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New vote-buying network busted

Candidates call to end political disputes • 1,157 judges to supervise elections

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The interior ministry said on Saturday it has busted a network of two people involved in vote-buying activities in favor of three candidates running in the June 6 National Assembly elections. The ministry added in a statement that security men seized cash and lists of names of voters. The two suspects admitted they were buying votes for three candidates in the first, second and fourth constituencies.

The statement said the ministry will refer the two suspects to the public prosecution for further investigations. Last week, the ministry arrested 10 citizens and expats suspected of buying votes for candidates. The public prosecution has freed three suspects on bail but extended the detention of the remaining seven suspects.

With just two days remaining for Tuesday's elections, candidates continued to focus on the reasons behind the country's non-stop political disputes and a lack of stability that has stalled development. Former MP and ex-justice minister Hussein Al-Huraiti, running from the first constituency, asked why Kuwait has been marred by political problems in the past several years, although "we have a constitution and enjoy a huge financial windfall".

"We have a problem. There is unemployment in the country and our projects are always late. Education is backward and we have a major housing problem," Huraiti said. "We have huge resources but neighboring Gulf states are way ahead of us." Candidate Thamer Al-Enezi said Kuwait is passing through a crucial period and only Kuwaiti voters can resolve the dilemma by voting for the best candidates.

Former MP Marzouq Al-Hubaini attributed the problems to a lack of political stability. He said for example in the past four years, eight governments have changed, adding the normal timespan for these governments should have lasted 32 years. Also, in less than two-and-a-half years, three National Assemblies have been either dissolved or scrapped by court, while their normal tenure should have been 12 years.

Alia Al-Khaled, a member of the scrapped 2022 Assembly, said Kuwait is facing one of the "biggest and most serious financial and economic problems", adding the scenario of a sharp drop in oil prices should not be ruled out. She added the government is risking the future of the country by continuing to depend on a single source of income, which is oil.

Candidates also urged voters to turn in large numbers. "We have been revolving in a vicious circle

of political rivalry. This is what has taken us to a dead end and to a state of political polarization," former MP and candidate from the second constituency Ahmad Al-Hamad said. He called for a roadmap that is agreed by all parties to end disputes and focus on development.

Former MP Hisham Al-Saleh urged Kuwaiti citizens to vote in large numbers, saying that if voters don't go to the ballots, parties and groups will control the next Assembly and will continue to block development and megaprojects. He indirectly blasted opposition groups and members, blaming them for preventing a number of key megaprojects and forcing foreign investors to go to neighboring countries. "What is happening in Kuwait is a crime," said Saleh, who is contesting for a seat from the third constituency.

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3 Zionist soldiers, Egypt policeman killed in shooting

JERUSALEM: Three Zionist soldiers and a member of Egypt's security forces were killed Saturday in a rare exchange of fire near the border between the two countries, official sources from both sides said. The Zionist army claimed an Egyptian assailant shot dead two soldiers "in the early morning... while they secured a military post at the Egyptian border" on Mount Harif, near the town of Mitzpe Ramon in the Negev desert. The discovery of their bodies triggered a manhunt during which the third soldier was killed.

An army statement identified the assailant as an Egyptian policeman, saying he was killed by Zionist troops after being found "in (Zionist territory)". The statement said an investigation was being carried out "in full cooperation with the Egyptian army". A fourth Zionist soldier, a non-commissioned officer, was lightly wounded and evacuated to hospital, the military added.

An Egyptian army spokesman said "a member of the security forces... chased drug smugglers. During the chase, the security agent crossed the security fence (border)" and an exchange of fire took place. Egypt was the first Arab country to make peace with the Zionist entity following the Camp David accords of 1978, though there remains widespread popular opposition towards normalization in Egypt.

Their shared border is largely peaceful, despite an insurgency in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and occasional exchanges of fire between drug smugglers and Zionist forces. The Zionist army had initially declined to confirm media reports of the first two deaths, while the families were being notified. The two soldiers, a man and a woman, were "killed by live fire adjacent to the border", it said in a statement. The woman was later identified as Lia Ben Nun, 19.

A barrier runs along the Zionist-Egypt border, and an army spokesman said the Zionist entity was looking into how it had been breached. Hours before the deadly shooting, Zionist soldiers had foiled an attempted drug smuggling operation at the border, seizing contraband goods estimated to be worth 1.5 million shekels (\$400,000), a spokesman said.

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288 killed in India train crash; Amir sends condolences

BALASORE, India: At least 288 people were killed and hundreds more injured in a horrific three-train collision in India, officials said Saturday, the country's deadliest rail accident in more than 20 years. Wreckage debris was piled high at the crash site near Balasore, in the eastern state of Odisha, where some carriages had been tossed far from the tracks and others flipped over entirely. Smashed train compartments were torn open in the impact late on Friday, leaving blood-stained holes in their sides.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday sent a cable of condolences to Indian President Droupadi Murmu over the victims of the train crash, wishing swift recovery for the injured. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah also sent cables of condolences to Murmu.

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BALASORE, India: This handout photograph taken on June 3, 2023 shows India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting the site of a three-train collision in India's eastern state of Odisha. — AFP

Arson behind Salmi tyre blaze; 3 killed in Jleeb house fire

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced Saturday that a blaze that erupted at the used tyre dump site in Salmi on Friday was "deliberate". Investigation teams completed technical examination and interrogated eyewitnesses about the fire that erupted at the dumping site spread over an area of 4,000 sq m, the KFF said in a statement issued by its media and public relations department.

Wind speed contributed to fueling the fire in the area, which was extinguished by KFF firefighters, it added. After checking the site of the fire, neither electrical nor thermal sources have been found, it said, indicating the results of the probe said that the fire was caused by a "deliberate" act. Coordination is ongoing with concerned bodies to identify who was behind this "criminal act", which affected public security and led to environment pollution, it stated.

Separately, a huge fire broke out at a house in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on Thursday, killing three people. A statement from KFF blamed the disaster on poor safety precautions



KUWAIT: Firemen battle a blaze at the Salmi tyre dump on June 2, 2023. — KUNA

at the site, including inaccessibility to the bedrooms of the home and lots of scrap such as doors and iron bars that blocked the way of firefighters. The statement urged land-

lords to make sure of the safety of their buildings and prevent tenants from storing scrap that could hinder firefighters and cause high numbers of victims. — KUNA

Erdogan sworn in, vows unity

ANKARA: Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan was sworn in for a third term as president on Saturday, promising to serve "impartially" after winning a historic runoff election to extend his two-decade rule. Erdogan called for unity and the anger and resentment of the campaign to be set aside as he spoke during a lavish ceremony at his presidential palace in the capital Ankara attended by dozens of world leaders.

Turkey's transformative but divisive leader won the May 28 runoff against a powerful opposition coalition, despite an economic crisis and anger over the response to a February earthquake that killed more than 50,000 people. Erdogan won 52.18 percent of the vote while his secular rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu

scored 47.82 percent, official results show.

"As president, I swear upon my honor and integrity, before the great Turkish nation... to work with all my power to protect the existence and independence of the state... and to fulfil my duty impartially," Erdogan said in parliament after a ceremony outside the building where he saluted soldiers under pouring rain. Supporters in parliament gave Erdogan a minute-long standing ovation after his swearing in, while some opposition lawmakers refused to stand up. In his oath, Erdogan also promised not to deviate from the rule of law and the secular principles of the republic founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 100 years ago.

Turkey's longest-serving leader, who has survived mass protests, a corruption scandal and a failed coup attempt since he came to power in 2003, now faces significant immediate challenges in his third term, including the slowing economy and tensions with the West.

Continued on Page 6



ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine greet guests during his oath-taking ceremony at the Presidential Complex on June 3, 2023. — AFP



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Local

Electricity ministry to issue decision regulating renewable energy sector

Regulations to encourage establishing solar energy companies: Minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Mutlaq Al-Otaibi said on Saturday that the ministry will make a decision regulating the renewable energy sector "within the next few days". The decision is expected to allow "purchasing renewable energy from third parties," said Otaibi in a statement Saturday. It will include "all sectors in Kuwait", except for the government and industrial sectors, which the minister said will be considered at a later time.

Having regulations in place will encourage citizens, namely small investors, to establish companies working on installing solar energy systems and related equipment, said Otaibi.

The ministry, said Otaibi, is seeking to produce no less than 15 percent of the country's electrical consumption from renewable energy sources by 2030, based on the directives of the political leadership. Otaibi pointed out that the ministry has completed surveys and studies, examining experience of neighboring countries in purchasing renewable energy and reducing pollution from power stations that operate with fossil fuels.

Energy projects on Failaka, Boubyan

While the ministry seeks to execute its renew-



Mutlaq Al-Otaibi

able projects, specifically the Shagaya project, it is studying several proposals to implement more sustainable energy ventures. Otaibi pointed out that among the proposals currently under review is the establishment of renewable energy projects on the islands of Failaka and Boubyan, in line with the vision of the Council of Ministers to develop the islands to diversify sources of income. The minister also hinted at plans to install photovoltaic energy systems on the facilities' roofs. Concerning the Shagaya project, Otaibi pointed out that the joint committee of the ministry and the Authority for Partnership Projects would issue recommendations regarding the venture, which is expected to have a production capacity of 4,400 megawatts, in four stages. Otaibi indicated that the project, expected to be completed in 2028, would contribute to providing more job opportunities. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The electricity ministry is studying a proposal to install solar energy systems in Failaka and Boubyan islands. Photo used for illustrative purposes only.

Kuwait pledges \$2m to UNRWA, affirms Palestinians' right

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed that time will never strip the Palestinian people of the right to return to their land. The remarks were made in a speech by Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the United Nations Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai late Friday during a meeting of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). He also announced Kuwait's pledge of \$2 million for UNRWA for 2023.

"The Palestinians' right to return is in accordance with international legislations, especially article 194 of the General Assembly and the Arab Peace Initiative, he said. "While commemorating 75 years since the crisis, we remember with sorrow the crime against humanity the Palestinian people faced in 1948, when hundreds of thousands were forcefully displaced and



Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai

were forced to stay away from their land and home for over seven decades," Bannai noted.

Kuwait will continue to support the rights of Palestinians, said the ambassador, hailing the efforts of UNRWA workers to ease the suffering of around six million Palestinian refugees in various countries. — KUNA

Proposal under review could limit residency permits to one year

KUWAIT: The Residency Affairs Department is contemplating the issuance of a decision to limit the validity of residency permits to one or two years at a maximum.

Sources said this proposal is being studied and will be submitted to Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and the Higher Committee for Demographics Rebalancing. The decision, if approved, will exclude expat government employees

in technical jobs such as doctors, nurses and technicians in the medical fields, as well as teachers and those of senior jobs in the private sector.

The sources said this move aims at remedying the demographic imbalance and eliminating labor that is not needed in Kuwait. The decision, if approved, will also result reducing marginal labor in the country, control residency traders, and monitor bogus companies that have labor registered under them.

Sources expected this decision, if issued, will cause an increase in the number of people violating residency laws in Kuwait. They said, however, that it's not necessarily a negative consequence as those in violation will be arrested and deported, thereby contributing to remedying the demographic imbalance.



KUWAIT: Healthcare professionals participated in a course held by Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) on the prevention and management of diabetic foot complications.

DDI tackles diabetic foot complications

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, held recently a specialized three-day course on the prevention and management of diabetic foot complications, in collaboration with the Primary Health Care Department at the Ministry of Health who assisted in coordinating this course.

The program was held at the Institute and attended by healthcare professionals. Trainees learned to assess and treat foot complications in people with diabetes using evidence-based assessment and treatment methods aimed at reduction of diabetic foot ulceration and amputation. The program was organized and delivered by Kay Scarsbrook Khan, Chief Podiatrist, Dr Ebba Al Ozairi, Chief Medical

Officer, Dr Abdullah Al-Ajmi, Consultant Neurologist from DDI, Alice Cusworth, Podiatrist and Andrew Gilmour, Podiatrist.

Foot problems are a major cause of morbidity in people with diabetes. Countries in the MENA region have among the highest rates of diabetes prevalence in the world. It was estimated in 2019 there were approximately 54.8 million adults living with diabetes in the MENA region, this is expected to increase to more than double by 2045.

Despite the high prevalence of diabetes in the MENA region, many of the countries in the region lack adequate foot care provision, foot screening and self-care education programs.

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

The Primary Health Care Department at the Ministry of Health coordinated this workshop.

Kuwaiti envoy wins best ambassador award in Canada

WASHINGTON: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Canada Reem Al-Khaled received Canada's Best Ambassador in Middle East award for 2023 in recognition of her efforts over the past three years. She was given the award during a ceremony organized by University of Ottawa in association with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Public Diplomacy Council (IPDC) on Friday. The IPDC is a non-for-profit group based in the Netherlands with the mandate to support and enhance the practice of public diplomacy at the national and international level.

The award was based on the fact that Khaled is the first woman from the Middle East and Arabian Gulf region to chair the Women Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Ottawa (WHDMO), in addition to her continued engagement with the youth through her various meetings with Canadian university students, the Kuwaiti embassy in Ottawa said in a release.

The ambassador said she is very pleased to have been honored in appreciation of her efforts since she took over as Kuwait's top diplomat in Canada. She added she would even exert more



WASHINGTON: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Canada Reem Al-Khaled (left) receives her award. — KUNA

efforts to further promote and develop distinguished relations between Kuwait and Canada, and develop people-to-people ties.

She added the embassy managed to deepen Kuwait's relations with Canada, citing in this regard the successful visit paid by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Canada in May. The visit witnessed the signing of bilateral cooperation deals and MoUs and paved the way for broadening the scope of relations between both countries, the ambassador pointed out. — KUNA



Kuwait navy conducts minesweeping drill with French forces

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Navy conducted a drill with a detachment of clearance divers



from the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean and French Forces stationed in the UAE. Navy forces trained on clearing oil tanker terminals from explosives using the latest technology in minesweeping, Kuwait Army General Staff Headquarters said in a statement on Saturday. The drill started on May 25, 2023 and concludes on June 8, 2023, according to the statement.

Q8Aviation wins fuel supply contract for Melbourne Airport

KUWAIT: Q8Aviation, the aviation fuel marketing arm of Kuwait Petroleum International, gained a major contract to supply and market jet fuel at Melbourne Airport in Australia. Together with Sydney Airport, Q8Aviation now operates at the two largest airports in Oceania, the company said in a press release on Saturday. The company's Executive Vice President for Planning and Finance Waleed Al Ben Ali and Q8Aviation's General Manager Naser Ben-Butain were in Melbourne to commence the operation and to meet stakeholders.

The new fuel service at Melbourne Airport is expected to position Q8Aviation amongst the biggest suppliers in the Australian jet fuel market, it added. Kuwait Petroleum's President and CEO Shafi Al-Ajmi commented: "Asia-Pacific continues to be one of the world's fastest growing regions for aviation and this success is a significant step towards realizing our ambitions. Growing our aviation fuel business is one of the pillars of our strategy and working with the second largest airport in Australia shows our customers how committed we are to serve them around the world. The excellent effort by the team at Q8Aviation has resulted in this success, and I congratulate



KUWAIT: Q8Aviation's general manager and executive vice president for planning and finance are seen at Melbourne Airport. — KUNA

everyone for their skill and tenacity throughout the lengthy and detailed discussions".

Kuwait Petroleum International is the international downstream subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, ranked as one of the world's largest national oil companies. Established in 1983, KPI operates over 4,700 service stations across Europe under its brands, Q8, Q8Easy and Tango, and provides over 70 airlines with jet fuel at major airport hubs. It also runs two state-of-the-art lubricant blending plants in Belgium and Italy under the brand Q8Oils and owns shares in three joint venture refineries in Italy, Vietnam and Oman. — KUNA

Local

Inequality a major reason for women's weak political representation: Activists

Political instability hinders women's participation in democracy

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Women in Kuwait were granted their political rights in 2005, but since then they have been struggling politically, due to several reasons. In recent years, women's representation in the National Assembly has become much weaker than before. Head of Women's Cultural and Social Society Lulwa Al-Mulla told Kuwait Times that the one-vote electoral system and political funds are the main reasons preventing women from being empowered in the Assembly.

Mulla said during a meeting to support Kuwaiti women candidates that political money is distorting and hindering the democratic process in Kuwait, which is resulting in political instability in the country. She stressed that in order to empower women on the political scene, political stability should be a top priority, calling for creating an election commission that supervises elections and organizes the electoral process.

Mulla concluded by saying that a women's quota

system is not the way to resolve this issue. She said she opposes this system, explaining it is too early to discuss imposing a quota as long as the country suffers from political instability.

Kuwait's first female minister Maasouma Al-Mubarak told Kuwait Times people should be optimistic over the matter of empowering women in the next Assembly, but due to previous experiences, where Kuwaiti women voted more than 10 times, the behavior of female voters towards women did not change. Therefore, "there is little room for optimism", she said. "We hope there will be an awakening among women to stand beside their nominated female candidates who need their support first, and then support competent men," Mubarak added.

Regarding the main obstacle facing women from being politically empowered, Mubarak said a large segment of female voters in Kuwait are misled, which is one of main reasons affecting women reaching the Assembly. On the other hand, she pointed out plenty of media campaigns are distorting the image of female candidates or at



Lulwa Al-Mulla



Maasouma Al-Mubarak

least not being fair with them, which affects their share of votes. "Not to mention that the number of male candidates is huge, and they have taken this opportunity for years," she said, adding "the opportunity should now go to women."

On the matter of a women's quota system,

Mubarak said after women being candidates more than 10 times, their chances are diminishing year after year. She said the women's quota system is an opportunity to adjust the balance between men and women in the Assembly, at least temporarily, until a segment of women reaches parliament.



KUWAIT: Officials tour the media center designated for covering the 2023 National Assembly elections. — KUNA photos

Media center, health clinics ready for election day: Officials

KUWAIT: With only a few days separating Kuwait from its third National Assembly elections in two and a half years, preparations for the event are in their final stretch. The Ministry of Information announced Friday that work is ongoing to prepare the media center where journalists will be covering the June 6 elections.

According to KUNA, the ministry has chosen the Four Seasons Hotel to house the center, which will be set up from June 4-7 to meet the needs of all media personnel from international and local news organizations covering the parliamentary race.

Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information Dr Nasser Muhaisen, who inspected the preparations accompanied by a number of the ministry's leaders last week, lauded the efforts made by all those involved in a statement.

Fifty media people, from many countries across



Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti

the globe, were invited to visit the polling stations and see the progress of the electoral and democratic process in the country, ministry spokesperson Anwar Murad told KUNA.

125 medical clinics

Head of the medical emergency department at the Ministry of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti said the ministry has prepared medical clinics in 125 polling stations, which includes nurses and paramedics, as well as five ambulances in each governorate.

He said, in a statement to KUNA, that people can directly contact any emergency department in public hospitals as required. He added that all area clinics are fully prepared to help anyone in need. Shatti called on all voters to follow the rules set by the health ministry, adding that voting priority is for elders, people with sicknesses or disabilities.

occurrence in Kuwait and the world, means of diagnosis, treatment, prevention, early detection and recovery rate.

Dr Al-Saleh said the interest in training nursing teams is due to their close contact with the patient and his family, also the doctors, adding that they are being taught the correct information on cancer diseases, and all that prepare them to answer any question in a sound scientific way.

He said that the nursing teams are the ones who administer the prescribed medicines by doctors, so they are the pillar in presenting treatment, so attention must be paid to the accuracy of their health knowledge in regards to cancer diseases.

He stressed on continuing the training of primary care doctors on identifying the initial signs of tumors as an important aspect of early diagnosis of cancer in its early stages which helps in increasing recovery rates.

He said 1,356 primary care doctors were trained by February 2023 and courses are still continuing. Dr Al-Saleh thanked Primary care and nursing directorates of Ministry of Health for their interest in training its staff to refresh their knowledge and gain skills that will benefit them at their work and serve patients which is the goal everybody seeks to fulfill.

Nurses get training in communicating with cancer patients

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN) started its specialized courses for primary care doctors and nurses in cooperation with health ministry in order to train them on communication skills with patients and their families, and cancer patients in particular.

Chairman of the Board of CAN Oncologist Dr Khalid Al-Saleh said the campaign completed the 97th course to train nurses in cooperation with the nursing directorate of the Ministry of Health as part of the CAN training programs, during which 2,409 nurses were trained until February 2023.

He said CAN trains nurses on the communication skills with patients and their families, especially cancer patients. He said an integrated program presented by oncologists to the trainees and it includes description of cancer disease, its stages, the rate of



KUWAIT: Nurses listen to a lecture on communicating with cancer patients as part of the CAN training program.

Vote solicitors play key role in electoral process

KUWAIT: Since the beginning of democratic life in Kuwait, vote solicitors have played a prominent role in gathering support for their respective candidates. This role requires the person to be of a particular social and political status. Generally, solicitors follow the program and political tendencies of the candidate to communicate with prospective voters regarding issues of importance to them, making it a part of the candidates' electoral program to increase their chances of winning. The role, media figure Nassar Al-Khaldi said, is unique to the Kuwaiti elections. Since the solicitor is usually related to the candidate's family, their relationship dynamics with the candidate's campaign is different when compared to that of campaign volunteers often found in other democratic systems, he added.

Traditionally, such individuals were usually from the candidates' families; however, things have changed as we reached the age of social media and technology, as some started turning to the services of social media celebrities. Head of a media institution Mubarak Al-Qinae noted that candidates are nowadays using technology to boost their media efforts to reach the largest numbers of people through social media. Sometimes, their online campaign is run by inexperienced people in this field, rather than by specialized companies, resulting in unprofessional content, he explained.

Political social studies researcher Dr Mohammad Al-Ajmi told KUNA that solicitors — both men and women — play a huge role in the election process, saving time and efforts of candidates. These key figures must have an effective personality with



Essa Al-Omairi



Mohammad Al-Ajmi



Nassar Al-Khaldi



Mubarak Al-Qinae

the ability to convince people of the candidates' ideas and program, he noted. Political analyst Essa Al-Omairi said the role of key figures does not only lie in visiting people and communicating with them, but they have to have certain administrative skills to lead the campaign.

Despite the importance of solicitors in the election process, said Khaldi, some of them have become associated with the negative phenomenon of vote buying in recent years where they manipulate voters and pressure them into casting their votes in exchange of favors. — KUNA



Double-edged sword: Kuwaitis weigh in on candidates using English

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Usage of English language by Kuwaiti candidates during campaigns can be a double-edged sword. While it helps candidates reach a wider audience and portrays a modern image of the country, it may also be viewed as being disconnected from Kuwaiti culture and Arab identity. Therefore, candidates must carefully consider their use of English during campaigns and balance the benefits and challenges associated with it.

Because Kuwait includes people of different categories and backgrounds — some of whom speak English as their first language, especially among the younger generations — candidates use English to connect with all categories of the population in hopes of achieving wider success. Kuwait Times interviewed three Kuwaiti citizens with differing opinions on Kuwaiti politicians' use of English in their campaigns.

Mariam, a Kuwaiti computer engineer, expressed her support of using English to reach out to voters. She said in Kuwait, speaking English gives a candidate the perception of modernity and internationalism. By using English, candidates can demonstrate their openness to cultural diversity and willingness to engage with the wider world. Moreover, using English allows candidates to present themselves as leaders who are willing to engage with international

business, which could have a positive impact on Kuwait's reputation on the global stage.

Abdullah, another Kuwaiti citizen, said the use of English by politicians helps them communicate more effectively because the majority of Kuwaiti youth, who make up a large part of the community, prefer speaking and reading in English. This has led to a push for English proficiency among politicians. Thus, it would be a very smart step for a candidate to use both English and Arabic in order to attract youngsters' attention and interest, he pointed out.

While speaking English is viewed as an advantage by some citizens, there are also concerns that focusing on English may come at the expense of Arabic language and culture. Some citizens argue the widespread use of English within the political sphere may lead to a loss of Kuwaiti national identity, which is Arab. This issue was highlighted by Dana, a Kuwaiti citizen who shared her thoughts about the drawbacks of candidates using English. She said that there are serious challenges associated with the use of English during campaigns.

One of the most significant challenges is the perception that candidates who use English are disconnected from Kuwaiti culture and the Arabic language. Arabic is a vital aspect of Kuwaiti culture and Kuwaiti people's identity, and candidates who cannot speak it fluently or tend to use English words while expressing themselves may not be viewed as authentic representatives of the people.

Moreover, some people may view the use of English language as a sign of privilege and elitism, which could damage the candidate's credibility. Thus, when it comes to things that are related to representing Kuwait, everyone must stick to Kuwait's authentic identity and culture, Dana said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Four men arrested for selling subsidized goods

KUWAIT: Four men have been arrested for selling subsidized Tamween goods in large quantities out of a camel stable in Jahra. The men were also found to be in violation of the residency law. The arrests were made by Residency Affairs detectives along with the Tripartite Committee, in cooperation with Commerce and Industry Ministry and Manpower Authority. Four citations were issued and a report was made by Commerce and Industry Ministry in the quantity of confiscated goods. The violators were sent to concerned authorities for further legal action.

Bachelors' residence targeted in electricity, water inspection

KUWAIT: Ministry of Electricity and Water judicial authority team carried out a major campaign in Hawally and Jahra governorate targeting encroachments on power grids and water networks. Deputy head of the team Ahmad Al-Shimmari said the campaign targeted bachelors' residence in Hawally as several calls were received about reconnecting violating power, that were disconnected earlier. Meanwhile, a large number of water meters tampering in Jahra were discovered and the necessary action was taken, as violators were referred to concerned authorities. On Thursday, Kuwait Municipality said it was "working seriously" to solve the "bachelor phenomenon" in the private and model residential areas. Laws stipulating penalties against violators, which may reach up to KD 50,000, will be activated, a municipality official said.

Kuwait's KUFPEC seeks to enhance existence in Asia

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) is seeking through its office in Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur, to boost its regional existence and expand its exploration in Asia, KUNA said Saturday. Following talks with Kuwait's embassy in Malaysia, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Malaysia Rashid Al-Saleh stressed the importance of cooperation between the two entities. In 2021, KUFPEC achieved the largest gas exploration achievement in the company's history off the coast of Sarawak, east of Malaysia.

Kuwaiti entrepreneurs showcase innovative apps in Africa GITEX expo

Exhibition attended by more than 400 decision makers from 95 countries



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti entrepreneurs pose for a photo with Kuwait's flag during their participation at the expo. — KUNA photos

MARRAKECH: Eight Kuwaiti entrepreneurs presented their innovative digital projects and apps in the first edition of Africa's GITEX which concluded in Morocco on Friday. "Our participation was meant to show the Kuwaiti innovation, search for opportunities for expansion and introduce the Kuwaiti projects to investors," Director of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity Nada Al-Daihani told KUNA.

He noted that Kuwaiti entrepreneurs' presence in such events allows them to get acquainted with the latest global innovations and trends as well as to learn about the latest developments in the world of modern technology. Yousef Al-Hussaini, one of the participating Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and owner of the e-learning platform Baims told KUNA that his app, which offers digital educational content, aims to make the learning tutorials and courses available to students anytime and anywhere. He explained that he works in partnership with universities, schools, professors and engineers to develop the teaching and learning experience digitally by investing in modern technology. He pointed out that his participation in the GITEX Africa exhibition was an opportunity to interact with a plethora of the regional entrepreneurs and see different innovations in this field.

Developer of the Motery application Abdullah



Nada Al-Daihani



Abdullah Al-Ateeqi



Yousef Al-Hussaini

Al-Ateeqi told KUNA that his app brings together everything related to cars in one place. He stated that his participation in the GITEX Africa exhibition allowed him to communicate with other entrepreneurs and interested people from all over the world, which would contribute to the development of his project and its regional expansion.

Rawan Al-Atair, developer of the octopus AI app which uses artificial intelligence to carry out customer services on social media, told KUNA that "the idea of the app is to develop a unique AI technology specialized in

customer service for all sectors".

GITEX Africa was held under the patronage of Moroccan King Mohammed VI, under the authority of the Moroccan Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform and hosted by Digital Development Agency during the period from May 31 to June 2. It brought together more than 400 global and pan-African government and private sector leaders, policy makers, technology and finance executives, investors and academics from 95 countries, who were unified towards Africa's transformation into a single digital market. — KUNA

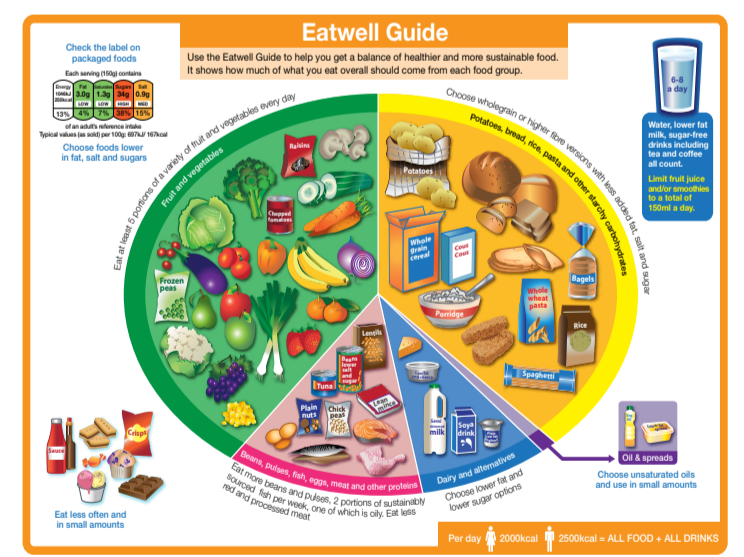
How to make your child's first visit to the dentist easier

By Danah Al-Madhi

Oral health is an integral part of a person's general health. And so, taking care of one's oral health, specially at a young age, can be a huge benefit to the individual. As a general dental practitioner, I was working at the pediatrics department for nearly a month, what surprised me the most was how late in age parents would bring in their children for their first dental visit, which is usually accompanied by severe pain and/or abscess. There's no surprise that the child will have a bad first experience, when their first encounter with the dentist is for a pain related issue, which usually means a more invasive treatment. This could escalate and cause the child to have dental anxiety and possibly even dental phobia impacting their behavior towards dentists for the rest of their life. The aim of this article is to raise awareness regarding the importance of oral health, especially for children, and provide general oral hygiene instructions.

The most common oral disease is dental decay affecting 60-90 per cent of school children worldwide. The good news is, dental decay is largely preventable. A few ways to prevent it include: Brush twice daily first thing in the morning and last thing before bed for at least two minutes to ensure that every surface including the gum-tooth junction (gumline) are cleaned carefully. For children up till the age of seven, it is advisable to have a parent or a guardian supervise the child's brushing. A small-headed soft-bristled toothbrush is ideal to achieve this. Any toothpaste with Fluoride is sufficient and the optimum concentration for children under the age of seven is no less than 1,000 ppm of Fluoride.

From seven years upwards, it is advocated to use 1,350 – 1,500 ppm of Fluoride. You can find these numbers on the back of any toothpaste package. It is crucial



The Eatwell Guide, a UK government initiative, provides a visual representation of what a healthy diet looks like for children aged two years and older and adults.

to only spit excess toothpaste and not rinse to increase the benefits and time of Fluoride in the mouth. Another way of introducing this useful component is through professional application, in the form of varnish, during the child's six-month dental check-up.

Several studies concluded that twice-yearly fluoride varnish application reduces risk of dental decay by 37 percent in primary teeth and 43 percent in permanent teeth, according to Delivering Better Oral Health: An Evidence-Based Toolkit for Prevention. Mouthwash is also a good source of fluoride and it is recommended for children eight years of age and older, specifically those who snack frequently. The use of floss to clean in-between teeth is advisable, although, most children's teeth are well spaced.

At least in one of the two yearly dental visits, diet advice should be given to adults and parents. It will include important points such as: Limiting consumption of foods and drinks, especially snacks, containing sugars as it increases the risk of dental decay and choosing

healthier low-sugar options like fresh fruits and vegetables, breadsticks, oatcakes etc. It is preferable for your child to drink water or milk between meals and avoid fizzy or soft drinks and juice sweetened with sugar. The Eatwell Guide is a UK government initiative that defines the recommendations on a well-balanced healthy diet for children aged two years and older and adults. It provides a visual representation of what a healthy diet looks like as seen in the photo.

My humble advice to all parents is to let the first few visits to the dentist be as soon as your child has at least five upper and lower teeth (around three years old), to enable preventive advice to be given at an early stage. Moreover, to acclimatize them to the dental setting in a neutral experience and that's when they are free of pain/infections. The aim of this is to have the child grow up feeling comfortable going to the dentist bi-annually and develop positive behavior about their oral health including the skills and motivation to maintain it.

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United opposition can beat Modi in 2024: Gandhi

Senegal death toll hits 15 after six more die in clashes

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US says talks with China 'essential'

Ukraine dismisses 'strange' Indonesian peace plan



SINGAPORE: This handout photo shows US and Southeast Asian defense ministers posing for a photo at the 20th Shangri-La Dialogue summit on June 3, 2023. — AFP

SINGAPORE: US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Saturday it was "essential" to renew dialogue with China to avoid "misunderstandings" that could lead to a conflict between the two superpowers. The United States had invited Austin's Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu to meet on the sidelines of a defence summit in Singapore, but the Pentagon said Beijing declined. A member of China's delegation told AFP that the removal of US sanctions on its minister is a pre-condition for talks.

"The United States believes that open lines of communication with the People's Republic of China are essential — especially between our defense and military leaders," Austin told the Shangri-La Dialogue. "The more that we talk, the more that we can avoid the misunderstandings and miscalculations that could lead to crisis or conflict."

Austin is on a tour of Asia that previously took him to Japan and will also include a visit to India — part of a push by top US officials to shore up regional alliances and partnerships to help counter a more assertive China and an increasingly bellicose North Korea. In his speech Saturday, Austin said he was "deeply concerned

that (China) has been unwilling to engage more seriously on better mechanisms for crisis management between our two militaries," expressing hope that this would soon change.

Li, who will address the meeting on Sunday, was sanctioned by the US government in 2018 for buying Russian weapons, but the Pentagon says that does not prevent Austin from conducting official business with him. Members of the Chinese delegation hit back swiftly over Austin's remarks, with Senior Colonel Tang Hefei, spokesperson for China's defense ministry, saying that the Pentagon chief "made several false accusations".

Another Chinese delegation member, Senior Colonel Zhao Xiaozhuo, said Washington had no business telling China what to do. "What we do in the Chinese military is based on maintaining the core interests of China's security, which is fundamental," he said. Zhao said removing the sanctions on Li is "one of the pre-conditions for substantial talks" with Austin.

Tensions between Washington and Beijing have soared this year over issues including Taiwan and an alleged Chinese spy balloon that was shot down by a US warplane after traversing the

country. Austin and Li shook hands and spoke briefly for the first time at the opening dinner on Friday, but there was no substantive exchange.

While high-level military-to-military ties between the United States and China have been cut off for months, other top US officials are still in communication with Beijing. CIA Director William Burns made a secret trip to China last month, while US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi met in Vienna in May.

'Risky intercepts'

Austin also took aim at Beijing for conducting "an alarming number of risky intercepts of US and allied aircraft flying lawfully in international airspace", including one last week. In that incident, the US military said a Chinese fighter pilot performed an "unnecessarily aggressive" maneuver near a US surveillance aircraft over the South China Sea. Video footage released by the US military showed a Chinese jet crossing in front of the US aircraft, which could be seen shaking from the resulting turbulence.

But China's military said the US plane "broke into" a military training area. Another

recent flashpoint in China-US relations has been high-end microchips. Beijing said last month that US semiconductor giant Micron had failed a national security review and would not be allowed to sell to operators of "critical information infrastructure".

Indonesia proposes peace plan

Meanwhile, Ukraine's defense minister on Saturday dismissed a plan proposed by his Indonesian counterpart to end the war between Kyiv and Moscow, calling it a "strange" proposal. Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto pitched the idea at the Shangri-La Dialogue defense summit in Singapore where he was a speaker.

The plan included an "immediate cessation of hostilities", a ceasefire "at present positions", and demilitarized zones that would be guaranteed by observers and United Nations peacekeeping forces. He also suggested an eventual "referendum in the disputed areas" organized by the UN. But Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov, who was attending the two-day summit, flatly rejected the proposal. "It sounds like a Russian plan, not Indonesian plan,"

he said. "We don't need this mediator coming to us (with) this strange plan."

China has presented its own peace plan to end the war — a vague list of proposals to which European Union politicians have reacted with skepticism. While Beijing says it is a neutral party to the conflict, it has been criticized for refusing to condemn Moscow's invasion. In contrast, the United States and Western allies have delivered billions of dollars in weapons and other aid to Ukraine since Russia's invasion.

Jakarta, which favors non-aligned diplomacy, had previously attempted to mediate peace. Indonesian President Joko Widodo travelled to Kyiv and Moscow and met the nations' leaders last year, while his country chaired the G20 bloc of major economies. Subianto's proposal was also criticized at the summit on Saturday by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. "We need to bring peace to Ukraine", but it must be a "just peace, not a peace of surrender," Borrell said, commenting on the Indonesian proposal. Indonesia voted in favor of a UN resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but it has not applied economic sanctions against Moscow. — AFP

Three Europeans released by Iran arrive home

BRUSSELS: One Dane and two Austrian-Iranian citizens released from detention by Tehran arrived in their home countries on Saturday, after the latest in a series of prisoner swaps. The three Europeans had landed shortly before 2:45 am (0045 GMT) Saturday at Melsbroek military airport just outside Brussels. They had flown there from Muscat, the capital of Oman which helped broker their release. Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib welcomed them at the airport along with Danish and Austrian diplomats.

The trio's release, as well as that of a Belgian aid worker a week earlier, were part of a prisoner swap in which Tehran got back an Iranian diplomat convicted and incarcerated in Belgium on terrorism charges. Vienna reacted with relief at the release of its two citizens, named as Kamran Ghaderi and Massud Mossaheb, who it said had been arrested "unjustly" by Iran in January 2016 and January 2019, respectively.

Thanking Belgium, Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg said: "Our years of diplomatic efforts to secure their release have borne fruit... Today is a very emotional day for all of us." Ghaderi and Mossaheb arrived at Vienna airport from Belgium at around 11:30 am (0930 GMT) on Saturday, where they were welcomed by their families and Schallenberg, his spokeswoman Claudia Tuertscher told AFP.

The Danish man, identified as Thomas Kjems, landed at Copenhagen airport at around 11:00 am local time, telling reporters that he had been treated well in Iran, without be-

ing subjected to torture. Kjems had been arrested in Iran in Nov 2022 on the sidelines of a demonstration for women's rights, according to Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo.

'Operation Blackstone'

Melsbroek is the same airport that Belgian aid worker Olivier Vandecasteele arrived at on May 26 upon being freed by Iran after 15 months in captivity. His liberation was obtained in exchange for Belgium freeing Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi, who had been imprisoned for a 2018 plot to bomb an Iranian opposition rally outside Paris. Iran had levelled charges of "espionage" at Vandecasteele but his family, the Belgian government and rights groups all say that was a fabricated case used to pressure Brussels for Assadi's release.

Belgian government officials said the release of Vandecasteele, the Dane and the two Austrian-Iranians were all part of "Operation Blackstone", in reference to an 18th-century English jurist William Blackstone, who was known for declaring: "It is better that 10 guilty escape than one innocent suffer." De Croo confirmed to Le Soir daily that the three Europeans released on Friday were the second part of the negotiations with Tehran on the exchange between Vandecasteele and Assadi.

The exiled Iranian opposition group the National Council of Resistance in Iran, the target of the 2018 bomb plot, has criticized Assadi's release, saying it violated a Belgian court order requiring them to be consulted first. Critics of the prisoner swap said it would encourage Tehran to take more Europeans hostage as bargaining chips to seek the return of agents like Assadi arrested for terror offences in the West. De Croo stressed his government "continues to fight for the respect of human rights and the release of European citizens unjustly detained by Iran".

Dozens still held

The exact number of foreign passport holders still be-



MELSBRÖEK, Belgium: Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadja Lahbib welcomes Thomas Kjems, Kamran Ghaderi and Massud Mossaheb upon arrival at Melsbroek military airport on June 3, 2023, after being released from detention by Iran. — AFP

ing held by Iran is thought to be in the dozens but is not precisely known, as the families of some detainees opt to negotiate out of the public eye. Belgian government officials said at least 22 "innocent" Europeans remained detained in Iran. France last week gave a figure of more than 30 EU citizens held. Austria's Schallenberg said of his two freed compatriots: "We are especially happy for the brave families who have suffered so much in recent years. Now they can finally embrace their husbands, fathers and grandfather again in freedom."

The Gulf sultanate of Oman has emerged as a key interlocutor between the West and Iran. In 2016 it also played a mediator role in the release of Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian and three other US citizens who had been held by Tehran. In May, Iran released a Frenchman and a French-Irish citizen, both of whom had gone on hunger strike to protest their detention and conditions. — AFP

Top Petro allies resign over nanny wiretap scandal

BOGOTA: Two close allies of Colombian President Gustavo Petro stepped down Friday after becoming embroiled in a scandal over the alleged illegal wiretapping of a nanny employed by one of the officials. Petro's chief of staff Laura Sarabia and ambassador to Venezuela Armando Benedetti are under scrutiny after Sarabia's nanny allegedly fell victim to illegal surveillance following the disappearance of thousands of dollars from her employer's house.

To gain access to her calls, a false police report was allegedly used to link the nanny to organized crime — none less than the notorious Gulf Clan drug cartel, Attorney General Francisco Barbosa told a press conference Thursday. The nanny, Marellys Meza, has also claimed she was subjected to illegal interrogation and a lie detector test in January at a building annexed to the presidential palace in Bogota. Authorities investigating the claims have searched the building. On Thursday, prosecutors announced Sarabia and Benedetti would be called to testify in a probe into the alleged illegal treatment of Meza. Barbosa condemned what he called "Gestapo" methods allegedly used, which he said were "aberrant from a judicial point of view" and reminiscent of darker days of human rights violations in Colombia.

Petro said Friday Sarabia and Benedetti "are withdrawing" from their posts pending the investigation. "This government respects human rights, does not illegally intercept the phones" of anyone, the president insisted in an address at a military ceremony. He referred in the announcement to Sarabia as "dear and esteemed". Sarabia said on Twitter that she was "ready to provide all the necessary explanations for the clarification of the facts." — AFP



BOGOTA: Colombian President Gustavo Petro delivers a speech during a military ceremony at the Jose Maria Cordova Military School on June 2, 2023. — AFP

Thousands ordered to flee advancing wildfires in Quebec

OTTAWA: Canada is facing a catastrophic spring wildfire season with massive and powerful blazes out of control in all corners of the country, and thousands more people displaced on Friday. "This is a scary time for a lot of people from coast to coast," said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, alluding to the vastness of a nation on fire stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic to the Arctic oceans. Some 10,000 people on Friday were ordered to evacuate from Sept Iles in Quebec in the face of advancing wildfires.

Steve Beaupre, mayor of the small city on the St. Lawrence River, declared a lo-

cal state of emergency and announced the mandatory evacuation after nearby wildfires "advanced very quickly" overnight. Residents were told in the morning to vacate their homes by 4 pm local time (2100 GMT). Stephane Lauzon, a member of Parliament from Quebec, told a news conference in Ottawa that as many as 10,000 residents, or one-third of the population of Sept Iles, would be displaced. This followed the evacuation on Thursday of 500 residents of Chapais in the north of the province. "The situation is quickly changing in Quebec," Lauzon said, adding that about 100 fires, "many more than yesterday," were burning in the province, including about 20 out of control.

'We need rain'

Canada has been hit repeatedly by extreme weather in recent years, the in-

tensity and frequency of which have increased due to global warming. Across Canada more than 210 fires were burning on Friday after scorching more than 2.7 million hectares. A total of 29,000 people had been evacuated before Friday's order. After major flareups in the west of the country in May, notably in the Prairies provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, firefighting shifted in the past week to Nova Scotia on the Atlantic coast.

Officials hoped rain and cooler temperatures in forecasts for the weekend following a record-breaking heat wave will bring relief. "Weather has favored the fires all week, not the firefighters. We're hopeful that this will soon change," Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston told a briefing. "We need rain. Hopefully that rain comes in sufficient amounts this weekend." Almost 1,000 firefighters from Australia, New Zealand, South

Africa and the United States also arrived or were en route to bolster firefighting efforts. And Ottawa was deploying the military in Nova Scotia and Quebec to help out, officials said.

'The house is gone'

In Halifax, the largest city in Nova Scotia, busloads of suburban residents were taken on tours for a first glimpse of devastated neighborhoods. In a video shared by local media, people on the bus could be heard trying to identify items burned or melted. "I think that was my car," a woman says when it stops at the end of a long driveway. Jason Young told reporters it was "pretty surreal" to see the blackened wooded lots and smoking debris. "The house is gone. The shed is gone. Everything's gone. On our property, there's nothing left. It's completely gone," he said. — AFP

International

Death toll climbs to 15 as tensions persist in Senegal

UN, AU urge calm after deadly clashes over opposition leader's sentencing

DAKAR: Tensions remained high in Senegal on Saturday after fresh overnight clashes brought the death toll to 15 in the two days since a court convicted opposition leader Ousmane Sonko. Sonko's ongoing legal woes have prompted rare flare-ups of violence in Senegal, typically a bastion of stability in West Africa, and foreign allies have urged a return to calm.

Sonko, a 48-year-old former tax inspector, was initially charged with rape but was convicted on a lesser charge of morally "corrupting" a young woman and sentenced to two years in prison. He claims the charges against him were a bid by the government to torpedo his political career ahead of the presidential election next year.

His conviction may take him out of the running for the 2024 poll. Clashes between Sonko's supporters and police broke out after the ruling on Thursday, leaving nine people dead. Shops and businesses were ransacked. The army was deployed to the streets but fresh scuffles erupted on Friday night in parts of the capital, Dakar, and in Ziguinchor. They left another six dead, government spokesman Maham Ka told AFP.

Burned-out cars, tyres and debris-strewn streets bore testimony to another night of violence. The government has acknowledged that it has restricted access to social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter in order to stop "the dissemination of hateful and subversive messages". Government spokesman Abdou Karim Fofana said on Friday that the violence was not fueled by "political demands" but "acts of vandalism and banditry". "These are difficult times for the Senegal nation that we will overcome," he told TFM.

Arrest looming

Sonko, who was tried in absentia, has yet to be taken into custody for his jail term, which is predicted to cause further tensions. He is presumed to be at his Dakar home, where he has been blocked in by security forces since the weekend. He alleges he is being "illegally held". Sharp-tongued and charismatic, Sonko has drawn a strong following among Senegal's youth, who love his barbs against a political elite he refers to as the "state mafia".

He has spoken out against debt, poverty, food insecurity, under-funded health and education systems and corruption. Sonko, who has two wives, portrays himself as a devout Muslim and defender of traditional values, and has called for harsher penalties for same-sex relations. Supporters of President Macky Sall, however, see him as a rabble-rouser who has poisoned political discourse and sown instability.

Dakar residents interviewed by AFP said they feared the possible consequences of his arrest. "I am really scared because we don't know how this will all end," said 46-year-old Fatou Ba, a businesswoman in the Dalifort neighborhood of Dakar. "If they want peace they won't go and fetch Sonko," she added. Another Dalifort resident, Matar Thione, 32, said he felt unsafe in the country. "If the protests continue, life is going to get even harder," he said.

Students have been plunged into uncertainty, forced to leave the capital's main university campus after violent clashes led to widespread destruction. "We didn't expect this. Political affairs shouldn't concern us," said Babacar Ndiaye, a 26-year-old student. "But there is injustice," he added, referring to Sonko's conviction.



DAKAR: This general view shows the charred remains of a vehicle on a street on June 3, 2023, following deadly violence in the Senegalese capital. — AFP

'Proud' democracy

On Friday, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the violence and "urged all those involved to... exercise restraint". The African Union said the head of its executive commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, strongly condemned the violence and urged leaders to avoid acts which

"tarnish the face of Senegalese democracy, of which Africa has always been proud". The European Union and Senegal's former colonial power France also expressed concern over the violence. Rights group Amnesty International has urged authorities to stop "arbitrary arrests" and lift restrictions on access to social networks. — AFP

Fighting worsens in Sudan despite US sanctions

KHARTOUM: Shelling rocked greater Khartoum on Friday as fighting between Sudan's warring generals intensified, despite US sanctions imposed after the collapse of a US- and Saudi-brokered truce. Witnesses reported "artillery fire" in eastern Khartoum and around the state television building in the capital's sister city Omdurman, just across the Nile.

For nearly seven weeks, fighting be-

tween the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has gripped Khartoum and the western region of Darfur, despite repeated efforts to broker a humanitarian ceasefire. The army announced it had brought in reinforcements from other parts of Sudan to participate in "operations in the Khartoum area".

Sudan analyst Kholood Khair said the army was "expected to launch a massive offensive" to clear the paramilitaries from the city's streets. Washington slapped sanctions on the warring parties Thursday, holding them both responsible for provoking "appalling" bloodshed. The US Treasury placed two major arms companies of the Sudanese Armed Forces, Defense Industries System and Sudan

Master Technology, on its blacklist. It also placed sanctions on gold mining firm Al Junaid Multi Activities Co and arms trader Tradive General Trading, two companies controlled by RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo and his family. The State Department meanwhile imposed visa restrictions on both army and RSF officials, saying they were complicit in "undermining Sudan's democratic transition". It did not name them.

Washington announced on Friday that Secretary of State Antony Blinken will next week travel to Saudi Arabia where he will discuss "strategic cooperation on regional and global issues". His trip follows efforts by both countries to broker a durable ceasefire in Sudan. — AFP



KHARTOUM: Sudanese patients suffering from kidney failure undergo dialysis treatment at the Soba Hospital on June 3, 2023. — AFP

3 killed as Muslims, police clash in Ethiopia capital

ADDIS ABABA: Three people were killed on Friday when police clashed with worshippers outside Addis Ababa's largest mosque, Ethiopian security forces said. Several Muslim places of worship have been destroyed on the outskirts of Addis Ababa in recent months as part of a controversial urban planning

project, which has sparked anger among worshippers. Police fired teargas at worshippers outside the Grand Anwar Mosque, in the latest clashes fueled by the destruction of mosques on the outskirts of the Ethiopian capital. Ethiopia's Joint Security and Intelligence Task Force said three people had died in the clashes, according to a statement published by Fana Broadcasting Corporate, a state-affiliated channel. Property of unknown value had been destroyed, it said, adding that 65 police officers suffered "light and heavy injuries."

The Addis Ababa High Council of Islamic Affairs said that one person had died in the Friday clashes, adding that they had taken "others who sustained

injuries" to a hospital. Last Friday, clashes erupted outside the Grand Anwar Mosque, leaving two people dead and dozens injured, said police who said they had made 114 arrests. Ahead of this week's Friday prayers, AFP journalists saw police in riot gear deployed outside the mosque.

Members of the Republican Guard, an elite unit responsible for protecting government institutions and officials, were also present. Worshippers were leaving the mosque calmly when some youths began to shout "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest), and shots rang out, sowing panic, AFP journalists saw. Some in the crowd threw stones at police, who responded with tear gas. It was unclear whether the police used

live ammunition, plastic projectiles or blank shots. Shots continued to be heard for about two hours before calm returned and police cordoned off roads around the mosque. Amir, a young worshipper who was at the mosque for Friday prayers said: "We more or less knew what was going to happen after prayers. Hundreds of our brothers and sisters were arrested last week... people are furious our mosques are being destroyed." The urban planning project, known as Sheger City, involves the fusion of several municipalities in the Oromia region on the outskirts of the capital. It has led to the demolition of homes and businesses, and local rights activists have slammed it as "illegal". — AFP

New vote-buying network busted...

Continued from Page 1

Candidate Abdullah Al-Shateri criticized the government for escaping from Assembly sessions to prevent MPs from discussing key issues. Under Kuwaiti law, the presence of at least one minister is essential for Assembly sessions to be legal. Candidate Sami Al-Mane called for amending the Assembly's internal charter to make it legal for the Assembly to convene without the presence of any minister.

He also said there is an urgent need to amend the

election law to change the system from one based on individuals to something close to a multiparty system. He added this should be preceded with a law allowing the establishment of political groups. Former MP Saud Al-Mutairi said the next election will be a battle between reform and corruption, adding reform will emerge victorious on June 6.

Meanwhile, the ministry of justice said as many as 1,157 judges will supervise the election and conduct the counting of votes and eventually announce the results. Polling will be conducted in 118 main voting centers, which comprise of 759 polling booths. The ministry of social affairs also issued a stern warning to civil societies from attempting to back certain candidates fighting the polls, saying those found helping candidates will be dissolved.

at the ceremony. In the latest sign of a thaw between the two arch foes, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was also present.

Addressing the country's economic troubles will be Erdogan's first priority, with inflation running at 43.70 percent, partly due to his unorthodox policy of cutting interest rates to stimulate growth. The president is due to unveil his new cabinet late on Saturday, with media speculating that former finance minister Mehmet Simsek, a reassuring figure with international stature, could return.

A former Merrill Lynch economist, Simsek is known to oppose Erdogan's unconventional policies. He served as finance minister between 2009 and 2015 and deputy prime minister in charge of the economy until 2018, before stepping down ahead of a series of lira crashes that year. "Erdogan's government looks like it will pursue an orthodox stabilization program," said Alp Eric Yeldan, professor of economics at Istanbul's Kadir Has University. "What we see now is that the news about Mehmet Simsek and his team is greeted with enthusiasm by the markets," he told AFP. Turkey's new members of parliament were sworn in on Friday in its first session after the May 14 election, with Erdogan's alliance holding a majority in the 600-seat house. NATO allies are anxiously waiting for Ankara to green-light Sweden's drive to join the US-led defense alliance, before a summit in July.

Erdogan has delayed approving the application, accusing Stockholm of sheltering "terrorists" from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which is listed as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg and Sweden's former prime minister Carl Bildt, who attended the ceremony at Erdogan's palace, are expected to press him to drop his opposition to Stockholm's bid. — AFP

3 Zionist soldiers, Egypt policeman...

Continued from Page 1

The spokesman added that no link had been established between the drugs seizure and the attack on the border post. There have been several previous incidents along the Zionist entity's border with Egypt. In 2011, assailants who entered from the Si-

nai killed eight Zionists in a triple ambush north of Eilat. Pursuing Zionist forces killed seven attackers and five Egyptian police. In 2012, a Zionist soldier and three militants who infiltrated from the Sinai were killed in a clash along the border.

In 2014, two Zionist soldiers on patrol were wounded by unidentified men who fired an anti-tank weapon from the Sinai during an attempt to smuggle drugs. And in 2015, rockets fired from the Sinai hit the southern Zionist entity without causing any casualties. The Islamic State group later claimed responsibility. — AFP

288 killed in India train crash...

Continued from Page 1

The foreign ministry on Saturday expressed solace to India, the Indian government and people on this painful affliction and wished the injured quick recovery.

Researcher Anubhav Das was in the last carriage of one of the trains when he heard "screaming, horrifying sounds coming from a distance". His coach stayed upright and he jumped out unhurt after it ground to a halt. "I saw bloodied scenes, mangled bodies and one man with a severed arm being desperately helped by his injured son," the 27-year-old told AFP. "I lost count of the bodies before leaving the site. Now I feel almost guilty."

The disaster began when an express train running north from India's tech hub Bengaluru to Kolkata derailed, falling onto the adjacent southbound track. Minutes later, the Coromandal Express heading from Kolkata to Chennai smashed into the wreckage, some of its coaches also colliding with a goods train parked alongside.

Residents nearby rushed to help the victims even before emergency services arrived. "There were severed arms, legs, and even some partially severed heads — while the unluckier ones died in pain, too much pain," said Hiranmay Rath. Over the next few hours the 20-year-old saw "more death and grief" than he could have "ever imagined", he told AFP.

The rescue effort was declared over on Saturday evening after emergency personnel had combed the mangled wreckage for survivors and laid scores of bodies out under white sheets beside the tracks. "All the dead bodies and injured passengers have been removed from the accident site," said an official from the Balasore emergency control room.

Sudhanshu Sarangi, director general of Odisha Fire Services, said the death toll stood at 288 but was expected to go higher, potentially approaching 380. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the crash site and injured passengers being treated in hospital and said "no one responsible" for the train crash would be spared. "It's a sad moment," he told state broadcaster Doordarshan. "I pray that we get out of this sad moment as soon as possible."

India has one of the world's largest rail networks and has seen several disasters over the years, the worst of them in 1981 when a train derailed while crossing a bridge in Bihar and plunged into the river below, killing between 800 and 1,000 people. Friday's crash ranks as its third-worst, and the deadliest since 1995, when two express trains collided in Firozabad, near Agra, killing more than 300 people.

Odisha state's chief secretary Pradeep Jena confirmed that about 900 injured people had been hospitalized.

Rescue teams including from the National Disaster Response Force and the military were deployed, while the railways ministry announced an investigation. Authorities said every hospital between the crash site and the state capital Bhubaneswar around 200 km away was receiving victims, with 200 ambulances — and even buses — deployed to transport them.

At Bhadrak District Hospital, bloodied and shocked survivors were receiving treatment in crowded wards. The disaster comes despite new investments and upgrades in technology that have significantly improved railway safety in recent years. Condolences came in from around the world. Pope Francis said he was "deeply saddened" by the "immense loss of life" and offered prayers for the "many injured". French President Emmanuel Macron sent his condolences to India's president and prime minister, saying in a tweet that his "thoughts are with the families of the victims". — Agencies

Erdogan sworn in, vows unity...

Continued from Page 1

"From a geopolitical point of view, the election will reinforce Turkey's recent pursuit of an independent foreign policy," said Matt Gertken, chief geopolitical strategist at BCA Research.

"This policy aims to extract maximum economic and strategic benefits from eastern and autocratic states while still preventing a permanent rupture in relations with western democracies," he said. "Tensions with the West will likely increase again," Gertken added.

Erdogan, standing next to his wife Emine, promised to embrace all segments of society during the ceremony at his palace after visiting Ataturk's mausoleum. "We will embrace all 85 million people, regardless of their political views, origins, creeds or sects," he said, hoping that his appeal would be reciprocated also by his opponents. "Turkey needs unity and solidarity more than ever," he said.

The polarization in society has deepened under the rule of Erdogan — called "Reis" by his supporters ("the chief"). "We want all opposition segments, including journalists, writers, civil society, artists and politicians, to reconcile with the national will," he said. "If there is resentment, if hearts are broken, let's find a way to make peace."

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, Iran's vice president Mohammad Mokhber, Hungary's right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the speaker of the lower house of Russia's parliament, Vyacheslav Volodin, were among the foreign guests

International

Chinese dissidents in New York open world's only Tiananmen museum

China censors protest site's location ahead of anniversary

NEW YORK/BEIJING: Chinese dissidents who took part in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests unveiled a museum in New York on Friday dedicated to remembering the "democratic dreams of the Chinese people," two days ahead of the 34th anniversary of the uprising's "brutal suppression". "The events of 1989 had an impact on China but also on the entire world," said Wang Dan, founder of the tiny museum and a leading figure in the Tiananmen Square student movement.

"Today, as we begin to wake up to the threat to human civilization posed by the Xi Jinping regime, we should remember back to 1989," he said, referring to China's current leader who cemented his grip late last year by assuming a historic third consecutive term. In a tiny office space in midtown Manhattan, Wang had put on a display of photos, videos, press clippings, posters, letters and banners about the democratic uprising that Beijing crushed, killing at least 1,000 demonstrators.

"We should commemorate those who sacrificed their lives and remember the democratic dreams of the Chinese people at that time," said Wang, who served years in prison in China before being exiled in 1998 to the United States, where he later earned a doctorate in history at Harvard. "Even in the United States, we still can feel the pressure and threats from the Chinese government," he told AFP. "The 1989 events connect not only with the past but also with today and the future," Wang said, demanding that the world should "also remember the true face of the Chinese Communist Party."

Several leading Chinese critics and American politicians spoke at the inauguration of the museum — the only permanent exhibition in the world on Tiananmen after the closure of a museum in Hong Kong in 2021. The artistic flourishing that accompanied the Tiananmen commemoration in Hong Kong each year has almost disappeared under Beijing's tightening grip on the territory.

For more than 30 years, tens of thousands of people gathered every June 4 in Hong Kong's Victoria Park for

a candlelight vigil. But since China imposed a national security law in 2020, local authorities have shut down such gatherings, while criminalizing most public displays of dissent.

'We need to stand'

In New York, a group of Chinese students living in the United States joined a march Friday evening through Manhattan between the new museum on Tiananmen and the Chinese Consulate General. Some wore masks and sunglasses to avoid being recognized and potentially endangering their families back in China, an AFP journalist said.

Demonstrator Yuge Shi said it was "very important" to be able to protest. "You know, the Chinese government kills so many people in 1989, and they don't want people (to) remember that," he said. "So every year we need to stand here and tell all the people in the world there is a history." Shawn, a demonstrator who only gave her first name due to security concerns, said protests last year against China's strict "zero COVID" policies echoed those held in Tiananmen Square decades ago.

"It's been almost 40 years between the White Paper protests and the Tiananmen Square one, and yet we are still ruled by the same government whose nature hasn't changed (a) single bit," she said. Widespread protests against Xi's strict "zero COVID" policy gripped China late last year. They were dubbed the "White Paper" protests because many demonstrators waved blank sheets of paper to symbolize censorship.

Meanwhile, Chinese police beefed up their presence Saturday at the bridge where a rare protest was staged last year, with authorities censoring online map searches for the site and even removing a road sign on the eve of the Tiananmen crackdown anniversary. In October, days before China's ruling party was set to hold congress, a protester had draped banners with slogans criticizing the Communist Party's Covid policies on the side of Beijing's Sitong bridge.

Modi and his BJP party support Hindu hegemony in India, the world's most populous nation with 1.4 billion inhabitants, a diversity of faiths and a secular constitution. But according to Gandhi, the ruling party fostered "a clampdown on the institutional framework that allowed India to talk, that allowed Indian people to negotiate".

Gandhi's US visit comes just a few weeks before President Modi's state visit on June 22, when he will be welcomed with great fanfare at the White House. With his conviction for defamation, and the subsequent loss on appeal in April, Gandhi lost the legal right to participate further in politics. Gandhi, the leading face of his opposition party, asserted that his "disqualification" was in fact "an advantage".

"It allows me to completely redefine myself. I think they have given me a gift, frankly. They don't realize it, but they have," he added, lamenting that "thousands and thousands of voices... are being frightened into submission." Gandhi was convicted of defamation after declaring that "all thieves have Modi as their surname". He was given a two-year jail by a tribunal but is currently free on bail.

The sentence renders Gandhi ineligible, preventing him from taking a seat in parliament or running in the 2024 general election, which Modi's BJP party

'Heating hammer'

The AfD started out as an anti-euro outfit in 2013 before capitalizing on public anger over former chancellor Angela Merkel's 2015 decision to allow in a wave of asylum seekers from conflict-torn countries like Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. It took nearly 13 percent of the vote in the 2017 general election, catapulting the party into the German Bundestag, before it fell back to 10 percent in the last national vote in 2021.

The recent polling rebound owed much to the fact that Scholz's three-way coalition was "always at odds on very central points such as climate", said Hajo Funke, a political scientist at the Free University of Berlin. The coalition members have traded blows of late over a plan put forward by the Green-led economy ministry to ban new fossil-fuel boilers and reduce emissions.

Concern over energy-led inflation has allowed the far-right party make hay with criticism of the government's climate policy — slammed by well-read tabloid Bild as a "heating hammer" for consumers. "Voters are seeing where the value-based politics of the Greens is leading us, namely, to economic war, inflation and deindustrialization," AfD co-leader Tino Chrupalla told the Funke media group.

'Resentment'

The AfD is succeeding in "mobilizing and creating a mood" by targeting the government's supposedly costly climate agenda for criticism, political scientist Muench told AFP. The far-right faction in the Bundestag had done better than the main opposition CDU at capitalizing on "resentment and lack of understanding about the heating law", she said. The government had not done enough to

ideas, even those that are controversial or based on disproven assumptions, is core to a functioning democratic society — especially in the midst of election season," YouTube said in a blog post. "We will stop removing content that advances false claims that widespread fraud, errors, or glitches occurred in the 2020 and other past US presidential elections."

YouTube's updated policy, which goes into effect immediately, comes as tech platforms grapple with a key issue in America's hyperpolarized political environment: How to combat misinformation without curtailing free speech? YouTube appeared to acknowledge that policing misinformation comes with downsides.

"Two years, tens of thousands of video removals, and one election cycle later, we recognized it was time to reevaluate the effects of this policy in today's changed landscape," the video-sharing

giant said. "In the current environment, we find that while removing this content does curb some misinformation, it could also have the unintended effect of curtailing political speech without meaningfully reducing the risk of violence or other real-world harm."

But that response prompted sharp criticism from US advocacy groups. "YouTube is dead wrong in its assertion that removing false election content curtails political speech without meaningfully reducing real-world harms," said Nora Benavidez, from the nonpartisan group Free Press. "Its dangerous decision to immediately stop removing content... which continues to sow hate and disinformation that threatens our democracy must be reversed immediately."

YouTube insisted that its other existing rules against election misinformation remain unchanged, including its prohibition of content that deceives voters or



NEW YORK: Visitors arrive for the opening of a Hong Kong Protest Pavilion and the new June 4th Tiananmen Memorial Museum on June 2, 2023, ahead of the 34th anniversary of the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations around Tiananmen Square in Beijing. — AFP

On Saturday, searches for "Sitong bridge" in Simplified Chinese — used in mainland China — led to a message saying "no results found" on map apps Baidu, Amap and Tencent maps. AFP reporters saw at least four police cars parked on each corner of the bridge Saturday, and that a sign with the name of the bridge had been taken down. Details of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests have been wiped from history books in China, and censors routinely block websites or social media accounts ahead of the event's anniversary.

Last year, a live stream by popular influencer Li Jiaqi was cut-off after he showed his audience a layered ice cream, garnished with Oreo cookies on its sides and what appeared to be a chocolate ball and a chocolate stick on top, resembling the shape of a tank, a day before the June 4 anniversary. Baidu, the operator of China's biggest search engine, did not reply to AFP inquiries about when or why searches for the bridge were blocked. Tech giant Tencent also declined to respond to similar queries. — AFP

United opposition can beat Modi in 2024: Gandhi

WASHINGTON: India's leading opposition figure Rahul Gandhi denounced Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stranglehold on Indian society on Thursday but expressed confidence that the opposition can beat the ruling party in 2024 elections. Gandhi, who was speaking at the National Press Club in Washington, is a member of the Congress Party and was expelled from the Indian parliament after being convicted of defamation in March for remarks made during a 2019 election campaign.

"I think the Congress Party will do very well in the next election. I think it will surprise people," he said, before referring to Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "Just do the math, a united opposition will defeat the BJP on its own." He accused the BJP leader of polarizing and dividing Indian society, and of orchestrating a "capture of the institutions" in his country.

Far-right party at new high as climate issues split Germany

BERLIN: Long an anti-immigration party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) has scaled new heights in national polls as discontent with the government in Berlin and its climate agenda grows. The far-right party would receive 18 percent of the vote if elections were held tomorrow, according to the most recent survey by national broadcaster ARD. The figure is the AfD's best in the closely watched election monitor, putting it level with Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats and behind only the conservative CDU-CSU on 29 percent of the vote.

The AfD was also topping polls in the eastern regions of Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg. While the party continues to leverage anti-immigration sentiment, it has also increasingly sought to capitalize on dissatisfaction with Scholz's ruling coalition with the Greens and the pro-business FDP. In particular, the AfD has taken aim at the government's plans to clean up the Germany's energy system amid a painful cost of living crisis triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. "The AfD has discovered the topic of climate protection for itself," said Ursula Muench, political scientist at the Bundeswehr University Munich.

YouTube scraps 2020 US election misinfo policy

WASHINGTON: YouTube will stop removing content that falsely claims the 2020 US presidential election was plagued by "fraud, errors or glitches," the platform said Friday, a decision quickly criticized by anti-misinformation advocates. The announcement by the Google-owned video website is a marked departure from its policy initiated in December 2020, which attempted to curb false claims — most importantly pushed by then-president Donald Trump — that his re-election loss to Joe Biden was due to the vote being "stolen."

"The ability to openly debate political

US, Japan, S Korea aim to share N Korea missile warning data

SINGAPORE: The United States, Japan and South Korea aim to share North Korean missile warning data before the end of 2023, the three countries said on Saturday after a record number of missile tests by Pyongyang this year. Leaders of the three allies committed to the real-time data sharing at a summit in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in November.

North Korea has ramped up military development since diplomatic efforts collapsed in 2019, conducting a string of banned weapons tests, including test-firing multiple intercontinental ballistic missiles. Defense chiefs from the United States, Japan and South Korea announced the data-sharing agreement after they met at a forum in Singapore.

The three sides "recognized trilateral efforts to activate a data sharing mechanism to exchange real-time missile warning data before the end of the year in order to improve each country's ability to detect and assess missiles launched" by North Korea, their joint statement said. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Japanese and South Korean counterparts Yasukazu Hamada and Lee Jong-sup met on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue defense summit.

They "discussed the growing nuclear and missile threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as well as efforts to enhance trilateral security exercises and address common security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region", the statement said. South Korea's defense ministry said in a separate statement that they "committed to making further progress in the coming months towards the activation of a real-time sharing mechanism for missile warning information".

Hamada told a news conference the initiative "will improve the ability of countries to detect and assess the threat of missiles launched by North Korea, and we will work firmly to achieve this as soon as possible".

'Grave threat'

Pyongyang's record-breaking number of launches this year includes test-firing the country's first solid-fuel ballistic missile — a key technical breakthrough for its military. The United States and South Korea have in turn been ramping up their defense cooperation, staging a series of major military exercises that included two trilateral drills involving Japan this year.

North Korea attempted to launch a spy satellite this week but it ended up crashing into the sea after a rocket failure. Pyongyang does not have a functioning satellite in space and Kim has made developing a military spy satellite a top priority, despite UN resolutions barring its use of such technology. Pyongyang has said its weapons are meant to defend against what it describes as aggression by the United States and South Korea.

Kim last year declared his country an "irreversible" nuclear power and called for an "exponential" increase in weapons production, including tactical nuclear weapons. The North's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs "pose a grave threat to international peace and stability", the United States, Japan and South Korea said in their statement. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi speaks at the National Press Club on June 1, 2023. — AFP

is widely expected to win. Gandhi is the scion of a political dynasty, the son of Rajiv (and Sonia) Gandhi, grandson of Indira Gandhi and great-grandson of independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru, all former prime ministers. His Congress Party is a political movement that once dominated Indian politics but whose weight has now been considerably reduced, while Modi's nationalist party has won over the country's Hindu majority. — AFP



address concerns of rising bills and "does not communicate well" around the issue, Funke told AFP. The discord at the heart of the government has hurt the public image of the ruling parties. Only one in five voters said they were satisfied with the work being done by Scholz's coalition in the ARD poll.

The AfD "will continue to thrive as long and only as long as politics gives this bad impression of itself", Funke said. But while climate issues were high among the reasons why voters were turning towards the AfD, migration concerns remained a core part of the AfD's appeal. Almost two in three of the party's voters named the issue as a reason for choosing the AfD in the ARD poll.

The sore subject is not going away, with the number of refugees headed for Germany climbing again after the war in Ukraine. "I suspect the AfD will continue to focus on the issue in their campaigns," Muench said. — AFP



incites people to interfere with democratic processes. "YouTube was one of the last major social media platforms to keep in place a policy attempting to curb 2020 election misinformation," said Julie Millican, vice president of the left-leaning watchdog Media Matters. "Now, it's decided to take the easy way out by giving people like Donald Trump and his enablers free rein to continue to lie without consequence about the 2020 elections." — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2023

At its 787 Dreamliner factory, Boeing prepares for takeoff

Boeing speeds up production of 787 Dreamliners



NORTH CHARLESTON: Boeing 787 Dreamliners are built at the aviation company's North Charleston, South Carolina, assembly plant. The plant is located on the grounds of the joint-use Charleston Air Force Base and Charleston International Airport. — AFP

NORTH CHARLESTON: As airlines seek to fulfill customers' growing post-pandemic appetites for long-haul travel, Boeing is aiming to speed up production of its 787 Dreamliners after a period plagued by repeated delivery interruptions due to manufacturing defects. At a hangar in the US East Coast state of South Carolina, the plane begins to take shape on its first assembly line - here, the wings, cockpit, cabin and tail are still in separate pieces.

It will take about a month for the entire aircraft to come together, with the final touches added later, in the parking lot. The US aerospace giant has already managed to up its manufacturing rate from fewer than two 787s per month in 2021 to four, and is hoping to get up to five by the end of the year. On the second assembly line in the hangar, located in the city of North Charleston, three completed airplanes are inspected.

They had to be returned for adjustments, after the discovery of several production flaws beginning in 2020. There are still several dozen other planes under inspection, but Boeing plans to move that review process to its factory in Ev-

erett, in Washington state, by the end of the year. That will allow them to devote the second assembly line in South Carolina solely to plane construction, meaning they can ramp up to 10 787s per month by 2025 or 2026.

That would bring the factory close to Boeing's pre-pandemic production rate of 14 jets per month, which was achieved by splitting 787 construction between South Carolina and Washington state, before it was all consolidated to the East Coast in 2021. Boeing says it's not worried about potential cancellations from airline clients unhappy with the delays. "Our problem right now is more to just getting these planes in the hands of the customers," Lane Ballard, the 787 program's general manager said during a press visit to Boeing's South Carolina locations Tuesday and Wednesday, ahead of the Paris Air Show later this month.

Sales rebound

Despite the rebound in sales of its flagship medium-haul 737 MAX last year - giving the company its best delivery numbers since 2018 - Boeing is pinning its financial hopes on the 787, after four con-

secutive years in the red. Recent months have finally seen an uptick in orders for large planes, the market for which was already suffering before the drop in long-haul air traffic during COVID lockdowns.

Boeing has historically dominated the high-margin long-haul manufacturing scene with its 787 and 777 configurations, competing with Airbus's A350 and A330. Now, with Boeing no longer producing its 747 jumbo jet, the lag on its 777 passenger model and the five-year delay in certification for its 777X, set for 2025, the company is counting on the 787. It took a gamble on the 787 line - which launched in 2004 and began flying in 2011 - by increasing its use of carbon fiber composites for the fuselage and wings. As a result, the plane is lighter and requires less fuel.

Many of the aircraft's major parts are shipped in from Italy, Japan and Kansas in one of Boeing's so-called Dreamlifters - modified 747s specially designed for carrying cumbersome equipment. And back in South Carolina, the back of the aircraft is built in an adjacent hangar next door. Betting on the 787 seems to have paid off so far: Boeing has received



250 orders for the plane just in the last six months. "By the end of this year, it's almost guaranteed the 787 will be the most popular passenger wide-body in

history," with even more total purchases than the 777 or Airbus A330, Boeing vice president of commercial marketing Darren Hulst predicted. — AFP

Fitch holds US rating on a negative watch

WASHINGTON: Ratings agency Fitch said that it is keeping the United States' "AAA" credit rating on negative watch, despite a bipartisan agreement on the debt limit to avert a catastrophic default. The decision came a day after US senators voted to suspend the federal debt limit, capping weeks of fraught negotiations to eliminate the threat of a disastrous credit default just four days ahead of a deadline set by the Treasury.

Hammered out between Democratic President Joe Biden and Republican leaders, the measure passed the Senate with a comfortable majority a day after sailing through the House of Representatives. While the resolution of the debt ceiling impasse means the US government will be able to meet its obligations, Fitch Ratings said it maintains a "Rating Watch Negative" on the United States. This comes "as we consider the full implications of the most recent brinkmanship episode and the outlook for medium-term fiscal and debt trajectories," Fitch added in a statement.

Lowering confidence

The agency acknowledged positive considerations this time, such as reaching a deal despite "heated political partisanship" while reducing fiscal deficits modestly over the next two years. But repeated political standoffs over the debt limit and last-minute suspensions as the Treasury comes close to not meeting all its obligations "lowers confidence in governance on fiscal and debt matters," Fitch said.

"In fact, there has been a steady deterioration in governance over the last 15 years, with increased political polarization and partisanship,"



PARIS: Photo shows the front of the New York offices of Standard & Poor's August in New York. — AFP

the statement added. Economists have warned that the country could run out of funds to pay its bills by Monday, leaving almost no room for delays in enacting the Fiscal Responsibility Act. With its passage through the Senate, the bill now heads for Biden's desk to be signed into law.

On Friday, Fitch said that it intends to resolve the negative watch in the third quarter of 2023. "The coherence and credibility of policymaking, as well as the expected medium-term fiscal and debt trajectories will be key factors in our assessment," Fitch said. The lifting of the so-called debt ceiling - a limit on government borrowing to pay for bills already incurred - is often routine. But raising the borrowing limit, currently at \$31.4 trillion, has been a contentious issue for several years, with congressional Republicans pushing for spending curbs and a smaller budget deficit in exchange for an increase. — AFP

Biden hails averting 'catastrophic' default

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden told Americans on Friday in a rare Oval Office address that the debt ceiling bill passed by Congress after weeks of wrangling saved the country from "economic collapse." Speaking from behind the historic Resolute Desk on live primetime television, Biden said that the deal resolving the standoff between Democrats and Republicans was a compromise where "no one got everything they wanted." "We averted an economic crisis and an economic collapse," he said, adding that "the stakes could not have been higher."

Biden said he will sign the bill, which authorizes the government to extend the so-called debt ceiling and renew borrowing, into law on Saturday. The US Treasury Department had warned that if the debt ceiling was blocked beyond Monday, the country could default on its \$31 trillion debt. A default would have likely triggered market panic, huge job losses and a recession, with global implications. "Nothing would have been more catastrophic," Biden said. Oval Office addresses have always been reserved by presidents for moments of unique national danger or importance.

Biden used the occasion to project a reassuring, calm tone. Sprinkling his speech with chuckles and smiles, he praised his opponents for negotiating in good faith and promised Americans that he had never felt more optimistic. Biden said that Congress has now preserved "the full faith and credit of the United States." But even with the House and Senate putting aside differences to finally rush through an agreement over the last week, the US economy's reputation took a hit. Ratings agency Fitch said Friday that it is keeping the United States' "AAA" credit rating on negative watch, despite the deal.

Campaign boost?

The debt ceiling is usually an uncontroversial accounting maneuver approved yearly by Congress. It allows the government to keep borrowing money to pay for bills already incurred. This year, hard-right Republicans dominating their party's narrow majority in the House of Representatives, decided to use the must-pass vote as leverage for forcing Biden into accepting cuts to many Democratic spending priorities. This triggered a test of political strength that threatened to end in chaos before the two sides agreed this week on raising the debt ceiling while freezing some budgetary spending in return - yet stopping well short of Republican demands for cuts.

Kevin McCarthy, the speaker of the Republican-led House, had touted the compromise bill as a big victory for conservatives, although he faced a backlash from hardliners on the right who said he made too many concessions. But Biden, who is campaigning for re-election in 2024, sees the dramatic resolution to the crisis as a win, showcasing his negotiating powers and his pitch to be the moderate voice in an increasingly extreme political landscape. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden addresses the nation on averting default and the Bipartisan Budget Agreement, in the Oval Office of the White House. — AFP

Business

US advances trade dispute with Mexico over anti-GMO policy

Mexico plans to phase out use of genetically engineered corn

WASHINGTON: The United States said it had requested dispute settlement consultations with Mexico, the next formal step in a row over the latter's plans to phase out genetically engineered agricultural products. The consultations, under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), come after Mexico announced plans to phase out the use of genetically engineered corn in animal feed and products for human consumption, among other measures, drawing ire from Washington.

"The United States has repeatedly conveyed its concerns that Mexico's biotechnology policies are not based on science and threaten to disrupt US exports to Mexico to the detriment of agricultural producers," said US Trade Representative Katherine Tai in a statement. "We will continue to work with the Mexican government through these consultations to resolve our concerns," she added.

Mexico is the world's second-largest buyer of yellow corn and imports a significant amount from the United States, where most corn is genetically modified. In February, the Mexican government softened its stance on the issue, saying exceptions could be granted for corn for animal feed and industrial food production while suitable substitutes are found, but held steady on banning GMO corn for human consumption.

"We fundamentally disagree with the position Mexico has taken on the issue of biotechnology,

which has been proven to be safe for decades," said US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. In a statement late Friday, Mexico's economy ministry said it had received the US request, and that it and other agencies would "demonstrate with hard data and evidence" that its policy does not have a material impact on US interests.

It said Mexico produces twice as much white corn as it uses for the production of tortillas, a staple food, so the "exclusive use of native corn for dough and tortillas is of no commercial concern or interest to the United States." The United States exported \$28 billion in agricultural goods to Mexico in 2022, while Mexico exported \$43 billion of such goods to the United States. The US move on Friday follows an earlier request for technical consultations in March. That process took place but failed to resolve the matter, a senior US official told reporters.

Looking ahead, the USMCA provides that a consulting party may ask for a dispute settlement panel to be set up if parties fail to resolve the matter within 75 days of the consultation request, officials added. "In the consultations that are about to begin, Mexico reaffirms its commitment to promote a constructive dialogue to clarify US concerns and reach a mutually satisfactory agreement," the Mexican statement said. "The strong commercial ties between the two countries require us to act responsibly and with an open mind," it concluded. — AFP



NOTTINGHAM: Timmy Frey (right) and Back Half supervisor, Mike Riddle, prepare to harvest a tray of leafy greens at a Bowery farm in Nottingham, Maryland. Bowery Farming operates three commercial farms and is the largest vertical-farming company in the United States, manipulating light, humidity, temperature, and other conditions to grow produce. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: Researcher Danielle Stevenson talks about the use of fungi as part of the University of California Riverside Phyto Myco Remediation Study in a vacant lot in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Fungi and plants clean up California pollution

LOS ANGELES: In an industrial wasteland in Los Angeles, Kreigh Hampel is uprooting California buckwheat with a pitchfork to find out how much lead it has absorbed. The plant's delicate white and pink flowers belie an astonishing cleaning power, which scientists think could be harnessed to get rid of dangerous pollutants — and even recycle them. "That's the miracle of life," enthuses 68-year-old Hampel, who is volunteering on the project. "Plants really can do this work and they know how to do it, they've done it so many times over millions of years," he says. The experiment is part of a project run by University of California Riverside which has scattered carefully selected plants and fungi on this former industrial site in the hope of getting rid of the heavy metals and petrochemicals that have contaminated the area for decades.

Danielle Stevenson, who is leading the study, says such bioremediation techniques can be much more cost-effective than traditional techniques. "The conventional method of cleaning up sites is just to dig up all the contaminated soil and to dump it somewhere else," she told AFP. "That approach doesn't actually solve the problem, right? It just moves it somewhere else." And, she says, it costs a lot of money. Stevenson's project, which is being carried out on three sites in and around Los Angeles, has a price tag of around \$200,000 and so far is showing very promising results.

Solar-powered vacuum cleaners — "In three months, we had a 50 percent reduction of the petrochemicals and then in six months, we were getting pretty close (to that level) with some of the metals," she said. Stevenson, a mycologist by training, has chosen her anti-pollution weapons with care. Oyster mushrooms have been incorporated into the soil because of their natural role in decomposition: Their underground part, called the mycelium, is sucking up diesel.

"Those same fungi that in nature would eat a dead tree will also recognize diesel oil, for example, as a food source. "The reason is, it's basically the same thing. A lot of our fossil fuels are just dead stuff that got compressed over long periods of time." Several California native plants, including the telegraph weed and the California bush sunflower, are particularly good at absorbing heavy metals.

Stevenson thinks of the plants essentially as "solar powered vacuum cleaners: They basically suck up the metals, like lead, into their bodies. "When we pull out the plants, we've removed the lead from the soil." The lead and other metals can then be recovered from those plants — and even reused. Throughout the United States and the industrialized world, commercial sites that outlive their useful life to the companies that pollute them are often just abandoned, says Stevenson.

The responsibility to put them right falls on poorly funded or ill-equipped local authorities, who struggle to find the money or the expertise. Historically the problem is worse in working class or ethnic minority neighborhoods, where politicians feel more able to ignore complaints. In the United States, where the Environmental Protection Agency lists nearly 1,900 problem sites, only a small number of clean-up projects are carried out each year, Stevenson says. She hopes that a cheaper method will enable more sites to be cleaned up. — AFP

NBK launches annual summer campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to reward its customers all year round by continuing to launch unique and exceptional campaigns that give them the chance to enter draws to win prizes tailored to their expectations. In this context, NBK launched its annual summer campaign for 2023. This year's campaign is exceptional with carefully selected prizes, as it provides the winner a unique tourism trip offering a unique once-in-a-lifetime experience connected with a special event in each destination. In addition, all prizes offer a highly luxurious trip inclusive of airline business class ticket and 5-star hotel accommodation.

The campaign runs from June 1st to end of December, with a number of winners of wonder trips every month. Eligible NBK Visa Credit and Visa Prepaid Cardholders who register and make a minimum spend of KD 250 per month will enter the draw, with each KD 1 international spends giving 2 draw chances. The winners will get 7 prizes offering unique once-in-a-lifetime experiences. June (San Francisco, USA): 5 winners with 3 companions each with experience Disney 100 years anniversary on a 8 night road trip starting from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

July (Belgium): 5 winners with 1 companion each will experience the adrenaline rush at the famous

Stocks rise after jobs report, debt US breakthrough

NEW YORK: Stock markets rallied, closing out the week on a high in the United States following a bumper jobs report and a deal in Congress to avert a potentially catastrophic debt default. The stronger-than-expected employment data released Friday morning suggests the US economy remains resilient despite concerted action from the Federal Reserve to suppress demand and bring down high inflation.

The passage of a debt limit deal through both houses of Congress appears to have eased market fears of a debt default as well, with Wall Street's "fear gauge" sinking to its lowest level since before the COVID-19 pandemic. The US dollar strengthened against rival currencies as foreign exchange traders digested the news, while Asian and European stocks also closed in the green Friday. "The Senate swiftly approved the new debt ceiling deal in the US prompting relief in the markets," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange during afternoon trading in New York City. — AFP

DTO racing track with a 1:1 coaching session in a 3 night trip. August (Paris, France): 3 winners with 1 companion each will visit fashion's most anticipated event of the year in a 3 night trip. Paris Fashion Week to access top designers reveal events. September (New York, USA): a 6 night trip to New York for 3 winners with 1 companion each to attend an exclusive private dinner and cooking experience event with a celebrity chef.

October (England): a 5 night trip to meet a football legend for 3 winners with 1 companion each and an opportunity to attend a Premier League match. November (Dubai, UAE): 3 winners with 1 companion each will enjoy a farewell to 2023 and welcoming 2024 at the luxurious Royal Atlantis in a 7 night trip to Dubai. And lastly, December (Nevada, USA): 3 winners with 1 companion each will get the chance to attend the most awaited sport event of the year, the Super Bowl LVIII in 5 night trip to Nevada at the Allegiant Stadium home of the Las Vegas Raiders.

Speaking on the campaign, Chief Executive Officer of Consumer & Digital Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, Mohammed Al Othman, said: "Our campaign this summer is totally exceptional offering an exclusive experience for the winners, which reflects our outstanding customer rewarding policy, in line with their various lifestyles."

"In designing all our services and rewards, we aim to make a difference in the lives of our customers, as reflected in the exclusive and unique experience that all the details of the trips offering the winners once-in-a-lifetime experience," he added. "NBK always seeks to enrich the banking experience of its Visa Credit Cardholders by offering them a unique lifestyle, and the opportunity to participate in exceptional campaigns all year round, which are always well-received by them," he noted.

Ankush Devadason, Visa's Head of Financial Institutions for Kuwait, said: "We are excited to strengthen our partnership with National Bank of Kuwait through this campaign for the bank's Visa cardhold-

ers. The campaign is not only a great way to reward our cardholders with exclusive experiences but also support the government's digital commerce ambitions. Good luck to our cardholders and I look forward to more valuable partnerships with NBK."

NBK Visa Credit Cards provide the best payment method given the various benefits they offer customers when using their cards for shopping, including NBK Rewards Program, NBK Miles Program, Purchase Protection and Extended Warranty, as well as many other benefits. NBK offers a top-notch banking experience for its customers worldwide with branches spanning 14 countries, where it provides a variety of NBK Visa Credit and Visa Debit Card related services.

Eligible cards: NBK Visa Platinum Credit Card; NBK Visa Signature Credit Card; NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card; NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card; NBK Visa Infinite Privilege Credit Card; NBK-KPC Visa Infinite Credit Card; NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Signature Credit Card; NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Infinite Credit Card and NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Platinum Prepaid Card.



Major US firms agree to \$1.2 billion 'forever chemicals' settlement

WASHINGTON: Three major chemical manufacturers announced they will pay nearly \$1.2 billion to settle claims that they contaminated water sources across the United States with harmful "forever chemicals" known as PFAS. Chemours, DuPont and Corteva said in a joint press release that they had "reached an agreement in principle to resolve all PFAS-related drinking water claims" for areas serving "the vast majority of the United States population."

A total of \$1.185 billion will be given to a settlement fund, with Chemours contributing \$592 million, DuPont paying \$400 million and another \$193 million added by Corteva. The group of chemicals known as PFAS, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, have been found to cause cancer and other health problems, and take very long periods of time to break down.

They have been used since the 1940s in a wide variety of industrial and consumer products such as nonstick pans, carpeting, waterproof clothing, food packaging, cosmetics and cleaning items. In addition to the agreement reached by the trio of companies, Bloomberg has reported that industrial giant 3M has signed an agreement in principle worth at least \$10 billion to settle other PFAS-related lawsuits brought by several US towns and cities.

When asked for comment on Friday evening, 3M did not immediately reply. The agreement must be approved by a judge. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) earlier this year proposed new standards to limit PFAS in public drinking water, requiring utilities to monitor for six of the chemicals and reduce their levels. EPA administrator Michael Regan at the time said the new water standards have the potential to prevent thousands of deaths and tens of thousands of PFAS-related illnesses. — AFP



ABK opens first interactive digital branch

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), a financial institution which strives to embrace cutting-edge banking solutions, has recently unveiled its latest offering to the Kuwaiti banking industry: a pioneering first-of-its-kind digital branch located at Al Khiran Mall. Serving as a testament to the Bank's unwavering commitment towards elevating customer experiences through state-of-the-art, secure, and agile digital banking services, this groundbreaking initiative further reinforces ABK's status as a front-runner in the realm of financial innovation.

By integrating the latest technology into its operational workflow, the Bank endeavors to remain a prominent figure in the evolving landscape of the Kuwaiti banking industry. ABK celebrated the inauguration of its new branch in Al Khiran Mall, attended by Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group CEO, Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait, Johair Marafi, Acting General Manager of Retail Banking, as well as several members of management and representatives of Kuwaiti media outlets. Attendees were introduced to the most prominent services offered at the new branch which serve as part of the Bank's digital transformation plan aimed to enhance customer service.

The new digital branch in Al Khiran boasts intelligent and innovative technologies, which are considered the first of their kind in Kuwait, including interactive digital screens that enable visitors to utilize them without the need for touch. The branch also features a never-seen-before in Kuwait hologram feature that provides customers with a unique banking experience.

On this momentous occasion, Marafi expressed her enthusiasm and said, "The unveiling of ABK's digital branch, which represents an embodiment of our customer-centric approach and steadfast commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our esteemed clientele, underpins our unwavering focus towards facilitating seamless, efficient, and satisfaction-guaranteed banking experiences. Aligned with our ambitions, we relentlessly strive to exceed customers' expectations, thereby elevating our position as a leading player in the rapidly-shifting landscape of the Kuwaiti banking industry."

In line with ABK's unwavering mission to provide exceptional banking services to all customers across Kuwait, the recently established digital branch will not only cater to the residents of Al Khiran, but also the neighboring areas. This development serves as an integral milestone which helps revolutionize customers' banking experience across Kuwait with enhanced accessibility and convenience.

Marafi continued, "The launch of our first digital branch in Al Khiran Mall embodies our approach to keeping up with digital developments. The branch's modern and distinctive design delivers a futuristic environment supported by unprecedented technology that come together to create a pioneering banking experience that further enhances our position in the Kuwaiti market amid the rapidly developing needs of the local banking industry."

Equipped with the latest technologies, the branch reinforces ABK's leadership position in the domain of modern banking, enriching customers with added val-

ue through swift account opening, hassle-free transactions, and high security measures. The new digital branch offers various self-service options for customers of all segments, including the provision of a digital signature service through devices in collaboration with the Public Authority for Civil Information including a range of tablet devices.

In addition to this, the branch provides self-service ATMs that offer cash deposit services, higher cash withdrawals, check deposits, account statements, customer account transfers, card payments, card and account inquiries, loan applications, card replacement requests, PIN resets, card activations, and limit increases for online and card withdrawals. The Bank plans to introduce more services in the near future for its customers. Moreover, traditional ATMs are available at the new branch which offer cash deposit and withdrawal services, cardless withdrawals, password changes, transfers to customer accounts and other beneficiaries, card payments, check deposits, and account statements, among others.

She continued, "To inquire about any products or services, customers can also video chat with our staff through the available self-service machines which will facilitate smooth and instant transactions. We strive to continue to introduce the latest technologies to the banking sector to attract more customers to enjoy the Bank's various benefits." Marafi emphasized that ABK is keen to offer innovative services which enhance customers' banking experience. These plans confirm ABK's strong focus on digital transformation to enhance customer satisfaction.



She continued, "ABK remains committed to benchmarking its services against the highest international standards in the banking industry and continually fostering innovation through the introduction of worthwhile products and services. Our commitment to technology-driven banking and unparalleled customer service underscores our ambition to lead the charge towards digital transformation and maintain our position as a leading bank in the Kuwaiti market."

Furthermore, Marafi highlighted the significance of the branch in catering to customers' ever-evolving and burgeoning requirements. Aligned with the Bank's unwavering commitment towards technology-driven banking, the new digital branch adheres to the highest quality standards and benchmarks to elevate the Bank's capabilities in delivering advanced banking products and services.

Marafi stated, "The launch of our new digital branch comes amid the growing

use of technology to complete banking transactions quickly and securely. ABK will continue to innovate services and products to meet all customers' needs by opening more digital branches, and introducing more digital offers, products, and services that enhance our position among other banks in the Kuwaiti market." She added, "We also strive to continuously develop the capabilities of our team to keep pace with the continuous change in customers' needs and consistently exceed their expectations."

ABK's new digital branch is operational during Al Khiran Mall's specified working hours from 10 am to 10 pm on weekdays and from 10 am to 11 pm on weekends. Marafi clarified that a team of the Bank's employees will be present to guide customers on how to use the self-service machines in the branch, ensuring that they are familiarized with the latest technologies and highest security measures.

KEMS-Zajil Telecom announces new CEO

KUWAIT: In April 2023, KEMS-Zajil Telecom, which has been providing internet services in Kuwait since 1991, announced that its board of directors has appointed Engineer Waleed Al-Qallaf as CEO, effective March 2023. He will lead the next phase of the company's expansion in Kuwait. Al-Qallaf joined KEMS-Zajil Telecom as CEO after completing his term as a full-time board member of the Kuwait Telecom and Information Technology Authority.

Nizar Al-Saei, Chairman of the Board of Kalam Group, commented on the appointment, stating: "The Board of Directors is pleased to appoint Engineer Waleed Al-Qallaf as CEO of KEMS-Zajil Telecom, who will lead the company and develop its performance to achieve the Board's strategy. Waleed is an experienced business leader with a rich history of developing sustainable, diversified, and profitable businesses. The Board of Directors believes that he is the right person to lead KEMS-Zajil Telecom in



Waleed Al-Qallaf

driving digital transformation in Kuwait."

Veer Bassi, Kalaam Telecom Group CEO, added: "We are delighted to have Engineer Waleed Al-Qallaf with us and look forward to his leadership in transforming KEMS-Zajil Telecom from an internet services provider to a digital solutions partner. Focusing on technology will contribute to the company's comprehensive transformation towards the technology field, with a strong emphasis on supporting the institutional sector in Kuwait on their journey towards digital transformation and providing a personalized and flexible customer experience."

Eng Waleed Al-Qallaf, CEO, KEMS-Zajil Telecom, said: "It is an honor for me to lead a wonderful group of employees for Kalaam-Zajil Telecom at this exciting time in the company's history. Kalaam-Zajil Telecom, which has now become part of the Kalaam Telecom Group, looks forward to establishing a strong presence in the business and government sectors and transitioning to becoming a partner for

digital solutions by launching new solutions and services with innovative value propositions from communication services, data transfer, cloud computing solutions, information security, managed networks, information technology, data centers, internet of things, and big data.

We are currently investing in upgrading our core network, adding relevant partnerships, enhancing service level agreements for customers, digitizing service delivery, and supporting customers to build an effective market to facilitate the digital customer journey." Engineer Waleed Al-Qallaf added: "The company cannot succeed without successful employees, so we always look to develop our investments in our talented employees and bring new skills to our growing team."

The appointment of Engineer Waleed Al-Qallaf comes after working for more than 32 years in various fields related to the Telecom industry, and before joining the Telecom Regulatory Authority, he served as CEO of Qualitynet, based in Kuwait. He is considered one of the pioneers in forming the Arab Internet Service Providers Association (ARISPA) and was one of the founders of the Middle East, North Africa, Gulf, and Iraq Operators Union to create a cable system that extends from the United Arab Emirates through the Gulf Cooperation Council, Iraq to Istanbul.

Gulf Bank adds new feature for Kuwaiti customers

KUWAIT: In addition to the many benefits provided by the 'Get Cash in A Flash' offer, and on the occasion of the summer season, Gulf Bank has added a new feature for Kuwaiti customers who join the Salary Account and transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank – by offering a cash gift of up to KD 1,200, in addition to a year-long grace period to repay the first loan installment.

Hence, this means that customers who transfer their salary to Gulf Bank and apply for a loan, have a period of 12 months to payback the first installment, following the date of obtaining it. Furthermore, Gulf Bank's salary account customers enjoy many other benefits, such as: Automatic enrollment in the best and fastest rewards program in Kuwait, discounts at leading car dealerships, a personal loan of up to KD 25,000 with a repayment period of 5 years, housing loans up to KD 70,000 with a repayment period of 15 years, as well as a free credit card and safety deposit box for one year.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Al-Qattan, said: "This offer applies to newly hired Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 350 and above, as well as those working in the government and oil sectors." He added: "We are keen to keep pace with the requirements of customers and provide them with the best competitive advantages in the banking market," noting that Gulf Bank's Salary Account is the only account in Kuwait that provides special offers tailored to fit the customers' needs – as part of the Bank's keenness to reward its customers and help them achieve their dreams.

Al-Qattan also indicated that customers can open an account with Gulf Bank or transfer their salaries, in just a minute, through Gulf Bank's mobile application or website – stressing that Gulf Bank constantly strives to provide a distinctive banking experience to customers by providing solutions that are simple, efficient and transparent. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large.

With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Mohammed Al-Qattan



Maqasa organizes women empowerment workshop

KUWAIT: Kuwait Clearing Company (Maqasa) recently organized a "Women Empowerment" workshop for its employees and Boursa Kuwait. The workshop's aim was to promote gender diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. The workshop was moderated by two experienced leaders in this field, Maha Al-Baghli and Bodour Al-Sumait, who shared their insights and experiences on how women can thrive in the professional environment.

Maha Al-Baghli, founder and managing Director of Safira Company in Kuwait, was recognized for her leadership and contributions to the business community and corporate social responsibility, and Bodour Al-Sumait, Safira Operation Manager and President of Business and Professional Women in Kuwait, is an accomplished speaker and coach with a focus on leadership and personal development. Together, they have worked with numerous organizations in Kuwait and the GCC region to empower women and promote workplace diversity.

"Our people are our biggest asset and they are the key to our success. Hence empowering our female employees and developing our staff lies at the head of our HR agenda. Women Empowerment aligns with our company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals, especially when it comes

to achieving gender equality". KCC's commitment to cultivating a balanced and inclusive work culture was demonstrated through this initiative. Participants were equipped with a wide range of critical skills, knowledge and tools to empower women to develop their leadership abilities in their respective fields.

The workshop covered communication, leadership, sustainability and professional development, providing holistic direction and support for women to excel in their roles. The workshop was successful in providing a supportive and inclusive environment for female staff. They were able to learn from experienced leaders and acquire essential knowledge and tools. KCC's efforts to promote diversity and gender inclusion demonstrate a commitment to creating a healthy and equitable balance in the workplace.



A handout picture from the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein (center right) and wife Saudi architect Rajwa Al-Seif (center left) posing for a picture with guests during their royal wedding ceremony in Amman. — AFP photos

PRINCESS RAJWA wore a dreamy Elie Saab bridal gown for her royal wedding

The 29-year-old architect married Crown Prince Hussein of Jordan in a dazzling royal wedding in Amman on Thursday and chose a classic look.

The newly-minted Princess Rajwa, as the Royal Hashemite Court announced she will be known, wore a custom white silk crepe gown by Elie Saab Haute Couture with long sleeves, asymmetric neckline and draped bodice. The curve-hugging dress also featured a long train with cut-out flowers and pearl details. Elie Saab said a team of 20 people spent three months bringing the look to life.

The bride styled her hair in loose curls, topping the look with a delicate diamond tiara and coordinating earrings — which appear to be a new suite — and a sweeping veil with embroidery.

On her feet, Princess Rajwa went for something sensible — flats! The white shoes with pointed toe were ideal for the march to meet her groom



A handout picture from the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Crown Prince Hussein (right) and his wife Rajwa Al-Seif sitting during their wedding ceremony at the Zahran Palace.

in the garden of Zahran Palace for the wedding ceremony. Crown Prince Hussein, 28, was all smiles when he saw his bride and looked dapper in a black military uniform. The style was inspired by the suit the groom's father, King Abdullah, wore when he married Queen Rania in 1993.

The bride stepped out in a surprise second look for the banquet following her royal wedding

to Crown Prince Hussein of Jordan. Rajwa changed from her white long-sleeve gown by Elie Saab into a white cap-sleeve ballgown with a sweetheart neckline and swirling embellishments. While Princess Rajwa kept on her delicate diamond tiara and matching earrings from earlier in the day, she swept her hair into a chignon and added dramatic white opera gloves for the second look.



Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein (right) and his wife Rajwa Al-Seif wave as they leave the Zahran Palace in Amman.

Wedding motorcade

Notable guests on Thursday included the Netherlands' King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima, as well as Belgium's King Philippe and Crown Princess Elisabeth and Danish Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary.

The highly anticipated nuptials were met by celebrations across Jordan, with thousands gathering to witness the proces-

sion in Amman in streets decorated for the occasion with pictures of the couple and banners.

A royal red motorcade, reserved for special occasions, crossed the capital from Zahran Palace in the centre to Husseinia Palace in the west.

"We are certainly very happy with the crown prince's wedding. This is the joy of all of Jordan," said Sawwan Rifaia, 26, clad in a white shirt with a picture of the

newly weds and a red Jordanian keffiyeh wrapped over her white headscarf.

Jordan enjoys relative stability compared to its Middle East neighbors, but has seen protests in recent years as it struggles with economic woes. The World Bank says Jordan is heavily in debt and faces around 23 percent unemployment.

The country relies extensively on foreign aid. The Jordanian king has wide-ranging political powers in a nation of 11 million people, a parliamentary monarchy, and he is also supreme leader of the armed forces.

Hussein followed in his father's footsteps by attending Britain's Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and then studied history at Washington's Georgetown University. His bride was born and raised in conservative Saudi Arabia but is also Western-educated, having studied architecture at Syracuse University in New York. — Agencies



A handout picture from the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Britain's Prince William (right) and Princess Catherine arriving at the Zahran Palace in Amman.



A handout picture from the Jordanian Royal Palace shows, Crown Prince Hussein (second left), his wife Rajwa Al-Seif (left), King Abdullah II (fourth left) and Queen Rania (third left) greeting Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima during a royal ceremony at the Zahran Palace in Amman.



A handout picture from the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Jordan's Prince Hashem bin Abdullah walking with Rajwa Al-Seif at the Zahran Palace in Amman.



This screen grab taken from a footage released by the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Crown Prince Hussein (right) and his wife Rajwa Al-Seif signing documents during their wedding ceremony at the Zahran Palace in Amman.



A handout picture from the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Sheikha Moza bint Nasser (left) attending a royal ceremony at the Husseinia Palace in Amman.



This screen grab taken from a footage released by the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Crown Prince Hussein and his wife Rajwa Al-Seif leaving the Zahran Palace in Amman.



A handout picture from the Jordanian Royal Palace shows Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein and his wife Rajwa Al-Seif traversing the streets of Amman in a royal red motorcade following their wedding ceremony.

Lifestyle



Members of the Ugandan dance group "the Ghetto Kids" that recently performed in the television show "Britain's Got Talent", pose during a rehearsal at their home in Kampala. — AFP photos



Akram Muyanja (center), 13, a member of the Ugandan dance group "the Ghetto Kids" dances during a rehearsal at their home in Kampala.



Ashiraf Mbazira, 11, of the Ugandan dance group "the Ghetto Kids" dances during a rehearsal at their home.



Benjamin Kayanja, 11, a member of the Ugandan dance group "the Ghetto Kids" dances during a rehearsal at their home.

From slums to stardom: Uganda's Ghetto Kids

The sprawling slums of Kampala are a far cry from the glitzy stage of Britain's Got Talent, where a group of Ugandan street kids will be performing in Sunday's grand finale of the hit UK television show. The children of the Triplets Ghetto Kids troupe have already wowed the Britain's Got Talent judges and viewers alike with their energetic dance medley, colorful costumes and beaming smiles.

A straw-roofed hut under a blazing yellow sun is the backdrop for their exuberant stage routine that has propelled them through the talent competition, giving just a hint of their impoverished and often troubled beginnings in the Ugandan capital. The children were given a new start in life by the Inspire Ghetto Kids Foundation, which was set up in 2007 in the poor Kampala neighborhood of Makindye by former school teacher Dauda Kavuma.

The 36-year-old - one of 30 children from six mothers - recalls how he had to hustle from a young age after the death of his father, rummaging through rubbish heaps to collect scrap or selling fruit to drivers stopped at traffic lights. Kavuma tells AFP that as a boy his first love was football but he was later encouraged by a friend to take up singing.

"Whenever I sang, I forgot my troubled past," he says, attributing help from

his teachers including the head of an Islamic school who paid his fees, for setting him on a path out of poverty. "Most people thought street kids... have no value in society but I thought otherwise.

"I thought, what if I use music, dance and drama to transform the underprivileged in the ghettos," he says. "My inspiration was my love for music and to pay back to the society that has supported me through my hard life."

'My life's changing for good'

Kavuma's foundation is based in a five-bedroom house in a warren of streets in Makindye, where he takes in homeless, orphaned or disadvantaged children and provides shelter, food, clothes and an education.

The youngsters in his care, currently 30 of them aged from three to 18, have heart-wrenching stories - some born as a result of rape, others who lost their parents and had to fend for themselves. "As much as I remember the hard life in the ghetto, at least now I have hope that my life is changing for good," says 13-year-old Priscilla Kisakye, one of those competing in the British show.

Priscilla's parents, both without jobs, found themselves unable to take care of their six children, and she was taken under Kavuma's wing. Now, Priscilla tells AFP, she is treated by her schoolmates



Priscilla Zawedde Kisakye (centre), 13, a member of the Ugandan dance group "the Ghetto Kids" that recently performed in the television show "Britain's Got Talent", dances during a rehearsal at their home in Kampala.

as a celebrity but she thinks of herself as just a normal kid. And rather than show-business, the softly-spoken youngster says her career goal is in law or politics - perhaps to become "the president of Uganda".

'Golden buzzer'

The Ghetto Kids first became an internet sensation in 2014 when their homemade dance video featuring the hit "Sitya Loss" by Eddy Kenzo, another

Ugandan orphan turned music star, went viral.

The clip of several youngsters dancing on a dirt road opened a floodgate of opportunities for the group whose videos on YouTube have had many millions of hits. They have gone on to win several African and global awards, and have worked with international music stars such as American singer-songwriter Chris Brown and Nigerian Afrobeats star Wizkid.

In 2022, the crew took to the stage at the World Cup in Qatar, one of a number of live performances across the globe. The Ghetto Kids earned a coveted "golden buzzer" on BGT in April - which automatically sent them through to the semi-finals on Wednesday.

"This is huge for us, for Uganda and for Africa!" the foundation posted on its Facebook page after they made it through to Sunday's finale. The winners will scoop a £250,000 (\$313,000) cash prize. Kavuma says the foundation relies on donations from well-wishers, earnings from Ghetto Kids videos on YouTube and TikTok as well as live concerts. "My dream is to have a bigger home to accommodate and help as many children on the streets as possible," he says. The current compound is "too small", he adds, watching the youngsters jostling for space as they play football, volleyball or simply run around with car tyres.

One of the boys, 13-year-old Madwanah Ssegirinya or "king" to his friends, says the foundation paid for surgery that helped him recover from a playtime injury, and his dream is to follow in Kavuma's footsteps and build another orphanage. "Above all, (Kavuma) mentored us to be good citizens," Ssegirinya tells AFP. "He is a father and mother to all of us." — AFP

Photographer sues Kanye West over alleged assault

A photographer who claims Kanye West threw her cell phone to the ground in a confrontation is suing the troubled rapper for assault, she said Thursday. Nichol Lechmanik said the artist, who is now formally known as Ye, caused her "great mental and emotional pain" in the January confrontation.

A press conference in Los Angeles heard how the paparazzo was outside a sports center in Ventura County, north of the city, where Ye and Kim Kardashian's son was playing. The lawsuit says Lechmanik had taken photographs of Kardashian and then saw Ye standing outside arguing with someone, so began filming him from her car.



Kanye West

The clip, which was played for reporters, shows Ye approaching the vehicle and addressing the photographer. "If I wanna go see my son at a game, You all ain't gonna run up on me like that. If I say stop... stop with your cameras," the rapper says.

"I know, but Kanye you are a celebrity," Lechmanik replies, continuing to film. The footage shows Ye reaching into her car, grabbing the phone and throwing it to the ground, before he walks away.

"He caused me so much fear that I have not been the same since," Lechmanik told reporters Thursday. "His actions have interfered with my ability to work. Although I am not a world famous artist (like) Ye, I have just as much right to work as he does. He has no right to assault me, batter me or cause me to be afraid to pursue my profession." — AFP



Residents with dementia participating in a silent disco at Apex Harmony Lodge in Singapore.



Singaporeans with dementia find their groove at silent disco

Under flashing disco lights, residents at a Singapore care home held hands and danced to golden oldies as part of an initiative to help those with dementia. They grooved to hits from the 1940s to the 1980s for about an hour in a silent disco format, listening to the tunes via headphones. The playlist, curated to get them moving, featured tracks in English, Malay and Chinese dialects at the Apex Harmony Lodge, which specializes in taking care of people with dementia.

"I don't really know how to dance, I just mess around. I have thick skin," 54-year-old Christine Chong, who has early-onset dementia, said cheekily. Another resident, Goh Kian Ho, 63, sang enthusiastically while tapping his foot and clapping his hands to a Hokkien number. "It's very good that we can play and sing," he said.

When the group began to tire from the upbeat boogie-woogie, the DJ slowed the pace with legendary Taiwanese crooner Teresa Teng's beloved 1970s track "The Moon Represents My Heart". A facilitator led the group in waving their arms and swaying their bodies as they listened fondly to the timeless romantic ballad.

Singapore, like many Asian countries, has been grappling with an ageing population and rising dementia rates. Singapore's Ministry of Health estimates that 86,000 people — one in 10 aged 60 and above — have dementia, with the number expected to grow to 152,000 by 2030.

Research has shown music therapy can be helpful for people with certain conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, the most common type of dementia, which begins with memory loss and

can lead to difficulty with conversation and cognition. "We play old songs, and then they help to trigger the... emotions of our residents that are often associated with certain memories from their past, so this helps to provide a sense of familiarity and comfort for our residents," said Grace Wong, an associate psychologist at Apex Harmony Lodge.

'Soundtrack to their lives'

The silent disco, which runs weekly, was inspired by similar ones in nurs-

ing homes in the UK and Australia. It was adapted to local musical tastes by Singaporean Johnson Soh, a former music executive who set up his own company offering music programs for seniors. Soh started it after his father was diagnosed with dementia and music from his generation seemed to help.

"He was my first guinea pig actually... his awareness was heightened," said Soh. More than 10 establishments in Singapore have adopted the program since it began in 2019, according to Soh.

Dubbed "Return to the Tea Dance", the initiative aims to evoke happy memories of Sunday afternoon dances that were popular with young people in 1960s Singapore. "Everybody has a soundtrack to their lives, so there's always some music that would have impacted you sometime during your life," Soh said. "It is inexplicable, I think music is something that really moves people." Meanwhile, the dancing uncles and aunts continued their nostalgic sojourn as they loudly sang along to Doris Day's "Que Sera Sera". "Whatever will be, will be." — AFP



Residents with dementia participating in a silent disco at Apex Harmony Lodge in Singapore. - AFP photos





A Persian cat sleeps at the "meowseum", a privately funded cat museum and cafe where some 30 friendly felines roam freely throughout the exhibition space, in Tehran. — AFP photos



A cat rests at the "meowseum".



A cat rests at the "meowseum".

Purrfect for Persians: Tehran's 'meowseum'



Sprawled nonchalantly across the doorstep, a large tomcat welcomes visitors to Tehran's cat museum and cafe, a curious establishment where some 30 friendly felines roam freely throughout the exhibition space. Shahrzad, Farrokh, Shapoor and Shirin are among the real stars of this attraction in a small two-storey building in the centre of the Iranian capital. Director Hossein HamlehDari says that when it first opened in 2020 it was named the "meowseum".

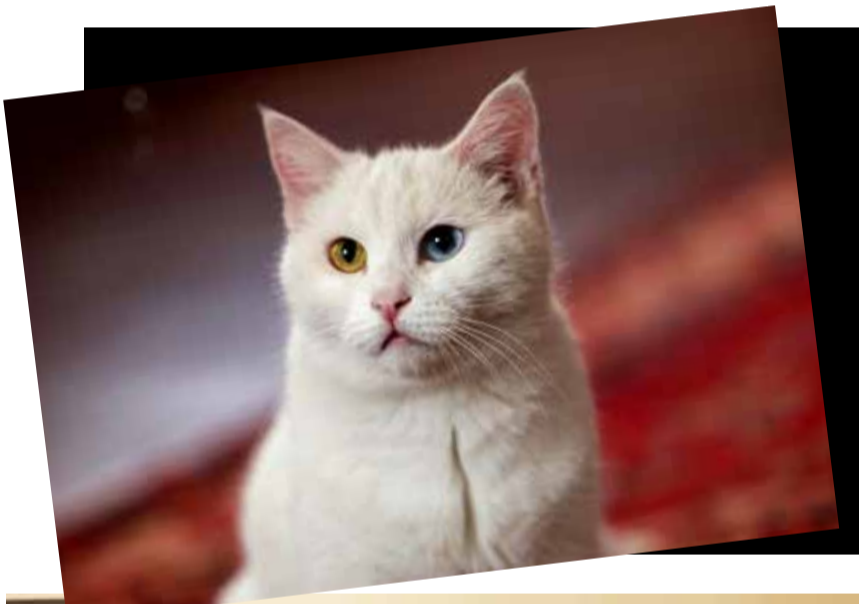
It is a place where visitors and cats coexist peacefully in the exhibition rooms and on the cafe terrace. The privately funded museum's faded walls feature reproductions of paintings, photos, caricatures and even stamps celebrating the cat from countries as diverse as Iran, South Korea, Guinea and Ukraine. Most visitors come here seeking to interact and play with the adopted cats, which hail from a wide variety of breeds.

Among them are several Persians, known for their long hair and placid character, a breed which originated in Iran and neighboring Turkey. "I love cats, so I really like this place and its friendly atmosphere," says Mina, a 21-year-old student cuddling a soft brown-coated tomcat. Her friend Mohammad, 20, says he too is fond of animals as pets, and has decided "to buy a cat" in the coming weeks. "When people come here and meet Farrokh, a cat that was born blind but is still very agile, they realize cats are also citizens of this city and can coexist with residents," HamlehDari says.

The animals' reputation in Iran has suffered knocks in the past because of the large number of strays in big cities, Tehran in particular. But unlike dogs, cats have been valued pets in Iran for centuries. "They are represented in many works of art, in particular Persian miniatures," HamlehDari says. He cites the example of Babri ("tigerish") Khan, the famous pet cat of Naser al-Din Shah of the Qajar dynasty, who reigned over the country from 1848 to 1896.

And all Iranians are familiar with the fable "Masnavi of Mush-O Gorbah" ("The Mouse and the Cat"), a political satire by the 14th century poet Obeid Zakani. It has become fashionable among wealthy Iranians in recent times to own a dog, preferably a small pedigree breed. But this trend is not entirely welcomed by religious conservatives and some officials who point out that in Islam dogs are considered impure.

In 2021, a bill that would have outlawed pets because of their "harmful" nature caused an outcry. But nothing has been heard since about this potential catastrophe — a clear signal from Iran's pro-pet lobby that they won't take things lion down. — AFP



People visit the "meowseum".

Osaka reveals she and Cordae expecting a baby girl

Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka said she and rapper Cordae are expecting a baby girl, making the gender reveal in an Instagram post that "A little princess is on the way."

The 25-year-old Japanese tennis star, who announced her pregnancy in January, illustrated the post with a photo of herself - baby bump front and

center - surrounded by pink and lavender balloons and flowers. In another photo Cordae leans down to kiss the burgeoning bump.

Osaka had let fans in on her pregnancy by sharing a photo of her sonogram on Instagram just days after she pulled out of the Australian Open.

"2023 will be a year full of lessons for me, and I hope I'll see you guys at

the start of the next one cause I will be back at the Australian Open 2024. Love you all infinitely," she said then.

Osaka hasn't played a tennis match since last September, her social media posts late last year showing her travelling in Europe with Cordae. The couple have been together since 2019. — AFP



Cordae and Osaka

Sports

Rybakina withdraws from French Open; Zhang chases landmark win

Djokovic, Alcaraz secure French Open last 16; Pegula, Rublev exit

PARIS: World number four Elena Rybakina withdrew from the French Open on Saturday due to illness, handing a significant and unexpected title boost to defending champion Iga Swiatek as Zhang Zhizhen chased history for China. Rybakina had been due to face Sara Sorribes Tormo of Spain in the third round in the opening match on Court Philippe Chatrier. "I was not feeling good yesterday and the day before. I didn't sleep last night," said the 23-year-old Wimbledon champion. "I had fever and a headache and it's difficult to breathe. I tried to play in the warm-up but I feel it's the right decision to withdraw."

Rybakina had swept into the last 32 without dropping a set. The Russian-born Kazakh was seen as a potential champion having arrived at Roland Garros with the prestigious Italian Open clay court title under her belt. She had been seeded to face two-time champion Swiatek in the semi-finals. "I guess with my allergy that my immune system just went down and I picked up something," said Rybakina. "The doctor said there's a virus in Paris."

Rybakina said she will focus on recovery ahead of defending her title at Wimbledon which gets underway on July 3. "The plan was to play Berlin, Eastbourne, and Wimbledon. There are not many tournaments on grass, but the most important thing is to get healthy again." Sorribes Tormo, ranked 132 in the world, will be playing in the second week of a Grand Slam for the first time. She will face either Ekaterina Alexandrova of Russia or

Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia for a place in the quarter-finals.

Pegula, Rublev exit

Meanwhile, Novak Djokovic battled into the French Open fourth round for a 14th consecutive year on Friday as Carlos Alcaraz also progressed, after women's third seed Jessica Pegula and men's seventh-ranked Andrey Rublev were dumped out of the tournament. Djokovic has made headlines for his comments about Kosovo this week but his on-court progress has been relatively serene, reaching the second week without dropping a set. The Serb star was made to work hard by Spanish 29th seed Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who served for the first set and missed a set point in the second, but won 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

"I thought if I lost the second set we would play five hours today, but I'm proud of the performance," said Djokovic. Two-time champion Djokovic, who has also made the French Open quarter-finals in each of the past 13 years, will take on Peru's Juan Pablo Varillas in the last 16. The 36-year-old is hoping to break out of his tie with injured rival Rafael Nadal at the top of the men's all-time list of major winners at Roland Garros.

He is just one title behind Serena Williams' mark of 23 Slams and two adrift of Margaret Court's overall record. Djokovic, slated to meet world number one Alcaraz in the semi-finals, has now won three of his four matches with Davidovich Fokina. The first two sets lasted two hours and 47 minutes, as Davidovich Fokina provided a stern

test of Djokovic's form. But the world number three broke when he trailed 6-5 in the opening set before overturning a 3-1 deficit to win a tie-break.

Davidovich Fokina missed one set point to level the match before Djokovic won another breaker before being booed by the crowd for taking a medical time-out. "That's something that I find disrespectful and I frankly don't understand that," said Djokovic, who made short work of the third set. Alcaraz thrashed Canadian 26th seed Denis Shapovalov for the loss of just seven games in the night-session match. The Spaniard powered to a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 victory, with the only slight blip when he trailed 4-1 in the second set.

He reeled off seven straight games after that wake-up call, though, to set up a fourth-round meeting with Italian 17th seed Lorenzo Musetti who dismantled British number one Cameron Norrie 6-1, 6-2, 6-4. "I knew I'd have my chances in the second set to come back a bit and that's what I did," Alcaraz said. The 20-year-old is bidding for a second straight Grand Slam title after winning the 2022 US Open and then missing this year's Australian Open through injury.

Sonogo stunner

Italian Lorenzo Sonogo battled back from two sets down to knock out Rublev and reach the last 16 for the second time. The world number 48 was two points from defeat during a fourth-set tie-break but prevailed 5-7, 0-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 after three hours and 42 minutes. Sonogo will face Russian 11th seed Karen Khachanov



PARIS: Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina plays a forehand return to Czech Republic's Linda Noskova during their women's singles match on day five of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Suzanne-Lenglen in Paris. - AFP

for a possible quarter-final meeting with Djokovic. "I played more aggressive than in the first and second sets because when he's aggressive it's tough to compete against him," he said.

Eleventh seed Khachanov ended Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis' run with an entertaining 6-4, 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5) win. Stefanos Tsitsipas continued his bid for a maiden Grand Slam title with a 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 win over former semi-finalist Diego Schwartzman. The Greek fifth seed, who

blew a two-set lead to Djokovic in the 2021 final, will next play Austrian qualifier Sebastian Ofner after making the second week for a fifth straight year. American Pegula's hopes were ended in comprehensive fashion by a 6-1, 6-3 loss to Belgian Elise Mertens. World number three Pegula has still never passed the quarter-final stage of a Grand Slam tournament. The former Australian Open semi-finalist will next face 2021 runner-up Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova. — AFP

England run riot as Ireland suffer Tongue lashing

LONDON: Ollie Pope and Ben Duckett both compiled record-breaking centuries before debutant Josh Tongue took his first wickets in Test cricket as England continued to dominate their Ashes warm-up against Ireland on Friday's second day at Lord's. Pope's 205, the fastest double hundred in a Test in England, and Duckett's 182, the quickest 150 in a Test at Lord's, were the cornerstones of a huge first innings total of 524-4 declared.

Ireland then slumped to 18-2 in their second innings before reaching 97-3 at stumps, with fast bowler Tongue, who struck twice in an over, taking all the wickets in a return of 3-27 in eight overs. Harry Tector (33 not out) and Lorcan Tucker (21 not out) held firm on a good pitch but Ireland were still 255 runs away from avoiding an innings defeat.

"A hundred at Lord's is special," Duckett told Sky Sports. "Batting with Ollie Pope was a breeze, really enjoyable to be at the other end watching him play." Worcestershire quick Tongue had gone wicketless on Thursday. But in another selection coup for coach Brendan McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes, he struck with his first ball Friday when Peter Moore was plumb lbw for 11. Five balls later, Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie - who had avoided the embarrassment of a 'pair' at the Home of Cricket - was caught behind carelessly chasing a wide ball from Tongue.

Ireland now risked being beaten inside two days in a match scheduled for four rather than the usual Test maximum of five. James McCollum, who had top-scored for Ireland with 36 on Thursday, then retired hurt on 12 after twisting his right ankle trying to pull a Tongue short ball. Tongue then had Paul Stirling out gloving down the legside to wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow. "Tongue was also exceptional," said Duckett. "He has got that X-factor that hopefully we can use tomorrow. Stokesy will have crazy fields and it will be exciting."

Earlier, Duckett and Pope ran riot against an out-classed attack lacking the experience of the Ireland bowling unit that reduced England to 85 all out in a corresponding Lord's clash four years ago. Both batsmen scored a hundred runs in a session on Friday, left-hander Duckett achieving the feat in the morning's play and Pope in the afternoon. And Duckett, by making a run-a ball 150, surpassed Australia great Don Bradman's record of 166 balls for the fastest Test 150 at Lord's, in what was also the England opener's first Test on home soil. — AFP

'Pills and angels': Djokovic seeks all cures for injuries

PARIS: Novak Djokovic admits that his push towards a record-setting 23rd Grand Slam title is at the mercy of a "long list" of injuries at the French Open with "pills and angels" amongst the cures. Djokovic, chasing a third Roland Garros title, reached the fourth round for a 14th successive year on Friday with a bruising 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 win over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. At three hours and 36 minutes it was the longest three-set match of his career.

The grueling nature of the clash meant the Serb star required a medical timeout between the second and third sets to treat a left thigh strain. The Court Philippe Chatrier crowd reacted with jeers to which the world number three responded with a thumbs-up and sarcastic round of applause. "We don't have much time to start to name the many injuries I have, the list is quite long," said 36-year-old Djokovic. "I don't want to sit here and talk about these things that are not preventing me from playing. I still kept on playing."

He added: "These are the circumstances that you have to deal with. Sometimes you need help from the physio. Sometimes you need pills. Sometimes you need help from god or angels." In January, Djokovic won a 10th Australian Open title despite playing with a three-centimeter tear in his hamstring. His build-up to the French Open was then hampered by the return



PARIS: Serbia's Novak Djokovic plays a forehand return to Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina during their men's singles match on day six of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris on June 2, 2023. —AFP

of a long-standing elbow problem. "The reality for me nowadays is that my body is responding differently than it did a few years ago," added Djokovic. "I have to adjust to this new reality."

Djokovic will face Peru's 94th-ranked Juan Pablo Varillas for a place in the quarter-finals. Varillas won his third five-setter to reach the last 16 at a Slam for

the first time by defeating Polish 13th seed Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-2. "I'll be facing one of the greatest players in history. I will try to win," said the 27-year-old who is the first Peruvian man to make the fourth round in Paris since Jamie Yzaga in 1994. "When you enter the court the chances are 50-50, it's one against one." — AFP

Australia's Lee leads LPGA Americas Open

NEW YORK: Australian Minjee Lee fired eight birdies in an eight-under par 64 on Friday to grab a share of the lead alongside Cheyenne Knight in the LPGA Mizho Americas Open at Liberty National in Jersey City, New Jersey. Lee roared out of the gate with birdies at the first three holes, and was six-under at the turn after birdies at the fifth, eighth and ninth. The world number five added birdies at the 10th and 12th for a 36-hole total of seven-under par 137.

Knight joined her with a four-under par 68. The American teed off on 10 and was even par through her first nine after two birdies and two bogeys. She, too, birdied

the first through third holes, and capped her round with her sixth birdie of the day at the ninth. The leading duo had a one-shot lead over world number three Lydia Ko of New Zealand, who carded a 69 for 138.

World number one Ko Jin-young of South Korea waited out a late weather delay to post a six-under par 66 and head a group on 139 that also included sixth-ranked Atthaya Thitikul of Thailand, No. 8 Brooke Henderson of Canada, India's Aditi Ashok and Rose Zhang — the 20-year-old American making her pro debut after dominating the amateur ranks for the past two years.

The weather was no trouble for early starter Lee, who turned things around after a one-over 73 on Thursday. "I didn't really feel like my score reflected how I played yesterday, so I just came in with a positive attitude," she said. "I knew there was probably going to be less wind this morning, so just tried to take advantage of the good conditions that were given to me."

She hit 10 of 14 fairways and 14 of 18 greens, needing 24 putts in her impressive second round. "I holed some really great putts today," Lee said after her best round since the 2022 Founders Cup — when she shot a nine-under 63 in the second round on the way to a victory. "A few long ones and a few mid-range — I don't think I had any taps, so they were all really great putts," she said. Knight said her birdie burst to start her back nine was crucial. "That really got things going and kind of kept the momentum up for me," the American said.

New Zealand's Ko had an early bogey at the third, but responded with back-to-back birdies at the sixth and seventh and another brace at the ninth and 10th. "I think I played really consistently," Ko said. "I haven't been playing that great leading up to this week. I played much better and solid on the (Ladies European Tour) event a couple weeks ago, so that was a good momentum shift." — AFP



Minjee Lee

Gymnazia Kuwait organizes annual Championship

KUWAIT: Gymnazia Kuwait School of Sports, Arts, and Science Education organized its annual Artistic and Rhythmic Gymnastics and Ballet 2023 Championship with the participation of players from Arco and Epic Academies. This is the first time Arco and Epic participated in the Gymnazia championship in artistic gymnastics. The event was held at Gymnazia Hall in the presence of the Secretary General of the Arab Gymnastics Federation, Head of the Technical Committee at the Kuwait Gymnastics Federation (KGF), Mohammad Abdelrasoul, and trainer Saleh Askar. Top places in the singles competition were won by players from the three schools, while team competitions were dominated by Gymnazia.



Sports

Inter Miami tight-lipped on Messi as Argentine coach takes charge

Sergio Ramos joins Messi in leaving PSG

MIAMI: Inter Miami's sporting director Chris Henderson declined to comment on speculation over a bid for Lionel Messi as the club unveiled their new Argentine interim coach Javier Morales on Friday. Miami, who sacked their English coach Phil Neville on Thursday, have long been linked with a bid for Messi, who is expected to leave Paris Saint-Germain when his contract runs out at the end of this season.

The club, which is co-owned by David Beckham, has pointedly never denied the various reports of a bid and when asked directly if an offer had been made for Messi, Henderson was careful with his words. "I'm not going to get into specifics about players that are not on our roster," he said. "I'm here today to talk about Javi Morales to talk about our team. You know there is a transfer window opening but we wanted we want to focus on tomorrow night (against DC United), the Open Cup quarterfinals and the next game... so it's a busy period for us and that's our focus at the moment," he said.

Former Manchester United player Neville was sacked after Miami's fourth straight loss left them stranded at the bottom of the Eastern Conference and ranked 27th of 29 teams in MLS with fans having turned against him. Morales was appointed as

interim head coach but former Argentina and Barcelona coach Tata Martino, who worked in MLS as head coach of Atlanta before coaching Mexico at last year's World Cup, has been linked with a move to the South Florida club. "I don't I don't want to talk about specific coaches," said Henderson when asked about Martino.

"There will be a process, interview process but I'm not going to get into specifics. That's internal within our club between myself and our ownership group and we will we will continue that process together as a group," he added. Although no timescale has been given to Morales, both the coach and Henderson referred to the next three games on several occasions. Morales, who began his playing career in Argentina before moving to Real Salt Lake in MLS, said he was relishing the chance to take charge of the side for the upcoming games, starting with the visit of Wayne Rooney's D.C. United on Saturday.

He also said he would love to get the job on a permanent basis. "Of course, this is the opportunity of my life, I've been waiting for this," he said. "Probably it is not in the way that I expected but this is life, it is what it is, it has come at this time, I am happy for the opportunity and I will do my best." "I've

seen this club growing so much...I love this club and will try to help (the team) to improve and get better as soon as possible".

Meanwhile, French champions Paris Saint-Germain announced on Friday that veteran former Spain defender Sergio Ramos will join Lionel Messi in leaving the club at the end of the season. Ramos, 37, arrived in French capital in 2021 after a trophy-laden spell with Real Madrid, lifting the Champions League on four times.

"We would like to express our immense gratitude to Sergio Ramos for the two years he has spent with us," PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said in a statement. "Sergio's leadership, team spirit and professionalism, combined with his experience at the highest level, make him a true football legend, and it was an honor to have him in Paris. "Everyone at the club wishes him all the best," Al-Khelaifi added. The announcement came less than 24 hours before PSG's final game of the Ligue 1 season as they host Clermont.

Ramos follows Argentina's 2022 World Cup winner Messi out of the Parc des Princes door with reports also linking Brazil's Neymar with a departure. "Tomorrow is a special day, tomorrow I will say goodbye to another stage of my life, goodbye to @psg," Ramos

said on social media. "I don't know in how many places one can feel at home, but without a doubt PSG, the fans, and Paris were one of them for me. "Thank you for two special years in which I was able to play in every tournament and give my all," he added.

The ex-Sevilla defender won Ligue 1 twice in Paris, playing 57 games and his PSG contract will end on June 30. 44 of those appearances came this campaign after a first season, with Mauricio Pochettino in charge, was plagued by injury. Ramos, who won the 2010 World Cup with Spain, and Messi arrived in the same summer eyeing a Champions League title with PSG but they were knocked out in the last 16 of both editions.

Messi has been linked with moves to Inter Miami and a club in Saudi Arabia as well as a return to Barcelona. Later on Friday, newspaper L'Equipe claimed PSG boss Christophe Galtier will also say goodbye to the club after this weekend's fixture. Despite this year's league title win, the failure in European competition is what Galtier has been judged on. Reports say PSG are interested in bringing in Real Madrid attacker Marco Asensio for next season as well as Inter Milan defender Milan Skriniar, as another summer of re-building is set to get underway. — AFP

CAF Champions League: Five facts and figures

JOHANNESBURG: CAF Champions League facts and figures ahead of the first leg of final between Al Ahly of Egypt and Wydad Casablanca of Morocco in Cairo on Sunday:

Prolific Sambou

Both finalists have played 12 matches to reach the title decider with Ahly winning eight, drawing two and losing two and Wydad winning six, drawing three and losing three. Ahly have scored 24 goals en route to their 16th Champions League final - seven more than Wydad - while both sides conceded 12. Senegalese Bouly Sambou has netted seven times for Wydad, making him the joint Champions League chart-topper this season, and Mahmoud Kahraba is the leading Ahly scorer with five.

Elusive treble

Ahly have appeared in a record 15 Champions League finals from 1982, winning 10, including back-to-back titles on three occasions. No side has won the premier African club competition three times in a row, but the Cairo Red Devils twice came close by reaching three straight finals. They were foiled in 2007 when Tunisian outfit Etoile Sahel scored a stunning 3-1 second-leg triumph in Cairo, and again last season when beaten 2-0 at Wydad in a single-match title decider.

History beckons

History beckons for Marcel Koller of Ahly or Sven Vanderbroeck of Wydad as no Swiss or Belgian coach has won the CAF Champions League.

Churchill Downs to suspend racing after 12 horse deaths

WASHINGTON: Churchill Downs, home of the famed Kentucky Derby, will suspend racing at the conclusion of this weekend's competition to examine safety measures after 12 horse deaths in the past month, officials said Friday. With operations shut down at the iconic track in Louisville, Kentucky, the remainder of its Spring Meet, scheduled to run to July 3, will be relocated to Ellis Park in Henderson, Kentucky, starting on Saturday, June 10.

Churchill Downs Incorporated said in a statement Friday that officials would conduct a "top-to-bottom review of all safety and surface protocols and integrity measures in collaboration and consultation with nationwide experts." The move comes a day after Churchill Downs announced that new safety measures would be implemented aimed at improving horse safety.

Those moves included restricting horses to four starts in a rolling eight-week span and eligibility bans for horses that do not perform well. Officials also paused a

program of track-based incentives, including trainer start bonuses and purse payout allocations to every race finisher through last place. But with the reason for the spike in equine fatalities still a mystery, Churchill Downs officials have opted to pursue further evaluation of track safety measures out of "an abundance of caution."

"Following a thorough internal review and concurrent investigations conducted by the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission and Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority, no single factor has been identified as a potential cause and no discernable pattern has been detected to link the fatalities," Churchill Downs said in a statement. "Diagnostics testing of the racetrack by experts have not raised concerns and the experts have concluded that the surface is consistent with prior measurements from Churchill Downs in past years," the company added.

"Even though the investigations and expert reports have indicated no surface issues, in an abundance of caution, and in alignment with a recommendation from HISA, CDI has elected to relocate the meet in order to conduct a top-to-bottom review of all safety and surface protocols and integrity measures in collaboration and consultation with nationwide experts." Mage won the Kentucky Derby

ner told reporters. "I probably owe it to myself and my family — if I can score runs here and continue to play back in Australia...If I can get through this (WTC final and subsequent five-Test Ashes campaign in England) and make the Pakistan series I will definitely finish up then."

Warner added he had suffered no major damage after being stuck in the practice nets on the same left elbow he fractured during Australia's tour of India earlier this year, an injury that meant he missed the final Two Tests.

He underwent treatment by a physiotherapist on Thursday but expects to be fit for Wednesday's start of the WTC final at the Oval. "It was sore, it got me right on the same point but from a different angle," said Warner. "It went numb and I had to get it strapped, but it's fine now — a little bit sore, but lucky it didn't hit me on top." Warner has been a mainstay of the Australia team since making his debut against New Zealand in 2011. But the left-handed



PRETORIA: Wydad's Moroccan midfielder Jalal Daoudi (left) tackles Sundowns' South African midfielder Sphelele Mkhulise during the CAF Champions League 2nd leg semi-final football match between South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns and Morocco's Wydad Athletic Club at the Loftus Versfeld stadium. — AFP

Former Austria manager Koller, 62, succeeded South African Pitso Mosimane last year for his first assignment in Africa and has won the Egyptian Super Cup twice and the Egyptian FA Cup. Vanderbroeck, 43, was assistant coach of 2017 Africa Cup of Nations winners Cameroon and became the fourth boss of Wydad this season when hired last month.

Bogey team

Wydad have made a habit of defeating Ahly and losing to Tunisian club Esperance in five Champions League finals appearances, three of which they won. They overcame the Egyptians 2-1 over two legs in 2017 and 2-0 in a single match last year, which was marred by controversy with Ahly demanding a neutral venue, but forced to play in Casablanca.

The Moroccans lost to Esperance in 2010, and in 2019 when they walked off in the second half of the return match after a disallowed goal could not be reviewed due to a broken VAR machine.

North dominate

The 2023 Champions League final will be the 10th in 20 years to feature two clubs from the northern region of Africa, which comprises Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Teams from the north have won 14 of the finals in that period with Ahly (seven titles), Esperance (three) and Wydad (two) leading the way. The only final among the last 20 not to feature a team from north Africa was in 2009 when TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo edged Heartland of Nigeria on away goals. — AFP



LOUISVILLE: US-Venezuelan Jockey Javier Castellano on Mage (front left) rides during the 149th Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs Racetrack in Louisville, Kentucky. — AFP

on May 6, capping a disturbing week at Churchill Downs where seven horses died within 10 days—two of them euthanized after they were injured in support races on Derby day.

The 11th and 12th fatalities occurred last Friday and Saturday, when Lost in Limbo and Kimberley Dream suffered injuries while racing and were euthanized.

Ellis Park is also owned and operated by Churchill Downs Inc, and chief executive Bill Carstanjen said moving the remainder of the meeting there would allow it to meet its "immense responsibility as the economic engine of the Thoroughbred industry in Kentucky which provides jobs and income for thousands of families every day." — AFP

Warner unveils swansong plan

LONDON: Under-pressure Australia batsman David Warner said Saturday he wanted to finish his Test career next year with a farewell match in his hometown of Sydney. Warner was speaking in Beckenham, near London, where Australia are preparing ahead of next week's World Test Championship final against India, when he unveiled his plan to bow out of Test cricket against Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground in January.

Warner, 36, added he still hoped to keep playing white-ball cricket for Australia until the 2024 T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the United States. "You've got to score runs. I've always said the (2024) World Cup would probably be my final game," War-



David Warner

opener approaches the WTC final and ensuing Ashes with one century in his past 32 innings and a mediocre record in England. During the 2-2 drawn Ashes series in England, he averaged under 10 and seven times fell victim to paceman Stuart Broad. — AFP

Messi at PSG: Flashes of genius but promise unfulfilled

PARIS: Lionel Messi arrived in France to a hero's welcome, seen as the man who would deliver the Champions League for Paris Saint-Germain. Two years on, the Argentinean is set to depart without having achieved that aim and having only produced his brilliant best in flashes. It is difficult to qualify Messi's time at PSG as a success, even if the move to the French capital helped set him up for the crowning glory of his career at last year's World Cup and did no harm to the Qatar-owned club as a sporting brand.

At his unveiling in Paris in August 2021, Messi said winning the Champions League for the fifth time in his career was his "dream" and that he was in "the ideal place" to do it. That was seductive talk for PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi, sat next to him, and for fans of the club who were desperate to see their team win European football's greatest prize for the first time.

The previous season they had lost to Manchester City in the semi-finals, having been beaten by Bayern Munich in the 2020 final. Messi looked like the final piece in the jigsaw. However, PSG have gone backwards with Messi. They were beaten in the Champions League last 16 by Real Madrid last season with Mauricio Pochettino in charge and suffered the same fate this year at Bayern's hands with Christophe Galtier on the bench.

There must be a reason why Pep Guardiola did not push to bring an ageing Messi to City, despite his former coach at Barcelona often describing him as the best player of all time. Guardiola's side are through to this season's Champions League final and playing at a level PSG could not currently hope to match, despite having Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar in the same side. Having to accommodate those three attacking superstars has weakened PSG overall as a team. Now they must try to build a more balanced side without a player who turns 36 this month and has been costing an estimated annual salary of 30 million euros (\$32.1 million) after tax.

From cheers to jeers

By early this year Messi was being jeered by some supporters at the Parc des Princes. That was before he skipped training for an unauthorized trip to Saudi Arabia to fulfill commitments as a tourism ambassador for the Gulf state. A one-week suspension followed, and there was no prospect of Messi signing a new deal in Paris after that. Messi had 32 goals in 74 games for PSG before Saturday's final match this season against Clermont. His first season in France was difficult as he struggled to settle having been uprooted from Barcelona.

He has sometimes struggled with the physical nature of the French league, but this season has been more memorable. The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner developed a fine understanding with Mbappe, appearing to accept that the younger French star was the focal point of the team. Messi has scored 16 Ligue 1 goals and set up 16 goals this season, comfortably the most assists of any player in France's top flight. He leaves having added two Ligue 1 title winner's medals to his collection.

Criticism unjustified?

After all he won at Barcelona, and his World Cup triumph with Argentina, the French league may not mean that much to Messi when he looks back on his career. As Vincent Duluc noted in France's leading sports daily L'Equipe: "PSG have not been better than they were before because of him...and he seemed to have as much desire to play in Ligue 1 as he did to go to the dentist." Nevertheless, Messi has still left his mark on those who have worked with him and come up against him. — AFP



Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine forward Lionel Messi

City complete domestic double Gundogan's double secures FA Cup for Manchester City



LONDON: Manchester City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland (center) lifts the trophy after the English FA Cup final football match between Manchester City and Manchester United at Wembley stadium on June 3, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: Manchester City are one game away from a historic treble after Ilkay Gundogan scored twice to beat Manchester United 2-1 in the FA Cup final on Saturday. Pep Guardiola's men completed a domestic double at Wembley and can become just the second side, after United in 1998/99, to win the Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League in the same season should they beat Inter Milan to become European champions for the first time on June 10.

Gundogan scored the fastest goal in FA Cup final history after just 12 seconds. United leveled on 33 minutes through Bruno Fernandes' penalty after Jack Grealish was harshly penalized for handball. But the City captain, in what could be his final game for the club on English soil, volleyed home the winner six minutes into the second-half. The first ever major final between the Manchester giants had the most explosive of starts.

Most of the 83,000 crowd were still taking their seats from the pre-match festivities when Victor Lindelof's headed clearance sat up perfectly for Gundogan to volley home a stunning strike after just 12 seconds. That appeared to set the tone for the Premier League champions. Rodri headed into the side-netting moments later before Erling Haaland failed to get a clean connection on Gundogan's enticing cross. United were barely able to get across the halfway line in the first half hour, but got the break they needed to get back into the game.

Aaron Wan-Bissaka's header back across the City box brushed the arm of Grealish and referee Paul Tierney was instructed to review the incident by VAR. Despite City's protestations, Tierney pointed to the spot and Fernandes coolly sent Stefan Ortega the wrong way. The Portuguese's celebrations

in front of the City fans were met with a flurry of objects thrown from the stands, one of which struck Lindelof. City boss Pep Guardiola was also showing his fury at the officiating as VAR did not intervene seven minutes before half-time when Kevin De Bruyne was wiped out by Fred inside the area and no penalty was awarded.

At the other end, United passed up a great chance to turn the game around before half-time when Raphael Varane fired high and wide at the back post from a corner. Having fought so hard to gain a foothold, United were made to pay for another slow start in the second-half. Gundogan was the goalscorer again as he fired home from De Bruyne's free-kick. But more questions will be asked of whether David De Gea remains the right man to be United's number one goalkeeper after the 32-year-old Spaniard's

sluggish attempt to keep it out. De Gea did at least make a big save with his legs to deny De Bruyne a third to keep United in the game on the hour mark.

Gundogan thought he had a rare FA Cup final hat-trick 20 minutes from time, but was flagged offside when he turned in the rebound after De Gea denied Haaland his 53rd goal of the season. United rallied in a tense finale as Marcus Rashford and Alejandro Garnacho flashed efforts inches off target. The ball came back off the City bar in a goalmouth scramble deep into stoppage time. However, the Red Devils could not find the goal to deny Guardiola an 11th major trophy as City boss and protect the unique legacy of Alex Ferguson's great side 24 years ago. Only Inter in Istanbul in a week's time now stand between City and matching the greatest achievement English club football has ever seen. — AFP

Barca clinch second Women's Champions League trophy

EINDHOVEN: Patri Gujjarro struck twice as Barcelona produced a stunning comeback to beat Wolfsburg 3-2 and clinch a second Women's Champions League trophy on Saturday. The Catalans were two goals down at the break but hit back strongly to triumph in Eindhoven, with Fridolina Rolfo stroking home the winner with 20 minutes remaining. Jonatan Giraldez's side have now won two of the last three finals after earning their first triumph over Chelsea in 2021, continuing to establish themselves as the main rivals to record eight-time winners Lyon.

Barcelona secured victory with two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas on the bench until the final stages, as she continues to find form after the knee injury which sidelined her for most of the season. Wolfsburg took the lead after just three minutes, when Ewa Pajor picked Lucy Bronze's pocket on the edge of the box and rammed past Sandra Panos. The England international had not played since April, taking surgery on her knee after the semi-final first-win over Chelsea, and that rust showed.

Goalkeeper Panos might have done better too, getting a hand on top scorer Pajor's effort but not doing enough to thwart her ninth strike of the tournament. Barcelona defender Irene Paredes should have equalized but sent a free header wide at the far post from Mapi Leon's sweetly-delivered corner. Caroline Graham Hansen, who scored in both legs of the semi-final win over Chelsea, also spurred a fine chance from point-blank range, failing to make solid contact on a cross.

Soon Barcelona paid the price for their profligacy, with Wolfsburg netting the second on the counter-attack. Veteran forward Alexandra Popp outmuscled Leon off the ball, which Barcelona were unhappy about, before darting into the box to head home the second from Pajor's cross. Putellas described last season's final defeat by Lyon as traumatic and Barcelona came out all guns blazing after the break to ensure it did not happen again. Gujjarro netted twice in the space of 109 seconds early in the second half to pull the game level.

First she finished well from Graham Hansen's cut-back, with the Norwegian winger making amends for her first-half miss by blazing into the box and teeing up her team-mate. Then Gujjarro headed home after Aitana Bonmati skinned Pajor and whipped in a cross from the right. Wolfsburg were rocking and Barcelona's third felt almost inevitable, arriving after defender Lynn Wilms blasted the ball at team-mate Kathrin Hendrich in her own six-yard box. — AFP



Jazeera Airways supports KBA

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low cost carrier, has been supporting the Kuwait Basketball Association (KBA) since 2021 concluding with the finals of the Basketball Cup and league matches recently. The Kuwait Club emerged winner of the Basketball Cup as well as the league matches. The Basketball Cup tournament follows a single-elimination competition format allowing the association to gather all local clubs associated with the federation. A total of 15 clubs (men and women) and over 1,500 players participated in the different matches.

Basketball is a popular game in Kuwait and youth teams are leading in Gulf and Arab tournaments held every year. By sponsoring the KBA, Jazeera aims to promote participation of local youth in sporting events for positive mental and physical development. The games also drew a large audience participation yet again engaging the youth while building healthy community relationships.

Hashem Al Gharabally, VP – Maintenance at Jazeera Airways, attended the final matches to award the winners prizes. Highlighting the purpose of Jazeera's support to the KBA Al Gharabally said, "As a Kuwait based airline, Jazeera Airways is aware of its social responsibility towards the local community.

The partnership with the KBA is a part of Jazeera's efforts to promote the participation of local youth in sports and other healthy pursuits. This not only helps with the youth's physical development but also with their overall mental health while keeping them engaged in a more productive activity."



EINDHOVEN: Barcelona's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the UEFA Women's Champions League final football match between FC Barcelona and Wolfsburg on June 3, 2023. — AFP