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Caretaker PM asked to form new Cabinet

Ex-MP Muslim to return next week



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: An Amiri decree was issued yesterday asking caretaker HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to form the new Cabinet. The decree was signed by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who had been entrusted with some of the Amir's constitutional powers. HH Sheikh Sabah resigned about two weeks ago after several sessions of a national dialogue that resulted in HH the Amir pardoning several opposition figures who were living in exile in Turkey.

There is no timeframe for the Prime Minister-designate to submit the new Cabinet line-up to the Amir. National Assembly sessions

have been suspended due to the resignation of the Cabinet. Under Kuwaiti law, the presence of (at least) one minister is essential to convene an Assembly session.

A majority of the opposition figures who were pardoned have returned to the country with the exception of ex-MP Faisal Al-Muslim and activist Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah. Muslim's lawyer announced yesterday that he is scheduled to return to Kuwait next Monday on the 29th of this month. Muslim confirmed his lawyer's announcement by re-tweeting it. Jarallah, however, cannot return now because he is facing other cases in court.

UK apologizes over 'Gulf War human shields'

LONDON: The UK government yesterday apologized for not warning British Airways that Iraq was about to invade Kuwait before one of its flights was caught up in a hostage drama in 1990. Passengers on BA flight 149 were taken off the Kuala Lumpur-bound plane when it landed in the Gulf state on August 2 that year, hours after Saddam Hussein's troops swept in.

Some of the 367 passengers and crew spent more than four months in captivity, including as human shields at the hands of the Iraqi dictator. The former hostages have long sought answers about what the government in London knew and when, as well as whether special forces were on the flight, putting them at risk. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss told parliament that the UK ambassador to Kuwait informed London about reports of an Iraqi incursion at about midnight on August 2, 1990.

BA 149 was already in the air when the message was passed to departments including the foreign and defense ministries, Downing Street and the MI6 intelligence service. But it was not circulated to BA, Truss said in a written answer, as she released files on the events to Britain's national archives. "The call made (by the ambassador) has never been publicly disclosed or acknowledged until today," she added.

"These files show that the existence of the call was not revealed to parliament and the public. This failure was unacceptable. "As the current secretary of state, I apologize to the House for this, and I express my deepest sympathy to those who were detained and mistreated." BA 149 was late taking off, officially for "technical problems", and landed in Kuwait City at 0113 GMT. About 45 minutes later the city's airport was closed.

Truss said the files indicated that the ambassador was uncertain about the scale of the Iraqi incursion, and no procedure existed at the time to warn airlines or at-risk flights. She also reaffirmed the government's previously stated position that UK special forces were not on board and "did not attempt in any way to exploit the flight". BA has always denied accusations of negligence, conspiracy and a cover-up. "These records confirm British Airways was not warned about the invasion," the company said yesterday. — AFP

Kuwait seeks to attract regional, foreign capital

KUWAIT: Kuwait is seeking to attract regional and foreign capital to invest in its economic development projects through its 'Vision 2035'. Part of the vision is the development of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway's southern and northern banks and two artificial Islands, which will be transformed to hubs of commerce, work, leisure activities, and tourism.

Development of the southern bank of the causeway (Shuwaikh area) will be at an area 635,913 square meters with a construction capacity of 30 per-

cent of the allocated region. The commercial activities will cover 12 percent with the ability to build eight-storey buildings, housing offices, cafes, and restaurants. The southern Island project of the causeway (at an area of 282,355 square meters) would have 20 percent used for four-storey buildings and 10 percent for commercial purposes.

The northern Island project, at 283,358 square meters, will utilize 20 percent of its total area, while the northern bank of the causeway in Subiya area, covering 565,504 square meters will utilize 30 percent of space. The public and private sectors will be welcomed to invest in the development project.

A member of the Municipal Council Dr Hassen Kamal told KUNA that Kuwait is eyeing ventures providing

Continued on Page 2

46 killed in Bulgaria as bus crashes

BOSNEK: Forty-six people, including a dozen minors, were killed after their tourist bus caught fire on a Bulgarian highway yesterday in Europe's deadliest road accident in the past decade. A cause has yet to be determined but officials believe the bus crashed into the guardrails and caught fire while travelling from Istanbul in Turkey to Skopje in North Macedonia.

There were no other vehicles

involved in the accident, which occurred around 2:00 am on a highway about 40 kilometers from Sofia, near the village of Bosnek. Seven people - five men and two women - survived. "Unfortunately, there are many victims, 46, including 12 minors," North Macedonian Health Minister Venko Filipce told public BNT television after visiting the survivors in a Sofia hospital.

The survivors include a 16-year-old girl and are all from the same family and in stable condition, official said. The dead were mostly from North Macedonia and from different ethnic groups and also included a Belgian and a Serbian national, officials said. Local media in Macedonia

Continued on Page 2

Europe battles COVID surge

COPENHAGEN: Europe remains "in the firm grip" of COVID and the continent's death toll could top 2.2 million this winter if current trends continue, the World Health Organization warned yesterday. Europe is battling an upsurge in the pandemic that saw Austria return to lockdown this week while Germany and the Netherlands are poised to announce new restrictions.

Another 700,000 Europeans could die by March

1, the WHO said, in addition to the 1.5 million who have already succumbed to the virus. It expects "high or extreme stress in intensive care units (ICUs) in 49 out of 53 countries between now and March 1, 2022". Europe's return to the pandemic's epicenter has been blamed on sluggish vaccine uptake in some nations, the highly contagious Delta variant, colder weather moving people indoors again and the easing of restrictions.

In the European Union, 67.7 percent of the population is fully vaccinated. But rates vary widely between countries, with low levels in many eastern countries. Only 24.2 percent of Bulgarians are fully vaccinated, compared to 86.7 percent in Portugal.

Continued on Page 2



KUWAIT: Photo shows Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway Bridge. Kuwait is seeking to attract regional and foreign capital to invest in its economic development projects through its 'Vision 2035'.



BOSNEK: Officials work at the site of a bus accident, in which at least 46 people were killed, on a highway near the village of Bosnek, south of Sofia yesterday. — AFP



FRANKFURT: A medical worker fills a syringe with a vaccine against the novel coronavirus COVID-19 in Frankfurt am Main yesterday. — AFP

Local

Energy Globe Award goes to Kuwait's Faisal Al-Fozan

For his work on the 'LOOP' recycling project



KUWAIT: Faisal Al-Fozan (center) receives the Energy Globe Award from Austrian Ambassador Marian Alexander Wrba (right) and Caroline Adenberger, Austrian Trade Commissioner for Qatar and Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Energy Globe Award was given to 17-year-old Faisal Al-Fozan of Kuwait, for his exemplary work on the project 'LOOP'. The award was handed over to him by the Embassy of Austria at the ambassador's residence in Rawda yesterday. Fozan was chosen as a recipient for the award for his outstanding and sustainable recycling project, using recycled plastic materials. "HH the Crown Prince of Kuwait recently underlined the great importance of environment sustainability and spoke about climate change. I believe that his work will serve as an inspiration to many, especially to the young generation. I am happy with this young man who has

the heart and care for the environment," Marian Alexander Wrba, Ambassador of Austria to Kuwait told Kuwait Times. "We want to recognize his effort and his love for the environment. We need more of these people for a better and sustainable future of this world we are living in," he added. He said people are becoming more committed to developing solutions for the most pressing environment problems "and the 'LOOP' project is one of them."

'LOOP' is a company founded by young people. It is the first of its kind in the Middle East where 3D printer filament is manufactured using recycled materials. The project aims to create economic value from waste, and reducing carbon footprint by having local micro-manufacturing of fil-

ament to eliminate long distance shipping associated with international deliveries of filament. "This is the first 3D manufacturing of filament in the Middle East," Fozan said. "We recycle plastic waste materials from various sources, and we turn them into filament then eventually turn them into money."

With more than 180 participating countries, the Energy Globe Award is one of the most important environment awards worldwide. Projects from all over the world are submitted, ranging from small and simple initiatives to large scale high-end ones. The national winners of the Energy Globe Award are published in cooperation with UNIDO at www.energyglobe.info.

KCCI participates in world chambers' conference in Dubai

DUBAI: Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Chairman Mohammad Al-Saqer said the 12th World Trade Chambers Conference (12WCC), held yesterday in Dubai, is an ideal platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the world trade congress. This came after the inaugural session of the conference, which was held in Jumeirah under the slogan 'Future Economy: The Next Generation of Chambers of Commerce', where heads and representatives of chambers of commerce from 100 countries attended.

In a statement to the press, Saqer said this conference is one of the important world conferences that discusses all issues regarding world economy, showcasing the latest experiments, experiences and studies concerning the private sector and ways to boost it. The conference discussed many important

issues including the growing role of partnerships between public and private sectors, health and safety standards, business flexibility, preparedness for crises and future risks, and logistical support for the sector, and several other issues, added Saqer. He pointed out that the conference aims to link the chambers of commerce and industry together and re-stimulate global cooperation, as well as highlighting the chambers' role in boosting the flexibility and adaptability of the business community and forming the chambers' future role.

In a similar statement, the Chamber's second vice-president, Fahd Al-Joan, said that they discussed the prospects for economic recovery after an unprecedented period of challenges due to COVID-19 pandemic. The attendees reviewed the role of the chambers regarding the digital revolution and global economic changes, and the role the chambers must play to serve its members during the next stage, added Joan. The three-day conference, organized by Dubai Chamber in cooperation with the World Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the International Chamber of Commerce, includes 40 discussion sessions and a workshop attended by 80 specialists. — KUNA



DUBAI: Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Mohammad Al-Saqer (center) participates in the conference. — KUNA

Authorities may introduce new residency rules soon

KUWAIT: Following years of criticism directed at the sponsor (Kafeel system), Kuwait's government may be working on major changes that could also help attract business investors. Among these changes are plans to grant residency permits valid between 5-15 years for foreign investors, company owners and CEOs in certain jobs, a local daily reported yesterday

quoting sources with knowledge of ongoing discussions in this regard.

Despite widespread criticism of the sponsorship system and its negative effect on labor and the economy, little effort has been taken in Kuwait in the past years on ending it. However, the new changes being discussed could be an indication that the government may soon introduce different types of residencies that could be issued without the need for sponsors.

"The changes are supposed to come into effect soon, as concerned authorities are working on them according to the government's plans to diversify economy," the sources are quoted anonymously in a report published by Al-Qabas Arabic newspaper yesterday.

invest more in the project to revitalize the economy and encourage business and commerce, he said.

The development of the two Islands in addition to the southern and northern banks of the causeway was presented to the Municipal Council and Cabinet's Secretariat for approval. He affirmed that the municipality was in favor of all lucrative government projects, noting that a special session was held last August to discuss the nitty-gritty of the venture. — KUNA

to Germany and neighboring Denmark because of surging COVID cases. Austria meanwhile closed shops, restaurants and festive markets on Monday, the most drastic restrictions seen in Western Europe for months.

Zionist entity, which is part of the WHO's European region yesterday rolled out vaccinations for children aged 5 to 11, one of only a handful of countries to inoculate minors that young. About half of its recently confirmed cases were among those below the age of 11, it said. And France's fully vaccinated Prime Minister Jean Castex went into isolation late Monday following a positive test, after his daughter caught the virus. The regional director for WHO Europe, Hans Kluge, said Europe and Central Asia "face a challenging winter ahead."

He called for a "vaccine plus" approach, consisting of a combination of vaccinations, social distancing, the use of face masks and hand washing. The WHO said face masks reduce COVID incidence by 53 percent according to a recent study, and "over 160,000 deaths could be prevented (by March 1) if universal mask coverage of 95 percent was achieved". But the prospect of a winter under renewed restrictions has sparked unrest in several countries. — AFP

Kuwaiti activist talks diversifying economy at Doha conference



DOHA: Participants in the conference pose for a group photo.

DOHA: The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies organized a conference titled "Economic Diversification in the Gulf Countries: Opportunities and Challenges" in Doha, Qatar recently, in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Asrar Hayat, Kuwait Transparency Society's board member and social activist, participated in the event, which featured participation of researchers and economic experts from 16 different countries. During the event, Hayat presented a research paper on the importance of diversifying sources of income and applying this to Kuwait and focused on the transition from a single-resource economy in Kuwait to a diversified economy.



Asrar Hayat speaks during the event.

While the sources considered this move 'as loosening of the current sponsor system', they indicated that it would help boost efforts to attract investments to the country and grant company owners freedom of movement. Furthermore, the changes are expected to separate investors from the system of residency permits through the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), and grant investors their own residencies according to legal rules and procedures to be introduced soon, the sources explained.

The amendment will also be introduced on the mechanism of granting 'self-sponsorship' as there are plans to ease procedures for those who wish to apply for them - especially for those who have lived in Kuwait for a long time and served the country or

worked in government sectors, the sources noted.

Kuwait's sponsorship law has not seen any major changes since its inception decades ago, and has been in the center of discussion in many incidents where the country came under fire for violations of labor rights over the years. Under the sponsorship law, a foreign worker's residency status is tied to their work permit and can lose their legal residence in the country within three months of their termination from their jobs. Not only does this system effectively put the fate of workers - especially low wage laborers - at the hands of their employers, it also serves as a deterrent for foreign investors who see it creating a very risky environment for investment in Kuwait.

Kuwait seeks to attract regional...

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more leisure and commercial services to citizens and residents alike. The Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway is operational and now is the time to

Europe battles COVID surge...

Continued from Page 1

According to WHO data, COVID-related deaths in its European region of 53 countries increased last week to nearly 4,200 a day, doubling from 2,100 deaths a day at the end of September.

It said evidence was growing that vaccine-induced protection against infection and mild disease was declining. Several countries, including Greece, France and Germany, are moving towards requiring a third booster shot for someone to be considered fully vaccinated. Chancellor Angela Merkel has warned that Germany is not doing enough to curb its "highly dramatic" fourth wave of the pandemic.

With intensive care beds swiftly filling up and its weekly incidence rate at an all-time high of 399.8 new infections per 100,000 people, Germany's worst-hit regions have ordered new shutdowns, including the closure of Christmas markets. The US State Department has urged Americans not to travel

46 killed in Bulgaria as...

Continued from Page 1

said the bus was registered with the "Besa trans" tourist agency, which organizes tours to Istanbul.

Bulgaria's interim Prime Minister Stefan Yanev said a probe into the accident had been launched, dismissing the suggestion that road conditions were to blame. Images showed the carcass of the charred bus after it broke through the guardrails between the two sides of the highway.

North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev told state news agency MIA that he had spoken to one survivor. "He explained that they were sleeping in the bus when an explosion was heard. They succeeded in breaking one of the windows and saved a few people. Unfortunately, the rest did not succeed," he said. "It is a great tragedy... 12 (victims) are under 18 years old, and the rest are young people about 20 to 30 years old," he added.

Bulgarian national police chief Stanimir Stanev said the bus driver died "immediately so there was no one able to open the doors". Survivors "jumped out of the windows", said Maya Arguirova, head of the treatment centre for severe burns where they were transported. Bulgaria's Interior Minister Boyko Rashkov was among those who rushed to the site of the crash. "It's a terrifying scene. I haven't seen anything like that before," Rashkov told journalists.

"Nobody can say for certain how many were there and who they were. The bodies are badly

burned and have to be identified one by one," he added. Frantic relatives of those on tours to Istanbul organized by the agency were trying to contact their loved ones in the hope they were not on the ill-fated bus. "We are calling Besa tours non stop, but no one is answering for hours," Xhelal Bakiu told reporters in Skopje, saying he had been unable to reach his cousin on the phone.

'Europe stands with you'

Bulgaria has a history of deadly bus accidents, but yesterday's disaster is the worst, according to officials. Twenty Bulgarians died in 2018 when their bus skidded on a wet road and overturned. EU chief Ursula von der Leyen sent her "deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who perished in the tragic bus accident" and wished "a fast recovery to those injured".

"In these terrible times, Europe stands in solidarity with you," she said. Russian President Vladimir Putin also expressed his "sincere condolences" and said he hoped for "the speedy recovery of all those wounded". A total of 628 people died in road accidents in 2019 and 463 in 2020 in Bulgaria, according to official data.

The accidents were often attributed to poor road conditions, outdated cars and speeding. Yesterday's accident occurred on a section of highway with steep gradients and without clear demarcation lines, where many accidents have taken place, according to Diana Roussinova of a road safety NGO, which has complained to authorities about the stretch in the past. In Europe, in one of the worst accidents in recent years, 43 people died in 2015 when a coach carrying a pensioners' club collided with a lorry and caught fire in southwest France. — AFP

Local

Diabetes program trainees celebrate graduation at Volvo Cars headquarters

Weight loss, prevention and management of diabetes program



Hussain Al-Muchaimi receiving certificate from main sponsor Volvo Cars and organizers

Altat Al-Essa receiving certificate from organizers and sponsors



Shireen Al-Mutawa program organizer

Coach Salah Al-Shatti

KUWAIT: Through the celebration of World Diabetes Day in November, the first batch of graduates from the Dr Hamdy's program for weight loss, prevention and management of diabetes celebrated their graduation at Volvo Cars headquarters, one of the program's sponsors. The graduation was held under the auspices and presence of Dr Ebaa Al-Azairi, Head of the Medical Sector at Dasman Diabetes Institute, who gave her opening speech.

Prof Dr Osama Hamdy, Professor at Harvard University and Head of the Obesity Management Program in People with Diabetes at the Joslin Diabetes Center in the United States of America, congratulated the first batch of graduates and presented the results they achieved in terms of weight loss and diabetes remission and/or control, which exceeded in his opinion the results of the program in the previous 15 years in the US.

And he introduced the four cornerstones of the program, which are the psychological, nutrition therapy, physical activity and health education for diabetes. This program is considered the first of its kind in the world in the application of multidisciplinary technology (medical, psychological, physical activity, nutritional and health education), which works in harmony with the participants to reach one and consistent goal, which is weight loss and diabetes control.

The integrated multidisciplinary team works mainly to change the unhealthy nutritional behaviors and health habits of the participants and help them adopt healthy eating that help them manage or suppress diabetes, and prevent or delay type 2 diabetes for non-affected people, through losing at least seven percent of the weight, where studies have shown that losing seven percent to 10 percent of the weight leads to the prevention of diabetes by 58 percent. Also, people with diabetes may partly or completely stop their diabetes medicines.

The consultant nutritionist Shireen Al-Mutawa, the team leader, confirmed that the results of the graduates of the program were amazing, as some of the participants lost 15 to 20 kilos of fat, and in general, some were able to get rid of diabetes medications, while maintaining blood sugar levels in the target range.

Nutrition is essential
Dr Ghanima Al-Falih, a therapeutic nutrition specialist, also indicated that nutrition is an essential part managing diabetes, and that her efforts in the program have paid off through the participants' adoption of new convictions after educating them about everything related to proper nutrition on the basis of the Dr Hamdy's program. The participants also acquired new skills and methods of healthy nutrition to enable them to move forward in their future lives efficiently and to be able to control all the expected obstacles.

Psychological specialist and coach, Shatha Abu Hijleh, introduced the importance of scientifically proven Rapid Transformational Therapy (RTT) sessions in immediately changing behavior to contribute to imparting healthy behavior on the participants, in addition to the comprehensive psychological awareness of the participants in everything related to exercise and nutrition, which contributed effectively and extensively to changing the participants' perspectives on these aspects.

Coach Salah Al-Shatti confirmed that sports is one of the pillars of the program and that he trained the participants over a period of three months and contributed to the success of the program in terms of increasing muscle mass and the participants lost weight from fat mass, as this is one of the most important secrets to maintaining the ideal weight and not gaining extra weight again in the future. Also, coach Salah worked with the participants to increase their fitness, self-confidence and passion of exercise through his continuous motivation.

At the end of the graduation ceremony, Dr Walid Al-Dhahi, consultant endocrinologist and diabetologist and president of the Kuwait Diabetes Association (KDS), gave the closing speech and handed the participants graduation certificates of the program.

The team and participants praised the support provided by the sponsors of the program, Volvo Cars, and the media sponsor Marina FM, who attended to cover the event, as well as Health Planet, which provided all participants with organic protein shake. Coach Shatha Abu Hijleh ensured that all participants were provided

with a free consultation that contributed to their successful development and change of behavior.

The team also announced its readiness and passion to launch registration for the second group to complete the successful course of the program, which will start on January 11 and 12 for men and women, respectively. The registration has started via the program website <https://www.webmediakw.com/application>. Or via the coaches' Instagram:

Specialist Shireen Al-Mutawa @shireenalmutawa
Dr Ghanima Al-Falih: @DrG.diet
Coach Shatha Abu Hijleh: @shatha.hijleh

We all work hand in hand to spread exercise, nutritional, health and cultural awareness to protect society from the high rates of obesity, as obesity rates in Kuwait for adults reached 71 percent and for children and adolescents 51 percent, as well as diseases resulting from it such as type 2 diabetes and its dangerous complications if blood sugar is not regulated.

Volvo is proud to sponsor this program which achieved outstanding results for the participants. We are not just a car company but a safety leader and a human centric brand and one of our main responsibilities is the safety and development of the community.



Mohammed Al Gharaballi, BNK Automotive



Shatha Abu Hijleh program therapist

Altat Al-Essa celebrating results



Hussain Al Muchaimi demonstrating example of how much weight he lost

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Alghanim Industries participates in 37th NUKS-USA conference

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest private companies in the region, announced its participation in the 37th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) USA branch. The four-day conference kicks off tomorrow in Chicago, Illinois, under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. This is Alghanim Industries' 13th year to sponsor the student-led event.

This year's conference, which carries the slogan "An Ambitious Generation to Fulfill the Vision of the Nation," will feature an array of informative panel discussions covering topics relevant to Kuwaiti youth including sports, society, and the economy. Speakers will include, media figures, politicians, athletes, health experts, and human rights activists.

"We, at Alghanim Industries, are proud to consistently support the yearly NUKS conference in the US. Our participation this year is solidified by our commitment to the future leaders of Kuwait as we launch our new educational program: the Alghanim Industries Academy," said Anas Al-Ateeqi, Senior Director of Central HR at Alghanim Industries. The senior director further explained the new initiative, adding, "the new academy is an intensive talent development and recruitment program where fresh graduates from various academic backgrounds hone their skills by working with us directly. We firmly believe, with tried-and-tested methods throughout our previous initiatives, that directly investing in our youth yields an even stronger, more capable generation than they already are."

The sponsorship of the annual NUKS conference in the United States reflects the company's commitment to attracting the best talent that Kuwait has to offer, helping Kuwait's young men and women launch successful careers in a variety of sectors and capacities. It also comes as part of Alghanim Industries' corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, which is focused on supporting education and encouraging entrepreneurship. The company is proud of its longstanding relationship with INJAZ-Kuwait, a youth program that focuses on delivering educational programs on entrepreneurship, financial literacy and work readiness.

NBK Run registration countdown starts

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is opening a final registration period for NBK Run. People still have the chance to visit nbk.com/nbkrun and register. NBK Run will be held on Saturday, December 4, 2021. NBK Run added a 5 km race in addition to the existing 11 km to increase the completion among participants. There will be 12 winners at the end of the race. NBK will award the top 6 winners (women and men) in the 11 km race with KD 1000, KD 700, KD 500 cash prizes. The top 6 winners (women and men) in the 5 km race will win KD 500, KD 400, KD 300 cash prizes. Ooredoo will award the top winners with exclusive prizes.

All participants in the race will be eligible to enter the grand draw at the end of the race to win a new Nissan X - TERA car from the strategic partner, Al-Babtain Group. All participants will get an exclusive offer from Ooredoo in addition to an exclusive chance to enter the draw on a ticket to watch Paris Saint German (PSG) football match.

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).

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, 30 November until Thursday, 2 December 2021.

It is 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.

NBK dedicates a special competition within the race for people with special needs, as part of the bank's beliefs of the utmost importance of involving all members of society and their ability to prove their active and vital role in various areas and fields, particularly sports.

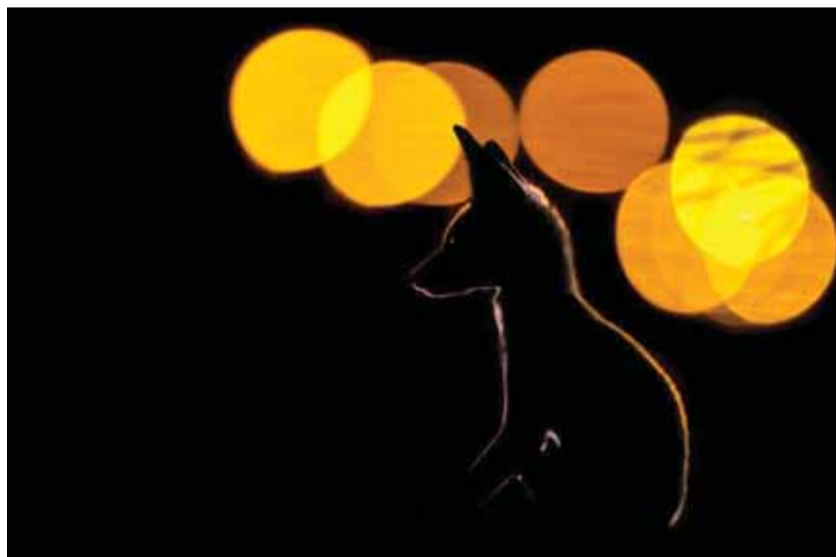
The run for both the female and male participants for a distance of 11 km will start from the Green Island and for the 5 km will start from Souq Sharq on the Gulf Road to the Shuwaikh Beach Park, parallel to the Gulf Road, next to KPC building.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive on Istiqlal Road as Kuwait City's high-rise buildings are seen. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Kuwait's Murad wins first prize in nature photography contest in India



The winning photo 'Arabian Red Fox'.



Kuwaiti photographer Mohammad Murad.

NEW DELHI: Kuwaiti photographer Mohammad Murad won the first prize in a nature photography contest on Monday, held in India with global participations. In a statement to the press, Murad said that he believes he is the first Kuwaiti or perhaps the first Arab photographer to win the first prize in India's Nature inFocus

Photography Contest. He said that the photo of the Arabian Red Fox which earned the first prize was taken in Kuwait. "The photographer spent more than two months observing and documenting the behavior of Arabian Red Fox families near their dens in the Kuwait region. Although scared at first, the foxes became more comfortable

around his presence after frequent visits. They even began to emerge from their dens when they heard the sound of his car and came close enough to inspect his camera gear," the Nature inFocus Photography Contest 2021 said on its official website announcing the first prize to Murad in the animal portraits category. — KUNA

DDI holds course on managing diabetic foot complications

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), a leading diabetes research Institute established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, held recently its specialized three-day course on the 'Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Complications'.

This program was held at the Institute and attended by healthcare professionals. Trainees learned to assess and treat the feet in people with diabetes using evidence-based assessment and treatment methods, aimed at reduction of diabetic foot ulceration and amputation. This program was organized and delivered by Kay Scarsbrook Khan, Chief Podiatrist and Dr Abdullah Al-Ajmi, Consultant Neurologist from DDI.

Foot problems are a major cause of morbidity in people with diabetes. The countries of the MENA region have among the highest rates of diabetes prevalence in the world. It was estimated in 2019



KUWAIT: Participants in a group photo.

there were approximately 54.8 million adults living with diabetes in the MENA region, this is expected to increase to more than double by 2045. Despite the high prevalence of diabetes in the MENA region, many of the countries in the region lack adequate foot care provision, foot screening and self-care education programs.

The course provided participants with the

knowledge and skills to assess the foot in people with diabetes, screen and categorize an individual's risk of foot ulceration and provide appropriate education advocating self-care and ulcer prevention. It also aimed to increase knowledge and skills in the assessment and treatment of common foot problems and diabetic foot complications, in line with current international guidelines.

Kuwait's boccia tourney concludes, winners honored



KUWAIT: The second local boccia tournament concluded at Kazam Club yesterday, wrapping up competitions that involved 70 special needs' players. Sheikha Sheikha Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, the honorary president of the organizing club 'Al-Tomouh Club' said in a statement that such competitions empower "our handicapped children with confidence and sharp-



en their gifts." Rehab Bouresli, president of the club, said the games involved more than 70 male and female players from 14 schools and clubs. Winning players were awarded by the Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Sports, Dr Saqr Al-Mulla, Sheikha Sheikha Al-Abdullah and Bouresli. —KUNA



UN appeal for Afghan aid meets \$600mn target

Merkel's husband calls unvaccinated Germans 'lazy'

IAEA seeks 'common ground' with Iran

Tehran is demanding all sanctions imposed or reimposed on it be lifted

TEHRAN: The UN nuclear watchdog said yesterday it was seeking "common ground" with Iran days after reporting that the Islamic republic had sharply increased its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi made the remarks following talks with officials in Tehran ahead of negotiations next week aimed at salvaging the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

His visit comes after the IAEA said Iran had boosted its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to many times in excess of the limit laid down in the landmark accord. "Our work has been intense since the morning," Grossi said at a joint news conference in Tehran with Mohammad Eslami, the chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.

"We are continuing at this point the negotiations with a view to find a common ground," he said. "There are other issues that we are working on and... it is very important to put this into the perspective of the peaceful nuclear programme of Iran."

"We are multiplying our efforts with a view to conclude our exchanges today." In a brief statement, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said "establishing a clear framework for cooperation between the IAEA and the agency is one of the main topics of discussion".

The talks come ahead of the scheduled resumption on Monday of negotiations between Tehran and world powers aimed at saving the 2015 deal that gave Iran sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear programme. On November 12, Grossi had described as "astonishing" his lack of contact with the new Iranian government of ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi.

Days later, Tehran responded by announcing it had invited the watchdog chief to visit. There was no mention of Grossi's visit in Iran's ultraconservative newspapers yesterday.

Demand to lift sanctions

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed hopes on Monday that his visit would be "constructive". "We have always advised the IAEA to stay on the path of technical cooperation, and to not let certain countries pursue their political orientations on behalf of the IAEA," he said.

Iran began easing its commitments under the deal in 2019, a year after then president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the accord and began imposing crippling sanctions. Trump's successor Joe Biden wants to bring Washington back into the agreement, which is known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

Tehran is demanding all sanctions imposed or reimposed on it by the US since 2017 be lifted. The IAEA said last Wednesday in a report seen by AFP that Iran had boosted its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to 2,489.7 kilograms. The total amount now includes 113.8 kg enriched to 20 percent, up from 84.3 kg in September, and 17.7 kg enriched up to 60 percent, up from 10 kg, it said.

The United States warned later that Iran was reaching the point of no return for reviving the nuclear deal. "The time will come if Iran continues at this pace with the advancements they've made, (it) will make it impossible even if we were going to go back to the JCPOA to recapture the benefits,"



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) shows the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Grossi (C-R) and the Head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization Mohammad Eslami (C-L) giving a press conference in the capital Tehran. —AFP

the US envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, said on Friday. The November 29 talks will be held in Vienna, where the IAEA is based. The remaining parties to

the deal—Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia—will join the talks while the United States will participate indirectly. —AFP

Broken dreams of desperate migrants fleeing for Saudi

HARGEISA, Somalia: The people smugglers promised Fentahun Derebe passage to Saudi Arabia, where the young Ethiopian could make more money than he had ever dreamed of, then return home to start a business.

Instead, after he reached the coast of Somalia, the smugglers demanded more money and dumped the 19-year-old when he couldn't pay up. Broke and alone, Fentahun had no option but to walk back the way he came — a journey many hundreds of kilometres through the desert.

"People told me I would get a good job, and change my life. They told me it would be easy. But it didn't turn out like that at all," the soft-spoken teenager told AFP in Hargeisa, a transit hub along the smuggling route where many migrants wind up stranded. As attempts to cross the Mediterranean have intensified, and a migrant crisis has erupted on the EU border, another of the world's busiest smuggling routes is quietly swinging back into gear away from the spotlight.

Fentahun is among thousands of migrants trying to leave Africa — but his destination isn't Europe, but the Arabian Peninsula. This so-called "Eastern Route" is perilous and sometimes fatal, with migrants crossing scorching desert, rough seas and active war zones in search of economic opportunity. The journey takes migrants — mainly Ethiopians, but also some Somalis — from the Horn of Africa across the Gulf of Aden to war-torn Yemen.

From there they traverse vast stretches of hostile territory in the hope of reaching Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, and finding work.

Eastern promise

Most don't make it. Tens of thousands of migrants are stuck in Yemen, unable to pay for a return trip, held hostage by smugglers or detained by local authorities.

Some meet tragic and grisly ends along the way. In March, a fire in an overcrowded detention facility in Yemen's capital killed dozens of



HARGEISA, Somalia: Ethiopian migrants sit behind several items during an assistance packages distribution for migrants at an International Organization for Migration (IOM) center in the city of Hargeisa, Somaliland. —AFP

migrants. That same month, 20 drowned when smugglers tossed people overboard en route to Yemen, fearing their vessel was overloaded.

But many never leave Africa at all, swindled long before even setting sail.

"They told me it would cost \$500 to get on the boat. I didn't even have \$100. I was shocked," said Fentahun, who left Gondar in northern Ethiopia when he had barely finished high school. The Eastern Route offers two gateways to Yemen: One via Obock in Djibouti, but more often from Bosaso in northern Somalia. Djibouti patrols its coastline and tracks migrants but governance is weaker in Somalia, in part making the Bosaso option more popular.

But it is the longer and more dangerous of the two, passing through isolated, lawless and arid parts of Somalia, and daytime temperatures reach excruciating highs.

On the month-long walk between Bosaso and Hargeisa, Fentahun said he passed many migrants in dire straits. Some had been robbed or physically abused, and all were desperately short on food and water. "I was afraid... It wasn't safe along the way," he said. Farhan Omer, a staffer at an IOM support centre in Hargeisa, said many on the road were unaccompanied teenagers: "Some have no shoes," he said.

programme claimed palace insiders dripped the media with negative stories about the initially popular Harry and Meghan, as a power battle played out behind the palace walls.

Buckingham Palace, Clarence House and Kensington Palace—respectively representing Queen Elizabeth II, her son Prince Charles and grandson William—were further angered that the BBC had refused to show them the documentary before it was broadcast, according to reports. "A free, responsible and open press is of vital importance to a healthy democracy," said the joint statement by the three royal households, which was included in the programme.

"However, too often it is overblown and unfounded claims from unnamed sources that are presented as facts and it is disappointing when anyone, including the BBC, gives them credibility." The programme also discussed Meghan's alleged bullying of palace staff, interviewing a lawyer for the former "Suits" star who

denied the claims.

Buckingham Palace is investigating the allegations internally. Meghan's lawyer appeared on the programme to deny the claims. Citing media intrusion, Harry and Meghan quit royal life last year and now live in the United States, where they have signed a series of lucrative deals and spoken out on a range of issues, including disinformation.

They have also openly criticised Britain's most famous family, including accusing an unnamed senior member of racism. This month, Meghan apologised to a UK court after admitting to being involved in a favourable biography of her short tenure as a frontline royal, having previously denied it.

The apology came as part of an appeal by Associated Newspapers—whose titles include the Daily Mail—against a High Court ruling that it breached the Duchess of Sussex's privacy, by publishing parts of a letter she had written to her estranged father. —AFP

South Korean ex-dictator Chun Doo-hwan dies

SEOUL: South Korean ex-dictator Chun Doo-hwan, who brutally crushed opponents until mass demonstrations forced him out, died yesterday, his longtime aide announced. The former president died at his home in Seoul. Min Jeong-ki told reporters outside the Chun residence. He was 90.

He oversaw the country's economic rise and secured the 1988 Olympics for Seoul. He was the first South Korean president to hand over power peacefully. A general in the South Korean military, Chun took power in a coup after the 1979 assassination of strongman Park Chung-hee.

He was president from 1980 to 1988, ruling with an iron fist and brutally crushing his opponents. Chun remains among South Korea's most reviled figures. He is known as the "Butcher of Gwangju" for ordering his troops to put down an uprising against his rule in the southwestern city.

In 1996, he was convicted of treason and condemned to death, in part over what happened at Gwangju, but his execution was commuted on appeal and he was released following a presidential pardon. The official toll for the dead or missing at Gwangju is around 200 people, but activists say it may have been three times as high.

Chun and far-right politicians in South Korea dismissed it as a "riot". The former dictator denied any direct involvement in the suppression of the uprising. After his death, the South Korean president's office expressed regret that there was "no sincere apology" from Chun. — AFP

UK royals attack 'overblown' BBC documentary

LONDON: Britain's leading royals have united in a rare joint statement to criticise the BBC over a documentary that claimed a behind-the-scenes briefing war before Prince Harry and his wife Meghan quit frontline duties. "The Princes and the Press" dwell on how Harry and his elder brother William handled the press as they rose to adult prominence in the royal family following the death of their mother Diana in 1997.

The first of two episodes, which aired Monday night, suggested that Harry in particular had a hostile attitude to the media, which only worsened with critical coverage of Meghan Markle after he started dating the US actress in 2016. The

CONDOLENCES

The Owners,
Management and Staff of
**Al-Rashed International
Shipping Co ksc**

Extend our Heartfelt
condolences to
Mr Goldy Chadha & Family
Key Account Manager
on the sad demise of his father



Gurcharan Singh Chadha
who passed away in Dubai
on November 23, 2021

May his soul Rest in Peace

International

More than 100 migrants flown out of Belarus to reach EU via Poland

Authorities assisting migrants who wish to go home with their paperwork

MOSCOW: Authorities in Belarus said yesterday that a group of 118 migrants who had hoped to reach the European Union via Poland were flown out of the country. It was the latest sign of de-escalation in a crisis that saw several thousand migrants—mainly from the Middle East—stuck on the border between Poland and Belarus.

"Yesterday, 118 people left from Minsk national airport," Alexei Begun, the head of the migration department at Belarus's interior ministry, told state news agency Belta. He said another group of migrants was due to fly out of Belarus later.

He did not say where they were headed, but said the embassies of several countries—including Syria and Iraq—were organising repatriation flights for their citizens who "have found themselves in a difficult situation." Western leaders have accused Belarus's strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko of causing the crisis by luring migrants to his country to send across the border into the EU in retaliation for sanctions.

The migrants set up a camp on the frontier after Polish forces deployed to prevent crossings, and Belarusian authorities eventually moved them to a

logistics centre near the Bruzgi border checkpoint. A first group of 431 people was flown back to Iraq from Belarus on a repatriation flight last week.

Begun said authorities were "assisting" migrants who wish to go home with their paperwork. He said Minsk was working with the Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on getting migrants out of the border zone.

Representatives of the organisations were on a visit to the country, he said, meeting with state authorities to "work on joint steps to resolve the migrant crisis". Representatives of the European Commission were also visiting the logistics centre, Belta reported.

On Monday, Lukashenko said more repatriation flights were being prepared. "They want to go back to Iraq, Syria—you see, we organised a flight," he said, according to Belta. "We are preparing another flight for the end of the month, if we gather these people," he said.

Aid groups say at least 11 migrants have died since a surge in attempts to cross the border began this summer. — AFP



Another group of migrants was due to fly out of Belarus later



GRODNO, Belarus: Migrant children play with snow outside the transport and logistics centre near the Bruzgi border point on the Belarusian-Polish border in the Grodno region yesterday. — AFP

Iranian ex-official slams 'lies' in Sweden war crimes trial

STOCKHOLM: A former Iranian prison official accused of handing out death sentences during a 1988 purge of dissidents yesterday slammed as "lies" the charges brought against him in a landmark trial in Sweden. Hamid Noury, 60, has been on trial in Stockholm's district court since August on charges including murder, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

They stem from the period between July 30 to August 16, 1988, when he was allegedly assistant to the deputy prosecutor of Gohardasht prison in Karaj, near Tehran. Human rights groups say about 5,000 prisoners were killed across Iran, allegedly under the orders of supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini in reprisal for attacks carried out by the People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) at the end of the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88.

Noury took the stand yesterday for the first time, as several dozen members of MEK, an exiled opposition group, protested outside the courthouse in central Stockholm. "I have only four days to respond to all the lies that have been told to the Iranian people," he told the court, dressed in tan trousers and a white turtle-neck, his white beard neatly trimmed.

"Everything we've heard is repetitive elements, but when you look at the details you realise it doesn't hold up. I will put an end to 33 years of lies and accusations," he said in a statement to the court before questioning, without addressing specifics. This is the first time any Iranian official has gone on trial for the purge, and Noury will have four days to testify in the case.

The prosecution has alleged that Noury's participation included handing down death sentences, bringing prisoners to the execution chamber and helping prosecutors gather prisoners' names. A mock-up of the prison was installed in the courtroom.

Noury has previously insisted through his lawyers that he wasn't present for the killings. "He says he wasn't there, but we have 58 people who say he was," Kenneth Lewis, the lawyer for the civil plaintiffs, told AFP. The trial has already heard testimony from several witnesses, including from members or ex-members of the MEK.

"When I was in the death corridor... I had the chance to see him and I witnessed that whenever they read some people's names he followed them towards the death chamber," one of them, Reza Falahi, told AFP. "After for example 45 minutes or so he came back, and again and again the same story was repeated." Sweden's principle of universal jurisdiction means that its courts can try a person on serious charges such as murder or war crimes regardless of where the alleged offences took place.

Lured by a cruise

Noury was arrested at a Stockholm airport in November 2019 following the efforts of justice campaigner and former political prisoner Iraj Mesdaghi. After compiling an evidence dossier of "several thousand pages" on Noury, Mesdaghi set about luring him to Sweden — where he has family members — with the promise of a luxury cruise.

Prosecutor Kristina Lindhoff Carleson has accused Noury of "intentionally taking the life of a very large number of prisoners sympathetic to or belonging to the People's Mujahedin" as well as others considered opponents of the "theocratic Iranian state". — AFP

Death toll mounts as Yemen war rages

DUBAI: Yemen's seven-year-old war will have claimed 377,000 lives by the end of the year, through both direct and indirect impacts, a UN agency estimates in a report published yesterday. Nearly 60 percent of deaths will have been caused by indirect impacts such as lack of safe water, hunger and disease, it said, suggesting that fighting will have directly killed over 150,000 people.

Most of those killed by the war's indirect effects were "young children who are especially vulnerable to under- and malnutrition," said the UN Development Program report. "In 2021, a Yemeni child under the age of five dies every nine minutes

because of the conflict," it found. A Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen in early 2015 to shore up the government after Iran-backed Houthis fighters seized the capital Sanaa months before. Fighting since then has had "catastrophic effects on the nation's development", said the report.

The UNDP has warned in the past that the war in Yemen, already the poorest country in the region, had thrown its development back by over two decades. The Yemen war is often labeled the greatest humanitarian disaster in the world. Projecting the impact of continued fighting into the future, the UNDP warned that 1.3 million people in total will have died by 2030. "A growing proportion of those deaths will occur... due to second-order impacts that the crisis is waging on livelihoods, food prices and the deterioration of basic services such as health and education."

'Downward spiral'

If the war stopped now, the UNDP said, there

would be "hope for a brighter future in Yemen" which it said could achieve middle-income status by 2050. But it judged that, for now, "the situation continues to propel in a downward spiral". Escalating fighting, including tank battles and regular bombardment by both fighter jets and drones, have in some areas destroyed even the most basic infrastructure. In recent weeks fighting has escalated on several fronts, mostly near the strategic Marib city, the internationally-recognized government's last major stronghold in Yemen's oil-rich north.

Thousands of rebels and pro-government fighters have been killed in the battle for the city. The UN Refugee Agency, in separate comments yesterday, said it is "gravely concerned about the safety and security of civilians in Yemen's Marib governorate, including more than one million people who are estimated to be displaced". Some 40,000 people have been forced to flee in Marib since September, said UNHCR spokeswoman Shabia Mantoo in Geneva. — AFP

Zionists 'formalising' defence ties with Morocco on minister's visit

TEL AVIV: Zionist's Defence Minister Benny Gantz headed yesterday to Morocco on a visit that will "formalise" cooperation between the two countries, officials say, at a time when Rabat is embroiled in a standoff over Western Sahara.

The two-day trip comes less than a year after Morocco normalised ties with Zionist entity in a deal brokered by former US president Donald Trump's administration.

In return, Washington recognised the North African kingdom's sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara. Gantz, the first Jewish defence minister to make an official visit to Morocco, will sign "a memorandum of understanding that will outline defence cooperation between the two countries", his office said.

The trip aims to "set the foundation for all future security cooperation between the Zionist entity and Morocco", a source familiar with the visit told AFP. "Until now there has been some level of cooperation; this truly formalises it," the source said.

Morocco controls most of Western Sahara and considers the former Spanish colony as its sovereign territory. Tensions have flared between Morocco and Algeria, which backs Western Sahara's Polisario Front independence movement.

Algeria cut diplomatic ties with Morocco in August citing "hostile actions" — a charge denied by Rabat.

Earlier this month, Algiers accused Morocco of killing three Algerian civilians on a desert highway, raising fears

of an escalation. And Polisario head Brahim Ghali said last week the movement had decided to step up military operations.

Timing 'not coincidental'

Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, a Jewish expert on Morocco, said the timing of Gantz's visit and the signing of an MOU was not a coincidence. "It's possible that in the context of the Moroccan-Algerian tensions, the Moroccans were the ones who were keen on this," he said.

"It would seem to me that the Moroccans are the ones who are keen on showing everybody — their own public, their Algerian rivals, the West — that they are deepening their relationship with Israel," said the Tel Aviv University professor.

Morocco and Zionist previously set up ties in 1993 but Rabat broke them off at the start of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in 2000. Rabat normalised ties with the Jewish state last December, shortly after similar announcements by the UAE and Bahrain. Last month, Zionist's Ratio Petroleum announced an agreement with Rabat on "exploration operations" off Dakhla in Western Sahara. Zionist's defence ministry oversees all security exports, with the Jewish state offering state-of-art products ranging from attack drones to the Iron Dome missile defence system.

'Benefits of recalibrating'

One Jewish product, the NSO's Pegasus spyware, has already made its



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita (L) stand side by side as they address the media at the State Department in Washington. — AFP

way to Morocco, according to Amnesty International and Paris-based organisation Forbidden Stories.

Rabat allegedly used it against French President Emmanuel Macron — a claim denied by Morocco which said it never bought the software and has filed lawsuits against French media and Amnesty International. A spokeswoman for Gantz would not comment on NSO. The Jewish-Palestinian conflict continues to mobilise civil society, Islamists and the far-left in Morocco, with a call for a November 29 demonstration against "creeping normalisation with Zionist entity" and in support of the Palestinians.

According to Maddy-Weitzman, while Rabat has not abandoned the Palestinian cause, "there are too many

other interests in play, too many other benefits to be gained by recalibrating".

"Most of the countries in the region just don't want to be held hostage any more on the issue, they want to pursue their interests as they define them, and at this point in time obviously the Jews has a lot to offer," he said. Before departing for Morocco, Gantz addressed a security conference at the Zionist's Reichman University, where he issued fresh warnings about arch foe Iran. It was not clear if the Islamic Republic would be discussed on Gantz's Morocco trip, but Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei last month vowed that the countries which normalised ties with Jewish state would have to "make up for this big mistake". — AFP

Merkel's husband calls unvaccinated Germans 'lazy'

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel's husband yesterday accused unvaccinated Germans of "laziness" as the country struggles to contain a dramatic surge in coronavirus infections.

Germany's COVID-19 resurgence has in part been blamed on its relatively low vaccination rate compared with other Western European nations like France, Italy or Spain, with just 68 percent of the population fully jabbed.

"It is astonishing that a third of the population

does not follow scientific findings," Merkel's husband, Joachim Sauer, said in an interview with Italian newspaper La Repubblica and picked up by German daily Die Welt.

"In part, this is due to a certain laziness and complacency of Germans," said Sauer, who rarely speaks in public.

"The other group are people who follow a personal conviction, a kind of ideological reaction to what they consider a vaccination dictatorship," Sauer said, a cohort he said also included doctors and scientists. Like his famous wife, Sauer is a quantum chemist and was in Italy on an academic visit.

The couple keep a low profile and Sauer rarely speaks to the media. One of the few occasions when they are photographed together is during their annual visit to the Bayreuth opera festival.

Sauer added that Germans' vaccine hesitancy

was all the more regrettable given the "miracle" of how quickly safe and effective jabs were developed during the pandemic.

Sauer's comments come a day after Merkel warned that Germany wasn't doing enough to curb the "highly dramatic" fourth wave of the pandemic.

The outgoing chancellor, who is acting in a caretaker capacity and will likely be replaced by Finance Minister Olaf Scholz next month, has repeatedly urged Germans to get vaccinated.

The sluggish vaccine uptake and rapidly filling intensive care beds have ignited a fierce debate about whether Germany should follow Austria's example and make coronavirus jabs compulsory.

Merkel's government has in the past always ruled out doing so, but several leading politicians, including Bavarian premier Markus Soeder, have in recent days called for mandatory vaccinations. — AFP

International

Moscow court begins hearings on closing top rights center

Prosecutors accuse centre of violating Russia's law on 'foreign agents'

MOSCOW: A court in Moscow yesterday began hearings into a request by prosecutors to shut down a key center of Russia's leading rights group Memorial. Dozens of supporters of Memorial gathered in frigid weather outside the Moscow City Court for the first of two court hearings this week on efforts to shutter the group, created in 1989 to catalogue Soviet-era crimes.

Founded by Soviet dissidents including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov, Memorial was a symbol of Russia's democratization efforts in the 1990s and is one of the biggest pillars of civil society. The pressure on the group comes in a year that has seen an unprecedented crackdown on Russia's opposition and independent media, with authorities imprisoning top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in February and banning his organizations.

Yesterday's preliminary hearing was in connection with a request by prosecutors to close Memorial's Moscow-based Human Rights Center, which campaigns for the rights of political prisoners, migrants and other disadvantaged groups.

Prosecutors accuse the center of violating Russia's law on "foreign agents" and of justifying "terrorism and extremism" by releasing lists of political prisoners that include banned figures like Navalny and members of outlawed groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Memorial said its lawyers put forward several

motions during the closed-door hearing, including that it be opened to the public and press, while prosecutors submitted their written case. Another preliminary hearing was scheduled for November 29, when Memorial said it would present its written position.

'Cannot destroy history'

Supporters outside the courthouse urged authorities not to go through with the ban. "You cannot destroy history because then the country will not have a future," said Alla Frolova, a coordinator with OVD-Info, a protest monitoring group that works with Memorial.

Memorial is due back before judges yesterday in another case at Russia's Supreme Court. Prosecutors have asked the Supreme Court to approve their request for the shuttering of Memorial International,

which focuses on efforts to remember victims of Soviet-era persecution.

Memorial International is also accused of violating the "foreign agents" law, which forces individuals or organizations to disclose sources of funding and label all their publications with a tag or face fines. The term is laden with Soviet-era connotations of treachery and espionage.

Memorial's Human Rights Center was put on the government's register of "foreign agents" in 2014, while Memorial International was added in 2016. Together the two entities form the core of

You cannot destroy history because then the country will not have a future



MOSCOW: People gather outside the Moscow City Court where a preliminary hearing into prosecutor's request to dissolve Russia's rights group Memorial's Human Rights Center. —AFP

Memorial's operations.

Ilya Novikov, one of Memorial's lawyers, said the closure of the group would once have been unimaginable. "If we fell from the moon and arrived from 2000, we could probably say that this is a farce," he said. But, he added, "this is the reality of 2021."

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman said the Kremlin would not comment at this stage. "This topic does not figure prominently on the agenda for the Kremlin and the president," Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "At this point, there is the position of the prosecution, and there's still no court decision." —AFP

HK independence activist jailed for secession

HONG KONG: A young Hong Kong democracy activist was sentenced to three and a half years behind bars yesterday after pleading guilty to secession under the city's sweeping national security law. Tony Chung, 20, is the youngest person to be convicted under the new law, which has crushed dissent in Hong Kong and transformed the once outspoken international business hub.

Earlier this month he pleaded guilty to one count of secession and one count of money laundering but defiantly declared he had "nothing to be ashamed of". Chung was previously the convenor of Student Localism, a small group he set up five years ago as a secondary school pupil to advocate Hong Kong's independence from China.

Separation from China was then a fringe view in

Hong Kong although calls for self-rule became more vocal during huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago. Beijing imposed the security law on Hong Kong in response to those protests and Student Localism disbanded hours before it came into effect.

Authorities accused Chung of continuing to operate the group with the help of overseas activists and soliciting donations via PayPal—the foundation of the money laundering charge. Prosecutors said Chung's group published more than 1,000 social media posts that included calls to "get rid of Chinese Communist colonial rule" and "build a Hong Kong republic".

Some of the posts prosecutors cited dated back to before the security law's enactment, despite Hong Kong authorities promising that the law would not be retroactive. Yesterday Stanley Chan, one of a group of select judges picked by the government to try national security cases, said Chung's criminal intent was "clear for all to see" on social media, in interviews, at street booths and in schools.

"Even though he had no concrete plan, his objective was very clear," Chan said, handing

down a total sentence of 43 months. Chung—who has already spent more than a year in custody after he was arrested in October 2020 — did not visibly react to his sentencing, though he nodded and waved to acknowledge his supporters in the public gallery.

He was nabbed by plainclothes police from a coffee shop opposite the US consulate, where he was allegedly planning to seek asylum. The security law targets anything authorities deem subversion, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces.

Chung initially faced an additional charge of sedition and another count of money laundering but they were shelved following a plea bargain. In a separate case last December, Chung was jailed for four months for unlawful assembly and insulting China's national flag.

Four other men have so far been convicted in separate cases under the security law—mostly for their political views. More than 150 people have been arrested under the legislation, with around half charged. Bail is often denied and guilty pleas are a way to reduce both the end sentence and the legal costs of a long court battle. —AFP

Philippines accuses China of 'harassment' in disputed sea

MANILA: Manila's defence minister yesterday accused the Chinese coastguard of "intimidation and harassment" after Philippine navy personnel were filmed and photographed unloading goods in the disputed South China Sea.

Tensions over the resource-rich waters have spiked in the past week after Chinese coastguard ships fired water cannon at Philippine boats delivering supplies to marines at Second Thomas Shoal in the contested Spratly Islands.

Manila expressed outrage over the attack which forced the Philippine boats to abort their mission. But Beijing said the vessels had entered its waters without permission. China claims almost all of the waterway, through which trillions of dollars in trade passes annually, with competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Beijing has ignored a 2016 ruling by The Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration that its historical claim is without basis. Two civilian boats manned by Philippine Navy personnel made another attempt to reach the shoal and arrived "without any untoward incident" yesterday, Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said. But three people in a rubber boat deployed by a nearby Chinese coastguard vessel took photos and videos as "personnel and cargo" were unloaded from the vessels, Lorenzana said. "I have communicated to the Chinese ambassador that we consider these acts as a form of intimidation and harassment," he added.

The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment. After China occupied Mischief Reef in the mid-1990s, the Philippines ran a derelict navy vessel aground on the nearby Second Thomas Shoal to assert Manila's territorial claim. Members of the Philippine marines are based there. Yesterday's incident came a day after Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte condemned the latest flare-up in the sea during an Asian regional summit hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"We abhor the recent event in the Ayungin Shoal and view with grave concern other similar developments," Duterte told the meeting, using the Philippines' name for the shoal. "This does not speak well of the relations between our nations and our partnership."

Duterte's remarks were unusually strong for a leader who has fostered warmer ties with Beijing since taking power in 2016 in the hope of extracting promised investment and trade. —AFP

UN appeal for Afghan aid meets \$600mn target

GENEVA: The United Nations said yesterday that its flash appeal for more than \$600 million to support the humanitarian response in Afghanistan until the end of the year was now fully funded. According to the UN, Afghanistan is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe, with more than half of its population at risk of not having enough to eat during the coming winter.

Following the Taliban takeover of the country in August, the UN held a ministerial meeting in Geneva in September, asking international donors for urgent support. "We can now report that the flash appeal is 100 percent funded," Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told reporters in Geneva.

The main donors were the United States, European countries and Japan, who helped reached the total funding goal of \$606 million (539 million euros). The funds are directed towards helping the 11 million most deprived people in Afghanistan.

Laerke said that between September 1 and November 15, the UN and its non-governmental organisation partners provided food assistance to 7.2 million people. They also provided healthcare to nearly 900,000 people. Nearly 200,000 drought-affected people have been assisted with water trucking and 178,000 children under the age of five have been treated for acute malnutrition, he added.

"However, not all funding has been translated



KABUL: File photo shows an Afghan woman, wearing the Taliban-imposed burqa, waits near a militiaman to receive a blanket, a quilt and warm clothes from aid workers as part of a UN winter relief distribution program. —AFP

into action because of the crisis in Afghanistan's banking and financial system. And half of the population still need emergency aid," he said. Laerke added that access had recently improved and the humanitarian effort now had access to all areas in Afghanistan.

"The big problem now is impeding the economic collapse of the country," he said. Afghanistan's food

shortage is caused by a drought coupled with an economic crisis that has deepened since the Taliban took power.

The financial crunch was aggravated after Washington froze about \$10 billion of assets held in its reserve for Kabul and deteriorated further after the World Bank and International Monetary Fund halted Afghanistan's access to funding. —AFP

earthen embankments that hold rainwater around the saplings longer to ensure they grow even during droughts.

"Their leaves and seeds are rich in protein for livestock," explained local farmer Garba Moussa. "Cooked or dried, we also eat them as survival food during severe food shortages," he added. Mayor Adamou said that game animals and even giraffes have been leaving their remote habitat south of the capital Niamey to savour the tender acacia leaves since the Simiri plateau reforestation programme started in 2013.

Niger's southern forests have lost one-third of their surface area and now make up only one to two percent of the country, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. By 2030, Niger

formation is part of the African Union's Great Green Wall project, which aims to restore 100 million hectares of dry land by 2030 along an 8,000-kilometre (5,000-mile) strip stretching from Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east.

Arable land is prized in landlocked Niger, where desert covers three-quarters of the territory and 80 percent of the population lives on subsistence farming. The World Bank predicts its population will rise from 23 million in 2019 to 30 million in 2030 and 70 million in 2050, underlining the vital importance of the Green Wall's success.

Niger's contribution is mainly made up of white gum and Bauhinia rufescens trees, two drought-resistant species that can grow 12 metres (40 feet) tall. Armed with pickaxes and spades, villagers build

aims to "green" 3.6 million hectares of land, which represents more than 37.5 percent of its territory, said Maisharou Abdou, the Green Wall's director-general in Niger.

Abdou said between eight and 12 percent of the total had been achieved by 2020, but emphasised the project was "a long-distance race". Mouhamadou Souley, head of the anti-desertification services, added that work had already begun to extend Simiri's reforestation by another 65 hectares.

To achieve this dream, the country—one of the world's poorest—needs more than 454.645 billion CFA francs (\$780 million), he added. The European Union, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank and other donors have already given money. —AFP

Great Green Wall brings life back to Niger desert

SIMIRI, Niger: Once a desolate landscape, the Simiri plateau in Niger is now a small paradise for fauna and flora. Goats crunch acacia seeds, squirrel and partridge prints dot the ground, praying mantises hang from trees and swarms of grasshoppers devour the verdant foliage.

"A small forest has miraculously been reborn," marvelled Simiri mayor Moussa Adamou. The trans-

Business

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2021

Zain presents first comprehensive digital program for accelerating tech startups

Company concludes ZGI 6 virtual edition in collaboration with Brilliant Lab



Al-Roudhan and Hammoud with Zain's executive management and government sector representatives.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, premiered the region's first Startup Innovation Digital Video Report, concluding the sixth edition of its renowned digital startups accelerator program: Zain Great Idea (ZGI) in collaboration with Brilliant Lab.

The event gathered Zain's executive management and the region's investment community along with 25 startups who made it to the final phase of Zain Great Idea 6. The Digital Video Report was screened at VOX cinemas in the Avenues mall, and saw the finalists, who represented seven Arab countries, pitch their startups to investors and potential business partners from across MENA.

During the event, Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer addressed the audience and startups: "This year we are celebrating over 10 years of Zain Great Idea. Without any doubt, it has been one of the most successful initiatives we presented in the Kuwaiti market as part of our innovation and entrepreneurship strategy."

Al-Roudhan continued: "Throughout a



Eaman Al-Roudhan during the event



Guests watch the digital report

ecosystem. Over the years, Zain has expanded its relationship with regional and international venture capital funds supporting their portfolio companies whenever appropriate".

Hammoud further explained: "The ZGI Accelerator program bolsters Zain Ventures' vision to capitalize on regional startups as we continue our active engagement in direct strategic investments in a variety of promising startups from the region and afar, offering them support on multiple fronts including a wide geographical reach and progressive customer base for expansion growth opportunities".

ZGI 6 witnessed a new chapter in the story of the program as the ZGI 6 alumni were the very first of Zain's own entrepreneurs to have completed an entire ZGI program in a 100 percent virtual setting. This, by no means, has been as easy feat.

While past ZGI participants had the benefit of physically learning from the world's best academies at San Francisco, London, and Barcelona, ZGI 6 participants had to navigate through the uncharted waters of e-learning and remote collaboration. Technology has undoubtedly played a vital role in making this process less challenging, but the entrepreneurs' perseverance and dedication were the main elements behind their success.

Zain Great Idea 6, being an all-virtual program, exceeded expectations in terms of numbers. In spite of the remote setting and unprecedented situation, 170

ambitious applicants applied, of which 114 took part in the virtual bootcamp and 60 bright minds qualified to the Super Saturday phase. In the end, 25 dedicated finalists from seven different GCC and Arab countries made it to the final phase and pitched their great ideas to potential investors and business partners.

ZGI 6 has also seen the highest-ever turnout of female entrepreneurs in the program's history, adding to the impressive track of triumphs during the past decade, directly contributing to what Zain calls the biggest startups network in the region, with almost 20-million-dollar capital in and capital out in accelerated startups.

Zain strongly believes in the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. The company is committed to printing a positive impact through all its activities, and this has led it to embrace the most influential topics in the community, perhaps most importantly the support of youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation, not only in Kuwait, but across the entire region.

Brilliant Lab founder and CEO, Neda Al-Dehani, said: "In spite of the pandemic, Zain insisted on launching the 2021 edition of ZGI virtually in an endeavor to support startups and entrepreneurs, and we took the call to be a part of the program yet again to continue our mission to accelerate Kuwait and MENA startups towards success".



The 25 tech startups accelerated by ZGI 6

Al-Dehani announced: "As part of ZGI 6, Brilliant Lab and Rasameel Investment Company have created a \$5 million fund to invest in successful startups that are part of the ZGI program".

Al-Dehani continued: "This has led Brilliant Lab and three other investors to invest an undisclosed amount in BnchrPlus, a ZGI participating startup that specializes in E-Automotive Industry Services. The investment values BnchrPlus in excess of \$3 million, with the startup forecasting revenues to exceed \$10 million in the next two years".

The telco's much-anticipated program that attracted over 170 startups from the Middle East and North Africa was undertaken in joint collaboration with Brilliant Lab, Kuwait's top startup accelerator service, and Mind the Bridge, an innovation center based in Silicon Valley,

USA. The program offered a refreshed opportunity for local talents and the region's entrepreneurial community. Throughout six successful editions, the program has empowered, trained, and invested in hundreds of creative and driven Kuwaiti and Arab youth, of which many now own thriving and active Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to this day in local and regional markets.

Zain is well aware of the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social responsibility, the company is committed to printing a positive impact through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most influential issues in the community, including the support of youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation.



Scan here to watch the report

decade, ZGI has empowered, trained, and invested in over 1,500 passionate Kuwaiti and Arab youth, and the program contributed to creating numerous job opportunities in the regional tech-startups arena by accelerating over 100 businesses." Al-Roudhan announced: "Investments in ZGI startups are well over KD 6 million (\$20 million) to this date, and 30 percent of our alumni now own thriving and active businesses to this day across local and regional markets. 40 percent of these businesses have raised capital."

Al-Roudhan noted: "Unsurprisingly, digital transformation was the prevailing success story for the vast majority of our alumni throughout the program's history. At its core, ZGI was always a tech-startup accelerator program, and the huge demand for this area of entrepreneurship across Kuwait and the region only proved that Zain's vision of achieving digital leadership was on the right track".

During the event, Zain Group's Chief Investment and Digital Transformation Officer Malek Hammoud introduced the recently launched Zain Ventures brand: "Zain Ventures was established to complement the existing investment portfolio of Zain Group and open the door to future investment opportunities in the venture capital, FinTech and Tech World, focusing on digital innovations in the fast-growing electronic services and startup ecosystem."

Hammoud continued: "Zain Ventures is one of the key elements of Zain Group's '4Sight' strategy. Investing in the world of venture capital provides Zain with a vast range of opportunities to diversify and expand its reach in the surrounding



Al Roudhan and Hammoud with Zain officials and ZGI 6 alumni

Business

Biden orders release of 50m barrels of oil from US strategic reserves

Coordinated release with other countries to tamp down soaring fuel prices

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden announced yesterday he has ordered the release of 50 million barrels of oil from the US strategic reserves in a coordinated attempt with other countries to tamp down soaring fuel prices. "This release will be taken in parallel with other major energy consuming nations including China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom," the White House said.

A senior administration official told reporters this was "the first time we've done something like this in parallel with other" countries. As the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, oil production has not kept pace with rocketing demand, pushing prices up.

In the United States, an associated rise in gasoline prices is one of the main culprits in a surge of inflation. Biden's announcement comes as Americans prepare for the holiday season, when travel ramps up. Average fuel prices at filling stations are \$3.41 a gallon, the highest level since 2014, according to latest figures from the AAA motorists' association. This represents an increase of \$1.29 over gasoline prices a year ago.

The US reserves, held in underground depots in Texas and Louisiana, are the largest emergency supply of oil in the world. A senior administration official said the releases would start in mid- to late December, and that further intervention was possible to steady the market, "responding to a once-in-a-

century pandemic."

"As the president has said, consumers are facing pain at the pump right now," the official said. "The president stands ready to take additional action if needed and is prepared to use his full authorities, working in coordination with the rest of the world, to maintain adequate supply as we exit the pandemic."

As output rises, oil prices are already down nearly 10 percent in the last few weeks. But officials echoed Biden's repeatedly stated concerns that despite easing of crude values, prices of gasoline for drivers have only gone up.

This has hurt ordinary Americans, while driving a sharp dive in Biden's approval ratings. "There is mounting evidence that declines in oil prices and the cost of other inputs into gasoline are not translating into lower prices at the pump," said the senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official said the government was looking into "anti-competitive practices" and will "examine whether illegal conduct is costing families at the pump." The approach is "two-pronged. First, making sure that, you know, the price of oil is coming down, reflecting the fact that we have to have supply matching demand, but also making sure that those savings are passed through to consumers," he said. "We expect the industry to be passing through the savings to consumers as quickly as possible." —AFP



SALT LAKE CITY, US: In this file photo, a trucker loads his truck with fuel at the Marathon Oil Refinery in Salt Lake City, Utah. —AFP

EU lawmakers back step towards curbs on Big Tech

STRASBOURG: Major EU legislation to impose unprecedented restrictions on how US tech giants do business passed a first and significant hurdle yesterday. A key committee of the European Parliament overwhelmingly approved their version of the Digital Markets Act, legislation that will slap far-reaching rules on Facebook, Google, Amazon, Apple and Microsoft.

Once passed, the landmark law should give the EU unprecedented powers to act quickly against these tech "gatekeepers" and impose a strict list of Do's and Don'ts on their most dominant platforms.

"The current competition rules are not enough," said German MEP Andreas Schwab, who is spearheading the DMA drafting in parliament. The law will mean "game over for unfair practices ... The legislator makes the rules, not private companies", he added in a statement.

The vote is now set to go to the full European Parliament in December, with its companion law, the Digital Services Act, expected to be passed in January. These final laws will be negotiated with EU member states, with ministers expected to greenlight their own versions at a meeting in Brussels tomorrow. The hope is to have them in force on January 1, 2023.

The legislative work is heating up a year after the European Commission first made its proposals and sets the scene for painstaking negotiations between the member states and MEPs in early 2022.

The big tech companies and other interests are lobbying furiously to influence the outcome, and member states will weigh in until the end with their own national priorities. The process was given a shot in the arm with the testimony in parliament earlier this month by Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen, who urged lawmakers to not lose their resolve. The final negotiations will be presided



by France, which has made delivering the new rules into law a major priority of its six-month EU presidency that begins on January 1.

'Significant risks'

In detail, the parliament's version increases the threshold for designating a company as a gatekeeper, reducing the likelihood that the law would capture companies beyond the US giants. It beefs up the powers of national competition authorities, with key member states Germany and France eager to not leave all the power to the European Commission in Brussels.

It could also demand a ban on ads targeted at minors, as well as force platforms make some of their services, including messenger software and social media, operable in rival networks. CCIA, the lobby for big tech, criticized the text, saying that many of the additions added by parliament created "significant risks of unintended consequences for Europe's digital economy."

"We hope the final EU negotiations will ensure that the DMA is workable for all (and) gives companies a fair chance to comply," said CCIA's Kayvan Hazemi-Jebelli. US tech giant are under pressure to change their ways in Europe. In the latest salvo, Italy's competition watchdog imposed fines totaling over 200 million euros (\$225 million) on Amazon and Apple yesterday for infringing EU laws through restrictions which penalized sellers of Apple and Beats products. —AFP

Vivendi says no to selling Telecom Italia stake

PARIS: French media group Vivendi said yesterday that it has no interest in selling its stake in Telecom Italia following a buyout offer from US private equity fund KKR. The public tender offer by New York-based Kohlberg Kravis Roberts for Telecom Italia's entire share capital sent the stock price of the former public telephone operator soaring on Monday.

But a spokesman for Vivendi told AFP yesterday that "it has no intention of ceding its participation in Telecom Italia". Vivendi is the largest shareholder in Telecom Italia with a nearly one-quarter stake.

"Vivendi has been a long-term shareholder in Telecom Italia from the start and reiterates its desire to work with the Italian authorities and public institutions to ensure the long-term success of Telecom Italia. The share price of Telecom Italia, which were about two percent lower in mid-day trading in Milan, recovered to trade flat at 0.45 euros after the Vivendi announcement. Telecom Italia has said that KKR's initial offer is for 0.505 euros a share. Italy's economy ministry welcomed the interest by KKR as "positive news for the country" over the weekend and said a working group would be formed to study the matter.

The ministry said it was necessary to ensure that such a project would be compatible with the rollout of ultra-wide-band in the country. Any sale would need the approval from government stakeholders, as Telecom Italia's network is considered a national strategic asset. Telecom Italia has said the proposal was subject to around four weeks of due diligence and would require the backing of holders of least 51 percent of both ordinary and savings shares. —AFP

Reconnaissance Research discusses threats of drones and the means to combat them



Founder and CEO of Reconnaissance Research Abdulaziz Al-Anjari, Deputy CEO Yousef Al-Ghussein and International Expert Dr Scott Crino with other participants

KUWAIT: Reconnaissance Research organized a private panel discussion with some attendees from diplomatic missions in Kuwait. The discussion focused on the issues of the drones' threats and technological means to combat them.

The panel was marked by the presence of the center's guest in Kuwait, International Expert Dr Scott Crino, current Advisor to the US Department of Defense.

The event was attended by founder and CEO of Reconnaissance Research Abdulaziz Al-Anjari, and Deputy CEO, Yousef Al-Ghussein.

The attendees addressed several topics, namely:

1. The Middle East as a focal point in the drone war.
2. The impact of drones on conventional warfare.
3. Impact of the countries' foreign policy in polarizing terrorist groups.
4. Weaknesses and strengths of the countries in the region in dealing with this kind of threat.
5. Counterintelligence and forensic mechanisms to track and disable drones.



High-level representatives from the embassies of the United States of America, France, Canada, Japan, Turkey, Tunisia, India and Oman took part in the discussion.

Regarding this visit, Al-Anjari said: "My deputy and I have visited Dr Crino in his office in Washington DC in

March 2020, and we had an eye-opening interview with him that got published in September 2020."

"Our event today is part of our belief in the necessity of providing modern knowledge from their sources on topics that have direct impact on the security of Kuwait and its neighboring countries", Al-Anjari noted.

He added: "We planned to arrange additional number of closed-door discussions at the center that would gather US expert, Dr Crino, with various other groups of specialists and stakeholders in Kuwait to help capitalize on his wealth of current knowledge."



Dr Scott Crino

Turkish lira crashes to new record low



ANKARA: The Turkish lira plunged to record lows against the dollar yesterday after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said policymakers have no appetite to hike interest rates in response to the currency's fall. The currency fell by 13 percent to almost 13 lira against the dollar.

Turkey is facing the worst currency crisis since August 2018 when the value of the lira hit historic lows after a row with then US president Donald Trump. The Turkish central bank on Thursday cut its policy rate from 16 to 15 percent despite rising inflation and a fast-depreciating currency.

Erdogan has always built his popularity on a

reputation of forging strong economic growth and improving the income of families across the country. He defended the current policies in an address to the nation after a cabinet meeting on Monday.

"We see the game played by those over the currency, interest and price hikes ... and show our will to proceed with our own game plan," he said. Analysts believe the blizzard of economic misfortunes in the country could put pressure on the president as he prepares for 2023 elections amid signs of consolidation within the opposition, which has so far failed to seriously challenge him. —AFP

Business

Kamco Invest holds its live virtual investors' conference

Sarkhou: Kamco Invest achieves numerous milestones leveraging on its business model

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, held its live virtual investors' conference yesterday for analysts and the company's shareholders and bondholders to discuss the company's performance during the nine months ended 30 September 2021.

Participating in the conference were Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, Hana'a Taha, Chief Financial Officer and Moustafa Zantout, Director of Marketing & Investor Relations who started by giving a brief introduction on the company, followed by an overview on the major events that took place in the world, as well as a recap of the market's performance during the period.

Business activity gradually returned to normal since the beginning of the year after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was reflected in the latest economic data with the GCC GDP aggregate expected to grow by 2.5 percent this year. A shift towards non-oil sectors, in addition to OPEC+ output cuts, is expected to result in a faster growth in non-oil GDP at 3.8 percent versus 0.3 percent growth for oil GDP. Brent crude spot reached a 36-month high during the third quarter at around \$78/b, an increase of 51.9 percent since the beginning of the year. With the rise in oil prices, resumption of economic activity, as well as withdrawal of policy support and spending made during the pandemic, the GCC countries' fiscal deficits are expected to narrow down during 2021 and further improve in the following year.

Regarding the capital markets performance, Zantout indicated that the global and regional equity markets performed positively during the first nine months. The MSCI GCC Index rose by 32.1 percent, with Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia recording the highest increases by 52.6 percent and 32.3 percent respectively, and Boursa Kuwait rose by 23.8 percent.

Sarkhou presented a detailed overview of the Company's business and financial performance since the beginning of 2021. The Company achieved numerous milestones leveraging on its business model that focuses on diverse income sources and



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou



Hana'a Taha



Moustafa Zantout

quality revenue streams.

Total revenue increased by 95.9 percent to reach KD21.9 million (9M 2020: KD11.2 million), while revenues from fees and commissions increased by 13.8 percent compared to the same period last year to reach KD13.4 million, representing 61.2 percent of total revenues. The company reported a net profit of KD8.2 million (EPS: 24 fils) compared to a net



loss of KD1.4 million during the same period in 2020 (EPS: -4 fils).

As for the company's profits for Q3-2021, Sarkhou attributed the decrease in comparison to the same period in 2020 to the lower investment income which was impacted by the markets' performance. Nevertheless, the company's core businesses witnessed a significant growth that was

reflected in the fee and commission income, which grew by 35.9 percent to reach KD 4.8 million.

Sarkhou highlighted the core business functions where assets under management grew by 11.9 percent during the period, and at a CAGR of 13.5 percent since inception to reach \$14.5 billion due to new amounts raised, as well as the positive performance of managed assets.

Kamco Invest's equity funds and managed portfolios continued to outperform their respective benchmarks, whereas Kamco Investment Fund emerged as the winner of the Refinitiv Lipper Fund Awards Kuwait 2021 in the categories of "Best Equity Fund Over 5 Years", and "Best Equity Fund Over 10 Years". During the nine months period, the Kamco Investment Fund, Al-Durra Islamic Fund, and Kamco Premier Market Index Fund emerged as the three top performing equity funds in Kuwait with returns of 27.77 percent, 26.96 percent and 26.25 percent respectively.

Income generating properties were acquired in the UK and US on behalf of clients with a total value of \$343 million. The Special Situations Asset Management team successfully completed several exits on behalf of clients amounting to \$39.1 million. A new venture capital fund was established and offered to qualified investors in Kuwait after obtaining CMA's approval.

The Investment Banking team successfully played the role of Joint Lead Manager & Joint Bookrunner for six regional debt issuances worth \$2.15 billion across Kuwait, Saudi, Oman and Bahrain. The team also acted as issuance advisor to the rights issue of two listed companies on Boursa Kuwait, the underwriting manager for a logistic company, exclusive buy-side advisor to an insur-

ance group to acquire 66 percent of a non-listed insurance company, exclusive buy-side advisor to an insurance group to acquire 75 percent of a listed insurance company in Jordan, sell-side advisor to sell a majority stake in the pharmaceutical sector in the UAE and a minority stake of a listed company on Boursa Kuwait.

First Securities Brokerage Company, Kamco Invest's brokerage arm, continued to provide its services to clients without interruption, while increasing market share and attracting new clients through its online trading platforms. The company successfully completed the MD3 test for netting, which now serves as a new revenue stream for the company.

Taha discussed the Company's financial position and credit rating, indicating that Kamco Invest maintained its "BBB" long-term credit rating and "A3" short-term rating with a stable outlook. The rating was issued by Capital Intelligence in its most recent review in May 2021.

Shareholders' equity reached KD 59.2 million as of 30 September 2021, an increase of 18.5 percent in comparison to the end of December 2020. Retained earnings increased by 86.2 percent to reach KD15 million, while total assets increased by 6.8 percent compared to 31 December 2020 reaching KD 126.7mn as of 30 September 2021. Cash and cash equivalents during the period represent 24.8 percent with prop-book investments representing 54.8 percent of the total assets.

She also touched on the company's total liabilities, which were reduced by KD1.3 million during the nine months, down 2.1 percent, to reach KD 63.5 million as end of September 2021. The net debt-to-equity ratio stood at 0.23x (31 December 2020: 0.3x).

Sarkhou concluded by stressing that Kamco Invest is committed to the highest standards of transparency. He added that although the virtual conference was not a regulatory requirement, it is an opportunity to keep our shareholders, bondholders and analysts updated with the company's performance and key developments.

Take off with British Airways to reunite and reconnect

KUWAIT: Now's the time to book your travel to London and beyond to reconnect with those you love. British Airways resumed flights from Kuwait to London Heathrow earlier this year in June and with ease in travel restrictions, travel to London has got simpler.

The airline currently operates a Boeing 777 aircraft on Kuwait to London Heathrow route, offering customers a choice of three cabins - World Traveller (economy), World Traveller Plus (premium economy) and Club World (business class) with a convenient schedule.

British Airways' Regional Commercial Manager - Middle East and Pakistan, Panagiotis Theodotou said, 'British Airways' route from Kuwait to London has been popular since the relaxation of travel rules this summer. In the winter we look forward to offering up to seven weekly flights from Kuwait to London on our Boeing 777 aircraft.' Return flights to London are available from KD 185 in economy and business class are available from KD 985.

British Airways has introduced a number of measures at the airport and on board to look after the safety and wellbeing of its customers and crew. These include social distancing measures, the wearing of face masks (which remain in place) and hand sanitizer stations. Prior to travel customers will also



receive details of how they can prepare for their journey, including information on discounted testing providers. The airline is cleaning all key surfaces including seats, screens, seat buckles and tray tables after every flight and each aircraft is completely cleaned from nose to tail every day. The air on all British Airways flights is fully recycled once every two to three minutes through HEPA filters, which remove microscopic bacteria and virus clusters with over 99.9 percent efficiency, equivalent to hospital operating theatre standards.



Huawei announces annual smartphone photography contest

KUWAIT: Huawei has announced the launch of its annual smartphone photography competition, the NEXT-IMAGE Awards for 2021. The theme of this year's Next-Image Awards is "Better Together". Starting from today, Huawei users around the world can submit their photographic and video masterpieces for the chance to win one of 70 amazing prizes: including the new Huawei P50 and cash prizes up to \$10,000. The deadline for entries is November 30, 2021.

Huawei's Next-Image Awards is the world's largest smartphone photography competition, with over two million entries since the competition began in 2017. With an easy entry mechanic and over 70 chances to win, amateur smartphone photographers and visual storytellers across the world are set to light up the competition for a fifth consecutive year.

This year's Next-Image Awards will be judged by a team of photography experts, from a diverse range of backgrounds and countries around the world. Karen Smith, the renowned art critic from the UK, and French radio and TV producer Olivier Chiabodo, will join Canadian extreme sports photographer Reuben Krabbe. The judging panel have a sense of what it is to win photography prizes, as Pulitzer-winning photographer and one of the grand prize-winners of the Next-Image Awards 2020, Lin Haiyin, joins founder of the Shanghai Centre of Photography, Liu Heung Shing, Professor of School of Journalism and Communication, BNU, Yu Guoming, and Vice Minister of the Consumer Strategy Marketing Dept. at the Huawei Consumer Business Group, Li



Changzhu, complete the judging panel.

10 categories

Unlike other competitions that search for one overall winner, Huawei is encouraging entrants to explore different perspectives, formats and light conditions. Insisting that users discover the diversity and beauty of life, the Next-Image Awards 2021 has 10 distinct categories to keep things interesting. Perfectly matched with Huawei's strengths in smartphone photography, the categories encourage users to make the most of their devices' innovative features while telling original, compelling stories through photos and videos.

Portrait

At its best, portrait photography tells rich and compelling human stories better than words ever could. Whether it is of yourself, of a loved one, or a model, submit your best portrait shots.

Monochrome

Monochrome images remove distracting colors, helping the viewer focus on the subjects, textures, shapes, patterns and composition. Use black and white photography to reflect the atmosphere, fun or originality of the shot.

Color

Huawei smartphones are renowned for their ability to produce vibrant photos that are bursting with vitality. Show your true colors by expressing yourself through smartphone photography.

Snapshot

Photography lets you live in the moment, encouraging you to capture defining moments and scenes. Create a snapshot that tells a powerful story, or immortalize an important memory forever.

Night

Thanks to the power of AI, Huawei smartphones capture incredible night scenes without the need for a flash. Get creative under cover of darkness, and make a night shot to remember.

Telephoto

For many smartphone users, zoomed-in photos are usually blurry or low quality. That is not the case with Huawei. Use your telephoto lens to home in on the important details, and show off the clarity of your zoomed-in shots.

Super wide angle

Wide-angle lenses allow photographers to get as close to the subject as possible without excluding crucial elements in the background. Use your mobile photography skills to make viewers feel as though they are viewing the scene with their own eyes rather than through a photograph.

Super macro

In photography, as in life, the small details are important. Explore different macro photography subjects and techniques, as you show off your camera's ability to capture tiny details up close.

Refaat Aladawi wins KD 10,000 in ABK's Alfouz draw

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Refaat Haleem Aladawi as the winner of KD 10,000 in the Alfouz weekly draw. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and announced live on Q8 Pulse Station FM88.8 on 22nd November 2021.

The Alfouz draw account offers ABK customers the chance to win life-changing rewards. With Alfouz, ABK customers will get a chance to win KD 10,000 in Kuwait's highest single weekly draw and the ultimate grand prize of KD 5,000 monthly additional income for 10 years. Both new and existing ABK customers can benefit from this opportunity, with a minimum account balance of KD 100 only. The next draw date will be on Sunday 28th November 2021.



Story creator

Shoot and produce a mobile-shot movie of 15 minutes or less to express your creativity and share your story through moving images. Assume the director's chair as you create a cinematic masterpiece to show to the world.

Storyteller

Different from the other categories that only allow single photo to be uploaded, in this catalogue, you can use a group of photos (3-9 photos) to express emotions, tell a story, record changes or discover trends. Every category is tailored to a unique photography scenario that Huawei devices excel in, challenging users to elegantly capture emotion as they get creative with Next-Image Award entries.

These award categories highlight some of the leading features of Huawei smartphones, with the latest Trendy Flagship & Camera King from Huawei - the Huawei nova 9 offering unparalleled performance in zoom and low light photography thanks to the Ultra Vision AI Quad Camera setup.

The rear camera system of the Huawei nova 9 includes a 50MP Ultra Vision Camera, an 8MP Ultra Wide Angle Camera, a 2MP Depth Camera and a Macro Camera that lets you capture from as close as 4cm. Both the front and rear cameras support 4K shooting at 30fps, allowing you to express yourself through short videos and exciting vlogs for social media. The main camera has a large 1/1.56-inch sensor and a RYYB color filter array with a high light sensitivity. This collects 40 percent more light compared to a standard RRGB sensor, ensuring the utmost clarity on all images, while enabling outstanding low light performance. Once the camera hardware captures an image, the XD Fusion Engine gets to work. The Huawei nova 9 inherited Huawei flagship smartphones' XD Fusion Engine, which uses sophisticated computational photography techniques to greatly enhance image details and quality.

Lifestyle | Features

NEW YORK'S FRENCH CHEF DANIEL BOULUD VOTED WORLD'S BEST



French chef and restaurateur Daniel Boulud works in the kitchen of his restaurant 'Daniel', in Manhattan, New York city. —AFP

French chef Daniel Boulud, who has been living in New York for almost 40 years, was named best restaurateur in the world by Les Grandes Tables du Monde on Monday for his flagship restaurant "Daniel." The association of 184 top restaurants worldwide said that the Lyon native, who moved to New York in 1982, "embodies, for many North Americans, French gastronomy, or even gastronomy, period." Boulud, 66, defines his cuisine as French in its cooking and textures but with American products and flavors. Besides "Daniel," which has two Michelin stars, in New York, the chef has other restaurants in the United States, Canada, Dubai, Singapore and the Bahamas.

Boulud told AFP after the news broke that this latest in a long list of honors represented a "professional dedication and

really a sign of friendship and support from colleagues" in an environment widely seen as extremely competitive and high-pressure. Like all New Yorkers, Boulud took a big hit in the COVID-19 pandemic that killed at least 34,000 people in his adopted city, which bore the brunt of the first wave of the virus in the United States in early 2020.

Some of his establishments closed, but "Daniel" kept going, setting up a terrace of covered shelters on the sidewalk "with heating in the winter and air conditioning and music in the summer" for die-hard fans. Emerging from the pandemic, Boulud thinks New York will remain "one of the five most attractive cities in the world" and will always enjoy a prominent place in French gastronomy. The economic and cultural capital of the United States and a cultural mosaic of 8.5 million inhabitants,

New York is home to 183 French restaurants, according to the French consulate.

"In love" with New York and now an American citizen, Boulud still boasts of being "the most French of all French chefs in the United States" thanks to a "cuisine which has its French references" but which "never stops innovating." The price of one of his "exceptional" dinners runs to about \$300 a head including wine and service, according to the restaurateur. "Customers want to have fun, to splash out on wines, they go out a lot. We see them with a regularity and a loyalty that reassures us", said Boulud, who is now looking forward to the return of visitors from Asia and Europe —AFP

Aniston 'can't imagine' more Morning Show yet

Jennifer Aniston "doesn't know" if she could make another season of "The Morning Show". The 52-year-old actress is still digesting the eventful second season of the Apple TV+ drama and she admitted the idea of returning to play Alex Levy again is currently "so hard to even imagine" as it was such a grueling run of episodes for her and her character. Asked about doing more, she said: "It's so hard to even imagine it right now. You know when they say mothers almost have a block: 'I could never do that again!' I'm a little bit in that moment of, 'I don't know if I could ever do that again!' So, we'll see." The two seasons have seen Alex expose her co-anchor Mitch Kessler (Steve Carell)'s sexual misconduct, divorce, retire, make a comeback, be praised as a hero before facing being "cancelled", suffer a near-breakdown and then contract COVID-19, and Jennifer admitted her character's trials felt "relentless. She joked: "It was relentless! Honestly, I did think at one point the writers were trying to kill me! "I was like, 'Oh my gosh. You guys! Literally crawling to the finish line here.'" If she does return for a third season, Jennifer hopes Alex has more "fun". Asked what she'd like to see happen next to her alter ego, she told The Hollywood reporter: "Oh, just a lot of love and fun



and dancing and playing and something with a lot more levity!" While a third season hasn't officially been commissioned, showrunner Kerry Ehrin doesn't want to

pick up where the season two finale left off, in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, and admitted she could take the program to a different time period entirely. She said: "I think it's going to have been done, done, done. So, it wouldn't be my instinct. You could [jump into the future]. You could go backwards. It's such an interesting little universe. You really can put it anywhere in time, and I think the challenge of the show is coming up with that big subject." And Reese Witherspoon admitted she'd like to see the show depict a world after the "shift" of the pandemic. She said: "If #MeToo was the centre of season one and season two has so many issues but really tackles the impending pandemic, I would love to see how the world realigns post-quarantine. "Even though that seems optimistic to say at this point, with people still dealing with the complexity of COVID and really what it's doing to different industries. But just, how the whole world has culturally shifted in so many ways: the way we communicate and work, the way we talk to each other - there's definitely a lot to talk about and tackle."

Travis Scott is sued by Astroworld security guards

Travis Scott is being sued for \$1 million by Astroworld security guards. The 30-year-old rapper - who has been subjected to multiple lawsuits in the wake of the tragedy, which saw hundreds injured and 10 dead after a crowd surge - has been hit by more legal action after Samuel and Jackson Bush claimed they have been left permanently scarred by what they witnessed at the event in Houston, Texas, on 5 November. According to documents obtained by TMZ, the pair - who were hired to work at the festival by AJ Melino and Associates - claimed 50,000 people had bought tickets but many more were in attendance, which contributed to the problem. Jackson told how he saw several lifeless bodies receiving CPR and even pulled a body from the crowd as thousands of fans surged towards the stage. As well as Travis, the security guards also want Live Nation, AJ Melino, Cactus Jack Records, and more, to be held accountable for the tragedy. Last week, a \$2 billion lawsuit was filed on behalf of 280 concertgoers, while many other fans have also lodged legal action. Travis was performing during the surge and his lawyer recently insisted the rapper "truly did not know what was going on" in the crowd until the following day. His attorney, Edwin F. McPherson, said: "Obviously was a systemic breakdown that we need to get to the bottom of before we start pointing fingers at anyone. "But clearly the important thing is that [the news] never got to Travis, it never got to Travis' crew. He's up there trying to perform: he does not have any ability to know what's going on down below, certainly on a mass level. "Travis didn't really understand the full effect of everything until the next morning. Truly he did not know what was going on. "Understand that when he's up on the stage and he has flashpots going off around him and he has an ear monitor that has music blasting through it and his own voice, he can't hear anything, he can't see anything." The news comes after Edwin previously accused law enforcement of making "inconsistent messages" about the tragedy. He added: "Houston Police Chief Troy Finner was quoted in the

New York Times as saying 'You cannot just close when you got 50,000 and over 50,000 individuals. We have to worry about rioting, riots, when you have a group that's that young.' "Yet, just a short time later, Chief Finner states the responsibility to stop the show falls on Travis." The chief said local officials didn't have the power to end the performance, insisting the "ultimate authority to end the show is with the production and the entertainer" - although he later said he didn't want to "point fingers" until the on-going investigation had concluded. But Travis' lawyer added: "It was reported that the Operations Plan designated that only the festival director and executive producers have authority to stop the show, neither of which is part of Travis' crew. "This also runs afoul of HPD's own previous actions when it



shut down the power and sound at this very festival when the performance ran over five minutes back in 2019. "Investigations should start proceeding over finger-pointing so that together, we can identify exactly what transpired and how we can prevent anything like this from happening again." Travis will play for the funerals of those who died, while he and his Cactus Jack Foundation are also teaming up with BetterHelp, an online portal providing mental health support, to offer free one-on-one virtual therapy sessions for anyone affected by the tragedy.

said: "In my memoir, I talk about how when I was a little kid, growing up with no money, growing up being mixed, not understanding, having identity issues, and then going through my career and the different things that have happened, that I never even talked about to even some of my best friends. "When I wrote about Christmas, I was like, 'Oh wait, I don't want to bring people down,' 'cause this seemed like depressing stuff that happened. "But that's the reason that it motivated me to really go all the way in every Christmas, every year. I just want my kids to have the best time, and honestly, a lot of it is for me." While Mariah is best known for her festive single 'All I Want for Christmas Is You', she admitted it wasn't always her favorite but she has grown to "love it" since it was first released in 1994. She told 'Entertainment Tonight': "I have to learn how to let myself live with mistakes I would have changed and stuff like that, but now I love it, it's part of my life. I feel like I grew up with it, and shared it with the world, and hopefully you will listen to it this year." And the 'Fantasy' hitmaker was taken aback when her record label first suggested she penned a Christmas track. She recalled: "When I wrote 'All I Want for Christmas Is You,' the label was like, 'OK, why don't you do a Christmas record?' And I'm like, 'Really, now?' Like, second album, two albums in. "And I was like, 'Well, I do love the holidays, let me try.' So, 'All I Want for Christmas Is You' is the first Christmas song I ever wrote, and then I worked on it with my then-writing partner, Walter A, and we just wanted to make it feel like a modern classic."

Carey explains Christmas obsession

Mariah Carey "goes all the way in" at Christmas because of her difficult upbringing. The 52-year-old star always wants her eight-year-old twins Moroccan and Monroe - who she has with ex-husband Nick Cannon - to have the "best time" over the festive season but admitted she's driven to make it a magical occasion because it helps her forget about the "depressing stuff" that's happened in her life. She



Dr Dre wanted his divorce to be 'classy and fair'

The music mogul split from Nicole Young in March 2020 after 24 years of marriage and despite his intentions for an amicable break-up, the 56-year-old producer cut off all communication with his former spouse after she "falsely" accused him of abusing her. According to a declaration filed in court by Dre - who is fighting Nicole's request for more than \$4 million to pay her legal fees - and obtained by RadarOnline.com, the 'I Need a Doctor' hitmaker told his ex-wife he wanted to keep things "classy and fair" and he "did not want to turn it into an expensive fight." And Dre's last text to Nicole, which was sent in early August 2020, ended with him saying: "Let's keep it friendly and peaceful. Over and Out. I love you." But days later, the 'Forget About Dre' rapper alleged Nicole falsely accused him of abuse during their marriage in legal documents. He stated: "This is a complete lie. Nicole is now also trying to get out of our Premarital Agreement by claiming that I supposedly forced her to sign the Premarital Agreement. This too is false." The pair have had no contact since, except in early January when Nicole voluntarily visited her former husband in hospital after he suffered a brain aneurysm. Dre's account of the visit is that Nicole hugged and kissed him and told him she loved him before leaving - but a few months later, the former lawyer filed for a domestic violence restraining order, which was denied by the court, and which he insisted there was no basis for. He wrote: "There were never any domestic violence claims made by Nicole before or during our marriage, formal or informal. At no time were the police ever called during our marriage. "I was present for Nicole's deposition. She testified that there are no witnesses to the alleged abuse and she admitted that she never told anyone, including her mother or siblings or other family or friends about any alleged abuse. There are no texts, no emails, no photographs, no videos, no police reports, no domestic violence filings, or other documents evidencing abuse and no witnesses to her offensive allegations. "After learning last August of Nicole's false accusations of abuse, I realized then that I did not know the woman I had married and loved." Dre explained this was why he has "not seen Nicole or communicated with her or spoken to her since August 2020 (except when she choose on her own to visit me when I was hospitalized)." The producer branded Nicole's allegations of abuse and claims he forced her to sign a pre-marital agreement "appalling". He added: "[They are] in my view nothing but an effort to attempt to obtain more money than that to which she is entitled and to what she agreed in our Premarital Agreement."



Charlotte McKinney attends the Stella McCartney "Get Back" Capsule Collection and documentary release of Peter Jackson's "Get Back" at The Jim Henson Company in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

Peter Jackson's 'Get Back' finds joy in final days of the Beatles

"The Beatles: Get Back," the eagerly awaited new Disney+ documentary from Peter Jackson, aims to dispel persistent myths about the Fab Four's breakup, offering a more positive take on their final months as a band. The three-part series finds John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr in January 1969, preparing for their first concert in more than two years. Using hours of unseen archive footage, it charts how the Beatles had set out to write and record 14 new songs for the occasion, giving themselves a deadline of just three weeks.

The time period is familiar territory for viewers of "Let It Be," the 1970 documentary from British director Michael Lindsay-Hogg that famously emphasized tensions and acrimony within the band, which split that same year. But Jackson - best known for his "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, and an avowed Beatles obsessive - does not dwell on arguments and creative disagreements among the Liverpool quartet. "Get Back" attempts to reshape the popular image of their later years as a time of resentment and fracture, instead showing the bandmates joking around and spontaneously creating classics that are still played regularly today.

"The best bit of us always has been, and always will be, when we're backs against the wall," says a young McCartney in the film, which hits Disney+ from Thursday. Jackson's series contains the Beatles' final public appearance together, a 40-minute concert on the roof of their company building on London's Savile Row - shown here for the first time ever in its entirety. That company - Apple Corps - granted Jackson some 60 hours of archival video that had remained under lock and key for decades.

"I think there's always been this misconception that my father was the cause of the Beatles breaking up, and he wasn't," McCartney's daughter Stella told AFP at a Los Angeles event for the series. "You can see it very clearly through this amazing insight of unseen footage." Her father remained "heartbroken" over the Beatles' breakup for "most of my life," as is clear from the series, she added. "You just see him desperately wanting to keep this alive and wanting to make this work and his brotherhood to stay intact." —AFP

CHINESE DAD MAKING MEDICINE TO TREAT HIS DYING SON



Photo shows Xu Wei feeding his son Xu Haoyang, who was diagnosed with Menkes syndrome, with honey water at home in Kunming in southwestern China's Yunnan province. —AFP photos



Xu Wei holding his son Xu Haoyang, after extracting urine from his bladder for testing at a hospital.



Xu Wei holding his son Xu Haoyang.



Xu Haoyang lying on his grandmother's shoulder.



Xu Wei pouring liquid nitrogen at his home laboratory in Kunming in southwestern China's Yunnan province.

Two-year-old Haoyang has likely just months to live—but the only medicine that can help his rare genetic condition is not found anywhere in China and closed borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic mean he cannot travel for treatment. Instead, his desperate father, Xu Wei, has created a home laboratory to create a remedy for the boy himself. "I didn't really have time to think about whether to do it or not. It had to be done," the 30-year-old told AFP from his DIY lab in a high-rise apartment building in southwestern Kunming. Haoyang has Menkes Syndrome, a genetic disorder that impacts how copper—which is crucial for brain and nervous system development—is processed in the body.

Sufferers rarely survive beyond the age of three. But Xu, who has only high school education and ran a small online business before his son became ill, is determined to give him a fighting chance. "Even though he cannot move or speak, he has a soul and feels emotions," he said, holding Haoyang in his lap to give him honey mixed in water. After being told the disease was incurable and the only medication that could help ease symptoms was not available in China, he began researching and teaching himself pharmaceuticals. "My friends and family were against it. They said it was impossible", he remembers.

Most online documents on Menkes Syndrome were in English, but undeterred Xu used translation software to understand them, before setting up a home lab in his father's gym. On discovering copper histidine could help, he set up the equipment to create it himself, mixing copper chloride dihydrate with histidine, sodium hydroxide and water.

Blocked by COVID

Xu now gives Haoyang a daily dose of home-made medicine, which gives the child some of the copper his body is missing. The amateur chemist claims that a few of the blood tests returned to nor-



Xu Wei moving medical equipment at his home laboratory.

mal two weeks after beginning the treatment. The toddler can't talk, but he gives a smile of recognition when his father runs a gentle hand over his head. His wife, who didn't want to give her name, cares for their five-year-old daughter in another part of the city. Menkes Syndrome is more prevalent in boys than girls, and it is estimated one in 100,000 babies are born with the disease globally according to organization Rare Diseases.

There is little information or data available but Xu said pharmaceutical companies have shown little interest as the treatment "does not have commercial value and its user group is small." Under normal circumstances, he would have travelled abroad to bring back treatments for Haoyang from specialist centers overseas, but China has largely closed its borders since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Xu felt he had no choice but to make it himself. "At first, I thought it was a joke," said Haoyang's grandfather Xu Jianhong. "(I thought) it was an impossible mission for him." But six weeks after throwing himself into the project, Xu produced his first vial of copper histidine.

To test it he first experimented with rabbits and



Xu Haoyang smiling as his father Xu Wei plays with him at home.

then injected the treatment into his own body. "The rabbits were fine, I was fine, so then I tried it on my son," he said. Reassured, he then started gradually increasing the dosage. But the medicine is not a cure. Professor Annick Toutain, specialist of rare diseases at the Tours University Hospital in France, said the copper treatment "is only efficient against certain genetic anomalies and if it is administered very early on, in the first three weeks of life." She said that after that the treatment will alleviate symptoms, "without leading to recovery." Xu has accepted that it can "only slow down the disease".

Gene therapy

His work has led to interest from VectorBuilder, an international biotech lab, who are now launching gene therapy research with Xu into Menkes syndrome. The company's chief scientist Bruce Lahn described it as "a rare disease among rare diseases" and said they were inspired after learning about Xu's family. Clinical trials and tests on animals are planned for the next few months. Xu has even been contacted by other parents whose children have



Xu Wei pouring liquid nitrogen at his home laboratory.

been diagnosed with Menkes, asking him to make treatment for their relatives too—something he has refused. "I can only be responsible for my child," he told AFP, while health authorities have said they will not intervene as long as he only makes the treatment for home use.

Huang Yu of the Medical Genetics Department at Peking University told AFP that as a doctor he was "ashamed" to hear of Xu's case. He said he hoped that "as a developing country, we can improve our medical system to better help such families." With a full-time role as an amateur chemist, Xu has little income and relies mainly on his parents. Friends tried to talk him out of his medical efforts but undeterred, the young father is planning to study molecular biology at university and do everything he can to protect his son. "I don't want him to wait desperately for death. Even if we fail, I want my son to have hope." —AFP

Doomed 'Dune' storyboards sell for 2.7million euros

The storyboards for the doomed 1970s film version of sci-fi classic "Dune" sold for 2.66 million euros (\$3 million) at auction on Monday, around 100 times the expected price. Long considered a mythical object by sci-fi fans, the notebook of drawings for the film by Franco-Chilean director Alejandro Jodorowsky triggered a bidding war at Christie's in Paris. The film project was supposed to bring together some major stars of the period including Salvador Dali, Mick Jagger and Pink Floyd—but fell apart after four years of preparation due to lack of funding.

The auction went down to two determined bidders, with an American eventually emerging victorious. Christie's admitted their initial valuation for the drawings—between 25,000 and 35,000 euros—had failed to account for the spike in interest

triggered by the new version of the film starring Timothee Chalamet, that has topped box offices around the world in recent months. The drawings are collected in one large notebook, and were made by celebrated French graphic novelist Moebius (alias Jean Giraud, who died in 2012) and Swiss illustrator Giger, who went on to design the movie "Alien" in 1979 and died in 2014.

As well as Dali and Jagger, the tumultuous Dune project was also due to feature veteran Hollywood legends Orson Welles and Gloria Swanson in the cast, with Pink Floyd among the bands approached for the soundtrack. Its infamous collapse was retold in the 2013 documentary "Jodorowsky's Dune". The brainchild of author Frank Herbert, the novel "Dune" was first published in 1965 and became a six-volume space opera of

massive influence, not least on the "Star Wars" franchise. Following the latter's blockbuster box office success, Hollywood took renewed interest in "Dune" in the early 1980s.

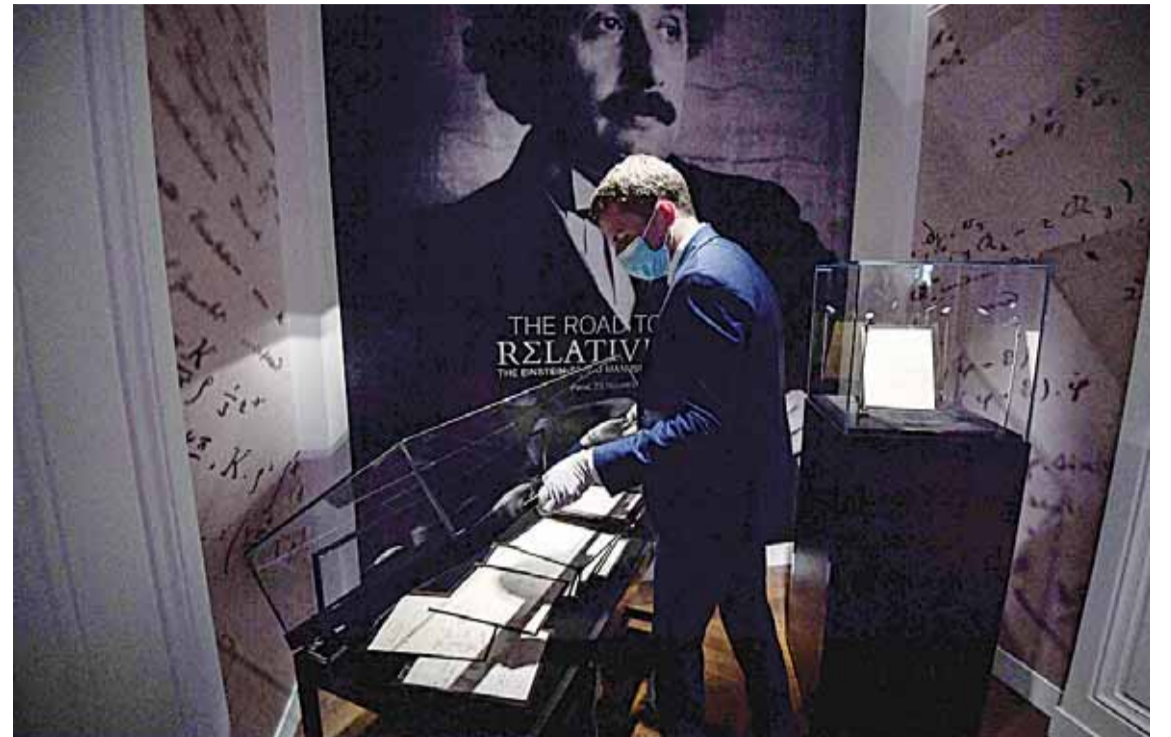
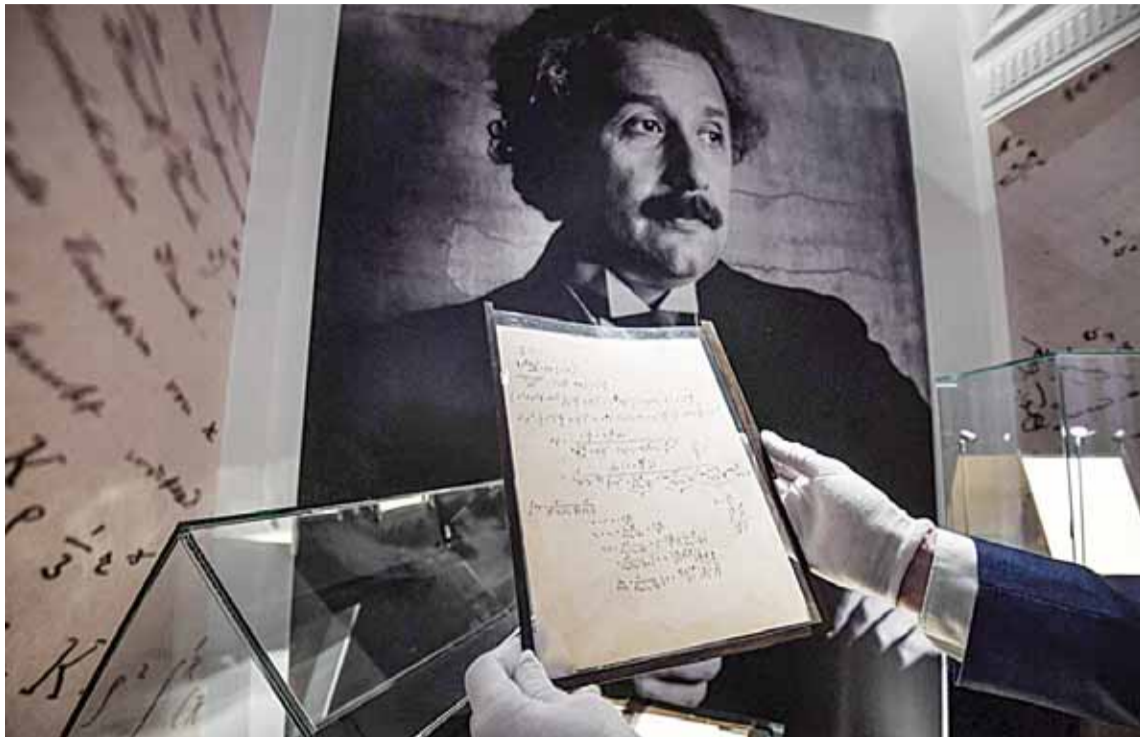
That led to David Lynch's version, released in 1984 with a cast including British musician Sting and Patrick Stewart of "Star Trek: Next Generation". But that Dune movie had its own troubles and became one of the decade's biggest flops. Jodorowsky's storyboards were said to have influenced later hits of the genre including "Blade Runner". "We know of several other copies: one was offered for auction several years ago, another is in Jodorowsky's possession... A third has been partially reproduced online," said Christie's. It said around 10 to 20 copies were produced, though it was hard to be certain. —AFP



One of the ten Alejandro Jodorowsky's epic 1970 Dune storyboard copies is displayed to the public three days before an auction at Christie's Paris gallery. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

RARE EINSTEIN MANUSCRIPT SET TO FETCH MILLIONS



These pictures show pages of one of the preparatory manuscript to the theory of general relativity of Albert Einstein, during their presentation a day before being auctioned at Christie's auction house in Paris. —AFP photos

Albert Einstein's handwritten notes for the theory of relativity are being auctioned in Paris yesterday, expected to fetch millions of euros. "This is without a doubt the most valuable Einstein manuscript ever to come to auction," said Christie's, which is hosting the sale on behalf of the Aguttes auction house. The manuscript contains preparatory work for the physicist's signature achievement, the theory of general relativity, which he published in 1915. Christie's expects it to reach between two and three million euros (\$2.3 million to 3.4 million).

The 54-page document was handwritten in 1913

and 1914 in Zurich, Switzerland, by Einstein and his colleague and confidant, Swiss engineer Michele Besso. Christie's said it was thanks to Besso that the manuscript was preserved for posterity. This was "almost like a miracle" since the German-born genius himself would have been unlikely to hold on to what he considered to be a simple working document, Christie's said. Today, the paper offers "a fascinating plunge into the mind of the 20th century's greatest scientist", it said. It discusses his theory of general relativity, building on his theory of special relativity from 1905 that was encapsulated in the

famous equation $E=mc^2$.

Einstein died in 1955 aged 76, lauded as one of the greatest theoretical physicists of all time. His theories of relativity revolutionized his field by introducing new ways of looking at the movement of objects in space and time. In 1913, Besso and Einstein "attacked one of the problems that had been troubling the scientific community for decades: the anomaly of the planet Mercury's orbit," Christie's said. This initial manuscript contains "a certain number of unnoticed errors", it added. Once Einstein spotted them, he let the paper

drop, and it was taken away by Besso.

"Scientific documents by Einstein in this period, and before 1919 generally, are extremely rare," Christie's added. "Being one of only two working manuscripts documenting the genesis of the theory of general relativity that we know about, it is an extraordinary witness to Einstein's work." Einstein also made major contributions to quantum mechanics theory and won the Nobel physics prize in 1921. He also became a pop culture icon thanks to his dry witticisms, and trademark unruly hair, moustache and bushy eyebrows. —AFP



In this file photo actor Kevin Spacey attends the BAFTA LA TV Tea 2013 presented by BBC America and Audi held at the SLS Hotel Beverly Hills, California. —AFP

Kevin Spacey to pay \$31mn after losing arbitration case

Disgraced US movie star Kevin Spacey will have to pay almost \$31 million to the production company that made the series "House of Cards" in which he starred until he was fired over allegations of sexual harassment, according to legal documents made public Monday. MRC, the production company that made the popular tale of political intrigue that was broadcast on Netflix, had sought damages for lost revenue attributed to Spacey's abrupt exit after allegations of harassment and sexual abuse emerged. An arbitration judge made the ruling on October 19 when MRC filed a petition to confirm the verdict in a Los Angeles court.

In the document, MRC detailed that after the allegations came to light it suspended Spacey and launched an investigation which found that the "American Beauty" star had "breached provisions of both the Acting and Executive Producing Agreements that set standards for his workplace conduct, including by breaching MRC's Harassment Policy." The wave of accusations that halted the 62-year-old's illustrious career coincided with the rise of the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and abuse, sparked by the case of the all-powerful Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

Two-time Oscar winner Spacey had starred as unscrupulous US politician Frank Underwood in five seasons of "House of Cards" until the allegations of sexual harassment against co-workers were made public in the media. "MRC had no knowledge whatsoever of any such conduct by Spacey with any cast or crew associated with the Show," the company said in its petition. The production company said the actor's abrupt exit from the popular series required a reorganization that resulted in "substantial losses" for MRC. It had to rewrite the script excluding Underwood, the main character of the series, and redesign the sixth season that went from 13 to eight episodes. The production company launched its legal battle against Spacey in 2019. The actor's legal representatives did not respond to an AFP request for comment. —AFP

French Netflix show 'Call My Agent' nets International Emmy

French showbiz comedy 'Call My Agent' won an award at the International Emmy's Monday after riding a wave of popularity on the global streaming giant Netflix. Launched in France in 2015 under the title "Ten Percent," the show has become an international hit as "Call My Agent," charting the ups and downs of the lives of actors and their agents in Paris. The International Emmy for best comedy was awarded to the fourth season of the show, which began as an idea by former agent Dominique Besnehard.

The writers and producers were in New York for the awards, which are given to the best television shows produced outside of the United States. On the red carpet in New York, producer Michel Feller admitted that "the Netflix broadcast of the four seasons has allowed us, with a production that we could say is local, to be seen in more than 200 territories".

"Today there are almost 20 remakes that have either been signed, are in production or have been filmed," in countries as diverse as Canada and India, he said. —AFP



In this file photo commuters drive past a poster of late Indian film star Puneeth Rajkumar in Bangalore. —AFP photos

Film star's death sets India's sights on eye donations

Mourning fans of beloved Indian film star Puneeth Rajkumar are pledging to give up their eyes after the actor's untimely death brought his post-mortem organ donation into focus. The "Powerstar"—so named for his boisterous action roles—died of a heart attack in Bangalore last month at 46, with thousands of grief-stricken admirers thronging the city's streets to hug, cry and commiserate. News reports in the days following revealed that Rajkumar had willed the donation of his eyes, with enough ocular tissue salvaged to restore sight for four people.

The tradition runs in the actor's family—both his parents made the same pledge before their deaths—and doctors say the example has now been taken up in earnest around Bangalore. "He sort of reminded people that you should donate eyes... instead of burning or burying them," Rekha Gyanchand, medical director at the Lions International Eye Bank, told AFP. "We see a lot of people coming forward to donate," she added. "The awareness has really increased." At the nearby Narayana Nethralaya hospital, vinyl posters and pamphlets showed Rajkumar's smiling visage, along with a message urging prospective donors to give the gift of sight.

A queue of young men waited in front of a trestle to speak to staff and fill in pledge forms. More than 7,000 members of the public have committed themselves to post-mortem eye donations since Rajkumar's death, said the clinic's managing director K. Bhujang Shetty. "In the days after

Puneeth passed away, we have had 112 eyes collected" from the recently deceased after relatives agreed to transplants, he added.

'Somebody will benefit'

Among those donating was Subramani, a driver who lost work after his vision deteriorated but received a transplant just two weeks ago. He was offering the eyes of his recently deceased brother. "We didn't want to waste his eyes, and would like to donate them to someone like the person who donated eyes to me," he told AFP. Rajkumar first made a name for himself as a child actor and went on to star in around 30 films, with his debut action-comedy flick "Appu" being one of the biggest hits. He had established himself as one of the most recognizable stars of the Kannada-language film industry centered on Bangalore, better known to the world as India's main tech hub. News of his death sent the city into shock, with a crowd chasing the ambulance carrying his body from the hospital, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing the loss as a "cruel twist of fate". Rajkumar is survived by his wife Ashwini Revanth and two children, along with the fanatical devotion of his fans.

Among them was Bangalore housewife Uma Aravind Kumar, who resolved to donate her own eyes. "After the (example) of Puneeth, our son pledged his eyes without our knowledge," she told AFP. "I liked it and I wanted to donate too. Somebody will benefit from this." —AFP



Narayana Nethralaya Eye Hospital employees help volunteers fill eye donation pledge forms during an event organized in memory of late Indian film actor Puneeth Rajkumar.

JK Rowling reveals death threats over transgender row



"Harry Potter" author JK Rowling said Monday she had received a flood of death threats, as she slammed three transgender rights activists who posted her home address on Twitter. Rowling thanked police in Scotland for their support after the activists tweeted a photograph of them standing outside Rowling's home in Edinburgh, with the address visible, on Friday. Rowling said that she and other women who have spoken out on gender issues had faced "campaigns of intimidation", stalking and harassment, but vowed she would not be silenced.

The 56-year-old writer said she had received "so many death threats I could paper the house with them", and that "families have been put into a state of fear and distress" by transgender activists. "Perhaps... the best way to prove your movement isn't a threat to women, is to stop stalking, harassing and threatening us." A Police Scotland spokesperson said the force was "aware of this incident"

and that enquiries were "ongoing". All three activists had shut down their Twitter accounts by Monday.

Rowling has been involved in a simmering row with the transgender community over her belief that women's sex-based rights should be protected. The dispute began around two years ago when the author tweeted against use of the phrase "people who menstruate", rather than only women. The message caused a rift with some of the stars of the "Harry Potter" movies, including lead actor Daniel Radcliffe, who tweeted an apology on her behalf. "Transgender women are women," Radcliffe wrote in a post. In her posts Monday, Rowling said she had been "appalled" to hear from various women who had spoken out on transgender issues, including those with no public profile, and suffered abuse including threats of rape. "None of these women are protected in the way I am," she said, attacking the "socio-political concept of gender identity" as opposed to biological sex. —AFP

Sports

Philippines presidential hopeful Pacquiao says he was 'naive' drug user

'PacMan' high-profile backer of Duterte's war on drugs

MANILA: Philippines presidential hopeful Manny Pacquiao says he was "naive" and ignorant of the law when he took crystal meth in his youth, but argues offenders today know drugs are illegal and should be punished. Pacquiao, a retired world champion boxer, has been a high-profile backer of President Rodrigo Duterte's brutal war on drugs that has killed thousands of people.

But in the lead up to the 2022 elections, Pacquiao has sought to distance himself from the outgoing Duterte, who is facing an international probe into his bloody crackdown, and now says offenders should have a "chance to defend themselves".

"We have to put in jail those who are using drugs, selling drugs — that's what the law says," he told AFP, vowing to continue the anti-narcotics campaign "in the right way". "Before, I'm naive, that's why I use drugs... I don't know the law," said Pacquiao, 42, who currently holds a seat in the Senate and previously served two terms in Congress. Nowadays, "people, they know already that the law is not allowing the illegal drugs."

Pacquiao shocked the sporting world in 2016 when he admitted using marijuana and shabu, the local name for cheap and highly addictive crystal meth, as a teenager. Known for his rags-to-riches rise from street kid to one of the greatest pound-for-pound boxers of all time, Pacquiao has made fighting drugs, corruption and poverty key themes of his campaign to succeed Duterte.

'Man of Destiny'

While victory for Pacquiao is not unrealistic in a country famed for its celebrity-obsessed politics, he faces a tough fight. A leaked survey conducted in October by respected polling outfit Social Weather Stations reportedly showed Pacquiao in fourth place with just nine percent of voter support.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the son and namesake of the nation's former dictator, was the top preference for president with 47 percent. He was followed by incumbent vice president and leading opposition candidate Leni Robredo (18 percent) and celebrity mayor Francisco Domagoso (13 percent). Sitting in front of a teleprompter in his luxury mansion in the capital Manila, Pacquiao dismissed his poor showing and insisted his "Man of Destiny" campaign for the top job would go on.

"I'm not thinking about backing out," he said, as a bevy of staff hovered around his home in a secured enclave of billionaires and foreign ambassadors. "The people will choose... I know that the people want change in this country, they want to stop this corruption, they want to have a prosperous country and they want jobs."

Fans in the poverty-afflicted nation see the former boxer as living proof that success is possible for anyone who works hard, no matter their origins. But as a politician and fervent evangelical Christian, Pacquiao has stirred controversy with his support for Duterte's drug war and push to restore the death penalty, as well as his admission of past drug use, and previous homophobic comments.

Critics accuse the high-school dropout of lacking intellect and barely turning up to sessions in Congress and the Senate, raising questions about his ability to run the country of 110 million people. And he risked political capital this year in a public falling out with Duterte, who rivals Pacquiao for the affections of many Filipinos.

"He might be popular with the masses, but so are some of these other candidates," said Ted Lerner, a US-born sports journalist in the Philippines, predicting a return to the ring for the boxing great. "Just look at the surveys — it doesn't bode well at all for him."



A comeback is not on the cards



MANILA: In this photo taken on November 11, 2021, Philippine Senator Manny Pacquiao looks at a chessboard after an interview at his residence in Manila. —AFP

'I'm done'

Whoever wins the presidency may have to grapple with an International Criminal Court investigation into Duterte's drug war, which rights groups estimate has killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men. Duterte, who yanked Manila out of the ICC after it launched a preliminary probe into his deadly signature policy, has insisted it has no jurisdiction in the Philippines and he would not cooperate.

Asked if he would protect Duterte from prosecution if elected president, Pacquiao said he would "obey" the law, and was adamant that the Southeast Asian nation was still a member of the ICC. A glittering decades-long career in the ring brought Pacquiao fame and fortune — as well as the vices of booze, gambling and infidelity that

nearly wrecked his marriage before he found religion.

Two months after hanging up his gloves, Pacquiao said a comeback was not on the cards — even if he lost the election. "I'm already turning 43 years old, so it's enough for me, I'm done," said the father of five. Pacquiao has served as a celebrity endorser for products ranging from appliances to pizza and cars, hosted TV shows, and even founded his own cryptocurrency, the "PAC Token".

If his presidential bid fails, he plans to add farmer to his CV, growing fruit on a 20-hectare (50-acre) property in the southern province of Sarangani. "It's also quiet (there), I like that," he said, before opening his smartphone and playing a country music ballad. —AFP

News in brief

Oceania athletes at Asian Games

HONG KONG: Athletes from Oceania — including sporting powerhouse Australia — will compete in athletics and four other sports when the region takes part at the Asian Games for the first time, the Olympic Council of Asia said. About 300 athletes from Oceania will be able to compete in triathlon, wushu, roller-skating, weightlifting and athletics at the multi-sport extravaganza next September in Hangzhou, China. "Oceania will be taking part for the first time at the Asian Games," director general Husain Al-Musallam told an OCA meeting in Dubai, according to a press release. "They will receive honorary medals (if they are in the top three) and it will not be counted in the final medals tally." Oceania — Australia, New Zealand and a swathe of Pacific islands — have not taken part in the regional Olympics before, but sporting ties with Asia have been growing. The 2022 Asian Games will see 10,000 athletes compete in 40 sports across 55 venues, with eSports making its debut as an official medal event.

Key shooting tourney underway

KUWAIT: The late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Shooting Tournament kicks off tomorrow with men's and women's competitions in 10m air pistol and rifle and Olympic archery. Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi said the tournament, which runs through Saturday, has a special importance for the shooting community, noting that Kuwait Shooting Sport Club "is keen on having this tournament on its annual local agenda as it enjoys large participation of shooters in Kuwait." "The tournament is a good opportunity for our national teams to prepare for international competitions, mainly the third Gulf Games" which take place in Kuwait on January 9-19, 2022, he said. Osaimi, on behalf of the board of directors and shooting community, thanked the family of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah for their continued support.

Barty gets engaged

SYDNEY: Ashleigh Barty capped her third straight season as world number one yesterday by announcing she is engaged to long-term boyfriend Garry Kissick. The Australian revealed the happy news in an Instagram post, sharing a photo of the smiling couple embracing with an engagement ring on her finger. "Future husband," wrote Barty, 25, who accompanied the post with a love heart and ring emoji. Kissick, 30, is a former golf pro and the pair met on a course in Barty's home state of Queensland in 2016. The news sparked a frenzy of congratulations from fellow tennis stars, with Simona Halep posting 10 love heart emojis. Reigning Wimbledon champion Barty pulled out of the season-ending WTA Finals to remain at home and focus on preparing for the Australian summer.

Corruption blights Kenya's quest for football glory

NAIROBI: When a youthful Nick Mwendwa took over the reins of Kenyan football five years ago, he was welcomed as a new broom who would clean up the troubled sport — but now he himself stands accused of corruption.

The game was plunged into further turmoil this month when the government disbanded the Football Kenya Federation (FKF) for alleged embezzlement of public funds, and appointed a caretaker committee headed by a retired judge to run its affairs.

FKF boss Mwendwa, 42, was arrested at a Nairobi hotel and hauled into court to face allegations of financial impropriety, and has since been banned from the federation's headquarters and all football activities. Sports Minister Amina Mohamed spoke of an "extended deterioration in the state of football management in Kenya" as she accused the FKF of failing to account for millions of dollars from the government and sponsors.

Mwendwa, who is also the owner of top-flight league club the Kariobangi Sharks, has denied any wrongdoing. But former FKF secretary general Lordvick Aduda said the current state of affairs was no surprise as there has been a "systematic drain" of leadership at the football governing body.

"We are at our lowest ebb. We are lowest in respect to performance, funding and management," Aduda told AFP. World-renowned as an athletics powerhouse, Kenya has long struggled to replicate its success on the track in the most popular game on the planet.

Gold-plated trophy

Mwendwa was first elected FKF head in 2016 after campaigning on an ambitious "team change" agenda, pledging a series of swift and sweeping actions to



NAIROBI: Nick Mwendwa, President of Football Kenya Federation (FKF), reacts as he arrives at Milimani Law Courts in Nairobi on November 15, 2021. —AFP

address the challenges he inherited. His forerunner Sam Nyanweya's two-decade rule was dogged by claims of corruption and mismanagement, highlighted by an embarrassing incident in 2018 when the national team was stranded at an airport before a World Cup qualifier because of a lack of funds.

"We will make sure that everything is functioning right from the grassroots," Mwendwa said after his election, vowing to make Kenya a "great football nation". But those dreams of glory failed to materialize, leaving Kenyan football in a dismal state. Mwendwa's tenure has been marred by the same sort of allegations of malpractice that peppered his predecessor's rule, while on the pitch Kenya's national team the Harambee Stars have failed to shine.

Earlier this year, Mwendwa was put on the spot over his decision to buy a 24-carat gold-plated trophy worth more than \$50,000 for the premier league champions — while the team that won the women's league pocketed a paltry 300,000 Kenyan shillings (less than \$2,700).

Football's world governing body FIFA has now threatened to ban Kenya if it considers the government action against the FKF unwarranted third-party



MELBOURNE: This file photo taken on January 13, 2019 shows China's Peng Shuai serving the ball during a practice session ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. —AFP

comment was the most direct response from the Chinese government to Peng's case. Until yesterday, Beijing had repeatedly brushed off questions about her whereabouts and welfare — calling them "not a diplomatic issue". Evidence of her claims have also been scrubbed from China's highly censored Internet. The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) has threatened to end lucrative contracts with China unless it gets word of Peng's safety.

meddling. Kenya has twice faced such bans in 2004 and 2006 because of government interference — coincidentally while the federation was also fighting claims of corruption.

'Good money after bad'

Aduda voiced doubt that the caretaker committee, which is in charge of the FKF until elections in about six months' time, would improve the sport's fortunes. "Nobody is going to throw good money after bad," said Aduda, who lost out to Mwendwa when he was re-elected as FKF boss in 2020.

Kenya failed to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations finals in Cameroon in January and are also out of the running for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar — qualification was one of Mwendwa's much-vaunted pledges. The team are currently ranked a lowly 104 by FIFA — below even the Democratic Republic of Congo — and have not been in the top 100 since 2017. Poor management, cancelled sponsorship deals, ageing players and a revolving door of coaches — seven since 2016 — have been blamed for their uninspiring performances. Adding insult to injury, the Confederation of African Football last month said Kenya's two main stadiums were not up to international standards.

But problems also run deep at local level — unpaid club salaries, contract violations and poorly run championships. There are few incentives for youngsters, with a lack of structured training programs or decent pitches outside the capital, so many give up football before secondary school age.

"The state of football in Kenya is not encouraging," lamented Bob Oyugi, a former coach with Kenya's most successful club Gor Mahia. He has called for the FKF's constitution to be overhauled to enable more grassroots involvement.

Former Kenya skipper Musa Otieno blamed the poor standards on the endemic graft that has left players unpaid and drained money away from efforts to develop the game. "Once elected, the officials forget the mandate that brought them to power. They put their interests ahead of sport," Otieno told AFP. "The people who will struggle are the players." —AFP

IOC call & criticism

Peng appeared in a 30-minute video call with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) chief on Sunday. The organization said in a statement that during the call, "Peng Shuai thanked the IOC for its concern about her well-being."

"She explained that she is safe and well, living at her home in Beijing, but would like to have her privacy respected at this time," it said. Earlier Sunday, Peng was seen attending a Beijing tennis tournament, in official photos of the event. But human rights groups and sporting authorities overseas have continued to voice concern about Peng and whether local authorities will act on her allegations.

"This video does not change our call for a full, fair and transparent investigation, without censorship, into her allegation of sexual assault, which is the issue that gave rise to our initial concern," the WTA said, when asked about the IOC call. Human Rights Watch also slammed the IOC and called for them to explain how the video call with Peng had been organized. "The IOC has vaulted itself from silence about Beijing's abysmal human rights record to active collaboration with Chinese authorities in undermining freedom of speech and disregarding alleged sexual assault," said Yaqiu Wang, senior China researcher at Human Rights Watch. —AFP

Sports

Durant powers Nets to top in East as Bulls flop

Hornets sting Wizards; Bucks too much for Magic

NEW YORK: Kevin Durant scored 27 points as the Brooklyn Nets defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers on the road to claim top spot in the Eastern Conference on Monday while the Chicago Bulls suffered a surprise reverse against the Indiana Pacers.

Durant's points tally included a perfect 10-from-10 free throws while the Nets star also chipped in with six rebounds, nine assists and three blocks as Brooklyn overturned a 12-point third quarter deficit to claim a third straight win.

LaMarcus Aldridge backed Durant with 21 points and 11 rebounds while Patty Mills had 17 points and James Harden 14. The win gave Brooklyn sole ownership of the Eastern Conference table with 13 wins against five defeats. Nets coach Steve Nash expressed satisfaction at how his team had clawed their way back into the contest in the second half.

"They find themselves in a hole and they're proud guys and they respond, and that's the most important thing," Nash said. "They responded tonight. We kind of shut them down in the second half. That's what we told them — we have to win this game on defense. And they did it. The spirit was not great in the first half but it was exceptional in the second half. The defense led to the offense."

Nash also singled out Japanese-born 2021 draft pick Cam Thomas for praise. The 20-year-old stepped up with 11 points including two three-

pointers to help the second-half fightback. "Cam was great," Nash said. "He stepped up with confidence to take shots. He's a kid who has a bright future. Tonight he really hung in there. Made some big shots and stepped up defensively. I was proud of him."

Durant was also impressed by Thomas's cameo. "He gave us the boost we needed - somebody who can score off the dribble and off the catch like that," Durant said. "They obviously left him off the scouting report — they left him open and he made plays."

In Chicago, the Bulls were handed a surprisingly one-sided beatdown to lose ground on the Nets at the top of the East, slumping 109-77 against the Pacers. Domantas Sabonis led the Pacers scorers with 21 points while Malcolm Brogdon had 16 points and Justin Holiday 14. Myles Turner and Caris LeVert finished with 12 points apiece. The Bulls meanwhile finished with only two players in double digits, DeMar DeRozan adding 18 and Zach LaVine 17, as the Pacers defense dominated.

"There is a standard and an expectation we try to play to and certainly tonight was not that," Bulls head coach Billy Donovan said. "How we learn from this is really important. Over an 82-game schedule, nights like this happen. If it catapults going forward to make us better, then great. If it doesn't then it's a wasted opportunity."

In Washington, the Wizards were downed 109-



CLEVELAND: Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets drives on Lauri Markkanen #24 of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the first half at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse on Monday in Cleveland, Ohio. —AFP

103 by the Charlotte Hornets, who were sparked by a 32-point display from Terry Rozier and 28 points from LaMelo Ball. Gordon Hayward added 16 points. Montrezl Harrell led the Wizards scoring with 24 off the bench, while starter Bradley Beal had 18 points for Washington.

In Milwaukee, the Bucks produced a superb all-round offensive effort to blitz the Orlando Magic 123-92. Victory was never in doubt for Milwaukee after a franchise record first-half performance that saw them race into a 77-36 lead at the break — the largest halftime lead in Bucks history. —AFP



Third straight win for Brooklyn

Brady halts Tampa losing streak as Giants stumble

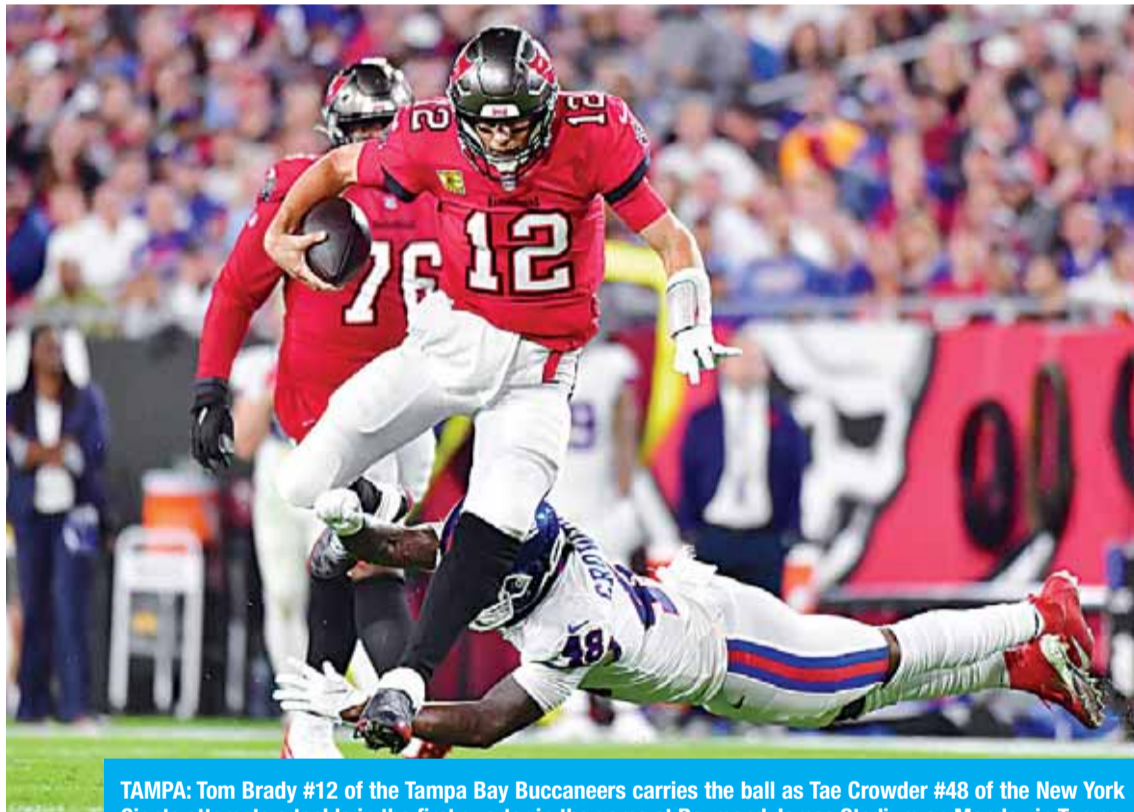
MIAMI: Tom Brady threw for two touchdowns and 307 yards as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers halted their two-game losing streak with a 30-10 defeat of the New York Giants on Monday. The reigning Super Bowl champions had been left reeling after back-to-back defeats to Washington and New Orleans in recent weeks, but got back to winning ways with a comfortable home win at Raymond James Stadium.

The Bucs' task was made easier after an erratic display from Giants quarterback Daniel Jones, who tossed for just 167 yards and gave up two interceptions. Jones was also sacked twice as the Giants fell to 3-7 to remain rooted to the foot of the NFC East. "Losing two straight really sucks in the NFL, just glad it's not three straight," said Brady, who was buoyed by the return of favorite receiving target Rob Gronkowski.

Gronkowski had not played since injuring his ribs in a loss to the Los Angeles Rams in week three. "He's amazing in every way — as a player, team-mate, leader, friend. Love being out there with him and he really sets the tone for that group. He had a great night."

"We executed a little bit better, but still left a few scores out there I thought. But overall it's a good win for our team," said Brady, who admitted he had been bothered by the Bucs' losing streak over the past month.

"A lot of bad nights sleep. But that's part of just playing football — every year has its different challenges and you've seen this year a lot



TAMPA: Tom Brady #12 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers carries the ball as Tae Crowder #48 of the New York Giants attempts a tackle in the first quarter in the game at Raymond James Stadium on Monday in Tampa, Florida. —AFP

of crazy things happen. An old coach of mine used to say 'It's not who you play, it's how you play when you play them'. We've played some good teams that are playing well, and we've got another tough one coming up on Sunday."

Brady had tossed the first of his two touchdowns in the opening quarter, finding Chris Godwin who jinked over to cap an eight-play, 73-yard drive. Giants kicker Graham Gano and Bucs counterpart Ryan Succop traded field goals to make it 10-3 Tampa early in the second

quarter, but a freak interception then gifted New York great field position to set up a touchdown pass from Jones to Andrew Thomas.

That made it 10-10, but the Bucs responded swiftly with Ronald Jones rushing over to restore Tampa Bay's lead just before half-time. Mike Evans gathered a touchdown pass from Brady to make it 24-10 midway through the third quarter before two more Succop field goals completed the Tampa Bay scoring. —AFP

Dortmund without Haaland, Hummels in Lisbon showdown

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund will be without both Mats Hummels and Erling Haaland when they head to Portugal for tonight's potential Champions League Group C decider against Sporting Lisbon. Level on points with two games to play in the group stage, Sporting and Dortmund meet today in a clash which could decide which of them joins group leaders Ajax in the knockout stages.

Yet Dortmund will be deprived of two of their best players in Hummels and Haaland as they look to steer their Champions League campaign back on course after back-to-back defeats. Veteran defender Hummels is suspended after he was controversially sent off in Dortmund's 3-1 defeat to Ajax three weeks ago. The club had said they would appeal the red card, but coach Marco Rose admitted last week that he did not expect the 2014 World Cup winner to be available. "We all know that Mats is suspended in Lisbon," he said, and hinted that Dan-Axel Zagadou could take his place in central defense.

Haaland, meanwhile, has been out for the last four weeks with a hip injury. Dortmund are hoping the Norwegian striker, who has nine goals in just six league appearances this season, will return to action in time for their top-of-the-table clash with Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich on December 4. Rose's side head to Lisbon in good



ALCOCHETE: Sporting Lisbon's Portuguese coach Ruben Amorim (center) speaks with his players during a training session at Cristiano Ronaldo Academy training ground in Alcochete near Lisbon yesterday, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League, Group C, football match against Borussia Dortmund. —AFP

spirits, having moved to within a point of Bayern with a narrow win over Stuttgart at the weekend. Sporting have had longer to recover since their 2-1 cup win over Varzim last Thursday.

The victory was their ninth in a row in all competitions, a run which goes back to their last meeting with Dortmund, a 1-0 defeat in

Germany in September. Donyell Malen, who scored the winner for Dortmund in that game, is likely to lead the line again tonight in Haaland's absence. The 22-year-old Dutch talent is in good form, having netted his first Bundesliga goal with a blistering strike against Stuttgart on Saturday. —AFP

News in brief

LeBron suspended one game

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James has been suspended for one game following his bloody clash with Detroit Pistons player Isaiah Stewart, the NBA said Monday. Los Angeles Lakers star James was ejected for only the second time in his career after wildly lashing out at Stewart during Sunday's victory over the Pistons. Stewart was left with blood pouring from a facial injury following the flashpoint, and needed to be restrained repeatedly by team-mates and staff as he attempted to confront James. The 20-year-old Stewart was given a two-game suspension for his part in the altercation. The NBA said Stewart had been given a two-game ban for "escalating an on-court altercation by repeatedly and aggressively pursuing (James) in an unsportsmanlike manner." James' suspension was for "recklessly hitting Stewart in the face and initiating an on-court altercation."

Ramos poised for PSG debut

PARIS: Spanish great Sergio Ramos could make his long-awaited first appearance for Paris Saint Germain in tonight's Champions League group match with Manchester City. The 35-year-old defender has not played for the French side since joining from his long-time club Real Madrid in July due to a recurring problem with a calf muscle. Ramos is likely to be on the bench for the clash between the top two in the group with Marquinhos and Presnel Kimpembe starting in central defense. Ramos arrived at PSG with a glittering CV, having won the 2010 World Cup, two European Championships and four Champions League trophies with Real. City top the group on nine points, a point clear of PSG with Belgian outfit Club Brugge four points further adrift with two matches remaining.

Lyon to play behind closed doors

PARIS: Lyon were on Monday ordered to play home games until at least December 8 behind closed doors after their Ligue 1 fixture against Marseille on the weekend was abandoned after Dimitri Payet was hit in the head by a bottle. The Marseille captain required treatment after being struck on the side of the head as he prepared to take a corner for the visitors in the fifth minute of Sunday's match at Lyon's Parc OL stadium, prompting both teams to return to the changing rooms. Payet, who did not train on Monday, has lodged a complaint with the Lyon public prosecutor investigating the incident, a Marseille club official told AFP. "He was very scared and he's fed up," the official said.

Lewandowski, Benzema nominated for FIFA's Best award

LAUSANNE: Robert Lewandowski is in the running to retain his Best FIFA Men's Player award after he was named Monday on an 11-man shortlist alongside Karim Benzema and Jorginho. Perennial candidates Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo feature among the nominees, with Neymar, Mohamed Salah and Kylian Mbappe also up for a prize first awarded in 2017. Erling Haaland, N'Golo Kante and Kevin De Bruyne complete the list of potential winners.

Four Barcelona players are included on the women's best player shortlist - Alexia Putellas, Jennifer Hermoso, Aitana Bonmati and Caroline Graham Hansen. Chelsea, beaten by Barcelona in last season's Women's Champions League final, also have four representatives with Sam Kerr, Ji So-yun, Magdalena Eriksson and Pernille Harder. Lucy Bronze, who took home last year's award, was nominated with fellow England international Ellen White. —AFP



RIYADH: Hilal's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the AFC Champions League final football match against South Korea's Pohang Steelers yesterday. — AFP

Al Hilal win Asian Champions League

Saudi giants beat Pohang Steelers 2-0

RIYADH: Saudi giants Al Hilal won the Asian Champions League with a 2-0 victory over South Korea's Pohang Steelers in the final yesterday. Both teams were aiming for an unprecedented fourth title but it was the hosts who made history with Nasser Al-Dawsari and Moussa Marega on target either side of the break at the King Fahd International Stadium in the Saudi capital.

A breathtaking history-making Nasser Al-Dawsari goal after just 16 seconds of the AFC Champions League final set Al-Hilal on their way to a deserved 2-0 win over Pohang Steelers and a record fourth continental title at Riyadh's King Fahd International Stadium yesterday.

The 22 year-old's early breakthrough was record-breaking in another sense as it was the fastest that the Champions League final has ever seen. It was also a stunning strike and worthy of winning any championship anywhere in the world. It was added to in the second half by Moussa Marega and Pohang, who were second-best for much of the game, never really looked likely to come back from that.

The East Asians, the tournament is divided into two geographical zones until the final, were up against it from the start. The roars from the 50,000 plus Saudi Arabian fans that had greeted kick-off had not even died down by the time the left-back gave the Blues the lead. Al-Dawsari, who made his national team debut earlier this year, picked up a loose ball just inside the Korean half, moved forward and unleashed a fierce shot from around 30 meters that flew into the top corner.

Goalkeeper Lee Jun may have been caught by surprise at the timing, the power and the pace of the shot but had it come in the last minute and not the first, there was still little that he could have done. It was unstoppable. The sea of blue around the arena erupted and Pohang were stunned as their opposite numbers celebrated with almost as much disbelief as delight.

The Koreans, with three continental titles of their own, had enough experience to know however that there were still more than 89 minutes to play. There was a reminder of that just ten minutes later as the Steelers silenced the din in Riyadh for the first time. Sin Jin-ho won the title with Ulsan Horang-i last December and the attacking midfielder must have thought he had got on the scoresheet this time as his half-volley from the edge of the area dipped over the diving Abdullah Al-Mayouf. Unfortunately for the Steelers the ball bounced back off the underside of the bar. Lim Sang-hyub was there to fire home the rebound but his shot bounced back off the underside of Al-Mayouf's legs. It was as close as the Koreans came all night.

The game started to settle into something approaching a more traditional final. The visitors were wary of conceding a second that would make an already tricky task doubly difficult and did not threaten enough. In fact, it started to get a little scrappy with some heavy challenges and misplaced passes. Hilal, with playmaker Matheus Pereira getting more and more into the game, looked more dangerous going forward but in the last half-hour of the first half, neither goalkeeper had much to do



RIYADH: Hilal's fans cheer during AFC Champions League final football match between KSA's Al-Hilal and South Korea's Pohang Steelers yesterday, at the King Fahd International Stadium in the Saudi capital. — AFP

until right at the end Al-Mayouf was grateful to see a close range header from Gwon Wan-kyu fly straight into his hands.

Pohang made a double substitution at the start of the second half, a signal of their more adventurous intent but it was Hilal who made the first chance with Pereira finding Gomis in the area, though the striker's shot was blocked by Alex Grant. Soon after Pereira's free-kick flew just over Pohang's top corner.

The Koreans, with seven losses in their last nine

league games, were struggling to get a foothold in the game but with just a one goal deficit were never out of it. A mix-up in the Hilal defense just before the hour allowed substitute Go Young-joon to get in a shot from the edge of the area that went wide. Then, with 63 minutes on the clock, Gomis slipped the ball through to Marega in the right side of the area and the former FC Porto striker found the opposite corner with a low shot. Given that Pohang had not done enough in attack, that seemed to be that. — Agencies

Rain forces early end in Galle as West Indies avoid follow-on

GALLE: Rain forced an early end with the West Indies tail still hanging on after avoiding the follow-on for day three of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle yesterday. The West Indies added nine runs in 30 balls and lost Rahkeem Cornwall in a brief passage of play after lunch before the heavens opened. The forecast for the next two days was more wet weather.

With the new ball due, Suranga Lakmal was called up to bowl the 79th over of the West Indies innings from the City End and he dismissed Cornwall. Lakmal bowled a short ball and Cornwall could not resist the pull shot, but got the execution wrong and was caught by Ramesh Mendis running backwards from mid-wicket. Cornwall made 39 off 58 balls with five fours and a six.

But the 49-run stand between Cornwall and Joshua da Silva ensured the West Indies avoided the follow-on. After a brief pause in the rain, umpires inspected the field and decided to resume

play. Another downpour soon washed out the final session before it began, threatening to spoil Sri Lanka's early advantage.

"We are hoping and praying the weather gods are kind to us," said Sri Lanka spin bowling coach Piyal Wijetunga, who was disappointed his spinners had failed to dispatch the tourists before the rain, despite accounting for eight wickets between them. "Not a hundred percent happy with the way we went about things," he said. "The boys are excited and they try too many things without sticking to basics. Patience is the key and they need to learn." Play will resume early for the final two days to make up lost time, with 98 overs scheduled for each.

Earlier, Sri Lanka had posted 386 all out after electing to bat first. Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne scored his 13th Test hundred, going on to make 147 while Dhananjaya de Silva (61) and Pathum Nissanka (56) scored half-centuries. The West Indies collapsed to 113 for six at stumps on day two but recovered thanks to a rearguard action by the lower order. Kyle Mayers (45), Jason Holder (36) and Cornwall (39) all chipped in. The side's only warm-up game ahead of the series, a four-day match against Board President's XI in Colombo, was called off without a ball being bowled, due to rain. — AFP

Begiristain the key to Guardiola's longevity

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola said the presence of director of football Txiki Begiristain is the reason he is into his sixth season with the English champions and has extended his deal to 2023. City's structure off the field has been brought back into the focus by the chaos at rivals Manchester United, where outgoing executive vice chairman Ed Woodward may prolong his stay at Old Trafford to oversee a fifth managerial appointment in eight years.

Guardiola took a year out of the game after being burned out by four years as coach of his boyhood club Barcelona and stayed just three seasons with German giants Bayern Munich. Many expected a similar stint at City, who had prepared the groundwork to attract Guardiola by appointing his former Barcelona colleagues Begiristain and CEO Ferran Soriano to senior positions at the club.

Together they have built an empire at the Etihad, winning three Premier League titles, one FA Cup and four League Cups. "One of the reasons why I extended my contract is because Txiki is here. I am now 50, we met each other when I was 19-years-old," said Guardiola yesterday. "So since then, we've been close friends and we work together incredibly well. When we are winning, we try to analyse, why we are winning? When we lose, why are we losing? No one judges the other one for good or bad. I've never been judged on a result. Both of you work for the best for this club."

"He is the most humble person I met. He never goes to the media, he's always behind the scenes. You don't find many of these types of people in this world when the egos are always there. I put that example for myself. "So he's an exception. What he has done in Barcelona, creating one of the best teams of all-time, and how he has been working here for these years... "He always gives the credit for the players, of course for the managers, for the chairman, for the CEO, and always is there so that's why it's a pleasure. We're with him because I can do my job."

City can secure a place in the Champions League last 16 with just a point at home to Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday, while victory over the star-studded French side would guarantee top spot in Group A. PSG boss Mauricio Pochettino has been linked with the vacant managerial post at United following Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's sacking on Sunday. Pochettino is on course to win the first league title of his managerial career with PSG who are currently 11 points clear at the top of Ligue 1.

But Guardiola said his record of not winning trophies at Espanyol, Southampton and Tottenham should not overshadow the excellent job the Argentine did for all three clubs. "You can be a top manager and not win titles. The managers that have the chance to win the titles are at top, top clubs with good investments and exceptional players. Otherwise, for managers, it is impossible to win," added Guardiola. "That doesn't mean the managers in the Championship or not in the top six of the Premier League cannot be excellent managers in tactics, communication, leading. It's not necessary to win titles." — AFP