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Pope meets King Hamad on first visit to Bahrain

Francis urges respect for human rights, 'safe conditions' for workers



AWALI, Bahrain: Pope Francis speaks with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa during their meeting on Nov 3, 2022. — AFP

AWALI, Bahrain: Pope Francis said human rights should not be "violated" as he arrived in Bahrain for his second trip to the Gulf on Thursday. The leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics, who is the first pope to visit the nation, is visiting to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Pope Francis told dignitaries, including his host, King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, that religious freedom should be "complete and not limited to freedom of worship".

The pope also demanded that "working conditions everywhere are safe and dignified". "Much labor is in fact dehumanizing," he said at the gleaming Sakhir Royal Palace. "This does not only entail a grave risk of social instability, but constitutes a threat to human dignity." The first papal visit to the island nation follows this pontiff's 2019 trip to the United Arab Emirates, also aimed at inter-faith outreach.

Pope Francis, 85, uses a wheelchair due to knee problems and boarded and disembarked from the plane on an electronic platform. Uniformed guards on horseback and Vatican and Bahrain flags lined the

route of his short journey to the palace, where he was greeted by cheering children. It is vital that "fundamental human rights are not violated but promoted", the pope told the audience. "I think in the first place of the right to life, of the need to guarantee that right always, including for those being punished, whose lives should not be taken."

During his trip, which lasts until Sunday, the pope will hold an open-air mass and lead prayers for peace at a vast new cathedral. On Friday, Francis will address a forum for "human coexistence" organized by the UAE-based Muslim Council of Elders. Afterwards, he will hold a private meeting with Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb, grand imam of Cairo's prestigious Al-Azhar, Egypt's highest Sunni institution.

The Argentine pope has made outreach to Muslim communities a priority during his papacy, visiting Muslim-majority countries such as Egypt, Turkey and Iraq, and most recently in September, Kazakhstan. Ahead of the voyage, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni

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News in brief

Saudi launches first EV company

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced on Thursday the launch of its first brand of electric vehicles, part of a broader push to diversify the economy of the world's biggest oil exporter. The company, known as Ceer, is a partnership with Foxconn, which "will develop the electrical architecture of the vehicles", SPA said. — AFP

Iran pursuing 'good neighborliness'

TEHRAN: Iran intends to pursue a policy of "good neighborliness", its foreign ministry said, rejecting as "baseless" reports it is planning to attack Saudi Arabia to divert attention from protests at home. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said his country's "policy is based on mutual respect and international principles" and that it "continues its policy of good neighborliness". — AFP

FBI busts theft of converters

WASHINGTON: The FBI announced Wednesday that it has broken up a nationwide catalytic converter theft ring that amassed staggering assets of more than half a billion dollars. A total of 21 people were arrested and charged in the US-wide bust. Catalytic converters contain many precious metals, are easy to steal and can be sold on the black market for more than \$1,000 each. — AFP

Man's body travels in train toilet

NEW DELHI: Police said Thursday they discovered the dead body of a man that had travelled undetected for 900 km across northern India locked inside a train toilet. They believe the man boarded the train days before it set off from Bihar state and died inside the lavatory after locking the door. Railway police forced the door open on Sunday after passengers complained of the smell. — AFP

WHO hails Kuwait's support

GENEVA: Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Ghebreyesus hailed Thursday Kuwait's support to the organization and the tangible improvements it made to its health system. This came in Tedros' meeting with Kuwait's per-

manent representative to the United Nations Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen at the organization's headquarters in Geneva.

He described Kuwait as unique in the region due to the constructive and objective support it provides to the organization. Ambassador Hayen mentioned to Kuwait News Agency that he conveyed Kuwait's political leadership's appreciation of WHO's efforts, and affirmed the country's keenness on bolstering ties with the organization to continue combating the spread of diseases. — KUNA



GENEVA: General Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Ghebreyesus meets Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen. — KUNA

Zionists kill 4 Palestinians

JENIN: Zionist forces killed four Palestinians Thursday, medics and security officials said, as violence flared across Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank. Two Palestinians were shot dead by Zionist forces in the northern West Bank city of Jenin - named as 14-year-old Mohammed Samer Khalouf and 28-year-old Farouq Salameh - while four others suffered gunshot wounds, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Hours earlier, a Palestinian was shot dead in Jerusalem's Old City. Mourners meanwhile gathered in the West Bank village of Beit Duquq for the funeral of a

42-year-old man, killed in clashes with Zionist forces. At least 34 Palestinians and three Zionists have been killed across east Jerusalem and the West Bank since the start of October, according to an AFP tally.

Early on Thursday, the Zionist military said it had lifted a weeklong closure of the West Bank city of Nablus, which had disrupted travel in and out of the city for more than 200,000 Palestinians. Just hours after the closure was lifted, Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh led a high profile delegation of some 30 foreign diplomats - including the European Union and United States envoys - and Palestinian officials on a march through the Nablus' Old City. He said that the three-week "siege" had been a form of "collective punishment". — AFP



JENIN: Mourners carry the body of Mohamed Khalaf, a Palestinian who was killed by Zionist forces, on their way to a morgue on Nov 3, 2022. — AFP

Ex-Pak PM Khan shot during rally

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was in stable condition after being shot in the leg at a political rally on Thursday in what the country's president deemed "a heinous assassination attempt". The former international cricket star has been leading a chaotic convoy of

thousands since Friday from the city of Lahore towards the capital, Islamabad, campaigning for fresh elections after being ousted from office in April. "This was an attempt to kill him, to assassinate him," senior aide, Raouf Hasan, told AFP.

Khan escaped with a bullet wound to his right calf, while several of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party officials were also hit by the spray of gunfire aimed at their modified container truck as it slowly drove through a thick crowd near Gujranwala. "Everyone who was standing in the

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ISLAMABAD: A boy watches a television channel showing the news of Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan on Nov 3, 2022. — AFP

Arab Summit urges joint action on economy, security, Palestinian crisis

Algeria Declaration commends efforts of Kuwait's political leadership

ALGIERS: The Arab Summit concluded with the issuance of a statement in which Arab leaders stressed the need to coordinate on the economy, steps to ensure national security and the Palestinian crisis. The final statement of the Algeria-hosted Arab Summit referred to the centrality of the Palestinian cause, protecting national security through the rejection of foreign interference and reform of the Arab League. Dubbed the "Algeria Declaration", it also noted the Kuwaiti political leadership's "endeavors and efforts" with the aim of achieving Arab and Gulf solidarity.

The centrality of the Palestinian cause was highlighted, saying this support was "absolute" for the "inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to freedom and self-determination". It also pledged commitment to endeavors aimed at granting independent statehood to Palestine, with full sovereignty, according to the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as a capital. Also, the right of return and compensation for Palestinian refugees, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution no. 194 of 1948 and for the Zionist entity to lift its siege of Gaza.

The leaders renewed their adherence to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative with all its elements and priorities, and their commitment to a just and comprehensive peace as a strategic option to end the Zionist occupation of all Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan Heights, Shebaa Farms and the Lebanese Kafr Shuba Hills. It urged the need to maintain efforts to

protect the occupied city of Jerusalem and its holy sites in the face of rejected attempts by the occupation to change its demographics.

They condemned the Zionist entity's use of force as an occupying power against the Palestinians and its barbaric practices, including assassinations and arbitrary arrests, calling for the release of all prisoners and detainees, particularly children, women, the sick and the elderly. Leaders also agreed they would push to grant Palestine full United Nations membership.

On Libya, it expressed full solidarity with the people and support for efforts aimed at ending this crisis through an internal solution that preserves the country's unity and sovereignty, preserves its own security, the security of its neighbors and achieves the aspirations of its people ahead of elections, as soon as possible. It expressed support for efforts to reach a political solution to the crises in both Yemen and Syria, in a manner that ensures their security, stability and sovereignty.

It praised Iraq's efforts to hold successful elections and hoped Lebanon would complete the election of a new president. On integration, it urged member countries to work towards a free trade zone, with the aspiration of creating a free trade union someday. The leaders also stressed the importance of cooperative mechanisms to boost collective capabilities in response to challenges posed to food, health and energy security alongside climate change. — KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the Amir's Representative HH the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returns home after taking part in the Arab Summit. — KUNA

Kuwait underlines importance of human rights, peace

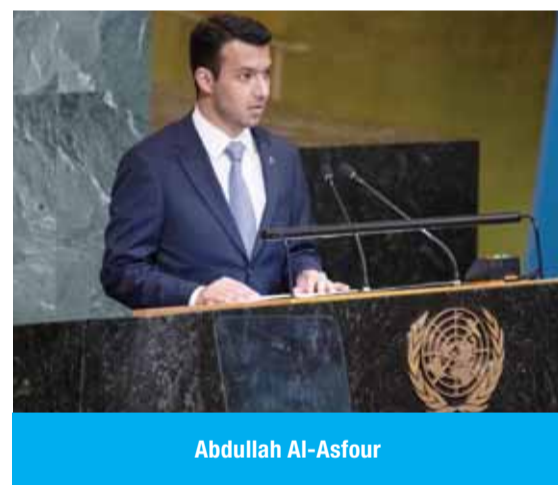
NEW YORK: Kuwait has reiterated importance of promoting and respecting human rights, saying peace is a fundamental human rights principle. "Seeking to boost human rights will only come into fruition by cooperation and coordination among member countries, regional and sub-regional organizations with the UN agencies, government and NGOs in order to achieve a sustainable world," attache Abdullah Al-Asfour told a UN General Assembly session discussing Human Rights Council's report on Wednesday.

He noted that UN bodies are always seeking to see people of the world enjoy basic rights with the objective of achieving sustainable development in a peaceful, secured and safe world. Countries are characterized by the degree of respect of human rights, said Asfour, therefore human rights should be an integral part in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since its independence, he added, Kuwait has been keen on achieving justice and equality in all fields, a matter guaranteed by the Gulf country's constitution "which is considered the guarantor and

first line of defense of human rights". Kuwait, he said, honored most of the SDGs' criteria as part of its quest to eliminate poverty and hunger, provide education for all and bridging the gaps between genders, in addition to providing healthcare as well as freedom of press and speech.

Kuwait also ratified an agreement that prohibited discrimination against women, he said. Asfour condemned human right violations against the Palestinian people by the Zionist occupation and against Rohingya Muslims in a blatant breach of international law and international humanitarian law, calling for their immediate end. — KUNA



Abdullah Al-Asfour



ALGIERS: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the KUNA team covering the Arab Summit. — KUNA

Sheikh Mishal's presence allowed 'positive' talks

ALGIERS: HH the Amir's Representative, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's attendance of the Arab Summit left a "positive impact" amongst Algerian and Arab officials, Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said on Thursday. At the pre-summit talks, Kuwait took part in several discussions that will result in a "positive outcome for Arabs", the minister told reporters after the summit's conclusion, praising fellow Arab ministers who were in attendance.

On the level of summit attendance, he said it was

"good and exceptional" amidst a "positive atmosphere", the outcome of which was "complete consensus". The summit gained importance, being the first held in the last three years, under threatening fast-paced circumstances and which gave leaders the chance to hold engaging discussions, Sheikh Salem said. The results of the talks urged the need for collaboration on national security and on tackling foreign intervention, along with cooperation on economic fronts in food, medicine and energy industries alongside proposed reforms to the mechanisms of the Arab League.

The foreign minister applauded the talks as "successful", saying the "Algerians deserve praise". On the Palestinian crisis, he said it remains the central issue for Arabs and Kuwait, saying these nations are keen to continue pushing for Palestine to be granted full United Nations membership. He added that there will be upcoming activities illustrating support for the Palestinians. — KUNA

Kuwait affirms support to UNHCR, refugees' rights to return home

NEW YORK: Kuwait has reaffirmed support to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) for the return of refugees to their homes or their resettlement in countries around the world, while asserting the importance of protection of refugees. Kuwait affirms importance of protecting UNHCR workers, as some 25 percent of them work in hazardous locations, attache Rashed Al-Abhouh addressed UN General Assembly's third committee on Wednesday, discussing a UNHCR report on refugees.

The relationship between Kuwait and the UNHCR, which celebrated this year the 31st anniversary of the foundation of its office in Kuwait, contributed to improvement of the UN agency's operations to help people suffering from armed conflicts or natural disasters in an indiscriminate fashion. Abhouh said around 100 million people, many of them from Arab countries, have fled to safe havens because of conflicts, violence, natural disasters, climate change or human rights abuses.

KFAED awarded by NCUSAR

WASHINGTON: The National Council on US-Arab Relations (NCUSAR) presented in Washington on Wednesday its first ever Distinguished Global Developmental Assistance Award to the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) for its assistance to developing countries and communities worldwide. National Council on US Arab Relations Founding President and CEO Dr John Duke Anthony presented the award to KFAED Director General Marwan Al-Ghanem during the 31st Annual Arab-US Policymakers Conference, alongside Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Jassem Al-Budaiwi.

Anthony said in remarks at the event, attended by senior US officials and other dignitaries, that this award is in recognition of the KFAED's "humanitarian efforts to raise the standard of living of peoples and communities throughout the world." He affirmed that the Kuwait Fund is an "institution that is well deserving for being honored and rewarded." He added that



Rashed Al-Abhouh

He meanwhile commended UNRWA for providing healthcare and education to over five million Palestinian refugees. He also condemned the Zionist occupation of Palestinian territories including the building of illegal settlements, stealing of Palestinian lands, destroying Palestinian houses and confiscating their properties in a blatant breach of international law and UN Security Council resolutions. Abhouh called on the international community to act to end the Zionist occupation of Palestinian lands, as well as ending conflicts via dialogue and peaceful means. — KUNA

since the establishment of the Kuwait Fund, it has served in over 100 countries unconditionally and many institutions in the region were established after the Kuwait Fund, which they used as a model. He praised the Kuwait Fund as one that has done "remarkable" work in "lessening the travails of humanity."

Ghanem told KUNA that the award is an honor for Kuwait and the Kuwaiti government. "I was honored to represent the Kuwait Fund in receiving this award, which is the first ever award to be presented by the Council here in the US," he remarked. He added that "this award is in recognition of the role of the Kuwait Fund...for its developmental work and in supporting other countries over the past 60 years."

Ambassador Budaiwi told KUNA that this award is an "obvious recognition by a well-respected American institution for the KFAED and its true and genuine efforts to help countries and people globally". "KFAED is an icon of Kuwait and has played a great role in exposing the true giving nature of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people," he affirmed. "The culture of donating, assisting and giving is embedded within the DNA of the Kuwaiti people even before the discovery of oil and Kuwait's independence," he noted. — KUNA



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Local

MoCI warns car rental offices in bid to protect consumers

No minimum rent period, no signing of blank receipts, no daily charge for repairs

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: As part of an awareness campaign, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry tweeted some facts on the services of car rental offices under the hashtag #You_have_the_right_to, to educate citizens and residents about what they need to know when renting a car. The ministry said it is strictly forbidden for car rental offices to force clients to rent for a minimum or specific number of days. It is also forbidden to force them to hand over the rented car on specified

days or refuse to pick it up on certain days.

The ministry of commerce affirmed the office is obligated to offer comprehensive insurance policy, and the consumer does not bear the cost of the daily rental value of the rented car throughout the period of its repair or its presence in the garage or agency for repair. Car rental offices are also prohibited from obligating the client to sign a bill of exchange or a blank receipt (or even it states an amount of money). The only paper to sign is the contract.

The ministry warned car rental offices against

refusing to serve customers, as it is a violation that can lead to the closure of the office and the cancellation of its commercial license, noting that it will not hesitate to apply the law against violators and exercise its powers to protect the consumer.

In order to protect the consumer and ensure the implementation of laws, the ministry announced that a joint committee has been formed to monitor car rental offices in all governorates of Kuwait to ensure their compliance with the laws and decisions. The committee will conduct joint and intensive inspection

campaigns of car rental offices in all governorates on an ongoing basis.

In the event that the rental office insists on the consumer signing a bill of exchange or obligating them to rent for a certain number of days, or charge a fee for the days of repairing the car due to an accident, or refusing or refraining from renting to a consumer without a legal justification, the consumer has the right to file a complaint at the nearest consumer protection center or contact 135 or via WhatsApp on 55135135.

Defense minister honors army officers with new ranks

KUWAIT: Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah on Thursday decorated a number of officers in the Kuwait army with the new lieutenant rank and new post in the army, in implementation of an Amiri decree issued recently. On this occasion, the minister congratulated the newly decorated officers for gaining the trust of HH the Amir and the Armed Forces Supreme Commander Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lt Gen Sheikh Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, Defense Ministry Undersecretary Delegate Sheikh Fahad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and several senior officers attended the decoration ceremony. — KUNA



CBK: Local economic data reflect Kuwait's monetary stability

KUWAIT: Kuwait's available local economic and financial data and information confirm continued soundness and resilience of the monetary and financial stability conditions in the country, according to the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). CBK said in a statement that it continuously monitors all international economic, monetary and geopolitical developments and their impact on the global economic conditions, in light of these developments and their

repercussions, and based on the requirements and conditions of the unique nature of each economy, including the country's national economy.

In the context of the CBK's follow-up on the indicators of domestic inflation within the indicators of monetary stability, the local inflation rate in the consumer price index slowed down after soaring to an all-time peak of 4.71 percent in April 2022 to reach 3.19 percent during Sept 2022, it said. Additionally, the KWD exchange rate continued its relative stability against the major currencies. On the other hand, residents' deposits with banking sector increased by 5.2 percent at end of Sept 2022 compared to the end of 2021.

The total private sector's deposits in KWD accounted for 95.4 percent of the total private sector's deposits at end of September 2022. Moreover, credit facilities for residents and non-residents

increased by 7.9 percent during the mentioned month compared to end of the previous year, it added. In this regard, it said it is keen to activate and enhance all available instruments to achieve its objectives, such as conducting money market interventions to regulate liquidity.

This comes within CBK's monetary policy aimed at maintaining the monetary and financial stability of the banking and financial sector's units, and the attractiveness of the national currency as a store of the local savings, and fostering an atmosphere conducive to sustainable economic growth. CBK emphasizes its continued vigilant monitoring of the local and international economic and monetary developments to, whenever appropriate, undertake any additional measures to safeguard monetary and financial stability, according to the statement. — KUNA



EPA reopens Jahra Nature Reserve

KUWAIT: Head of Environment Public Authority Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah reopened Jahra Nature Reserve on Thursday, which will start welcoming visitors starting Friday. "The reserve aims to boost environmental tourism in Kuwait and raise environ-

mental awareness," Sheikh Abdullah said. The opening was attended by representatives of many embassies and a number of school students.

The 18-sq-km reserve was set up in 1987, four square kilometers of which is open to the public. It has more than 300 types of migratory and local birds, with five different environments, including mangrove, coastal and desert environments. The reserve is open for investments by small and medium companies with the approval of the public rela-



tions department to display their products and market them to increase environmental awareness.

The success of this attempt will allow more reserves to be opened to encourage environmental tourism and preserve flora and fauna. Visiting hours will be from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Photographers, with permission, will be able to enter from 5:00 am. Reservations can be done on the EPA's official app, while a team from the authority will be present to guide visitors. — KUNA

Stuck child extracted from vacuum cleaner

KUWAIT: The public relations department at the KFF announced a child who was stuck in a vacuum cleaner was rescued. "After the central command was notified about a child stuck in a vacuum by her parents, a team from Sulabikhat station was sent to the location of the incident, after which the team was successful in rescuing her," the PR department of KFF announced. The rescued girl is in good condition.



Ahmadi gov launches drugs awareness drive

KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Sabah appreciated a Cabinet decision to assign specialized departments to start a national campaign to fight drugs through awareness, prevention and treatment. Rehabilitation centers will be provided with complete privacy, with the presence of national and international experts. The governorate launched an awareness campaign called 'aware', which aims to educate students of different stages throughout the school year.

Sheikh Fawaz met a team that is part of the initia-

tive in Ahmadi educational zone. Team member Nawaf Al-Mutairi expressed his gratitude for the team's appreciation, adding the Ahmadi governor's support is "limitless, along with that of many different sectors in the governorate". "The goals of the initiative and its timeline aims to increase social awareness to develop a generation aware of the dangers of drugs, which have spread to schools and threaten the future of children," Mutairi said.

Member Mohammad Al-Azemi said: "The initiative includes a number of elite lecturers, ranging from lawyers, educators and religious leaders, as well as from the 'Bashaer Al-Khair' society and the anti-drug department to make students aware in order to reach our goals."

In my view

Restructuring of administrative responsibility-II

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi

Local@kuwaittimes.com

The most serious problem: Tampering; the biggest solution: Seriousness - Ahmad Al-Deeb

Many in Kuwait complain about traffic jams on streets, as a 15-minute ride may take 45 minutes to one hour, with boredom and frustration among the results of having congestion on the streets, along with patients arriving late to hospital to save their lives, being late for an important appointment, being late for work and other things.

If we look closely, we will find the matter is normal and expected, because the main means of transportation is vehicles in a small and crowded country, so it is highly expected to have these unwanted consequences. A negative situation is in distributing authorities at ministries and other authorities. Many have to go to the capital only to get a certain signature from a senior official who has many authorizations in his powers and relies on centralism to manage the entities under his jurisdiction, instead of granting senior officials in governorates some authorizations so a person will not be compelled to go to the capital for a signature. This person will be one of the reasons for causing a traffic jam.

There is no comfortable public transportation, with fast lanes in all directions (government facilities in the capital, universities, schools, markets). If they exist, they are not enough and not at a good level to convince an individual to leave their car and use public transportation.

There are no trains too. A small country the size of Kuwait suffers from severe traffic jams but there are no local trams or trains, despite their realistic cost. If the state wants it, the infrastructure for trains is difficult, but can be overcome. It is possible it will take one or two years to prepare the infrastructure and bring in the coaches - then everybody will be comfortable for many years. It is possible to charge minimal fees through subscriptions or other payment methods. It is also important for trains to be well-equipped, such as the availability of fast Wi-Fi Internet, comfortable seats, and drinks and snacks at reasonable prices, so that its use will be more than just a ride; rather it could be an entertaining journey.

In any country that aims for development, the first thought that comes is the level of transportation, sufficient roads and solutions for transportation through providing means that help the easy flow of traffic inside and outside the city. This allows for easy movement and quick arrivals for individuals, and this may be an important factor in providing a comfortable work environment for all and help in more production and achievements.

Kuwait does not lack money, trained individuals or an excellent infrastructure, but lacks the belief by decision makers that the problem exists, then the importance of a solution, followed by implementing the solutions with the best and most beneficial action.

No naturalization for honorable services for expats or bedoons

KUWAIT: The government has assured MPs that the issue of naturalization for honorable services for long-term foreign residents has been suspended and will not be reopened so as to not change the national identity and for social cohesion. "A prepared list which included the names of foreign businessmen, doctors and specialists, including sons of Kuwaiti mothers was shelved," sources revealed to Kuwait Times.

"Naturalization based on noble services needs further review as it was proven that many have received the nationality in illegal ways, and the current priority is to not to give nationality to people but to review files of those who illegally acquired it," sources said. "The government intends to create an authority for national identity, despite some MPs' objections, because it opens the door to revoking nationality of some citizens and will give the government leverage over the legislative branch, since the judicial branch does not have any authority on the matter."

"It is not true that the naturalization of stateless residents is open, as the discussion now is to set laws that protect their rights, including medical treatment, employment, education and obtaining civil IDs," sources added. These rights, however, necessitate that they prove they do not have any nationality from other countries.

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News in brief

Prosecution objects to verdict against killer

KUWAIT: The public prosecution has objected to the verdict of the cassation court against the murderer of Farah Akbar, saying he has been given a light punishment. The cassation court had sentenced the killer to life in prison, but the prosecution said that the verdict is too light and should be changed to hanging. The court of appeal had canceled its previous death sentence to life in prison. The prosecution had on April 2021 concluded that the defendant kidnapped the victim by force after stopping her vehicle on a public road, then jumped in the car forcibly to take her to an unknown location, where he murdered her with previous intent. The defendant kidnapped the victim's children as well, who are under 18 years of age, and threatened her sister with physical assault.

MoE excellent work rewards list sent to Central Bank

KUWAIT: Official spokesperson of the education ministry Ahmad Al-Huwaida announced sending the list of names of employees who deserve rewards for excellent work to the Central Bank on Thursday. Huwaida pointed out that the financial department has sent the names of employees in the Hawally, Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational zones as well as religious schools after review. The names of Capital and Jahra educational zones will be sent on Sunday, while the Farwaniya educational zone is currently being reviewed and will be sent as soon as procedures are completed. "The central bank will transfer the amount to local banks to be credited according to procedures," Huwaida added.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Picture taken on Nov 3, 2022 shows an aerial view of Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KCCI chief stresses economic dimension of ties with Britain

UK trade commissioner affirms commitment to GCC free trade agreement

LONDON: Solid political relations are often forged on the bedrock of shared economic and trade benefits, Kuwait's Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Mohammad Al-Saqer told an Arab-UK economic summit on Wednesday. Underlining Kuwait's eagerness to join such gatherings, he told KUNA on the sidelines of the 2nd Arab-British Economic Summit that Britain's ties with the wider Arab region dates back more than two centuries. Echoing the Kuwaiti official's sentiments, Qatar's chamber of commerce chief Sheikh Khalifa Al-Thani said Gulf Cooperation Council member states are among Britain's most trusted trade partners, pointing out that bilateral trade between London and the Gulf Arab bloc was worth \$38 billion last year.

Britain's Trade Commissioner for the Middle East Simon Penney affirmed Wednesday his country's



LONDON: Kuwait's Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Mohammad Al-Saqer with the Kuwaiti delegation. — KUNA

commitment to achieving the free trade agreement with the GCC at the nearest possible opportunity. In his speech during the summit in London, Penney stated that the aim of the trade agreement is not to increase British exports to Arab markets, but to develop a sturdy economic partnership. He clarified the role of the British government, saying that it could be summarized in three main axes - exports, investments and trade policy.

Penney revealed that value of British exports to Arab states reached £28 billion (\$32.23 billion) with 80 percent to Gulf countries (\$25.7 billion). Gulf states, Penney commented are the UK's third

largest trade partner outside of the EU, adding that after that coronavirus pandemic Saudi Arabia became the largest market for British exports to the Gulf region.

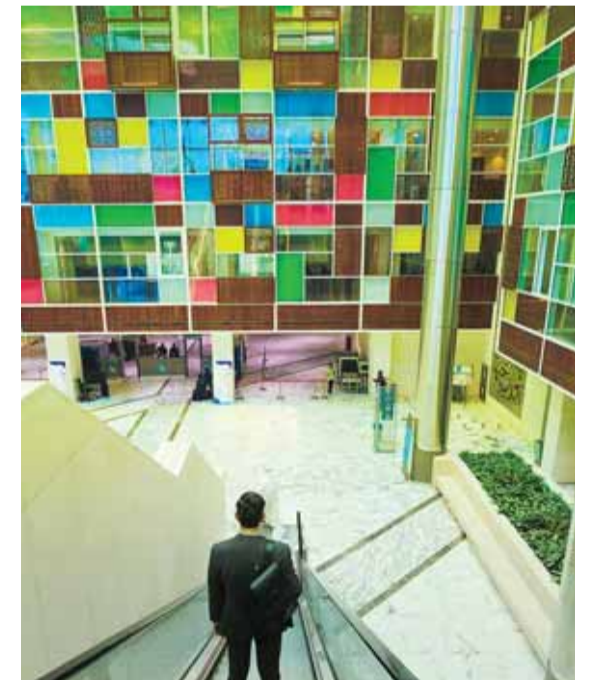
Chief negotiator for the free trade agreement, Tom Wintle, called for accelerating pace of negotiations to reach a comprehensive agreement that meets the aspirations of the people. He stated that the Gulf region is quite vital to Britain due to historical relations on various fronts, adding that economically these relations have the potential to grow even bigger, and the free trade agreement is the exemplary way to achieve this joint vision. — KUNA

Ministries Complex gets new look

KUWAIT: The Ministries Complex has been refurbished and has a new colorful look blended with Sadu textiles, giving a relaxed atmosphere for employees and visitors. The Ministries Complex is a hub offering services for citizens and expatriates, consisting of many entrances and a major lobby. The complex also includes restaurants, waiting areas, a pedestrian bridge and parking lot. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The main fountain in the Ministries Complex reflects the enrichment of Arabic design with contemporary architecture. — KUNA photos



The use of colors inspired by Arabic Sadu on the walls inside the Ministries Complex.



A pedestrian bridge that connects the parking lot to the Ministries Complex.

Kuwait, Years From Now

Student Art Competition 2022

10 October - 13 November 2022

We are excited to welcome each and every youngster to our Student Art Competition 2022. We hope everyone is ready to showcase and create beautiful artworks of Kuwait in the future. We're searching for great art - so get your paintbrushes, color pencils and markers ready. Let your talent flow and start painting. Good luck to our young artists!

- The competition is open to students aged 6-18 years under the categories of 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-14 years, 15-18 years and special abilities students.
- The competition is open to all schools in Kuwait (government and private).
- 5 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools and individuals interested in participating in this competition are welcome.
- You can use any drawing sheet, but of A3 size.
- All artworks must be hand drawn and not computer generated.
- All paintings should be submitted by email at art@kuwaittimes.com in PDF format only.
- Kuwait Times reserves the right to retain the drawings for future use.
- Participants should include on the bottom of the artworks the following: Name, age, email address, phone number and school in legible font.



Strategic Partner
ZAIN



N Korea ICBM launch appears to have failed

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UK murderer admits killing and abusing 101 dead women



SAO PAULO: Riot police take position to clear a blockade held by supporters of President Jair Bolsonaro on the Castelo Branco highway, on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP

Bolsonaro asks supporters to 'unblock' roads

Number of road blockades throughout the country decreased from 271 to 146

SAO PAULO: Brazil's outgoing President Jair Bolsonaro asked participants in what he said were "legitimate" protests to "unblock the roads" and demonstrate elsewhere Wednesday as they push for military intervention to keep him in power.

The far-right leaders' supporters are rallying in front of military installations in Brazil's major cities and have blocked highways in more than half the country's states. The demonstrators, unwilling to accept the results of Bolsonaro's Sunday election defeat to leftist ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, have now clogged autoroutes and caused nationwide disruptions for three straight days.

"I want to make an appeal to them: Unblock the roads," Bolsonaro said late Wednesday. The blockades do "not seem to me to be part of legitimate demonstrations." "Other demonstrations that are taking place throughout Brazil in squares... are part of the democratic game. They are welcome," he added. After days of silence, Bolsonaro on Tuesday gave a short speech in which he neither accepted defeat nor congratulated Lula on his weekend win, although his chief of staff took the podium afterward to say the president had authorized the transi-

tion to a new government.

"Federal intervention now!" chanted some of the thousands who gathered in front of the Southeastern Military Command in the country's biggest city, Sao Paulo. "We want a federal intervention because we demand our freedom. We do not admit that a thief governs us," Angela Cosac, 70, told AFP, alluding to the fact that Lula served time in prison for corruption.

The day of mobilization was marred by violence, however. At a roadblock near the town of Mirassol in Sao Paulo state, a motorist drove into a crowd of demonstrators, injuring at least seven people, according to CNN.

Some supporters of Bolsonaro, himself a retired army captain, made threatening gestures to journalists in Sao Paulo, where crowds of demonstrators swelled later in the day. In the southern state of Santa Catarina, protesters were filmed on Wednesday raising Nazi salutes.

Thousands meanwhile gathered in the capital, Brasilia, chanting "civil resistance," while in rainy downtown Rio de Janeiro, demonstrators were filmed by Brazilian media shouting: "Lula, thief, your

place is in prison."

The number of road blockades throughout the country decreased from 271 on Tuesday to 146 on Wednesday, according to police. In Sao Paulo, military police used tear gas to disperse a blockade on the main highway connecting the state with the central-west region of the country, after the Supreme Federal Court ordered the use of "all necessary measures" to open the roads.

Rodrigo da Mata, a 41-year-old salesman, told AFP that he wanted a military intervention "so that our country does not become communist." "We do not accept the election result because we know it was fraudulent. Like everything that the PT does," he added, in reference to Lula's Workers' Party.

Trucks sounded their horns, while demonstrators wearing yellow football jerseys waved flags in front of passing vehicles, in scenes broadcast on local television. The blockades have caused disruptions nationwide. The main airport in Sao Paulo cancelled 48 flights due to the protests, according to its press office. Bolsonaro's vice president, Hamilton Mourao, told the O Globo daily that "it's no use crying, we've lost the game." The National Confederation of

Industry warned on Tuesday of an imminent risk of fuel shortages if blocked roads were not quickly cleared.

Infrastructure minister Marcelo Sampaio had asked late Tuesday for protesters to unblock the highways to allow medicine, supplies and fuel to circulate. Many Brazilian supermarkets reportedly were already experiencing some supply shortages.

'Dream is still alive'

Demonstrations calling for military intervention in front of military buildings took place Wednesday in 11 of the country's 27 states, according to news site UOL. Bolsonaro on Tuesday said protesters should not "use the methods of the left... that prevent freedom of movement," but added that the roadblocks were "the fruit of indignation and a feeling of injustice at how the electoral process took place." "Peaceful protests will always be welcome," he said. That was interpreted by some supporters as a call to maintain the demonstrations. "The dream is still alive," said a message by one supporter Tuesday on Telegram. "Fill the streets tomorrow." — AFP

Iranians stage new protests as another teenager killed

PARIS: Iranians staged new protest actions Thursday in defiance of a crackdown by the authorities as a rights groups said an 18-year-old became the latest teen killed in clashes in the northwest. Iran has for over six weeks been gripped by protests sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini who had been arrested by the notorious morality police—a movement that poses the biggest challenge to the Islamic republic since the 1979 revolution.

The clerical leadership under Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 83, has responded with a crackdown that as well as killing dozens has seen 1,000 people charged so far and according to activists risking the death penalty.

With the movement no signs of abating, the problems for the authorities are compounded by the tradition in Iran of holding a "chehelom" mourning ceremony 40 days after a death, meaning each new killing can fuel new protest actions.

Norway-based group Iran Human Rights said large numbers in the city of Karaj outside Tehran were Thursday attending a 40-day ceremony for Hadis Najafi, a 22-year-old woman activists say was killed by security forces in September.

IHR said police had blocked the highway leading to the cemetery to prevent even larger numbers attending. "This year is the year of blood, Seyyed Ali (Khamenei) will be toppled," the video showed them chanting.

The Kurdish rights organisation Hengaw reported a sequence of protests had taken place Wednesday in the Kurdish-populated regions of northwestern Iran where Amini hailed from, including the city of Sanandaj which has become a major protest flashpoint.

It said Momen Zandkarimi, 18-year-old from Sanandaj, was killed by direct fire from Iranian security forces. Due to the pressure from Iranian security agencies who fear his funeral could turn into a protest, his body has been moved to another village for burial, it added.

According to an updated death toll issued



NEW YORK: Iranian-born British actress and activist Nazanin Boniadi speaks during an arra-formula meeting regarding the ongoing protests in Iran, at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. — AFP

Wednesday by IHR, 176 people have been killed in the crackdown on protests sparked by Amini's death. Another 101 people have lost their lives in a distinct protest wave in Zahedan in the southeastern Sistan-Baluchistan province.

Of all those killed, 40 were under 18 years of age, it added. Thousands have been arrested nationwide, rights activists say, while Iran's judiciary has said 1,000 people had already been charged over what it describes as "riots".

The trial of five men charged with offences that can carry the death penalty over the protests opened Saturday in Tehran. "The charges and sentences have no legal validity and their sole purpose is to commit more violence and create societal fear," said IHR director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, condemning the "show trials".

Hadi Ghaemi, head of the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran, warned that courts handing down death sentences would be a "blatant attempt to terrorise the Iranian people into silence".

Activists condemned as a forced confession a video published by state-run Iranian media of Toomaj Salehi, a prominent rapper arrested at the weekend after backing the protests, in which a blindfolded man saying he is Salehi admits to making "a mistake".

Freedom of expression group Article 19 said it was "extremely disturbed Iran state media are sharing forced confessions" with the subject "under clear duress". — AFP

Joe Biden hits campaign trail to save Democrats

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden was embarking Thursday on a final push to try and save Democrats from defeat in next week's midterms, hours after he gave a dramatic speech casting the election as a make-or-break moment for US democracy.

Biden was flying to New Mexico, California and Illinois, before winding up with his latest of many appearances in the crucial electoral battleground Pennsylvania on Saturday. The president spending so much campaign time in areas already considered Democratic strongholds—like California—indicates just how defensive the party has become.

Polls show Republicans likely to win the House of Representatives and possibly also the Senate. Currently, Democrats hold tiny majorities in both, but the party has been dragged down by popular discontent over high inflation. Biden argued in a speech in Washington, DC, late Wednesday that the next week's contest is about far more than electoral politics, pointing out that hundreds of Republican candidates for offices across the nation have joined the false far-right conspiracy theory led by former president Donald Trump that the 2020 presidential contest was rigged.

Trump, despite being under investigation for hoarding top secret documents in his Florida golf resort and being twice impeached during his one-term presidency, has re-emerged as the Republican party's most powerful character, with many expecting him to run again in 2024.

The divisive figure, still a hero to tens of millions of Americans, is leading the charge by a slate of so-called election denying candidates. He is set to hold his latest rally in Iowa Thursday evening. With conservatives hammering the administration over inflation, crime and illegal immigration, Biden, 79, used his Wednesday speech to attack Trump and his followers as a deeper threat to the country.

"There are candidates running for every level of office in America... who won't commit to accepting the results of the elections they're in," Biden said.



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden delivers remarks on preserving and protecting Democracy at Union Station in Washington. — AFP

Their goal, he said, was to follow Trump's lead and try to "subvert the electoral system itself"—noting there are more than 300 Republican election deniers on the ballot in races across the country this year.

"They've emboldened violence and intimidation of voters and election officials," he charged—less than two years after a mob of Trump supporters ransacked the US Capitol to try to overturn the 2020 result.

"That is the path to chaos in America," he said. "It's unprecedented. It's unlawful. And it is un-American." In the wake of a violent attack on the husband of the Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, which dramatically heightened concerns about heated political rhetoric, Biden urged Americans to unite in defense of democracy.

"We must with an overwhelming voice stand against political violence and voter intimidation, period," he said.

But nearly 22 months after the Capitol insurrection, polling shows that American voters are more concerned with the economy. More than half say the price of gas and consumer goods is the economic issue that worries them the most in a new Quinnipiac University national poll.

In response to Biden's speech, House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy accused the president of refusing "to address Americans top concerns." "In six days, Republicans will win convincingly and help put America back on track," McCarthy, who stands to become House speaker if the Republicans win next week's election, tweeted. — AFP

International

Tropical Storm Lisa moves towards Mexico after lashing Belize

Some parts of Belize were left without power

BELIZE CITY: Tropical Storm Lisa slowed on Thursday after making landfall in Belize, causing flooding and plunging parts of the country into darkness as it churned westwards toward Mexico. Both Mexico and Belize dropped their coastal tropical storm warnings as the former hurricane weakened and headed west at 10 miles per hour (16 kilometers per hour), according to the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) in Miami.

Forecasters warned that the tourist-popular coast of Central America and the Yucatan Peninsula should continue monitoring the situation as the maximum sustained winds decreased to around 45 mph (75 kph).

For the next day or so, the storm system is expected to pack a gusty punch and deliver heavy rain, swells and flash flooding to northern Guatemala and southeastern Mexico, further weakening as it moves inland.

Lisa slammed into the Sibun River just southwest of economic hub and former capital Belize City around 2120 GMT on Wednesday, uprooting trees, downing power lines and inundating streets.

"It's very dangerous for us" because in Belize "it floods quickly, even with moderate rain," Jasmin Ayuso, a 21-year-old secretary, told AFP.

A state of emergency was declared in two areas, while a curfew was in effect until dawn on Thursday. Some parts of Belize were left without power as the storm lashed the country of about 405,000 people.

"BEL is aware of power outages affecting several areas of the country," the utility wrote on Facebook.

"We assure the public that our teams are taking note of the reports of damages to the power system, including fallen power lines and poles."

Schools and most businesses were closed in anticipation of the storm and the government set up several shelters. In Belize City and neighboring areas, local media showed weather-battered buildings, flooded streets and yanked out trees after Lisa landed.

The storm is forecast to be further downgraded to a tropical depression by the end of the day before dissipating over Mexico.

Evacuations in Guatemala

The NHC said Lisa could drop up to 10 inches (250 millimetres) of rain in some areas of Belize, northern Guatemala and several states in southern Mexico. The Yucatan Peninsula, Honduras' Bay Islands and other areas of Central America were forecast to receive up to six inches of rain.

In Guatemala, heavy rain caused flooding and landslides in the northernmost department Peten on the border with Belize.

About 143 people were evacuated and 48 remain in a shelter, Oscar Cossio, secretary of the National Coordination for Disaster Reduction (CONRED), told a press conference. Schools in the north canceled classes.

Lisa arrives not even three weeks after the passage of Julia, another Category 1 hurricane, which caused dozens of deaths in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.



BELIZE CITY, Belize District: Tourists visit the boardwalk in Belize City before the arrival of Tropical Storm Lisa. —AFP

Lisa is the 12th named storm this season, a designation given to systems that produce winds of 39 mph (63 kph) or greater, according to the NHC.

Last year's active Atlantic hurricane season, which officially runs from June through November, saw 21 named storms. —AFP

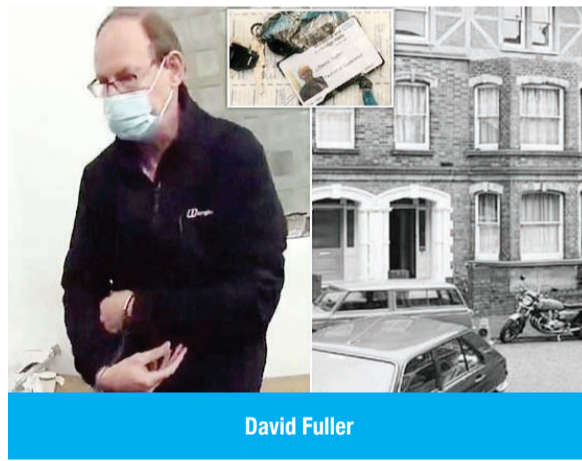
UK man admits abusing 101 dead women

LONDON: A hospital electrician serving a full-life sentence in Britain for murdering two women and sexually abusing corpses in mortuaries on Thursday admitted defiling a further 23 dead women. David Fuller, 68, previously admitted strangling 25-year-old Wendy Knell and 20-year-old Caroline Pierce months apart in Kent, southeast England, in 1987.

He also pleaded guilty to 51 other offences relating to 78 victims in mortuaries between 2008 and 2020. At a hearing at Croydon Crown Court on Thursday, Fuller admitted sexually abusing a further 23 dead women in hospital mortuaries, including 12 counts of sexual penetration of a corpse, bringing the total number of victims to 101.

Prosecutor Michael Bisgrove said statements from victims' families were being prepared for when Fuller is sentenced next month. "There are many family members of the victims who would like to attend court in one way or another, some of whom who would wish to read their victim personal statements to the court," he added.

On sentencing him for murder last year, judge Bobbie Cheema-Grubb said that Fuller appeared to be living a "mild and ordinary life", but "in seclusion... committed acts of the deepest darkness". "Having killed two young women who were full of the promise of life you became a vulture, picking your victims from among the dead, within the hidden world of hos-



David Fuller

pital mortuaries which you were left free to inhabit, simply because you had a swipe card," she added.

Police who searched his home found he had filmed himself carrying out the attacks at the two mortuaries where he had worked in electrical maintenance from 1989. The offences include the sexual penetration of a corpse, possessing an extreme pornographic image involving sexual interference with a corpse and taking indecent images of children.

The evidence found dated back to 2008 — when digital camera devices were becoming more widespread-but police believe the true scale of Fuller's offending may never be known. The health secretary at the time, Sajid Javid, called Fuller's offences "profoundly distressing" and promised that action would be taken to "ensure nothing like this ever happens again". The government announced an independent inquiry into how Fuller's crimes went undetected for so long. —AFP

CBC shuts down China bureau citing lack of work visa

BEIJING: Canada's public broadcaster said it has closed its China news bureau after more than 40 years of operating in the country, saying their journalist's "repeated requests" for a work visa had been ignored.

CBC News Editor-in-Chief Brodie Fenlon wrote in a blog post on Wednesday that the China correspondent for French-language counterpart Radio-Canada had not received a visa since applying in October 2020.

"Despite numerous exchanges with the Chinese consulate in Montreal and requests for meetings over the last two years, there is still no visa," Fenlon wrote. "Closing the Beijing bureau is the last thing we want to do, but our hand has been forced."

CBC's closure of its China news bureau follows the mass expulsion of over a dozen journalists from American media outlets in March 2020 in a US-China tit-for-tat, after which it has been increasingly difficult for foreign reporters to obtain Chinese visas.

Since 2020, the number of new foreign correspondent visas has dried up dramatically, with wait times for a new one typically lasting several months. Beijing cites COVID border controls for the delays in awarding new visas.

In response to the announcement, China's

foreign ministry said Beijing had not cancelled CBC's permit to work in the country and insisted it had made accommodations to allow the broadcaster to work in the country.

"China always welcomes foreign journalists to engage in reporting work in China in accordance with laws and regulations," foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters at a regular briefing. Independent Chinese media is virtually non-existent due to local regulations, leaving foreign journalists to report on sensitive topics under difficult conditions.

Foreign media journalists regularly encounter state harassment and surveillance in their reporting activities, as well as denial of access to official events. "As the number of journalists forced out by the Chinese state grows due to excessive intimidation or outright expulsions, covering China is increasingly becoming an exercise in remote reporting," the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China said in its 2022 report.

CBC's last Beijing correspondent, Sasa Petric, returned to Canada after China locked down over the pandemic, and the broadcaster has only been able to return once for the February 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, the note said.

For the next two years, the CBS and Radio-Canada correspondent Philippe Leblanc will instead work from Taiwan, Fenlon said. "We hope China will someday open up again to our journalists," he wrote. China ranked 175th out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2022 Media Freedom Index. —AFP

Ex-Pak PM Khan shot...

Continued from Page 1

very front row got hit," former information minister Fawad Chaudhry, who was standing behind Khan, told AFP. He said supporters in the crowd tried to snatch the gun from the attacker. "In that scuffle he missed the target." Six people were hit and one supporter killed, he said.

A video captures the crack of gunfire as Khan and his team duck behind banners tied around the edge of the container. In a tweet, Pakistan's President Arif Alvi called it "a heinous assassination attempt". Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said the attacker had been taken into custody and that a confession video was circulating online. "I did it because (Khan) was misleading the public, I tried to kill him, I tried my best," says a disheveled man in the video, shown with his hands tied behind his back in what appears to be a police station.

He adds that he was angry with the procession for playing music during the call to prayer that summons Muslims to the mosque five times a day. Police have yet to comment on the incident or confirm earlier reports that a second attacker was killed at the scene. Faisal Sultan, the doctor treating Khan at a Lahore hospital, confirmed he was in a stable condition. Jemima Goldsmith, the ex-wife

of the former cricketing superstar who shares two children with him, tweeted her relief. "Thank you from his sons to the heroic man in the crowd who tackled the gunman," she said.

Pakistan has been grappling with Islamist militants for decades, and politicians are frequently targeted by assassination attempts. The attack on Khan had echoes of the 2007 assassination of another former prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, who died when a huge bomb detonated near her vehicle as she greeted supporters in Rawalpindi while standing up through the roof hatch. Just months earlier she had survived another attempt on her life when her motorcade was targeted in Karachi, killing more than 130 people.

Each day since starting his so-called "long march" 70-year-old Khan has mounted a shipping container towed by a lorry, making speeches from the open top to crowds of thousands in cities and towns along the way. He was booted from office in April by a no-confidence vote after defections by some of his coalition partners, but he retains mass public support in the South Asian country.

Khan was voted into power in 2018 on an anti-corruption platform by an electorate tired of dynastic politics. But his mishandling of the economy - and falling out with a military accused of helping his rise - sealed his fate. Since then, he has railed against the establishment and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government, which he says was imposed on Pakistan by a "conspiracy" involving the United States. Khan has repeatedly told supporters he was prepared to die for the country, and aides have long warned of unspecified threats made on his life. — AFP

UK gov't tries to defuse Albania migrant row

LONDON: Britain on Thursday sought to defuse a row with Albania over migrants as Prime Minister Edi Rama doubled down on his criticisms of UK government claims, describing them as like "screams from a madhouse". Rama condemned what he called the UK's "crazy narrative of invaders and gangsters" to distract attention from "totally failed policies on borders and on crime".

"Albanians in Britain are a great community, great," he told reporters in Germany after a summit also attended by the UK. "To single out the community and to talk about gangsters and about criminals doesn't sound... very British... more like screams from a madhouse," he added in English.

Britain's Foreign Secretary James Cleverly held talks with Rama in London on Wednesday and tweeted that they had "an important meeting". "We agree that we must break the business model of people smugglers who are putting lives at risk," he added. Government minister Graham Stuart on Thursday morning also spoke of Britain's "grati-

tude" to Albania for its "cooperation" in tackling the issue. He praised Albania for sending senior police officers to help speed up the processing of claimants and highlighted an "expedited system" to return failed asylum-seekers.

'Easy rhetoric'

Britain's government is grappling with how to deal with a record number of migrants crossing the Channel from northern Europe in small boats. Since the beginning of the year, a record 38,000 people have made the perilous journey, the government's home affairs select committee was told on Oct 26. Of those 12,000 were Albanians, compared to only 50 in 2020.

Britain's rightwing home secretary Suella Braverman earlier this week caused outrage - and earned a rebuke from the new UN rights chief - for describing the arrivals as an "invasion". Braverman has previously blamed "Albanian criminals", alleging that they were gaming the asylum system by falsely claiming to be victims of modern slavery.

Stuart told Sky News on Thursday the urgency of tackling the situation, which has led to huge backlogs in processing applications, sometimes led to "unfortunate" language. But he added: "It is worth putting on record our gratitude to the Albanian government for their co-operation in working to sort this out." — AFP

Pope meets King Hamad on first...

Continued from Page 1

told journalists he would not guess whether Francis would broach the topic of human rights but said the pope's view "concerning religious freedom and liberty is clear and known".

Friday's "prayer for peace" will be held at the

cavernous Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral in Awali, which seats more than 2,000 people and opened in December. It was built to serve Bahrain's approximately 80,000 Catholics, mainly workers from southern Asia, including India and the Philippines. On Saturday, Francis will lead mass at Bahrain's national stadium before a crowd of nearly 30,000 people, where workers on Wednesday were adding finishing touches, including a giant gold cross above Francis' chair. Francis will preside over a prayer meeting with Catholic clergy and others on Sunday before returning to Rome. — AFP



BERLIN: (From left) Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen address a press conference on Nov 3, 2022. — AFP

International

North Korea ICBM launch appears to have failed: Seoul

US, South Korea extending joint air drills

SEOUL: North Korea unsuccessfully fired an intercontinental ballistic missile during a new salvo of launches Thursday, the South Korean military said, with Washington urging all nations to enforce sanctions on Pyongyang. The launches prompted South Korea and the United States to extend their ongoing joint air drills, the largest-ever such exercises, citing North Korea's "provocations". People in parts of northern Japan were ordered to seek shelter during the North's latest

range of the long-range ballistic missile is around 760 kilometres, altitude of 1,920 kilometres at speed of Mach 15," the military said.

It also detected what were "believed to be two short-range ballistic missiles fired at around 08:39 am from Kaechon, South Pyongan province." South Korea's military "is maintaining a full readiness posture while closely cooperating with the US and strengthening surveillance and vigilance," it said.

'The most horrible price'

Pyongyang fired more than 20 missiles on Wednesday, including one that landed near South Korea's territorial waters. One short-range ballistic missile crossed the Northern Limit Line, the de facto maritime border, on Wednesday, prompting President Yoon Suk-yeol to call it "effectively a territorial invasion". The launches come as Seoul and Washington stage their largest-ever joint air drills, involving hundreds of warplanes from both sides. Pyongyang has called the exercise, dubbed Vigilant Storm, "an aggressive and provocative military drill targeting the DPRK", and warned that, if it continues, Seoul and Washington will "pay the most horrible price in history."

The exercise had been due to end Friday, but South Korea's air force said Thursday that it would extend its air drills with the United States in response to the latest launches. "The joint air forces have agreed to extend the Vigilant Storm drill that kicked off on October 31 with respect to the North's recent provocations," the air force said in a statement.

Tokyo confirmed Thursday's launches, with the Japanese government issuing a special warning to residents of northern regions to stay indoors or seek shelter. Tokyo initially said the missile had flown over Japan, prompting a "J-Alert" to be issued, but defence minister Yasukazu Hamada later said that "the missile did not cross the Japanese archipelago, but disappeared over the Sea of Japan."



Enforce sanctions on Pyongyang

launches, which included two short-range missiles and followed a blitz of projectiles fired Wednesday.

The largest of Thursday's launches, however, "is presumed to have ended in failure", the South Korean military said. The United States condemned the ICBM launch despite its apparent failure. "This action underscores the need for all countries to fully implement DPRK-related UN Security Council resolutions," US State Department spokesman Ned Price said, using the North's official name of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Washington also confirmed information provided by the South Korean military, which said earlier it had detected the launch of the long-range ballistic missile at around 7:40 am (2240 GMT Wednesday) in the Sunan area of Pyongyang.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the ICBM appeared to have failed during "second-stage separation". "The



SEOUL: Television screens show a news report about the latest North Korean missile launch with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at an electronic market in Seoul. — AFP

'Tactical nuclear drills'

Washington and Seoul have repeatedly warned that Kim Jong Un's recent missile launches could culminate in another nuclear test—which would be Pyongyang's seventh. "Quite possible tactical nuclear weapons test(s) will be next. Possibly very soon," Chad O'Carroll of Seoul-based specialist site NK News said on Twitter.

Ahn Chan-il, a North Korean studies scholar, agreed. "These are North Korea's pre-celebration events ahead of their upcoming nuclear test," he told AFP. "They also seem like a series of practical tests for their tactical nuclear deployment."

North Korea revised its laws in September to allow

for pre-emptive nuclear strikes, with leader Kim declaring the country to be an "irreversible" nuclear power—effectively ending negotiations over its banned arms programs.

On October 4, North Korea fired a missile over Japan that also prompted evacuation warnings. Pyongyang later claimed it was a new type of "ground-to-ground intermediate-range ballistic missile". It was the first time North Korea had fired a missile over Japan since 2017.

Pyongyang later claimed that the launch and a blizzard of other tests around the same time were "tactical nuclear drills" that simulated showering South Korea with nuclear-tipped missiles. — AFP



KAWIT, Philippines: People wade through a flooded street in Kawit, Cavite province after Tropical Storm Nalgae hit Philippines. — AFP

More rain on way as Philippine death toll hits 150

MANILA: The death toll from a powerful storm that triggered flooding and landslides across the Philippines has reached 150, disaster officials said Thursday, as more rain was forecast in some of the hardest-hit areas.

More than 355,400 people fled their homes as Severe Tropical Storm Nalgae pounded swathes of the archipelago nation late last week and over the weekend. Of the 150 deaths recorded by the national disaster agency, 63 were in the Bangsamoro region on the southern island of Mindanao where flash floods and landslides destroyed villages.

At least 128 people were injured and 36 are still missing across the country, the agency said. Authorities have warned there is no hope of finding more survivors. Mindanao is rarely hit by the 20 or so typhoons that strike the Philippines each year, but

storms that do reach the region tend to be deadlier than in Luzon and the central parts of the country.

With more rain forecast Thursday, disaster agencies in Bangsamoro were preparing for the possibility of further destruction in the poor and mountainous region. "The soil is still wet in areas where flash floods and landslides occurred so further erosion could be instantly triggered," said Naguib Sinarimbo, regional civil defence chief.

"Waterways and rivers that were in the path of the flash floods are blocked by debris and boulders so they could easily overflow." President Ferdinand Marcos has blamed deforestation and climate change for the devastating landslides in Bangsamoro.

He has urged local authorities to plant trees on denuded mountains. "That's one thing that we need to do," Marcos told a briefing this week. "We have been hearing this over and over again, but we still continue cutting trees. That's what happens, landslides like that happen." Marcos has declared a state of calamity for six months in the worst-affected regions, freeing up funds for relief efforts. Scientists have warned that deadly and destructive storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer because of climate change. — AFP

China authorities apologise after boy dies in lockdown

BEIJING: Chinese local authorities apologised Thursday after a three-year-old boy died of carbon monoxide poisoning when medical care was delayed because of a COVID lockdown, in a rare admission of responsibility. The northwestern city of Lanzhou has been locked down for nearly a month under China's harsh zero-COVID policy, which has seen millions of people across the country confined to their homes and often complaining of poor conditions, food shortages and slow emergency responses. Local police had earlier confirmed the death of a child in a Tuesday statement but did not mention delays in accessing medical treatment. The same day footage of people desperately administering the child CPR on a flatbed tricycle spread rapidly, along with videos of small neighbourhood protests that evening.

The boy's father, surnamed Tuo, wrote on social media Wednesday that he had been denied permission to leave his housing compound by workers stationed at a checkpoint, and that an ambulance did not arrive in time. Over an hour later, he managed to break out of the compound and flag down a taxi to a hospital, shortly after which his son was pronounced dead, he said. On Thursday district health authorities published

a detailed account of the incident on social media and expressed their "sincere condolences" to the boy's relatives. "We sincerely accept criticism and supervision from the media and netizens, and are determined to rectify (mistakes)," they wrote. The Lanzhou authorities admitted it took over 90 minutes to dispatch an ambulance after the boy's father rang an emergency hotline multiple times, and they confirmed lengthy interactions with staff took place at the compound gate. "This incident exposed blockages in the emergency rescue mechanism, weakness in emergency response capabilities, and the inflexibility of cadres' work," their statement said.

Outrage

Authorities said Tuo had eventually managed to flag a taxi with help from a policeman at another checkpoint. However, Tuo said he had been forced to break through a checkpoint barrier and that it was a passer-by who helped him flag the ride.

He also claimed he was asked to present a PCR test result by community staff, despite the entire housing compound having been under lockdown and not tested for the previous 10 days. The tragedy triggered a storm of online criticism of China's zero-COVID policy, with one related hashtag censored on Weibo after gaining hundreds of millions of views. "Three years of the COVID pandemic have been his entire life," read one widely circulated comment. "Even though I didn't experience it, I feel like I can't breathe," wrote another user. The incident is the latest in a series of health emergencies that have provoked outrage after they were exacerbated by zero-COVID policies. —AFP

Khan's carnival edges towards Islamabad

GUJRANWALA, Pakistan: Imran Khan summons a lurching lorry bound for Islamabad and surveys the legions of feverish followers he hopes will propel him to Pakistan's highest office for a second term. Gazing through Cartier sunglasses and clutching mahogany-coloured prayer beads, the cricket superstar turned populist politician projects the energy of a circus ringmaster, conjuring the crowd with spectacle and rhetoric.

Since Friday, the 70-year-old has been at the head of this roadshow—a so-called long march starting in Lahore—staged to demonstrate mass support for early elections. Every day the fender-bending cavalcade of motorbikes, blacked-out SUVs and lumbering truck-mounted shipping containers inches closer to a showdown in Islamabad, with undeniable energy and a fanatical edge. "This is a movement, it's a struggle," Khan told AFP this week, momentarily turning his back to a crowd of thousands in the smoggy city of Gujranwala, 190 kilometres (120 miles) southeast of the capital. "That's why I have this massive following right now."

Wrath of Khan

Khan took to politics as a reformer, founding his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in 1996 as a stand against corrosive corruption and the dynastic families which have historically held power. For years he was the party's only national MP, but by 2013 PTI was a genuine opposition force which won the largest share of seats in the 2018 election. After three-and-a-half years in office,

Khan was ousted in a spring no-confidence vote as the economy crumbled and he lost the support of all-powerful army leaders, considered the true powerbrokers of the south Asian nation.

The government which replaced him, however, has been bruised by further economic freefall and the cobble-together coalition that ended his premiership has made him seem potent by comparison.

"He was great when he was in power and he is great even now," insisted 52-year-old supporter Basharat Ahmad, a PTI scarf draped around his neck and a bedazzled party brooch pinned to his chest.

Since losing power Khan has been fettered by corruption allegations and a series of complex legal cases, a frequent hazard in Pakistan where rights groups say the courts are used to stifle dissent.

The long march is Khan's riposte, designed to shore up support and heap pressure on the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Every day he mounts the container encasing an air-conditioned green room, climbs a spiral staircase past a mini-fridge stacked with mineral water and emerges on his mobile lectern where supporters shower him with petals. As the contraption crawls forward, Khan points to the sky and touches his heart as his entourage ducks under overhead power lines and traffic lights, and a smattering of fireworks pops off above. He uses a fuzzy sound system chained to the truck to repeat his talking points to domestic TV crews, hovering drones and the fawning crowds. But it is less of a manifesto and more of a litany of grievances.

Chief among them is Khan's claim that his ousting was orchestrated by the United States in a "regime change" conspiracy, and that the current leadership is an "imported government of crooks". Analysts say no evidence has proven this, but the anti-America message resonates deeply in Gujranwala, the fifth biggest city in the Islamic republic. —AFP



NEW DELHI: Pedestrian walk along a road near the India Gate amid heavy smog in New Delhi on November 3, 2022. — AFP

'Hazardous' smog chokes India's capital

NEW DELHI: Smog in New Delhi hit "hazardous" levels on Thursday as smoke from thousands of crop fires in northern India combined with other pollutants to create a noxious grey cocktail enveloping the megacity. Levels of the most dangerous particles—PM2.5, so tiny they can enter the bloodstream—were 588 per cubic metre early on Thursday morning, according to monitoring firm IQAir. That is almost 40 times the daily maximum recommended by the World Health Organization. IQAir rated overall pollution levels as "hazardous".

"This is really the worst time to be out in Delhi. One never wakes up fresh with this pollution," policeman Hem Raj, 42, told AFP. "The body feels tired and lethargic in the mornings... The eyes are always watery and throat scratchy after spending hours on the Delhi roads," he said. Every winter, cooler air, smoke from farmers burning stubble, and emissions from vehicles

and other sources combine to create a deadly smog reducing visibility in the city of 20 million people. In 2020 a Lancet study attributed 1.67 million deaths to air pollution in India in 2019, including almost 17,500 in the capital.

Delhi authorities regularly announce different plans to reduce the pollution, for example by halting construction work, but to little effect. The burning of rice paddies after harvests across Punjab and other states persists every year despite efforts to persuade farmers to use different methods. The situation is also a political flashpoint—with the capital and Punjab governed by the Aam Aadmi Party, a rival to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "As of today, Punjab, a state run by the AAP, has seen an over 19% rise in farm fires over 2021," environment minister Bhupender Yadav, who is from the BJP, tweeted on Wednesday.

"There is no doubt over who has turned Delhi into a gas chamber," he added. "I have been here for a long time now and the situation has only become worse. We spend 8 to 10 hours on the Delhi roads every day and it's tough because pollution hits everyone," said Brij Lal, 54, another policeman. "But there isn't much we can do about the situation since police have to be out on the roads, among the people all the time." — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2022

iPhone factory lockdown shows the risks of China dependence: Analysts

Apple's principal subcontractor has seen surge in COVID cases

BEIJING: The lockdown of Foxconn's Zhengzhou factory, the world's biggest producer of iPhones, has highlighted some of the risks of relying on zero-COVID China's manufacturing sector, analysts told AFP. Foxconn, Apple's principal subcontractor, has seen a surge in COVID-19 cases at its Zhengzhou site, leading the company to lock down the vast complex in a bid to keep the virus in check.

Images then emerged of panicking workers fleeing the site on foot in the wake of allegations of poor conditions at the facility, which employs hundreds of thousands of workers. Foxconn is China's biggest private sector employer, with over a million people working across the country in its around thirty factories and research institutes. But Zhengzhou is the Taiwanese giant's crown jewel, churning out iPhones in quantities not seen anywhere else. "In a normal situation, almost all the iPhone production is happening in Zhengzhou," said Ivan Lam, an analyst with specialist firm Counterpoint.

Risk of 'strong dependence'

Apple manufactures more than 90 percent of its products in China, which is also one of its most important markets. "For Apple, it is once again a bad example in terms of the stability of production chains," Alicia Garcia Herrero, Asia-Pacific manager for Natixis bank, told AFP. Experts say the company's heavy dependence on China "brings potential risks, especially when the US-China trade war shows no signs of de-escalating," according to

Dezan Shira & Associates, a consulting firm.

Opened in 2010, the Zhengzhou factory employs up to 300,000 people who live on-site all year round-creating a sprawling tech hub known as "iPhone city". It is made up of three factories, one of which produces the iPhone 14 — Apple's newest handset model. Apple did not respond to AFP's request for comment on how exactly the lockdown will affect its production. Analyst Lam estimates the partial stopping of work at the site resulted in a loss of "10 to 30 percent" of output, but said part of the production has also been temporarily moved to other Foxconn sites in China.

According to Foxconn, the site is currently operating a "closed loop" with the workers avoiding all contact with the outside world, while their daily bonuses have been quadrupled. "This incident may have a limited impact," on worldwide iPhone production, estimated analyst Ming-Chi Kuo, who specializes in Apple products. "But suppliers in China must learn to improve closed-loop production efficiency in response to the zero-COVID policy," he added.

Looking elsewhere

China is the last major economy committed to a zero-COVID strategy, persisting with snap lockdowns, mass testing and lengthy quarantines in a bid to stamp out emerging outbreaks. But new variants have tested local officials' ability to snuff out flare-ups faster than they can spread, causing much of the country to live under an ever-changing mosaic of COVID curbs.



ZHENGZHOU: In this file photo, passengers crowd Zhengzhou East Railway Station in Zhengzhou in China's central Henan province. —AFP

Apple has already begun outsourcing part of its production to India and is eyeing Vietnam in a bid to wean itself off Chinese manufacturing—a trend accelerated by COVID. But that's not so simple-last

year, nearly 7.5 million iPhones were made in India, just three percent of Apple's total production. "Increasing the capacity of factories (in India) is difficult," Lam said. —AFP

Turkish inflation tops 85 percent

ISTANBUL: Turkish inflation surged past 85 percent in October, its highest level since 1997, official data showed Thursday, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sticks to unorthodox policies to combat a cost-of-living crisis. Central banks worldwide are raising borrowing costs in efforts to tame soaring consumer prices, but Turkey has bucked the global trend, with Erdogan calling higher interest rates his "biggest enemy".

Last month, Turkey's central bank cut its policy rate for a third consecutive time, bringing it down to 10.5 percent from 12 percent. With an election looming next year, Erdogan argues that high rates are the cause of inflation, not the opposite, in defiance of orthodox economic theories. Turkey's inflation has steadily risen since reaching a low of 16.6 percent in May 2021. It hit 85.51 percent in October, according to state statistics agency TUIK, up from 83.45 percent in September.

Independent economists, however, say the rate is more than twice as high. At the same time, the Turkish lira has plunged against the dollar. Despite soaring consumer prices, Erdogan praised the state of the country's economy in an address to his ruling AKP lawmakers in parliament on Wednesday. "Thank God, the wheels of the economy are turning," he said. "Our economic model, which we have summarized as growth through investment, employment, production, export and current account surplus, is bearing fruit."

The head of the central bank, however, has said that success could not be declared. "We cannot consider ourselves very successful in the fight against inflation," central bank governor Sahap Kavcioglu said last month. "If there is inflation, there is a problem, it is not right to talk about success there, we know the distress of the citizens very closely, we take measures, we believe that we will see the result



ANKARA: A man arranges his stall at a market in the Turkish capital Ankara. —AFP

in a very short time," he added. The October surge was fuelled by a 117 percent rise in transportation prices and a 99 percent jump for food. The central bank has raised its inflation forecast for the full year from 60.4 percent to 65.2 percent.

'Disguise the real figure'

Many Turks and the opposition question the credibility of the official government data. According to a respected monthly study released by independent economists from Turkey's ENAG research institute, the annual rate of consumer price increases reached 185.34 percent in October. Opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu accused the government of hiding the real inflation while setting public employees' salaries. "Why does TUIK (statistics agency) disguise the real figure?" he asked last month.

"Because when it gives the real figure, the pen-

sions will be determined accordingly. Workers' wages will be determined accordingly. Civil servants' salaries will be determined accordingly. If you show it low, it will give a low raise," he argued. Erdogan's government blames inflation on outside factors such as the global spike in food and energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The central bank is expected to cut rates again at its next policy meeting and then end the easing cycle, as Erdogan has said the rate should be in single digits. Liam Peach, senior emerging markets economist at London-based Capital Economics, said the bank would remain "under pressure" from Erdogan for looser policy. While the central bank has said that it will deliver one more 150-basis-point rate cut at its meeting later this month, "there is a risk of further easing beyond that, adding more downward pressure onto the lira," he said in a note to clients. —AFP

Microsoft pledges \$100m to Ukraine 'digital alliance'

LISBON: Microsoft will give Ukraine an additional \$100 million of technology support to strengthen a "digital alliance" protecting the country, the firm's vice chairman said on Thursday. Brad Smith said Ukraine would be able to use Microsoft's cloud services and data centres across Europe during the entire 2023. He told a news conference on the sidelines of the annual Web Summit tech meeting in Lisbon that Microsoft's total commitment to Ukraine was now \$400 million. Ukraine has put technology at the centre of its war effort, stressing the importance of cybersecurity and the centrality of online services from education to health.

"Part of what this war has shown is that one needs to move services to the cloud in a time of war to ensure their resilience and security," said Smith. He said the new commitment would "enable the government and other businesses in Ukraine to continue to run their services and serve Ukraine citizens". He said Microsoft was happy to be involved in "a digital alliance of countries and companies and nonprofits standing together to support Ukraine".

Smith was speaking alongside Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, who laid out the details of a plan he announced earlier this year for Ukraine to become the world's most digital country. Ukraine has solicited the help of big tech firms in its efforts to defend its borders against Russia's invasion, and secured a donation of Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet systems earlier this year. However, Musk suggested recently that he would not continue to support the donation. Fedorov told the news conference there was "no problem with the system", adding: "Everything is OK. —AFP

Twitter's new path 'unclear'

SAN FRANCISCO: The road ahead for Twitter remained as murky as ever after new owner Elon Musk said Wednesday that it could take weeks to reinstate banned accounts—such as that of former US president Donald Trump. Twitter users have been watching closely to see whether Musk will reinstate Trump, banned for inciting last year's attack on the Capitol by a mob seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election, and other deplatformed users.

The potential reinstatement of such accounts banned for violating the site's content moderation rules has been seen as a bellwether of where Musk, a self-described "free speech absolutist," wants to take the site he describes as a global town square. But on Wednesday the South African billionaire said the wait will have to continue a little while longer.

"Twitter will not allow anyone who was de-platformed for violating Twitter

rules back on platform until we have a clear process for doing so, which will take at least a few more weeks," he tweeted. That would delay a return of Trump until after crucial November 8 midterm elections in the United States, which will determine control of Congress.

Trump, once a prolific tweeter, retains a powerful hold on his Republican Party, and has reopened his 2020 playbook by questioning the integrity of the upcoming election. Since Musk took Twitter private last week, Trump has suggested he would be happier sticking with his own Truth Social messaging platform. But the former president's network has financial issues and many political strategists believe he would find it hard to resist the influence offered by Twitter, where he was once one of the site's biggest global draws.

The financial fate of Truth Social could be determined at a crucial meeting expected on Thursday that could see one of the site's key backers dissolved. The announcement comes only days after the world's wealthiest man took sole control of the social media giant in a contentious \$44 billion deal, vowing to dial back content moderation. But the huge sum paid

for Twitter has heaped pressure on Musk to keep advertisers on board and keep a lid on offensive content.

Musk in his tweet on Wednesday also said he had talked to civil society leaders "about how Twitter will continue to combat hate & harassment & enforce its election integrity policies." This followed his reassurance over the weekend that the site would not become a "free-for-all hellscape," and announced the formation of a content moderation council. However on Sunday, Musk himself tweeted an anti-LGBT conspiracy theory about what happened the night US Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband was attacked, then hours later deleted the post.

'Most accurate'

In a sign that the approach to content moderation was a key concern, Musk praised the site for its handling of a White House tweet that users said exaggerated a claim that Biden had increased retirement benefits. The White House deleted the tweet after Twitter users flagged the post as lacking context. "Our goal is to make Twitter the most accurate source of information on Earth, without



CALIFORNIA: The Twitter logo is pictured at their headquarters in downtown San Francisco, California. —AFP

regard to political affiliation," Musk said. US conservatives complain of censorship on the major social networks and Musk staunchly defends looser moderation of content on Twitter in the name of free speech. Twitter's finances also remain a mystery going forward, with Musk on the hook to make huge loan repayments

after his buyout. Musk on Tuesday said the site will charge \$8 per month to verify users' accounts, arguing the plan would solve the platform's issues with bots and trolls while creating a new revenue stream for the company. Some users warned that they would simply leave the site if they were made to pay. —AFP

Business

Bank of England warns UK faces two-year recession

Bank of England announces biggest interest rate hike since 1989

LONDON: The Bank of England on Thursday announced its biggest interest rate hike since 1989 to combat sky-high inflation that it warned was pushing Britain into a recession set to last until mid-2024. Following a regular meeting, the BoE said it was lifting borrowing costs by 0.75 percentage points to three percent - the highest level since the 2008 global financial crisis - to cool UK inflation that it sees shortly peaking at a four-decade high near 11 percent.

"It is a tough road ahead," BoE governor Andrew Bailey told a press conference. "The sharp increase in energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made us poorer as a nation. The level of economic activity is likely to be flat and even fall for some time," he warned. The latest rate increase mirrors aggressive rate-tightening by central banks worldwide as food prices and energy bills soar. On Wednesday, the US Federal Reserve sprang a fourth consecutive hike of 0.75 percentage points - and its boss Jerome Powell suggested they would go higher than expected. The BoE said British inflation would peak at 10.9 percent this year, but with the level so high, analysts said the central bank rate could hit as high as five percent in the coming months.

'Prolonged recession'

Minutes of its meeting warned of a "challenging outlook for the UK economy" that was "expected to

be in recession for a prolonged period", dealing a blow to Britain's troubled government. The BoE said the economy had shrunk since the third quarter, entering a technical recession that is forecast to last until the first half of 2024. The pound tumbled two percent against the dollar on expectations of a long-lasting recession. "A typical textbook trade is out of the window because currencies usually move higher when a central bank increases rates," noted Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at Avatrade. "Tough times are ahead, and we are going to see the economy, markets, and the currency tanking in the coming months." London's FTSE 100 shares index fared better, losing about half-a-percent.

Cost-of-living crisis

The BoE rate increase is set to worsen a cost-of-living crisis for millions of Britons as hikes by central banks see retail lenders push up interest rates on their own loans. "The central bank has had the unenviable job of fighting soaring inflation amid enormous economic and political uncertainty," said Craig Erlam, analyst at trading platform OANDA. Repayments on UK mortgages have surged in recent weeks also after the debt-fuelled budget of previous British prime minister Liz Truss spooked markets, forcing her to resign and triggering emergency buying of UK government bonds by the BoE. Her successor Rishi Sunak has attempted to



LONDON: (Left to right) Bank of England Deputy Governor Ben Broadbent, Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey, Bank of England Secretary Sebastian Walsh and Bank of England Deputy Governor for Markets and Banking, Dave Ramsden address the media on the Monetary Policy Report at the Bank of England, in London, on November 3, 2022. — AFP

bring calm to markets by hinting at tax rises in a fresh budget on November 17, even if such a move further harms Britain's economy. "I think everyone knows we do face a challenging economic outlook and difficult decisions will need to be made," Sunak, a former UK finance minister, told parliament on Wednesday.

British annual inflation stands at 10.1 percent, the highest level in 40 years. As the COVID-19 pandemic

began in early 2020, the BoE slashed its key interest rate to a record-low 0.1 percent and also pumped massive sums of new cash into the economy. The Bank of England started raising rates last December, while Thursday's hike was the eighth increase in a row. "Importantly, most of the tightening in policy over the past year was yet to feed through to the real economy," said the BoE minutes.— AFP

Businesses consider pirated software to cut costs

KUWAIT: The latest Kaspersky report reveals 24% of companies with 50 to 999 employees are ready to use pirated alternatives of business software to decrease IT spending. Among small businesses (less than 50 employees), only 8% are ready to take this step. This measure can seriously affect corporate cyber safety, since adversaries actively distribute malicious files under the guise of most used software.

According to Kaspersky Security Network (KSN), in just eight months the total number of users who encountered malware and unwanted software masquerading as the most popular software products for

small and medium businesses was 9,685. In general, 4,525 unique malicious or potentially unwanted files were spread via unofficially distributed (including pirated) SMB-related software.

The Kaspersky study aims to explore which crisis management tactics business leaders find most successful, and how some steps can seriously affect a company's cyber resilience. Safe measures such as seeking lower-cost contractors and adopting free alternatives of usual software are most popular with the respondents, gaining 41% and 32% respectively, but 15% of surveyed business leaders would replace their software with a pirated version to cut costs.

As for the type of programs respondents believe they could replace with hacked copies, the majority chose project management, marketing and sales software - 41% even agree to use a pirated cybersecurity software. "A lack of resources is a common situation for small and medium businesses but use of a pirated or hacked software should be completely

excluded if an organization values its safety, reputation and income.

Pirated copies of software usually come with Trojans and miners and do not contain the fixes or patches released by developers to close vulnerabilities that might be exploited by cybercriminals. Official free alternatives are much better options for those who need to save money on IT," - comments Alexander Shlychov, Product Marketing Lead at Kaspersky

What types of software would you replace with a pirated alternative? To avoid data leakage and financial losses caused by infected software installation, implement the following Kaspersky's recommendations: -Make sure your employees use standard accounts without admin rights. That will prevent them from accidentally installing a Trojan mistaken for productivity software.

You can use free security solutions. They usually have less functions than paid products but still might

be very helpful. Choose a solution based on the independent tests' results, and download it directly from the developer's site. - To avoid paying a hidden miner electricity bills, try to constantly monitor your devices efficiency. If your gadget is slowing down, overheats and makes a lot of noise even when no one is using it, someone might have installed a miner on the device which is overloading the processor and video card. Use a security solution that detects not only malicious programs, but also potentially unwanted installations.

Update your operating system, security software, browser and all the programs you work with as soon as a new update comes out. Implement regular backups of important files in a cloud service and on alternative hardware. That will allow you to have a copy even if ransomware encrypts your data. A security solution with remediation feature will let you roll back actions performed by malware in the operating system, delivering protection against cryptolockers.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 3 NOVEMBER 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,064	1,110	1,111	1,062	49	35,857,273	55	5.21%	16.90%	1,092	1,111	18.1	2.11	2.2%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	342	342	345	340	5	12,909,253	2	0.59%	28.71%	338	346	18.1	1.56	1.9%	1.27
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	190	190	192	189	3	9,544,635	1	0.53%	-9.36%	186	194	34.4	0.61	2.0%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	218	219	219	214	5	5,017,191	2	0.92%	-8.39%	217	222	21.7	0.79	2.2%	1.29
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	813	808	817	802	15	93,556,225	7	0.87%	6.83%	807	815	27.5	3.36	1.3%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	811	821	837	811	26	5,740,318	10	1.23%	15.25%	813	822	54.0	3.29	0.5%	1.09
204	National Investments	Financial Services	237	257	260	235	25	5,527,852	23	9.83%	17.35%	248	257	9.2	0.98	18.2%	1.83
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	122	118	123	117	6	10,372,993	-2	-1.67%	-16.90%	116	122	305.1	0.63	4.2%	0.96
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	74	74.5	75	74	1	1,555,671	0.6	0.81%	-36.86%	72.8	78.0	-	0.44	12.1%	1.24
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	109	104	112	103	9	44,338,872	-3	-2.80%	-40.16%	99.5	108	12.8	0.77	2.8%	1.11
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	875	875	893	853	40	1,775,068	6	0.69%	16.96%	875	889	18.4	1.96	1.5%	1.04
501	National Industries	Financial Services	231	237	240	230	10	27,620,091	8	3.49%	-1.64%	232	247	5.5	1.00	4.6%	1.50
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,150	1,206	1,228	1,150	78	888,160	70	6.16%	38.46%	1,202	1,226	11.1	1.11	5.0%	0.98
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	794	798	801	792	9	1,812,191	5	0.63%	-6.34%	790	820	9.0	1.63	7.5%	0.94
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	265	248	267	246	21	3,818,933	-12	-4.62%	-28.53%	240	256	9.5	0.61	7.3%	1.06
603	Agility	Industrials	780	778	795	772	23	20,364,279	11	1.43%	-1.21%	769	788	59.9	1.33	2.1%	1.56
605	Zain	Telecommunications	598	600	605	596	9	17,932,167	3	0.50%	0.84%	599	605	14.3	2.20	5.5%	0.79
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,330	3,371	3,429	3,330	99	611,473	43	1.29%	4.56%	3,350	3,400	7.1	3.41	11.8%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	165	166	172	162	10	56,131,154	3	1.84%	-23.85%	162	167	-	0.61	0.0%	1.17
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,659	1,731	1,760	1,659	101	1,460,600	72	4.34%	34.19%	1,700	1,780	13.3	10.33	2.6%	1.44
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
821	Warba Bank	Banking	242	241	244	239	5	11,471,158	1	0.42%	-12.04%	240	243	24.4	1.33	0.0%	1.08
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	368	358	371	352	19	5,848,422	-8	-2.19%	-38.00%	352	360	36.9	1.05	4.4%	0.48
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	324	330	336	321	15	28,462,366	6	1.85%	-10.81%	321	345	25.0	1.35	3.1%	0.72
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	189	193	193	189	4	2,534,003	3	1.58%	-15.35%	189	195	14.8	2.17	9.3%	0.47
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,265	2,305	2,395	2,235	160	774,898	84	3.78%	14.11%	2,287	2,350	24.1	7.42	2.8%	0.94
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	796	805	806	785	21	2,167,694	9	1.13%	-	800	830	12.5	3.69	0.06	0.36

* As of end of week closing

Business

Philip Morris International eyes a 'smoke-free future'

'If you don't smoke, don't start. If you smoke, quit. If you don't quit, change'

News in brief

German car sales climb

BERLIN: German car sales rose in October, official data showed Thursday, but analysts were still pessimistic as soaring prices and recession fears clouded the outlook. Around 208,000 new cars were registered last month, the KBA federal transport authority said in a statement—a 16.8-percent increase from a year earlier. But the jump mainly reflected last year's "record low" in October, when manufacturers were blighted by acute supply chain issues, the VDIK car importers' federation president Reinhard Zirpel said. October's figures were still "the second weakest" on record and "well below the long term average", Zirpel said. Carmakers' sales were boosted by big order backlogs, which they were slowly working through as supply issues eased, he said. Auto manufacturers have for months had to deal with supply issues, with shortages of key components leading to intermittent production stops and a slump in sales.

BMW sees profits jump

FRANKFURT: German automaker BMW reported Thursday a 23-percent increase in third-quarter profit thanks to robust demand for pricier luxury models, but it warned that soaring inflation could limit purchases from consumers. The Munich-based group said it had booked a net profit of nearly 3.2 billion euros (\$3.1 billion), up from 2.6 billion euros between July and September last year. Car deliveries, however, were down nearly one percent over the period, as the industry continues to grapple with supply chain disruptions and COVID lockdowns in China. BMW said "higher prices" for its premium vehicles had helped deliver a "solid" third quarter. The group said it was on track to meet its full-year earnings targets. Although the overall sales volume was expected to be "slightly lower" than in 2021, sales of fully-electric vehicles should still double, it said.

Uniper posts huge loss

FRANKFURT: Gas giant Uniper reported one of the biggest losses in German corporate history on Thursday, weeks after reaching a deal to be nationalized as Russia throttles energy supplies. The net loss of 40 billion euros (\$39 billion) for the first nine months of the year came after the company had to pay sky-high gas prices following Moscow's closure of a key pipeline. "Uniper has for some time been procuring gas at significantly higher prices," said the company's chief financial officer Tiina Tuomela. This has "left massive scars in our financial results," she added. Moscow's move to slash gas deliveries, in suspected relation for sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine, has plunged Europe into an energy crisis. Germany has been particularly hard hit as it had relied heavily on Russian energy. Europe's top economy is scrambling to find new supplies and has unveiled a 200-billion-euro fund to help households and businesses.

Dutch ING profit drops

THE HAGUE: Dutch banking giant ING reported a sharp drop in third-quarter profit on Thursday as it took a hit from new mortgage rules in Poland and cited a "challenging" geopolitical environment. ING said that its net profit reached 979 million euros (\$958 million) in the third quarter, down 28.4 percent from the same period last year. The bank said its Polish unit took a 343-million-euro hit from new regulations allowing borrowers to suspend mortgage loan payments. Turnover fell by five percent to 4.4 billion euros, with the bank saying it would have topped five billion euros if it had not been impacted by the mortgage rules in Poland and a 288-million-euro charge related to a hedge accounting adjustment. The Dutch bank also announced a share buyback of 1.5 billion euros. "I'm pleased with our solid performance, especially in light of the challenging economic and geopolitical environment," chief executive Steven van Rijswijk said.

Norway bank hikes rate

OSLO: Norway's central bank raised its main interest rate to its highest since 2009 on Thursday in another busy week for global policymakers fighting soaring inflation. The move came a day after the US Federal Reserve lifted its rate again by a hefty 0.75 percentage points and ahead of a similar decision expected by the Bank of England later Thursday. The Norwegian central bank lifted its rate by 0.25 percentage points, taking it to 2.5 percent. While economists widely expected the move, the size of the increase was unknown. It was the fourth consecutive hike, but lower than the three previous increases of 0.5 percentage points. Norge Bank warned that it would likely raise its policy rate again in December. "Economic activity is high in Norway, and unemployment is at a historically low level. Inflation has continued to edge higher and is — From AFP

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Tobacco is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing more than 8 million people a year, including around 1.2 million deaths from exposure to second-hand smoke, according to World Health Organization. Although the majority of smokers know the risks, yet many plan to never quit. With their message 'If you don't smoke, don't start. If you smoke, quit. If you don't quit, change,' Kuwait Times visited the Cube, Philip Morris International's (PMI) research and development center located in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, to learn more about PMI's reduced-risk products and its vision for a smoke-free future.

During the trip sponsored by Philip Morris, Kuwait Times learned more about the steps the company is taking toward a smoke-free future. They are determined to decrease the danger associated with tobacco smoking, particularly among young people, so the research team invented heated-not-burn tobacco products that aim to achieve an era without smoking.

Tommaso Di Giovanni, Vice President of International Communications at PMI, said Philip Morris International has been working hard over the last few years to achieve a smoke-free environment, noting that it is actively working to expand and evolve into a broader lifestyle, consumer wellness and health-care company.

PMI has been leveraging careful research and development at The Cube facility for over a decade and has more recently set an ambitious target of having its smoke-free products account for 50 percent of total revenue by 2025. Giovanni explained that PMI aims to completely phase out cigarettes and replace them with better products, where they are working toward extending their value proposition and innovative capability to commercialize products that go beyond tobacco and nicotine.

He explained that smoke-free products are not for people who do not use tobacco or nicotine products. "Smoke-free products are intended for one audience — adult nicotine product users. Tobacco harm reduction can complement already existing tobacco control measures like prevention and cessation and encourage adult smokers who would otherwise continue to smoke to switch to scientifically substantiated better alternatives than cigarettes," he said.

Giovanni mentioned that PMI has more than 930 employees including scientists, engineers, technicians, and support staff. "Philip Morris International has invested over \$9 billion. It is the 45th largest patent filer in EU, the only tobacco company in the top 100 and

has over 425 peer-reviewed publications and chapters on smoke-free products."

Manager Study Outsourcing at PMI, Ashraf Elamin, gave a scientific overview to the media. "Harm reduction uses these advances to reduce the negative effects of potentially harmful behaviors. The reduction in harmful chemicals does not mean they're risk-free. They still deliver nicotine, which while addictive, is not the primary cause of smoking-related diseases." PMI's smoke-free products launched in key cities in 70 markets, where approximately 13.2 million adult smokers around the world have already switched to IQOS. It expects IQOS to be in 100 markets in the next five years.

Companies like PMI are embracing business transformation so they can be more accountable for their actions. In fact, studies show that over 90 percent of consumers admire brands and organizations that are transparent about their business. PMI's research and development efforts are focused on the science behind the harmful effects of smoking, and how the very power of scientific research can validate the creation and production of preferred alternatives.

PMI's ambition is for smoke-free products to account for more than 50 percent of total net revenues



risk tobacco products (MRTPs), finding that exposure modification orders for these products are appropriate to promote public health. In 2009 PMI launched 'The Cube'; the company is committed to investing in novel technologies and contributing significantly to the innovation landscape. PMI is hoping to inform smokers that alternative products can be just as satisfactory without anything near the amount of harm of cigarettes.

Not every business that develops a new transforma-



by 2025. It believes that with the right regulatory frameworks, dialogue, and support from civil society, cigarette sales can end within 10 to 15 years in many countries. The company's current product portfolio primarily consists of cigarettes and smoke-free products, including heat-not-burn, vapor, and oral nicotine products, which are sold in markets around the world.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has also authorized the marketing of versions of PMI's IQOS Platform 1 devices and consumables as modified

tional model succeeds in the process. It takes rigorous innovation and constant learning and relearning within the business, plus dedication and sound investment into research and development capabilities, to achieve lasting business transformation. As PMI continues to work towards a smoke free future, the company recognizes that successful absolute of its core product is a long-term process. Its longstanding commitment to research and development efforts at the Cube, however, is an indication that the company is on the right path.

Europe could face gas shortage next year: IEA

PARIS: Europe must act immediately to prevent a shortage of natural gas next year as Russia slashes deliveries in the wake of the Ukraine war, the International Energy Agency warned Thursday. The region could lack 30 billion cubic meters that it needs "to fuel its economy and sufficiently refill storage sites

Trend Micro showcases solutions to safeguard digital environments

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Digital Transformation Conference and the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) welcomed attendees on Wednesday for immersive sessions and panel discussions, with experts sharing insights on adopting smart and digital technologies in line with Kuwait's 2035 vision at Jumeirah Messila Beach Resort & Spa.

More than 500 specialists and executives in the field of digitization in the country, ICT experts, solution providers and leading international consultants discussed the latest plans and innovations in the digital transformation journey that the country is going through, as well as presenting global best practices and innovative solutions to overcome challenges and ensure access to successful and secure digitization of processes and services. Kuwait Times spoke to Assad Arabi, Managing Director, Gulf Cluster, Trend Micro to learn more about the company's role at the conference.

Kuwait Times: Can you tell us more about Trend Micro?

Assad Arabi: Trend Micro is a global cybersecurity leader helping businesses, government entities and individuals to securely exchange digital information. We safeguard the digital infrastructure of millions of people across clouds, networks, devices and endpoints, leveraging our decades of security knowledge, extensive threat analysis and industry-leading innovative solutions. As a pioneer in enterprise and cloud cybersecurity, we also provide robust multilayered security solutions that are optimized for AWS, Microsoft and Google environments, and offer central visibility for better and quicker detection and response.

Kuwait Times: What will Trend Micro be presenting at Digital Transformation Kuwait Conference 2022?

Arabi: At the Digital Transformation Kuwait Conference 2022, Trend Micro will showcase our extensive range of state-of-the-art, multi-layered security solutions specifically designed to safeguard the digital transformation journeys of organizations across both public and private sectors and help enterprises in Kuwait overcome some of today's most complex challenges presented by the modern evolving threat landscape. Key solutions that we will present include Trend Micro Vision One, which leverages AI and predictive machine learning to detect threat campaigns earlier, optimize workflows, and orchestrate response across multiple vectors and improve mean-time-to-respond. We will also showcase our Trend Micro Cloud App Security solution which provides protection against

during the summer of 2023, jeopardizing its preparations for the winter of 2023-24," the Paris-based agency said in a report.

The IEA said the shortfall would occur if Russia stops pipelines deliveries completely and China steps up its imports of liquefied natural gas, which Europe has relied upon to replace Russian supplies. Russia drastically cut supplies to Europe in suspected retaliation against Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine, but the region was able to fill storage sites for this upcoming winter.

Moscow delivered 60 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe this year, but the IEA said in a report that it is "highly unlikely" that Russia will provide the same amount in 2023 and could cease deliveries entirely.

modern day threats.

Our participation in Digital Transformation Kuwait Conference 2022 comes in line with our effort to secure the digital journeys of organizations and communities in the country. We are committed to securing the country's digital environments by empowering security teams to utilize the best innovations and adopt future-proof strategies that are crucial to advancing cybersecurity across industries. We look forward to supporting and enhancing the progressive strides of governments, private and public organizations, and communities at large.

Kuwait Times: How important is cybersecurity and how does it relate to actualizing Kuwait's 2035 vision?

Arabi: Kuwait is currently at the forefront of technology adoption and digital infrastructure improvement. The high reliance on technology necessitates sophisticated cyber security solutions that provide the necessary security foundation. Trend Micro strives to provide enterprises with solutions and services that will assist them in keeping up with today's accelerated digital world transformation. More significantly, present innovations and methods that will allow them to not only adapt to future challenges but also increase their operational capabilities as they work toward their digital goals.

Kuwait Times: Why is it important to support the Digital Transformation Kuwait Conference?

Arabi: Organizations across Kuwait and the wider Middle East are operating in a rapidly evolving digital world. Digital transformation is presenting unprecedented opportunity for public and private organizations to realize new possibilities and explore new opportunities for growth and scale. At the same time, however, the increasing digital landscape has also given rise to cyber-attacks in the post pandemic era. In fact, in the first half of 2022 alone, Trend Micro blocked and detected over 97 million threats, with organizations across the region facing significant rise in cyber threats due to the widespread adoption of new technologies catering to the remote work model and evolved digital environments.

At Trend Micro, we recognize the role that advanced cybersecurity plays in empowering organizations to securely accelerate their growth and development. And we are committed to spreading awareness on the necessities of cybersecurity across the country, as we aim to reach more organizations and individuals to support their digital journeys.

That's why it's important for us to participate in events like the Digital Transformation Kuwait Conference. They provide an invaluable opportunity to raise cybersecurity awareness and strengthen the country's security posture. As an industry, it is important that we are enabled to engage and interact with local experts, decision-makers and industry leaders to raise awareness of today's threat landscape, tools and strategies that are required to face digital challenges. Events like these enable us to both showcase solutions that will enable safe, secure digital



Assad Arabi, Managing Director GC Trend Micro

transformation, while simultaneously exchanging best practices and insights as we collectively work towards the overall mission of protecting Kuwait against increased cyber threat in the digital era.

Kuwait Times: Why do organizations need to adopt better cybersecurity strategies?

Arabi: Today's accelerated digital world provides more opportunities to connect, communicate, and increase productivity than ever before. The natural response to adopting innovations to make work and life easier is to proactively incorporate cybersecurity practices in all digital activities. And now, protecting their digital activities has become a top priority, as nearly every modern device in use, one way or another, is connected to a system or network.

This leads us to today's organizations and institutions that have shifted to hybrid or remote work and learning models. These remotely located access points can create complexities within a network, which must be protected with the most highly sophisticated solutions and industry-leading strategies in cybersecurity.

So as the attack surface continues to expand, so too do the hurdles in the way of enterprises striving to achieve their organizational goals amid an unprecedented digital era. As we saw in the latest figures highlighted in Trend Micro 2022 Midyear Cybersecurity Report, over 7 million email threats, more than 1.8 million malware attacks, and over 1 million URL victims' attacks were detected and blocked across Kuwait.

And as the country continues to advance their hybrid and remote work environments, Smart Home Network (SHN) solutions shielded home devices and prevented 138,000 SHN events. It's alarming figures such as these that illustrate why robust, trusted cybersecurity should be taken into close consideration, and why adopting multi-layered solutions is crucial if organizations are to protect their operations against more sophisticated attacks in the future.

Lifestyle | Features

REHAB FOR EGYPT'S 'BRITNEY' STIRS TALK ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In past weeks, the story of an Egyptian pop star admitted into a rehabilitation facility has spilled beyond celebrity gossip, and sparked new debate on women's rights in the conservative country. Sherine Abdel Wahab has long been a darling of Arab pop, but recent events

Mahmoud Salem wrote on Facebook. "A rich and successful star and based on her choices and her haircut, people decided that she is not OK-her parents placed her in a facility against her will and say she is incompetent and in need of guardianship."

cussion, conflicting versions of events have emerged from her family and her ex-husband, singer Hossam Habib. The Abdel Wahab family has accused her ex-husband of being violent and wanting to take advantage of the singer's fame and money, which Habib denies.



In this file photo Egyptian singer Sherine Abdel Wahab performs at the Roman amphitheatre during the 53rd session of the Carthage International Festival near Tunisia's capital Tunis.—AFP photos

have earned her the title of Egypt's Britney Spears—not for her musical talent but because of her family's efforts to portray her as unfit to manage her own affairs. Her fanbase was shocked when she appeared sporting a dramatic new buzzcut, but when she was admitted into a rehabilitation facility last month for an unspecified addiction it sparked a groundswell of debate.

Questions of consent and coercion were raised in a country where, in 2021, the government proposed—without success—a draft bill aimed at restricting the rights of nearly 50 million Egyptian women by, for example, allowing their fathers or their brothers to annul their marriages. Nearly eight million women out of Egypt's 104 million people were victims of violence committed by their partners or relatives, or by strangers in public spaces, according to a United Nations survey conducted in 2015.

Abdel Wahab's brother and Habib both spoke by phone on different days to tell their side of the story on the program "Al-Hekaya" anchored by Amr Adib, one of Egypt's most watched talk show hosts.

"My mother was begging me to save her from her addiction," Mohammed Abdel Wahab said, accusing Habib of beating her and saying he had been forced to admit her into rehab. "I have never been violent towards a woman, and I never took a pound from Sherine," her ex-husband replied.

'Forcibly disappeared'

But weeks into her rehab stint, one voice has been missing from the raging debate—that of Abdel Wahab herself. In her last TV appearance in early October, Abdel Wahab—usually known for her candour, which has often landed her in trouble—spoke cryptically of her supposed addiction. "You can be addicted to medicine, to food, to bad habits, it is not just drugs," she said. In the online din, misinformation has thrived, including claims that the singer had died, slipped into a coma and travelled to Europe. A recording circulated on social media claimed to be a leaked phone call in which Abdel Wahab said she was a victim of "a conspiracy".

Viewed by 1.6 million people on Facebook alone, the video was proven



In this file photo Egyptian singer Sherine Abdel Wahab performs at the Roman amphitheatre during the 43rd session of the Carthage International Festival near Tunisia's capital Tunis.



In this file photo Egyptian singer Sherine Abdel Wahab performs at the Roman amphitheatre during the 45th session of the Carthage International Festival near Tunisia's capital Tunis.

to be an old voice clip from 2019 by AFP fact-checkers. But the absence of clarity hasn't prevented people from weighing in. "Sherine Abdel Wahab was kidnapped, she is forcibly disappeared by her family because of her personal choices, as an adult, successful woman," Mahmoud Salem alleged in his Facebook post, reviving the #FreeBritney hashtag used to campaign for the US songstress's release from her father's conservatorship.

Her lawyer Yasser Qantoush, who in mid-October accused the family of entering her home and having her committed against her will, has since withdrawn his complaint from the public prosecutor's office. "I saw the medical reports deeming hospitalization necessary," Qantoush told Adib on television. "Sherine is a rare

talent, she took up the torch of the great voices of the Arab world," said Tarek Mortada, spokesman of the Egyptian musicians' union, comparing her to Arab divas like Oum Kalthoum and Fairouz.

Her first album 'Free Mix 3' recorded with another star singer Tamer Hosni, sold more than 20 million copies. With seven albums, a film, a TV series role and a seat as a judge on the Arabic version of "The Voice" talent show, the 42-year-old singer fascinates her public. "Whether we love her or hate her, her name is engraved on our hearts," Mortada said. "Sherine Abdel Wahab is a victim of her own success, too many people want something from her."—AFP



Celine Dion

Celine Dion stars as herself in rom-com due in 2023

International music icon Celine Dion announced Wednesday she will star in a romantic comedy called "Love again," which will be released in theaters in 2023 — and in which she will play herself. "See you at the movies!" wrote the Quebecer on social networks, noting that she will act alongside Indian Bollywood film star Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Scotland's Sam Heughan, known for his role in the drama series "Outlander." Dion also said she will unveil new songs for the Sony-produced film, which will hit the big screen on May 12.

The film directed by Jim Strouse ("The Incredible Jessica James") tells the story of a young woman who continues to text her fiancé after his death. A romance is born with the new owner of the phone number, a journalist, thanks to Celine Dion, whose profile he must write.

In April, the 54-year-old star had postponed to 2023 all the concerts of her "Courage World Tour" scheduled for Europe this year, due to persistent health problems. In recent years, the Canadian diva has been forced to cancel and postpone numerous performances for medical reasons and because of the pandemic.—AFP

Punk poet Patti Smith says writing is her 'essential' art form

Her Godmother of Punk Rock icon status made her a household name, but for Patti Smith, it's writing where she finds her true artistic voice. Along with her musical performance and literary pursuits, Smith is a painter and photographer, but if she had to choose one form? "I'd pick writing." "Writing is my most essential form of expression," the artist told AFP in Chicago, where she recently received the prestigious Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. Smith, who was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2007, is perhaps best known for her seminal punk album "Horses."



But poetry was an earlier love, and "Horses" begins with lines from a poem that she penned. "Performing poetry, reading poetry was very strong in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s," she said. But "I had so much energy and was really a child of rock and roll, so standing there reading a poem was never satisfying to me," Smith continued. "I quickly merged my poems with a few chords as something to propel me to improvise more poetry, and it sort of evolved into a rock and roll band."

While Smith's album and her band went on to critical acclaim, writing always was at its backbone, she said, pointing to her song "Redondo Beach" which was initially a poem. "Throughout all my albums and even the prose that I write, poetry is still a thread," she said. "Horses" is widely considered one of the best albums of all time, but for Smith it was her 2010 book "Just Kids"—a memoir she promised her best friend and muse Robert Mapplethorpe that she would write hours before he died—that became her life's greatest success.

"I'd never written a book of nonfiction, but he asked me if I would write our story," she

recalled. Mapplethorpe, a photographer, died at age 42. He and Smith shared a deep friendship, romance and lifelong creative bond. "My greatest success in my life has been the book that he asked me to write and it almost makes me cry. Robert got his wish and I kept my vow and wrote the book as best I could."

"Just Kids" won The National Book Award and introduced Smith to an entirely new generation of fans, while outselling all of her music albums along the way. She said young people used to tell her "Horses" changed their lives—but "it was usurped by 'Kids.'" "I think it's really opened up many doors for me," she continued. "Other books were examined and people read them and now when we have our concerts, it's a wonderful thing to step on stage and see a sea of people under 30, even under 25." "To see all these young people who are interested in your work and giving of their energy, I'm so grateful for that."

People power

Smith, who turns 76 this December, said she has no plans to slow her output. She's set to release "A Book of Days" later this month, a volume based on her Instagram account's musings. She's also considering a serialized book entitled "The Melting," based on her Substack account posts. Smith has maintained her prolific output for years but she says "things don't necessarily come easy."

"I've had to plug away my whole life." She considers herself an optimist but she's "deeply concerned and heartbroken" about the state of the world right now, citing environmental crises along with the rise of nationalism globally and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"There's so many things happening simultaneously right now, it's overwhelming," she said. "But I have kids, so I'm always seeking in my mind ways to make the world better for them." Persevering means writing daily and trying her best to help others. "We just have to keep doing our work and find a way to keep ourselves healthy and just help one another. It seems so elemental but it's also required," she said. Smith said she's working on writing a new song inspired by the women protesting in Iran, and still believes, like one of her famous songs, that people have the power. "I absolutely believe it," she said. "It's just whether we choose to use it or not. That's what the women of Iran are doing." "That's the only tool we have."—AFP



Make glasses cool with new emojis, urges UK schoolgirl

British schoolgirl Lowri Moore is just 13 but has achieved a lot in her short life, championing children who like her wear glasses. Aged nine, she persuaded Disney to create a bespectacled heroine for the first time, in the hit film "Encanto". Her #GlassesOn campaign has meanwhile struck a chord with thousands of young people and their parents around the world. Now she has another US giant in her sights. The teenager from Nottinghamshire, central England, is urging the body responsible for all new emojis to give people the option to put glasses on them.

She says many people believe that children being stigmatised for wearing glasses is a thing of the past. But she argues many children still resist wearing their glasses for fear of appearing "different or uncool". Research shows children with spectacles are over 35 percent more likely to be bullied at school, and not wearing them can have far-reaching consequences. "We are in touch with a professor who works in Botswana to give children glasses and he said that most of the children that get glasses don't want to wear them for fear of being different and not cool," Lowri told AFP.

'Biggest fan'

She said that without glasses you need, "you won't be able to learn and that will limit your job options and you will probably really struggle in life all because you didn't wear your glasses. That's not fair." Lowri's latest campaign was sparked when her mother Cyrilyn tried to find an emoji relevant to her daughter. "She was looking for an emoji that would represent me but all she found was a nerd." "She kept on looking and there was a granny and a teacher but obviously that doesn't

represent me," she said. Lowri said it was great there were some bespectacled emojis, but three were not enough.

"It's not really positive so we're just asking for the option of putting glasses onto already existing emojis," she said after handing in copies of her letter at the London offices of tech giants Google and Meta on Wednesday. Lowri's campaigning began in 2019 when she wrote to Disney calling for more characters with glasses in their films.

Two years later, the "Encanto" character Mirabel Madrigal hit the big screen. Director Jared Bush revealed he had been inspired by the schoolgirl's letter, telling her: "I am your biggest fan, I'm so impressed by you." The director also said he had wanted to let her know much earlier, but had to keep it secret until the movie was in the bag.

'Negative stereotypes'

In her latest letter, Lowri praised the Unicode Consortium, the non-profit organisation based in California that oversees new emojis, for offering users more choice. But she urged them to go further. "I'd love to see the option to add glasses to face emojis, similar to changing skin colour or hair colour as you have already made available," she wrote. Having the current "nerd" emoji as the only one available for young people could be "damaging as it helps to confirm the negative stereotype and stigma that we are trying hard to destroy," she added.

Lowri's campaigning success was recognized earlier this year when she was named "Campaigner of the Year" by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). Failing to wear glasses can prevent children's eyes from developing normally and lead to avoidable eye conditions. Jessica Thompson of the IAPB, which works in over 100 countries worldwide, said Lowri's advocacy was helping to highlight the damage to children's futures of not wearing glasses. "If you struggle to see, you struggle to learn," she told AFP. Wearing glasses was the single "most effective" health intervention for schoolchildren, "reducing the odds of failing a class by 44 percent", she added.—AFP

US lottery jackpot swells to \$1.2 billion

The grand prize for Wednesday night's Powerball lottery has surged to over \$1.2 billion, its organizers estimate, which would make it the fourth-highest jackpot in US lotto history. With no winning ticket sold over the previous 38 Powerball drawings, the jackpot has been steadily growing for three months. If a single lucky winner matches all six numbers Wednesday night, they will have the option of accepting the \$1.2 billion as an annuity, paid out over three decades, or taking a lump sum cash payment, estimated by Powerball at \$596.7 million.

The jackpot, the which is the second-

highest in Powerball history and the fourth-highest in the United States overall, would be split evenly if multiple winning tickets are sold. Taxes will inevitably gobble up a significant chunk of any prize, still leaving an extraordinarily large payout for the gamble of a \$2 ticket. Lottery winners are generally advised to immediately seek assistance from financial advisors, even before claiming the prize money. The biggest jackpot in the world ever won was \$1.586 billion, split among three Powerball ticket holders in January 2016.

In July, one ticketholder won a \$1.3 billion jackpot, the third-highest ever, in the other national US lottery, Mega Millions. The second-biggest prize ever and the highest won by a single person was in an October 2018 Mega Millions drawing for \$1.5 billion. The odds of winning the Powerball jackpot are one in 292.2 million-

much higher than the one-in-a-million chance of being struck by lightning, according to US government data. Powerball tickets are sold in 45 states, the US capital of Washington, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.—AFP



In this file photo a customer picks up her California Powerball lottery tickets in Hawthorne, California.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features



The sun rises behind the skyline of Egypt's capital Cairo and its Nile river island of Manial.



A picture shows a view of sand dunes on the bank of the Nile River.

Nile is in mortal danger, from its source to the sea

The pharaohs worshipped it as a god, the eternal bringer of life. But the clock is ticking on the Nile. Climate change, pollution and exploitation by man are putting existential pressure on the world's second longest river, on which half a billion people depend for survival. All along its 6,500-kilometre (4,000-mile) length, alarm bells are ringing. From Egypt to Uganda, AFP teams

per second to 2,830 cubic meters.

Yet it could get much, much worse. With multiple droughts in east Africa, its flow could fall by 70 percent, according to the United Nations' most dire predictions. Every year for the past six decades, the Mediterranean has eaten away between 35 and 75 meters (38-82 yards) of the Nile Delta. If the sea level rises even by a meter, a third of this intensely fertile

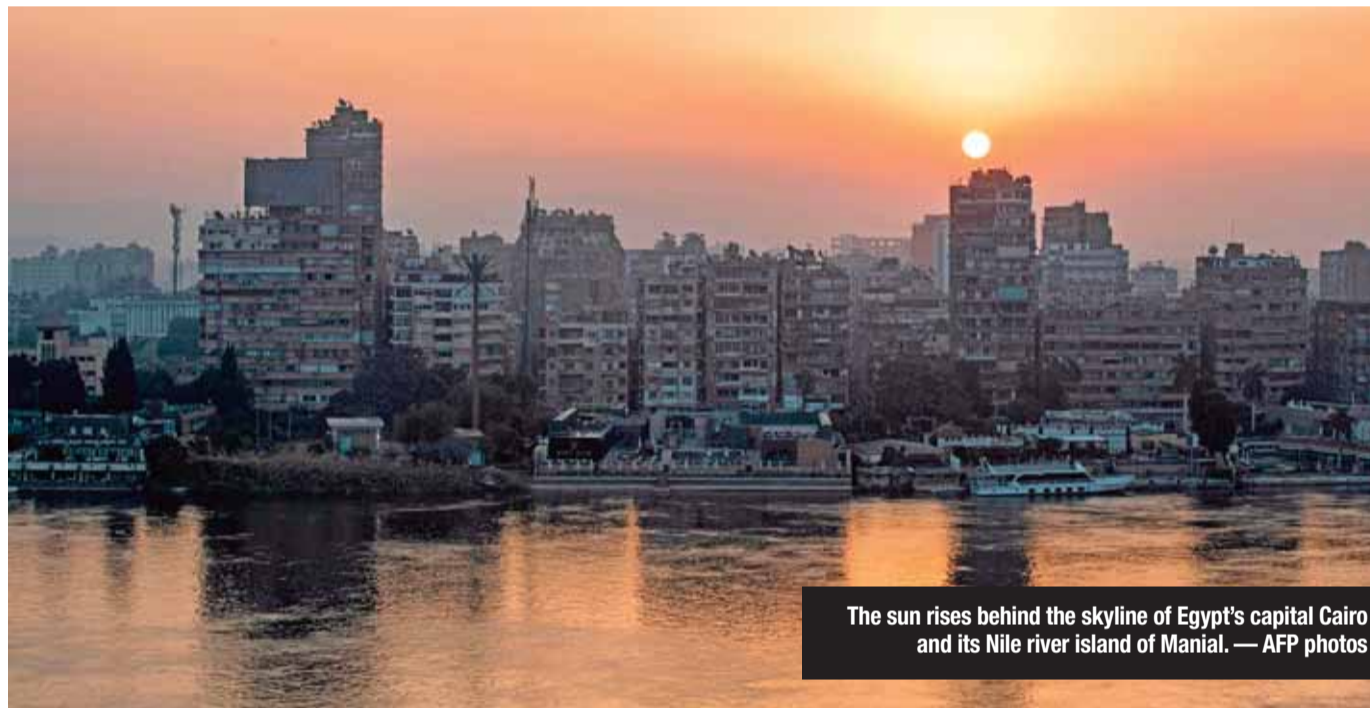
tract them are half covered by water and sand. The sea ate three kilometers into the Nile Delta between 1968 and 2009, with the river's weaker flow unable to hold back the Mediterranean, which rose some 15 centimeters (six inches) over the last century due to climate change. The silt that for millennia formed a barrier to protect the land no longer makes it to the sea.

seems as yet far from danger. But all is not well, said Sayed Mohammed, 73, who supports his 14 children and grandchildren growing rice and corn in fields sandwiched between the Nile and a road cacophonous with car horns. Salt from the Mediterranean has already seeped into large swathes of land, killing and weakening plants. Farmers say their vegetables no longer taste the same. To compensate for the salination of the soil, they have to pump more fresh water onto it from the Nile.

For 40 years Mohammed and his neighbors used pumps that guzzled diesel and electricity. The cost strangled villagers whose income was already being eaten up by inflation and devaluations of the Egyptian pound. So much so that in some parts of the Delta fields were abandoned. But the old man, who sports a djellaba and a traditional woollen cap, has been helped by a new irrigation system driven by solar energy which aims to increase farmers' incomes to stop more people fleeing the land. Thanks to the 400 solar panels the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization financed for Kafr El-Dawar, he can water his half hectare (1.2 acres) of ground.

Solar power saves "farmers about 50 percent" of pumping costs, local irrigation chief Amr Al-Daqaq told AFP. And they can also sell the surplus power the panels produce to the national grid. Even so, none of Mohammed's descendants want to take on the farm. For the Mediterranean may eventually swallow up 100,000 hectares of the region's prime agricultural land, according to UNEP, covering an area nearly 10 times the size of Paris. Which would be a disaster for Egypt, with the Delta the source of between 30 and 40 percent of the nation's agricultural output.

All but three percent of Egypt's 104 million people live along the river on just eight percent of the country's territory. It is a similar story in neighboring Sudan, with half its 45 million people living along its banks, and the Nile supplying two-thirds of its water. By 2050 the population of both countries will have doubled, and it will be two or three degrees hotter. The UN's group of climate experts, the IPCC, say the impact on the Nile will be catastrophic.—AFP



The sun rises behind the skyline of Egypt's capital Cairo and its Nile river island of Manial. — AFP photos

have gone out on the ground to gauge the decline of a river that drains a tenth of the African continent. At its mouth on the Mediterranean, Sayed Mohammed is watching Egypt's fertile Nile Delta disappear. In Sudan, fellow farmer Mohammed Jomaa fears for his harvests, while at its threatened source in Uganda, there is less and less hydroelectric power for Christine Nalwadda Kalema to light her mud and wattle home.

"The Nile is the most important thing for us," said Jomaa, who at 17 is the latest generation of his family to work the river's rich banks at Alty in Gezira state. "We certainly do not wish for anything to change," he said. But the Nile is no longer the unperturbable river of myth. In half a century its flow has dropped from 3,000 cubic meters (10,600 cubic feet)

region could disappear, the UN fears, forcing nine million people from their homes. What was once a bread basket has become the third most vulnerable place on the planet to climate change. Lake Victoria, the Nile's biggest source of water after rainfall, could also dry up due to drought, evaporation and slow tilts in the Earth's axis. With such grim scenarios in store, governments have scrambled to capture its flow. But experts say dams are only hastening the coming catastrophe.

Land lost to sea

At the mouth of the Nile, the promontories of Damietta and Rosetta that once stuck out into the Mediterranean in northern Egypt have disappeared. The concrete barriers that were supposed to pro-

tect them are half covered by water and sand. The sea ate three kilometers into the Nile Delta between 1968 and 2009, with the river's weaker flow unable to hold back the Mediterranean, which rose some 15 centimeters (six inches) over the last century due to climate change. The silt that for millennia formed a barrier to protect the land no longer makes it to the sea.

Poisoned by salt

Fifteen kilometers inland, the bustling farming community of Kafr El-Dawar

Controversial monkey study reignites animal testing debate

Other monkeys permanently separated from their newborns sometimes find comfort in plush toys: this recent finding from Harvard experiments has set off intense controversy among scientists and reignited the ethical debate over animal testing. The paper, "Triggers for mother love" was authored by neuroscientist Margaret Livingstone and appeared in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) in September to little fanfare or media coverage. But once news of the study began spreading on social media, it provoked a firestorm of criticism and eventually a letter to PNAS signed by over 250 scientists calling for a retraction.

Animal rights groups meanwhile recalled Livingstone's past work, that included temporarily suturing shut the eyelids of infant monkeys in order to study the impact on their cognition. "We cannot ask monkeys for consent, but we can stop using, publishing, and in this case actively promoting cruel methods that knowingly cause extreme distress," wrote Catherine Hobaiter, a primatologist at the University of St Andrews, who co-authored the retraction letter. Hobaiter told AFP she was awaiting a response from the journal before further comment, but expected news soon.

Harvard and Livingstone, for their part, have strongly defended the research. Livingstone's observations "can help sci-

entists understand maternal bonding in humans and can inform comforting interventions to help women cope with loss in the immediate aftermath of suffering a miscarriage or experiencing a still birth," said Harvard Medical School in a statement. Livingstone, in a separate statement, said: "I have joined the ranks of scientists targeted and demonized by opponents of animal research, who seek to abolish lifesaving research in all animals."



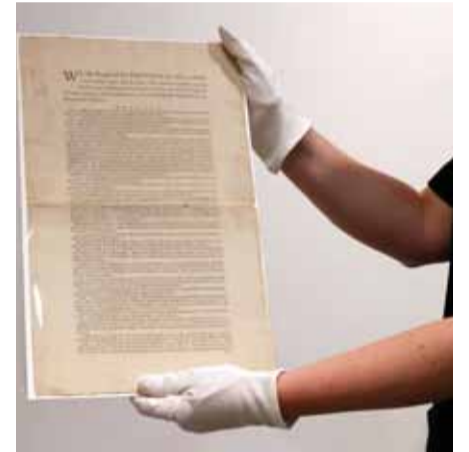
Such work routinely attracts the ire of groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which opposes all forms of animal testing. This controversy has notably provoked strong responses in the scientific community, particularly from animal behavior researchers and primatologists, said Alan McElligot of the City University of Hong Kong's Centre for Animal Health and a co-signer of the PNAS letter.

He told AFP that Livingstone appears to have replicated research performed by Harry Harlow, a notorious American psychologist, from the mid-20th century. Harlow's experiments on maternal deprivation in rhesus macaques were considered groundbreaking, but may have also helped catalyze the early animal liberation movement.—AFP

Rare US Constitution original copy to be auctioned in Dec

An original copy of the US Constitution—one of only two known to be in private hands—will be auctioned off in December with bidding estimated to go as high as \$30 million, Sotheby's announced Tuesday. Five hundred first printings were made of the US Constitution's final text and provided to participants at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, including George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and Ben Franklin, but almost all have been lost to history. Of the 13 that are known to have remained, 11 are owned by governments and institutions.

Last year, one of the two privately held copies was bought for \$43.2 million by US hedge fund manager Ken Griffin, who outbid a group of 17,000 cryptocurrency investors who had raised \$40 million to try to buy the document, vowing to exhibit it in the public digital domain. Griffin's purchase, which he has since lent for display at a free public museum, set a record for the highest price ever paid for a historical document at auction, according to Sotheby's.



The second copy will be auctioned off on December 13 for up to \$30 million dollars, but bidding could soar even higher, according to Richard Austin, an expert in manuscripts and old books at Sotheby's New York auction house. Austin told AFP he would "like to see another private individual or perhaps a group being responsible for the care of this very important document." The artifact will be on public display at Sotheby's New York starting on November 4.—AFP

Casts found of 'fish lizard' skeleton bombed in WWII

The first complete ichthyosaur skeleton, believed to have been found by the fossil hunter Mary Anning, was thought to have been lost forever when German bombs rained down on London in World War II. But two plaster casts of the distinctive dolphin-like reptile have now been unearthed, even though there was no record of them ever being made.



Researchers Dean Lomax, from the University of Manchester in northwest England, and Judy Massare, from New York State University, described the finds as "historically important". "The specimen was the first skeleton of an extinct marine reptile in the scientific literature and the most complete ichthyosaur skeleton known at the time," they said. One cast, found at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University in the United States, is likely to be a "cast of a cast" and was donated to the institution in 1930.

It mentions it is an ichthyosaurus specimen from Lyme Regis on the Jurassic coast of Dorset, southern England, where Anning and her family went fossil-hunting in the early 19th century. The other, at the Natural History Museum in Berlin, says only that it is a "plaster cast of an ichthyosaur skeleton from an unknown location". Lomax and Massare wrote in the journal Royal Society Open Science published Wednesday that the latter was in excellent condition and likely to be a later cast using newer methods as it was more detailed. Comparisons of both casts led the researchers to conclude they were of the lost ichthyosaur skeleton bought for £100 by the Royal College of Surgeons after it failed to sell at an auction by Anning in 1820. The sum is the equivalent to nearly £7,500 (\$8,600) today. "Considering that the original was destroyed during World War II, it is somewhat ironic that the cast in the best condition is in the Berlin museum," the researchers noted. Ichthyosaurus, whose name translates to "fish lizard", was part of a larger group called ichthyosaurs which were distant relatives of lizards and snakes.—AFP



Loss of pride sparks lion lockdown at Australian zoo

Five African lions broke out of their enclosure at Sydney's harbourside Taronga Zoo on Wednesday, triggering an emergency lockdown as police and specialist handlers scrambled to round up the pride. Alarms blared throughout the zoo, a tourist drawcard that was closed to the public at the time, before the lions were tracked down and returned to their exhibit. The zoo's executive director Simon Duffy told reporters one lion cub had to be tranquilized. "This is a significant incident and a full review is now under way to confirm exactly how the lions were able to exit their main exhibit," he said. "We don't have the exact details of how and why that occurred."

Taronga Zoo-set in a leafy, affluent neighborhood with views of Sydney's

famous opera house and harbor bridge—said it would be opening as normal later in the day. Zookeepers were seen probing the fences of the lion enclosure for signs of damage. The zoo has two adult lions, mum Maya and dad Ato, as well as their five cubs named Khari, Luzuko, Malika, Zuri and Ayanna. A fully-grown male African lion can weigh as much as 250 kilograms, while females get as heavy as 180 kilograms.

A two-year-old Bengal tiger escaped its enclosure at Taronga Zoo in 1946, roaming the grounds in what a newspaper described as a "frenzy of fear" before it was shot and killed by a zoo keeper. Some 20 police were rushed to a suburb in Sydney's west in 1982 after a lion was spotted near a soft drink factory—the culprit later identified as a pudgy cat called Ginger. One of Sydney's most famous animal escapes occurred in February 2020, when baffled onlookers watched three baboons scampering about an inner-city car park after they bolted from a medical research facility.—AFP



This file photograph shows tourists making their way along a walkway beside a glacier near the peak of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. — AFP photos



This file photograph shows a view of Mount Kilimanjaro seen from Kimana Sanctuary in Kajiado south sub county.



This file photograph shows a UNESCO World Heritage sign of The Dolomites, near the Marmolada mountain and glacier.



This file photograph shows a sunset close to the Marmolada mountain, near Punta Rocca.



In this file photo the glacier that collapsed the day before on the mountain of Marmolada.

YELLOWSTONE, KILIMANJARO GLACIERS AMONG THOSE SET TO VANISH BY 2050: UNESCO

Glaciers at many UNESCO World Heritage sites including Yellowstone and Kilimanjaro National Park will likely vanish by 2050, the UN agency warned Thursday, urging leaders to act fast to save the rest. The warning followed a study of 18,600 glaciers at 50 World Heritage sites covering around 66,000 square kilometers (25,000 square miles) — which found glaciers at a third of the sites were “condemned to disappear”. The study

“shows these glaciers have been retreating at an accelerated rate since 2000 due to CO2 emissions, which are warming temperatures”, UNESCO said. The glaciers were losing 58 billion tons of ice every year, equivalent to the combined annual water use of France and Spain, and were responsible for nearly five percent of observed global sea-level rise, the agency explained.

“Glaciers in a third of the 50 World Heritage sites are condemned to disappear by 2050, regardless of efforts to limit temperature increases,” UNESCO said. “But it is still possible to save the glaciers in the remaining two thirds of sites if the rise in temperatures does not exceed 1.5°C compared to the pre-industrial period.” Countries have pledged to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels—a goal the world is set to miss on current emission trends.

“This report is a call to action,” said UNESCO head Audrey Azoulay, ahead of the COP27 climate summit in Egypt starting on Monday. “Only a rapid reduction in our CO2 emissions levels can save glaciers and the exceptional biodiversity that depends on them. COP27 will have a crucial role to help find solutions to this issue.” In Africa, glaciers in all World Heritage sites will very likely be gone by 2050, including at Kilimanjaro National Park and Mount Kenya, UNESCO warned.

In Europe, some glaciers in the Pyrenees and in the Dolomites will also probably have vanished in three decades’ time. The same went for glaciers in the Yellowstone and Yosemite national parks in the United States. The melting of ice and snow is one of the 10 key threats from climate change, an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report published in February said.— AFP

— AFP



This file photograph shows a general view of the snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro from Kimana Sanctuary in Kimana, Kenya.



This file photograph shows snow covering the Pyrenees mountains.

From fake favas to ‘smuggler sheep’: How Captagon is trafficked

Stitched into the bellies of “smuggler sheep” or loaded onto drones and ultralight planes, Captagon is crossing the Middle East’s borders in ever more creative ways. Smugglers have hidden pills in hollowed out pomegranates or even painstakingly stuffed them, one by one, into pitted olives. The pills have also been hidden in fake fava beans, artificial oranges and ornate stone frescoes. The creativity of smugglers continues to astound the authorities, with seizures more often the result of tip-offs than the technological prowess of customs checks. Here are some of the most unusual smuggling methods foiled in recent years:

Pomegranates

More than 5.3 million pills were found by the Saudi authorities in a large shipment of pomegranates in April 2021, with

the drugs stuffed inside some of the fruit. The seizure led to a Saudi ban on fruit and vegetable imports from Lebanon.

Live sheep

Fastening weapons or drugs to livestock to cross borders is an age-old smuggling trick. Latin American cartels took this a step further by stitching bags of cocaine and heroin into dogs and other animals. In November 2021 Kuwaiti authorities found 17 kilos of Captagon pills inside live imported sheep.

Fake oranges

Lebanese authorities found nine million pills hidden in fake plastic oranges heading to the Gulf in December 2021. A week earlier, 1.1 million pills stuffed into fake lemons were intercepted by Emirati customs.

Stuffed olives

Jordan’s anti-narcotics squad arrested a smuggler with 37,000 pills concealed in pitted green olives in April 2015. Syria’s drug unit arrested a man in December last year who had stuffed 160,000 pills into olives after stoning thousands of them.

Tomato paste lids

Saudi authorities found more than two million pills hidden in the hollowed-out lids of tomato paste jars in July 2021.



A Lebanese security official holds a handful of confiscated Captagon pills in his palm at the judicial police headquarters in the city of Zahle in Lebanon’s central Bekaa valley.



Fighters affiliated with Syria’s “Hayat Tahrir al-Sham” (HTS) rebel-group display drugs previously seized at a checkpoint they control in Daret Ezza, in the western countryside of the northern Aleppo province.

Trolley wheels

In the largest ever seizure of Captagon, Malaysian customs found 94.8 million pills at Port Klang in March 2021 hidden in a shipment of trolley wheels. The drugs were not intended for the Malaysian market. Three weeks later, another three million pills were found in the same port hidden in a shipment of door parts.

Microflight plane

Iraqi security forces opened fire on a microflight aircraft near the Kuwaiti border in June 2022. The pilot got away but one million Captagon pills were found in the abandoned aircraft. — AFP



Seized drugs, including Captagon, are displayed for the media in the town of Marea, in the northern Aleppo countryside following clashes among different Turkey-backed factions in Syria. — AFP photos

What is Captagon?

Captagon is the old trademark of a once legal amphetamine stimulant. But the name has long been taken to describe one of the Middle East’s most used illegal drugs. Initially, Captagon was one of the names under which the stimulant fenethylamine was marketed by the German chemical company Chemiewerk Homburg in 1961. The drug was sold as a treatment for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as well as narcolepsy and, to a lesser extent, depression.

It was declared a controlled substance in the United States in 1981, then listed by the World Health Organization as a psychotropic substance, despite limited cases of abuse. By 1986 Captagon was banned in most countries but fenethylamine had become popular enough in the Arabian peninsula for the pill to start being produced illegally, mostly in the former Yugoslavia and in Bulgaria.

It is closely related to methamphetamine or meth-another more potent synthetic stimulant, traces of which are sometimes found in Captagon. Today, Captagon is mostly manufactured in Syria and Lebanon, where hundreds of millions of pills are produced.

Side effects

The long-term use of fenethylamine can lead to extreme depression, irritability, blurred vision and cardiovascular problems. However, very few of the millions of pills now coming out of the illegal labs in Syria and Lebanon contain any fenethylamine, and the make-up of today’s Captagon can vary wildly.

Most pills contain amphetamine

but adulterants can also include paracetamol, caffeine, quinine and various anaesthetic substances, all of which can be harmful. Abuse of amphetamine can cause nerve damage as well as muscular and heart problems, while the variety of bulking agents found in the pills also come with serious health risks.

How it’s used

Captagon is usually swallowed but can be crushed and snorted. Amphetamine increases certain types of brain activity and can lead to feelings of greater attention and confidence, while also decreasing appetite and sleepiness. The drug’s versatility has made it popular with everyone from students staying awake all night before exams to taxi drivers working two jobs, to high-powered professionals hoping to stay focused over long hours. In its main market, Saudi Arabia, the rich use it to party all night, while many women take it to lose weight. Captagon is less taboo than cocaine or even alcohol in Gulf countries.

Appearance

Captagon’s shifting formula would make it difficult to differentiate from other drugs if it wasn’t for the two Cs pressed into every pill. The logo has earned Captagon the street name “Abu al-hilalain”—the father of the two crescent moons.

The adulterants used to make the drug means pills come in shades of white, yellow, beige and even pink. White pills are reputed to be the best quality and are destined for the Gulf. Captagon is mostly sold in bags of 200 pills known as a “shad” that are adorned with various logos, including the ones for Lexus—the most widespread in recent years—Range Rover, Lacoste, and in some cases a crescent and star or a swastika.—AFP

Sports

Bucks in seventh heaven as Cavaliers stun Celtics

Antetokounmpo delivers another dominant performance with 32 points

LOS ANGELES: Giannis Antetokounmpo delivered another dominant performance Wednesday with 32 points as the Milwaukee Bucks extended their unbeaten start to the season with a 116-91 rout of the Detroit Pistons. Milwaukee, the only undefeated team left in the NBA, improved to 7-0 courtesy of an impressive all-round offensive effort against an outgunned Pistons team. Antetokounmpo hauled down 12 rebounds and provided four assists with five steals while Jrue Holiday provided offensive support with a 26-point salvo that included four three-pointers.

The outcome at Milwaukee's Fiserv Forum was settled well before the end, with the Bucks taking a double-digit lead into the fourth quarter and increasing their advantage to 33 points late in the game. Jordan Nwora (12 points), Brook Lopez (11) and Bobby Portis (10) also cracked double figures for Milwaukee while Saddiq Bey led the Detroit scorers with 22 points. The Pistons fell to 2-7 with the defeat.

In other games on Wednesday, Darius Garland returned from a five-game injury absence to produce a sparkling performance as Cleveland notched their sixth straight win with a thrilling 114-113 overtime victory over the Boston Celtics. Garland poured in 29 points with 12 assists and five rebounds while Donovan Mitchell once again underscored his value to the Cavs with a 25-point performance which included 11 points in the closing minutes of regulation and overtime. Garland had not played since suffering a lacerated eyelid during Cleveland's season-opening defeat to Toronto.

But the 22-year-old rising star showed no lingering after-effects from the injury as he teamed with Mitchell on Wednesday to clinch a victory which was

confirmed when Boston's Jaylen Brown missed a two-pointer on the buzzer. "We came out really aggressive in the last five minutes and really happy we got the win," said Garland after a victory that takes Cleveland to 6-1. "After the first shot went through I felt good, the eye didn't affect me or anything. It's good to be back."

Lakers thriller

Garland meanwhile paid tribute to Mitchell, who joined the Cavs in a blockbuster trade from Utah in September. "He brings a lot to our team," Garland said. "He's been in the playoffs many times before and he brings that kind of knowledge to our team. He's helped me a lot. I'm happy he's here." Elsewhere, Dejounte Murray's 36 points helped Atlanta to a 112-99 win over the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden. Memphis meanwhile pulled off a nailbiting 111-106 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers in Oregon thanks to 29 points from Desmond Bane. The Grizzlies guard put on a clinic from outside the arc, making 5-of-8 from three-point range. Ja Morant added 20 points for Memphis, who improved to 5-3 with the win.

In Dallas, Luka Doncic finished with 33 points, 11 assists and five rebounds as the Mavericks scored a 103-100 defeat of the Utah Jazz. Doncic has scored 30 or more points in each of the Mavericks' seven games this season. In Los Angeles, the Lakers bagged their second victory of the season with a pulsating 120-117 overtime triumph against the New Orleans Pelicans. Matt Ryan was the hero for the Lakers, draining a game-tying three-pointer on the buzzer to make it 111-111 and force overtime.



CLEVELAND: Dean Wade #32 of the Cleveland Cavaliers and Grant Williams #12 of the Boston Celtics jump for the ball during the second quarter at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse on November 02, 2022. — AFP

Lonnie Walker IV led the Lakers scoring with 28 points while LeBron James and Anthony Davis scored 20 points apiece. The Lakers, who lost their opening five games of the season, improved to 2-5 with the win. In San Antonio meanwhile, Toronto ran riot

against the Spurs with a franchise record 143-100 blowout. The 43-point winning margin was the Raptors' biggest ever on the road. Gary Trent Jr led the Toronto scoring with 24 points, while six other Raptors players made double figures. — AFP

Annual Shooting Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Third Annual Shooting Championship organizers held a closing ceremony on Saturday. Farwaniya governor Sheikh Mishal Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah represented HH the Crown Prince at the ceremony that was held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations and tournament Director Obaid Al-Osaimi said the nine-day event was successful. He said HH the Crown Prince's continued support encouraged and motivated the shooters to represent their country at their best form. Al-Osaimi said the KSSC board of directors is satisfied with the level the shooters showed in the tournament. Obaid Al-Osaimi thanked the political leadership headed by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and government for their generous support.



Sakkari into last 4 at WTA Finals as Jabeur on track

FORT WORTH: World number five Maria Sakkari advanced to the last four of the WTA Finals for the second straight year on Wednesday as Tunisia's Ons Jabeur got her campaign back on track with a battling victory. Greece's Sakkari secured her place in the semi-finals in Fort Worth, Texas, after cruising past seventh-seeded Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus 6-2, 6-4. Sakkari's second win of the round-robin stage left her on top of the Nancy Richey Group with one match remaining. Sakkari will qualify in top spot from the group if she beats Jabeur in her final first-round game. "It feels great, just giving myself the chance to play my next match a little bit more relaxed, and enjoy another battle," Sakkari said after her win. "Obviously I want to win-I still want to go undefeated. It's gonna be a very tough match but it's nice to feel like my hard work is paying off finally," she added. Jabeur, who had been beaten by Sabalenka in three sets on Monday, shrugged off that loss with a spirited 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 victory over Jessica Pegula of the United States. Sabalenka will pip Jabeur for a semi-final berth if she beats Pegula in her final group game.

Pegula was left rueing her failure to capitalize on a fast start in her defeat to Jabeur, a losing finalist at Wimbledon and the US Open this year. The American roared through the opening set, winning six straight games after dropping the first. Jabeur responded with an early break for a 2-1 lead in the second before dropping her serve at love. Jabeur managed to right the ship, breaking twice in a row to force the third set. The decider was tightly contested, Pegula failing to convert five early break points.

Jabeur finally gained the upper hand with a break for 5-3 and polished off the win after an hour and 41 minutes. "After the first set, she was playing really well and really fast," Jabeur said. "The balls were tough, very low. I know she likes to play the balls like that. And I just had to find that click to just change up the rhythm and impose my game." Pegula was surprised to discover that she was not yet mathematically eliminated, although it would take an unlikely combination of results to see her reach the semi-finals. —AFP

Astros beat Phillies 5-0 in World Series

WASHINGTON: Cristian Javier led Houston pitchers in an unprecedented World Series combined no-hitter Wednesday as the Astros beat Philadelphia 5-0 to level Major League Baseball's championship showcase. Javier threw six innings without surrendering a hit and relief pitchers Bryan Abreu, Rafael Montero and Ryan Pressly kept the door firmly closed as the Astros knotted the best-of-seven title series at two games apiece.

One day after the Phillies belted a World Series record-equaling five home runs in a 7-0 game three victory, Javier's fastball flummoxed the host hitters. The 25-year-old Dominican struck out nine and walked two in a dominant performance. Abreu struck out all three he faced in the seventh inning and Montero retired the side in the eighth before Pressly worked around a one-out walk as he delivered the final three outs in the ninth. The only other no-hitter in the 118-year history of the World Series was Don Larsen's perfect game for the New York Yankees against the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1956.

"That's crazy, man," said Astros catcher Christian Vazquez. "We play for this and making it that special is even better." Astros manager Dusty Baker said Javier had delivered an "electric" performance from the mound. "He threw the ball up, down, and that shows you that the best pitch in baseball is still the well-located fastball," Baker said. "He was calm, cool. 'Man, it's a strange series-they hit five home runs yesterday and then no hits today.'"

The Houston hurlers were backed by a five-run outburst in the fifth that was keyed by Alex Bregman's bases-loaded two-run double. Chas McCormick led off the inning with a ground ball single off Phillies starter Aaron Nola. Jose Altuve looped a single to left field and Jeremy Pena hit a sharp single to left off a breaking ball Nola hung over the plate to load the bases. That spelled the end of Nola's night, Jose Alvarado taking over on the mound with three on and none out.

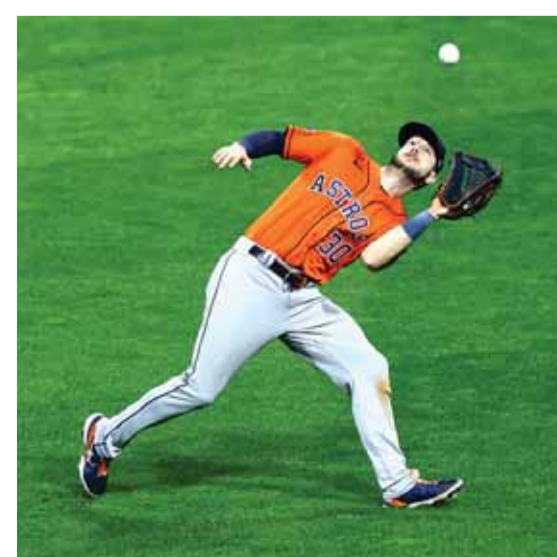
Offensive surge

He plunked Yordan Alvarez with his very first pitch and Houston had their first run of the night. Bregman followed with a two-run double to right field. Kyle Tucker's sacrifice fly to center scored Alvarez as Bregman advanced to third then scored on Yuli Gurriel's single to left field. Alvarado finally closed out the inning by striking out Vazquez and Aledmys Diaz. Javier—who had struck out JT. Realmuto, Bryce Harper and Nick Castellanos in order in the bottom of the fourth-fol-

lowed up the Astros' offensive surge by retiring the next six batters he faced. Of his 97 pitches, Javier threw 70 fastballs, and Vazquez said it was a pitch that could always be counted upon.

"It's I think the best fastball I've ever seen," the catcher said in an on-field television interview. "You can call it whoever is in the batter's box and it's going to be awesome. It's going to be effective and it's going to do the job." The victory means that after game five in Philadelphia on Thursday, the Astros will return to Houston for game six on Saturday and a potential game seven on Sunday. "We're happy to split the series and we can finish at home," Vazquez said. The Phillies, who had been unbeaten at home this post-season, are chasing their first World Series title since 2008.

Phillies manager Rob Thomson said Wednesday's no-hitter was unlikely to leave a lasting psychological mark on his batting line-up heading into Thursday's game five. "We were no-hit in New York against the Mets and we came back the next day and won," Thomson said. "These guys, they got a short memory. They're going to go home tonight and go to bed and come back in here tomorrow and compete like they always do." The Astros, whose 2017 World Series triumph was later tainted by revelations of illegal sign-stealing, are in the championship series for the fourth time in six seasons. —AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Kyle Tucker #30 of the Houston Astros catches the ball for an out against the Philadelphia Phillies during the ninth inning in Game Four of the 2022 World Series at Citizens Bank Park on November 02, 2022. — AFP

Nadal crashes out of Paris Masters

PARIS: Rafael Nadal crashed out of the Paris Masters in the second round on Wednesday after losing in three sets to American Tommy Paul, boosting Carlos Alcaraz's hopes of finishing the year as world number one. Nadal, who received a bye as second seed, was playing his first singles match in two months after spending time at home in Mallorca with his wife and newborn son.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion shook off an early break in the opening set by winning five of the next six games. But Paul recovered from dropping serve in the third game of the second set to win a tie-break, having failed to convert a set point with Nadal serving at 4-5. The Spaniard's lack of match practice told as Paul dominated the final set, breaking three times to seal the biggest win of his career.

"I had the match (in my hands) in that second set with a set and break. I played a terrible game there. I didn't deserve the victory playing that bad in that key moment," said Nadal. Nadal is a 14-time French Open champion but has never won the title at Bercy. "A lot of things have been going on the last couple of months, without a doubt. But we are always ready to find excuses. At the end, it's always the same. You play well, you win; you don't, you lose," he added.

Nadal said he expected to compete at the Tour finals in Turin from November 13-20. "If nothing happens, I hope to be there. I'm excited about playing, even if it hasn't been the perfect couple of months for me." Paul goes on to play Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in the quarter-finals. Alcaraz, the reigning US Open champion, will play Grigor Dimitrov in the last 16 after defeating Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-4, 6-4.

The 19-year-old smacked 30 winners including nine aces despite a heavily-taped left knee, an issue he had downplayed on Monday. "I tried to find my best level. I think I played really well. I don't think about the pressure of being world number one," said Alcaraz. The Spaniard was presented with the world number one trophy earlier in the week, having become the youngest player to top the ATP rankings in September. "I felt number one before getting the trophy, but of course with the trophy, it's amazing. It was amazing feeling when I had the trophy in my hands."

Alcaraz admitted there is a target on his back now as the world's top-ranked player. "Probably the difference, the way the players play against me, probably I felt that difference, but not too much," he said. "I would say the players play better or more aggressive with me." Nadal's loss means Alcaraz will end the season as the top-ranked player if he takes home the trophy on Sunday.

Medvedev beaten

Nadal's early exit was preceded by that of Daniil Medvedev, the 2020 Paris champion and 2021 runner-up who was knocked out by Australia's Alex de Minaur 6-4, 2-6, 7-5. De Minaur, who had not previously beaten a top-five player, will now face US Open semi-finalist Frances Tiafoe, who eased past Jack Draper 6-3, 7-5. Felix Auger-Aliassime qualified for the season-ending Tour finals for the first time, with Andrey Rublev completing the tournament's eight-man field after Taylor Fritz and Hubert Hurkacz both lost.

Auger-Aliassime began his bid for a fourth title in four weeks by battling back from the brink to beat Mikael Ymer in three hours and 30 minutes. The Canadian eighth seed scraped through 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) to extend his winning streak to 14 matches. Auger-Aliassime saved two break points at 1-4 in the second set just as Ymer looked poised to end his unbeaten run.

"Somehow I found a second wind after saving those break points at 4-1," said Auger-Aliassime. "It was pretty epic. Definitely a win to remember." Fritz was upset 7-5, 5-7, 6-4 by the 37-year-old Gilles Simon, who is retiring after the tournament. Hurkacz's qualification hopes ended with his 7-5, 6-1 loss to Danish teenager Holger Rune. Fifth-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas had no problem in seeing off Britain's Dan Evans 6-3, 6-4 to book his place in the last 16. Italy's Lorenzo Musetti beat Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia 6-4, 6-2 to set up a meeting with third seed Casper Ruud. —AFP

Sports

England boss Southgate feels the heat ahead of World Cup

Under-fire boss can arrest his spluttering side's alarming decline

LONDON: Gareth Southgate could be entering the final weeks of his England reign unless the under-fire boss can arrest his spluttering side's alarming decline in time for the World Cup. Southgate has two years remaining on his England contract, but there is a growing sense the World Cup could serve as his last hurrah with the Three Lions.

There has been a noticeable change in national mood towards Southgate, with the 52-year-old subjected to jeers and abuse from the stands on several occasions during England's damaging loss of form in recent months. Having failed to win any of their last six matches, Southgate's side will fly to Qatar on their worst run of form since 1993.

And if England fail to return home with their first major men's international trophy since the 1966 World Cup, it would be no surprise if Southgate called it quits. The Football Association are reportedly happy for Southgate to extend his six-year reign. But, having significantly improved England's fortunes since taking over from Sam Allardyce, the former Middlesbrough boss wouldn't be short of options if he wanted to escape the relentless national spotlight and return to club management.

Southgate is painfully aware how unpleasant life can be as a scapegoat for major tournament failure after his penalty shoot-out miss for England in their Euro 96 semi-final defeat against Germany. That blunder and his subsequent decision to poke fun at the miss in a television commercial for pizza made Southgate persona non grata among England fans. He turned the tide in unexpected fashion, stepping up from his role as the nation's Under-21 coach and revitalising an England team reduced to punchline status after crashing out of

Euro 2016 against Iceland.

Southgate led England to the World Cup semi-finals in 2018 and broke new ground by taking the Three Lions to their first major final for 55 years at Euro 2020. However, those impressive achievements were tarnished in the eyes of Southgate's critics by England's failure to get their hands on the trophy on either occasion. Both times, Southgate was cast as the villain as England let the lead slip through their hands.

'Stay calm'

After the waistcoat-wearing Southgate became a reluctant cult hero during the World Cup in Russia, he froze in the spotlight as Croatia recovered from Kieran Trippier's fifth minute goal to win 2-1 in the semi-finals. An even more agonizing loss lay in wait at Wembley in the Euro final. England's last-16 win over old foes Germany and their quarter-final demolition of Ukraine had sparked a tidal-wave of enthusiasm for Southgate's team. For a few memorable weeks, Neil Diamond's 'Sweet Caroline' became the unofficial national anthem following its rousing renditions after England's Euro matches at Wembley.

But the party ended with a hangover for the ages as Luke Shaw's second-minute opener against Italy in the final was followed by a tepid display that finished in a penalty shoot-out defeat. Just as in the Croatia loss, Southgate's caution betrayed him as he let Italy hit back without making a tangible response, either with substitutions or a change in tactics. From that night on, Southgate has been derided as a negative manager who wilts under pressure.



MUNICH: England's head coach Gareth Southgate addresses players during a training session in Munich. — AFP

England's stroll through a weak qualification group to book their place at the World Cup briefly quelled the rebellion. But the naysayers were sharpening their knives again after England's dismal Nations League campaign ended in relegation from the top tier earlier this year, a desultory sequence that hit its lowest ebb in a 4-0 home humiliation against Hungary. Since beating the Ivory Coast in a March friendly that took their unbeaten run to nine games, England have gone into a steep decline.

Until Shaw scored in a 3-3 draw against Germany in their most recent match, England had gone 565 minutes without a goal from open play. Southgate has pleaded for patience, saying: "We need to stay calm. We believe in what we are doing and I think the players took that on board. "We can talk about team spirit when things are going well but the true test is in adversity." But England's barren run has only encouraged Southgate's critics to call for his head as the pressure mounts. — AFP

History beckons for Kane in Qatar

LONDON: History beckons for Harry Kane in Qatar with the England captain just two goals away from matching Wayne Rooney's record of 53 for the Three Lions. But unless Kane lifts the World Cup aloft at the Lusail Stadium on December 18, he will enter the year he turns 30 still without a major trophy to his name.

Already guaranteed legendary status at Tottenham Hotspur, where he is just seven goals short of Jimmy Greaves' club record 266, Kane has another shot at immortality on the international stage should he fire Gareth Southgate's men to a first major tournament win in 56 years. He has come agonizingly close to the biggest prizes in the game for both club and country.

Kane scored in the shootout as England lost on penalties in front of a home crowd in the Euro 2020 final against Italy 16 months ago. He was also on the losing side when Tottenham reached the Champions League final for the first time in their history in 2019, going down 2-0 to Liverpool in Madrid. Instead his career has been littered with personal accolades and goalscoring records in a remarkable rise from unspectacular loan spells at Leyton Orient, Millwall, Norwich City and Leicester City early in his career.

Already England's joint record goalscorer at major tournaments with 10 alongside Gary Lineker, Kane has a World Cup Golden Boot and three Premier League Golden Boots to his name. "I'm close, I try not to think about it too much but with the World Cup coming up it would be an amazing place to go and achieve that," Kane said on the prospect of



DOHA: A banner depicting England's captain Harry Kane hangs alongside a building in Doha ahead of the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup football tournament. —AFP

becoming England's record goalscorer in Qatar. "I'm sure when it comes around I'll be ready to go and if I do do it this winter it will be extremely pleasing." Southgate has made clear his wish that the record-breaking goal comes in the final.

Career crossroads

But should England fall short, it will put even greater emphasis on what happens next for their star man. With 18 months left on his contract at Tottenham, Kane's career is at a crossroads. He tried and failed to force Spurs into transfer talks

with Manchester City in the weeks following England's Euro final defeat last year.

The arrival of Erling Haaland in Manchester seems to have closed that door with Bayern Munich now the frontrunner should Kane finally leave north London behind. "I think people would forgive him if he said at a certain point, if it's next summer or the summer after when his contract is definitely over, that he will move on to a club that might give him a higher probability to win trophies," Jurgen Klinsmann, who made the same move from Spurs to Bayern in 1995, told The Athletic. — AFP

Final places at stake as England, NZ seek Rugby WCup glory

WELLINGTON: All-conquering England will be driven by the prospect of more women's Rugby World Cup glory when they face Canada before defending champions New Zealand look to end a losing run against France in the semi-finals on Saturday. England take on the Canadians in a repeat of the 2014 World Cup final before the French try to halt New Zealand, who, like the English, have blasted into the last four by playing powerful running rugby.

A full house is expected in Auckland for Saturday's double-header at Eden Park, which will also host the final a week later. England are on a 29-Test winning streak—a record for both men's and women's rugby. They won the women's Rugby World Cup in 1994 and 2014, have played in five other finals and are red-hot favorites to lift the trophy this year. England coach Simon Middleton said Thursday that his side were looking forward to facing New Zealand in the final, if the hosts could get past France.

"To play the Black Ferns at Eden Park in a World Cup final in their country, when they are the holders—if you can tick that box you have pretty much ticked every box as a player," said Middleton, who believes anything other than England winning the World Cup would be a failure. "But that is as far as it goes. We've got to get there and Canada are formidable opponents." England's veteran captain Sarah Hunter, 37, will make her 139th Test appearance and knows her side must contain Canada's 23-year-old all-action skipper Sophie de Goede. "She's a great talent. She does it all for them. She's captain, calls their line-outs and kicks their goals," said Hunter, who was co-captain when England won the 2014 World Cup. — AFP

Snyders exploring sale options for NFL Commanders

WASHINGTON: Embattled Washington Commanders owner Dan Snyder and his wife Tanya are exploring purchase deals for the NFL club, according to a team statement released Wednesday. Snyder, dogged by accusations of a toxic workplace culture, bought the team and its home stadium in 1999 for \$800 million. Forbes magazine in August ranked the Commanders as the NFL's sixth-most valuable team at \$5.6 billion despite issues surrounding Snyder.

"Dan and Tanya Snyder and the Washington Commanders announced today that they have hired BofA (Bank of America) Securities to consider potential transactions," the statement from the Commanders said. "The Snyders remain committed to the team, all of its employees and its countless fans to putting the best product on the field and continuing the work to set the gold standard for workplaces in the NFL."

Left unclear was exactly how much of the club might be for sale or if a minority investor would be involved in a takeover effort. The most recent NFL team sold was the Denver Broncos, who were bought for \$4.65 billion in August. The statement followed a Forbes magazine report Wednesday that said at least four groups have expressed interest in purchasing the Commanders and that Snyder was exploring all options for a complete sale or a minority stake purchase.

Snyder bought out all of his minority partners last year to take full control of the NFL team, which hasn't won a playoff game since 2005. Snyder has taken verbal abuse at games from fans complaining about the state of the franchise, which has won three games in a row to stand 4-4 in the current campaign. The Washington Post reported in July 2020 that 40 women who were former employees



LANDOVER: Team co-owners Dan and Tanya Snyder pose for a photo with former team members during the announcement of the Washington Football Team's name change to the Washington Commanders at FedExField. —AFP

of the club had been sexually harassed by Snyder and others within the organization.

An independent investigation into the matter concluded in July 2021 and found bullying, intimidation and sexual harassment were commonplace within the NFL team's workplace. The league fined the team \$10 million and Snyder gave day-to-day operational control of the team to his wife. In July of this year, Snyder testified before a US House committee regarding its probe into the Washington team's workplace. The committee also looked into reports Snyder under-reported ticket sales to the league, a move that would have allowed him to keep more ticket revenue.

ESPN reported on Wednesday that the US Attorney's office for the Eastern District of Virginia had launched a criminal investigation into alleged financial improprieties by the Commanders, citing unnamed sources. A House committee's letter to attorneys general in April alleging deceptive business practices by the club triggered the probe, according to the report. —AFP

England favorites but draw gives US, Iran, Wales hope

LONDON: Clashes between England, Iran, the United States and Wales mean World Cup Group B is laced with political tension, but also boasts the highest average FIFA world ranking of any of the sections in Qatar. Despite heading to the Middle East on the back of a six-game winless run, England undoubtedly start as favorites with Gareth Southgate's men looking to finally end a 56-year wait to claim a major international trophy. The Three Lions have come close recently, reaching the semi-finals of the World Cup four years ago and the final of Euro 2020 on home soil.

However, a hectic schedule for Southgate's squad with their clubs and little preparation time could see them caught cold in the group stages. Injury concerns are piling up in defense for England with Reece James and Kyle Walker doubts to make the squad, while Harry Maguire is short of match fitness after falling down the pecking order at Manchester United. At the other end of the field, it was a lack of creativity from open play that saw England relegated from the UEFA Nations League as they twice failed to beat any of Germany, Hungary or Italy in recent months.

A goal drought was washed away in a thrilling 3-3 draw with Germany at Wembley in their final competitive game before the tournament and the pressure is on Southgate to get the likes of Mason Mount, Phil Foden, Bukayo Saka and Jude Bellingham performing as regularly at international level as they do for their clubs. England's hopes could though come down to keeping captain Harry Kane fit as the Tottenham Hotspur striker bears down on becoming his country's highest ever goalscorer at international level. Kane is just two goals short of Wayne Rooney's record of 53 and is one of the favorites to walk away with another Golden Boot as the World Cup's top goalscorer.

Iran's political preparation

Iran's preparations have been besieged by political turmoil. Protests have swept across the nation in the wake of the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini following her arrest by the country's morality police. Activists, including former Iranian international Ali Karimi, have called on the team to make a stance in joining the protest movement with the eyes of the world upon them in Qatar.

FIFA have even been asked to throw Iran out of the competition and be replaced by Ukraine over the alleged use of Iranian drones by Russia in its war against Kyiv. On the field, with former Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz back as manager, Iran beat Uruguay in a friendly in September to back up an impressive qualifying campaign. However, they could be without star striker Sardar Azmoun due to a torn calf muscle. A meeting with the United States brings back good memories for Team Melli of a 2-1 win in a politically-charged World Cup clash in 1998.

The Americans are back on the biggest stage after failing to qualify for Russia four years ago and have a squad now filled with experience at the highest level in Europe. However, manager Gregg Berhalter has been heavily criticized for a lack of spark in a run of one win in five games heading to Qatar. Wales are back at a World Cup for the first time since 1958 in what could be Gareth Bale's farewell on the international stage. —AFP

AC Milan and Leipzig book last-16 as PSG lose top spot

Five-star Real Madrid seal top spot with Celtic drubbing



MADRID: Celtic's English goalkeeper Joe Hart (center) dives for the ball during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 6 Group F football match between Real Madrid CF and Celtic FC on November 2, 2022. — AFP

PARIS: AC Milan reached the Champions League knock-out stage for the first time in nine years on Wednesday with a 4-0 victory over Salzburg, while RB Leipzig also qualified by thrashing Shakhtar Donetsk. Paris Saint-Germain will be the team group winners want to avoid in Monday's last-16 draw after missing out on top spot in Group H despite a 2-1 win at Juventus, as Benfica hammered Maccabi Haifa 6-1 to snatch first place on total away goals.

Seven-time European champions Milan knew a point would be enough to send them into the last 16 for the first time since the 2013-14 season after a group-stage exit last term. "These kinds of nights is what we wish for," Milan coach Stefano Pioli told Sky Sport. "We wanted to show we improved compared to last season in the Champions League. We're ambitious now, so let's see what happens next." Pioli's side eased any nerves at the San Siro inside 14 minutes as Olivier Giroud headed home.

Milan's return to the knockouts was all but confirmed less than a minute after half-time when Giroud headed the ball across goal for Rade Krunic to nod past Philipp Kohn in the Salzburg goal.

Giroud added his second before the hour mark, allowing the home fans the opportunity to celebrate for the remainder of the match and Junior Messias added further gloss to the scoreline in added time.

Milan qualified from Group E in second place behind Chelsea, who came from behind to beat Dinamo Zagreb 2-1 at Stamford Bridge with goals from Raheem Sterling and debutant Denis Zakaria. Leipzig also only needed to avoid defeat to go through against Ukrainians Shakhtar in Warsaw. Shakhtar, playing their home matches in Poland and having seen most of their foreign players leave due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, had stunned Leipzig 4-1 in their Group F opener. But the Bundesliga side were too strong after Christopher Nkunku's early strike left Shakhtar with a mountain to climb.

Andre Silva and Dominik Szoboszlai netted in the second period and Dani Olmo's shot was deflected into his own net by Valeriy Bondar to wrap up a 4-0 win. "I'm really proud of the team. We didn't start well in this Champions League campaign, but we put in a solid performance today and are really happy to be through," Leipzig forward Emil Forsberg told DAZN. Holders Real

Madrid secured first place in the group by hammering Scottish champions Celtic 5-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Luka Modric and Rodrygo both scored penalties awarded for handball in the opening stages, before Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois saved Josip Juranovic's spot-kick. Second-half goals from Marco Asensio, Vinicius Junior and Fede Valverde completed the rout despite Jota's late consolation for Celtic who finished bottom. Karim Benzema also made his return from injury as a substitute to complete a good night for Carlo Ancelotti's men.

Benfica snatch first from PSG

PSG lost top spot in Group H despite Nuno Mendes' 69th-minute winner in Turin as Benfica scored five goals in the second half at Maccabi. Kylian Mbappe's brilliant individual effort put PSG in front, before Leonardo Bonucci dragged already-eliminated Juventus level. Mendes scored only a minute after coming off the bench, but late drama in Israel saw PSG slip to second. Possible last-16 opponents for the Qatari-owned club include 14-time champions Real Madrid,

Manchester City, Bayern Munich, Chelsea and infirm Napoli. "It doesn't matter, we qualified... We'll watch the draw and we'll play to win," Mbappe told RMC Sport.

Three goals in 14 minutes in the second half gave Benfica hope of matching PSG's goal difference and pipping them on away goals. It appeared as though the Portuguese would come up two short, but Henrique Araujo scored in the 88th minute and Joao Mario struck in injury time to complete the job. "As the game progressed, we saw that it was within our reach," Goncalo Ramos, who scored Benfica's third goal, told Eleven Sports.

Juventus will drop into the Europa League after finishing third despite losing five of their six group matches. Manchester City came from behind to round off their Group G campaign with a 3-1 win over Sevilla at the Etihad. Rafa Mir gave the Spaniards the lead, but 17-year-old full-back Rico Lewis fired City level. Julian Alvarez and Riyad Mahrez sealed all three points for Pep Guardiola's Premier League champions, who were still without the injured Erling Haaland. Borussia Dortmund were held to a 1-1 draw by FC Copenhagen. — AFP

Pakistan keep slim WCup hopes alive with S Africa win

SYDNEY: Gutsy Pakistan kept their slim Twenty20 World Cup hopes alive with a 33-run win over South Africa in a dramatic rain-affected match at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday. South Africa, who are still on course for the semi-finals, came out blazing after a rain delay saw their initial target of 186 adjusted down to 142, meaning they needed 73 runs in five overs.

But the asking rate was too much and they finished on 108-9 at the end of a captivating match that had a bit of everything, from bad weather to good bowling and dropped catches. Their win means Pakistan can still reach the World Cup semi-finals if they win their last match against Bangladesh on Sunday and other results go their way. But they must rely on India or South Africa losing their final games. India face Zimbabwe and the Proteas play the Netherlands.

Iftikhar Ahmed and Shadab Khan had rescued Pakistan with the bat with a superb 82-run partnership, their World Cup having looking dead and buried prior to that. Captain Babar Azam, who failed with the bat once again, was full of praise for his fighting side. "These are our best players and everyone is ready to play," Azam said. "Everyone is a match-winner. Our first two matches were close losses, but we've given 100 percent in the last two matches and you never know, cricket is a funny game. "We hope for the best." Iftikhar, who came to the crease with Pakistan in big trouble at 43-4, scored 51 off 35 balls and Shadab blazed 52 from 22 as Pakistan finished their innings at 185-9. Pakistan had looked headed



SYDNEY: Pakistan's Iftikhar Ahmed hits a boundary during the 2022 ICC Twenty20 World Cup cricket tournament match between Pakistan and South Africa on November 3, 2022. — AFP

for a certain early exit from the tournament as the South African seam attack tore through the top order. But Iftikhar stayed firm, sharing a 52-run partnership with Mohammad Nawaz before he and Shadab took the much-vaunted South African attack apart, taking the score from 95-5 to 177-6.

After finishing strongly with the bat, the Pakistanis began well with the ball, Quinton de Kock chipping Shaheen Shah Afridi to Mohammad Haris at midwicket for a duck on the last ball of the first over. Afridi then removed the dangerous Rilee Rossouw for seven in his second over, caught by Naseem Shah on the third man boundary, leaving South Africa 16-2.

South African captain Temba Bavuma has been struggling for form this tournament but he looked in great touch as he cruised to 36. He and Aiden Markram took the score to 65. But Shadab changed the game in his first over, the leg-spinner having Bavuma caught behind then bowling Markram through the gate one run later, leaving South Africa teetering at 66-4. — AFP

'Pride of Saudi Arabia': Newcastle wins fans

RIYADH: Life supporting English football club Newcastle United was once a lonely undertaking for Alwaleed Aldebasi, who spent years watching matches by himself at his home in the Saudi capital. But that changed dramatically when a consortium backed by the kingdom bought the club a year ago, giving rise to a new community of Saudi fans motivated as much by nationalism as by any deep-rooted fealty to the Magpies. "I have been a Newcastle fan for more than 25 years, but I used to consider myself the only one here," Aldebasi, a 37-year-old physiotherapist, told AFP during a recent 2-1 win over Tottenham—which he watched in a crowded cafe.

Eyes fixed on the screen, flanked by men wearing the club's black-and-white striped kit, he said: "There is interest in Newcastle now because people feel it is the pride of Saudi Arabia." The Saudi purchase of Newcastle—its sovereign wealth fund paid \$408 million for an 80 percent stake—has proved deeply controversial, with critics quick to deride it as an example of "sportswashing", or using athletics to distract from human rights abuses. The takeover was rubber-stamped by the Premier League only after it received legally binding assurances the Saudi state would not control the team.

Just last month manager Eddie Howe was forced to defend its latest warm-weather training camp in Saudi Arabia, describing the choice of location as a "purely



RIYADH: Alwaleed Aldebasi (center) watches the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Newcastle United at a cafe in Riyadh. — AFP

footballing" decision. Saudi fans, for their part, show little interest in such debates, focusing instead on growing their numbers through watch parties, blogs and even a podcast. "This is purely an investment project," said fan Abdullah Al-Qashami, a 27-year-old Saudi engineer. "If it was really sportswashing, the fund would have bought a bigger club that was already successful."

It is true the Magpies have not always been synonymous with achievement. The club has not won a major title since 1969, and in recent years it has struggled to stay in the Premier League, dropping out of the top tier in 2009 and again in 2016. Yet under Howe, Newcastle has caught fire and is now positioned fourth in the league standings, winning four of its last five games, including a 4-0 drubbing of Aston Villa at the weekend. — AFP