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Kuwait Amir congratulates Saudi King

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, congratulating him on the 8th anniversary of assuming office. His Highness the Amir praised the brotherly relations that the two countries share and commended all

the accomplishments the Kingdom has achieved. He also wished the King good health and the kingdom further development and prosperity under his reign. Also, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a similar cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, congratulating him. His Highness the Crown Prince commended all the accomplishments the Kingdom has achieved. He also wished the King good health and the kingdom further development and prosperity under his reign. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly Budgets Committee met yesterday with Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rasheed to sort out objections on the state budget for fiscal year 2022/2023 raised by lawmakers on Tuesday. Head of the committee MP Adel Al-Damkhi said that it was agreed with the minister to add some KD 420 million to the budget to account for additional payments to employees.

KD 300 million will be allocated to government employees who want to cash their annual leaves after an earlier decision allowing them to do so, Damkhi said. Under the decision, employees can "sell" up to 120 days of accumulated annual leave every calendar year. Damkhi added that the com-

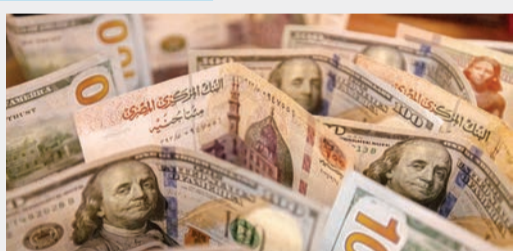
mittee passed a recommendation that Kuwaiti employees in the government should be given priority to cash their annual leave. KD 120 million will be allocated for delayed payments to frontline workers who worked during the coronavirus pandemic.

Based on the new additions yesterday, the budget is likely to post yet another deficit. The initial budget projected a surplus of over KD 300 million due to the sharp rise in oil revenues, but the new additions will wipe out the surplus. Damkhi said that the final report of the budget will be approved on Sunday to be ready for debate at the National Assembly next Tuesday.

In the meantime, MP Mubarak Al-Tasha said he will submit draft legislation allowing people to challenge verdicts issued by judges after the Court of Appeal sentenced

seven judges to jail terms and hefty fines after convicting them of accepting bribes from an Iranian businessman.

The court sentenced seven judges to seven years in jail each and fined them hundreds of thousands of dinars. Some of them were dismissed from their jobs. The court acquitted one judge. This is the first time in Kuwait's history that a judge had been sentenced to jail term over bribery charges. The court also sentenced the Iranian businessman to 10 years in jail and fined him KD 500,000. It also sentenced a Kuwaiti businessman to four years in jail and a lawyer to 10 years in jail and a fine of KD 112,000. The verdicts can be challenged before the Court of Cassation, whose rulings are final.



CAIRO: Photo shows Egyptian pound and US dollar banknotes. — AFP

Egypt, IMF ink loan deal; pound hits new low

CAIRO: Egypt has clinched a \$3 billion loan deal with the International Monetary Fund conditioned on a currency depreciation and state subsidy cuts, the government said Thursday. The Egyptian pound shed 17 percent of its value against the dollar after the staff agreement was announced. Egypt has been battered by inflation and is among the world's top five countries most at risk of defaulting on its foreign debt, according to the international credit rating agency Moody's.

The IMF deal is conditioned on reforms that include further cuts to subsidies, bringing yet more pain for struggling households in the Arab world's most populous nation. In August, global investment firm Goldman Sachs estimated that Egypt would need about \$15 billion in funding to be able to repay its foreign debt, currently estimated at about \$150 billion. In addition to the latest \$3 billion loan, Egypt has also unlocked another \$1 billion from the IMF from a facility dedicated to developing countries. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said Thursday.

The loan program is scheduled to run for four years and is due to be sent to the IMF board of directors for approval in December, Madbouly said. He added that Egypt had also received an additional \$5 billion from "regional and international organizations", without specifying which.

The IMF meanwhile said in a statement that its staff and "the Egyptian authorities have reached a staff-level agreement on comprehensive economic policies and reforms to be supported by a 46-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Arrangement of US\$3 billion".

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait explores US investment opportunities

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's ambassador to United States Jasem Al-Budaiwi visited the state of Nebraska this week where he held talks with top Nebraskan officials focused on food security cooperation and investment opportunities in Kuwait. The aim of the visit is to connect with US states to boost the cooperation on all levels, mainly in the fields of food security and agriculture exchange.

During his visit, Ambassador Al-Budaiwi met with several top officials in Nebraska, including the governor of Nebraska Pete Ricketts, the Secretary of State of Nebraska Robert Evnen, Congressman Don Bacon, the University of Nebraska President Walter Carter, CEO of Farm Bureau of Nebraska Mark Mchargue and representatives from Iowa based companies, in addition to Nebraska commodity groups and a group of Gulf War veterans.

Ambassador Al-Budaiwi said the visit was "successful," saying "we hope to exchange expertise and have a closer look at this cooperation," especially

Continued on Page 6



WASHINGTON: Kuwait's ambassador to US Jasem Al-Budaiwi takes a group photo with Secretary of State of Nebraska Robert Evnen, Congressman Don Bacon and other officials. — KUNA

Coming decade 'most dangerous' since WWII: Putin

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that the coming decade will be the "most dangerous" since the end of World War II, while accusing the West of seeking to dominate the world. "Ahead is probably the most dangerous, unpredictable and at the same time important decade since the end of the Second World War," Putin told members of the annual Valdai Discussion Club, adding that the situation is "to a certain extent re-

volutionary".

The Ukraine offensive is only a part of the "tectonic shifts of the entire world order," Putin said. "The historical period of undivided dominance of the West in world affairs is coming to an end. The unipolar world is becoming a thing of the past," he said. "We are at a historical frontier," he added. Putin added that the West is not able to "single-handedly govern humanity" but is "desperately trying to do it".

"Most peoples of the world no longer want to put up with it," he said. Putin also said that Moscow is trying to "defend its right to exist" in the face of Western efforts to "destroy" his country. "Russia is not challenging the elites of the West, Russia is just trying to defend its right to exist," he said.

Meanwhile, Russian parliament on Thursday

passed a law allowing ex-convicts to be mobilized into the army and other measures to prop up Moscow's troops in Ukraine. Last month President Vladimir Putin announced the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of reservists in the country to boost his Ukraine military campaign. People who were released from prison but hold a criminal record for serious crimes can now be mobilized into the Russian armed forces.

The decree introducing mobilization previously banned the recruitment of such ex-convicts. The change does not apply to people convicted of sexual assault against a minor, terrorist acts, traffic of radioactive material or crimes against the government, including treason and espionage. The parliament, or Duma, also passed legislation reinforcing

Continued on Page 6

Zionists and Lebanon seal 'historic' deal

NAQURA: Zionist entity and Lebanon struck a US-brokered maritime border agreement Thursday that opens up lucrative offshore gas fields for the neighbors that remain technically at war. US President Joe Biden hailed the "historic" deal that comes as Western powers clamor to open up new energy production and reduce vulnerability to supply cuts

from Russia. The agreement was signed separately by Lebanon's President Michel Aoun in Beirut and by Zionist Prime Minister Yair Lapid in Jerusalem, and went into effect after the papers were delivered to mediators.

"Both parties took the final steps to bring the agreement into force and submitted the final paperwork to the United Nations in the presence of the United States," Biden said in a statement. Zionists' arch-foe, the Lebanese Hezbollah group, said it would end its "exceptional" mobilization against the country, after threatening to attack Zionists for months should it reach

Continued on Page 6



NAQURA: A United Nations peacekeeping force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) ship patrols alongside Lebanese navy vessels off Lebanon's southern town of Naqura close to the border with Zionist entity. — AFP

Kuwait joins Saudi-hosted talks to approve Mideast green initiative

GCC chief, Saudi Interior Minister discuss security cooperation

RIYADH: Kuwait's environment body joined ministerial-level talks in the Saudi capital to approve the charter and governance of the Middle East Green Initiative, which will draw up the intricacies behind the endeavor. Kuwaiti Environment Public Authority chief Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah led his country's delegation to the talks, joining some 20 other officials and ministers from across the Middle East region. The talks are an important step towards approving the Middle East Green Initiative,

allowing countries in the region to cooperate and promote environmental protection and development, state-run SPA news agency quoted Saudi Environment Minister Abulrahman Al-Fadhli as saying.

Security cooperation

In another development, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf and Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud discussed on Wednesday

enhancing GCC security cooperation and coordination. They deliberated several issues of common interest to serve GCC joint action and Gulf peoples' interests, the GCC General Secretariat said in a statement. The meeting was held at the Saudi Interior Ministry headquarters in Riyadh.

Kuwaitis honored

Meanwhile, a number of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nationals, including two Kuwaitis, were honored on Wednesday as culture ministers

from within the six-nation bloc held talks to acknowledge their contributions to the region's cultural scene. Kuwaitis Mohammad Al-Farsi and Awatef Al-Bader joined other GCC honorees in a gala organized in the Saudi capital, Kuwaiti National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters acting secretary general Dr Essa Al-Ansari said. Congratulating the honorees on their accolades, the Kuwaiti official said his compatriots should "serve as an example" to aspiring youngsters in the wider region. — KUNA



Sheikh Fahad Al Kandari with Waleed Al Khashti and Zain employees.



Zain employees during the trip.

Zain staff take part in 18th Omrah trip

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, recently concluded the 18th Omrah trip for employees and their families, taking them on a

special visit to the Sacred House in Makkah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The initiative aimed at enriching bonding and closeness between Zain employees out of the workplace.

Zain organizes this trip and other similar programs periodically to cater to its employees' spiritual needs. The trip was joined by many Zain employees who were accompanied by their family members to the Sacred House in Makkah. Such pro-

grams come in line with the company's internal communications strategy that closely focuses on catering to the Zain workforce's various needs.

The travelers were accompanied by Sheikh Fahad Al Kandari, Imam of the Kuwait Grand Mosque, who was present throughout the trip to share his experiences through lectures and seminars about the rituals of Omrah, Islamic history, and more.

Zain considers its employees the main pillar of its overall success, and thus caters to the many different aspects of their lives. This initiative comes as part of Zain's commitment towards its human resources, especially after the positive feedback it received from previous Omrah trips. Zain will always put the development of the cultural and spiritual aspects of its employees at the forefront of its priorities.

Arab's merchandise commitments down to \$100.6: Dhaman

KUWAIT: New commitments to ensure finance and exports to Arab countries against commercial and political risks slightly decreased by 0.1 percent in 2021 to \$100.6 billion, said Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) on Thursday. The value of outstanding commitments for insuring investments, financing, and exports to Arab countries against commercial and political risks fell by one percent to \$219 billion by the end of 2021 - representing approximately 7.4 percent of total global commitments for the same year, Dhaman said in a press release on the occasion of the 3rd quarterly bulletin for 2022.

Arab countries accounted for 3.7 percent of all new

commitments for insuring investment, finance, and exports in the world by the end of 2021, it added. Insurance of exports to Arab countries in both short and medium-long terms acquired the largest share of new commitments with 93.8 percent, while the share of insurance against political risks reached 4.5 percent, and about 1.7 percent for other additional products, it noted.

The new insurance commitments concentrated geographically in five Arab countries that accounted for 77.6 percent of the total. They include: UAE - 25.1 percent; Saudi Arabia - 17.2 percent; Egypt - 16.1 percent; Qatar - 11 percent and Morocco - 8.1 percent, it said. The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) is a multilateral credit and political risk insurance provider. Established in Kuwait in 1974, Dhaman comprises all Arab countries and four joint Arab financial institutions. It provides insurance services against credit and political risks to facilitate the flow of Foreign Direct Investment into Arab Countries and to support Arab exports and imports. — KUNA

Arab Summit held amid intricate circumstances

ALGIERS: Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative at League of Arab States (LAS), Ghanim Al-Ghanim, stated that the anticipated Arab Summit is held amidst complex and intricate world circumstances, which inflicts dangerous ramifications on national Arab security. Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the sidelines of preparatory meetings ahead of summit, slated to take place on November 1st and 2nd in Algiers, Al-Ghanim added that this is the first summit to be held after a three-year hiatus due to spread of coronavirus.

Al-Ghanim revealed that Kuwait's delegation will be headed by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in response to invitation by Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. This reflects Kuwait's political leadership's keenness on ensuring success of



Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative at League of Arab States (LAS) Ghanim Al-Ghanim.

summit and bolstering Arab efforts, solidarity and joint work, commented Al-Ghanim. The Arab League's permanent representatives and senior officials came together in Algiers earlier today for the preparatory meeting of foreign ministers ahead of 31st Arab summit. — KUNA

First ever conference on charity action in Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Surgery Department at Jaber Hospital organized the first Kuwait conference on 'charity action' in the medical field under the patronage of Health Ministry and in cooperation with Association of Doctors, Kuwait Association of Surgeons and Kuwait Medical Association. Head of Surgery Department at Jaber Hospital Dr Suleiman Al-Mazidi said, the conference which was attended by a large number of doctors and representatives from Health Ministry and NGOs including the Red Crescent, was to recognize the humanitarian work Kuwait doctors are doing.

The conference reviewed the charity achievements in the medical field by Kuwaiti doctors around the world. "There are many medical charity organizations that visited more than 30 countries to



treat hundreds of patients every year," Dr Al-Mazidi said, adding that Kuwait Association of surgeons will support the voluntary medical campaigns to promote Kuwait government's reputation in support of humanitarian projects. Meanwhile Urologist Faisal Al-Hajiri said the conference was at the initiative of Jaber Hospital and Kuwait Medical Association. He said volunteers sometimes face harassments in some areas of conflict.



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Local

PACI: Kuwaiti population structure 'mainly youth'

Public sector employs 83.5% of the national labor

KUWAIT: According to the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), the Kuwaiti population structure is mainly youth (as on June 30th 2022). The percentage of those aged 24 years and under constitutes about 51.8%, and the rest, or 25 years and older, form 48.2%. The youth bloc is about 779,000 citizens, and the second bloc is 723,000, including 140,000 retirees and 473,000 citizens whose vast majority is in the labor market.

According to the Central Statistical Bureau, the public sector employs 83.5% of the national labor (June 30th 2022) and indirectly provides financial support to the national workers in the private sector. Employees in the public sector score about 366,000 citizens, and about 72,000 citizen workers are in the private sector, down from 73,000 workers in June 2021. This youth bloc, or those 24 years old and under, equals 1.6 times the number of those in the labor market or unemployed after excluding the retirees.

Suppose Kuwait keeps its unsustainable financial policies unchanged without calculating inflation impact on wages and prices of goods and services - in that case, it will need to double expenditures in the current fiscal year at KD 23.1 billion over the next 20 years to meet the necessary needs of the youth bloc if we calculate the inflation impact and the rise in producing an oil barrel costs coupled with the aging of the reservoirs, which doubled the cost

of production now five times the charge in 2000.

And if we calculate a significant and potential weakness of the oil market, its prices will decrease. Its production will also decrease due to its being exposed, right or wrong, to a political and other environmental war. We know that the separation between the capacity of public finance and the stability of the labor balance is inevitable and near. A widening gap in the labor balance -that is, blatant accumulating unemployment- is the reason for most countries losing their stability.

Financial sustainability has three enemies. The first is corruption, which has turned into a pandemic during the past decade. The second is waste in public expenditures and what the Audit Bureau gratefully provides is an appreciated and respectable effort. The third is populist projects, which adults accept because they involve exchange for leniency with corruption and waste.

The victims in their work, housing, necessities, and education form about 51.8% of the citizens that are 779,000. Suppose the goal is the state's permanence and stability and ensuring the employment and future of the majority of its citizens. In that case, the remedy is a fierce war against corruption and drying up the sources of waste. Both require a government's will and determination in addition to strict resistance to populist projects, even if a constitutional confrontation occurs to stop them.



What is at stake is the protection of the young population which is more in number and trust. It is also a protection for the current workers and retirees who believe they are safe. There is no guarantee for the payment of workers' wages or for meeting their benefits in the event of retirement

with a considerable deficit of their funds. If oil conditions worsen, the harmful repercussions will not hurt a single citizen. No matter how immediate gains, such as a long term in office, or an unsustainable temporary increase in income, they are not worth the formidable cost. — Al-Shall Report

Summer expected to continue until mid November

KUWAIT: Astronomy expert Adel Al-Marzouq said the central Arabian Peninsula and the coast overlooking the Arabian Gulf will witness a rise in atmospheric pressure in the next 10 days. There will be hotspots, which will be distributed to the south, with atmospheric pressure ranging between 1013 to 1018 millibars.

"We are closer to the presence of the Sudanese depression that blows with the western winds, and the possibility of its presence in the coming period is great," he said, adding that this situation led to fluctuating winds - most of them comprising of southern winds shifting to south eastern winds called 'Al-Koss winds'. This is expected to continue until the middle of next month.

Clouds are expected to multiply in the sky and will cover the entire Kuwait - ranging from cloudy to partly cloudy until the mid of November - with almost 7% chance of rain and high humidity. He stated that the weather (during the coming days) will be slightly hot - between 17 and 21 degrees Celsius at night and higher in the day (between 36 and 40 degrees Celsius). The summer is expected to continue until the middle of next month. The winter may be delayed and may begin from December.

"During this period, nights will continue to be



KUWAIT: Photo shows Kuwait Towers along the Arabian Sea coast. The summer is expected to continue until the middle of next month. The winter may be delayed and may begin from December. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

long, and days will remain shorter. Daylight tomorrow is expected to be around 11 hours and will continue until December 21. This indicates the beginning of winter and Capricorn, which begins with the

sun being at perpendicular to the sign of Capricorn-located south of the equator. Moreover, the sun will be in the direction of Qibla at 2pm," Al-Marzouq added.

Expats to be deported for fighting, other misconduct

KUWAIT: Sources revealed to Kuwait Times that instructions have been given to the Ministry of Interior to boost security and to deport expats who participate in fighting or any other misconduct. "Deportation cases do not need a decision from the Ministry or the undersecretary as the law does not contradict human rights - especially when it is carried out after thorough investigations," sources added.

The move comes after there has been an increase in violent behaviors and fighting in Hawally, Mahboula, Salmiya and Al-Riggae areas. "The deportation will include a complete ban from visiting Kuwait. Some expats are deported (free) - without them paying for their travelling expenses, but this will no longer be the case. The deportees will be held accountable for the expenses if they are found guilty," sources added. In another case, the Ministry of Interior has decided to deport motorcyclists who used pedestrian bridge. It has been noticed lately that motorcyclists have been using pedestrian bridge illegally there by putting their lives and other people's lives in danger.



Top officials and participants take a group photo after the meeting in Portugal.



Globalization threats and security meeting held in Portugal

KUWAIT: National Guard Undersecretary Hashem Al-Refaei met with the International Association of Gendarmeries and Affiliated Corps (FIEP) in Portugal under the banner of globalization threats and security to discuss drug, human trafficking, and the dangers of globalization in the world.

The undersecretary sent the regards of HH Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait and his deputy HH Sheikh Mishal Al-

Ahmad Al-Sabah in remembrance of their support of the National Guard to join the association and tackle the most important challenges they face due to globalization. The dangers necessitate teamwork and cooperation to unify standard so as to face them. The National Guard played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kuwait.

The second meeting will discuss ways to improve mutual cooperation between countries and members as well as - to exchange experiences when using modern cyber systems in training and communication. The Kuwait National Guard will host the next FIEP meeting in November next year. The meeting was concluded with the affirmation and signing of plans and memos for the next year as well as the subjects that they will be discussing.

Kuwait ambassador submits credentials to Iran president



TEHRAN: Kuwaiti Ambassador Bader Al-Munaikh on Thursday submitted his credentials to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. The Iranian president welcomed the Kuwaiti ambassador in Tehran. — KUNA

Local

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

News in brief

Kuwait crude oil up

KUWAIT: Kuwait crude oil was up 58 cents during Wednesday's trading session to reach \$94.15 per barrel compared with \$93.57 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Thursday. Brent futures were also up 20 cents to \$95.89 pb and West Texas Intermediate jumped 19 cents to \$88.10 pb.



CHITTAGONG: Residents search for their belongings amid the debris of their collapsed huts after the cyclone Sitrang hits Chittagong. — AFP

Solidarity with Bangladesh

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Foreign Ministry has voiced the country's sympathy and solidarity with Bangladesh over the cyclone that hit the country and left scores dead. In a press statement, the ministry offered condolences to the leadership, government and people and victims' families over the storm. Meanwhile, Bangladesh rescue workers found the bodies of four missing crew of a dredger boat, taking the death toll from Cyclone Sitrang to 28 as millions remained without power, officials said. Cyclones - the equivalent of hurricanes in the Atlantic or typhoons in the Pacific - are a regular menace in the region but scientists say climate change is likely making them more intense and frequent. Cyclone Sitrang made landfall in southern Bangladesh on Monday but authorities managed to get about a million people to safety before the monster storm hit. — From Agencies

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This picture taken on October 27, 2022 shows an aerial view of the landmark Kuwait Towers and the Ras Al-Ard cape of Kuwait City overlooking the Arabian Gulf waters. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait denounces Zionist aggressions

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Foreign Ministry has voiced Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of continued incursions and brutal aggressions launched by Zionist occupation authorities against Palestinian cities, including Nablus and Ramallah, which led to the martyrdom and injury of scores of Palestinians. In a press statement, the ministry sounded the alarm about the consequences of this serious military escalation, for which occupation authorities are to blame and which put regional security and stability in jeopardy.

It called on the international community to move immediately and urgently to provide protection to the Palestinian people and to exert efforts to revive the peace process, thus leading to a just and com-

prehensive solution that ensures an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab peace initiative.

Meanwhile, Zionist forces has detained three alleged members of the Lions' Den militant group in the occupied West Bank, the army said, including the brother of a key Palestinian militant. The arrest of Muhammad Al-Nabulsi and two others in Nablus comes a day after five Palestinians were killed during a military operation in the city. "Muhammad Al-Nabulsi was suspected of possessing weapons, manufacturing explosive devices and involvement in the 'Lions' Den' terrorist group," the army said in a statement.

His brother Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi, nicknamed "The Lion of Nablus", was shot dead by Zionist forces in August and has since become a folk hero among

Palestinian youth. The Lions' Den has emerged in recent months alongside a sharp rise in raids by forces in the northern West Bank. The three arrests on Wednesday follow the killing on Tuesday of Wadih Al-Houh, described by Zionists as the head of the Lions' Den, and four other Palestinians in Nablus.

A further 20 Palestinians were wounded in the operation, the Palestinian health ministry said. In addition to regular raids, the Zionist army has imposed additional checkpoints around Nablus over the past two weeks which have severely impeded daily life. The closures follow the killing of a Zionist soldier in the area on October 11, three days after a military policewoman was shot dead in the annexed east Jerusalem. So far this month 25 Palestinians have been killed in east Jerusalem and the West Bank, territories occupied by Zionists since the 1967 Six-Day War. —Agencies



RAMALLAH: Zionist soldiers keep position during clashes with Palestinians at the northern entrance to the city of Ramallah, near the Zionist Beit El settlement in the occupied West Bank. —AFP

Pakistan's KPBD organizes blood donation drive

KUWAIT: Kuwait Pakistan Blood Donors (KPBD) organized a blood donation drive on Friday October 14, 2022 at Pakistan English School Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. Kuwait Pakistan Blood Donors, established in 2012, is a Pakistani Community-based organization in Kuwait with an aim to spread awareness about the serious matter of blood donation. It has conducted more than a dozen drives yielding thousands of pints of blood since its inception.

Pakistani community in Kuwait expressed their solidarity and gratitude by overwhelming attendance and donations. About 182 pints of blood were collected in a short span of six hours between 1.30

to 7.30 pm adhering to all SOPs prescribed by Ministry of Health, Kuwait. The event was witnessed by the people from different nationalities including Pakistan, Kuwait, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Philippines and Egypt.

Prominent figures from Pakistani business community and other sectors also visited the camp and appreciated the donors and volunteers for their services towards humanitarian cause. The effort was honored by the presence of Farrukh Amir Sial, Community Welfare Attache from the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan - Kuwait, which became the reason for encouragement and motivation for the organizers.

Embassy official was warmly welcomed by Chairman - Muhammad Arif Butt, President - Malik Sajid, Vice president - Athar Hussain and team members. Farrukh Amir Sial congratulated the team KPBD on another extremely successful event and conveyed the good wishes by Malik Farooq, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Kuwait as he was not present in the country.



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



'No trust': Clandestine world of Ukraine prisoner swaps

ASEAN 'even more determined' to solve Myanmar crisis



NUNAVUT: This handout picture shows researchers drilling holes to collect sediment at the Lake Hazen in Nunavut, to investigate how climate change might increase the risk of 'viral spillover'. A warming climate could bring viruses in the Arctic into contact with new environments and hosts, increasing the risk of 'viral spillover', according to a research. — AFP

Climate plans would allow up to 2.6C of global warming: UN

Emissions must fall 45% this decade to limit disastrous global warming

PARIS: Country climate pledges leave the world on track to heat by as much as 2.6 degrees Celsius this century, the United Nations said on Wednesday, warning that emissions must fall 45 percent this decade to limit disastrous global warming.

The United Nations Environment Programme, in its annual Emissions Gap report, found that updated national promises since last year's COP26 summit in Glasgow would only shave less than one percent off global greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The world has warmed nearly 1.2C since the start of the Industrial Revolution and already faces increasingly ferocious climate-enhanced weather extremes like heatwaves, storms and floods.

The Emissions Gap report examines the difference between the planet-heating pollution that will still be released under countries' decarbonization plans and what science says is needed to keep to the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to between 1.5-2.0C.

A day after the UN's climate change agency said governments were still doing "nowhere near" enough to keep global heating to 1.5C, UNEP found

progress on emissions cutting had been "woefully inadequate". It said that additional pledges made since the COP26 summit in Glasgow last year would not even cut emissions by one percent by 2030.

Failure left the world "hurtling towards" a temperature rise far in excess of the Paris goals, it added. "It's another year squandered in terms of actually doing something about the problem," the report's lead author, Anne Olhoff, told AFP. "That's not to say that all nations have not taken this seriously. But from a global perspective, it's definitely very far from adequate."

The report found that in order for temperature rises to be capped at 2C, emissions would need to fall 30 percent faster by 2030 than envisioned under countries' most up-to-date plans. To limit heating to 1.5C, the gap is 45 percent. Under the 2015 Paris deal, countries are required to submit ever deeper emission cutting plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs.

UNEP found that "unconditional" NDCs—which countries plan regardless of external support—would probably lead to Earth's average temperature rising

by 2.6C by 2100. Scientists warn that level would be catastrophic for humanity and for nature.

Conditional NDCs—which rely on international funding to achieve—would probably lead to a 2.4C temperature rise this century, it said. All told, current plans are likely to see a five- to 10-percent reduction in emissions by 2030 — a far cry from the drop of nearly 50 percent required for 1.5C.

'Missed opportunity'

UNEP said that in 2020, carbon pollution fell more than seven percent, largely thanks to Covid-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions. A fall of that magnitude is needed every year this decade to stay on track for 1.5C. But it said greenhouse gas emissions in 2021 could end up being the highest on record—some 52.8 billion tons—because countries threw themselves into fossil-fuelled pandemic recoveries.

"We see a full bounce-back in emissions after COVID," said Olhoff. "It's a missed opportunity in terms of utilizing these unprecedented recovery funds to accelerate a green transition." Separately, the International Energy Agency said on Thursday it

believed global energy emissions would peak in 2025 as surging oil and gas prices spurred a drive to renewables.

But UNEP said that while the switch to greener tech in the power sector was accelerating, several industries were lagging behind in the push towards net-zero emissions. For example, in the food sector, which is responsible for around a third of emissions, dietary changes and cutting food loss could help reduce the sector's footprint by more than 30 percent by 2050.

Olhoff said the financial sector was "part of the problem rather than part of the solution" to climate change, with hundreds of billions funneled annually to fossil fuel projects. UNEP suggested the introduction of an effective carbon price under a global cap and trade system that would push investors to consider the environmental impact of their portfolios. It also called for central banks to make more funds available and help create global low-carbon technology markets. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said Thursday's report showed the world "cannot afford any more greenwashing". —AFP



KHARTOUM: Demonstrators march in a protest in the area of Bashdar in the south of Sudan's capital Khartoum. —AFP

Sudanese protest to call on UN to end tribal conflicts

KHARTOUM: Around 150 Sudanese protesters rallied Thursday in front of the United Nations headquarters in Khartoum to denounce ethnic clashes that have killed more than 200 people this month in Blue Nile state. Demonstrators held banners reading "No to deaths", "We want to live in peace", demanding an end to the violence that erupted in early October over reported land disputes between members of the Hausa people and rival groups, an AFP journalist said.

Since the start of the year, ethnic conflicts in Sudan have killed 600 people and displaced more than 210,000 others, the UN says. Access to land is highly sensitive in the impoverished country, where agriculture and livestock account for 43 percent of employment and 30 percent of GDP, according to UN and World Bank statistics. "Today, we protest to tell the international community to put an end to violence in Blue Nile because the Sudanese authorities are doing nothing," protester Mawaheb Ibrahim told AFP.

The health minister in Blue Nile state, which borders South Sudan and Ethiopia, said Thursday a total of 237 had been killed in the violence last week in the Wad al-Mahi area, about 500 kilometers (300 miles) south of Khartoum. "This is not the final toll because there are still bodies in the rubble of homes," he added. Some "40,000 people, mainly women, children and elderly people, have found refuge in schools in Roseires and Damazin", the two closest major cities, he said. "International organizations must help us, in particular to provide them with medicines because there are sick people among them," he said.

A high-ranking member of the Hausa, Mohammed Nureddine, told AFP that "entire houses have been burned". There are "besieged inhabitants, some of whom are injured, but no one can access them" as tensions continue to rage in the area, he said. Sudan has been grappling with deepening political unrest and a spiraling economic crisis since last year's military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. The military power grab upended a transition to civilian rule launched after the 2019 ouster of strongman Omar al-Bashir, who ruled for three decades. A surge in ethnic violence in recent months has highlighted the security breakdown in Sudan since the coup. —AFP

Mother and two children killed in Venezuela landslide

CARACAS: A mother and her two children were killed in a landslide in Venezuela, an official said, as a deluge of rains has unleashed disasters affecting thousands across the country in recent weeks. The deaths add to a national toll of over 70, including 54 killed in a landslide in the town of Las Tejerias in Aragua state.

"In the state of La Guaira, a landslide occurred

over a house causing the collapse and the regrettable loss of life of a girl, a boy and their mother," interior minister Remigio Ceballos told state TV Wednesday. The rains also caused a fire when lightning struck a fuel tank at the key El Palito refinery complex in the northern state of Carabobo. The flames were "controlled without incident."

Streets in several of Venezuela's northern and coastal states are flooded due to overflowing rivers, and landslides have obstructed highways. After a landslide killed three in the city of Maracay this month, President Nicolas Maduro said "all this is climate change." "This year the rainfall has been very difficult for the whole country," Maduro said that in 2022, he has seen the worst natural disasters in his nine and a half years in office. —AFP



LAS TEJERIAS, Venezuela: Handout picture released by the Venezuelan Presidency showing Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, speaking through a megaphone next to his wife Cilia Flores, as he visits Las Tejerias, in the state of Aragua, for a second time week after a landslide killed more than 50 people. —AFP

International

'No trust': Clandestine world of Ukraine prisoner swaps

'There is simply no trust between us at all'

MYKOLAIV, Ukraine: The five captured Russian soldiers stumbled out of the Ukrainian van with their heads covered in black balaclavas. Vitaliy Danila's hand was trembling by the time he filmed himself a few tense moments later with the dazed faces of five Ukrainian captives whose release he had just secured in return. It was the 16th prisoner swap the regional traffic police chief had safely concluded along the southern front of the war Russia started in Ukraine eight months ago.

Each one of them could have ended in a blood-bath. "When there is a battle and you see tanks firing and you are standing in a field conducting an exchange..." Danila said before trailing off.

The swap he filmed had occurred a day earlier and was just about to be formally announced by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's office. But the towering policeman was still living the moment—and realizing again how close to death he had come while bringing his total of recovered captives to 170. "The first few times I did this, I thought this was my one-way ticket to the grave. We didn't know who we would be meeting or if it was a trap," he recalled at a secret location in the war-ravaged southern port of Mykolaiv.

"There is simply no trust between us at all," he said of the soldiers conducting the actual swaps on the battlefield.

'Anything can go wrong'

World headlines occasionally light up with news of mammoth Russian-Ukrainian exchanges that often involve high-value captives. These have included 200 fighters who survived the Russian siege of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol and more than 100 women who returned from Russian

captivity last week. Less noticed are the more routine swaps of just a few prisoners—many of them gravely wounded—that the sides have been able to arrange behind the scenes.

How these occur in the middle of a war zone between two foes are a slight mystery, even to Danila himself. "Anything can go wrong," he said. "We just have to avoid opening fire at each other. Everyone has to come out alive."

Secret operation

Danila said the first swaps were conducted in March, without formal state approval and in complete secrecy. The Russians had just been thwarted in their attempt to seize Mykolaiv and were regrouping at a rear base. The fighting was falling into a deadly rhythm and the captives were piling up on both sides. The Russians made the first move.

"We got word that their side is not against an exchange. They established contact with us about a few prisoners," he said. "At this point, it was impossible to go through official channels. Very few people knew about it." He said the exchange lists are now approved by Ukraine's GUR military intelligence directorate and the SBU security service.

But the first ones were done without any pauses in fighting at an agreed location in the very middle of the front. "I looked at my men, we all agreed we should do this, and drove off," Danila said.

'All a lie'

Danila said his biggest challenge was talking to the enemy without losing his cool. "We talk to them on the spot. We discuss the details of the exchange. All sorts of things can happen," Danila



KYIV, Ukraine: (From left to right) Former prisoners Viktoriya Obidina, a military nurse, Ukrainian medic Tetyana Vasylychenko, Inga Chikinda, an army marine, Lyudmyla Guseynova, a volunteer from the eastern Donetsk region, deliver a press conference in Kyiv on October 26, 2022. —AFP

said. But he does not believe a word the Russians tell him and treats each exchange like a military mission.

"The way they act, pretending like they want to help and things like that—that is all a lie," he said.

This mistrust stems in large part from the repeated targeting of civilians who were allowed to flee the war zone along established routes in the

first weeks of war. Those routes were secured along back channels similar to the ones Danila uses today. "You have to keep your cool. No emotions," said Danila of his mindset during the exchanges. "Emotions can ruin everything. So everyone who takes part—these are my guys that I know won't take out their guns and open fire. I trust each of them with my life." —AFP

Kenya's new cabinet sworn in two months after vote

NAIROBI: Kenyan President William Ruto's cabinet was sworn in on Thursday, two months after he narrowly won a bitterly-fought but largely peaceful election. The 22-member line-up will be tasked with tackling the cost of living crisis and other economic issues in the East African country, the cornerstone of Ruto's election campaign manifesto.

"You will have my support because you have no other option but to succeed. Failure is not an option, we have a country to look after," Ruto told the new ministers at the event in Nairobi. Ruto vowed to run an inclusive, transparent and accountable government as he aims to transform the regional powerhouse.

"We have no grey areas, we have nothing to hide. We want to serve the people of Kenya," he said.

However, the new cabinet did not achieve the gender parity Ruto had promised on the campaign trail, naming just seven women to the team. Musalia



NAIROBI, Kenya: Newly sworn-in Cabinet Secretaries (left to right) Aden Duale, Minister of Defense, Eliud Owalo, Minister of Information, Technology, & Digital Economy, and Musalia Mudavadi, Prime Cabinet Secretary, are seen after their swearing-in ceremony at the State House in Nairobi on October 27, 2022. —AFP

Mudavadi, a former vice president who broke ranks with defeated presidential candidate and opposition chief Raila Odinga to back Ruto, assumed the newly-created position of prime cabinet secretary.

The 62-year-old will be the most senior government minister and answer directly to the president and his deputy. Alfred Mutua, a former governor whose party also sided with Ruto, will take charge of

the foreign ministry.

Kithure Kindiki, a lawyer who served on the legal team that defended Ruto's August election win in court, will head the powerful interior ministry. Kindiki also represented Ruto at his trial at The Hague-based International Criminal Court for his alleged role in orchestrating the 2007-2008 post-election unrest that killed at least 1,100 people and displaced more than 600,000. —AFP

N Ireland moves closer to fresh elections

BELFAST: Northern Ireland on Thursday appeared headed for a second election this year after the leader of the pro-UK Democratic Unionist Party said his grouping had not changed its position on contentious post-Brexit trade rules. DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson told reporters insufficient action had been taken to address their concerns on the so-called Northern Ireland Protocol governing post Brexit trade.

The party would therefore not be supporting the nomination of ministers to the executive, he said, speaking before a special sitting of the Northern Ireland assembly at Stormont. "We need to remove the rubble of the protocol that has undermined our economy, that has inhibited our ability to trade within our own country and changed our constitutional status without our consent, a protocol that every day is harming businesses and driving up the cost of living for every single person in Northern Ireland," he said. New British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's message to the

parties was to "get back to Stormont... because the people of Northern Ireland deserve a fully functioning and locally elected executive", his official spokesman said.

UK government efforts to resolve months of political stalemate have failed to secure a breakthrough in recent days. Chris Heaton-Harris, Britain's Northern Ireland minister, held talks with the political parties on Wednesday in a fresh bid to get them to form a new executive.

If no agreement is reached by Friday, London will be legally required to call early elections for the devolved assembly in the volatile province. "If the executive is not formed by 28 October, I will call an election," the minister said in a statement earlier. "Time is running out."

Northern Ireland has been without a functioning government since February, when DUP collapsed the executive over its staunch opposition to post-Brexit trade rules there. It wants the protocol agreed by London and Brussels as part of Britain's 2019 Brexit deal-overhauled or scrapped entirely. They say it weakens the province's place within the United Kingdom.

Many unionists also argue the pact is threatening the delicate balance of peace between the pro-Irish nationalist community and those in favor of continued union with Britain. —AFP

Egypt and IMF ink loan deal; pound...

Continued from Page 1

Egypt has been dependent on bailouts both from the IMF and from Gulf allies, particularly since the 2013 ouster of Islamist late president Mohammed Morsi. The Egyptian tourism sector—already battered by jihadist attacks and the coronavirus pandemic—and the major wheat importer's food industry have lately been hit hard by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. With the latest depreciation,

Egypt's local currency has shed a total of 47 percent of its value since the start of the year, going down to 23 pounds against the greenback as markets closed Thursday, down from 15.6 pounds in a matter of months.

The pound's continued free-fall against the dollar has caused many importers to stop bringing in goods. The pound previously saw a dramatic devaluation in 2016 when it shed nearly half its value overnight. Inflation has also surged recently, reaching 15.3 percent in September, driven by the skyrocketing food prices. Non-oil private sector activity has continued to contract since 2017, while experts fear an impending real estate bubble as the military continues to launch massive-scale development projects that often lack financial transparency. —AFP

ner in combating international terrorism and strengthening international trade between our two countries. It is an honor to host our friends in the Heartland of America," he remarked. Also, Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs (NDVA) Director John Hilgert said "it was an honor to meet with Ambassador Al-Budaiwi alongside some of my fellow Gulf War veterans."

He added "hearing his perspective and the thanks he gave on behalf of the Kuwaiti people reiterated the importance and righteousness of Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield and America's continued efforts to protect democracy around the globe." Meanwhile, Secretary Evnen said "it was a great honor and pleasure to welcome Ambassador Jaseem Al-Budaiwi to Nebraska." "We found much of common interest for the mutual benefit of the people of Nebraska and the people of Kuwait," he added. He continued that Ambassador Al-Budaiwi "was warmly received by Nebraskans wherever he visited, and particularly so with our veterans of Desert Storm. We look forward to future follow-up in the many areas of mutual interest."

President and CEO of the National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce David Hamod said that is a "great opportunity" to introduce Kuwait's Ambassador to the heartland of America. "The middle west is distinguished by its productivity in agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and education, which makes this region a natural partner for the state of Kuwait," he added. —AFP

Coming decade 'most dangerous'...

Continued from Page 1

the status of people voluntarily supporting the Russia army during mobilization, in times of war, counter-terrorist operations, or abroad.

"In terms of status, volunteers will be equal to our servicemen under contract," said Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin. "It is only fair: they protect our country," he said, according to a statement on the Duma website. The law will regulate "material and

technical protection measures for volunteer groups and define social protections for them and their families," according to the statement. Both bills will need to be approved by the upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, before Putin can sign them into law.

More than 200,000 people have joined the Russian armed forces since mobilization was announced, the defense ministry said in early October. But after some public outrage over students, older or sick people being mistakenly ordered to report for duty, Putin ordered that mistakes be "corrected". Putin ordered the establishment of a special coordination council headed by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin to cover the needs of the armed forces during mobilization. —AFP

Zionists and Lebanon seal...

Continued from Page 1

offshore gas reserves at the border before the deal was signed. "Our mission is complete," Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech.

The deal comes as Lebanon hopes to extract itself from what the World Bank calls one of the world's worst economic crises in modern history, and as Lapid seeks to lock in a major achievement days ahead of a general election on November 1. The exchange of letters was held in the southern Lebanese border town of Naqura, in the presence of US mediator Amos Hochstein and UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka, who will now deposit the new maritime coordinates at the UN headquarters in New York.

Biden said that "energy - particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean - should not be a cause for conflict, but a tool for cooperation, stability, security and prosperity." "This agreement takes us one step closer to realizing a vision for a Middle East that is more secure, integrated and prosperous, delivering benefits for all the people of the region." Hours before signing it, Lapid had claimed that Lebanon's

intention to ink the deal amounted to a de-facto recognition of the Jewish state.

"It is not every day that an enemy state recognizes Zionist entity, in a written agreement, in front of the entire international community," he said. Aoun denied Lapid's assertion, countering that "demarcating the southern maritime border is technical work that has no political implications". The deal comes as political parties in Zionist entity - including Lapid's centrist Yesh Atid - jockey for position in what will be the fifth general election in less than four years.

Veteran right-winger and longtime premier Benjamin Netanyahu has his sights set on a comeback and he dismissed the maritime deal as an "illegal ploy" early this month. London-listed Energean on Wednesday said it began producing gas from Karish, an offshore field at the heart of the border agreement, a day after Zionists gave the green light. Lebanon meanwhile will have full rights to operate and explore the so-called Qana or Sidon reservoir, parts of which falls in Zionist territorial waters, with the Jewish state receiving some revenues.

With demand for gas rising worldwide because of the energy crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Lebanon hopes that exploiting the offshore field will help ease its financial and economic crisis. But analysts caution that it will take time for production to start in Lebanese waters, meaning no quick return for a country that is desperately short of foreign exchange reserves. —AFP

Kuwait explores US investment...

Continued from Page 1

in food security that is considered a "global challenge." He added that Nebraskan officials expressed their appreciation for Kuwait's stance towards US and the coordination in food security and many other domains. He affirmed Kuwait's keen interest in the food security, shedding light on Kuwait's Supreme National Committee to enhance the food and water security system that was created in May 2022 by Kuwait's Cabinet which is aimed at preventing any consequences from global crises that might affect the food security system. "This visit reflects Kuwait's desire to intensify and boost its cooperation globally as well as prepare itself in this field," Ambassador Al-Budaiwi said.

On his part, Governor Ricketts said, "Nebraskans are grateful for the strong friendship between the US and Kuwait. Kuwait is a key ally for our nation in the Middle East and an important trading partner for Nebraska," he added. He thanked Ambassador Al-Budaiwi for visiting Nebraska "to discuss opportunities to strengthen our ties with one another."

Furthermore, Congressman Bacon reiterated that "Kuwait is a strong ally of US and an important part-

International

ASEAN foreign ministers 'even more determined' to solve Myanmar crisis

Over 2,300 people killed in military's brutal crackdown in Myanmar

JAKARTA: Southeast Asian foreign ministers said they were "even more determined" to solve the political crisis in Myanmar during talks in Indonesia on Thursday ahead of the ASEAN leaders' summit in November. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military coup in February last year, but despite its expressions of concern, efforts by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have yet to bear any fruit.

But "ASEAN should not be discouraged, but even more determined to help Myanmar to bring about a peaceful solution", said Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn after the emergency meeting at the bloc's secretariat in Jakarta. Myanmar's junta had declined to send a non-political figure to the meeting.

More than 2,300 people have been killed in the Myanmar military's brutal crackdown on dissent after the coup, according to a local monitor. The United States had urged strong action at Thursday's meeting. Daniel Kritenbrink, the top US diplomat for East Asia, said at an event in Washington that the junta was leading "the complete destruction of all the progress made over the last decade" as Myanmar transitioned to democracy.

"We are not going to sit idly by while this violence continues; we're not going to sit idly by while the junta prepares for what will be completely fake and sham elections that they talk about holding next year," Kritenbrink said Washington had "great respect" for ASEAN, but US officials have expressed frustration in the past at the lack of progress on the bloc's own plan for the crisis, which called for an end to the violence,

increased aid and dialogue.

"I think all the ASEAN countries need to hold the regime accountable," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in July. "To date, we have not seen positive movement in that direction."

'Deep disappointment'

ASEAN ministers reaffirmed on Thursday their commitment to that five-point plan, first proposed in April 2022. "The situation on the ground remains critical and fragile, and this is not due to the lack of commitments and efforts on the part of ASEAN... but because of the complexity and difficulty of Myanmar's decades-long protracted conflicts," Sokhonn said.

"The time to act is now." Host Indonesia's foreign minister Retno Marsudi said the top diplomats of all ASEAN members had expressed concern about the failure to move ahead.

"The approach to sweep problems under the rug should not be an option in the ASEAN working mechanism," she told a press briefing. Singapore's foreign minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan expressed the city-state's "deep disappointment at the lack of progress" by the junta on implementing the agreed plan, his ministry said in a statement. Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has not been invited to the ASEAN leaders' summit in Cambodia next month-for the second year in a row-and Myanmar's top diplomat Wunna Maung Lwin was excluded from ministerial talks in February and August.

But rights groups condemned the bloc's failure to act, calling it business as usual.



JAKARTA: This handout picture taken and released on October 27, 2022 by the Indonesian ministry of foreign affairs shows the foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) countries attending the Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (SAFMM) at ASEAN secretariat general building, in Jakarta. — AFP

"Instead of the kind of wishy-washy language contained in the Chairperson's statement, ASEAN needs to get tough by establishing clear, time-bound human rights benchmarks on Myanmar," said Human Rights Watch's deputy Asia director Phil Robertson. He said that should include releasing political prisoners, ceas-

ing attacks on civilians, and steps towards dissolving the junta to allow for civilian democratic rule. "Those benchmarks should be accompanied by clear penalties should Myanmar fail to meet them," he said, criticizing ASEAN for not taking "even small actions to show displeasure" with the junta. —AFP



ASTANA, Kazakhstan: President of the European Council Charles Michel (second left) poses for a family photo with the leaders of all five Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - during the first EU-Central Asia summit in Astana on October 27, 2022. — AFP

EU chief calls for closer ties with Central Asia

ASTANA: EU chief Charles Michel called on Thursday for closer ties with Central Asia on his first official visit to Kazakhstan, the main economic powerhouse in a region where Russia's influence has come under question. "Central Asia and Europe are coming closer together and becoming more and more connected," Michel said at a press conference with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in the capital Astana. The head of the EU Council said Kazakhstan was a "crucial partner" and the EU hoped to "develop our cooperation". Michel's visit comes eight months into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has made Moscow's former Soviet neighbors nervous and intensified the Kremlin's clash with the West.

"My visit takes place at a difficult time for Europe and the wider region," Michel said, condemning Moscow's "war of aggression". This is the first EU-Central Asia summit, a gathering Michel described as "much more than just a policy dialogue between two regions". "It's a powerful symbol of our reinforced cooperation," he said.

He singled out Kazakhstan as a major trading part-

ner for the EU and called for investment in transport infrastructure in the country, which has looked to reduce its dependence on Moscow since the latter sent troops to Ukraine. Michel's visit comes two weeks after Astana hosted several summits attended by Russia-as well as by China and Turkey, who are also seeking to strengthen their influence in the region.

Central Asian countries, traditional allies of Moscow, have trod a fine line on the Kremlin's attack on Ukraine, neither condemning nor openly supporting it. Tokayev even clashed with Russian President Vladimir Putin publicly in June, refusing to recognize the self-declared separatist republics controlled by pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Russia has since claimed to have annexed the regions. Meanwhile Astana is seeking new routes for its oil exports, around three quarters of which transit Russia. In early July, Tokayev pledged greater energy cooperation with the EU. In a joint statement on Thursday, Tokayev and Michel said they discussed how to avoid "unintended negative impact on Kazakhstan's economy" of EU sanctions against Russia, imposed over the Ukraine conflict. They also discussed relocating to Kazakhstan "European manufacturing companies", whose products are not subject to sanctions. Rich in hydrocarbons and minerals, Kazakhstan lies at the heart of China's massive new Silk Road project. Like Beijing, Turkey is also advancing its interest in the region, highlighting its ethno-linguistic and religious ties to Central Asia. —AFP



KYIV, Ukraine: Ukrainian Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov delivers a news conference in Kyiv on October 26, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

towards us, forcing us to fire on them, to reveal our positions," said Sergiy, a major in the 53rd brigade. "After that, they fire artillery or send more experienced commandos towards our positions."

'Number of your prison'

Most of these fighters-dubbed "disposable soldiers" by the Ukrainians-are killed, they said. Some are wounded and captured. Sergiy said he found one alive one morning. In a video he said he took and showed to AFP later on the same day, a Russian captive is seen lying on the ground in a room, his right arm and left leg injured, being interrogated by the major.

"What is the number of your prison?" the major is heard asking in the video. "Kopeika", the man says, giving the nickname of a prison in Voronezh in western Russia. The Russian mercenary then says he joined Wagner one month earlier and received training in three different places, including a Russian-occupied area in eastern Ukraine. The man is heard saying that all his fellow fighters were ex-inmates recruited by Wagner. AFP could not independently confirm the contents of the video.—AFP

Russia's 'disposable soldiers' fighting for Bakhmut

KYIV: With Russian artillery exploding around him, a Ukrainian soldier takes shelter in a tunnel and recounts the scene at the front line in Bakhmut, just a kilometer away. "It's horror over there. The ground is black like asphalt. Everything is destroyed," 38-year-old serviceman Yevgen told AFP. "There are bodies everywhere". The eastern Ukraine town, known for its salt mines and vineyards, has been under attack for months by Russian forces, who are mostly on the defensive in other regions across Ukraine.

A driving force behind the offensive is the Wagner mercenary group, say war observers and Ukraine troops. The shadowy force was founded by Kremlin-linked businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin. The 61-year-old has taken an increasingly prominent role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine-leading some to question if he might harbor personal political ambitions. Ukrainian officials say Prigozhin has been sending thousands of soldiers recruited in Russian prisons to the front line, with the promise of a salary and an amnesty. Several Ukrainian soldiers in Bakhmut told AFP these alleged ex-convicts are used as a type of "human bait".

"It starts at around 6 pm, when it's getting dark," said Anton, a 50-year-old Ukrainian soldier from the 93th brigade who was resting after an injury. "These soldiers-with no experience-are sent towards our guns and stay there for a few minutes," Anton, nickname "Polyak", told AFP. He estimated seven or eight were sent every night. "Their job is to advance

Hong Kong pastor, housewife jailed over court applause

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong pastor and a housewife were both jailed on Thursday after they were convicted of sedition for clapping in court and criticizing a verdict against a democracy activist, local media reported. The sentence is the latest under Hong Kong's sedition law, once a little-used hangover from the British colonial period that has been embraced by prosecutors as China cracks down on dissent in the city.

Evangelical pastor Garry Pang and housewife Chiu Mei-ying were both convicted of "uttering seditious words" after they used applause and comments in court to criticize a verdict against a jailed democracy activist. Pang, 59, was given a year-long sentence while Chiu, 68, received three months.

Pang was separately convicted of another sedition count for comments on his YouTube channel about democracy protests. The two regularly attended activists' trials, which have filled Hong Kong's courts

Key Brazil state provides snapshot of divisive election

SAO PAULO: Nikolas Ferreira is a young, ultra-conservative who preaches about politics in churches and on social media. Celia Xakriaba, an Indigenous activist, focuses on the climate emergency. The two recently-elected lawmakers in Brazil's Minas Gerais state are fighting for polar opposite visions of the country's future for their respective candidates, far-right President Jair Bolsonaro and leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The stakes are high: Since 1989, no president has won an election without victory in Minas Gerais, home to the second-highest number of voters in the country of 215 million people.

Nikolas Ferreira: influencer with the most votes

Ferreira, a baby-faced 26-year-old lawyer, was elected to Congress with 1.5 million votes in legislative elections held alongside Brazil's first-round presidential vote. This represents more votes than any other legislative candidate in the country. For months he has declared himself at "war" with the "silent threat of communism" he claims a Lula victory will bring.

"Are we going to turn it around or not? Yes or no to abortion? Yes or no to the legalization of drugs?" Ferreira said as he worked up an audience during a recent Bolsonaro rally in the state.

The two have appeared together at least three times during the campaign, during which both Bolsonaro and Lula have given outsized attention to Minas Gerais voters. Dark-haired and articulate, Ferreira addresses his audience much like an evangelical pastor. "There are believers who are voting for the devil. There are believers who are voting for Lula," he told the Jovem Pan radio station. A graduate of a Catholic University in Minas Gerais, Ferreira claims that Brazilian universities are in the grip of a "Marxist ideology" out to destroy the traditional family.

He pushes his views in provocative speeches and videos shared with millions of followers on social media, a magnet for conservative youth. Electoral authorities removed his content falsely claiming that Lula was pro-abortion or the legalization of drugs. Local media has reported that Ferreira is under investigation after he exposed a transgender child for using the female toilet in a school. "I am not controversial. I am just following what I believe in," he said in a recent interview.

Celia Xakriaba, 32, is convinced she is living through a "historic moment." With more than 100,000 votes, she became the first indigenous deputy in Minas Gerais, as a candidate for the left-wing Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL). "Our absolute priority will be environmental issues," she told AFP during one of her campaign appearances in support of Lula in Belo Horizonte.—AFP

since a crackdown followed huge protests three years ago. "Pang not only openly admitted he clapped, he also criticized the magistrate of being conscienceless ... which incited others to despise the judiciary," magistrate Cheng Lim-chi said, according to local publication The Witness, which covers Hong Kong courts.

Cheng also found that Chiu called the sentencing magistrate "unjust". More than 200 people-the bulk of them activists, former elected lawmakers, unionists and journalists-have been arrested on national security charges since mid-2020. About one-fifth of those arrested have been hit with charges of sedition, which is treated as a national security crime.

Critics say the national security campaign has eviscerated freedoms and begun transforming Hong Kong's legal system, while Beijing says order has been restored in the wake of the demonstrations.

Thursday's verdict came a day after Hong Kong was demoted in the World Justice Project's annual global rule of law index. The city fell three places to 22 out of 140 regions and countries. It was the second-largest drop in the Asia-Pacific region after Myanmar, where the military seized power last year. The Hong Kong government rejected the lower ranking, saying it was "possibly due to the lack of an accurate and overall understanding of the real situation of the city". —AFP



BANGKOK: Thai plastic surgeon Nopparat Rattanawaraha (center) describes his ordeal of being kidnapped in Mali, during a press conference at Nopparat Cosmetic Clinic in Bangkok on October 27, 2022. — AFP

Thai doctor recounts Mali kidnap ordeal

BANGKOK: A Thai plastic surgeon on Thursday described drinking pond water to survive during three weeks of captivity at the hands of gun-toting kidnapers in Mali. Nopparat Rattanawaraha, who also runs a popular YouTube channel where he posts travel clips, returned to Thailand after being released on payment of a reported \$150,000 ransom.

The 49-year-old was back at work just a day after flying back to the kingdom, and recounted the dramatic moment he was seized while driving from Burkina Faso into Mali with a driver and guide. After falling asleep in the car, Nopparat said he woke up to find himself surrounded.

"It was like a movie. There were five or six men carrying guns surrounding me but I couldn't understand them," he told Channel 3 television station. "They told me to kneel down, put my hands behind my back and covered my eyes." The kidnapers took him to a remote location and he tried to stay calm and friendly, he said.

"They were not aggressive, they didn't injure me. They spoke to me nicely," he said, though food and drink were limited. "I had to eat whatever there was. If there was no water, I needed to drink from the pond. Sometimes I could smell oil in it," he said.

Helping him through was his homemade survival kit-a plastic bag containing mosquito repellent arm bands and herbal inhalers popular in Thailand.

In the third week of captivity, he was allowed to use the phone to speak to his mother and girlfriend, who spoke to the kidnapers to hear their ransom demands. It has not been confirmed who paid the ransom, but the Thai police and foreign office helped to organize his return. Nopparat said that while he did not feel immediately traumatized by his experience, he thought he would need professional counseling.—AFP

Business

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2022

BNK Motion will live up to Kuwait riders' expectations: Al-Kharafi

BNK expands into motorcycles and bikes segment, opens new showroom at Sirbb Circuit



KUWAIT: Motorbike enthusiasts arrive at the newly-opened BNK Motion showroom on Wednesday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: BNK, the official dealership of Piaggio Group Motor Works in Kuwait, continues to expand across the country. BNK Motion inaugurated a new showroom on Wednesday at Sirbb Circuit in the Shuwaikh area. The store offers end-to-end sales, service, and spare support.

Speaking on the occasion, Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, the Founder and CEO of BNK Holding, said "We are extremely delighted to open the store of Motoplex for Piaggio Group at the beginning of the motorcycle season. I hope we can live up to Kuwait riders' expectations".

He added, "BNK Automotive entered the field of cars at the beginning, and now we announce our development and expansion into BNK Motion for Motorcycles and Bikes. Hopefully, we will consider new brands for the new store soon".

Showroom offers end-to-end sales and services support

Ashraf Tamim, General Manager at BNK Automotive and BNK Motion, told Kuwait Times that the new showroom considers a '3S Facility' which means it has spare-parts, services and sales in one center.

He revealed that the new BNK Motion store brings together all the brands of Piaggio Group's top-selling dealers, consisting of Aprilia, Moto Guzzi, and Vespa, all under one roof. "The show-



KUWAIT: Founder and CEO of BNK Holding Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi at the showroom.

room also offers service at the same place, which makes it an integrated center for motorcycles".

Tamim affirmed that the showroom will meet all the requirements of the riders in Kuwait, where it presents various models from scooters to racing bikes. He noted, "The showroom at Sirbb Circuit will be of assistance to people who want to ride a bike without going out onto the public road. It is a rare thing to have a place with all that full options with qualified paths to drive bikes".

"The BNK Motion aims to take motorcycles closer to customers of Kuwait who can check out on different ranges of premium motorcycles. In addition, the timing is right for the showroom's launch as it coincides with the riding season. I am quite confident that bike lovers will benefit from this showroom

not only in sales but also from a service point of view," Tamim pointed out.

The event provided an opportunity for people to learn more about different brands of motorcycles and Vespa scooters. In addition, various accessories, apparel, and spare-parts were on display at the showroom. The attendees and motorcycle riders were provided food and beverages.

During the launch event, riders expressed their keen interest in the showroom that provides full services to both beginners and professional riders and provides high-quality Italian motorcycles to Kuwaiti riders. BNK's vision is to create an enjoyable and exceptional driving experience for the Kuwaiti community. BNK brands are a collection of style, simplicity, safety, and innovation. The brands are recognized for setting trends across the globe.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (left) and Saleh Al-Alyan check out a motorcycle at BNK Motion.



'SPARE' - PRINCE HARRY TO RELEASE MEMOIR IN JANUARY

Prince Harry will release a tell-all memoir in January, his publisher said Thursday, with the highly-anticipated account of life in the British monarchy and after he quit royal duties landing just four months after the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

The book by Harry—who now lives in California with his wife Meghan Markle—comes at a sensitive time. There has been intense speculation that prince could draw back the veil on palace life and offer damaging revelations, or pull his punches in the aftermath of Elizabeth's death as Britain adjusts to its new head of state, King Charles III.

Titled "Spare," the memoir will hit the shelves on January 10, 2023. "We are excited to announce the remarkably personal and emotionally powerful story of Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex," Penguin Random House said on Twitter.

On its website, the book is described as a window into how the prince responded to the death of his mother Diana 25 years ago, and how his life has been affected since. "With its raw, unflinching honesty, Spare is a landmark publication full of insight, revelation, self-examination, and hard-won wisdom about the eternal power of love over grief," Penguin



Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex, speak during the 2021 Global Citizen Live festival at the Great Lawn, Central Park in New York City. — AFP photos

Random said.

Diana, Princess of Wales, died in a high-speed car crash in Paris on August 31, 1997. Britain was plunged into an outpouring of grief that jolted the monarchy, which was seen by some as out of touch.

In addition to the title referring to Harry's apparent bid to lead a more simple, less ritzy lifestyle, it also alludes to his status as the "spare" to

his older brother Prince William's role as "heir" to the British throne.

Harry and Meghan stunned his family by announcing they were quitting royal duties and moving to the United States in early 2020. From there, they launched a series of broadsides criticizing their life in the institution, including claims of racism and the Crown's failure to support them amid relentless tabloid attacks.

Their public criticisms exacerbated tensions with William—with whom he is reported to be barely on speaking terms—and their father, King Charles. Harry and Meghan now live with their two children, Archie and Lilibet, in Santa Barbara, California.

'Highs and lows'

In July last year, Harry announced he was penning a memoir that would expose the "mistakes" and "lessons learned" across his life. "I'm writing this not as the prince I was born but as the man I have become," Harry said at the time.

"I've worn many hats over the years, both literally and figuratively, and my hope is that in telling my story—the highs and lows, the mistakes, the lessons learned—I can help show that no matter where we come from, we have more in common than we think."

He said he was "excited for people to read a firsthand account of my life that's accurate and wholly truthful." But any additional unflattering and candid remarks—beyond those Harry made during a high-profile interview with Oprah Winfrey last year—about the royal family after the queen's death might backfire.

"Prince Harry has gotten cold feet about the memoir's contents at vari-



ous points, book industry executives with knowledge of the process told The Times, and the project has been shrouded in rumors, delays and secrecy," The New York Times reported.

Harry will use proceeds from the memoir, which will be released in 16 languages, to donate to British charities, the publisher added. — AFP

King Charles plans to sideline Harry, Andrew as royal stand-ins: Reports

British King Charles III on Thursday was reportedly planning to extend the pool of royals allowed to act for him in his absence, effectively sidelining non-working royals Prince Harry and the Duke of York. Charles is expected to amend the "Regency Act" to add his brother Edward, the Earl of Wessex, and his sister Anne, the Princess Royal. The Daily Telegraph and the BBC reported, quoting sources.

The Telegraph reported the amendments could go before parliament "within weeks", quoting "royal insiders" as saying it was a "logical step". Buckingham Palace has not commented officially.

Currently the list of royals who can temporarily take over on the 73-year-old monarch's behalf if he is away or ill only includes Charles's wife Camilla, heir to the throne Prince William, Harry, Andrew and his daughter Beatrice, who is not even a working royal.

A longer list would allow the Palace to bypass Harry, who has quit as a working royal and lives in the US, and Andrew, who has retired from public life over his friendship with convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein and allegations of sex with a minor, without directly excluding them.

Daily Express royal reporter Richard Palmer tweeted that amendments "to create more stand-ins for the King is now a priority, sources have confirmed". He said this would mean "the King never has to ask non-working royals such as Harry, Andrew or Beatrice to stand in for him".

The role includes signing documents and receiving ambassadors, the BBC said. The regency issue was raised in the House of Lords Monday, with Labour peer Stephen Benn questioning the current situation where Andrew and Harry can exercise these powers.

"Is it not time for the government to approach the King to see whether a sensible amendment can be made to this Act?" Benn asked. Senior Tory peer Nicholas True appeared to confirm such discussion, saying that the government "will always consider what arrangements are needed to ensure resilience in our constitutional arrangements".

He added that "in the past we have seen that the point of accession has proved a useful opportunity to consider the arrangements in place".

Queen Elizabeth II suffered ill health during the last year of her life. She asked Charles to deputise for her at events such as the opening of parliament, showing that the legislation is "still very relevant", Benn said. — AFP

Bees shown to 'count' from left to right for first time

Bees order numbers in increasing size from left to right, a study has shown for the first time, supporting the much-debated theory that this direction is inherent in all animals including humans. Western research has found that even before children learn to count, they start organising growing quantities from left to right in what has been called the "mental number line".

However the opposite direction has been found in people from cultures that use an Arabic script which reads from right to left.

"The subject is still being debated between those who think the mental number line has an innate character and those who say it is cultural," said Martin Giurfa, a professor at the Research Centre on Animal Cognition at Paul Sabatier University in Toulouse, France.

There has been recent evidence that newborn babies and some vertebrate animals, including primates, organise numbers from left to right. Giurfa led a study, published last week in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), aiming to find out if the same holds true for insects, via an experiment on bees.

"It has already been shown that bees are able to count—at least up to five," Giurfa told AFP. They also process information differently in the two hemispheres of their brains, he added. This trait they seem to share with humans, and is thought to be a potential reason for the "the existence of the mental number line," Giurfa said.

A numbers game

For the experiment, the researchers had individual honeybees fly into the first of two compartments of a wooden box. Sugar-water was then used to entice the bees to select a number affixed to the middle of the back of the second compartment.

The number stayed the same for each individual bee, but varied randomly across the group from between one, three or five, in shapes of circles, squares or triangles.

Once the bees were trained to fly towards their set number, the researchers removed it and put another number on both sides of the second compartment, leaving the middle blank.

They then removed the sugar-water reward and observed which way the bees went. For example, if the bee was trained to select the number three, and was now faced with two number ones on either side and nothing in the middle, which way did they fly?

Around 80 percent of the time the bees chose the option on the left—the "correct choice" if brains order numbers from left to right, Giurfa said. But if those same bees were given two number fives to choose from, they went right, again supporting the mental number line.

And bees trained to go for number one went to the right for a number three, while bees targeting a five went left for their three. So if animals do in fact think of numbers from left to right, why is this not true for all humans?

Giurfa said it was more complicated than directly choosing between nature and nurture. Even if the mental number line "is innate, culture can still modify it, even reverse it—or on the contrary accentuate it," he said. Bees, on the other hand, have to stick to what nature dictates. — AFP



Moroccan rapper ElGrande Toto (R), also known as Taha Fahssi, holds a press conference with his lawyer Abdelfattah Zahrah in Rabat. — AFP photos

Moroccan rapper Toto released

Moroccan rapper ElGrande Toto was released from police custody on Wednesday but remains under investigation for alleged "insults, defamation and

threats", a judicial source said, after the artist made public statements about using cannabis.

The Casablanca-born rapper, whose real name is Taha Fahssi and who is a massive star in the Arabic-speaking music world, had in late September told reporters after one of his concerts, "I smoke hash — so what?... It doesn't mean I set a bad example."

That sparked anger in conservative Morocco, where recreational use of the drug is illegal despite the country being the world's top producer, according to the United Nations. On Monday, a Casablanca prosecutor



Moroccan rapper ElGrande Toto, holds a press conference with his lawyer Abdelfattah Zahrah in Rabat.

ordered the musician detained after complaints were filed by several artists, a journalist, and a policeman.

But on Wednesday he was released after the artists withdrew their complaints, the judicial source told AFP. A source within the rapper's circle however said the journalist and the policeman had maintained their complaints.

He also paid a 20,000-dirham (\$1,800) fine and apologised again for his comments, the source said, adding that he remained under investigation for alleged "insults, defamation and threats". The rapper had already apologised at a packed press conference

in Rabat on Sunday.

Moroccan media say he remains under investigation for social media posts and public statements that may "contain elements punishable by law". The rapper was the most in demand Arab artist in the Maghreb in 2021 on Spotify, with more than 50 million downloads. His YouTube channel meanwhile maintains 2.7 million subscribers, with popular videos drawing tens of millions of views. — AFP

Kanye West 'escorted' out of Skechers offices

Kanye West was "escorted" by two executives out of the Skechers corporate offices after the rapper showed up uninvited, the shoe company said in a statement Wednesday. West—known formally as Ye—has made headlines in recent weeks for racist and anti-Semitic statements that have cost him several lucrative fashion collaborations.

He arrived "unannounced and without invitation" at the Los Angeles offices, Skechers said, adding that he was "engaged in unauthorized filming." The hip hop star appeared at a Paris fashion show this month wearing a shirt emblazoned with "White Lives Matter," a slogan created as a backlash to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Days later, he was locked out of Twitter and Instagram for threatening to "Go death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE," using a reference to US military readiness.

"Skechers is not considering and has no intention of working with West," the company said Wednesday. "We condemn his recent divisive remarks and do not tolerate anti-Semitism or any other form of hate speech."

"Considering Ye was engaged in unauthorized filming, two Skechers executives escorted him and his party from the building after a brief conversation," it added. German sportswear giant Adidas on Tuesday announced it was ending its partnership with West, followed later that day by American



Kanye West

apparel company Gap, which said it was taking "immediate" steps to remove his products.

Paris-based fashion house Balenciaga ended ties with West last week. One of Hollywood's biggest talent agencies, CAA, said on Monday it was dropping West, while film and TV producer MRC said it was shelving an already finished documentary about the artist.

West's ex-wife Kim Kardashian posted a message condemning hate speech on social media this week without mentioning her former husband. West, 45, has been outspoken about his struggles with mental health issues. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

IN EASTERN UKRAINE, THE PLIGHT OF ANOTHER VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

When occupying Russian forces came knocking on doors in his small village in east Ukraine in late April to check the identities of residents, 64-year-old retiree Volodymyr Zelensky was terrified.

Then, one of the Russian soldiers glanced at his passport and burst out laughing. "It's okay guys, the war is over," the soldier said. "We can go home—we got their president!" Born in 1958 in the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, then part of the Soviet Union, to a coal miner and a construction worker, Zelensky, a namesake of the Ukrainian leader, served as a driver in the Soviet army and then worked in construction.

Since Russia invaded its neighbour in February, Zelensky, who has no known relationship to the Ukrainian president, has spent most of the war hiding from bombardment in the basement of his house.

"I had quit smoking four years before, but I started again," Zelensky said. AFP is not disclosing the name of his village for security reasons.

'Don't look like him'

His wife Valentina Zelenska, 72, evacuated to western Ukraine at the start of the war, but Zelensky refused to leave the home he purchased 20 years ago. Here, he could finally breathe "the purest



Ukrainian pensioner Volodymyr Zelensky shows his passport during an interview with AFP in a recently liberated village of the Donetsk region. — AFP photos

air" after years in a mining town, plant vegetables on his own plot, enjoy time on the patio, and fish in the local pond.

Zelenska returned home after Kyiv's forces expelled the Russians from the village late last month. But it is now being pounded by Russian artillery, and she is alarmed whenever a blast outside blows the plastic sheet on their gutted window inward.

"She hasn't gotten used to it," said her husband, wearing corduroy trousers and

a jumper with a zip collar. With the help of a flashlight, he retrieved an old photo album, and found a photo of himself as a man in his 40s in khaki uniform. "I don't think I look like the president. Not at all," he said. His wife disagreed.

"But you do look like him!" she said from her stool on the other edge of the living room. He laughed. "Which president are you talking about? Biden?" he asked. "People can't take it anymore" -

His wife said Zelensky was a common



last name in Ukraine, as well as in Russia. But she admits she had never known any other Volodymyr Zelensky until Ukraine's current leader, a former comedian, was elected president in 2019.

Zelensky, the retiree, voted for his namesake in the election. "He presents well, he is young, intelligent," he said. But now Zelensky says he is disappointed that the president is not doing more to negotiate an end to the war with Russia.

"The people here can't take it anymore," he said. Like many residents of his generation in the eastern Donbas

region, Zelensky considers Ukraine to be his homeland. But the former Soviet soldier is also nostalgic for his years under the Soviet regime, which he says brought peace and prosperity to his generation.

It was the couple's twenty-second marriage anniversary on Wednesday, and Zelensky wanted to give his wife a bunch of flowers. But in a village ravaged by fighting and cut off from the rest of the world, there were none to be found. — AFP



Visitors look at the Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring" at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague. Dutch police arrested three people after climate activists targeted Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring". — AFP photos

Climate activists target 'Girl with a Pearl Earring'

Dutch police arrested three people after climate activists targeted Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring" at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague on Thursday. Two people glued themselves to the famed painting and adjoining wall, while another threw an unknown substance, but the artwork was behind glass and undamaged, the Mauritshuis said.

Social media images showed activists wearing "Just Stop Oil" T-shirts and saying "how do you feel", while museum visitors shouted "shame" and "you're stupid". The attack comes after environmental activists poured tomato soup over Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers" at the National Gallery in London and smeared mashed potato over a Monet



painting in Germany.

"Around 2 pm (1200 GMT) two people glued themselves to the Girl with a Pearl Earring by Johannes Vermeer," the Mauritshuis said in a statement to AFP. "One person glued his head to the painting, which was behind glass, and the other person glued his hand to the green wall next to the painting. A third person threw an unknown substance at the painting."

The museum added: "We have immediately inspected the painting, which was done by our restorers. Fortunately the painting... was not damaged." The painting would return on display "as soon as possible".

"Art is defenceless and to try and damage it for whichever cause, we strongly condemn it," the Mauritshuis added. The Hague police said on Twitter that they had arrested three people in a museum for "public violence against goods".

Dozens of people were gathered inside the museum waiting for news, while security guards told them not to get too close to the other paintings, an AFP reporter said. The entrance to the room where the "Girl with a Pearl Earring" normally hangs was blocked off by a large reproduction oil painting and a guard said it would likely be closed for the rest of the day. Two police vans were parked outside the museum while investigations continued. — AFP

Rihanna to make return with track for 'Black Panther'

After launching high-fashion collections, a lingerie line, a makeup brand, becoming a billionaire and having a baby, megastar Rihanna is making a highly anticipated return to music this week, her reps said Wednesday.

After six years without releasing a new solo song, the 34-year-old on Friday will drop a new single entitled "Lift Me Up," which will be on the soundtrack for the Marvel sequel "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever." It's her first solo single since 2016's "Love on the Brain."

Rihanna is releasing the new song on her Westbury Road label in conjunction with Roc Nation, Def Jam Recordings and Hollywood Records.

The singer behind the hits "Diamonds" and "Umbrella" posted a brief preview of the new track, which featured humming over strings.

The news comes only weeks after the NFL announced Rihanna would be headlining the coveted Super Bowl halftime show in February, a long-awaited return



Fossil fuel reliance is 'stupid': UN

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Wednesday it would be "stupid" for the world to keep relying on fossil fuels, saying they triggered today's climate emergency. "If the world, and then particularly if Europe, had invested massively in the past two decades in renewable energy, we will not be facing the energy crisis that we are facing today," Guterres said in an interview with the BBC.

"And the prices of oil and gas would not be as high as they are today," he added in response to a question on the war in Ukraine and its consequence of stimulating some fossil fuel production.

"As we did not invest sufficiently in renewables, we are now paying the price," said Guterres. He added: "The most stupid thing is to bet on what has led us to this disaster." With UN climate talks opening early next month in Egypt, the UN chief urged countries to do more to fight global warming. The UN said in a report released Wednesday that the world's current climate pledges are far off track to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius and will steer a planet already wracked by increasing floods, heatwaves and storms towards catastrophic warming. — AFP

'Ar-JIN-tina'- K-pop star sparks fan craze in Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires has been gripped by "Jin" fever, with fans thronging to catch a glimpse of the K-pop superstar making what could be his last public appearance in a while. Ahead of signing on for military service in South Korea, 29-year-old BTS singer-songwriter Jin is set to make a guest appearance Saturday with Coldplay on the Argentine leg of the British rock band's tour.

He is plugged to appear for a just single track—the first-ever live performance of "The Astronaut" co-written with Coldplay's Chris Martin. The promise of one song was enough to set off a craze, and since news broke of Jin's one-off appearance, hundreds of fans have set up camp outside the River Plate stadium hosting 10 concerts by Coldplay, who tweeted on Thursday: "Jin is here!"

More than a thousand devotees flocked to the airport in the vain hope of catching a glimpse of Jin's arrival Tuesday, but he slipped out through a back exit. "It... means a lot now that he is going to go to do military service," university student Agustina Jenzi told AFP outside the stadium—among those who came with tents, yoga mats, food and drink for the long wait.

"It's nice for him to experience this. I don't know whether he passed by here and saw us... he should know that there are a lot of people here." The local branch of the global "BTS army" hope to get as close to the stage as possible when the gates open for Saturday's concert.

'To have him close'

Ten days ago, the agency representing BTS said the band's seven members

would enlist in the military, putting an end to a debate about whether they should be exempt from mandatory service of about two years.

The group, credited with generating billions for the South Korean economy, must sign up by December. They have said they hope to reconvene by 2025.

Outside the stadium, the make-shift tent camp is decorated with shrine-like homages to Jin, with photos of the singer on home-made placards, decorated phone covers, blankets and scarves.

Finding a room to rent in Buenos Aires, a city of three million, has become a test in recent days. And social networks have exploded, with Jin occupying six of the top ten trends on Argentine Twitter with more than half-a-million tweets on Tuesday alone.

Popular hashtags include "#Welcome to Arjintina." "When they announced he was coming, we came here and started camping," Rocio Vega, 23, told AFP. "We are tent one. And then more girls joined us. So far there are 18 tents" with about 40 ticket-holders sleeping in and around each one.

Vega and others care little that the concert will be broadcast on the screens of 3,500 cinemas on more than 75 countries. Jin must be seen in flesh and blood. "This will be his real sendoff," said Vega, who had bought tickets to see Coldplay on October 25 and 29, and another for Saturday when she learnt Jin would be there.

Sumilda Garcia, an 18-year-old student who smiles at the mere mention of Jin's name, said sleeping in intermittent rain was a small price to pay for the chance of seeing her idol in real life.

"At night, we sit and talk about the possibility of seeing him... It is a mix of emotions, between happiness, a lot of adrenaline, anxiety to be able to see him, to have him close." — AFP



People arrive to River Plate's Monumental stadium for the second show of the British pop rock band Coldplay in Buenos Aires. Coldplay performs its second of ten shows in Argentina today. South Korean K-Pop boy band BTS member Kim Seok-jin (C), also known as Jin, will perform with the British pop rock band his new solo single, "The Astronaut", on Friday October 28. — AFP photos



Barcelona exit with whimper

Liverpool, Inter Milan ease into last 16



BARCELONA: Bayern Munich's French defender Dayot Upamecano (L) fights for the ball with Barcelona's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 5, Group C football match between FC Barcelona and FC Bayern Munich at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

PARIS: Liverpool booked their place in the Champions League last 16 on Wednesday as Jurgen Klopp's men saw off Ajax 3-0, while Inter Milan also qualified to eliminate Barcelona who slipped to a tame defeat by Bayern Munich.

Much of the drama came elsewhere on a breathless night of action, as Porto became the 12th team to secure a berth in the knockout stage but Tottenham were forced to wait. Last season's losing finalists Liverpool knew a draw in Amsterdam would be enough to clinch a last-16 spot for a sixth straight season.

The Reds, struggling in the Premier League this term, weathered an early Ajax storm before Mohamed Salah gave them a half-time lead.

Darwin Nunez, who had earlier missed an open goal from six yards out, headed in to double the advantage shortly after the break and Harvey Elliott rounded off the scoring with his second goal in as many Champions League games. "Darwin was really angry with himself at half-time," Liverpool left-back Andy Robertson told BT Sport.

"I sat next to him at half-time and told him I

would put a cross in to his head for him to score." Liverpool join Napoli in progressing from Group A, but need a four-goal victory at Anfield in six days' time to pip the red-hot Italians to top spot after their 3-0 win over Rangers.

Inter finish job

Inter Milan romped to the win they needed to go through and eliminate Barca from Group C, thrashing Czechs Viktoria Plzen 4-0 at the San Siro. Romelu Lukaku came off the bench to score on his return from injury late on, after Henrikh Mkhitaryan's opener and a double for Edin Dzeko.

That left the financially struggling Catalans digesting a group-stage exit for the second straight season. The five-time champions were unable to at least lay down a marker on their way out, falling to a 3-0 home loss by Bayern Munich at a subdued Camp Nou.

Sadio Mane, Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Benjamin Pavard scored as Bayern wrapped up first place in the group with a fifth successive win. "On a night like this, you don't go out to play the game with the same motivation," admitted Barca midfielder Pedri. "We

wanted to give the fans a victory but it wasn't to be."

Late VAR drama

Porto earlier beat Club Brugge 4-0, although knew an Atletico Madrid victory against Bayer Leverkusen would set up a deciding Group B match between the Portuguese and Diego Simeone's team next week.

But Atletico's Yannick Carrasco missed a penalty, which was awarded by VAR after the initial final whistle, in a remarkable 2-2 draw to send Porto through. Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen led twice thanks to goals from Moussa Diaby and Callum Hudson-Odoi.

But Carrasco's first-half strike and Rodrigo de Paul's equaliser gave Atletico 40 minutes to find a winner and keep their Champions League campaign alive. In chaotic scenes, the players were called back onto the pitch after VAR spotted a handball from the final attack of the game.

But Carrasco's spot-kick was saved by Leverkusen goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky, Saul Niguez headed the rebound off the bar and Reinildo

Mandava's following effort was denied by a last-ditch block.

Porto, trailing leaders Brugge by one point, could still snatch top spot, while Atletico and Leverkusen will fight over a Europa League place. Spurs thought they had won against Sporting to qualify from Group D when Harry Kane found the net deep into added time, only for the goal to be ruled out for offside after a lengthy VAR delay as it finished 1-1.

Sporting took a deserved first-half lead through former Tottenham youngster Marcus Edwards' fine strike, but Rodrigo Bentancur scored with 10 minutes left to set up a grandstand finish.

Kane celebrated wildly with the home fans in London when he scored what appeared to be a last-gasp winner, but VAR had other ideas. "VAR is doing a lot of damage," said Tottenham manager Antonio Conte, who was sent off for his protests.

"I want to see if in another stadium of a big team if they are ready to disallow this type of goal. I'd like to know this." All four teams in the group can still qualify heading into the last games after Eintracht Frankfurt beat Marseille 2-1 in Germany. — AFP

Lakers woes continue, Giannis sparks Bucks over Nets

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Lakers' miserable start to the season continued on Wednesday as the winless NBA giants crashed to a fourth straight defeat against the Denver Nuggets. Nikola Jokic scored 31 points and hauled down 13 rebounds in a 110-99 win for Denver that left the Lakers rooted to the foot of the Western Conference standings at 0-4.

LeBron James finished with 19 points and Anthony Davis 22 but it was another frustrating night for the Lakers, who reached half-time tied at 54-54 before being outscored 32-17 in a lopsided third quarter in Denver.

The Lakers' 0-4 start to the season matches their start to the 2015-2016 campaign, when the team would go on to post the worst season in franchise history, finishing with a 17-65 record. It is only the fourth time in franchise history that the Lakers have started a season with an 0-4 record.

Elsewhere Wednesday, Giannis Antetokounmpo produced his second straight 40-point performance as the Milwaukee Bucks maintained their unbeaten start to the NBA season with a 110-99 win over the Brooklyn Nets.

Antetokounmpo single-handedly hauled Milwaukee back into an absorbing clash at Fiserv Forum, scoring 17 points in a third-quarter rally which turned a 12-point half-time deficit into a two-point lead.

The Greek star added 17 more points in the fourth quarter to finish with 43 in total as the Bucks pulled clear to wrap up the win and improve to 3-0. Former NBA Most Valuable Player Antetokounmpo scored 44 points in his last outing against Houston on Saturday



DENVER: Anthony Davis #3 of the Los Angeles Lakers defends against DeAndre Jordan #6 of the Denver Nuggets at Ball Arena on October 26, 2022 in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

and has averaged 36 points per game this season.

"That was vintage Giannis," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "He's had a lot of great performances, but that second half he did everything, he was phenomenal. "We had a poor second quarter and he came out with a force and a determination to put us in the right place. It's hard to put into words how good he was in the second half."

Brooklyn, meanwhile, saw head coach Steve Nash ejected late in the third quarter after an uncharacteristic outburst from the Canadian Hall of Famer. Nash erupted after officials failed to call a foul on Antetokounmpo when the Bucks star flattened Brooklyn's Patty Mills.

An incandescent Nash needed to be hustled away from the confrontation by Nets players and coaching staff before heading back to the locker room. "I was just standing up for our guys," Nash said. "I thought

Patty took a forearm to the throat from Giannis right in front of the ref and I didn't think that was fair... What happened happened. I said my piece on the court and that's really all there is to it."

Nash's ejection came at a time when momentum had swung back towards Milwaukee, who recovered after being pummeled 35-18 in the second quarter to outscore Brooklyn 35-21 in the third. Brooklyn led by four points when Nash was ejected but Antetokounmpo took over to lead the Bucks to a deserved win.

Kevin Durant led the Nets scoring with 33 points while Kyrie Irving added 27 and Royce O'Neale 12. Ben Simmons finished with four points. Elsewhere on Wednesday, in-form Damian Lillard scored 22 points but hobbled off with a right calf strain as the Portland Trail Blazers suffered their first loss of the season with a 119-98 defeat to the Miami Heat in Oregon. — AFP

Spanish Super Cup to be hosted in Riyadh again

BARCELONA: The Spanish Super Cup will take place in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia in January 2023, the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) announced Thursday.

It is the third time the tournament will take place in the Middle East, as part of a deal to keep the tournament there until 2029, worth a reported 30 million euros (30.1 million dollars) a season for the RFEF.

Reigning champions and La Liga winners Real Madrid will face Copa del Rey runners up Valencia in one semi-final, with cup-winners Real Betis playing Barcelona, who finished second in the league in the other.

"The three matches will be played at the King Fahd de Riyadh stadium, a spectacular venue with capacity for over 60,000 fans," said the RFEF in a statement. The semi-finals will take place on January 11 and 12 with the final on January 15.

In the 2019/20 season the Spanish Super Cup was played in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, but because of the coronavirus pandemic it returned to Spain in 2020/21. Last season it returned to Saudi Arabia, being held in Riyadh where Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 2-0 in the final.

The tournament has been mired in various controversies, including Barcelona defender Gerard Pique's sports event company Kosmos being paid for helping arrange the move to Saudi Arabia, as well as concerns over human rights issues in the host country. — AFP