group.

The top three winners from both categories (women and men) will be awarded with KD 1,000, KD 700, KD 500 cash prizes. The bib-number for each participant will contain a step-counting chip to identify the winners' places. The results for NBK Run are supervised by the Event Management Company (SUFFIX).

"We are extremely thrilled to take our involvement with this exciting event to a new level. This year, NBK Run is marked by a variety of fun, entertainment filled and health awareness-raising activities. This sports event aim is to encourage and motivate each individual for running or even walking", said Yaqoub Al-Baqer, NBK Public Relations Manager. It's worth mentioning that, NBK Run is supported from Al-Babtain Group, Kuwait Municipality, Kuwait Fire Force and the Touristic Enterprises Company in addition to Ministries of Commerce, Health and Interior.

Applicants can then collect their assigned T-shirt and number at Al-Shaheed Park Multi-purpose Hall in Phase 1, next to Starbucks between 3:00 pm and 9:00 pm starting from Tuesday, November 30 until Thursday, December 2, 2021. The walk for both the female and male participants will start from the Green Island on the Gulf Road to the Shuwaikh Beach Park, parallel to the Gulf Road, next to KPC building for a distance of 11 kilometers.



Yaqoub Al-Baqer

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Participants compete during the UIM ABP-Aquabike World Championship in Kuwait yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's children, youth seek discipline, honor in martial arts

Trainers highlight importance of training at young age



KUWAIT: A Kyokushindo training session in action at a gym in Kuwait. —KUNA photos



Karate players perform a kata during a practice session at a gym in Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Children and youth in Kuwait are increasingly interested in the values of discipline and honor propagated by the martial arts, enrolling in various clubs and teams to develop their minds and bodies. Other than filling time with something beneficial, martial arts — in its various forms — bring a sense of commitment and self-worth for practitioners under the tutelage of capable instructors. A number of martial art experts said that it was paramount to start teaching at a young age to engrain the positive aspects of the art in the minds of practitioners.

Karate instructor Aladeen Far said that martial arts teach honor, good manners, and respect to oneself and society, reiterating that it was important to learn at a young age. Forming the character of the youngsters is very essential not only for a person, but also for social development in general, he noted, calling on parents to enroll children and youth in any martial arts that would benefit the younger generation holistically.

Ahmad Mandani, instructor in the art of Kyokushindo which is a hybrid of the full-contact Karate style of Kyokushin and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), stressed that starting young in martial arts

develops ones' body, mind, and spirit. Having a strong character will contribute to the development of society and that is what martial arts offered to people, Mandani said, calling similarly on parents to enroll their children to reap the benefits both physically and mentally.

Meanwhile, gym owner and head coach at

important task is to control their emotions to achieve victory against an opponent, and this mindset translates perfectly into any social situation, affirmed Hayati who called on individuals to try any form of martial arts to get a better understanding of themselves and others. Hayati also urged for more competition and support to get more exposure for the martial arts community in Kuwait.

While the words of those teaching martial arts are important, it is the practitioners' outlook that provide more introspective. Jujitsu practitioners, Yousef Al-Dousari and Sultan Al-Ajmi, both agreed that martial arts offered more than meets the eye. Dousari indicated that martial arts gave him courage to face any type of situation whether on the mat grappling or life in general. Ajmi had a similar outlook, saying that martial arts alleviated psychological pressure, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and stressed that it was great to fill his time with something worthwhile. Whether it was boxing in the ring, grappling on the mat, performing a Karate kata, the martial arts always gave practitioners something to seek while traversing life's twists and turns. — KUNA



MMA coach calls for more local support

Vikings MMA Ahmad Hayati affirmed that practitioners put their skills to the test while partaking in national, regional, and international competitions. Under the heat of battle, a martial artist's most

Burgan collaborates with 312 Cafe

KUWAIT: In line with its efforts to foster inclusivity and support creative small businesses, Burgan Bank recently collaborated with 312 Cafe - the first of its kind Cafe in Kuwait fully managed and run by people with disabilities - to offer free coffee to its loyal customers.

Through this initiative, Burgan Bank customers were able to enjoy a cup of coffee from 312 Cafe for free. Moreover, the bank also offered a special free gift to all its customers

and staff at 312 Cafe, which is located in Dalal Complex in Salmiya.

Burgan Bank's collaboration with 312 Cafe comes in line with the bank's social responsibility program; namely its ongoing commitment to empowering and supporting the disabled community in Kuwait. The bank continues to support initiatives that help promote the full integration of people with disabilities into society, with a key focus on fostering their talents and developing their skills to enable them to pursue rich, rewarding careers and lives - without any stigmatization or marginalization.

It is worth mentioning that Burgan Bank has long been an advocate of people with disabilities and seeks to ensure their access to a comfortable banking experience. The bank has



equipped several of its branches, in key strategic locations, with all the necessary accessibility features to enable people with disabilities to carry out their banking needs with ease and efficiency. This includes allocating

dedicated parking spaces, equipping branches with ramps, training branch staff in sign language, offering braille documents and statements and installing voice-activated capabilities in its ATMs.



Is the body on Mount Etna Italian reporter 'killed' by mob?

Syrian migrant found dead on Poland-Belarus border

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NEW DELHI: Commuters make their way along a busy road under heavy smoggy conditions in New Delhi. — AFP

Unbreathable! India board warns

A looming health emergency in New Delhi; Schools shut

NEW DELHI: India's pollution control body warned of a looming health emergency in New Delhi as deteriorating air quality in the capital turned the sky a murky grey. The city is ranked one of the world's most polluted, with a hazardous melange of factory emissions, car exhaust fumes and smoke from agricultural fires settling in the skies over its 20 million people each winter.

Yesterday, levels of harmful PM 2.5 particles topped 300 on the air quality index. That number is more than 10 times the safe daily limit set by the World Health Organization. A reading over 300 for 48 hours would initiate emergency measures in the

capital, including the closure of primary schools and severe traffic restrictions. The Central Pollution Control Board on Friday told New Delhi residents to "limit outdoor activities and minimize their exposure" and advised government authorities to prepare "for implementation of measures under 'emergency' category".

It added the poor air quality would likely run until November 18 due to "low winds with calm conditions during the night". Yesterday, the Supreme Court suggested imposing a pollution lockdown on Delhi to help with the air quality crisis. "How will we live otherwise?" Chief Justice NV

Ramana said. The burning of agricultural waste in Delhi's neighboring states - largely behind the megacity's pollution levels every winter - has continued despite a Supreme Court ban. The number of farm fires this season has been the highest in the past four years, according to government data.

At the COP26 global climate summit this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made it clear that carbon emissions-cutting pledges from India and other developing nations would require finance from rich, historic emitters. A 2020 report by Swiss organization IQAir found that 22 of the world's 30 most polluted cities were in India, with

Delhi ranked the most polluted capital globally. The same year, the Lancet said 1.67 million deaths were attributable to air pollution in India in 2019, including almost 17,500 in the capital.

Meanwhile, New Delhi's chief minister yesterday ordered schools to close for a week as India's capital reeled under dangerously high levels of air pollution. "Starting Monday, schools are being shut so that children don't have to breathe polluted air," Arvind Kejriwal told reporters, as government data showed pollution levels in the megacity were 437 on a scale of 500 on the Air Quality Index. — AFP

Broken dreams: Burkina Faso's orphans schooled in Castro's Cuba

OUAGADOUGOU: Thirty-five years ago, Burkina Faso's radical leader Thomas Sankara sent 600 youngsters, most of them orphans, to train in Cuba—a scheme, he declared, that would steer the country to a new dawn. Within a year, Sankara's dream of immersing marginalized children in Burkina's revolution was wrecked after he was cut down by assassins.

Today, scores of those who were enrolled in his scheme have died before their time, some by suicide, and many have mental health problems. Others live in limbo, eking out a life despite gaining qualifications in Cuba that their home country does not recognize. Sankara came to power in 1983 at the age of 33, an idealistic army captain who wanted to eradicate poverty in his country and challenge the "imperialist" world order.

The Marxist-Leninist turned instinctively to Cuba and Fidel Castro. "Sankara had the idea of sending a contingent of students to be trained in Cuba—politically, ideologically and professionally," Stanislas Damiba, who was 12 at the time he made the journey, told AFP. The group consisted of 600 children and adolescents aged 12 to 16, including 135 girls, "all from disadvantaged families and most of them orphans," said Damiba. On their return to Burkina, said Sankara, they would be a spearhead—a generation hardened in doctrine and trained in badly needed skills.

Damiba, 46, is president of the Association of Former Students Trained in Cuba—individuals who are often called the "Sankara Orphans." Today he has become a senior civil engineering technician in the private sector but proudly wears a Sankara T-shirt to honour a man he still considers "a spiritual father". Joined by two comrades who were with him in Cuba, Florence Hien and Inoussa Dankambary, 51, Damiba made a



OUAGADOUGOU: Stanislas Damiba, association of former students trained in Cuba's president, looks at a photo of him and a friend when he was a young student in Cuba. — AFP

point of meeting AFP journalists at the Thomas Sankara Memorial erected in Ouagadougou. The statue marks the place where the young leader was shot dead during a putsch which, on October 15, 1987, brought to power Blaise Compaore, once his brother in arms and a close friend. Compaore ruled for 27 years before being kicked out on the back of mounting street protests in 2014.

Damiba recalled the heady days when everything seemed possible. After passing selection tests, "we headed off to Cuba in September 1986," Damiba recalled. Six Burkina teachers came with them to teach French, history, geography and sex education, while other specialized subjects were taught by Cubans. The group was taken to the Isle of Youth, located in the southwest of Cuba and where students of 40 nationalities mingled. Their first requirement was to learn Spanish in six months.

'Work hard'

Sankara visited Cuba in September 1987. "Sankara came to shake our hands, one by one, and said to us, 'Work hard and come back to build the nation,'" said Damiba. But a month later, the "Father of the Revolution" was murdered. "It came out of the blue. For three days we were too stunned to eat or to

drink," said Damiba. "Everything changed—our six supervisors were recalled to the country and replaced by others," he said.

The "rectification" of Sankara's leftist policies had already started. Burkina's new government decided to "have us only do short studies" lasting a maximum of three years after the baccalaureate (high school) diploma, said Damiba. Then a monthly scholarship of about \$100 (86 euros) a month was cut off, dealing a further blow to their chances. Only 33 of the 600 were able to gain a university education. "Compaore wanted to destroy everything connected with Sankara," said Hien.

Before they had left home they had been promised coveted jobs in the civil service on their return. But only 240 out of the 600 "orphans" were given civil-service jobs on their return. And the qualifications they gained in Cuba are not recognized by the Burkina state, despite a long-running legal battle mounted by Damiba's association, which is also demanding compensation. "They are underemployed, they hold junior positions compared with people who trained in other countries," he said. "What sickens us is that we didn't ask to go to Cuba—we don't understand why when we came back, we were given the brush-off." — AFP

Mind over matter? Long COVID-19 study sparks controversy

WASHINGTON: A large-scale French study suggesting symptoms of so-called long COVID may be more due to psychological factors than to infection with the virus has sparked debate among patients and scientists. The report that appeared earlier this week in the Journal of the American Medical Association focused on nearly 27,000 participants across France who took antibody tests to screen for COVID infection.

After the subjects had received the antibody test results, researchers asked them whether they believed they had been infected with COVID and to report on symptoms like fatigue, breathlessness or impaired attention. The vast majority of respondents—over 25,000 people—tested negative for COVID antibodies and believed they had never been sick.

Of the some 1,000 who tested positive, about 450 believed they had contracted the virus. Finally, about 460 people who received negative antibody tests said they nonetheless believed they had had COVID. Researchers found that people who believed they had had COVID, whether or not they had had a positive test, were more likely to report long-term symptoms. A positive antibody test, meanwhile, was only consistently associated with one long-term symptom: loss of smell.

They concluded that persistent physical symptoms "may be associated more with the belief in having been infected with SARS-CoV-2 than with having laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection". The study coordinated by Cedric Lemogne, head of psychiatry at the Hotel-Dieu hospital in Paris, suggested the findings were important in order to allow research into other causes of the symptoms. "A medical evaluation of these patients may be needed to prevent symptoms due to another disease being erroneously attributed to 'long COVID'," it said.

Scepticism

But for patients suffering from these symptoms, the analysis feels like an attempt to discredit them. After the study was written up in French daily Le Monde, patient support group ApresJ20 alleged it could lead to stigmatization of people with long COVID. And some researchers have questioned the study's methods. Several reactions from experts published via the Science Media Centre point out that serology tests for antibodies cannot always reliably measure previous COVID infection—with one researcher saying it could be particularly unreliable for people feelings sick months after infection. — AFP

International

Syrian migrant found dead on Poland-Belarus border

Russia has 'nothing to do' with Poland-Belarus border crisis

WARSAW: The body of a young Syrian man has been found in a forest close to the border between Poland and Belarus, Polish police said yesterday. The death brings to 11 the number of migrants found dead on both sides since the crisis began in the summer, according to aid groups. "The body of a young Syrian man was discovered yesterday in the forest near Wolka Terechowska," police for the Podlasie region said in a statement. "The cause of the death could not be determined at the scene," it said. Police also said that a group of around 100 migrants had attempted to cross the border during the night in the same area. "After seeing police and soldiers, the people on the Belarusian side fled into the forest," it said.

The Polish border guards also accused Belarusian forces of destroying some barbed wire fencing laid down by Polish forces overnight, releasing a video that purported to show Belarusian forces using lasers and strobe lighting while doing so. "During the night, Belarusian soldiers attempted to take down the temporary barrier. They took down fence posts and tore up the barbed wire with a service vehicle. Polish forces were blinded by lasers and strobe lighting," the border guard said. It also said that Belarusian forces had supplied the migrants with tear gas which was then used against Polish forces.

Thousands of migrants-most of them from the Middle East-have crossed or attempted to cross the EU and NATO border since the summer. The crisis escalated this week when larger groups of hundreds of migrants began arriving at the border and attempting to get through. Polish border guards estimate there are currently up to 4,000 migrants camped out along the border. Western countries

have accused the Belarusian regime, which is backed by Russia, of engineering the crisis in retaliation against EU sanctions, charges that Minsk has denied.

Putin denies claims

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday denied claims Moscow is helping to orchestrate a crisis that has left hundreds of migrants from the Middle East trapped on the Belarus-Poland border. Blaming Western policies in the Middle East for the crisis, Putin hit back at claims from Poland and others that Russia is working with Belarus to send migrants to the border of the European Union. "I want everyone to know.



Putin blames West's policies in Mideast for border crisis

"We have nothing to do with it," he said in an interview with state television broadcast yesterday. Putin said European leaders need to talk to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to resolve the crisis and that "as I understand it" German Chancellor Angela Merkel was ready to do so. "We should not forget where these crises associated with migrants came from... Western countries



BELARUSIAN-POLISH BORDER: Photo shows children in a migrants camp on the Belarusian-Polish border in the Grodno region. —AFP

themselves, including European countries," he said.

The migrants, mainly Kurds, have been stuck for days in a no-man's land on the border in near-freezing temperatures, setting up a tent camp and burning wood to keep warm. Belarus says there are about 2,000 people in the camp, including pregnant women and children. Poland says there are between 3,000 to 4,000 migrants on the border, with more arriving every day.

Tents, heaters brought to camp

There is growing concern for their plight as temperatures continue to fall, with Poland refusing to

allow them to cross and accusing Belarus of preventing them from leaving the area. Belarusian authorities said yesterday they were delivering aid including tents and heaters to the migrant camp - a move that could make it a semi-permanent presence on the borders of the EU.

State news agency Belta reported that government bodies were erecting tents at the camp and that a generator had been delivered. "The Belarusian side is doing everything to provide them with what they need. Water, firewood and humanitarian aid have been delivered," Igor Butkevich, the deputy head of the state border committee, told Belta. —AFP

COVID pandemic speeds up in Latin America, Europe

PARIS: The COVID-19 pandemic continued to pick up speed across Europe this week and also began to accelerate in Latin America. Here is the global state of play based on an AFP database.

Global rise

The number of new daily cases increased globally for a fourth week in a row, jumping eight percent compared to last week, with an average of 472,800 daily infections, according to an AFP tally. However, the confirmed cases only reflect a fraction of the actual number of infections, with varying accounting practices and levels of testing in different countries.

Worsening in Europe, Latin America

Unlike previous weeks, the global increase was no longer largely down to Europe, which saw a 13 percent spike in the number of new daily cases. The number of new daily cases increased by 14 percent in the Latin America and Caribbean zone, and by 15 percent in Africa, but this is skewed by catch-up data from Botswana. Elsewhere the situation continues to improve in the Middle East, dropping 12 percent, in Asia (down seven percent) and Oceania (down six percent), while it is stable in the United States and Canada (up one percent).

Worst in Europe

The 10 countries which suffered the biggest spikes over the week were in Europe, with the top five being Hungary (up 77 percent), Poland (66 percent), Germany (61 percent), Austria (57 percent) and France (52 percent).

Big dips

The countries where cases fell the most were also in Europe, in the east where there had previously been large outbreaks-Romania (minus 35 percent), Latvia (-35 percent) and Estonia (-34 percent). The Philippines (-33 percent) and Mongolia (-30 percent) followed.

US most infections

The US remained by far the country with the biggest number of new cases - 73,100 per day-a decrease of one percent. It was followed by Russia (39,800 cases, also down one percent) and the United Kingdom (34,300, a decrease of 12 percent). On a per capita basis the countries that recorded the most new cases this week were Slovenia with 1,080 per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Croatia with 943, and Georgia 833.

Russia most deaths

Russia recorded the biggest number of daily deaths with 1,205, followed by the US on 1,160. Third on the grim podium was Ukraine with 673. At a global level there was a two percent increase in the number of daily deaths, to 7,160.

Vaccinations

Vietnam led the vaccination race this week, giving shots to 1.33 percent of its population every day, among countries with more than one million inhabitants. Iran came next with 0.96 percent, Taiwan (0.82 percent), and Bangladesh (0.81 percent). The leaders in the vaccination race are all in Latin America and Asia, which have over the past few months been catching up with the vaccination champions in Europe, North America and the Middle East. The United Arab Emirates remains the most vaccinated country in the world, with 89 percent of its population completely jabbed, and Portugal hot on its heels with 86 percent. —AFP

Lukashenko: The unpredictable strongman on Europe borders

MOSCOW: The stranding of hundreds of migrants on Belarus's border with Poland is just the latest brazen gambit in strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko's nearly three-decade tenure as Europe's most unpredictable neighbor. Belarus's loyal state media has for days been sending out images of refugees huddling around makeshift fires in near-freezing temperatures next to rows of barbed wire and columns of Polish border guards refusing them entry.

The EU accuses Lukashenko of luring the migrants to his country to send them across the border. When the bloc with responded with plans for sanctions, he threatened to cut off Russian gas flowing through Belarus to Europe. The move on migration - an attempt to embarrass Europe on human rights and pile pressure on the bloc over the historically sensitive issue - is in a long tradition of unex-

pected surprises from Lukashenko.

"He's unpredictable in his tactics - he uses every opportunity available to him," said Alexei Makarkin, a political analyst at Moscow's Centre for Political Technologies. "But he is predictable in terms of strategy - to hold on to power at any cost. And he will fight to the end," Makarkin said. Lukashenko is the longest serving leader in any ex-Soviet country and has ruled Belarus with an uncompromising hand since coming to power in 1994.

'Clearly disturbed'

After just one year in charge, he was firmly on the radar of the West when he dispatched a military helicopter to shoot down a civilian air balloon over Belarus, killing two American citizens on board. Little has since changed. In May this year, the rogue 67-year-old who likes to be known as "balka" - a colloquial term for dad - alarmed



KIEV: A Ukrainian nationalist holding a placard with a portrait of Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko and a symbolic picture of migrants participates in a protest action outside the Belarusian embassy in Kiev to support Poland in a migrant crisis. —AFP

Europe again by dispatching a fighter jet to ground a Ryanair flight with an opposition activist onboard. "I will not suddenly leave the presidency," mustachioed Lukashenko said last year in the wake of historic anti-government

protests. "I have nothing but Belarus, I cling to it and I hold it". According to leaked cables, US diplomats had come to that same conclusion in the wake of elections in 2006 that the opposition saw as rigged. —AFP

Tigray's rebels kill scores of civilians

NAIROBI: Tigrayan rebels killed scores of civilians in the Amhara region on suspicion of being informants or offering aid to federal forces, the government-affiliated Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said in a report published yesterday. The investigation, which draws on 128 interviews, focuses on parts of Amhara which saw heavy fighting in July and August between fighters from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and Ethiopian soldiers as the country's brutal conflict enters its second year.

At least 184 civilians died as a result of the bloodshed, the EHRC said, accusing TPLF fighters of "willfully (killing) scores of civilians in towns and rural areas they captured". Civilians were shot and killed for supporting the federal government or for sheltering wounded soldiers, the commission said.

Eritrea condemns 'illicit and immoral' US sanctions

WASHINGTON: Eritrea slammed the United States yesterday for slapping new sanctions on the country over the deadly conflict in neighboring Ethiopia, calling the move "illicit and immoral". The US measures announced on Friday came in response to Eritrea's decision to send troops into Ethiopia's Tigray region to back Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in the war against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel group. Eritrean and Ethiopian forces have been accused of carrying out mass rapes and massacres in Tigray and Washington has repeatedly urged Asmara to withdraw its troops.



HUMERA: A member of the Amhara Special Forces stands at the border crossing as people cross from Eritrea, in Humera, Ethiopia. —AFP

"TPLF forces shot and killed mentally ill residents of towns they controlled on suspicion of being informants for the government," it added.

Local youth meanwhile killed people who had fled war-torn Tigray, accusing them of spying for the TPLF, the commission said. "Additionally, both warring sides engaged in indiscriminate shelling that was not direct-

ed at a specific military objective causing civilian deaths, injuries and damage to civilian property."

EHRC Chief commissioner Daniel Bekele said that "violations and abuses committed by all parties in South Gondar and North Wollo Zones of the Amhara region underscores the need to put an urgent stop to the continued suffering caused to civilians." Prime

Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray last November to topple the TPLF, a move he said came in response to rebel attacks on army camps. Though the 2019 Nobel Peace laureate vowed a swift victory, by late June the TPLF had retaken most of Tigray before expanding into Amhara and Afar.

As the humanitarian toll has spiked, bringing reports of massacres, sexual assaults and a starvation crisis, rights groups have sounded the alarm. Human Rights Watch said Wednesday that the Abiy government's "effective siege" of Tigray - where Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers are accused of mass rapes - was preventing survivors from getting health care and other critical services. The same day, Amnesty International said Tigrayan rebels had raped, robbed and beat up women during an attack on a town in Amhara. The TPLF criticised Amnesty's "disturbingly flawed methodology" but said it would conduct its own probe, adding: "If our investigation discovers that Tigrayan fighters have in fact committed such crimes, the government of Tigray will bring the perpetrators to justice." —AFP



DABAT: Children stand under a tree on the site of a future camp for Eritrean refugees, in a rural area near the village of Dabat, 70 kilometers northeast from the city of Gondar, Ethiopia. —AFP

International

30 million diabetics can't access insulin they need

Number of people suffering from diabetes surges

NEW YORK: The number of people suffering from diabetes is surging, even as tens of millions cannot get the insulin they need, the World Health Organization said. The UN health agency stressed the need to cut prices and dramatically increase access to the life-saving medicine. More than 420 million people are currently estimated to be living with diabetes globally, marking nearly a quadrupling in the past four decades.

And that number is expected to surge past half a billion by the end of this decade, WHO said Friday. But despite an ample supply, high prices make it difficult for many diabetics to access the insulin they need to manage their condition. "There are significant gaps in access to conditioning globally, particularly in lower income countries," Kiu Siang Tay, of WHO's Access to Medicines and Health Products division, told reporters.

In a fresh report, WHO decried a betrayal of the solidarity showed by the Canadian researchers who discovered insulin 100 years ago. Frederick Banting and John Macleod sold the patent for insulin, which transformed a diagnosis of diabetes from a swift death sentence to a manageable disease, for just one Canadian dollar, insisting the discovery "belongs to the world." "Unfortunately, that gesture of solidarity has been overtaken by a multi-billion-dollar business that has created vast access gaps," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

'I want to start a youth movement': Facebook whistleblower

PARIS: What exactly does one do after leaking thousands of documents from the world's most powerful social media company? For Frances Haugen, the answer is obvious: start a youth movement. Facebook has faced stinging criticism over the whistleblower's document drop, not least the revelations that the company knew its Instagram photo app had the potential to harm teen mental health.

Ex-Facebook engineer Haugen believes young people have more reason than anyone else to pressure social media companies to do better. "I want to start a youth movement," she told AFP in a wide-ranging interview, adding that youngsters who have grown up online should not feel so "powerless" over the social networks enmeshed in their lives. Haugen has spent nearly two months in the spotlight over her claims that Facebook has consistently prioritized profits over people's safety, and supporters and foes alike are wondering what comes next.

The interview on Friday at a luxury Paris hotel, carefully watched by her lawyer, came at the end of a European tour that was managed by a slick public relations team, with financial backing from the philanthropic organization of eBay founder, Pierre Omidyar. Haugen, 37, has addressed lawmakers in London, Brussels and Paris, as well as a cheering crowd of thousands at a Lisbon tech conference. Both Britain and the EU are currently debating new tech regulation, and she said the tour was an opportunity "to influence where those regulations are going".

Iowa-born Haugen knew very well before she went to work for Facebook that its sites were capable of sending people down dangerous rabbit holes. A close friend who became radicalized in 2016 was convinced that billionaire George Soros secretly controlled the economy. "That was very painful," she said.—AFP



PARIS: US whistleblower and former Facebook engineer Frances Haugen during an interview in Paris.—AFP

Is the body on Mount Etna Italian reporter 'killed' by mob?

ROME: Half a century after investigative journalist Mauro De Mauro disappeared in Sicily, the discovery of a body in a cave has raised fresh hopes of cracking one of Italy's mafia mysteries. Crime laboratory analysts are expected to perform a DNA test on the corpse, which was found in September on the slopes of Mount Etna by a sniffer dog during a mountain rescue exercise. Investigators have long believed De Mauro, who had been looking into the suspicious death of powerful businessman Enrico Mattei, was kidnapped and killed by Sicily's Cosa Nostra organized crime group.

The journalist disappeared on September 16, 1970, in Palermo. His daughter Franca, one of the last people to see him alive, called a police hot-line after reading news reports about the recently-found body, which dates to the 1970s and has a distinctive nose-just like her father. The man on Etna, in his 50s, was wearing dark trousers, a light striped shirt, a wool jumper, a black tie, a dark green coat, a winter hat with a pom-pom on it, and black boots, the reports said.

'Non-competitive'
Diabetes is divided into two types. An estimated nine million people have type 1 diabetes, a chronic condition where the pancreas does not produce enough insulin - the hormone that regulates blood sugar levels. Most people living with diabetes have type 2, which is associated with obesity and other lifestyle factors and emerges in adults and increasingly



UN health agency stresses the need to cut prices

among children. All type 1 diabetics need insulin to survive, and generally their access is ensured. Some 63 million people with type 2 meanwhile also need the hormone, according to WHO estimates, but only about half of them can access it.

Diabetes is especially on the rise in lower-income countries, which now account for 80 percent of cases, but the insulin consumption in those countries is lagging due to a range of barriers, it said. A major prob-



OGOSSAGOU: A Senegalese Blue Helmet peacekeeper stands in the village of Ogossagou, Mopti Region.—AFP

Peace is a tall order in massacre-hit Mali village

OGOSSAGOU: In Ogossagou, where ethnic Fulani suffered two massacres in two years, traces of the recent horrors abound in this village of central Mali. They are one sign of just how tough incipient internationally-sponsored peacemaking efforts are between nomadic Fulani herders and traditional Dogon hunters. Reconciliation is all the more difficult as the Dogon accuse the Fulani of supporting the jihadists—who are now present in central Mali but have been a scourge of the Malian government and its western allies since 2012.

A peace pact signed last month has produced "a lull" in the village, Senegalese army captain Andre Sebastien Ndione, who heads the nearby UN base, told AFP. "But it is relative, it can go off the rails at any time," Ndione added. In the Fulani part of the village, targeted by people dressed as traditional Dogon hunters, reminders are everywhere of the killings of 160 civilians in March 2019 and 31 more in February 2020. Local NGOs say the number of Fulani dead is even higher.

Destroyed houses lie abandoned in tall grass and a charred wooden pestle for grinding millet bears witness to the brutality of the events. Ogossagou is one of the last villages in central Mali's Bankass area where Fulani, who are also called Peul, still live. Ghost villages are all that remain in other parts of the area. A hotbed of violence plaguing the Sahel, the centre of Mali has become prey to the atrocities of jihadist organizations, self-defense groups, brigands and even regular armed forces.

Both Malian and UN security forces have been singled out for their inability to prevent the repetition of

Coin and newspaper
"We expect they will do a DNA test," the De Mauro family's lawyer Giuseppe Crescimanno told AFP. A coin from 1977 was discovered next to the remains, along with a piece of a newspaper from 1978, according to La Sicilia daily—both of which date to after De Mauro's disappearance. Franca does not recognize the clothes, nor the comb or watch found with the body, the paper said. "She is not sure they are not his, she doesn't rule it out, she just cannot remember them—except perhaps the hat with the pom-pom," Crescimanno said.



CATANIA: This image grabbed from a video handout shows a watch found by members of the Guardia di Finanza dog squad from Nicolosi, Catania, in a lava cave on the Etna volcano near Zafferana Etnea, Sicily.—AFP

lem is that the global insulin market remains dominated by just three companies: Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk and Sanofi, creating a "non-competitive market environment". The report also lamented that the global market had at the start of this century shifted away from human insulin, which can be produced quite cheaply, to much pricier synthetic insulins.

This, it said, had imposed "an untenable financial burden on lower-income countries". Tay pointed out that the price for the new insulin analogs could be multiple times higher, but clinical evidence showed that "human insulin usually works equally good ... for most people living with diabetes." Another problem highlighted in the report was that research and development in the area focuses heavily on the needs in high-income countries, even though lower-income nations have the biggest burden.

"WHO is working with countries and manufacturers to close these gaps and expand access to this life-saving medicine for everyone who needs it," Tedros said. Earlier this year, the UN agency launched talks with insulin manufacturers and others about ways to meet the growing demand "at prices that countries can afford". It said Friday that the industry had made some commitments, including participating in a prequalification program it introduced in 2019 aimed at bringing more manufacturers into the market.—AFP

violence that weighs heavily on people's minds in Ogossagou. Malian soldiers and peacekeepers of the UN MINUSMA operation are today based between the districts of Ogossagou-Dogon and Ogossagou-Peul, separated by a few dozen meters that might as well be thousands of meters given the gulf in feeling. The Fulani, living next to mass graves dug in haste, are constantly bullied by Dogon neighbours who accuse them of being accomplices of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadist group in the area.

Stray dog

The Fulani wanted to leave Ogossagou after the second massacre, but troops restrained them in the months that followed the slaughter on February 14, 2020. "The army prevented people from fleeing. It would have been a failure for the state if there were no more Fulani," a humanitarian source in the region told AFP on condition of anonymity. Government soldiers have also been accused by the United Nations of raping Fulani women who survived the massacres.

The year 2020 was a long one for the Fulani. Nobody could leave the village to cultivate their fields or go to the market. Residents were too afraid of being killed to take to the road, despite the peaceful appearance of the bush that surrounds Ogossagou and stretches to the horizon. "It was an open-air prison," said Jens Christensen, the Danish regional director of MINUSMA. Tensions ran so high that in March the soldiers had to intervene to separate Dogons and Fulani when a Dogon's dog strayed from one part of the village to another.

In September 2020, Christensen and his teams began a step-by-step mediation, which culminated on October 8 with the signing of a peace agreement. It bound inhabitants of Ogossagou and ten surrounding villages to lay the foundations for reconciliation, specifying that Fulani and Dogon visit each other, accept free movement and not attack each other. The bright smiles of village children lighten the ambient gloom, but they are not enough to eradicate the deep fissures in the village.—AFP

The journalist may have been held by kidnapers for years and have been given different clothes. If the body is a DNA match with De Mauro, he may have died after managing to escape. Police mountain rescuers can be seen in a video published on their Facebook page this week climbing down a steep, narrow tunnel to the cave, the entrance to which is almost hidden from the outside. The dog had been supposed to be sniffing out a fictitious missing person for training purposes—but found the real remains instead.

Trapped

Investigators believe the man, who was in his 50s and about 170 centimeters tall (five feet, six inches), entered the cave voluntarily but found it impossible to climb out again. His death is not believed to have been violent, the reports said. De Mauro had been doing research for award-winning director Francesco Rosi's film about the death of Mattei, who founded the ENI oil company, and who died in a 1962 plane crash likely caused by a bomb.

Mafia boss Salvatore "Toto" Riina was tried over De Mauro's murder, but found not guilty for lack of proof. The journalist was kidnapped a few days before Franca's wedding. After having returned home together from an outing, Franca went inside while her father parked the car. She turned to see two or three men appear, and get into the car. De Mauro then drove off quickly, never to return, according to the Giornale della Sicilia daily. The lead investigators on the case would be killed in turn by the mafia years later.—AFP

News in brief

Rebels seize Hodeida area

DUBAI: Yemen's Houthi rebels have taken control of a large area south of Hodeida, a lifeline port where the warring sides agreed a ceasefire in 2018, government military sources said. The rebels advanced after forces loyal to the internationally recognized government retreated from positions south of the Red Sea port city, the sources said, without giving reasons. The Hodeida ceasefire was agreed at Yemen's last peace talks in Sweden in 2018, but clashes have since broken out between the rebels and pro-government troops around the city. Elsewhere, the Iran-backed insurgents, who are fighting a Saudi-led coalition, have been engaged in a sustained attempt to capture Marib, the government's last stronghold in the north. The United Nations said it was aware of the reported withdrawal near Hodeida and the Houthis' move into the vacated areas, and was watching the situation closely.—AFP

Missing journalist found dead

ABUJA: A Nigerian journalist who went missing last month in the nation's capital has been found dead, killed by a hit-and-run driver, police said. Tordue Salem, a parliamentary reporter with the independent Vanguard newspaper in Abuja was last seen on October 13 after leaving the national assembly building. Efforts by family, friends and colleagues to locate the reporter were unsuccessful until his body was discovered on Thursday. National police spokesman Frank Mba told reporters in Abuja that the hit-and-run driver who killed Salem had been arrested and had confessed. Mba said that after the 29-year-old suspect, Clement Ito, hit the reporter, "the victim's phone, an iPhone, fell on the car's windshield". Police investigators were able to track the phone and therefore the suspect to where he parked his car. The newspaper also confirmed the recovery of Salem's body in a hospital in Abuja.—AFP

US space tourist dies

NEW YORK: US businessman Glen de Vries, who flew into space with "Star Trek" actor William Shatner on last month's Blue Origin flight, has died in a plane crash, police said. The small aircraft came down in Hampton Township, New Jersey, about 60 miles west of New York City, shortly before 3:00 pm on Thursday, a spokesman for New Jersey state police told AFP. "There are two confirmed fatalities," the spokesman said, naming de Vries, 49, and 54-year-old Thomas Fischer. "The FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) will be the lead investigating agency," he added, without providing more details. De Vries, the founder of clinical research platform Medidata Solutions, joined Shatner on Blue Origin's second crewed mission on October 13. Also on board for the 11-minute journey that took them beyond Earth's atmosphere and back again were Blue Origin executive Audrey Powers and Planet Labs co-founder Chris Boshuizen.—AFP

Migrants drown off Morocco

SKHEIRAT: Four Moroccan migrants trying to reach the European Union have drowned in the Atlantic Ocean, officials and relatives said. Three other migrants were rescued after their vessel sank off the resort of Skheirat, south of the capital Rabat, on Thursday. "We are in shock. My cousin, who was 29, was among the dead," said a relative of one of those who drowned. "They were all Moroccan. We had no idea he was going to try to make the voyage." Officials said the migrants' vessel was believed to have had a capacity of up to 20 people, and a search was continuing for any other survivors. Fishermen in the area said the coast between Rabat and Casablanca was a regular jumping-off point for migrants trying to reach mainland Spain. Further south, along the Moroccan-controlled coast of the disputed Western Sahara, the goal is normally Spain's Atlantic Canary Islands.—AFP

Unvaccinated or cured face curbs

VIENNA: Austria's government said it wanted a nationwide lockdown for those not vaccinated against or recovered from the coronavirus, while Vienna city authorities said they would start vaccinating children as young as five - a first in the EU. Only around 65 percent of the population is fully vaccinated in Austria, a rate described by Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg as "shamefully low". Salzburg and Upper Austria states, which have seen some of the worst case rates, are already introducing a lockdown for the unvaccinated from Monday. This means they will not be able to leave the house except for reasons such as buying essential supplies, exercise or seeking medical care. "The aim is clear: we want on Sunday to give the green light for a nationwide lockdown for the unvaccinated," Schallenberg told a press conference. He said lockdowns across the country would be enforced with "random" spot checks.—AFP

Business

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2021

5-day Dubai airshow opens today as airline industry eyes recovery

Dominant aerospace companies seek new business in post-COVID world



DUBAI: In this file photo, an Emirati visits the stand of Boeing at the Dubai Airshow. —AFP photos



DUBAI: In this file photo, Emirati and foreign delegates gather around an Airbus A380 passenger jet on a runway at the 2007 Dubai air show.

PARIS: The aviation industry is slowly recovering from last year's COVID-induced downturn, but European aircraft maker Airbus is having a smoother ride than American rival Boeing, which has endured a series of crises.

The world's dominant aerospace companies will seek new business as they attend the five-day Dubai air show today, the industry's first major event since the pandemic started last year. But while Airbus has returned to profit and delivered 460 aircraft in the first 10 months of the year, Boeing remains in the red and has supplied just 268 planes. Boeing's 737 MAX returned to the skies last year after the entire fleet was grounded for 20

months following two crashes—in Ethiopia and Indonesia—that left 346 people dead.

Almost 370 of the planes remain in inventory and Boeing chief executive David Calhoun has said that it will take two years to sell them all. The 737 MAX has also yet to be re-certified in China, a major market for aircraft makers. Boeing's production plans will depend on access to the Chinese market, Calhoun says. The 787 Dreamliner has had its share of problems which is estimated to have cost the company \$1 billion. The company halted deliveries of the 787 in May following a series of issues with the plane—the second suspension in the past year.

Boeing announced in July that it had spotted

additional problems near the nose of the plane and was working to fix them. A delay for the first deliveries of its new wide-body 777X plane—which were pushed back from 2022 to late 2023 — is costing the company \$6.5 billion.

"There's been so many problems that it's very difficult to say they're over," Richard Aboulafia, analyst at aerospace consultancy Teal Group, said.

COVID cuts long-haul flights

COVID has also hit Boeing's strong point—long-haul aircraft—as international travel has been curbed by pandemic restrictions, said Remy Bonnery, an analyst at Archery Strategy Consulting.

International air traffic is only expected to return to pre-pandemic levels between 2023 and 2025.

Domestic air travel, meanwhile, is doing better—which benefits Airbus and its A320 family of narrow-body aircraft. Airbus will display its latest single-aisle plane, the A321neo, in Dubai. The company aims to release the long-range version of the aircraft in 2023, the A321XLR, which can fly for 10 hours—a feat only achieved by bigger planes until now. "Airbus is alone in the single-aisle, long-haul market," said Bonnery at Archery Strategy Consulting. "The next 10 years, we will have more plane deliveries by Airbus than Boeing," he said. —AFP

Black homebuyers underrepresented in US real estate boom

WASHINGTON: The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the nature of homebuying in the United States, but one constant is that Black Americans do not have the same access to a home of their own. Black purchasers made up just six percent of the total homebuyers this year—a figure that has changed little over the past two decades, a National Association of Realtors (NAR) report released Thursday said.

Pandemic dynamics have allowed many Americans to get caught up on student loans and build savings, since spending opportunities like travel and eating in restaurants were off limits. As remote work became the norm, more buyers packed up and moved to be closer to family and friends rather than relocating for a job, according to NAR's 2021 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers.

However Black Americans are weighed down by student loan debt to a greater degree than their white counterparts, and less able to get help from family, the report said. "Unfortunately, race hasn't really changed much this year. We're still seeing pretty consistent, low shares of minority homebuyers," NAR's Jessica Lautz told AFP in an interview.

While low interest rates made mortgages more accessible, the now-chronic shortage of homes for sale has driven prices higher and kept many first-time buyers out of the market, the data showed.

Even in the South, Blacks made up just nine percent of homebuyers in a region where their population in some states is more than double the 13 per-



WASHINGTON: Black purchasers made up just six percent of the total homebuyers this year—a figure that has changed little over the past two decades, a National Association of Realtors (NAR) report said.

cent national average, the report said. Prior NAR research shows white homeownership rates are 30 percentage points higher than those of Black buyers, who are more than twice as likely to have student loan debt and a higher amount, and are rejected for mortgages at more than twice the rate as white applicants.

And because they are less likely to own homes, they are not able to use proceeds from the sale of a home to finance a purchase.

Priced out

While the share of first-time buyers rose this year, it remains below the historic norm of 40 percent, said Lautz, NAR's vice president of demographics and behavioral insights. "We know that first-time homebuyers are struggling to enter into this housing market," she said, adding they find it hard "to pull the money together and then to be able to compete with

other buyers" who increasingly can pay all cash.

With historically low inventory—exacerbated by a shortage of workers and supply issues and tendency for builders to focus on large, expensive houses—sellers are getting full asking price and more for their homes, and a higher share of buyers can pay cash. The median home price was \$305,000, more than \$30,000 higher than in 2020, according to the report.

President Joe Biden has made lowering home prices a plank of his Build Back Better bill under consideration in Congress, calling for \$150 billion for "the single largest and most comprehensive investment in affordable housing in history." His plan would offer down payment assistance to help more buyers own their first home and build wealth, and focus on zoning reform to allow more construction.

Close to family

One of the biggest shifts during the pandemic has been the increase in demand for work-from-home opportunities as offices shut down. "Home sellers are saying their number-one reason to sell is to get closer to friends and family," Lautz said. "People really wanted their support system around them and needed it during the pandemic." Job relocation as the reason to move fell to seven percent from 11 percent.

She said she expects that trend to continue "as CEOs understand if they want to retain talent, they may need to allow more flexibility in working from home." Another trend is the dwindling share of homebuyers with children, which fell to 31 percent—the lowest on record, she said. That shifts priorities, since those buyers will be less concerned about issues like schools or larger homes, which for cash-strapped buyers will "open up neighborhoods for them that would have been off limits if they had children in the home." —AFP

Oil exporter UAE accepts future is not oil: US delegation

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates accepts that oil is not its future despite being one of the world's top exporters, a visiting delegation of US politicians told AFP on Friday.

The UAE's leaders "recognize that their future is not going to be in oil", Senator Ben Cardin said at the end of a trip that also included the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. Both the UAE and neighboring Saudi Arabia, the number one oil exporter, announced net zero carbon goals in the build-up to the UN environmental meeting, which ends on Friday. The targets were set despite plans to ramp up oil production. Net zero refers to emissions created within a country, not by products sold and consumed abroad. But UAE officials "recognize reality", delegation member and House of Representatives Majority Leader Steny Hoyer said after talks with Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

"They know the world is working very hard not to be in a position to buy their product anymore, because they're going to alternative energy," he said at the Dubai Expo world fair, which has sustainability as one of its major themes. "So I think they also want to make sure that they diversify at this point in time because they know their economy cannot be based long-term on a product that the world thinks is harmful to use." —AFP

Mexico's economic recovery has sting in its tail

MEXICO CITY: Latin America's second-largest economy is bouncing back from its worst slump in decades, but rising living costs mean that many Mexicans like Reynaldo Perez are struggling to scrape by. The 54-year-old ekes out a living from tips for valet parking for restaurant customers in Mexico City, the epicenter of the pandemic in one of the world's worst affected countries. "After expenses, it's only enough to get by, without the luxury of going out with my family," said Perez, who overcame a bout of COVID-19 last year, spending two weeks in hospital.

Still, he feels lucky to even have a job. Several other businesses nearby went bankrupt. "They couldn't survive the blow" from months of pandemic restrictions and a lack of customers, Perez said.

His story reflects the challenges facing the Mexican economy, whose post-pandemic recovery has a sting in its tail: rising prices of food and other essentials.



MEXICO CITY: A woman buys fruit at a market in Mexico City. The rebound of the Mexican economy following the COVID-19 pandemic is insufficient to alleviate the slowdown of activities and to contain inflation. —AFP

Inflation in Mexico reached 6.24 percent in the 12 months to October, more than double the central bank's target of around three percent, and the highest in almost four years. Like many countries, Mexico is grappling with the impact of rising costs of energy and raw materials, as well as global supply chain bottlenecks.

At the same time, the Mexican economy—the second largest in Latin America, after Brazil—has yet to recover to its pre-pandemic size. Gross domestic product

(GDP) is expected to grow 6.2 percent this year, the Bank of Mexico predicts, not enough to fully reverse an 8.5 percent plunge in 2020.

Indicators such as consumption, employment, investment and tourism remain below pre-pandemic levels, said Gabriela Siller, head of analysis for the financial group BASE in the northern city of Monterrey. "GDP won't fully recover until 2023, and in per capita terms not before 2027," she said. —AFP

Syria inks solar plant deal with UAE firms

DAMASCUS: Syria has signed a deal with United Arab Emirates firms for the construction of a solar power plant near Damascus, state media said, in a sign of growing economic ties. The accord comes two days after UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan met President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus in the first such visit since the start of Syria's war.

The visit was widely seen as a sign of regional efforts to end Assad's diplomatic isolation as Syria grapples with a spiraling economic crisis caused by years of conflict and compounded by Western sanctions. "The ministry of electricity and a consortium of Emirati firms have signed a cooperation agreement to establish a solar power plant with a 300-megawatt capacity," in the suburbs of Damascus, the official SANA news agency said.

The Syrian government initially approved the project last month, with Economy Minister Samer Al-Khalil

calling it a positive sign for future investments in Syria. At the time, the UAE's economy ministry said it agreed with Syria on "future plans to enhance economic cooperation and explore new sectors".

The UAE severed relations with the Iran-backed government in Damascus in February 2012, nearly a year after the start of the Syrian war. The 11-year conflict erupted with nationwide protests demanding regime change that were met with a brutal government crackdown. It escalated into a devastating war that drew in a host of regional and international powers, and killed nearly half-a-million people. In December 2018 the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus, and in March this year it called for Syria to return to the Arab League.

The war in Syria has ravaged the country's power grids causing round-the-clock electricity cuts now compounded by fuel shortages. Losses sustained by the energy sector since the start of the war amount to about "100 billion dollars in direct and indirect damages", Syria's economy minister said last month. Also last month, the electricity ministry signed a \$115 million contract with an Iranian firm to rehabilitate a power station in a central province of the war-torn country. —AFP

Business

Governments risk 'trillions' in fossil fuel climate litigation

Treaties allow foreign firms to sue governments over climate actions

GLASGOW: Governments which enact climate legislation risk being sued for trillions of dollars by fossil fuel companies seeking compensation for lost revenue and stranded assets, according to data that campaigners warn threaten pledges made at COP26. Energy experts predict that more ambitious climate action from world leaders will significantly increase companies' use of a tribunal mechanism that has already awarded billions to heavy industry.

Trade agreements such as the Energy Charter Treaty and NAFTA contain investor arbitration clauses, known as investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), that allow foreign companies to sue governments over actions they say hit profits or investments. Campaigners say that energy companies are increasingly turning to this type of arbitration to recoup investments as governments accelerate the shift away from fossil fuels.

Jean Blaylock, trade campaigner at Global Justice Now, tells AFP these corporate courts—"the global trade system's dirty little secret"—could "make a mockery" of commitments generated at the COP26 summit. "We're seeing the fossil fuel sector use investor-state dispute settlement to hold climate action to ransom," she says.

"These companies have made unfathomable profits from fuelling the climate crisis, we cannot let them demand even bigger pay-outs," AFP has obtained excerpts from a presentation given at a September trade event by consultancy firm Berkeley Research Group (BRG), which predicted that climate legislation would lead to a rise in private lawsuits.

"Increased climate policy ambition (e.g. CAT Ratings) will drive the policies behind climate-related disputes," said an excerpt. CAT refers to Climate Action Tracker, which ranks national emissions plans on their compatibility with the Paris climate deal.

The presentation suggested that the "scale of energy transition policy" could "unleash a wave of international investment and/or commercial arbitration to adjudicate claims". Responding to a request to comment, Christopher Goncalves, chair of BRG's Energy and Climate practice, told AFP that dispute resolution was "likely to remain a critical component of the energy transition process". "It is not possible to make any generic conclusion as to whether such legal disputes accelerate or impede the energy transition," he added.

History of awards

The BRG presentation said if governments legislate to limit heating to 2C by 2050, \$3.3-6.5 trillion in upstream fossil fuel assets would be at risk, as well as \$650-700 billion in coal power assets and \$900 billion in oil reserve write-offs in a 1.5C scenario. Blaylock said \$9 trillion in upstream fossil fuel and oil reserve write-

offs are at risk of litigation—a little over a tenth of the global economy. Energy and mining firms have a long history in winning large settlements. In 2006, Occidental Energy sued the government of Ecuador for terminating an oil contract. It was awarded \$1.77 billion, which was later reduced to \$1bn. In 2012 Tethyan Copper sued the government of Pakistan over a gold mine, and in 2019 was awarded \$5.9 billion—roughly two percent of the country's GDP.

ISDS decisions are internationally binding and courts have in the past ordered the seizure of state assets when countries have refused to pay. Five current cases, brought by energy firms identified by Global Justice Now, are seeking \$18 billion from governments.

These include a dispute involving the cancellation of the Keystone Pipeline in North America, where the complainant, TC Energy, is seeking a reported \$15 billion in lost revenue. A TC Energy spokeswoman told AFP that it would "not comment on speculative claims".

German energy firm Uniper is one of two companies reportedly seeking more than \$1 billion from the Netherlands after it decided to phase out coal. A Uniper spokesperson did not comment on the amount in question but said government policy had cut 15 years off the lifespan of its MPP3 power plant near Rotterdam, "however understandable that change in itself may be".

'Ordinary people will pay'

British company Rockhopper is suing Italy for a reported \$324 million over a ban on offshore oil drilling close to the country's coast. Italy signed the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) but then withdrew in 2016.

Companies can resort to ISDS for 20 years after a country leaves the ECT. A spokeswoman for Rockhopper rejected the idea that the suit was linked to climate change. "The Italian government issued licenses and encouraged significant investment in oil and gas exploration, based on this platform. Clearly it is not equitable to change the rules halfway through," she said.

Most of the governments wrapping up COP26 plan to slash their emissions to net-zero by 2050. That will cost the global economy as much as \$100 trillion, according to International Energy Agency estimates. Nations are also pledging billions to help countries adapt to climate-driven extreme weather and crop failures. Campaigners say that litigation represents a looming, hidden cost of climate action.

"The science is clear. The vast majority of fossil fuels must stay in the ground to avoid catastrophic global heating," Leah Sullivan, trade campaigner at the War on Want pressure group, told AFP. Since ISDS awards are taken from public money, "It's ordinary people who will have to pay for this," she said.—AFP



GLASGOW: Performers of the Blue Rebels prepare to conduct a funeral ceremony to symbolize the failure of the COP26 process, at Glasgow Cathedral in Glasgow yesterday during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference. — AFP

US consumer confidence hits 10-year low amid rising inflation

WASHINGTON: Rising prices taking a bite out of American wallets caused consumer sentiment to drop to a 10-year low in November, a sign inflation is increasingly a political liability for President Joe Biden.

While the world's largest economy has bounced back strongly from the Covid-19 pandemic impact, global shortages of key components and supply chain snarls have added to a US worker shortage, raising costs and pushing prices higher. Following a government data report Wednesday showing consumer price inflation jumped to a 30-year high of 6.2 percent in October, a survey released Friday with the sharp drop in sentiment came as another blow, although economists do not expect shoppers to pull back on spending. The

University of Michigan said its preliminary sentiment index dropped to 66.8 this month, a 6.8 percent decline. Survey chief economist Richard Curtin said one in four families suffered eroding living standards but lower income families were feeling the most pain. Biden on Wednesday pledged to make putting a lid on inflation a "top priority," but Curtin attributed the dismal sentiment reading to "the growing belief among consumers that no effective policies have yet been developed to reduce the damage from surging inflation."

The US central bank has stuck to its view that most of the inflation pressures will fade once the global supply issues—including ongoing manufacturing shutdowns, especially in Asia, due to coronavirus infections—are resolved. Federal Reserve officials have preached patience about deploying its main inflation-fighting tool—raising the benchmark interest rate—but announced it will start pulling back on pandemic stimulus, lowering its monthly bond purchases.

Low interest rates have fueled high demand for homebuying, sending prices higher, while vehicle and gasoline prices also have spiked worldwide. "The description that inflation would be 'transient' has the undertone that consumers could 'grin and bear it,'" Curtin said in a statement.—AFP

Middle East building digital trust through shared standards



As the importance of digital technology in Kuwait and across the Middle East continues to rise, so are the requirements of cyberspace. Cybersecurity Ventures expects global cybercrime costs to grow by 15% per year over the next five years, reaching USD10.5 trillion annually by 2025. In the Middle East specifically, a new report by Rackspace Technology further notes that only 48% of organizations feel confident in their understanding of the cybersecurity threat landscape for their business, and only three in five feel confident in their ability to respond to incidents today.

While these challenges are inherently a technical, standards-based issue, the protocol governing cybersecurity can sometimes be unnecessarily intertwined with political and trade matters. This politicization can unnecessarily lead to the diminishing of trust between nations.

The ongoing technological tussle between the U.S. and China is but one example of this. The resulting U.S. blacklisting of Huawei technologies alone has led to an upheaval of 5G investments worldwide, contributed to a still ongoing shortage of chipsets globally, and has even brought out Huawei's traditional competitors like Ericsson to lobby to reverse local bans.

Experts have said repeatedly that attempts at dominating technology across the board are simply not rational. Moreover, these issues can largely be avoided through open, shared security standards. Tech industry expert David Koh summed this up when noting that the developments of recent years have heightened the urgency for collaborative global responses to build a secure, trusted, and interoperable cyberspace. A rules-based order is key because it gives all states, big and small, the confidence, predictability, and stability essential for economic progress, Koh notes.

Meanwhile, experts at Strategy& have voiced a similar position, remarking that every national government in the Middle East is now striving to create a secure digital environment, but that too often these efforts are "fragmented, tactical, and reactive".

Starting at the network

While it is important that individuals and enterprises adopt practices to mitigate cybersecurity attacks, there is also the more fundamental issue of cybers-

security relating to countries' core ICT network infrastructure.

At the recently held GITEX Global summit, for example, technology stakeholders from across the Middle East discussed how to build a more resilient post-pandemic world through network standards and frameworks. Jawad Abbasi, Head of MENA at GSMA, was amongst the executives championing for open collaboration on security and standardization as part of the GSMA's participation at the Huawei Arab Innovation Day, co-located at GITEX Global.

This is a call that has been echoed in many other forums. At this year's GISEC security conference, the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation – Computer Emergency Response Team (OIC-CERT) launched its first 5G security working group to develop common, open standards that can be used in extending 5G infrastructure to more communities. Again, it has welcomed many partners in these efforts, including the expertise of companies like Huawei, who are now co-chairs of the working group.

During the 5th Arab Security Conference this fall, the Network Equipment Security Assurance Scheme (NESAS) co-developed by the GSMA and 3GPP was also spotlighted as a common global baseline for operators and national ICT security agencies in the region to work from, particularly in the security and reliability of 5G networks.

Security of 5G networks is particularly noteworthy considering the strong progress many nations in the Middle East have already made in adopting this highly advanced infrastructure. 5G networks are helping to usher in a new generation of smart education, healthcare, oil & gas, and much more. The digitization enabled by 5G is now part of nearly every country's national development vision in the Middle East. Meanwhile, PwC estimates the total 5G economic impact in Europe, the Middle East and Africa to be USD361 billion by 2030.

While local requirements must always be considered, embracing cybersecurity standards that are broadly in line with internationally agreed frameworks will only benefit the Middle East in an increasingly connected world. Whether in 5G networks, cloud computing, or other emerging technologies, open collaboration will be key to strengthening trust for shared success.



BUENOS AIRES: Daniel Corvalan (center) receives a free meal at a community kitchen of the MRP (Movimiento Resistencia Popular) in La Boca neighborhood, Buenos Aires. — AFP

COVID-related lack of work leaves Argentine stomachs empty

BUENOS AIRES: Fatima Gomez, Stefani Chinguel and Carlos Alberto Alvarez head every day to a soup kitchen in their working class Buenos Aires neighborhood. When the government shut down much of the economy to stop the spread of COVID-19, they had to give up work and now find themselves impotent in the face of rampant inflation that devours their meager savings. "I've been coming to the soup kitchen for around five months. I always had work and earned good money," said Chinguel, 23. "But not anymore. Every day I send out my CV but no-one calls me."

She leaves with two meals in a box: one for her and one for her partner who works in a shop but whose salary is not enough to support them.

"Sometimes they increase my boyfriend's salary, but 1,000 pesos (\$9) is not enough to match rising prices," said Chinguel. Inflation this year is 41.8 percent, one of the highest in the world—a key factor at play in Argentina's parliamentary elections today.

Since turning 18, Chinguel has worked as a carer for the elderly and as a car saleswoman, amongst other jobs. She heads to the soup kitchen in La Boca also in the hope of finding work.

Those working in the kitchen are given a state subsidy worth half the minimum monthly wage of 32,000 pesos (\$300). "Many people want to work here but there are no vacancies," said Edith Cuspipaucar, 40, a mother of six. She also receives 15,400 pesos a month in family allowance for her three youngest children.

But she still has to head out every evening to find food on the street. "Do you think you can feed a family with 15,400 pesos a month?" she said. Soup kitchens

run by social action groups with state funds have sprung up on practically every street corner in poor neighborhoods like La Boca.

'I work to survive'

Gomez works for a cleaning company and while she never lost her job during the pandemic lockdown, her employers simply do not have any offices to clean. Her salary was practically reduced by half, and for the first time in her life she needed a soup kitchen to feed her three children and granddaughter.

"I work to survive. If I don't take away food, we can't manage at the end of the month. It's not enough. Maybe we eat lunch but not dinner," said Gomez, who has lived in a boarding house for 20 years.

Alvarez, a 61-year-old peddler, says he cannot sell his wares any more. "In the street the police chase us. They don't let us work," he complained. "I come here out of necessity, out of hunger. There's no work, that's why we come looking for work." Unemployment in Argentina was 9.6 percent in the second quarter of 2021, with underemployment reaching 12.4 percent and poverty 40.6 percent.

Huge informal sector

"The pandemic accelerated processes that were already happening in the world where there is ever more informal or unrecognized work," said Ezequiel Barbenza, a professor at Salvador University. "When, from one day to the next, they slow down the circulation of people and, as a consequence the economy, a system that was prepared to include all people is left exposed." During the 2020 lockdown, the state offered assistance to informal workers. "It was designed for three million people, 12 million applied and nine million were accepted. It showed a huge universe," said Barbenza. The lack of work, alongside inflation and personal security, are the issues that most worry Argentines, according to political scientist Diego Reynoso. "It creates a lot of uncertainty for people and great discomfort. There is a society that is very worried, annoyed, unhappy, with fatal humor, which they aim at the government." —AFP

Business

NBK Economic Report

Kuwait project activity dips amid delays and supply chain constraints in 3Q21

Total value of projects awarded in 2021 reaches KD 916 million

KUWAIT: The total value of awarded projects in Kuwait fell to KD 152 million (-68 percent q/q; -57 percent y/y), according to MEED projects. This brings the total value of projects awarded in 2021 to a cumulative KD 916 million so far. With the fourth quarter underway already, the full-year figure is likely to fall a long way short of the KD 2.4 billion earlier projected by MEED. The decline is due to delays in government tendering and approvals amid cutbacks in capital spending as well as pandemic-linked supply chain constraints that have led to increases in the cost of materials and labor.

Construction sector awards came in considerably weaker than in the previous quarter (-72 percent q/q). It was, though, the strongest performing sector, both in 3Q21 with KD 102 million worth of projects awarded and in the year so far with 63 percent of all projects falling in this sector. KOC and KERP's Excavation Transportation & Remediation Project: Zone-3, worth KD 75 million, was the largest project awarded during the quarter, followed by PAHW's Al-Mutlaa City: Soil Works contract, worth KD 26 million. Several project awards are expected in 4Q21, including the PAHW's Public Buildings at South Abdullah Al-Mubarak: Blocks 1-6 (KD 96 million) and a portion of the Sabah Al-Ahmed Township project (KD 75 million).

The power and water sectors also witnessed a slowdown in project activity in 3Q21, with awards



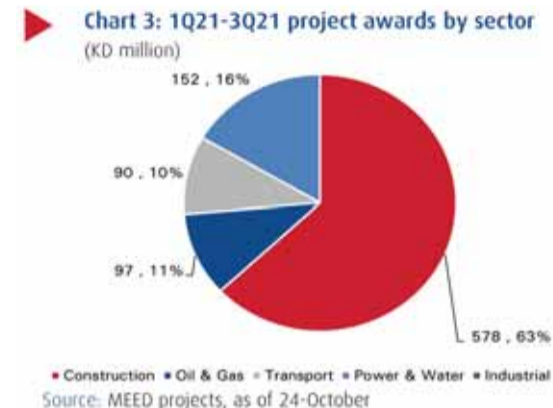
falling 17 percent q/q to KD 47 million. Two contracts under the PAHW's Extension & Maintenance of Medium & Low Tension Cable Networks project were awarded. The fourth quarter of the year should see KD 431 million worth of projects awarded, including several contracts related to the MEW's Fresh Water Pipeline project (KD 105 million) and smaller scale projects in the power sector worth around KD 258 million.

No projects were awarded in the transport sector in 3Q21. This is the second consecutive quarter of minimal activity, following 2Q21's outturn of KD 5



million. Looking ahead, KD 452 million of transportation awards, including two parts of MPW's Northern Regional Road (KD 189 million) and the Crossroads for New Passenger Terminal 2 (KD 120 million) are expected by the end of 2021.

Activity in the oil and gas sectors also slowed significantly. Total awards declined by 93 percent q/q to KD 4 million, which was essentially KOC's Installation of Flow Lines for Producer Wells project. Kuwait's oil and gas sector has KD 308 million in awards planned for 4Q21, including KOC's JPF 4 & 5 Production Facilities (KD 294 million) and several smaller scale



oil projects. However, given recent trends, we could see this project pushed back into early 2022.

Lastly, Kuwait's chemical sector, which has been quiet for the past few years, should finally see some movement, with the contracts expected for the Al-Zour Petrochemical Complex (KD 2.85 billion) by Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC). This is not likely before early 2022, though.

MEED Projects sees KD 1.5 billion worth of projects awards coming through in 4Q21. For 2021 as a whole, however, project activity is likely to be softer than initially expected.

KFH: For first time in Kuwait, smart watches to perform transactions through ATMs

KUWAIT: For the first time in Kuwait, Kuwait Finance House "KFH" launches a service using smart watches and mobiles to perform banking transactions through ATMs at KFH branches and KFH.Go smart branches. KFH Group Acting Chief Retail Banking and Private Banking Officer, Khaled Yousif Al-Shamlan said that KFH has achieved and added another success to its records in digital banking world. He noted that customers can now benefit from a variety of banking services through ATMs without using cards as these transactions are performed through available digital portfolios: KFH Wallet, Samsung Pay, Garmin Pay and Fitbit Pay.

Al-Shamlan indicated that the banking services which can be performed through digital portfolios include cash withdrawal, cash deposit, cheque deposit, inter-accounts transfers, transfers to KFH beneficiaries, transfers local and foreign banks, donations to charity institutions, cheque book request, account statement request, opening additional new account and investment deposits. He added that digital portfolios services through ATMs are pro-

vided to customers free of charge.

He indicated that this unique service affirms KFH pioneering position in providing innovative banking services and financial solutions that fulfil customers aspirations and enhance their banking experience. The service uses the most modern fintech means. The service reflects KFH major success in implementing the digitalization strategy which has come a long way in strengthened KFH leading position worldwide.

A variety of e-financial solutions

KFH provides customers with a variety of distinguished e-services which can be applied round the clock. This package includes online personal finance request service, opening new accounts for customers without visiting the branch, endorsement by e-signature through Haweyati application, local and foreign money transfers, investment deposits, opening gold account, buy/sell gold, cheque book request, instant printing of ATM card through QR Code, cheque deposit, follow up finance liabilities and installments, view investment plans, follow up account balances and deposits, spot trans-



Khaled Al-Shamlan

Glasgow: Industrial canal's climate fighting future

GLASGOW: Glasgow was a vital cog in the machine of Britain's Industrial Revolution, which brought the baleful impact of carbon emissions and eventually climate change to the world. Today, the venue for the COP26 environmental summit is home to a pioneering project to counteract the effects of planetary warming, centered on Glasgow's Forth and Clyde Canal.

Coinciding with COP26, its managers have launched "Europe's first 'smart canal'" to combat flooding in what is already Britain's wettest city. According to Peter Robinson, chief engineer of Scottish Canals, climate modeling forecasts that Glasgow's rainfall will rise by another third in the next 50 years.

But riding a canal barge to present the new project, he told AFP: "We've applied 21st-century thinking to an 18th-century asset." In anticipation of heavy rain, computer systems can

automatically adjust the canal's levels to divert water to the Firth of Forth and sea beyond, east of Glasgow.

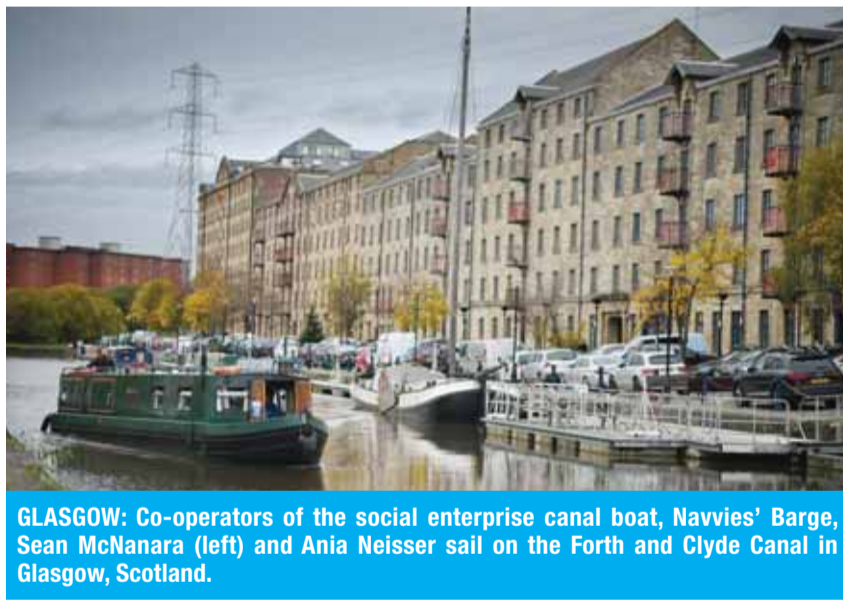
The spare capacity created can then retain some of the rainwater to prevent flooding of the city center, about 15 minutes away by foot. The technology-driven transformation is a far cry from the canal's part in Glasgow's rise, fall and more recent rebirth.

It was the artery that turned Glasgow into the "second city" of Britain's Empire, after London, before the city fell on hard times after World War II. "Two hundred years ago timber was coming through here, stone, coal were coming through here," Robinson said.

Scottish engineer James Watt, a graduate of Glasgow University, was one of the pioneers of the Industrial Revolution when in 1765 he transformed the power and efficiency of the steam engine.

The idea came to Watt while he walked in one of the city's parks, recalled Ewan Gibbs, an expert in economic and social history at Glasgow University today. "We could loosely say that was the first point of the modern carbon economy," he said.

The canal opened in 1790 and was used to transport coal by barge to Glasgow from Scotland's largest coal-



GLASGOW: Co-operators of the social enterprise canal boat, Navy's Barge, Sean McNanara (left) and Ania Neisser sail on the Forth and Clyde Canal in Glasgow, Scotland.

field in nearby Lanarkshire. Steel mills proliferated alongside it with the 19th century growth of heavy industry, shipbuilding and finance. But as that industry fell away after the war, urban squalor took over and canals like the Forth and Clyde became "completely derelict, they were full of shopping trolleys", commented Amelia Morgan, director of safety at Scottish Canals.

The 57-kilometre (36-mile) Forth and Clyde itself, running off the River Clyde, acted as a "barrier" between

deprived areas to its north and the far more affluent city center to the south, she said. It lacked bridges, leading to long diversions for residents wanting to go from north to south.

But urban regeneration since the 1980s has helped revitalize the city, and newly bridges connect the canal's two halves today. "We have repurposed this canal," Robinson said. "It had a purpose that helped to create Glasgow and now it has another purpose that is making it sustainable." —AFP

Sri Lanka to tax car crashes in drastic budget

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka slapped a tax on road accidents in a drastic austerity budget unveiled Friday as the country faces a major foreign exchange crisis. Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa said vehicle accidents will be taxed under new revenue proposals to keep the budget deficit at 8.8 percent of GDP in 2022, down from 11.1 percent this year.

"It is proposed to impose a fee on vehicles meeting with accidents," Rajapaksa told parliament. "Through this initiative, it is expected to reduce the number of motor vehicle accidents."

He did not give details of the crash tax. Sri

Lanka's roads are among the most dangerous in the world with over 3,000 traffic fatalities and some 25,000 seriously injured every year.

Rajapaksa admitted that the country was facing a serious crisis with foreign reserves at \$2.3 billion, down from \$7.5 billion when his brother Gotabaya took over as president two years ago.

"We have to accept that the increase in prices is due to a shortage of goods, the imposition of import restrictions, the overreliance on imports, the depreciation of the rupee together with the failure to adequately encourage manufacturers," he said. There were no measures to ease the import ban on a host of goods, including vehicles, spares, tiles and even some essential food imports, imposed in March last year. However, Rajapaksa increased taxes on cigarettes, liquor and slapped a one-off tax on companies earning profits of over 2,000 million rupees (\$10 million) and raised the VAT on financial services from 15 to 18 percent.

He also announced raising the retirement age of public servants from 60 to 65 years, a move that will delay the payment of terminal benefits to thousands of employees and thereby reduce government spending for the next five years. The budget deficit of 1.628 billion rupees (\$8.14 billion) will be bridged with borrowings, including \$5.08 billion in foreign borrowings, according to official figures.

Central Bank officials have said the country is facing its worst foreign exchange crisis since the advent of a free economy in 1978. Ratings agency Moody's downgraded Sri Lanka's foreign debt rating last month. The decision was fuelled by the absence of "comprehensive financing" to make looming debt repayments, according to Moody's. Sri Lanka's economy shrank a record 3.6 percent last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The central bank expects growth of 4-5 percent this year with the gradual reopening of the economy and the roll-out of a vaccine program. —AFP

APEC to cut vaccine tariffs, mulls US hosting offer

WELLINGTON: Pacific Rim leaders agreed to cut tariffs on COVID-19 vaccines at a virtual summit yesterday, but failed to deliver meaningful movement on climate change and reacted coolly to US efforts to re-engage with the region. The annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit brought together leaders from 21 member economies, including US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, in a bid to chart a path to pandemic recovery. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the group discussed an economic "reset" in the wake of the coronavirus crisis. "APEC leaders are determined to work together to defeat COVID-19," she said.

"We are focused on driving a coordinated economic response to the biggest downturn in 75 years, creating new models of growth and responding to climate change." The meeting's major outcome was a commitment to slash tariffs on vaccines and other pandemic-related medical supplies to streamline the international response to the deadly health crisis.

The leaders also agreed to push for a freeze on increases to fossil fuel subsidies as part of a plan to make the pandemic recovery environmentally sustainable. But the pledge, first raised by APEC in 2010, did little to meet the soaring rhetoric of regional leaders in the build-up to the summit, who had talked up transitional change toward a green future. Ardern said ahead of the declaration that she would have liked to see fossil fuel subsidies scrapped completely. "If the world is not ready to take bold action on climate change, then the world must be ready for the disastrous results of climate change," she said in the lead-up to the leaders' meeting.

Climate Council of Australia ecologist Lesley Hughes said declarations without tight timelines and enforceable penalties were "empty words".

Rising tensions

The summit was held against the backdrop of growing competition between the United States and China, the world's top two economies and the region's preeminent military powers. With tensions between Washington and Beijing building over Taiwan, human rights and trade, Biden and Xi are set to hold a virtual meeting on Monday, the White House announced. "Of course, as APEC economies, we would welcome the ongoing dialogue between APEC members," Ardern said when questioned about the talks. Biden used the APEC meeting to discuss "ways to unleash the economic power of the region and to deepen US economic engagement throughout the Indo-Pacific", the White House said in a statement.

"President Biden reaffirmed our interest in serving as a strong, reliable partner to APEC economies as we pursue sustained and inclusive growth," it said. China last month made a record number of air incursions near Taiwan, a self-ruling democracy claimed by Beijing, prompting Washington to stress it would help Taiwan defend itself if needed. On Thursday, Xi warned against a return to Cold War-era divisions in the Asia-Pacific, in remarks to a virtual business conference on the sidelines of the APEC summit.

"Attempts to draw ideological lines or form small circles on geopolitical grounds are bound to fail," he said. "The Asia-Pacific region cannot and should not relapse into the confrontation and division of the Cold War era." Biden and Xi have talked by phone twice since the veteran Democrat moved into the White House in January. Biden had hoped to meet Xi at a recent Group of 20 summit in Rome, but the Chinese leader has not travelled since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP

Business

Gulf Bank's 'Let's Talk Business' podcast interviews top events management firm

Podcast highlights little-known origin stories behind some of Kuwait's favorite brands

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank aired the second episode of its "Let's Talk Business" podcast with Ahmed Al-Majed, General Manager at the Suffix company for sports events management. The program, hosted by Tareq Al-Saleh, Deputy General Manager of the Economic Research Unit at Gulf Bank, presents entrepreneurial stories within a simplified economic framework, targeting budding entrepreneurs who are considering starting businesses of their own. The bank's new podcast is part of its overarching strategy of fostering economic and community sustainability in Kuwait.

Following our passions

Ahmed Al-Majed started his talk about the beginning of his work in the sports equipment sector, an industry that he loved but was not as popular in Kuwait at the time—at least, not popular enough to sustain a business. He said, "I learned then that a business should not be built on personal passion alone. You may be passionate about something, but the market may not be ready for it. That is what happened to me when I founded my first local sports products store in 2004."

Competition

When asked about competition in the sector, Al-Majed touched on his company's philosophy and their unique view of business in the sports event management sector, saying: "At Suffix, we see ourselves as being complementary to the sector. We work with all sectors in the country. We do not necessarily view ourselves as being anyone's competitors, rather we are an added support system for many people and entities. The market is very large, and our mission is much greater, which is why we are pleased with any effort that succeeds in reaching a new category of customers, and promoting a culture of sports and health."

Focusing on the customer experience

The Suffix company is responsible for organizing the annual "Gulf Bank 642 Marathon" and has been successfully putting on the event for over seven years. With the marathon reaching bigger and better heights every year, Gulf Bank recently announced the extension of their strategic partnership with Suffix for another three years. Al-Majed spoke about the most important thing that distinguishes the marathon from other events, highlighting the unique and enjoyable experience that Gulf Bank creates for all participants, saying: "The marathon is for everyone, whether you are a sports enthusiast or just participating for a



KUWAIT: Tareq Al-Saleh interviews Ahmed Al-Majed during Gulf Bank's second episode of 'Let's Talk Business' podcast.

day, so it is important for this marathon to always be more than just a race. Hence, we work to create a beautiful experience for every participant, despite its logistical difficulty. We make sure that the contestants pass through the various landmarks of Kuwait, starting with Souq Sharq, Kuwait Towers, and Souk Al-Mubarakiya, because we want to add a sense of excitement, especially for those who are not interested in, or do not like, sports. In that way, we hope to urge everyone to practice healthy habits like walking and running."

Patience paves the way to success

During the interview, Al-Majed explained the necessity of continuous work and planning, and not expecting impressive success from the first attempt. Al-Majed continued: "When we started the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon series in its first year, we had 1,400 people, but that was like getting a million participants to us, and we were very happy with that number. After only three years, the number of participants reached 10,000, which placed the 'Gulf Bank 642 Marathon' on the list of the largest marathons in the world. We have also recently been awarded a Bronze Ranking by World Athletics, an honor that we received among 128 marathons around the world."

Working during the pandemic

The lockdown and the long curfews in Kuwait were some of the big challenges that the Suffix company faced, and successfully overcame using technology. Al-Majed said: "Today, technology has become an essential element in every company, whether it is a digital company or not. The use of technology enables us to continue working and reduce costs, in addition to increasing the ability to innovate. Within a few short years, we have gradually transformed into the digital company we see today, and although our main activity is managing sports events, today technology has become the heart of our work. During the pandemic, our sector was one of the most affected. We took the opportunity to prove our ability to work and manage events digitally and remotely, launching various services within the first days of the closure and the curfew. We found that it resonated very well with the customers, whose loyalty to us significantly increased during this period."

Risk management

When asked about the financial aspect of the business, Al-Majed said that when the company was launched, the reliance was very high on the management of sports events as a source of income, while the

management of sports facilities constituted only 6 percent of the company's size. According to Al-Majed, this financial model constituted a great risk to the company's feasibility. The partners' vision was to focus on developing the sports facilities management division to constitute 60 percent of the company's size. In that way, the company could ensure the sustainability of income throughout the year, and in different seasons.

Financing

On financing, A-Majed said: "We still see Suffix as a small company, with very large potential for growth, without the need for investors to enter the business model at this time. We have many goals that we are seeking now, and we prefer to reach them without any pitfalls or pressures. Entering financial investment helps you accelerate growth but it may not help you speed up success. So, as my partner Ahmed Al Hezami always says, we choose to enjoy the journey. We may look into getting investors when we reach the goals we have set for the next five years."

"Let's Talk Business" is Gulf Bank's newest podcast, created in collaboration with Belmokhba, a local creative content creation and production house. Episodes air on Gulf Bank's digital and social media channels.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with the different relevant parties to achieve it. For more information on Gulf Bank's various initiatives and activities, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches or log on to Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number.



SINGAPORE: In this photograph taken yesterday migrant workers are pictured working at a construction site in Singapore. —AFP

Singapore migrant workers suffer under COVID curbs

SINGAPORE: Bangladeshi migrant worker MD Sharif Uddin used to spend his days off with friends outside his cramped Singapore dormitory, but coronavirus curbs have for 18 months left him stuck inside during his spare time. More than 300,000 migrant workers, many of them from South Asia, live in dorms in the prosperous city-state, where they are typically packed into shared rooms and sleep on bunk beds. The vast complexes were hit by COVID-19 and locked down at the start of the pandemic, while restrictions were introduced across the whole country for a period to prevent a broader outbreak.

Curbs have been eased for most in Singapore, where—despite currently facing a renewed virus wave—vaccinated people can go out shopping and to restaurants, and borders are gradually re-opening.

But it is a different story for the low-paid migrants, who remain subject to far more onerous restrictions that mostly allow them to travel only between their work and accommodation. "It's a very painful life... like prison," said construction site worker Uddin, adding that before the pandemic he used to meet friends at the weekend to drink coffee, recite poetry and gossip.

"We're only allowed to go to work and home, back and forth, and nowhere else. It's like living under house arrest," added the 43-year-old, who has worked in Singapore for 13 years and written two books about his experiences. Beyond heading to work, the migrants are allowed occasional trips to specially-built "recreation centers" that typically comprise shops set around a square, and sports facilities.

'Economic commodity'

When the dormitories—self-contained and usually in out-of-the-way parts of Singapore—became the epicenter of the city's first COVID-19 wave last year, it sparked national soul-searching. Calls mounted to improve the livelihoods of migrants who have for decades done the back-breaking work of constructing

the financial hub's gleaming skyscrapers, cleaning housing estates and maintaining public transport.

The government pledged to take steps such as building new dormitories with more modern facilities and more space for residents. But the continued restrictions faced by the workers—who typically earn from Sg\$500 to \$1,000 (US\$370 to \$740) a month in one of the world's most expensive cities—highlight how little has changed in reality, critics say.

"Our government doesn't quite see them as fully human," Alex Au, vice-president of migrant rights group Transient Workers Count Too, said. Authorities treat the migrants like "an economic commodity", and fail to "accord them the same rights, the same freedoms that our citizens have," he said.

As criticism mounted, authorities in the city-state of 5.5 million started a scheme that allows a limited number to make organized trips to designated areas. About 700 participated in the scheme's first month in September, and it was expanded at the end of last month to allow up to 3,000 workers a week from the dorms to participate. But this still represents only a tiny proportion of the workers.

'Psychological problems'

The government maintains that continued curbs on migrants—who come from countries including Bangladesh, India and China—are necessary as there is a higher risk of virus transmission due to their living conditions. This is despite the fact 98 percent of dorm residents have been fully vaccinated, higher than the city-state's overall rate of 85 percent.

"Any easing of movement restrictions will need to be done in a careful and calibrated manner," Minister for Manpower Tan See Leng told parliament last week. He also said authorities have improved access to mental health services. But this is little comfort for dorm resident Amir from Bangladesh, who longs to have the freedom to go where he wants.

"I miss nature, open space," said the 32-year-old construction site supervisor, who spoke using a pseudonym. "We can only see our dormitory life and our construction site. We cannot travel... cannot see outside." For Uddin, change can't come soon enough for the increasingly stressed migrant workers.

"We are facing psychological problems," he said, adding their "fundamental rights as workers and human beings" had been breached. "This imprisoned lifestyle won't let a person live a healthy life." —AFP

Rosneft profit up with 'rapid growth' in energy demand

MOSCOW: Russian oil giant Rosneft on Friday reported an increase in profits in the third quarter, with its CEO predicting a "super cycle" of rising energy prices as demand picks up. The company—which is about one-fifth owned by Britain's BP—has returned to profit this year as oil prices have rebounded following a dismal 2020 for the industry and global economy due to the pandemic.

Gas prices have also surged this year as the world economy recovers from the COVID-induced crisis.

CEO Igor Sechin said in a statement that "despite the uncertainty in the global economy" there is a "rapid growth in demand for traditional energy resources". "We may witness a new super cycle on the oil and gas markets," he said.



The state-controlled company reported a net profit of 314 billion rubles (\$4.3 billion) in the third quarter after suffering losses in the previous year. Profit was up 35 percent between July and September compared to the previous quarter. Quarterly revenue rose to 2.3 trillion rubles in the third quarter, 60 percent higher than a year ago.

Sechin said the market conditions were favorable for the company to increase its "investments in new projects" among which is the Vostok Oil project in Siberia. The Rosneft results comes as talks conclude at the COP26 UN climate conference in Glasgow with calls for nations to phase out fossil fuels. —AFP



BEIJING: Workers sort packages for delivery at a JD.com distribution center on "Singles Day", also known as the Double 11, the biggest shopping day of the year, in Beijing. — AFP

Alibaba, JD enjoy record Singles Day despite tech crackdown

BEIJING: Chinese ecommerce titan Alibaba enjoyed record sales during its Singles Day shopping extravaganza, giving a much-needed boost to the firm after a torrid year in which it became the symbol of a government crackdown that hammered the country's tech sector. The firm said 540.3 billion yuan (\$84.5 billion) was spent as China's army of consumers went on a splurge, despite a much lower-key sales campaign following pressure from the government to tone down the aggressive promotions and rampant consumerism.

Combined sales with industry rival JD.com came in at 889 billion yuan (\$139.4 billion) — equivalent to the GDP of many countries—which was also a record and up about a fifth from last year. Both Alibaba and JD.com reported strong sales of items such as electric appliances, electronics, pet supplies, and cosmetics and other personal-care goods.

JD.com share rose more than four percent in Hong Kong on Friday, though Alibaba was down more than one percent. "Single's Day"—so-called for the 11.11 date—began more than a decade ago and for years was a one-day, 24-hour event on November 11.

But industry players expanded it recently into an extended promotion from November 1-11, with many retailers and platforms offering discounts and pre-sales even earlier. The shopping fest now dwarfs the US "Black Friday" spree and has become a barometer of consumer sentiment in the world's second-largest economy. Concerned that Big Tech was becoming too powerful and abusing its market dominance, the government has this year dramatically tightened regulation.

The campaign has rattled investors, slicing billions of dollars off the market capitalization of Alibaba—which has seen its share price plunge about 30 percent this year—as well as JD, Tencent and other major players. In e-commerce, the government has taken specific aim at alleged abuse of user data and monopolistic business practices by platforms, such as banning merchants from selling their products on rival sites.

But the steadily rising consumer sales are also likely to be quietly welcomed by the government, which is moving to create a more modern consumer-driven economy, lessening the traditional reliance on manufacturing, exports and government investment. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Nadia Adanle, promoter of Colour Indigo workshop, a project transforming waste fabric into decorative objects, poses for a portrait in Ouidah yesterday.



Marcel Adjanohoun, head of several hotels in Ouidah, holds items made at Colour Indigo workshop.

BENIN PROJECT TURNS WASTE FABRIC INTO RECYCLED 'GOLD'

Every morning, Amake Yessoufou makes the rounds of the sewing workshops of Ouidah, a small coastal town in the south of Benin, and collects scraps of fabric used by tailors to make clothes. In the past, waste fabric clogged up the gutters of Ouidah, but Yessoufou is part of one effort to change that culture and make the most of recycling materials.

When Yessoufou ends her tour, the 28-year-old, who is deaf and mute, joins the

"Colour Indigo" workshop, a project transforming waste fabric into decorative objects. Employing around 30 people, including 10 living with a disability, the project has found a loyal following and even ships some objects overseas.

"I had never imagined that scraps of fabric could be useful. At first, I was amazed and astonished but afterwards, I understood that textile waste is worth gold if it is recycled," says Lucrece Sossou, a local seamstress.

In the workshop, Anne-Marie Afoutoutou leaves her wheelchair at the foot of a pile of scraps of fabric. On a small wooden chair, she braids pieces of laundry sorted by colour.

Over the course of the day, the piles of fabric disappear and all manner of objects take shape, from placemats and rugs to earrings, sold at between seven and 40 euros a piece. One "Colour Indigo" client is Marcel Adjanohoun, head of several hotels in Ouidah — a tourist destination

40 kilometres (25 miles) along the coast from Cotonou, the economic capital.

"These are objects that speak to me a lot, so I use them to decorate my hotel," explained the entrepreneur.

Braiding the pieces of fabric to make objects has significantly changed the lives of the workers, most of whom use crutches or wheelchairs. Contrary to what some argue, working with people living with a disability does not affect the productivity of the company in any way, says Nadia

Adanle, the business manager.

Thanks to her work, Afoutoutou can "finally provide for her needs", whereas before, she says, she could "not put anything aside".

"The way society looks at me has changed a lot since I leave the house every morning to go to work," she says, her eyes riveted on the thin braids. "Today, I feel valued." — AFP



To Tjoelker-Kleve, ambassador of the Netherlands in Benin, who is a customer at Colour Indigo workshop. — AFP photos



Items made at the Colour Indigo workshop, a project transforming waste fabric into decorative objects.



In a changing city, a glitzy Hong Kong gallery grapples with censorship

Between glass and soaring concrete walls, Hong Kongers queued for the opening of the much-anticipated multimillion-dollar art museum M+, a project bedeviled by delays, spiraling costs, and now the spectre of censorship. The Kowloon gallery - built directly above a major train tunnel that for weeks ferried thousands to the 2019 pro-democracy protests - was supposed to open four years ago, and is the first in Asia dedicated to 20th- and 21st-century visual culture.

While the Swiss-designed venue aims to rival Western leaders in contemporary art curation, critics say it must also grapple with a shrinking space for freedom of expression and growing self-censorship. And ahead of the opening on Friday attention has focused on the decision to not display a photo series by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei in the museum. "Politics shouldn't override art," said Yip, who gave only her surname, while waiting to enter the museum on a bright autumnal morning. "The current situation is very disappointing," interrupted her husband, also in his sixties.

In the series in question, Ai is showing his middle finger to institutions around the world, including the White House, Germany's Reichstag - and Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Earlier in the week, officials confirmed the artwork would not be shown, stating "artistic expression is not above the law". That political tension was not immediately on display as the museum's first visitors - many touting designer handbags better suited to Shanghai fashion week - roamed the atrium. Other visitors, most of whom declined to be fully identified, gave a different perspective to AFP.

'Art should be free'

"Some people said in the news recently that law is above art, but I think art should be free and creative," said Dennis, 35, who only gave his first name. He said instead of attracting artists as initially envisaged, the gallery was scaring them away. First conceived 14 years ago and budgeted at \$760 million - a figure officials have said is likely to be higher when the data is released - the 65,000-square-metre gallery has opened in a hugely different political climate.

The National Security law, passed in June last year following the 2019 pro-democracy protests, targets anything deemed "secession, subversion, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces" and has quickly criminalized a host of political views. And critics say it has also stifled a once-thriving artistic community, clamping down on freedoms and expressions previously celebrated in the city. In March, Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam said authorities will be "on full alert" to ensure exhibitions do not undermine national security while simultaneously promising artistic freedom of expression, in response to a question about M+'s upcoming shows.

But critic Leung Po-shan asked how the art museum would function under such restrictions: "Is it possible to omit June 4 in stories about China's contemporary arts?" "All the cultural and art institutions, not only M+, are facing the same problem of the unlocatable 'red line'," she said. "M+ is big and it will become a wind vane, but we are not sure how well it can defend itself." Despite concerns, others were delighted. Visitors leaving "Hong Kong: Here and Beyond" - among the exhibits showcasing some 1,500 works from the museum's 8,000 piece archive - expressed their surprise at some of the work shown. "When we walked around the galleries there are some politically sensitive items related to China and we are happy to see that they are displayed," said Ashley Wong, 35. One man, who declined to give his name, said the situation was not black and white. —AFP

'Like queens': Divisive legacy of Senegal's women traders

Aminata Sall, who rents out brilliantly coloured dresses in the Senegalese city of Saint-Louis, systematically quizzes her clients about their motivations for the prized cultural heirlooms. Kept in a storeroom near her office, the gowns represent a now-vanished group of mixed-race merchant women known as the Signares. "If it's just for show, I won't rent them to you," Sall says, recounting how she once rejected a bid by a university professor hoping to hire some Signare-style dresses.

The Signares were a colonial-era class of female traders of gold, ivory and slaves who once strutted their wealth in West African trading hubs in magnificent spangled dresses and conical hats.

At their height, they were powerful commercial brokers in Saint-Louis and further south on the island of Goree, developing their own unique Euro-African hybrid culture. They have since faded away, but their glamour lives on in folk memory. Today, women wearing Signare dresses are in demand at business or political events in Saint-Louis, once the capital of the former French colony of Senegal. The Signares' ties to the slave trade are either unknown or pass largely without comment.

Sall, a museum curator and member of a history association that has about 100 replica Signare dresses, warned that flippant use of the robes represents a "loss of meaning". "I think people forget or pretend to forget," she said. "People have to understand that they played a big role-like the colonisers."

Female bourgeoisie

The history of the Signares is entwined with the history of Saint-Louis itself. French traders founded the city in the mid-17th century, on an island on the mouth of the Senegal river, and it quickly became an important hub. The Signares first emerged during the early years of the settlement, when European traders would take native wives. Marrying locals was frowned upon, and condemned by the Catholic Church. But the common practice afforded African women and their mixed-race descendants opportunities for social advancement.

Through inheritances and shrewd business acumen, these women ended up building considerable fortunes in their

own right, including by trading in slaves. Accounts from travellers during the heyday of the Signares—from the 18th to mid-19th centuries—describe a thriving female bourgeoisie in Saint-Louis.

At set times during the day, the businesswomen would promenade through the city wearing their vivid dresses to flaunt their wealth. Aissata Kane Lo, a researcher at Saint-Louis' Gaston Berger university, described the Signare phenomenon as a novel way of life "that had nothing to do with Senegalese tradi-

matching headdress and shawls.

Diallo, 77, said the popularity of Fanal is such that she is now regularly asked to "send us some Signares" by people throwing parties, or organising business events. Demand for the dresses has been a boon for tailors in Saint-Louis who can replicate the style.

Awa Marie Sy, who models for one such dressmaker, said she felt proud to wear the outfits. "These dresses were worn by our grandmothers, who were like queens," she said.



Models working with fashion designer, Ndeye Diop Guisse, talk as they wear their traditional Signares outfits in Saint Louis.

tion". But from the middle of the 19th century onwards, with the abolition of the slave trade and French restrictions on local commerce, the Signares disappeared.

'Like queens'

Some are nostalgic for the old times, Aissata Kane Lo said.

Marie-Madeleine Valfroy Diallo, a journalist and actor, is one such person. In 1999, she revived the "Fanal" festival, a custom that once saw the Signares march to Midnight Mass by lantern light.

Today, women dressed as Signares for the festival shimmer in the procession alongside other festival-goers in traditional Senegalese garb. Their dresses are of another era—puffy below the waste, adorned with ruffles and lace,

'You can't erase history'

Ariane Reaux, who owns a hotel with rooms named after famous Signares, and has hosted conferences on the women, said there was a broad fascination for the singular culture of Saint-Louis centuries past. "There's a lot that people don't quite understand," she admitted, but noted that the Signares are part of Senegal's heritage.

"It's all part of a history between France and Senegal. Nothing like this has ever happened anywhere else". Aminata Sall, the museum curator, insisted the complex reality of the Signares should not be glossed over. "You can't erase it, it's history," she said.—AFP



M+ museum director Suhanya Raffel (L) and chairman of the Board of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Henry Tang (R), attend a press conference during a media tour of the new M+ Museum in Hong Kong on November 11, 2021. —AFP



Models pose for a portrait in front of a disused port crane. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



This picture taken on October 12, 2021 shows Japanese artist Masakazu Rokuhara, who is also an architect and a member of the Taiyoshi Hyakuban restoration project.



This picture shows light switches (L) next to ageing decorations on a wall of Taiyoshi Hyakuban.



Picture shows Japanese artist Masakazu Rokuhara, who is also an architect and a member of the Taiyoshi Hyakuban restoration project, pointing to ageing designs during an interview with AFP at Taiyoshi Hyakuban. — AFP photos

'UGLY HISTORY': BATTLE TO RESTORE JAPAN'S ICONIC BUILDING

At the corner of a red-light district in the Japanese city of Osaka stands an unlikely architectural gem: a century-old former brothel at the centre of a restoration campaign. Taiyoshi Hyakuban hasn't functioned as a brothel for decades, and now operates as a restaurant, but it is seen as a symbol of the surrounding neighbourhood, which is still associated with the sex industry.

Experts say the wooden two-storey structure is a rare original example of architecture from the Taisho era of 1912-1926. "Most Japanese architecture dating from a century or more burned down in wartime air raids or big fires," Shinya Hashizume, a professor of architectural history at Osaka Prefecture University, told AFP.

"Old brothel buildings, in particular, have rarely survived," he said on a visit to the site. Taiyoshi Hyakuban has dozens of Japanese and Western-style party rooms, some featuring delicately painted sliding doors and ceilings with ornate inlays.

Murals of festivals, goddesses playing

traditional instruments and Dutch merchants in old-fashioned clothes adorn the suites, which surround a garden where towering "yin and yang" rocks represent men and women. "Here, the art is part of the building... that's what is so wonderful about it," said Masakazu Rokuhara, an architect involved in the restoration project.

At night, swinging red lanterns strung along the outside of the building's second floor lend the structure a nostalgic charm, gently illuminating its red wooden siding. But daylight reveals the desperate need for restoration, including cracks to a large wooden plaque over the front door and fading paint.

The building is designated a "registered tangible cultural property" in recognition of its historical significance, but that hasn't resulted in any public funds to protect it. And while its owner had long planned to give the building a makeover, the pandemic downturn left funds scarce.

Salacious vibe

So a group of local real estate agents



Part of the interior of Taiyoshi Hyakuban.

and town developers decided to launch a crowdfunding project to raise 15 million yen (\$133,000) to save the struggling structure. "We were concerned the restoration might not even be possible if we waited and let the building continue to deteriorate for another 10 years," said Keisuke Yotsui, a member of the campaign.

Taiyoshi Hyakuban is also something of

attempting to lure customers. "Hey, mister! Why don't you stop by?" shouts a tout, as a young woman bathed in a pink spotlight locks eyes with passers-by.

And while Taiyoshi Hyakuban has been an upscale Japanese restaurant for decades, its history meant fundraising for its restoration was sometimes tricky. "We heard from women who told us there was no way they would give money for it," because of the association with the sex industry, Yotsui told AFP.

Despite the obstacles, by August, the campaign had raised nearly 19 million yen and restoration has now begun. Hashizume said there was no disguising Taiyoshi Hyakuban's past, but the building was still worthy of saving.

"This district lives with an ugly history," he acknowledged. "But it's also a history of how a neighbourhood has survived despite that legacy," he added. "This piece of architecture is the only original part of the neighbourhood that speaks to that." — AFP

an emblem for the historic Tobita-Shinchi red-light district, which housed hundreds of brothels a century ago. Many reinvented themselves when prostitution was outlawed in 1957, with customers paying for a room rather than a companion, to skirt legal restrictions.

But the neighbourhood retains a salacious vibe, with women sitting at entrances



Supporters of the FreeBritney movement celebrate following a court decision ending her conservatorship outside the Stanley Mosk courthouse in Los Angeles.

Judge dissolves Britney Spears guardianship

Los Angeles judge Friday terminated the controversial guardianship that has controlled pop star Britney Spears' life for the past 13 years, handing back her freedom along with control of a multi-million-dollar estate.

The ruling, greeted with raucous cheers and showers of pink confetti by Spears' fans outside the downtown courthouse, ends a conservatorship long overseen by her father, and which the "Toxic" singer has described as abusive. "Best day ever... praise the Lord... can I get an Amen," wrote Spears on Instagram, using the hashtag "#FreedBritney."

"I can't freaking believe it!" she added. The formal end to the guardianship comes after the pop princess's father Jamie Spears was removed from his position in charge of her finances and estate at a hearing in September.

Both sides reiterated their support for swiftly ending the guardianship at the start of Friday's brief hearing. "Effective today... the conservatorship of the person and estate of Britney Jean Spears is hereby terminated. And that is the order of the court," said Judge Brenda Penny. Friday's hearing capped a long campaign by

Spears and her legion of global fans to end a conservatorship that began after her highly public 2007 breakdown, when the star attacked a paparazzo's car at a gas station.

Judge Penny agreed with Spears' request for the arrangement to end without need for a mental evaluation — on the basis that "this was a voluntary conservatorship" and that "all parties agree." "The court finds and determines that the conservatorship of the person and estate of Britney Jean Spears is no longer required," she ruled.

'Perfectly capable'

Fans outside the courthouse who had been campaigning for the conservatorship to end for years could hardly contain their joy and relief. "She thought nobody would believe her... she's just a perfectly capable human being," said Danielle Kushner, 30. "We all feel like she's our friend, we wanted to talk to her but couldn't talk to her!"

Spears, who publicly spoke out via phone to the court this summer, had said through her lawyers that her father was "never fit to serve." She cited in one petition allegations of his "reported alcoholism" and "trauma he caused his daughter since her childhood." As momentum mounted, Spears said in a September filing that she wanted to end the guardianship as soon as possible so that she can marry her fiancé Sam Asghari with a prenuptial agreement. — AFP



Supporters of the FreeBritney movement celebrate following a court decision ending her conservatorship outside the Stanley Mosk courthouse in Los Angeles.

Cheetahs fast running to extinction as cub trade thrives

Tiny, weeks-old cheetah cubs suckled from baby bottles and purred weakly, their condition still dangerously precarious after their rescue from the Horn of Africa's illegal wildlife trade. Around half the cubs saved from traffickers do not survive the trauma and there are real concerns for the smallest of this lot, a frail infant nicknamed "Green" weighing just 700 grams (25 ounces).

"It was very touch and go with Green," said Laurie Marker, founder of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), inspecting the mewling cub at the non-profit organisation's rescue centre in Somaliland. They are the lucky ones—every year an estimated 300 cheetah cubs are trafficked through Somaliland to wealthy buyers in the Middle East seeking exotic pets.

Snatched from their mothers, shipped out of Africa to war-torn Yemen and onward to the Gulf, cubs that survive the ordeal can fetch up to \$15,000 on the black market. It is a busy trade, one less familiar than criminal markets for elephant ivory or rhino horn, but equally devastating for Africa's most endangered big cat.

Loved to death

A century ago, there were an estimated 100,000 cheetahs worldwide. Today barely 7,000 remain, their numbers slashed by human encroachment and habitat destruction. The steady plunder of cubs from the wild to satisfy the pet trade only compounds this decline.

More than 3,600 live cheetahs were illegally traded worldwide in the decade to December 2019, according to research published this year that documented hundreds of advertisements for cubs on social media platforms including YouTube and Instagram.

"If this keeps going... that kind of off-take causes the population to go extinct in a very short time," said Marker, a leading authority on cheetahs. Cheetahs have been prized as pets and hunting companions since the Roman Empire and breeding them in captivity is notoriously difficult, making wild-caught cubs the only option.

Part of the campaign to stop the modern-day trade has focused on changing attitudes in prosperous Gulf states, the main buyer market where cheetahs are still coveted status symbols. Marker said wealthy owners liked to show off their cheetahs in selfies as much as their cars and cash. "There's kind of a one-upmanship on it, and there's bragging power. One of our messages is do not 'like' this kind of thing on social media," Marker said.

Cruel trade

Combating this criminal trade is particularly challenging because it revolves around Somaliland, a self-declared republic



A volunteer of the Cheetah Conservation Fund plays with cheetahs in their cage in one of the facilities of the organisation in the city of Hargeisa, Somaliland.

without international recognition, and one of the world's poorest regions. Roughly the size of Syria, with 850 kilometres (530 miles) of coastline facing Yemen, the breakaway region between Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia is stretched thin policing its porous borders.

Somaliland's interior minister Mohamed Kahin Ahmed told AFP that a small coast-guard unit was doing its best but apart from patrolling for cheetahs they had human traffickers and gun runners to contend with. The cubs that slip through the net suffer terrible mistreatment along the

Future generations

Through a UK government-funded programme, Somaliland is expanding intelligence sharing with neighbouring countries and Yemen to fight the criminals robbing Africa of the iconic species. But the government is also working with impoverished rural communities, whose conflict with cheetahs is another driver in the trade.

Of the 13 cubs confiscated between September and November, at least four were taken by farmers hoping to sell them and recoup losses after claiming their livestock were killed by cheetahs. "The next



Members of the Cheetah Conservation Fund feed baby cheetahs.

smuggling route, fed improperly and confined to tiny cages, sometimes with their legs bound with zip ties.

Marker said one particular seizure in 2019 illustrated the cruelty: "When they dumped them out, there were live ones dying on top of dead ones... It was just horrible," she said. In recent years, confiscations have soared as the government has cracked down on the trade.

From just a handful of cubs in 2018, today CCF shelters 67 rescued cheetahs across three safe houses in the Somaliland capital Hargeisa. Laws criminalising the sale of cheetahs have also started being enforced. In October 2020, a smuggling ring was shattered and a high-profile trafficker prosecuted in a landmark trial.

generation may never see a cheetah if this illicit trade continues," Edna Adan Ismail, Somaliland's former foreign minister, told an anti-poaching conference in September.

Local veterinarian Ahmed Yusuuf Ibrahim is determined this grim prophecy does not pass. The 27-year-old has been learning how to nurse sickly cubs back to health and has developed a close fondness for the cheetahs under his care.

They cannot fend for themselves, and eventually will be relocated to a larger natural enclosure outside Hargeisa. But for now, Ibrahim is their doting custodian-right down to making sure cheetahs young and old get their fair share of camel meat. "I care for them. I feed them, I clean them. They are my babies," he said. — AFP

Sports

Kane fires England to brink of Qatar, Italy held by Switzerland

England needs one point from San Marino match to qualify

LONDON: Harry Kane scored a first half hat-trick as England romped towards the 2022 World Cup with a 5-0 thrashing of Albania, but Italy still have work to do to reach Qatar after a 1-1 draw with Switzerland.

England still need a point to mathematically qualify when they visit San Marino tomorrow, but boast a three-point lead and six-goal advantage on goal difference over Poland, who sealed at least a playoff place with a 4-1 win over 10-man Andorra.

The Three Lions can look ahead to Qatar with confidence as they bounced back to form at Wembley in style with all the goals coming before half-time. "The first half was fantastic, as well as we've played for a long time," said England boss Gareth Southgate. "We're best when we have an edge and this was a game that could put us on the verge of qualification for the World Cup."

Harry Maguire put a difficult start to the season at club level behind him as the Manchester United captain opened the floodgates with a thumping header from Reece James' free-kick. Kane admitted on Thursday to also struggling physically and mentally from the exertions of England's run to the Euro 2020 final added to the speculation over his future.

The England captain has scored just one Premier League goal this season, but now has six in five games for his country. Kane headed home Jordan Henderson's cross from close range before turning

provider for Henderson to calmly slot home his first international goal on home soil.

England were rampant in the first 45 minutes as Kane thrashed home his second from a narrow angle before completing his fourth international hat-trick in spectacular fashion with a scissor kick from Phil Foden's corner. Kane is now level with Jimmy Greaves as England's fourth highest goalscorer of all time on 44 and moved ahead of Wayne Rooney with the most competitive goals for the Three Lions.

Italy pay late penalty

European champions Italy maintained a narrow advantage over Switzerland at the top of Group C, but missed a glorious late chance to virtually secure qualification when Jorginho blazed a penalty over the bar. The Chelsea midfielder has now missed six spot-kicks for club and country since the start of last season. "If he felt like shooting, it is

right that he took the penalty," said Italy manager Roberto Mancini. The visitors got off to a flying start in Rome when Silvan Widmer's thunderous strike flew into the top corner. The Azzurri levelled nine minutes before half-time thanks to a well-worked set-piece that was headed in by Giovanni Di Lorenzo.

Italy were given a controversial late spot-kick after a VAR review for a push on Domenico Berardi by Ulisses Garcia. Jorginho also missed from the spot when the sides drew 0-0 in



LONDON: Albania's forward Sokol Cikalleshi (left) vies with England's defender Harry Maguire (right) during the FIFA World Cup 2022 Group I qualifier football match between England and Albania at Wembley Stadium in London on Friday. —AFP

September and fired well off target. Italy hold a two-goal advantage over the Swiss on goal difference heading into today's final games. Northern Ireland host Italy, while Switzerland face Bulgaria at home.

Scotland guaranteed a playoff place behind

already-qualified Denmark in Group F with a comfortable 2-0 win in Moldova. Nathan Patterson and Che Adams either side of half-time as Steve Clarke's men secured a fifth consecutive win. Denmark beat the Faroe Islands 3-1 to maintain their 100 percent record. —AFP



Scotland guarantees playoff place

Scotland guaranteed a playoff place behind

News in brief

Aguero denies 'rumors'

BARCELONA: Barcelona forward Sergio Aguero has dismissed as rumors reports a heart condition had ended his playing career, insisting he hoped to be back in action within three months. The 33-year-old Argentine was rushed to hospital on October 30 after suffering breathing problems while playing in the Liga draw against Alaves. The club said after he underwent heart tests that Aguero would be "unavailable for selection and during the next three months the effectiveness of treatment will be evaluated to determine his recovery process." Catalunya Radio however reported on Friday that Aguero would never play again "due to a serious heart problem." The former Manchester City star took to Twitter to deny the reports. "Always positive," said Aguero. "There are rumors going around but I'm following the club doctor's opinion and we'll see how I am in 90 days."

'Not a bad idea'

TUBIZE: Manchester City attacker Kevin De Bruyne said on Friday a proposal to hold the World Cup every two years was "not a bad idea." FIFA's biennial World Cup scheme was mooted earlier this year by former Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger, who now works as chief of global football development for the governing body. The proposition has been widely criticized by the likes of UEFA and the Premier League. FIFA plans to publish a report in November, before a "global summit" by the end of the year. "At the start of the season, I had a meeting with FIFA and Arsene Wenger to explain to us what they wanted to do," De Bruyne told news agency Belga. "The idea isn't bad in itself, as long as everyone works together," he added.

Iran footballers complain

TEHRAN: Iran's footballers, well-placed to reach the World Cup 2022 finals in Qatar, feel they are being taken for granted by their national federation. "Our victories have become a normal thing (for the federation). Instead of giving us more support, they've completely forgotten us," the players lamented in posts on Instagram. "The people need to be informed of the excessive problems faced by the national team," players wrote. This state of affairs is "not at all worthy of our country's name". Iran beat Lebanon 2-1 away on Thursday, leaving them at the top of Group A in Asian qualifiers for next year's finals. "We've been using old shirts for the past year," players said. The federation reacted quickly to the posts, with spokesman Hossein Sharifi saying on state television its president was working to resolve any problems faced by Team Melli.

Alves agrees Barca return under Xavi

BARCELONA: Barcelona announced on Friday that veteran defender Dani Alves will be returning to the club as new coach Xavi Hernandez's first signing. Alves, 38, has been a free agent since leaving Sao Paulo in September but is ineligible until the transfer window opens early next window. He played for the Camp Nou outfit between 2008-2016 when he lifted the Champions League title three times alongside Xavi.

"Barcelona and Dani Alves have reached an agreement in principle for the player to join the football first team for the remainder of the current season," they said. "The Brazilian will be joining training from next week but will not be able to play until January. In the Catalan capital, he made the right back slot his own across eight seasons, making

391 official appearances and scoring 23 goals.

"Alves has also played for Brazil, winning six major titles, most recently the Tokyo Olympic Games, where he lined up in the final against what are now his team-mates Oscar Mingueza, Eric Garcia and Pedri," they added.

Alves will compete with USA youngster Sergino Dest for a starting berth with Spain center-back Oscar Mingueza also able to cover at right-back. Xavi was presented as the club's new boss on Monday to replace the sacked Ronald Koeman returning to the side where he won eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues as a player.

Despite club debts of more than a billion euros (\$1.16billion), Xavi is tasked with returning Barcelona to Europe's elite and recovering a style of play most associated with Johan Cruyff and Pep Guardiola. Xavi's priority this term will be to ensure Barcelona qualify for next season's Champions League by finishing in La Liga's top four.

They also face a fight to make the last 16 of this



Dani Alves

season's tournament, with a crunch game away to Benfica to come later this month. The Catalans' next match after the international break is on November 20 at home against city rivals Espanyol. —AFP

PSG player arrested over teammate's attack denies involvement

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain women's footballer Aminata Diallo on Friday denied any involvement in a street attack on her teammate Kheira Hamraoui, in her first public statement about an incident that has shaken the Qatar-owned club.

Diallo was driving fellow midfielder Hamraoui home on Thursday evening last week near Paris after dinner when her car was stopped by two masked men. They dragged Hamraoui out and beat her with a metal bar on her legs, meaning she was unable to play this week in PSG's Champions League clash with Real Madrid. Diallo was detained by police at her home on Wednesday and held for nearly 35 hours before being released without charge, with investigators looking into whether on-field rivalry might explain the violence.

Diallo "hopes that judicial authorities conclude their investigation quickly and is sure that this will end up showing her complete and total innocence," a statement issued by her lawyer said on Friday. The statement denounced a "totally artificial suggestion of a rivalry between her and Mme Kheira Hamraoui that would explain why she would target her teammate. This theory does not reflect at all the reality of their relationship."

French media reported that Hamraoui had raised the alarm about Diallo when she filed a police complaint about the attack, highlighting the unusual route

taken by her teammate and the slow speed of their vehicle when the attackers sprang out.

A man already in jail over a separate assault case in the southeastern city of Lyon — a friend of Diallo's — was also arrested as part of the investigation before he too was released without charge on Thursday evening. Diallo criticized the "media speculation which has already condemned her, without justification, and she will not hesitate to launch legal action if necessary against any defamation."

"Other far more serious theories are now being explored by investigators that do not involve my client," the statement from lawyer Mourad Battikh said. Her detention overnight at a police station in Versailles outside Paris was also unnecessary "given that she could have made a statement without being subjected to constraint," he said.

'Friends'

Given the manner of the attack on Hamraoui and the arrest of Diallo, commentators had recalled a notorious assault on American ice skater Nancy Kerrigan in the run-up to the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics. Her rival Tonya Harding was banned for life after her ex-husband and bodyguard hired a hitman to club Kerrigan in the leg.

Diallo, 26, and Hamraoui, 31, were



PARIS: This combination of file photographs shows France's Kheira Hamraoui (left) and Aminata Diallo. —AFP

described by club sources as friends who even holidayed together, despite their competition for the central midfield berth in the PSG team. Hamraoui, a capped French international like Diallo, returned to the French club in the summer from Barcelona where she won the Champions League last year.

Unable to play in Tuesday night's clash with Real Madrid after her assault, she was replaced in the team by Diallo who played most of the match before being substituted in the 89th minute. Neither player attended the team's train-

ing session on Friday, the club said.

PSG, who have invested heavily in their women's team, asked for the table-topping clash with Lyon today to be postponed but the French football federation turned down the request. French football has also been rocked in recent years by allegations that star attacker Karim Benzema took part in an attempt to blackmail national teammate Mathieu Valbuena with a sex tape. Benzema, who went on trial last month, denies the allegations. A verdict is expected on November 24. —AFP

Indian doctor calls Pakistan opener Rizwan's recovery 'miraculous'

DUBAI: Pakistan opener Mohammad Rizwan's recovery from a lung infection to make a valiant innings in the Twenty20 World Cup semi-final was termed "miraculous" yesterday by the Indian doctor who treated him. Rizwan, 29, came out of the intensive care unit of a Dubai hospital to top-score with 67 in Pakistan's 176-4 on Thursday, but his efforts were in vain as Australia overhauled that total to set up a title clash with New Zealand.

Rizwan's courage was lauded by Pakistan's batting

coach Matthew Hayden and by fans, while pictures of the batsman lying in a hospital bed went viral on social media. Saheer Sainalabdeen, a pulmonologist who hails from the south Indian state of Kerala, told AFP it was Rizwan's "faith in God" and desire to play for Pakistan that got the batsman through a severe chest infection. Rizwan was so grateful that he sent the doctor an autographed Pakistan shirt. "I must admit that we did not expect his recovery to be so fast as it takes around five to seven days for improvement with the kind of condition that he came in with," Sainalabdeen told AFP. "But because of his fit lifestyle, of course he is a sportsman, he improved in two to three days and it was miraculous. Main thing I thought was his faith in God and his strong belief to play in the World Cup for his country."

Sainalabdeen said Rizwan was admitted to the

hospital on November 9 with severe chest pain and doctors suspected heart issues but later it turned out to be spasm of the lungs and food pipe. "It all started with cough and cold but November 9 he had severe chest pain and we had a doubt of him having heart issues," he said. "But then the evaluation found out that he had severe throat infection which led to spasm of the lungs and food pipe. Because of which he had severe pain and breathing difficulty."

Once Rizwan was passed fit, he tore into the Australian bowling in Thursday's semi-final, taking nine balls to get going with skipper Babar Azam as he hit Josh Hazlewood for six. The batsman smashed three fours and four sixes in a 52-ball blitz before his dismissal in the 18th over. He jumped to second in the tournament's batting chart with 281 runs in six matches, behind only Babar's 303 runs. —AFP

Sports

Di Maria winner puts Argentina on brink of WC qualification

Argentina could qualify with will over Brazil Tuesday

MONTEVIDEO: Angel Di Maria's goal on Friday put Argentina on the verge of qualifying for next year's World Cup in Qatar as Lionel Messi was on the bench for the 1-0 win away to Uruguay. Messi was only called upon by coach Lionel Scaloni to play the final quarter of an hour as he made his comeback from knee and hamstring issues that saw him miss Paris Saint-Germain's last two matches.



Uruguay in World Cup playoff spot

Di Maria's sublime early finish at the Campeon del Siglo stadium in Montevideo was the difference between the sides in a match dominated by Uruguay. The result means Argentina — who are unbeaten in 26 matches — will qualify for the World Cup finals if they beat Brazil on Tuesday and any one of Colombia, Chile or Uruguay fail to win.

"This team has great courage and when you don't play well, you still have to win," said Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. "Winning today was a huge step. We deserve it because we work very hard." The defeat left Uruguay in a World Cup playoff spot, behind

Colombia and Chile in the final two automatic qualification position on goal difference.

Nahitan Nandez should have given Uruguay a fifth minute lead after Argentina failed to deal with a long throw into the box. A ricochet saw the ball land at Nandez's feet seven yards from goal and while Martinez did well to come out quickly and spread himself, Nandez's finish was poor and straight at the Aston Villa stopper.

Uruguay were made to pay two minutes later as Paulo Dybala robbed a dawdling Joaquin Piquerez just outside the box and passed inside for Di Maria to stroke a glorious shot into the top corner. It was Argentina's only shot at goal in the first half. Luis Suarez provided Uruguay's main threat, as he has done so many times before, and fired a free-kick narrowly over.

On the half hour he hit an instinctive volley against the post before snatching at the rebound with his left foot and putting it wide. Uruguay were piling on the pressure and Matias Vecino had a chance to restore parity at the end of the first half but shot too close to Martinez.

After the break, Argentina continued to control possession without creating chances, while Uruguay were more dangerous, but without testing Martinez. Substitute Papu Gomez finally got off Argentina's second shot, just before the hour mark, but it flashed wide, while Martinez had to backpedal to tip over a wayward Facundo Torres cross that looked like it was dipping in behind the goalkeeper's head.—AFP



MONTEVIDEO: Argentina's Angel Di Maria (11) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Uruguay during their South American qualification football match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, at the Campeon del Siglo stadium in Montevideo on Friday. — AFP

Pulisic, McKennie on target as US sink Mexico

LOS ANGELES: Christian Pulisic and Weston McKennie scored the goals as the United States downed Mexico 2-0 to move to the top of CONCACAF's 2022 World Cup qualifying race on Friday. Chelsea star Pulisic nodded home a 74th-minute cross from Timothy Weah just five minutes after coming on as a second-half substitute to put the Americans 1-0 up in Cincinnati.

Juventus's McKennie then made the game safe five

minutes from time, sweeping a low finish past Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa after Weah's deflected low cross caused confusion in the Mexican area. A late red card for Miles Robinson after a second bookable offence left the US down to 10 men for the closing stages, but US coach Gregg Berhalter's young side were not to be denied.

The win leaves the United States on top of the eight-team final round of CONCACAF standings with 14 points from seven games. The top three finishers in the standings qualify automatically for next year's finals in Qatar, while the fourth place team advances to an inter-continental playoff.

Friday's win means the US are firmly on course to exorcise the ghost of their 2018 World Cup qualifying debacle, when they failed to reach the finals in a devastating blow for US football. It also completed a clean

sweep of victories by the US over Mexico in 2021 following wins over 'El Tri' in the CONCACAF Nations League final and Gold Cup final. "It was incredible, the fans really came out tonight and moments like that are what we live for," US goalscorer Pulisic said.

'A crazy game'

"US-Mexico you know what you're going to get - it was a crazy game for sure, that's what we expected. They were tough to break down and I'm happy I could come in and help us out. We're happy with where we are now. We've got a lot of games left to play and this is just one step closer to get us to the World Cup."

The US had struggled to get a foothold in the game during an error-strewn first-half performance, and had Manchester City reserve goalkeeper Zack Steffen to thank for two crucial saves to deny Mexico. Steffen rescued the US in the 12th minute, diving to his right to turn a goal-bound Edson Alvarez shot from the edge of the area around the post.

Steffen then pulled off another fine save after Alvarez's clever through-ball released Hirving Lozano. Lozano looked certain to score but Steffen spread himself to snuff out the danger. Those were the best Mexican chances of the game, and the US came out in the second half looking far more threatening.

McKenzie almost opened the scoring on 49 minutes but saw his shot tipped over by Ochoa, and Ricardo Pepi should have done better on 54 minutes but scooped his shot over the bar. The growing US pressure told soon after Pulisic's introduction, the forward heading home Weah's cross to make it 1-0, sparking wild celebrations among the home crowd.

In other games on Friday, Canada boosted their chances of a first World Cup appearance since 1986 after a 1-0 win over Costa Rica in Edmonton. Jonathan David's 57th-minute goal sealed a win which leaves Canada in third place in the table with 13 points, just one off the lead.

Panama, bidding to repeat their 2018 World Cup appearance, also reignited their challenge with an improbable 3-2 away win over Honduras. Honduras looked to be cruising to victory after goals from Alberth Elis and Brayan Moya left them 2-0 up with 13 minutes remaining.—AFP

Salah launches comeback as Egypt reach final qualifying stage

JOHANNESBURG: A brilliant assist by Egypt captain Mohamed Salah triggered a comeback that earned a 2-2 World Cup draw in Angola on Friday, and a place in the final African qualifying stage. The Liverpool star pushed the ball between two defenders and onrushing Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny slammed the ball into the net to halve an Angolan lead to 2-1 by the interval. Akram Tawfik equalised with a deflected shot just before the hour and the draw gave Egypt an unassailable four-point lead over Gabon in Group F with one round remaining.

Meanwhile, Group A leaders Algeria extended an unbeaten run in competitive and friendly matches to 32 by hammering Djibouti 4-0 in Group A in Cairo with recent West Ham recruit Said Benrahma among the goals. Algeria surpassed the African record of the Ivory Coast in June and now have their sights on the 37-match world record set by Italy this year. In Luanda, Helder Costa, the Leeds United winger on loan to Valencia, gave Angola a lead that doubled when M'Bala Nzola converted a penalty.

Salah, who won the Premier League Player of the Month and Goal of the Month awards on Friday, was the center of attention with several spectators racing on to the pitch during the match seeking selfies. South Africa-born Egypt assistant coach Roger de Sa hailed the two-time African Footballer of the Year, calling Salah "a respectful professional who is a pleasure to work with. He is one of the best footballers in the world, but so humble. His behavior in the build-up to the Angola match was exemplary."

The only disappointment for the Liverpool sharpshooter was seeing a personal goal drought stretch to four matches after scoring in 10 consecutive games. He even found time during the match to act as a peacemaker after a scuffle close to the Egypt bench threatened to get out of hand soon after his side levelled.

Coach Queiroz pushed

Salah calmed his teammates and opponents after Egypt coach and former Real Madrid manager and Manchester United assistant Carlos Queiroz was pushed by an Angolan player. The closing stages were incident free with both teams seemingly satisfied with a point as Egypt moved closer to a fourth World Cup appearance. They were invited to the 1934 tournament in Italy and qualified for the 1990 finals in the same country and the 2018 edition in Russia.

Egypt are the fourth group winners after Senegal, Morocco and Mali to secure places in two-leg play-offs next March that will decide which five African teams go to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. The remaining six places will be decided by Tuesday with African champions Algeria, Nigeria, Tunisia set to make it.

Ivory Coast and Cameroon, South Africa and Ghana and Benin and the Democratic Republic are locked in two-team battles to win the other sections. Morocco are the only team boasting a perfect record in the group stage with a 3-0 'away' win over Sudan in Rabat giving them 15 points from five Group I outings. Ryan Mmaee bagged a brace before Imran Louza from Premier League outfit Watford completed the scoring in added time.

It was a home fixture for Sudan, but the east African nation lack an international-standard stadium and moved the game to the Moroccan capital. Another Premier League forward to score was Arsenal talisman Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, whose penalty earned Gabon a 1-0 win over Libya in Franceville.

A Burkina Faso side severely depleted by injuries to forwards fell two points behind Algeria after being held 1-1 by Niger while Guinea remain winless in Group I after a 0-0 home draw with Guinea-Bissau. Leading scorer Abdoul Tapsoba and Aston Villa forward Bertrand Traore were among the Burkinaabe absentees in Marrakech. — AFP



CINCINNATI: Christian Pulisic #10 of the United States heads the ball past Guillermo Ochoa #13 of Mexico for a goal during the second half of the FIFA World Cup 2022 Qualifier match at TQL Stadium on Friday in Cincinnati, Ohio. — AFP

GAZOO Racing celebrates spectacular WEC World Championship win

MANAMA: GAZOO Racing (GR) completed its history-making hypercar season in style with a one-two victory in the 8 Hours of Bahrain on a day of destiny for the 2021 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) Drivers' Championship crown. An emotional finale to the season saw Kazuki Nakajima bring the curtain down on his glittering endurance career in style, with victory in the No 8 G-Drive Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV) he shares with teammates Sebastien Buemi and Brendon Hartley.

Meanwhile, Le Mans winners Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and Jose Maria Lopez retained the Drivers' Championship title by finishing second during the sixth and final round of the season in the No 7 G-Drive HEV. Kobayashi is now Japan's first two-time World Champion on four wheels, while Lopez becomes only the second Argentinian to win five FIA World Championships.

On a day of new milestones, GR became the first team to win every race in a WEC season. The team extended its unprecedented winning run to nine in its 70th event since first entering the series in 2012. The last two events of the season took place over two consecutive weekends in Bahrain following the cancellation of round five in Fuji due to ongoing travel restrictions related to COVID-19. Victory during the first weekend of the Bahrain double-header meant Toyota had already secured its fourth Manufacturer's Championship title before the final race began.

Despite clean sweeps in all round five sessions, the G-Drive HEVs played catch-up during the opening laps of the season finale. However, some exciting wheel-to-

wheel racing put the team back in front and they never looked back. As the race moved into the night, the No 8 G-Drive HEV established an ever-stronger grip at the front. Nakajima took the wheel for the final stint, and his last laps in the WEC. A journey which started with the roll-out of the TS030 HYBRID in January 2012 ended when Nakajima took the chequered flag 7.351secs ahead of Lopez, whose second place delivered another world title to the No 7 G-Drive HEV crew.

Akio Toyoda, President, Toyota Motor Corporation, commented: "First of all, congratulations on the team championship! We won all six races in the first year of Hypercar, and were able to run through with the tremendous efforts of the drivers and team. I am really grateful that these two cars have become champion cars. To Kamui, Mike, and Jose, congratulations on winning Le Mans and the Drivers' Championship. It is very nice! Thanks to the partners who supported the battle in the new Hypercar class and the fans who con-

tinued to support us. Thank you for fighting with us this season."

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nurburgring 24 hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established GR, to consolidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' GR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, GR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.





SAN FRANCISCO: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors smiles during the game against the Chicago Bulls on Friday at Chase Center in San Francisco, California. —AFP

Warriors improve to NBA-best 11-1 record

Schroder shines as Celtics outlast Bucks; Mavs cruise in Texas showdown

LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry scored 40 points, including nine three pointers, as the Golden State Warriors clamped down on defense early and breezed to a 119-93 lopsided victory over the Chicago Bulls on Friday.

Curry, who scored 50 points in a win over the Atlanta Hawks on Monday, drained nine of his 17 three point attempts and shot 15 of 24 overall in 34 minutes of playing time. He has now made nine or more threes a league record 36 times. This was also the 52nd time he has scored 40 or more points in a game.

The Western Conference-leading Warriors improved to an NBA-best 11-1 on the season as Friday's win capped an eight-game, 16-day homestand. Andrew Wiggins had 15 points, Kevon Looney grabbed 10 rebounds and Draymond Green tallied nine points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Warriors, who opened their lengthy homestand with a loss to the Memphis Grizzlies, before racking up seven consecutive wins.

Zach LaVine had 23 points and DeMar DeRozan 18 for the Bulls, who began a five-game trip without

Nikola Vucevic who tested positive for the coronavirus earlier in the week. Golden State shot 15-for-46 from three-point range, outscoring the Bulls 45-24 from beyond the arc. Chicago made just eight threes overall.

Chicago got off to a solid start to lead 24-14 in the first quarter. But they would score just five points in the remaining three minutes of the first as the Warriors defense got untracked. Golden State held the Bulls' offense to just 33 points in the second and third quarters and waltzed to victory from there.

Bucks' struggles continue

In Boston, Dennis Schroder scored eight of his season-high 38 points in overtime and Jayson Tatum tallied 27 points and 11 rebounds as the Boston

Celtics beat the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks 122-113. The Celtics raised their level of play in the extra session, outscoring the NBA champion Bucks 14-5 as Schroder led the assault. He also finished with eight rebounds to help the Celtics win for the

fourth time in five games after a dismal 2-5 start to the season.

"I tried to attack and get some early buckets," said Schroder. "I wanted to be aggressive, get into the paint and look for my teammates." Marcus Smart added 19 points and Robert Williams had 12 points

and 10 rebounds for Boston. The Celtics won despite being without Jaylen Brown for the third consecutive contest with a hamstring injury.

Milwaukee was missing all-star Giannis Antetokounmpo, who was ruled out just prior to

tipoff with a right ankle sprain. They were already without Khris Middleton, who missed his seventh straight game after testing positive for COVID-19. The Bucks had six scorers in double digits, including Bobby Portis, who had 22 points.

This was just the Celtics' second win at home this season after they were clobbered by Toronto in a 32-point blowout in their home opener on October 22. The club's fortunes at home began to change after Marcus Smart called out the team's stars for a lack of passing following a 128-114 loss to Chicago on November 1. They avenged that earlier loss to the Raptors with a 104-88 home victory on Wednesday.

"We kept our composure and kept battling on defense to get stops," Schroder said. "We got guys playing defense first and that has to be our mentality. We get the stops and then we get out and run." Elsewhere, Kristaps Porzingis scored a season-high 32 points and Luka Doncic added a triple-double as the Dallas Mavericks cruised to a 123-109 win over the San Antonio Spurs. — AFP



Curry with 40 after 50 points barrage

Australia, New Zealand seek history in T20 World Cup final

DUBAI: Kane Williamson's New Zealand eye a second global crown in a single year when they take on Australia at the Twenty20 World Cup final that will witness a new winner today. New Zealand and Australia renew their trans-Tasman rivalry in Dubai as both teams look to clinch their maiden world title in the shortest format.

It's a hat-trick of ICC finals for the once perennial underdogs of world cricket after they outplayed India to win the inaugural Test championship in June. They beat favorites England in the semi-final to avenge their 2019 defeat in a dramatic 50-over World Cup final at Lord's when they went down on boundary count after a super over.

Head coach Gary Stead said the Black Caps are excited to take on the Australian challenge in what will be their first ever T20 World Cup final appearance. "That's probably a final that I'm not sure too many people would have predicted a month or so ago, Australia and New Zealand," said Stead.

The Kiwis though have suffered an injury blow after wicketkeeper Devon Conway was ruled out following a broken hand when he punched his bat on his dismissal in the semi-final. Jimmy Neesham played a key part in the team's semi-final win over England as he hit 27 off 11 balls to turn the game on

its head and win with an over to spare. "I am sure there will be a bigger outpour of emotion if we manage to get across the line," he said.

Sunday's clash will bring back memories of the 2015 50-over final when Australia beat New Zealand by seven wickets to clinch their fifth ODI World Cup. Aaron Finch's Australians beat title favorites Pakistan by five wickets in the second semi-final. "They've got a bunch of guys who are real match winners," said Stead. "And we're going to have to make sure that our planning, our scouting is right on point and we've got really clear plans for their players because they can like rip a game open pretty quickly."

Australia were in trouble at 96-5 while chasing 177 on Thursday when Marcus Stoinis (40) and Matthew Wade (41) put on an unbeaten partnership of 82 and win by an over to spare. Wade smashed Pakistan pace ace Shaheen Shah Afridi for three straight sixes including two audacious scoop shots - the final one sailing over fine leg to silence the Pakistan crowd.

'Piece to the puzzle'

Stoinis said a T20 World Cup title will "mean a bloody lot to us." "Obviously Test cricket and the Ashes, that's what we grew up when we played. Then the transformation of T20 cricket. It's not a hit and a giggle anymore in terms of the pressure," said Stoinis.

"I don't think many people gave us a chance leading into this tournament apart from the players and coaching staff. So it's definitely going to mean a bloody lot to us and we will be super proud when



DUBAI: Australia's Matthew Wade plays a shot on the nets during a practice session at the ICC academy in Dubai yesterday, ahead of tomorrow's Twenty20 World Cup final match between Australia and New Zealand. — AFP

we bring that home to Australia."

Coach Justin Langer said: "We have got such a rich history and it'll be nice to add this piece to the puzzle." Key will be the form of opener David Warner who has plundered 236 runs at the tournament. Langer lauded the Black Caps for their brand of cricket and said the Aussies will have to bring

their best for a maiden title.

"The way New Zealand have gone about their business for the last few years has been outstanding," said Langer. "They are a really good bunch of blokes. They get on with the job and get it done. We have to be at our best like we have been throughout this tournament to beat New Zealand." — AFP