

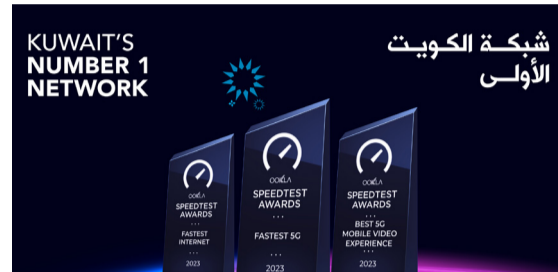
2 Kuwait calls to monitor nuclear facilities, slams Zionist threat



7 Gun salutes mark King Charles's 75th birthday



8 Zain first and only operator in Kuwait to win three major awards from Ookla Speedtest



15 Egypt captain Salah leads African stars into World Cup qualifying



'Personal' grilling fizzles out

Commerce minister denies accusations • MPs approve raising pensions to a minimum of KD 1,000

Crown Prince meets Google Cloud CEO



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday at Bayan Palace Chief Executive Officer of Google Cloud Thomas Kurian and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, HH the Crown Prince was briefed with digital transformation services that Google provides to Kuwait. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Minister Mohammad Al-Aiban categorically refuted on Tuesday allegations of committing irregularities and squandering public funds, in addition to committing administrative violations. The accusations were made by MP Hamdan Al-Azmi in a grilling that eventually ended without a motion of no-confidence, which means that the minister will continue in his post as usual.

The minister insisted that the claims made by MP Azmi are totally baseless and that the lawmaker provided no evidence for any of the allegations. Azmi had accused the minister of failing to manage a company that he headed before he became a minister, and that in a few years, the company posted losses after it had posted profits.

But Aiban quashed the accusation, saying that before he headed the company in 2012, it was posting a loss and that within a few years, the firm posted profits, contrary to the accusation. The minister was also accused of utilizing his post to escape summons by the public prosecution in a lawsuit against him, but the minister insisted that he was never summoned by the prosecution, nor was he accused.

MP Azmi had charged the minister of risking the safety of the country's main commercial port of Shuwaikh by piling huge containers full of highly inflammable diesel. Aiban also denied this accusation, saying these containers are full of diesel intended for smuggling, adding that before he became a minister, only 120 such containers

were seized, while during just six months of his time in office, as many as 470 containers were seized. Azmi had claimed the containers could explode any time.

Aiban also said the reason for the grilling was entirely personal, as Azmi had come to the minister's office and was asked to wait to be able to speak to the minister. The lawmaker didn't wait and forcibly entered the office.

Azmi had also charged the minister of failing to contain price increases, especially of food and construction items, as he did not perform his constitutional duties and allowed some merchants to exploit poor consumers. The minister again categorically rejected the charge, saying he has taken many measures to prevent any artificial increases in consumer prices.

Meanwhile, MPs unanimously approved in two rounds of voting a draft law stipulating to increase the minimum pension of retired Kuwaitis to KD 1,000 monthly. Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah said the pensions will increase gradually in accordance with the number of children to up to KD 1,615 for retirees who take care of seven or more children. The minister said the legislation will benefit some 52,000 retired citizens.

The Assembly also agreed to a government proposal to discuss and approve improving the standard of living of public and private sector employees on Dec 19. The finance minister said the government will prepare the necessary legislation to increase the pay of public and private sector employees, which will be ready for debate and approval on Dec 19. The Assembly will also discuss interest-free loans for retired citizens in that session.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Court dismisses Iraqi speaker

BAGHDAD: Iraq's top court said on Tuesday it was dismissing powerful Parliament Speaker Mohamed Al-Halbussi, an influential politician, after a lawmaker's complaint over the alleged "falsification" of a document. "The Federal Supreme Court ends the mandate of the President of Parliament" Halbussi, in office since 2018, the court said in a short online statement. It added that it had also ended the mandate of lawmaker Laith Al-Duleimi. — AFP

Air pollution spikes in Tehran

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities urged young schoolchildren and many civil servants in Tehran to stay at home Wednesday due to a spike in air pollution levels. "One third of the employees of all executive bodies will work remotely on Wednesday due to the accumulation of pollutants," the official IRNA news agency reported, citing a government committee tasked with monitoring pollution. It also said that preschool and elementary school classes in Tehran "will be held virtually on Wednesday due to worsening air pollution levels". — AFP

YouTube targets AI imposters

SAN FRANCISCO: YouTube on Tuesday said it will soon allow users to request that artificial intelligence-created imposters be removed from the platform, and will require labels on videos featuring realistic-looking "synthetic" content. New rules aimed at AI-generated video material will go into force in the coming months as fears mount over the technology being abused to promote scams and misinformation. In evaluating removal requests, the Alphabet-owned site will consider whether videos are parodies and whether the real people depicted can be identified. — AFP

Gaza hospital buries patients in mass grave

GAZA: Gaza's main hospital has been forced to bury scores of dead patients in a mass grave, its director said Tuesday, while thousands of Palestinians were trapped inside by fierce combat. Zionist forces were at the gates of the sprawling Al-Shifa hospital they say sits atop an underground Hamas command base, but the militants deny the charge while doctors say patients and people seeking shelter were stranded in horrific conditions.

"There are bodies littered in the hospital complex and there is no longer electricity at the morgues," said Al-Shifa hospital director Mohammad Abu Salmiya, adding that 179 bodies had been interred so far. "We were forced to bury them in a mass grave," he said, adding that seven babies and 29 intensive care patients were among those who had died after fuel for the hospital's generator ran out.

A witness said the stench of decomposing bodies was everywhere in the Gaza City facility as bombardment and gunfire echoed constantly in the area. The United Nations estimates that at least 2,300 people — patients, staff and displaced civilians — are inside and may be unable to escape because

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Physicians and other men pray over some of the bodies of victims who were killed in Zionist bombardment before their burial outside the morgue at Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis on Nov 14, 2023. — AFP

Surge in killing of Palestinians in West Bank

RAMALLAH: With scores of Palestinians killed across the occupied West Bank in recent weeks, rights groups have accused the Zionist entity of giving soldiers free rein to shoot on site while war rages in Gaza. In just over five weeks since the war between the Zionist entity and Hamas erupted on Oct 7, at least 190 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, according to the Palestinian Authority's health ministry. The figure is almost as high as the ministry's toll of 208 dead for the first nine months of the year up to the start of the war.

The surge in violence comes as raids

by Zionist forces on Palestinian communities have multiplied in the West Bank, which has been occupied by the Zionist entity since the 1967 Arab-Zionist war. Iyad Haddad, from the anti-occupation Zionist organization B'Tselem, said "the (Zionist) army and settlers now have a free hand to fire on Palestinians in the West Bank" in an unprecedented way.

Since Monday alone, the health ministry said nine Palestinians have been killed by Zionist forces. The first was a 66-year-old taxi driver shot dead in Hebron, in the southern West Bank. "A soldier heard shots and responded" the Zionist army said, while witnesses said the man killed was not involved in any violence. Seven Palestinians were subsequently killed during a Zionist raid in Tulkarem, in the north, while a ninth was shot dead near Hebron on Tuesday morning.

Continued on Page 6



HEBRON: Mourners carry the body of Issa Al-Qadi, a 66-year-old Palestinian man shot dead while driving his taxi by Zionist forces, during his funeral on Nov 13, 2023. — AFP



Local

Kuwait: Monitoring nuke facilities in Mideast is a global obligation

Zionist entity minister slammed for Gaza nuclear remarks



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah with the visiting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Google Cloud Thomas Kurian (left). — KUNA

Premier receives visiting Google Cloud CEO

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

received on Tuesday the visiting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Google Cloud Thomas Kurian and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting was attended by Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Public Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Mishal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Head of the Office of His Highness the Prime Minister Hamad Al-Amer and Assistant Director General of Investment Operations at KDIPA Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. — KUNA

NEW YORK/VIENNA: The lack of monitoring on some nuclear facilities in the Middle East is unacceptable and supervising facilities is a global obligation to create a region free of nuclear weapons, said a top Kuwait diplomat.

Delivering his speech late on Monday to the fourth session of the conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, Kuwait Permanent Representative to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai said that it was unacceptable that some nuclear facilities in the region went without monitoring.

He affirmed to the conference, which would continue until November 17 that lack of monitoring caused mistrust and threatens the security of the Middle East region and the world. Establishing a Middle East region free of Weapons of Mass Destruction is not an easy task, acknowledged Al-Bannai, who stressed that it was the collective responsibility of the 191 countries signatories to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its review conference of 1995.

The Kuwaiti diplomat touched on the lack of commitment on part of the Zionist entity's regime in the region, which did not join the NPT, expressing condemnation of the recent comment by a Zionist entity minister who suggested the use of nuclear weapons in the heinous assault on the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Al-Bannai reflected on Kuwait's welcoming of any efforts for disarmament and preventing the selling of nuclear weapons, expressing stern commitment in this regard. He expressed disappointment for the failure of the conferences to review the NPT in 2015 and 2020, calling for more efforts to rid the world from nuclear arms.

Kuwait on Tuesday slammed recent remarks by a Zionist entity minister over the potential launch of nuclear attacks against the Gaza Strip. Citing a global treaty banning nuclear weapons tests, known as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN and international organizations Talal Al-Fassam told the treaty's Preparatory Commission that his country backs the "full implementation" of the treaty that was formed in 1996. Commending the efforts of CTBTO, Executive Secretary Robert Floyd urged countries that have yet to commit to the CTBTO to join the list of signatories in a bid to give the accord more cre-



NEW YORK: Kuwait Permanent Representative to the United Nations Headquarters in New York Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai addresses the UN meeting. — KUNA



VIENNA: Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN Talal Al-Fassam addresses the UN treaty's Preparatory Commission on Tuesday. — KUNA

denance, which the Kuwaiti diplomat said was essential in eliminating the use of nuclear weapons.

In response to an Zionist entity minister's comments over the possibility of staging nuclear attacks against the Gaza Strip, he slammed such words as "blatant violations" of international laws and principles, saying it "leaves no doubt" over Zionist entity's "malicious tendencies" towards the Palestinians. He went on to deplore in equal measure the "massacres" committed by Zionist forces against the Palestinians, in addition to the targeting of healthcare and educational facilities, calling for an immediate ceasefire and subsequent delivery of aid for the Palestinians. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Tuesday with Head of the UN-Habitat GCC Office Dr Aameera Alhassan. The two officials discussed aspects of cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the UN-Habitat GCC Office in the fields of human settlements and sustainable development. — KUNA

When can changing schools be the best decision?

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The decision to switch schools is a complex one that many parents face at some point. Whether prompted by a relocation, financial considerations or dissatisfaction with their current school, the idea of switching schools can be both exciting and overwhelming. On one hand, switching can open doors to new educational experiences, access to additional resources and opportunities for a child's growth. On the other hand, it may present social and emotional challenges while potentially impacting academic progress.

However, based on people Kuwait Times interviewed for this report, age as well as having someone familiar already attending the same school are two essential factors that parents must consider before transferring their children. To delve deeper into the topic of school switching, Kuwait Times spoke with a high school teacher, a psychiatric specialist and a young individual who has experienced multiple school transitions as a student.

Lama, a young woman who switched between four different schools as a student, shared her experience with Kuwait Times. "As a student, I have experienced switching schools multiple times. The first transition was during 5th grade, which proved to be the most challenging, because making friends is uneasy at this age, as we are still young and not yet socially skilled. Despite my efforts, I could not fit in at the new school. I often found myself missing my friends from my previous school, but due to my lack of maturity at that time, I did not know how to maintain my friendship. I lost touch with my old friends and failed to make new ones," she said.

According to Lama, age as well as having someone familiar already attending the same school plays a significant role in the child's experience when switching schools. "I highly advise parents to ensure that their child has someone they know at the new school, especially if the child is under 15, because after I had two emotionally unsatisfying years and declining academic performance, I moved to another school, where I fortunately had a cousin studying there. This helped me have a positive experience. I was able to excel academically due to my higher spirits and newfound confidence," she recalled.

On her part, Ghadeer Ghafour, an English



Ghadeer Ghafour



Zahra'a Abdulsalam

teacher at a public school, spoke to Kuwait Times about the bright side of switching schools. "When moving to a new school, many students share their own ideas and attitude in a different way. This is because when students move to a new school, they bring their own ideas to a whole different community, where things are done quite differently than the previous place. Hence, it is a great way for students to learn new skills. Also, when students move to a new school, they learn how to adapt to a new surrounding, such as having a new routine. Students will make new friends, as having a strong bond of friendship is very crucial, especially at this age, which allows them to build their self-esteem and social skills," she said.

Ghafour further clarified that each school is different than the other, and this is because of the cultural standards of each. Thus, every student faces their own strength and weakness when transferring to a new school. She then confronted the dark side of switching schools. "There are some drawbacks and challenges that students may face when transferring to a new school. Students might experience bullying and difficulty adapting to new surroundings. When it comes to studying, students will have difficulty in handling the academic curriculum, therefore their grades will not be that good at the beginning, which may affect their self confidence in their performance at school," she added.

This was also highlighted by Zahra'a Abdulsalam, psychiatric specialist, who said: "Whether moving students from one grade to another or from one school to another, switching can have a negative impact on the student. This is because it affects their academic performance due to the difference in grade level, school environment and teachers. Besides, the difference in friends also plays a significant role in affecting the student psychologically. In my opinion, it is preferable for the student to stay in the same school to avoid these psychological and academic issues, unless there is a compelling need for them to transfer."

DDI organizes annual World Diabetes Day

KUWAIT: For the 16th consecutive year, Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), held its annual informative event to commemorate World Diabetes Day on Nov 14, 2023. This year's event was held at Al-Hamra Tower and Shopping Center. The event allowed visitors to consult with diabetes specialists and dietitians, as well as gather medical information from booths that explained various facts of diabetes and promoted healthy lifestyle modification.

In addition, DDI had two booths, one assigned for clinical research and the other for scientific research to showcase the various research and studies being carried out by the Institute and encourage the public who are eligible to get involved in DDI's research and studies and benefit from it.

NBK runs successful evacuation drill at Cinema Salmiya branch

KUWAIT: As part of the measures taken to ensure the safety and security of its employees, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) successfully ran an evacuation drill at Cinema Salmiya branch. The drill aimed to test the readiness of the security and safety teams in dealing with emergency situations.

The evacuation drill was conducted under the supervision of NBK Security Department, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and Medical Emergency Department of the Ministry of Health. Commenting on this, Khalid Al-Matrouk, Chief Security Officer and Head of Anti-Financial Crime-Kuwait at National Bank of Kuwait said: "These drills are crucial to qualify and prepare employees for immediate response in dealing with crises and risks, in order to ensure the safety of both employees and customers."



KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute officials during the annual event to commemorate World Diabetes Day on Nov 14, 2023.

Many of the booths at the event offered various activities and services, such as educating visitors on proper dietary habits, pharmacotherapy counseling, physical activities amongst others. In addition, some of the booths provided blood glucose and blood pressure testing, as well as vital signs assessment.

"Holding such events and activities stems from DDI's mission statement, where health promotion and awareness are a priority for the Institute. Since its establishment in 2006, the Insti-

tute organizes and takes part in many events and campaigns to spotlight on diabetes and its related conditions. This is in accordance with the Institute's belief that, "Prevention is better than cure," Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, Director-General of DDI said.

The primary goal of the event was to promote awareness about diabetes, work towards achieving long-term positive health outcomes for diabetes management and empowering those affected by diabetes to proactively improve their quality of life.

"From the evacuation drill, we aim to test the readiness of the bank's systems and facilities and employees' knowledge of how to deal with emergencies, in addition to raising employees' exposure in this regard," he added. "We place the safety and security of our employees and customers as a top priority and a key consideration in designing all business strategies. Therefore, we never deviate from adhering to the highest international standards related to safety and security measures," he emphasized. "During the evacuation, the employees showed adherence with the guidelines and instructions, followed the plans, and used the emergency exits under the supervision of the Security Department staff," he noted.

Al-Matrouk extended thanks to the government agencies that did not hesitate to provide assistance in running this evacuation drill, especially Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Health's Medical Emergency Department. National Bank of Kuwait frequently organizes training courses and educational seminars for its employees on safety and security measures, in line with its firm commitment to following the highest internationally recognized safety standards.



Local

Embassy hosts Korean cooking show to bridge food and cultures

South Korean Ambassador seeks to bolster food security in Kuwait



Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Byung-ha Chung and chef Junhyuck Lee in a group photo with the participants at the cook show. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait hosted a Korean cooking class on Monday, showcasing a splendid fusion of cultural exchange and culinary expertise. The event, organized in collaboration with the Han-Ku Cultural Diwaniya, was a vibrant celebration of Korean cuisine.

South Korean Ambassador Chung Byung-ha underscored the event's significance as a cultural bridge, emphasizing the importance of fostering cross-cultural connections. He highlighted the substantial impact of Korean dramas on global cultural trends, particularly in the culinary realm. Chung noted the growing phenomenon of heightened interest and curiosity about Korean cuisine, with viewers eager to explore and savor these culinary delights.

"The number of Korean restaurants in Kuwait is on the rise, with two new establishments and a Korean supermarket for food and cosmetics recently

opening. The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the spread of Korean culture, with increased demand due to watching Korean series during the lockdown," he added.

Discussing the importance of food diplomacy, Chung said: "Imports of Korean food are increasing, and we are currently exploring cooperation on smart farms to enhance food security in Kuwait. We have established smart farms in Abdali, employing high technology and special facilities to plant vegetables under harsh weather conditions. Expansion into more stable food production areas is on the horizon."

Regarding the bilateral relationship between Korea and Kuwait, he mentioned a significant step forward demonstrated by a meeting between the South Korean Prime Minister and HH the Crown Prince. During their discussions, both leaders addressed various mutual interests and agreed on the necessity to foster comprehensive collaboration,

extending it to political and cultural sectors.

The cooking class was led by chef Junhyuck Lee from a Korean restaurant, whose expertise in Korean culinary arts illuminated the event. Participants engaged in hands-on cooking sessions, mastering the preparation of iconic dishes such as tteokbokki (spicy rice cakes), bulgogi (marinated beef) and kimchi jeon (kimchi pancake), encapsulating the essence of Korean cuisine on the daily dining table.

This cooking class marked a significant moment in the ongoing cultural exchange between Kuwait and



Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Byung-ha Chung



Chef Junhyuck Lee teaches participants how to cook Korean food.

Korea. It transcended a mere cooking lesson, evolving into a celebration of friendship, culinary art and mutual respect between the two cultures.

Overcoming the fear of public speaking

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Standing silently in a room filled with people, where all eyes are only directed toward you, you start wondering if any of them can tell whether you are nervous or not. The truth is, no one can tell, until the moment you set your first words free. You start feeling the anxiety echoing in every part of your body — in your squeaking voice, trembling hands and fluttering stomach. That's when you realize that you cannot hide it anymore.

This common scenario is experienced by people who suffer from fear of public speaking, according to Anwar Al-Shaikh, a personal coach and founder of a public speaking club. "Humans are naturally born with self-confidence," she said, adding this mostly appears in how a baby clearly communicates its needs and wants without prejudice or hesitation. It confidently expresses its urge to sleep, asks for its right to play, and even cries for milk. But it's the external environment that affects this natural trait negatively.

Shaikh said perfectionist parents initiate this negative impact by teaching their children that failing or making mistakes is unforgivable. As the baby grows up and faces different challenges in life, its fear of failure grows too. Eventually, this confident, outspoken and fully self-expressed child starts losing their innate spark and begins to doubt or second-guess themselves.

Fear of failure, as Shaikh noted, is one of the most prominent factors behind the fear of public speaking. "It makes you end up being anxious about appearing anxious," she explained. To overcome this issue, she suggested one should accept that failure is an essential part of the process, as experience can only be developed through trial and error. "This experience will never come from your comfort zone; it can only be acquired through putting yourself in challenging and unusual situations," she said.

Shaikh had always been a shy person — she used to fear the simplest forms of human interactions, such as calling the deliveryman or visiting her relatives. But a major development in her personality occurred after frequent engagement in volunteering activities for non-profit organiza-

tions and joining a public speaking club, which she advises people to do as well. Most importantly, confidence alone is not enough without proper practice. Practicing your presentation or public speech is important for captivating the audience's attention, "especially with the current short attention spans of people". She said it's like choosing to add some colors to a mundane black and white picture.

Shaikh suggested practicing some behaviors to master this skill during any public speech. For instance, using your body language to convey confidence, sharing eye contact evenly with the public, maintaining a stable body posture by avoiding rocking back and forth while speaking, and changing your tone of voice differently according to the parts of your speech.

She added that to make a speech as entertaining as possible, one can also rely in their speech on a storytelling approach to narrate their ideas, by beginning the speech with the most interesting part of the story, highlighting a point that everyone can relate to. Maintaining structure for her is an added value. "It's preferable if you divide your presentation into an introduction, body and conclusion, even if it's just a two-minute speech." Moreover, she suggested that in order to not miss any important piece of information, it's fine to sneak a glance at a paper in your hands that highlights the key points that you want to deliver.

Shaikh believes blending of all these actions together is the best way to give the audience something worth remembering after leaving the stage and walking away. "It will help the message reach people deeply and leave a longer impact on them," she stressed. Shaikh asserted that public speaking skills are equally important for all fields of work or study. Teachers, coaches, entrepreneurs, bank clerks and front-desk jobs all need it in their professional lives. It's essential in everyone's personal daily life as well. "As a mother of two, I notice that when I speak to my children in monotone, they lose interest in what I am saying," she said.

"Public speaking is more like an art that everyone can develop. Lacking it is a problem, so it all starts with the realization that you have this problem, followed by your tendency to resolve it. A huge shift in your personality will then possibly happen," Shaikh concluded.



Anwar Al-Shaikh, personal coach and founder of a public speaking club.



KUWAIT: The inauguration of Essa Dashti's exhibition at Kuwait National Library under the patronage of Sheikha Hanaa Bader Al-Sabah and the attendance of British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis. — KUNA

Researcher displays rare pictures of King Charles III's visit to Kuwait

KUWAIT: Essa Dashti, a researcher in Kuwaiti-British relations and holder of the British Empire Medal (BEM), on Tuesday displayed rare pictures of King Charles III and Queen Camilla's visit to Kuwait back in 2007. This came at the inauguration of his personal exhibition in Kuwait National Library under the patronage of Sheikha Hanaa Bader Al-Sabah and the attendance of British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis.

Speaking to KUNA, Dashti said that he held the exhibition on the occasion of King Charles III's birthday, on November 14, noting that most of the exhibition's 40 photos are displayed for the first time. He added that the images include meetings and visits to Grand Mosque in Kuwait, Kuwait Association for the Care of Children Hospital in Kuwait, Sadu House and dinner banquet held in their honor by Sheikha Sherefa Al-Jassem.

The exhibition also displays historical moments between King Charles III and Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and former Parliament speaker Jassem Al-Kharafi, Dashti added. The photos highlight the depth and strength of Kuwaiti-British relations, Dashti noted, stressing that these relations are of great importance in enhancing cooperation and cultural and economic exchange between the two countries. Dashti holds the British Empire Medal (BEM) granted to him by Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his efforts in documenting developing, strengthening and supporting relations between the two countries. — KUNA



King Charles III and Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Kuwaiti researcher Essa Dashti displays rare pictures of King Charles III and Queen Camilla's visit to Kuwait back in 2007.

News in Brief

43 held in swoop on vice dens

KUWAIT: The interior ministry announced that 43 people were arrested in 15 different cases on charges of engaging in immoral activities and running vice dens in Mahboula, Hawally, Salmiya and Hadiya. The ministry continues monitoring all areas in the country in order to check any negative phenomena that could damage the social order and moral principles. The General Directorate of Criminal Investigation, represented by the Department of Public Morals Protection, was able to arrest 36 people on charges of acts contrary to public morals (practicing vice) in various governorates of the country. Two people were arrested on charges of seizing public money. They were referred to the competent authorities to take all necessary legal measures against them.

Mock evacuation drill

KUWAIT: The General Directorate of Civil Defense conducted a mock evacuation exercise at the Avenues Mall on Monday with the participation of a number of competent security sectors at the Ministry of Interior (Public Security Affairs Sector, General Directorate of Traffic, General Directorate of Rescue Police, General Directorate of Special Security Forces) and the Kuwait Fire Force. The exercise aims to identify the efficiency and readiness of the participating authorities as well as to train and qualify the employees of major complexes on how to deal with emergency cases using self-protection means and civil defense measures.

WASD honors Kuwait envoy

LONDON: The World Association for Sustainable Development (WASD) has honored Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Bader Al-Awadhi for his pioneering contribution to achieving and supporting sustainable development in various parts of the world. This came during the 20th annual World Association for Sustainable Development conference on Monday, held over two days in London with the participation of international researchers, policy makers, academics and experts. WASD chose Al-Awadhi among the sustainability pioneers for his support of WASD programs during 2023 and his efforts in following the UN's sustainable development agenda, in addition to various development projects around the world. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A pigeon is precariously perched on a high-power electric line in downtown Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MoH keen on holding specialized medical conferences: Al-Awadhi

45th annual conference on 'Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery' kicks off in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and international delegates during the 45th annual Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery Conference. --KUNA

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi stressed on Tuesday the ministry's keenness to organize specialized medical conferences to enhance cooperation and share experiences among specialists to improve methods of prevention and treatment of diseases of all kinds. This will also help provide the best healthcare to all citizens and residents, he said. Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Supportive Medical Services Affairs at the Ministry Dr Abdullah Al-Faras was delivering a speech on Tuesday on

behalf of the health minister at the opening ceremony of the 45th annual Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery Conference. The conference was organized by the ministry in which an elite group of specialized doctors from around the world participated.

Al-Faras said that such conferences enhance maximum benefit in the scientific and medical fields in addition to building cooperation to discuss matters of common interest which focuses on developing medical performance and medical care provided to people. He explained that the conference discusses microscopic ear operations, cochlear implants, diagnosis of diseases and surgeries of snoring and sleep apnea.

The conference also discussed some complex medical cases in addition to conducting operations on the sidelines of the conference and shared experiences with participating and visiting international talents. He added that the ministry is interested in the topics that were discussed at the conference and it is following up the recommendations made by the participants and researchers in order to work on transferring them on the ground until they come into effect.

Director of the Zain Center and the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center Dr Mutlaq Al-Saihan said in a similar speech that the participation of a group of the most prominent pioneers, experts and specialists from all over the world in the conference, reflects the importance of the conference and adds value to the activities of the conference. Al-Saihan, who also holds the position of chairman of the Cochlear Implant Committee and chairman of the Ear, Nose and Throat



Dr Mutlaq Al-Saihan



Dr Abdullah Al-Faras

Council, added that Kuwait continues to be a pioneer in hosting scientific and medical conferences as part of its continuous endeavor to develop its health system to provide advanced medical services. Kuwait's wise leadership believes that healthcare is an integral part of the comprehensive system for building a modern and advanced state, he said. He stated that the conference will also discuss the latest findings in delicate ear surgeries, cochlear implants, hearing devices, nasal and pharyngeal surgeries, surgeries to clear suffocation during sleep and their treatments, and reconstructive and cosmetic head and neck surgeries in order to keep up with the advanced developments in medical sciences and generate community awareness and knowledge dissemination.

He stated that the conference's activities include lectures, live performances and training workshops for doctors, trainees, audiology specialists accredited with the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties. — KUNA



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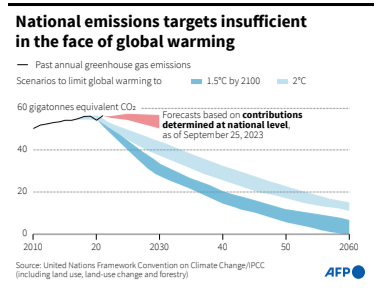
KUWAIT: The 19th Kuwaiti humanitarian relief plane is ready to take off at the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base on Tuesday. — KUNA

19th Kuwaiti relief plane heads to Egypt

KUWAIT: The 19th Kuwaiti humanitarian relief plane took off from Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base to Al-Arish International Airport in Egypt on Tuesday, carrying 40 tons of food and medical supplies to Gaza Strip. In a statement to KUNA, head of the public relations and media department at Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Khaled Al-Zaid said that Kuwait started sending emergency humanitarian aid and ambulances

to Gaza since the beginning of the Zionist entity's aggression on Gaza Strip. This humanitarian aid is part of Kuwait's continuous support to the Palestinian cause under direct orders from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He affirmed the need to deliver aid to Gaza Strip, as 2.3 million people are suffering from lack of medical supplies, food, water and fuel. A number of Gaza hospitals went out of service after running out of fuel and electricity, he added. KRCS is accepting donation to Gaza on its website, said Al-Zaid, noting that the current situation in the Strip requires urgent aid from humanitarian organizations. — KUNA



World not 'getting a grip' on climate change: UN

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'Woman with the flower tattoo' identified 31 years after murder

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RAFAH: A boy stands in the rain at a school run by the UNRWA in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 14, 2023. — AFP photos

Rainfall compounds misery in Gaza

Displaced Palestinians fear for children as rain drenches their meager belongings

RAFAH: At a Gaza camp for those forced to leave their homes by the Zionist war on Gaza, Ayman al-Jueidi tried to shift the pooling rainwater weighing down his makeshift shelter. As he went along, the Palestinian stopped to catch a few drops in his mouth and splash a little on himself.

Like many others caught in the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza, he had not showered for days. The war has displaced almost 1.6 million people, according to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA, leaving hundreds of thousands living in cramped shelters with little food and insufficient water.

But on Tuesday those in the south woke up to yet another scourge: rain soaking their meager belongings and threatening to bring waterborne diseases as it gathers in stagnating puddles. "We are completely soaked, all of our clothes are soaked, our mattresses, our blankets too, even a dog could not live like this," said Jueidi, who has set himself up in the courtyard of a UN school in Rafah at the southern extremity of the Gaza Strip. Those with access to waterproof sheeting are shoring up their makeshift homes. Others are using plastic bags to strengthen their defenses against the rain.

Soaked clothes, sick children

"My children's clothes are drenched and I have nothing for them to change into, they will get sick," said Jueidi, wearing only a thin t-shirt as the weather

turned chilly. "Where will we sleep? We haven't eaten anything for three days." UNRWA gives the family "cans of food and biscuits, but our children are never full, we need bread", he said.

"We had no water, and then suddenly we were drowned," said Souha Hassan, who has lived under a tent since the first day of the war on Oct 7. The UN has said each of its school shelters in the south of Gaza is now packed with some 6,000 displaced people. UN officials said 125 people were sharing each toilet in the beleaguered south, with more than 700 sharing each shower.

Fuel crisis

The UN has warned of an impending cholera crisis stemming from a lack of fuel, which it has said will bring its aid operations to a halt by Wednesday. Potable water can no longer be trucked in, sewage pumps cannot be fueled, and hospitals relying on generators are starting to shut down.

"In the next 48 hours, it just comes to a halt, there's nothing that we can do," said UNRWA's Gaza chief Thomas White. "That's the reality of an aid operation that's being strangled of resources to serve people in need." Hassan feared the worst is yet to come. "We don't have any winter clothes because we left our homes without anything and now all our things are soaked," she said.

"And this is only the beginning. What will happen in the winter, when the rain will be stronger still? Our



KHAN YUNIS: A woman stands under a plastic sheet spread to protect from rain in the area outside tents pitched by Palestinians taking shelter from Zionist bombardment around Nasser Hospital.

children are already weak because they don't eat enough, it will be terrible." Around her, despite the risks, some people tried to make use of the rain. One man collected water pouring out of gutters. Another

sought to block a trickle of water falling on a woman baking bread over a small wood fire. In the Gaza Strip, completely besieged by the Zionist entity, bags of flour are now selling for some \$200. — AFP

Disinformation war demonizes Palestinians, stokes online abuse

JERUSALEM: Months after he was discharged from hospital, his right leg amputated, Mohammed Zendiq saw his image swirling online in a vicious disinformation campaign downplaying the horrors of the Zionist attack on Gaza. The 16-year-old is one of many civilians caught in a haze of disinformation since Hamas infiltrated the militarized border on Oct 7, triggering a Zionist bombardment and invasion of Gaza.

The information war running in parallel with the deadly conflict on the ground has seen conspiracy theorists accuse Palestinians of being "crisis actors" — feigning injuries and deaths to garner sympathy and demonize the

other side. An old video that shows Zendiq wounded in a hospital bed was falsely identified in multiple social media posts as depicting a Palestinian blogger who has chronicled the Zionist bombardment of Gaza.

The posts peddled the false narrative that the blogger had staged the injuries one day while walking around seemingly unharmed soon after. "Palestinian blogger 'miraculously' healed in one day from 'Zionist bombing,'" a Zionist influencer said in one post viewed millions of times on X, formerly Twitter. "Yesterday, he was 'hospitalized,' today, he is ... walking like nothing happened."

But the posts conflated images of separate people, AFP fact-checkers determined, using reverse image and keyword searches. One was Zendiq, who lost his leg in July during a Zionist raid in the occupied West Bank, according to his family. The other was an unrelated video blogger in Gaza named Saleh Aljafarawi. Highlighting the real-world ramifications of wartime disinformation, the viral posts sparked an avalanche of online abuse targeting Zendiq, including comments asking why doctors did not cut off the

teenager's second leg or kill him. "I fear for my son's life," Zendiq's father Yousef Issam Fandqah, 50, told AFP. "He could get killed because of this lie."

Falsely accusing people of faking their suffering has become "one of the most predictable" disinformation tactics in a crisis scenario, said Mike Caulfield, who researches online falsehoods at the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public. Similar "crisis actor" claims have followed US mass shootings and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But such narratives have exploded with the Zionist war on Gaza, in part because of a scaling back of content moderation at platforms such as X, experts told AFP.

Some of the most viral posts targeting war-afflicted Gazans have used the term "Pallywood", a derogatory label blending "Palestine" with "Hollywood." "This trend initially emerged in the early days of the war, with a video revealing the behind-the-scenes of a film set and alleging it portrayed Palestinians fabricating injuries," Yotam Frost, from the Zionist disinformation watchdog FakeReporter, told AFP. As the war progressed, Zionists were also caught

up in the false narratives, Frost added.

AFP fact-checkers have debunked multiple "crisis actor" claims, which often misrepresent visuals from entirely different years and places. Official Zionist accounts on X, including embassies, falsely charged that a video of a dead Palestinian child in fact showed nothing more than a doll wrapped in cloth.

Other accounts mislabeled footage of a 2013 protest in Egypt and a funeral preparation course in Malaysia as Palestinians acting out their own deaths. A Thai mother's Facebook pictures of her young son in a Halloween costume ricocheted across social media alongside false claims that they showed a Palestinian "actor".

"It's a set of recipes — Find a couple pictures of people that look similar or sift through behind-the-scenes video of films and find something you can pretend is faking a war," Caulfield said. "Crisis actor narratives often take the worst moment of a parent or partner's life — the loss of a loved one — and make a circus of it. It's cruel and exploitative." — AFP

Hamas denies Zionist 'evidence' of hostages at hospital

JERUSALEM: Hamas on Tuesday denounced Zionist army claims that a discarded baby bottle, makeshift toilet, and bullet-scarred motorbike were evidence the militants held hostages inside a Gaza hospital. On Monday evening, army spokesman Daniel Hagari said troops "found signs that indicate that Hamas held hostages" in the basement of Al-Rantisi children's hospital in Gaza City.

AFP was not able to independently confirm the allegation, and the Hamas health ministry said the objects merely showed the basement was used by displaced residents fleeing fighting. In a statement, the ministry said

the video was "poor staging" with "not a single piece of evidence" backing the Zionist army claims. "This basement appeared in the original blueprints of the hospital as a storage area and displaced people found refuge there," it added.

Some 240 people were taken hostage by Hamas fighters who surged through the heavily militarized Gaza border on Oct 7. Around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed, according to Zionist officials. Hagari did not say how many hostages the army believes were held at the hospital in the north of the besieged Gaza Strip.

However in a video recorded on site, he walked through various scenes alleging they "indicate that Hamas held hostages here". Hagari said a bullet-marked motorbike used to transport hostages was in the basement, alongside a chair with rope near the legs and discarded women's clothing. An improvised toilet was also cited as evidence hostages were held downstairs.

"You don't need to build something improvisedly in a hospital, in the basement, unless you want to hold some-

one in the basement and you don't want anyone to see him," Hagari said. "I also want you to look at this room," he said. "People are putting curtains with nothing behind, just wall. No reason to put here a curtain unless you want to film hostages."

Since war broke out, the grounds of many Gaza hospitals have been filled with thousands of displaced civilians desperate for protection from the Zionist near-relentless bombardment. Hagari said a list posted on the wall was a rota for Hamas militants guarding the hostages. However, when the camera zooms in, it shows a tally of dates since October 7, but with no names written.

A weapons cache — which Hagari described as "gear for a major fight" — was also found at the hospital, according to the Zionist army. Meanwhile on Tuesday, the army confirmed the death of woman soldier Noa Marciano, who they said had been "abducted by a terror organization". Hamas earlier said she had been killed in Zionist bombardment but the army did not say how she died. — AFP



GENEVA: Zionist Foreign Minister Eli Cohen shows an image of a Zionist soldier posing next to weapons cache, which was allegedly found at the Rantisi hospital in Gaza, according to the Zionist army. — AFP

International

'Woman with the flower tattoo' identified 31 years after murder

Interpol's 'Identify Me' web page seeks public's help in solving cold cases

LYON: A woman found murdered 31 years ago in a river in Belgium has been identified over three decades later thanks to her flower tattoo and an international appeal, Interpol said on Tuesday. The Lyon-based global police organization said she was Rita Roberts from Cardiff in Wales and British.

Roberts, found lying against a grate in the river Het Groot Schijn in Antwerp on June 3, 1992, had a tattoo of a black flower with green leaves and the inscription "RNick" on her right forearm. She was 31. "A family member in the United Kingdom recognized the tattoo on the news and notified Interpol and Belgian authorities," Interpol said in a statement.

The breakthrough followed an international appeal on Interpol's Identify Me web page where police share previously confidential information — so called Black Notices — about unsolved cases hoping for input from the public. The page, launched in May this year, seeks to identify 22 women found dead in recent decades in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, Interpol said. Rita Roberts, dubbed "the woman with the flower tattoo" is the first case of the 22 victims to have been identified. Information volunteered had also brought progress in other cold cases.

Rita Roberts has been "formally identified" by her family who travelled to Belgium to meet investigators. "Whilst the news has been difficult to process, we are incredibly grateful to have uncovered what happened to Rita," the family was quoted in the statement as saying.

'A beautiful person'

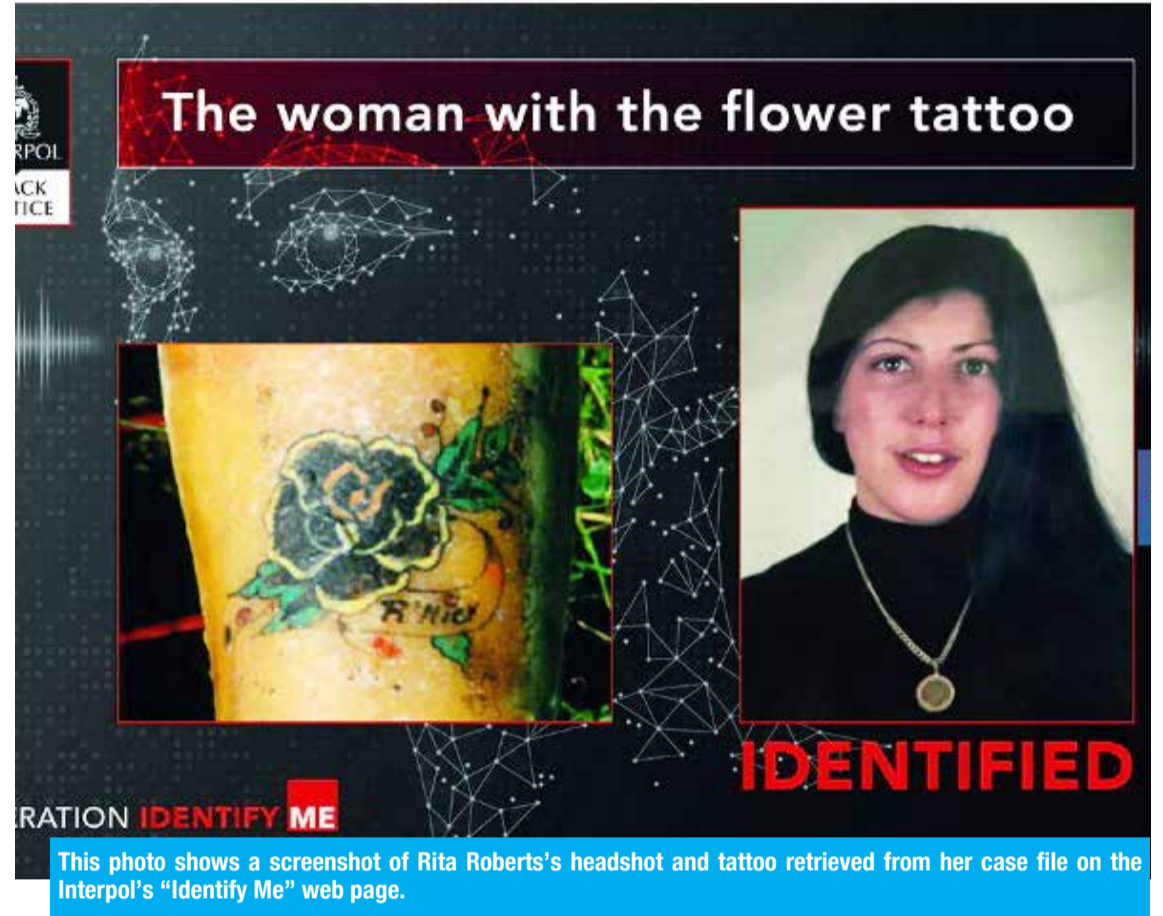
Police in Durham, England, said they had support-

ed the family, some of whom live in the area, "during what has been a heartbreaking time for them". Durham Constabulary called the case "historic". Durham police quoted a statement from the family, who had asked to remain anonymous, saying they had last heard from her via a postcard from Belgium in May 1992.

"The news was shocking and heartbreaking. Our passionate, loving, and free-spirited sister was cruelly taken away," the family said. "There are no words to truly express the grief we felt at that time, and still feel today. Rita was a beautiful person who adored travelling. She loved her family, especially her nephews and nieces, and always wanted to have a family of her own," the family said. "She had the ability to light up a room, and wherever she went, she was the life and soul of the party. We hope that wherever she is now, she is at peace."

Belgian police hope for further input from the public to clear up the circumstances of Roberts' violent death, it said. It said that Roberts was believed to have spent time in the Netherlands. She was 1.70 meters (5'7") tall, and wearing a blue-green-purple T-shirt, adidas jogging trousers and hiking boots when she was found.

"After 31 years an unidentified murdered woman has been given her name back and some closure has been brought to her family," Interpol Secretary General Jurgen Stock said. "Such cases underline the vital need to connect police worldwide, especially when missing persons are involved." Interpol is an inter-governmental organization for police cooperation between the 195 member countries. — AFP



MOSCOW: In this file photo, suspected Ibragim Makhmudov (left) and Sergei Khadzhiurbanov, former special police unit officer, wait for the beginning of the Moscow Military Court session on Aug 7, 2009. — AFP

Russia pardons murderer after serving in Ukraine

MOSCOW: Russian authorities have pardoned a former policeman jailed over the 2006 killing of investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya after he fought in Ukraine, his lawyer said on Tuesday. Sergei Khadzhiurbanov was one of five people jailed in connection with the murder of Politkovskaya, who worked for the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper. She was shot dead in the lift of her Moscow apartment block aged 48.

"As a special forces fighter, (Khadzhiurbanov) was invited to sign a contract to participate in the special military operation. Which he did," lawyer Alexei Mikhalechik told AFP. "When the contract expired, he was pardoned by presidential decree," Mikhalechik said.

Khadzhiurbanov went on to sign another contract as a volunteer and is still fighting in Ukraine, he added.

Thousands of prisoners are thought to have been sent to the battlefield since Moscow launched its offensive last February, with critics warning some have committed new crimes after returning home. Khadzhiurbanov was initially acquitted of Politkovskaya's killing by a jury in 2009, embarrassing prosecutors. But after the Supreme Court threw out the original verdict he was sentenced in 2014 to 20 years in prison. He would have served until at least 2030 had he not been pardoned, his lawyer said.

'Atone with blood'

Politkovskaya was well known for her forthright criticism of the Kremlin, denouncing alleged abuses by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and writing a scathing book on President Vladimir Putin's rise to power. While Khadzhiurbanov and four others were jailed for carrying out the killing, the European Court of Human Rights in 2018 criticised Russian investigators for failing to properly look into who contracted the crime. Politkovskaya had written books and articles de-

tailoring what she described as brutality by Russian and pro-Russian security forces during the Chechen war and had allegedly faced intimidation from Putin-ally Kadyrov and his subordinates.

Khadzhiurbanov's pardon, which was first reported by the RBC and Baza news outlets, comes amid renewed scrutiny surrounding the use of convicts in Ukraine, after the controversial pardon of a man who had brutally murdered his ex-girlfriend. The Kremlin last week acknowledged the use of prisoner recruits to fight in the conflict and said convicts who "atone for their crime on the battlefield with blood" could be pardoned. "They are atoning with blood in storm brigades, under bullets and under shells," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday. President Vladimir Putin said in September that Russian prisoners who died in Ukraine had "redeemed themselves" in the eyes of society, Russia has probably recruited 100,000 people from prisons to fight, Olga Romanova, head of an independent prisoners' rights group has estimated. Russian media outlets have reported several instances of released prisoners going on to commit serious offences, including murders, after leaving the army. — AFP

Gaza hospital buries patients...

Continued from Page 1

of fierce fighting from the facility where supplies are nearly exhausted.

The health ministry in Gaza says the Zionist entity's relentless assault has killed 11,240 people, mostly civilians, including thousands of children. The Zionist military says 47 of its troops have been killed in Gaza. Al-Shifa's fate has become a major focus of the more than five week war that has stirred international criticism of the suffering and death inflicted on civilians in the besieged territory.

The Zionist entity's top diplomat acknowledged Monday that his nation has "two or three weeks until international pressure really steps up". Quoted by his spokesman, Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said the Zionist entity is working to "broaden the window of legitimacy, and the fighting will carry on for as long as necessary".

The situation in Gaza's other hospitals is also dire, with the UN saying 22 of 36 are not functional due to lack of generator fuel, damage and combat. "The 14 hospitals remaining open have barely enough supplies to sustain critical and lifesaving surgeries and provide inpatient care, including intensive care," said the World Health Organization in the Palestinian Territories.

But the humanitarian crisis in the territory also includes the hundreds of thousands of people who

have fled south at the Zionist entity's urging to get away from the most intense fighting. On Tuesday those in the south woke up to yet another scourge: Rain, soaking their meagre belongings and threatening to bring waterborne diseases as it gathers in stagnating puddles.

"We are completely soaked, all of our clothes are soaked, our mattresses, our blankets too, even a dog could not live like this," said Ayman Al-Jueidi, who has set himself up in the courtyard of a UN school in Rafah at the southern extremity of the Gaza Strip. But even escaping the fighting is dangerous and wounded Palestinians told AFP how they were hit by a strike on their way south.

"I walked around three to four kilometers while I was bleeding," said Hasan Baker, whose head and left hand were bandaged. "There was no possibility for any ambulance to enter the area. "We didn't have any weapons," he added. "We are civilians, we were moving from one place to another according to the instructions of the (Zionist) occupation."

Zionist leaders have so far insisted there will be no broader ceasefire until captives are released, but Qatar is mediating talks on a possible deal to free captives. Abu Obeida, a spokesman for Hamas' military wing, said Monday that the Zionist entity asked for the release of 100 captives while the militants want 200 Palestinian children and 75 women freed from Zionist prisons. "We informed the mediators we could release the hostages if we obtained five days of truce... and passage of aid to all of our people throughout the Gaza Strip, but the enemy is procrastinating," Abu Obeida said in an audio statement. — AFP

The Zionist incursion into Jenin was the deadliest Zionist raid in the West Bank since at least 2005, according to United Nations data, with the Palestinian health ministry announcing 14 people were killed. While Zionist raids in the West Bank have frequently been fatal, other Palestinians have been killed in clashes. Sayed Homeidat, a 17-year-old from Jalazone refugee camp, was one of the dozens of minors killed in recent weeks.

According to eyewitnesses, B'Tselem and Palestinian rights group Al-Haq, he was shot dead by a Zionist soldier standing more than a 100 meters away. Zionist forces had blocked a road to repair a wall, which separates the camp from the Zionist settlement of Beit El on Oct 26. Young Palestinians threw stones at soldiers but Homeidat was not involved, witnesses told AFP.

For Omran Al-Risheq, from Al-Haq, "it's very clear that the soldiers shoot to kill even if they are not in danger". The two rights organizations accuse the military of using live bullets, rather than other means, to disperse protesters. Journalists working in the West Bank have confirmed that Zionist troops are not using tear gas as much as they used to before the war, while killings have surged. — AFP

Lula slams Zionist 'terrorism' in Gaza

BRASILIA: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Tuesday the Zionist entity is committing the "equivalent of terrorism" in Gaza by killing innocent women and children in its war on Hamas. The veteran leftist had previously condemned as a "terrorist attack" the Oct 7 assault on the Zionist entity by the Palestinian militant group, in which its fighters stormed across the border from the Gaza Strip, killing around 1,200 people, according to Zionist officials.

But the leader of Latin America's biggest country said the Islamist group's actions do not justify the Zionist entity's military response in Gaza, where more than 11,200 people, mostly civilians, have been killed, according to health officials in the Hamas-run territory. "The Zionist entity's attitude toward children, toward women, is the equivalent of terrorism. There's no other way to put it," Lula said in his weekly social media address. "If I know a place is full of children, even if there's a monster inside, I can't kill the children just because I want to kill the monster."

Lula, 78, had already come in for criticism from Zionist groups in Brazil for his remarks on the conflict. On Monday, he said that "even if Hamas committed a terrorist act, (the Zionist entity) is also

Iraq says working to find kidnapped Zionist academic

BAGHDAD: Iraq said Tuesday it is working to find kidnapped Zionist-Russian academic Elizabeth Tsurkov, a day after a video of her was released as the first public proof of life since her abduction. Zionist authorities revealed in July that Tsurkov had been kidnapped, blaming pro-Iranian militants, after she had gone missing in Iraq in late March.

On Monday, Iraqi channel Al Rabiaa TV aired the first hostage video of Tsurkov known to the public since her kidnapping. AFP was unable to independently verify the footage or determine whether her statement was coerced. "The security services are still following the case of the disappearance of the Russian citizen in Baghdad and are sparing no effort to find any leads leading to the kidnapped person," said Husham al-Rikabi, a communications advisor to Iraq's prime minister. "We hope soon (to find) leads or evidence that will lead the competent authori-



BRASILIA: Brazilian President Lula da Silva welcomes Brazilians and Palestinians returning from Gaza at Brasilia Air Base on Nov 13, 2023. — AFP

ties to her," he told AFP.

In the video, Tsurkov mentioned the war between the Zionist entity and Hamas in the Gaza Strip which has been raging since the Palestinian militant group launched their Oct 7 attack. Tsurkov said she had been detained for more than seven months, without identifying her captors or the location where she is held. Her sister Emma Tsurkov said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that it "is great news to see she is alive". "The statement was clearly coerced, but we do note that she appears as well as can be expected ... The release of this video is an important step in the effort to bring her back to us."

A doctoral student at Princeton University and fellow at the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, Tsurkov said in the video she had worked for Zionist and US intelligence agencies in Syria and Iraq, and that there were no efforts towards freeing her. The office of the Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in early July accused Iraq's powerful Kataeb Hezbollah of holding her, but the armed faction has implied it was not involved in her disappearance. Tsurkov, who had likely entered Iraq on her Russian passport, had travelled to the country as part of her doctoral studies. — AFP

Surge in killing of Palestinians...

Continued from Page 1

Last week, the Zionist entity's extreme-right National Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, who lives in a settlement himself, gave stark instructions to law enforcement. "Zero tolerance. In case of doubt, there is no doubt," he said in annexed east Jerusalem, where a Palestinian was shot after allegedly attacking Zionist police. At least three Zionists have been killed in the West Bank since Oct 7, including one who was shot dead by a fellow soldier.

In the northern city of Jenin, physician Pedro Serrano recalled treating multiple gunshot wounds during a raid on Thursday. Most "had been shot in the abdomen and the legs", said Serrano, from Doctors Without Borders (MSF). "Some had an exploded liver or spleen, the others had serious vascular wounds," he added. "There was also a really sad case, of a man who walked just in front of the hospital and was hit in the head by a sniper," said Serrano.

World not 'getting a grip' on climate change: UN

'It is time for a climate ambition supernova in every country, city and sector'

PARIS: The world is "failing to get a grip" on climate change, the UN warned Tuesday, as an assessment of current climate pledges shows only minor progress on reducing emissions this decade. In a report released just weeks before high-stakes climate negotiations, the United Nations climate change organization said the world was failing to act with sufficient urgency to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

With temperatures soaring and 2023 expected to become the warmest year so far in human history, scientists say the pressure on world leaders to curb planet-heating greenhouse gas pollution has never been more urgent. The UN found that combined climate plans from nearly 200 nations would put the world on a path for 2030 carbon emissions just two percent below 2019 levels.

That is far short of the 43 percent fall that the UN's IPCC climate panel says is needed to limit warming to the Paris deal target of 1.5 degrees Celsius since the preindustrial era. "Every fraction of a degree matters, but we are severely off track. COP28 is our time to change that," said UN Climate Change chief Simon Stiell. He called for climate talks in Dubai this month to mark a "clear turning point" for a world already wracked by increasing floods, heatwaves and storms. Scientists have warned that humanity is dangerously close to blowing past the 1.5C global heating limit, risking intensifying impacts.

"The world is failing to get a grip on the climate crisis," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, warning countries were not acting fast enough to avoid climate catastrophe. "Inch by inch progress will not do. It is time for a climate ambition supernova in every country, city and sector."

Closing the gap

Under the 2015 Paris deal, countries are required to submit ever deeper emission cutting

plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs. The latest annual UN assessment of these plans includes 20 updated NDCs submitted between September 2022 and September 2023, including from Mexico, Turkey, Norway and COP28 hosts the United Arab Emirates.

Last year's report used a 2010 benchmark and found that if the world's NDCs were fully implemented, emissions would be 10.6 percent higher by 2030. This time around there has been "only a fractional improvement", Stiell said, with emissions projected to be 8.8 percent higher in 2030 than in 2010.

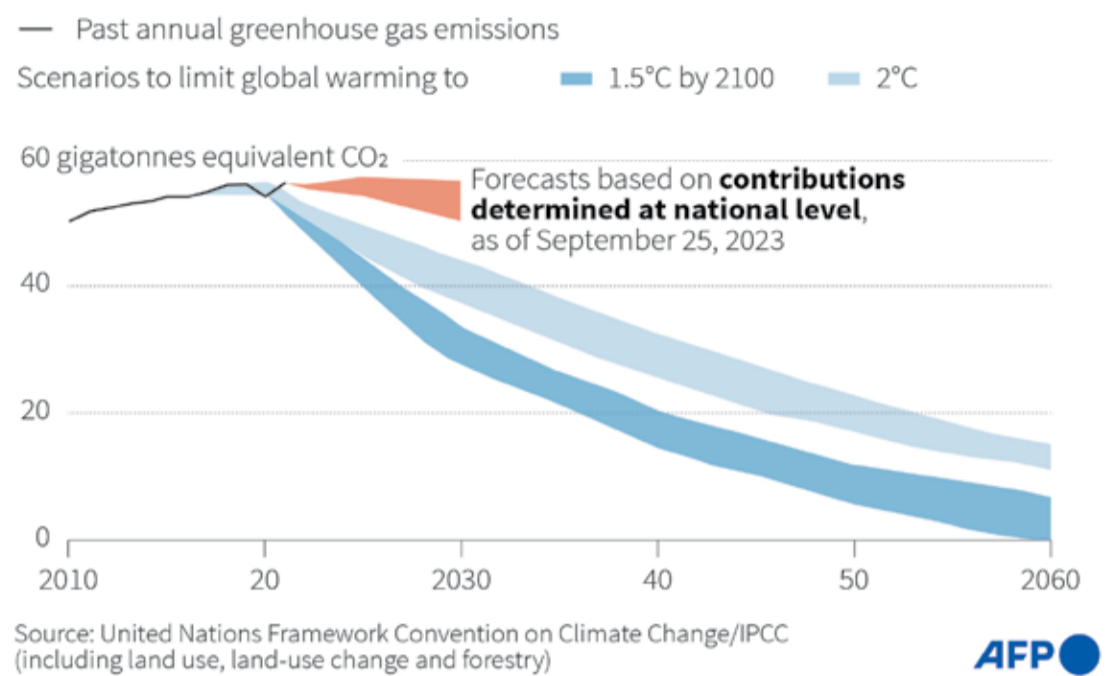
In September, a global stocktake of the world's progress on averting the worst impacts of climate change warned that the world was far off target. Global greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 and drop sharply thereafter to keep the 1.5C limit in view, it said, drawing from a major scientific assessment by the UN's IPCC science advisory panel. Achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 — another Paris goal — will also require phasing out the burning of all fossil fuels whose emissions cannot be captured or compensated.

'The only chance'

A response to the stocktake will form the centerpiece of the Nov 30 to Dec 12 COP28 meeting, with crucial debates over the future of oil, gas and coal — the main drivers of planet-heating emissions. But currently, countries are still failing to match their actions to what scientists say is needed to avoid blasting past the world's agreed global warming limits.

This month a report by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) found that planned production increases in major petrostates would result in 460 percent more coal, 82 percent more gas and 29 percent more oil than would be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5C.

National emissions targets insufficient in the face of global warming



And the room to maneuver might also be tighter than previously understood. In October, new research found that the amount of CO2 the world can emit and still have a 50 percent chance of limiting warming to 1.5C is much smaller than previously thought and could be used up in six years at current pollution levels.

"We are still miles off where we need to be for limiting global warming to 1.5C," said Tom Evans, policy advisor at the think tank E3G, adding that the response to the stocktake will be "critical". "It's the only chance we have to make sure that the next set of climate targets — due by 2025 — will put us in a place to close this gap." — AFP

Californians fight fire with fire to avoid catastrophes

SANTA CRUZ: In a forest in northern California, a line of people spread out through the trees, setting fire to shrubs and fallen branches in an act of intentional arson aimed at making the woodland better able to cope with future conflagrations.

The operation near Santa Cruz is part of a growing number of prescribed burns intended to reduce the amount of fuel that can feed natural wildfires in an era when human-caused climate change is increasing the likelihood of devastating blazes.

"The best way to fight fire is with fire," says Portia Halbert, senior environmental scientist with California State Parks, who is supervising the burn. "It's not a matter of if it burns, but when it burns: it's going to burn eventually. And so we want to burn it ... when it's not going to be so extreme that it burns down people's homes and causes loss of life and property."

Before the undergrowth is ignited, the earth is turned with shovels to create a containment line. Branches and shrubs too close to fully grown trees are removed, and hoses are deployed to stop flames from getting out of control. The idea is to encourage the fire to consume only the forest floor, without spreading to the oaks and redwoods that loom over it. When wildfire breaks out in the future — as it certainly will — it will have less fuel and will burn cooler and slower, without spreading to the treetops.

Native American practice

After around 20 years of drought and in a climate that is slowly aridifying, California has seen an alarming number of megafires over the last decade. These blazes have destroyed millions of acres (hectares) of forest, killed over 200 people and wrought



SANTA CRUZ: A volunteer with the Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association sprays water on a prescribed burn at Wilder Ranch State Park near Santa Cruz, California, on Oct 13, 2023. — AFP

hundreds of millions of dollars of damage.

The scale and cost of these blazes has brought about an understanding that California's long-established policy of stamping out wildfires as soon as they break out is wrongheaded and counterproductive. With firefighters having rushed to quell blazes as soon as they could, forests have been transformed into fuel-stuffed tinderboxes — with disastrous consequences when fires inevitably get out of control. Forest managers now understand what Native Americans long knew — controlled burns are key to successful management. Around 20 different organizations are now aiming to burn a total of 160,000 hectares a year by 2025. But that figure is nowhere near enough, says Jared Childress of the Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association, which is involved in the Santa Cruz controlled fire.

"We need to scale this up," he said. "We need

Cake and a sing-song

Camilla, 76, once revealed that the famously workaholic king is particularly hard to buy gifts for. "I will tell you that he is the most difficult person in the world to buy a present for... So, he likes to make a list of things that he wants so you get it exactly right," she said. He likes "a cake and a bit of a sing-song", she said, adding however that it was often difficult to get him to take a break.

Close family and friends are expected at the evening celebration, although his estranged younger son Harry will be missing. A report by BBC online said Harry was expected to telephone his father at some point during the day. A spokesperson for Prince Harry and his American wife Meghan rebutted reports they had turned down an invitation, saying there had been "no contact regarding an invitation to His Majesty's upcoming birthday".

Harry, 39, and Meghan, 42, quit royal duties in 2020 and relocated to California. They have since unleashed a barrage of criticisms of the royal family,

to be doing burns exactly like this, all throughout California, throughout the fall, throughout the winter, throughout the spring, even in early summer. "We're nowhere near the level that we need to be, both ecologically and also from changing the wildfire dynamic."

At present, the windows granted by the authorities for these operations remain very narrow. The nervousness to fully embrace a practice that many land managers see as vital could stem from perceived risk. While most controlled burns go off without a hitch, they occasionally go wrong — like one in New Mexico in the autumn of 2022 that ended up destroying hundreds of homes. Lenya Quinn-Davidson, a specialist in controlled fire at the University of California, says it is a specialized area. "Prescribed fire is a very artful, thoughtful practice," she told AFP. — AFP



DIDCOT: Britain's King Charles III reacts as he leaves at the end of the launching of "The Coronation Food Project", to mark his majesty's 75th birthday on Nov 14, 2023. — AFP photos

leading to strained relations with Charles and a damaging rift between Harry and his older brother, heir to the throne Prince William. — AFP

Gun salutes mark King Charles III's 75th birthday

LONDON: Gun salutes rang out across central London on Tuesday to mark Charles III's 75th birthday, just over a year since he became king and British head of state after the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II. There was a 41-gun salute in Green Park, near Buckingham Palace, and a 62-gun salute at the Tower of London on the banks of the River Thames.

Halfway through his eighth decade, Charles — who shows no sign of a let-up in activity — spent the day carrying out public engagements followed by a private dinner at his London residence. The lifelong environmentalist used his landmark birthday to highlight causes close to his heart, including a visit to a surplus food distribution center with his wife Queen Camilla.

Charles officially launched the Coronation Food Project at a depot in central Oxfordshire and found himself serenaded twice with renditions of "Happy Birthday". The initiative is aimed at tackling food poverty by redistributing food that would otherwise end up in landfill. The sovereign has penned an article for the latest edition of the Big Issue magazine about food waste and those in need. The magazine helps the homeless by allowing them to become vendors.

"He asked me if I was in accommodation and about selling the 'Big Issue'," said seller Kelvin after meeting the king. "I said it's got me through the bad times and it has a positive social message," he said. Charles was also hosting a reception at Buckingham Palace for 400 nurses and midwives as part of this year's 75th anniversary celebrations for the state-run National Health Service (NHS).



LONDON: Members of the Honourable Artillery Company fire a 62 Gun Royal Salute, for the King's 75th Birthday from Tower Wharf, by Tower Bridge.

Xi looks to steady ties at meeting with Biden

SHANGHAI: The last time Xi Jinping travelled to the United States was six years ago to meet an effusive Donald Trump, who had promised "a very, very great relationship".

Instead, US-China relations spiraled to lower and lower depths, with the Chinese president now looking to stabilize ties when he sits down with Joe Biden in San Francisco this week. The two leaders will meet on the sidelines of the APEC summit in the California city, their first encounter in a year despite trade tensions, sanctions, and the question of Taiwan feeding quarrels between the world's largest economies.

Positive momentum from November 2022 talks between Xi and Biden in Bali was derailed when the United States shot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon, delaying a planned visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Since then, a flurry of high-level diplomacy, including Blinken's eventual trip to Beijing in June, has signaled ambitions on both sides to mend ties. "I don't think anyone really has high hopes for the meeting in terms of there being concrete outcomes," said Joseph Liow from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University. "This meeting is important for the symbolism that the leaders do want to set relations on a more stable footing."

Asked about Beijing's expectations for the meeting, China's foreign ministry remained vague, mentioning "in-depth communication" and "major issues concerning world peace". "China attaches great importance to positive efforts to stabilize US-China relations," Chen Dingding, president of the Guangzhou-based think tank Intellisia Institute, told AFP. Tactically for Beijing, "the key at present is to seek points of cooperation", said Lyu Xiang, US-Chinese relations expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

'Calmer waters'

Xi is under pressure at home because of a weak economy, but also because of "the impression among at least part of the Chinese elites that the most important diplomatic relation for China ... is being mismanaged," wrote Natixis CIB's Alicia Garcia Herrero in a note. From Xi's perspective, "the ability to project an image of strength, of being in control of the bilateral relationship, of staring into calmer waters, will be politically useful," added Amanda Hsiao of International Crisis Group (ICG). But several thorny issues could get in the way of smoothing out tensions.

In Beijing's view, Washington has "failed to implement the consensus of the two sides' talks (in Bali), leading to a period of stagnation for US-China relations this year," said Intellisia Institute's Chen. Chen was cautious about Washington's overtures to China, saying that Biden could switch to a harder line on Beijing ahead of elections if he ends up facing off with Republican predecessor Trump. China has also made clear that it will not budge on issues it considers red lines, such as Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory to be seized one day, and its military expansion in the South China Sea.

Washington and Beijing have recently made some progress on trade and economic relations, and climate change talks. Ahead of the APEC summit, US climate envoy John Kerry met with his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua, while US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen sat down with her opposite number last week too.

Xi will have dinner with top US business leaders on his trip and is expected to push for a relaxation of US trade curbs in his talks with Biden. "Trade tariff barriers, technology export controls, the blacklisting of Chinese companies, and restrictions on Chinese green energy products remain egregious and unacceptable," said CASS' Lyu. "In these pragmatic areas, the US side must come up with serious measures for improvement." — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2023

Zain first and only operator in Kuwait to win three major awards from Ookla Speedtest

‘Fastest 5G’, ‘Best 5G Video Experience’, and ‘Fastest Internet’



Eaman Al-Roudhan:

Enhancing customer experience, cultivating human resources, and investing in 5G infrastructure fuels the growth of our powerful brand.



Stephen Bye:

We're thrilled to acknowledge Zain for this achievement, which is the result of their unwavering focus on delivering a superior network experience.

KUWAIT: Raising the bar yet again with an impressive achievement that reaffirms its leadership position in the local telecom & ICT industry, Zain announces that it has become the first and only operator in Kuwait to win three major awards in the same year from Ookla Speedtest, the renowned global leader in connectivity intelligence, for Q2-Q3 2023.

The three prestigious accolades, ‘Fastest 5G Network’, ‘Best 5G Video Experience’, and ‘Fastest Internet’, came after Zain’s network successfully topped the extensive analysis carried out by Ookla on hundreds of thousands of user-initiated

- Ookla is a global leader in connectivity intelligence.
- Zain’s network deservedly achieved the highest scores for Q2-Q3 2023.

tests made by consumers in Kuwait. The tests were carried on all of Kuwait’s major networks throughout the previous months and Zain deservedly scored the highest results in the above three categories.

Commenting on the occasion, Zain Kuwait Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan said: “We’re proud to announce this unmatched achievement, which affirms the fact that Zain is Kuwait’s number one network. Once again, we have proven that we are the market leader, and have further solidified our position in the telecom and ICT industry.”

Al-Roudhan continued: “Our ongoing investment in upskilling our employees and cultivating our human resources is key to realizing Zain’s vision and continuing its leadership journey. In addition, we will always strive to elevate our customers’ experience because it is the real guarantee for growing our powerful brand and it drives us to invest more in 5G networks and innovative digital tools.” The CEO added: “As a responsible

organization that takes its social and economic commitments seriously, we continue to work eagerly and passionately to empower Kuwait’s vision to build a digital infrastructure, increase digital maturity in our community, and achieve our sustainable goals. Looking forward, we strive to continue our leadership with the rollout of 5.5G technology, opening up entire new horizons for our customers and community.”

Stephen Bye, President and CEO of Ookla, a division of Ziff Davis, commented: “After conducting an in-depth analysis of consumer-initiated tests taken with Speedtest, Zain has been named the Fastest 5G Network, Fastest Internet, and Best 5G Video Experience in Kuwait by Ookla’s Speedtest Awards.”

“This award is given to network operators that demonstrate exceptional speed and performance in comparison to other major networks in the market for Q2-Q3 2023. We are thrilled to acknowledge Zain for this achievement, which is the result of their unwavering focus on delivering a superior network experience to their customers,” Bye continued.

Ookla is the global leader in network intelligence and connectivity insights. For almost two decades, Ookla has set the industry standard for both fixed and mobile network testing and analysis. From its world-renowned Speedtest and Downtetector platforms to an accompanying and growing suite of end-to-end enterprise solutions, Ookla’s mission is to make the internet better, faster, and more accessible for everyone.

Ookla’s enterprise solutions combine first-party crowd sourced data and scientifically controlled testing with tools that provide actionable insights across a network’s lifecycle and customer experience. Ookla’s insights empower operators, businesses, government agencies, nonprofits, and more to analyze, optimize, and publicize networks around the world.

Ookla is part of Ziff Davis (NASDAQ: ZD), a vertically focused digital media and internet company whose portfolio includes leading brands in technology, entertainment, shopping, health, cybersecurity and martech. Ookla’s headquarters is located in Seattle, WA, USA with additional offices around the world.



KUWAIT'S
NUMBER 1
NETWORK

شبكة الكويت
الأولى

‘Fastest 5G Network’ Speedtest Award

KUWAIT: Ookla compared over 200,000 user-initiated 5G tests taken on the Speedtest@ iOS and Android mobile apps from all the major mobile carriers in Kuwait during the award period to determine who showed the fastest mobile network speeds.

Zain’s network topped the results with a Speed Score of 332.81, with a download median speed of 405.32 Mbps, and an upload median speed of 31.99 Mbps. The final score is based on several factors, with emphasis on the download speeds and median speeds as those represent what most customers will experience on a day-to-day basis.

This award directly reflects Zain’s unwavering efforts to bring the biggest and most powerful 5G network in the nation to its customer base. In 2019, Zain led the market by being the first operator to commercially launch 5G services, setting a new precedent in the local and regional telecom industries. Since then, more successes have followed in adapting 5G technologies to overhaul customers’ digital journeys. Zain continues to heavily invest in its 5G infrastructure with world-class technologies, achieving the highest speeds and best operational efficiency levels. The company seeks to meet the increasing demand on data, while exploring new ecosystems only possible by this revolutionary technology, with the ultimate goal of serving all needs of consumers, businesses, and government agencies.

‘Best 5G Video Experience’ Speedtest Award
Ookla compared over 6,000 tests taken on the Speedtest iOS and Android mobile apps and while connected to a 5G mobile network. Zain’s

network topped the results by scoring 80.32 on the Video Score, with the results being based on five components, each measuring a different aspect of consumer video experience. Zain offers its customers the biggest library of entertainment content through its expansive ecosystem of strategic partnerships with MENA and the world’s largest content providers. The company brings tens of thousands of hours of entertainment and sports content on its biggest 5G network, ensuring customers have the best video experience to watch whatever they like, anytime and anywhere they are.

‘Fastest Internet’ Speedtest Award

Ookla compared over 1,000,000 user-initiated tests that were taken on various Speedtest applications connected to a fixed network, including tests taken on mobile phones over a Wi-Fi connection.

Zain’s network topped the results with a Speed Score of 162.81, with a top download speed of 473.23 Mbps, and a top upload speed of 83.58 Mbps. The final score is based on several factors, with emphasis on the download speeds and median speeds as those represent what most customers will experience on a day-to-day basis.

Fixed networks offer superfast speeds with low latency times, making them ideal for gaming enthusiasts. With its powerful, nationwide network, Zain offers a variety of plans for gamers to serve their unique needs and give them the best online experience. The company also offers a wide range of gaming products, like the latest gaming PCs and consoles, original accessories, and much more.



Business



JEBEL ALI: The Italian Air Force aerobatic unit Freccia Tricolori (Tricolor Arrows) spread smoke with the colors of the Italian flag as they fly over Dubai during the Gulf emirate's 2023 airshow at Dubai World Central on November 14, 2023. — AFP photos



DUBAI: Aermacchi MB-339 trainer aircraft of the Fursan Al-Emarat (UAE Knights) aerobatics team release smoke as they fly over during the 2023 Dubai Airshow at Dubai World Central on November 14, 2023.

Ethiopian Airlines snaps up 31 Boeings in 'landmark' deal

Airbus announces EgyptAir order for 10 planes

DUBAI: Ethiopian Airlines ordered 31 Boeing jets with an option for 36 more in a "landmark" deal on Tuesday as it joined the list of companies betting big on the growth of aviation. The order, announced at the Dubai Airshow, was the biggest ever made by an African airline for Boeing aircraft, the US manufacturer said.

The 11 787 Dreamliner and 20 737 MAX planes with a list price of more than \$5.6 billion are part of the airline's expansion plans, said group CEO Mesfin Tassew. "The addition of the brand new, latest technology with both wide body and narrow body will enable us to expand our network and enhance our growth, our operations and profitability," he said. With a fleet of 140 aircraft covering 100 destinations, Ethiopian Airlines is already Africa's biggest carrier, Tassew added.

Brad McMullen, Boeing's senior vice-president of commercial sales and marketing, called it a "landmark commitment" from the flag-carrier. Ethiopian Airlines is not the only carrier eyeing expansion. Dubai's Emirates airline ordered 95 Boeing planes on Monday, while budget carrier

flydubai bought 30 wide-bodied aircraft from the US firm as it seeks to open up new routes. Turkish Airlines has confirmed talks with Airbus, Boeing's European rival, for up to 355 jets. In June, India's low-cost airline Indigo ordered 500 Airbus A320-family planes, the biggest ever order for civil aircraft.

While Boeing has enjoyed the lion's share of the deals in Dubai this week, Airbus announced an order for 10 A350-900 planes by EgyptAir on Tuesday. Airbus commercial director Christian Scherer told a news conference the deal marked "an important milestone" in the "long and successful partnership" with the state-owned carrier. Without discounts, which are routinely applied in the industry, the transaction is worth \$3.2 billion, according to the manufacturer's latest published list price.

However, Emirates chief executive Tim Clark said on Tuesday that he will not buy Airbus's A350 until he has concluded negotiations with engine manufacturer Rolls Royce, which he blames for a lack of durability and longevity. "Forty percent of

the 350-1000s have been sold into this region," Clark said, adding: "This is the region that is buying these airplanes and will buy the big numbers if the engine issue's resolved." Airbus has emphasized that technology used in the A350s means the aircraft consumes 25 percent less fuel than its competitor's previous models. But the Emirates chief said reliability was paramount in the selection of aircraft. "They (Boeing) might not be as advanced in their technology, in their build materials. But in the end, what we want is reliance," Clark said. Also on Tuesday, Emirates announced contracts worth \$1.2 billion with the French aircraft equipment manufacturer Safran. That includes an agreement for Safran to equip the Emirates fleet of Airbus A350s, Boeing 777X-9s and Boeing 777-300s with new seats costing \$1 billion at list price, Emirates said in a press release.

Air Arabia, based in Sharjah—an emirate neighbouring Dubai—ordered 240 LEAP-1A engines in a deal with a book value of about \$3.36 billion to power its existing order of 120 Airbus A320neo family aircraft, the company said.

Meanwhile, European aerospace giant Airbus announced an order for 10 A350-900 planes by Egypt's state-owned carrier EgyptAir on Tuesday, the second day of the Dubai Airshow. Airbus commercial director Christian Scherer told a news conference the deal marked "an important milestone" in the "long and successful partnership" with EgyptAir. Without discounts, which are routinely applied in the industry, the transaction is worth \$3.2 billion, according to the manufacturer's latest published list price. Airbus, which on Monday announced an order for 30 A220-300s from Latvian budget carrier airBaltic, has been overshadowed by US rival Boeing at this year's Dubai Airshow. Boeing announced a mega-contract with Emirates, the Middle East's biggest airline, on Monday for 55 Boeing 777-9s, 35 777-8s and five 787 Dreamliners in a deal worth \$52 billion. The 777-9s are expected for delivery in 2025 and the 777-8s are scheduled for 2030. Low-cost carrier flydubai, also based in the Gulf emirate, announced an order for 30 Boeing 787-9s, valued at \$11 billion.—AFP

Cooling US inflation raises hopes of an end to rate hikes

WASHINGTON: US consumer inflation cooled more than expected last month, according to government data published Tuesday, providing welcome news for policymakers looking to control price increases without damaging the economy. The consumer price index (CPI) inflation gauge increased by 3.2 percent in the 12 months to October, down from 3.7 percent a month earlier, the Labor Department said.

Inflation was unchanged month-over-month in October from September, with a sharp monthly decline noted in energy prices. Both the annual and monthly figures came in below the median expectations of economists surveyed by MarketWatch. "Today we saw more progress bringing down inflation while maintaining one of the strongest job markets in history," President Joe Biden said in a statement. "I'm working to get results for the American people and it's happening." US stock markets rose sharply on the news of cooling inflation, which reduces the likelihood of another interest rate hike next month. "I think it's very encouraging," Nationwide economist Kathy Bostjancic told AFP. "This reading helps ease some of the pressure on policymakers to raise rates further." Although easing inflation is good news for consumers, the current rate of inflation as measured by a range of gauges remains stuck firmly above the Fed's long-term target of two percent. The Federal Reserve recently held its key lending rate at a 22-year high for a second consecutive meeting, leading some analysts and traders to predict it was done tightening monetary policy.

But since then, a number of policymakers, including Fed Chair Jerome Powell, have indicated that they are prepared to hike rates again, if necessary, to bring price increases firmly down to target. While the decline in the



The consumer price index (CPI) inflation gauge increased by 3.2 percent in the 12 months to October, down from 3.7 percent a month earlier, the Labor Department said.

gasoline index was responsible for the slowdown in prices, it was partially offset by an increase in the index for shelter, the Labor Department said. Transportation services also acted as a counterweight to falling energy prices. Stripping out volatile food and energy segments, so-called "core inflation" cooled to 4.0 percent last month, the smallest 12-month change since the period ending September 2021, the Labor Department said. Core inflation is closely watched by analysts and traders, since it paints a clearer picture of how some of the underlying factors in the economy are doing.

"When you look in the details there, it's really transportation services that are exerting the most upward pressure on core services," said Bostjancic from Nationwide. On a monthly basis, core CPI inflation increased by 0.2 percent, down from 0.3 percent a month earlier. The figures for core inflation also came in below expectations. "It was a move very much in the right

direction," OANDA's senior market analyst, Craig Erlam, told AFP, adding that "the Fed will be pleasantly surprised" by the move. "Seeing that 0.3 percent on a monthly basis become a 0.2 I think will leave them feeling a little bit more relaxed that they are still heading in the right direction."

The cooler inflation figure raises the chances of the Fed holding interest rates for a third consecutive meeting in December. "What we're seeing is continued disinflation at the core level, albeit gradually," said Bostjancic. She added that the October CPI figure "definitely reduces any pressure for the Fed to act." "Our view is, they're done tightening for this business cycle, but they're going to be very slow and gradual at cutting rates," she said. Futures traders currently assign a probability of almost 95 percent that the Fed will pause once more at its next rate decision in December, according to data from CME Group.—AFP

Vodafone drops into H1 net loss

LONDON: British mobile phone giant Vodafone said Tuesday that it sank into a first-half loss and revenue dipped after one-off gains from asset sales were not repeated as it undergoes a vast overhaul. Net losses totaled 346 million euros (\$370 million) in the six months to the end of September, Vodafone said in a results statement. That compared with profit after tax of 945 million euros in the same period a year earlier.

Revenues fell 4.3 percent to 21.9 billion euros, hit by adverse foreign exchange rate moves as well as the sale of Vantage Towers, Vodafone Hungary and Vodafone Ghana last time around. But services revenue grew 4.2 percent to 18.6 billion euros. Vodafone added that its transformation plan was "progressing", two weeks after it announced the sale of its Spanish division to investment fund Zegona for up to 5.0 billion euros. In a further streamlining, Vodafone in June agreed to merge British operations with Three UK, owned by Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison, to create

Britain's biggest operator with 27 million customers, as it targets an acceleration in faster 5G connectivity.

"During the first half of the year, we have delivered improved revenue growth in nearly all of our markets and have returned to growth in Germany in the second quarter," said chief executive Margherita Della Valle. "Vodafone's transformation is progressing. Our focus on customers and simplifying our business is beginning to bear fruit, although much more needs to be done."

"We have also announced transactions to strengthen our position in the UK and exit the challenging Spanish market in order to right-size our portfolio for growth." Vodafone had announced six months ago that it would axe 11,000 jobs or more than ten percent of its global workforce to slash costs.

The operator said Tuesday that it cut approximately 2,700 jobs in the first half, on its way towards the target. The global tech sector has shed tens of thousands of jobs this year, including by Facebook parent Meta and UK telecoms group BT, as soaring inflation saps the economy. The group added on Tuesday that it remains on course to meet annual earnings guidance.—AFP

China fuels rise in global oil demand: IEA

PARIS: World oil demand will rise slightly more than expected this year as China's appetite for the fossil fuel hit a record and the Israel-Hamas war did not hit supply flows, the International Energy Agency said Tuesday.

The Paris-based organization said global demand is forecast to hit an all-time high in 2024, although it will grow at a sharply slower pace. "World oil demand continues to exceed expectations," the IEA said in its monthly oil market report. The IEA said demand from China, the world's top importer of crude and its second biggest economy, reached another record high at 17.1 million barrels per day (bpd) in September. Global oil demand is now forecast to reach 102 million bpd in 2023, the IEA said. China is expected to account for 1.8 million bpd of the 2.4 million bpd increase in world demand.—AFP

Apple supplier Foxconn says profits fuelled by holiday season demand

TAIPEI: Key iPhone supplier Foxconn posted "better-than-expected" profits in its third quarter, with leadership on Tuesday attributing the surprise jump to demand ahead of the holiday season. The firm -- also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry -- is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles devices for several companies, most notably Apple's iPhones.

It said net profit for July-September rose to Tw\$43.1 billion (US\$1.3 billion) from Tw\$38.8 billion in the same period last year. "We have entered the traditional peak season in the second half and our operations are set to gradually improve quarter on quarter," CEO Young Liu said during an earnings call. "These performances were better than expected in the first half of the year."

Tuesday's results follow consecutive quarterly profit misses -- with January-March seeing a drop of 56 percent and a one percent fall in the next three months. Liu added that he expected "robust growth in revenue" for consumer smart products during the fourth quarter. Foxconn is China's largest private-sector employer, with more than a million workers nationwide.

But the company -- as well as key client Apple -- has been looking to diversify its manufacturing supply chain after it saw production affected by strict COVID restrictions in China and diplomatic tensions with the United States. Last month, Chinese state-run media Global Times reported that Foxconn was under land use and tax investigations for its sites in central Hunan and Hubei provinces, though no details on the offences were provided.

Chief financial officer David Huang sought to reassure investors during Tuesday's call. "At present, the group's production and operations are all normal," he said. "We will actively cooperate with the operations of relevant units and hope to complete the relevant work as soon as possible to alleviate everyone's concerns about the uncertainty." Taiwan's national security chief on Monday said the tax probe was "political", as billionaire founder Terry Gou is running for president of the democratically ruled island.

Liu said he did not "have any crystal ball at this time" on the election outcome, or on China's potential reaction if Gou wins. "I don't know what's going to happen. But from the management team's point of view, we would have to be prepared for all the possible cases," Liu said. "I wish (Gou) the best -- that's all I can say." Gou -- who gave up his Foxconn management reins four years ago -- is currently polling last among the major candidates, with Vice President Lai Ching-te the current frontrunner.—AFP

Business

APEC seeks to grow economies with an eye on sustainability

US postpones Asia trade deal rollout after domestic fire

SAN FRANCISCO: Leaders of Asia-Pacific economies want to boost output with an eye on issues like reducing inequality and protecting the environment, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Monday. Her comments at a press conference come at the end of talks with finance ministers of the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

Citing legislation like the Inflation Reduction Act — a signature achievement of US President Joe Biden — Yellen told reporters “APEC economies recognize the potential of this strategy and are pursuing similar policies.” Economic development and environmental action need to work together if the world is to combat global warming, Yellen said.

“We need to further improve our long-term economic outlook by boosting labor supply, innovation, and infrastructure investment, in ways that are also sustainable and reduce inequality,” Yellen said in San Francisco. After several years focused on post-pandemic recovery, 2023 was a “pivotal year” for APEC, said Yellen, a time where governments could refocus on “advancing fiscal reforms to build our economies over the long run.”

But economic development cannot be separated from the immediate need to wean humanity off planet-warming energy sources, she said, noting that less wealthy countries needed help to make the leap. “We’ve discussed how to finance efficient and effective energy transitions while supporting the individuals and communities who are most vulnerable,” she said, referencing as an example the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP) in Vietnam and Indonesia.

These agreements define conditions for rich countries to commit to financially assisting the energy transition of developing countries. The JETP for Indonesia, the largest economy in Southeast Asia, was unveiled last year. It provides public and private funding of up to \$20 billion in exchange for capping emissions from the electricity sector by 2030 and

reaching zero emissions in 2050.

At the end of talks Monday, Yellen also noted that efforts to build a stable economic relationship with China are moving “along the right path.” She said leaders are focusing on “unlocking the flow of sustainable finance” as well, like by exploring ways to encourage the development of credible climate commitments and to create effective voluntary carbon markets.

Not all financing systems are equal, Yellen said earlier Monday, noting that the markets for carbon credits need to be examined for ways to improve their integrity. Carbon credits, which allow companies to offset their CO2 emissions, effectively permitting them to claim a heavily-polluting product is “carbon neutral”, are increasingly coming under the microscope, amid claims by critics that they amount to greenwashing. Besides working with the private sector and international financial institutions, Yellen added: “There is also commitment to continued work on the responsible development of digital assets.”

Digital assets technologies carry risks, which calls for regulation, she noted. Such assets include unbacked crypto-assets and central bank digital currencies. Leaders of the bloc will gather in San Francisco for a summit later in the week.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden’s administration signaled Monday it would postpone a draft of an Asia trade pact that had been set to be unveiled at a summit in San Francisco, after facing domestic criticism. Biden, welcoming 20 other members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to San Francisco where he will meet on the sidelines with Chinese President Xi Jinping, had been expected to announce substantial progress on a nascent trade deal.

But Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said there was still work to be done on the most contentious part of the so-called Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), the trade component.



SAN FRANCISCO: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (center) delivers opening remarks during the first session of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Finance Ministers Meeting in San Francisco, California, on November 13, 2023. — AFP

“There’s been significant progress, but it looks not to be complete, like something that is likely to require further work,” she told reporters after leading talks of APEC finance ministers. “Nevertheless, in a number of areas that I think are critically important to the United States, like supply chains, environment, sustainable finance, we’ve made a huge amount of progress and we’ve made progress on trade too, but it appears not to be complete,” she said.

IPEF falls well short of a traditional trade deal as it does not offer trade access. Nonetheless, it would aim to set standards for business across some 40 percent of the global economy including three of the world’s top five economies — the United States, Japan and India. IPEF also includes Australia, South Korea and much of Southeast Asia, but notably not China, as the United States tries again to assert a leadership role in Asia. — AFP

Tata Steel to scrap 800 jobs in the Netherlands

THE HAGUE: Indian-owned steelmaking giant Tata Steel announced Monday it was scrapping 800 jobs at its under-pressure plant in the Netherlands to “improve market conditions and bring down costs.” “The steel market has been in dire straits for some time. In order to remain structurally competitive and profitable now and in the future, Tata Steel Netherlands is taking significant measures, including a reduction of 800 jobs in IJmuiden” near Amsterdam, the company said in a statement.

The cuts will affect some 500 full-time workers — mainly in management, staff and support functions — while another 300 temporary jobs were also to disappear. “Forced redundancies cannot be ruled out and the company will discuss a social plan with the unions,” said the firm.

The site employs more than 9,200 people. In all, 11,500 people work for Tata Steel in the Netherlands.

The Tata Steel plant has come under increasing fire from Dutch residents and health authorities, who accuse it of being the main source of air, soil and water pollution in the area and of causing illness.

Tata Steel is facing several legal claims and Dutch prosecutors in February last year opened a criminal probe into possible “intentional and unlawful” pollution. Dutch emission authorities have identified the Tata Steel site as one of the largest emitters of CO2 in the country. The steelmaker’s announcement comes as the UK government in September announced it would pump in £500 million (\$621 million) to fund the production of “greener” steel at Tata Steel’s Talbot plant — Britain’s biggest steelworks — but that 3,000 jobs there were also at risk. — AFP

Argentina inflation hits new high before presidential vote

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina’s annual inflation rate has hit 143 percent, the statistics agency announced Monday, just days before a presidential election in which the dire state of the economy will be a deciding factor. Argentines go to the polls on Sunday for a nail-biting showdown between Economy Minister Sergio Massa and political outsider and self-described “anarcho-capitalist” Javier Milei.

The two men represent wildly different options for the future of Latin America’s third-largest economy. While Milei has held a slight lead in the polls, analysts say the race is too tight to predict. Massa has overseen the slide into triple-digit inflation that has left many people struggling to survive.

However, he scored the most votes in last month’s first-round election, and Argentine media called him the winner of a final debate with his rival on Sunday night. The libertarian Milei has vowed to “dynamite” the central bank — meaning shut it down — and dollarize the economy, firing up voters tired of decades of decline in their living standards. Ahead of the run-off he has sought to tone down his fiery image to appeal to more moderate voters, notably ditching the live chainsaw he wielded at ral-

lies as a symbol of his plan to slash state spending.

The rise of the political outsider, who rages against the establishment, is seen as a symptom of voter disgust with decades of recurrent fiscal crises marked by debt, financial mismanagement, and a volatile currency.

The national statistics agency reported that inflation over the past 12 months had risen 142.7 percent, up from 138 percent in September. “Every day I go to buy something and every day I see the prices rising. You go to buy something to make dinner and you have no idea how much you will spend,” said David Garcia, 43, a food deliveryman.

Nevertheless, monthly inflation slowed to 8.3 percent in October, down from 12.7 percent in September. Consumer prices have risen 120 percent since January this year. “We are going to dollarize. We are going to close the central bank. We are going to end the cancer of inflation,” Milei said during the final debate. Massa peppered his rival with questions about his controversial policy plans, many of which he has watered down in recent weeks.

In a post-debate interview on Monday with Radio Mitre, Milei accused Massa of planting “coughers” on his side of the audience in an effort to distract him, and of trying to depict him as “emotionally unstable.” During the debate, Milei doubled down on his accusation that Massa represents a “corrupt, parasitic, thieving political class” that has driven the country into its current misery.

Nicolas Saldias, a senior analyst with the Economist Intelligence Unit, told AFP that regardless of the

Huawei PaperMatte Tablet: The best choice for students

KUWAIT: Have you tried reading books or watching videos on tablet screens in bright outdoors or by a window? It’s going to be hard to see what’s on the screen with all the reflections and glare, and you will end up squinting at the screen and hurting your eyes. Reading from paper is comfortable even over extended periods because paper doesn’t gleam with reflections under bright light, nor does it flicker. Moreover, writing or drawing on paper provides a certain resistance and tangible feedback that a smooth glass screen simply doesn’t offer. What if you could have a screen that is just as comfortable as paper?

Huawei recently released the Huawei MatePad 11.5” PaperMatte edition tablet that tackles this problem head-on with the new PaperMatte display that gives you a paper-like experience. This tablet uses the PaperMatte Display that reduces glare, flicker, and eye strain, offering a natural and comfortable viewing and writing without compromising display clarity.

The PaperMatte Display

The PaperMatte Display uses nano-level anti-glare etching technology to create hundreds of millions of tiny textures on the glass surface. These textures scatter the light and prevent it from reflecting back to your eyes. This reduces light interference by 97 percent, eliminating glare from any angle. You can see clearly even in bright sunlight and enjoy a smooth and natural paper-like feel on your tablet.

The PaperMatte Tablet also delivers a vivid and vibrant display that doesn’t compromise colour accuracy for com-

fort. They offer a color e-book mode that makes your screen look like a real book, displaying thousands of colors with precision and richness. You can read e-books or comics with a realistic and immersive view, in a way that is easy on the eyes and lush with colors.

Whether watching a video, reading an e-book, or playing a game, the PaperMatte Display lets you do it all without missing any details.

Certified for eye comfort

Besides glare, another factor that can cause eye fatigue is screen flicker. It can happen when your screen adjusts to different lighting conditions or when you use it for a long time. Fortunately, the PaperMatte Display protects your eyes from flicker and blue light. It uses TÜV Rheinland-certified Flicker-Free and Low Blue Light (Hardware Solution) technologies to keep your screen smooth and natural, taking eye comfort to a whole another level.

The PaperMatte Display has TÜV Rheinland Reflection Free and industry-first SGS Low Visual Fatigue Premium Performance Certifications that guarantee excellent viewing performance in any situation. The SGS Low Visual Fatigue Premium Performance certification is the highest certification from SGS that measures eye strain. With a screen as comfortable as this, you can enjoy your content with peace of mind, knowing that your eye health is in good hands.

Write and sketch like on paper

The PaperMatte Display lets you write on your tablet as if writing on



real paper. It has a subtle texture, created by nano-level anti-glare etching technology, that offers a tangible, paper-like resistance while writing and sketching. It also has realistic sound effects and vibrations that simulate the feel of using a pen and paper. The textured surfaces of the PaperMatte tablet give you the right amount of friction and grip for you to write faster and accurately without slipping.

You can use the PaperMatte Tablet with the Huawei M-Pencil (2nd generation), which has a nylon elastomer nib and a latency of just 2ms. It gives you a smooth and natural writing experience. You can even change the nib to a soft white one for a more gentle feel.

PaperMatte Edition tablet come with Huawei Notes, a powerful note-taking app that lets you do amazing things with your tablet. This app

offers some cool features that make your note-taking more fun and efficient. You can zoom in on the canvas up to 15 times to effortlessly craft intricate mind maps and stunning sketches. You can also convert your handwriting to text with just a tap.

Conclusion

The Huawei MatePad 11.5” PaperMatte edition tablet are perfect for anyone who wants a tablet that can replace physical books and let them watch videos and browse the web without being distracted by glare and squinting their eyes. With this tablet, you can carry thousands of books anywhere you go and sketch your ideas and take notes comfortably, like on paper. Plus, unlike an e-book reader, these tablets can do everything a typical tablet can.



BUENOS AIRES: People pass by the INDEC (National Institute of Statistics and Census) displaying political propaganda of Argentina’s Economy Minister and presidential candidate for Union por la Patria party Sergio Massa in Buenos Aires on November 13, 2023. — AFP

debate, “reality bites... and I think that this election is still unfavorable to Massa fundamentally.”

“The economy is really, really suffering.” Inflation soared after the strictly-controlled peso was devalued by 20 percent in August, but since then Massa has kept the rate steady — all while the parallel “blue dollar” rate has soared. “It’s a total fiction. And to maintain it is extremely expensive,” said Saldias of the official peso rate of 365 to the US dollar. In recent weeks, Massa temporarily suspended taxes on already heavily-subsidized fuels to limit price increases. — AFP

Glencore takes majority stake in Canadian coal firm

ZURICH: Swiss commodities giant Glencore will acquire a majority stake in the steelmaking coal business of Canadian miner Teck Resources, the companies said on Tuesday, ending fraught negotiations between the groups.

Glencore initially launched a \$23 billion hostile takeover bid of Teck’s entire operation in April, disrupting the Canadian firm’s plans to spin off its coal business and raising concerns in the country about its potential impact on jobs. After Teck balked, the Swiss group made an alternative offer to buy its steelmaking coal business, Elk Valley Resources (EVR).

In the deal announced Tuesday, Glencore will take a 77-percent effective interest in EVR for \$6.93 billion in cash.

Japan’s Nippon Steel Corporation will acquire a 20-percent minority stake, while South Korea’s POSCO will grab three percent. Vancouver-based Teck Resources put the value of its steelmaking coal business at \$9.0 billion. Glencore’s coal strategy has attracted fierce criticism, including from some shareholders at the commodity trading and mining group. — AFP

Lifestyle

Pastry chef of year says pleasure comes first

Nina Metayer, the first woman to win one of the world's top pastry chef awards, doesn't believe in cutting back on the butter. Metayer's cakes have just won her the coveted "World Confectioner" award from the International Union of Bakers and Pastry Chefs. This is the first time the award has gone to a woman in its 92-year history. But you won't find the 35-year-old following any modern trends or low-fat options. "I like cakes with butter, gluten, eggs," she told AFP.

"I work from the principle that you shouldn't lie to people. When we eat a cake, it's for pleasure." And good quality, tasty ingredients inevitably cut down on the amount of sugar required, she added. Other aspects of Metayer's success are less traditional. She has earned her new accolade without being part of a renowned restaurant or even a shop. Instead,



French World Pastry Champion Nina Metayer poses at her workshop in Issy-les-Moulineaux, outside Paris. - AFP photos

Metayer runs a delivery service out of an industrial space in a business district just outside Paris. Busy preparing her new mango tart, she told AFP that the key lay in precision and little twists, not wild originality.

"I'm not thinking up unbelievable



recipes that no one has done before," she said. "It's about having an instinct but also being precise down to the millimeter — everything is weighed, calculated... we have micro-scales so that we can reproduce them down to the last piece of zest."

'No glass ceiling'

Trained as a baker, Metayer found it tough to break into the male-dominated world of French boulangeries when she started out 15 years ago. Switching to cakes "was not much easier," she said, but with perseverance Metayer landed gigs in the Michelin-starred kitchens of top chefs like Yannick Alleno and Amandine Chaignot, eventually earning her top awards from French guides. "Nina represents all that is best in modern confectionery. She is really moving the profession forward," said Marc Esquerre of the Gault et Millau food guide.

Metayer moved into the large industrial space three years ago to build her own business. It's a system that allows her to avoid waste and cater directly to customers' desires, she says. Often posting videos online of her making cakes with her two young daughters, Metayer says she wants to show it is

possible to be "a female chef, entrepreneur, and have a happy family". Around her, the sous-chefs are adding touches to mango and passion fruit pavlovas and tarte tatin.

"This atmosphere, with a close team under a female chef, is reassuring for young women starting in pastry work, because it's not like this everywhere," said 30-year-old Lucie Martin-Pierrat. "It's inspiring. We see there is no glass ceiling," added her colleague, 27-year-old Mathilde Jeannes.

The team has grown rapidly from three to 30. But while orders are pouring in after last month's award, Metayer's husband, Mathieu Salome, who helps run the business, said they do not want to turn into a production line. "We are artisans, not factory workers," he said. — AFP



'The Marvels' has a far from marvelous North America opening

New superhero film "The Marvels" is making history, and not in a good way: its estimated \$47 million North American take over the weekend marks the lowest debut ever for a movie from Disney's normally money-cranking Marvel Cinematic Universe. "This opening is an unprecedented Marvel box office collapse," said analyst David A Gross. Second superhero episodes normally outperform the originals, he said, but this one is down 67 percent from its predecessor, "Captain Marvel," and has a long way to go to recoup its \$220 million production cost.

It's unclear, analysts said, whether this is a clear signal of moviegoers' superhero fatigue after so many successful blockbusters. But Gross said several factors are hurting such films in the theaters, including the growth of streaming services and the recently ended actors' strike ("Marvels" stars led by Brie Larson were unable to do promotional work) - as well as a slew of "unimaginative and bad movies" across the genre.

"The Marvels," a complicated sci-fi yarn about quantum entanglement, "jump points" and holes in space, also stars Teyonah Parris and Iman Vellani. In second for the weekend was "Five Nights at Freddy's" from Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Productions, with estimated ticket sales of \$9 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday.

Josh Hutcherson plays a down-at-the-heels guard working nights at an abandoned family entertainment center where creepy animatronic characters spring — murderously — to life.

AMC Theaters' "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" again performed well: the superstar's concert film earned \$5.9 million as it placed third for the weekend. Its total domestic haul in five weeks is now \$172.5 million.

In fourth was A24's biopic "Priscilla," at \$4.8 million, nearly level with last weekend's \$5 million take. The Sofia Coppola-directed film charts the rocky relationship between Elvis and Priscilla Presley, from their first meeting, when she was just 14 and he was a 24-year-old star, to their acrimonious split. Cailie Spaeny, in the title role, has earned the Venice Film Festival's best actress award. And in fifth, at \$4.7 million, was Martin Scorsese's history-based epic "Killers of the Flower Moon." The Paramount drama stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro and Lily Gladstone.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "The Holdovers" (\$3.2 million) "Journey to Bethlehem" (\$2.4 million) "Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie" (\$1.8 million) "Radical" (\$1.8 million) "The Exorcist: Believer" (\$1.2 million).

—AFP



1962 Ferrari auctioned for \$51.7 million in New York: Sotheby's

A 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO sports car sold for \$51.7 million in New York on Monday, making it the second most expensive car ever sold at auction, Sotheby's said. The bright red roadster had been the property of an American collector for the past 38 years, and its auction price was surpassed only by that of a Mercedes 300 SLR Uhlenhaut Coupe that went for 135 million euros in 2022, the auction house said. That would be \$144 million at today's exchange rate. The 250 GTO went on sale Monday evening after a few minutes of bidding in the auction room, but at a price lower than the more than \$60 million expected by RM Sotheby's, the luxury car subsidiary of the auction house. Sotheby's did not identify the winning bidder.

Dating from 1962, the legendary Scuderia sports car — chassis 3765, four-liter engine developing 390 horsepower — had finished second in a race of 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) on the German Nurburgring circuit, as well as in the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans, where the team had to withdraw due to engine failure, according to RM Sothe-

by's. After several years of competition on the Italian mainland and in Sicily, the car was sold and exported to the US in the late 1960s.

Restored and modified, the 250 GTO changed American owners several times before ending up in the hands of an Ohio "dedicated collector" in 1985, who sold it on Monday. "This stunning GTO offers its next caretaker further touring and vintage racing enjoyment, or display at major concours d'elegance and marque gatherings worldwide," Sotheby's said. The Mercedes 300 SLR Uhlenhaut Coupe that fetched 135 million euros in 2022 was one of only two examples of the sport car. It sold at a confidential auction at the German manufacturer's museum in Stuttgart and was the most expensive car ever sold worldwide, whether at auction or privately, a RM Sotheby's spokesman told AFP.

This week, New York auction houses Sotheby's and Christie's conclude their autumn season of art sales, which have not been affected by hard times and have raked in hundreds of millions of dollars since November 7. Christie's, which on Thursday sold Claude Monet's "Le bassin aux nymphéas" ("Water Lily Pond") for \$74 million and three paintings by Paul Cezanne for \$53 million, reported a total of \$864 million by late Monday. — AFP

Italian circus says escaped lion posed no risk

The lion that escaped from a circus near Rome posed no threat to the public, his handler insisted Sunday, as campaigners called for Italy to ban wild animals in entertainment. Residents of the seaside town of Ladispoli were told to stay indoors for more than five hours on Saturday evening while police, vets and circus staff tracked the lion, finally sedating and then capturing him.

Extraordinary videos published by Italian media, apparently taken by locals, showed the fully-grown lion with a shaggy mane walking through dark and deserted residential streets, padding past parked cars. But Rony Vassallo, who is responsible for the animals in the Rony Roller Circus, said that while the thought of confronting a lion would make most people fearful, eight-year-old Kimba posed little danger.

"He met with people in an environment he wasn't used to... and nothing happened, he didn't even for a second have the instinct to attack a person," he told AFP at the circus site. He said his fear had been "that someone could have harm the animal, out of fear, or excess enthusiasm". Nearby, not far from the red and white striped main tent where preparations were under way for the afternoon show, the newly captured lion paced inside his cage, occasionally roaring.

Sabotage?

Vassallo said Kimba was only lightly sedated and woke up almost immediately, while examinations by vets had concluded he bore no ill-effects from his excursion. But the handler, whose family runs the travelling circus, said they were all "very shaken and very tense" after the escape, which he believed was not an accident.

Vassallo said he personally checked on the cage an hour before the lion went walkabout, and "everything was in order". He declined to comment on reports of sabotage, including that the lock was forced, saying an investigation was underway. But he said it had never happened before and "it's very strange". He showed how the door to the metal cage opens inwards, secured with a sliding bolt and a lightweight chain with a small padlock.

Forced into captivity

Kimba was born and raised in captivity, alongside his two brothers — Zeus and Ivan — and sister Maya. They are among nine big cats at the circus, including tigers, while acts also involve elephants, camels, horses and even bison. The circus has drawn the ire of animal rights campaigners, who say keeping

such wild creatures is cruel.

More than 20 European countries have banned or heavily restricted the use of animals in circuses — but Italy is not yet among them. A law has been drafted but was this year delayed to 2024, according to the LAV campaign group, which estimates that just under 2,000 animals are held in circuses across Italy.

What happened in Ladispoli "highlights the dangers of circuses with animals from the point of view of public security", said animal rights group OIPA. But it also highlighted "the discomfort of poor creatures forced into captivity for entertainment", it said.



The lion Kimba, 8, from the Rony Roller circus is seen behind fences in Ladispoli.

Ladispoli mayor Alessandro Grandi, who had warned residents to stay at home on Saturday, has also called for a change in the law. "I hope that this episode can stir some consciences, and that we can finally put an end to the exploitation of animals in circuses," he said.

But Vassallo said critics "don't know the reality of the facts, how animals are treated in circuses, of the checks that are carried out". In the surrounding neighborhood, residents who spoke to AFP expressed support for the circus — and seemed more concerned about the lion than public safety. "I was a little bit scared but afterwards, from the images from the videos, you could see that he was so good," said Barbara Rosolino, 47. "He wanted to go home anyway, you could see he was scared out of his mind." — AFP



The lion Kimba is seen behind fences in Ladispoli. — AFP photos



Rapper Young Thug

Prosecutors can use rap lyrics as evidence in Young Thug trial, judge rules

Rap lyrics can be admitted as evidence in the sprawling US gang conspiracy trial targeting rapper Young Thug and several others, a judge ruled Thursday. The defense had sought to exclude lyrics from evidence, saying the use of verses could unfairly influence the jury and was a violation of creative expression. For years, many free speech advocates, civil rights groups, music world figures and legislators have decried using lyrics as evidence as a constitutional violation of expression that criminalizes and punishes artists, most of them of color.

But Atlanta Judge Ural Glanville ruled that he would allow specific sets of lyrics as evidence if prosecutors could detail how the raps connected to crimes the defendants are alleged to have committed. There are 17 sets of lyrics Glanville said he would plan to admit, and that additional verses could be presented if prosecutors can "lay the foundation" of how they connect to alleged real-life crimes.

Young Thug, the 32-year-old rapper born Jeffery Williams, was one of 28 alleged street gang members originally swept up in a May 2022 racketeering indictment. Many of those defendants have since taken plea deals or will be tried separately. The accusations included myriad predicate offenses that support an overarching conspiracy charge, including murder, assault, carjacking, drug dealing and theft. Prosecutors say Young Thug's record label is a front for a crime ring, arguing that the defendants belong to a branch of the Bloods street gang identified as Young Slime Life, or YSL. But defense lawyers insist YSL - Young Stoner Life Records, a hip-hop and trap label that Young Thug founded in 2016 - is simply a music label and vague association of artists, not a gang.

The indictment shook the rap world in Atlanta, where Young Thug is considered among the industry's most impactful figures. The jury selection process took nearly 10 months, a painstaking process marred by delays. Opening statements are currently scheduled for November 27, and the trial could last well into 2024. Young Thug is on trial in Fulton County court in Georgia, the same jurisdiction where former president Donald Trump is also embroiled in a racketeering case.

'Fictional art form'

The admission of rap lyrics as evidence will surely continue to trigger debate, both in the courtroom and across the broader music world. Critics of the tactic say taking slice-of-life lyrics out of context criminalizes artists who are primarily Black and brown, and can have a chilling effect on creative expression. During hours of presentation on Wednesday prosecutor Mike Carlson told the judge "the question is not rap lyrics. The question is gang lyrics."

"These are party admissions. They just happen to come in the form of lyrics." Fellow prosecutor Simone Hylton read the lyrics aloud to Judge Glanville on Wednesday, saying they glorify alleged crimes, including the shootings of rival gang members and violence against police. But the defense argued that lyrics are fiction. "Rap is the only fictional art form treated this way," said attorney Doug Weinstein, who represents the artist Yak Gotti. "No other musical genre, no other art is treated the same way." — AFP

Lifestyle

Indigenous writer Ailton Krenak, postponing the end of the world

The year was 1987, Brazil was just exiting a long military dictatorship, and Indigenous writer Ailton Krenak stood before the country's constitutional assembly in a pristine white suit, smearing black paint across his face. "Indigenous peoples have watered every scrap of Brazil's eight million square kilometers with their blood," the handsome young activist defiantly told the assembly, using a traditional mourning ritual to protest centuries of violence against native peoples.



Indigenous leader, environmentalist and writer Ailton Krenak speaks during an interview with AFP in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Thirty-six years after that memorable protest, which helped ensure the nation's new constitution protected native land rights, Krenak achieved what he calls a new "historic reparation" last month, when he was chosen as the first Indigenous member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters. Founded in 1897, the Academy is the rough equivalent of France's hallowed Academie Francaise or Spain's Real Academia.

Seen as a standard-bearer of Brazilian language and literature, the Rio de Janeiro institution is made up of 40 members known as the "immortals," who hold their seats for life. Known for its hushed halls and hallowed rituals — its members convene for formal gather-

ings in gold-embroidered uniforms — it is perhaps an unusual spot for life-long rabble-rouser Krenak, 70.

"We're going to bring a little noise to that century-old silence," the philosopher, writer and poet told AFP in an interview in Sao Paulo. The Academy "has always been closed to native peoples and dominated by (Brazilian) Portuguese."

Krenak says he hopes to use his seat in the institution to help shine a spotlight on Brazil's nearly 200 Indigenous languages. "Through language, literature and the arts, Indigenous cultures can be perceived as living things, not just something from the past," he says, speaking in calm but razor-sharp sentences. Despite the horrors of the colonial past, "we are alive," he adds. "We won."

In the flesh

A member of the Krenak people of southeastern Brazil, whose surname he bears, the writer has lived the Indigenous struggle in the flesh. His people were expelled from their land around 1970, during the dictatorship (1964-1985), forcing him and his family into exile. At 18, he left for the southern state of Parana to study "the colonizer's language," earning a journalism degree. It is the language in which he writes his books.

After enduring torture and persecution by the military regime, the Krenak only partly recovered their lands with the return to democracy. Their 600 remaining members were scattered across several states. Krenak's own fight is rooted in their suffering. Considered one of Brazil's leading Indigenous intellectuals, he has written a highly regarded body of work criticizing colonialism and capitalism, including the critically acclaimed essay "Ideas to Postpone the End of the World" (2019), translated into more than



Ailton Krenak visits the photographic exhibition "Hiromi Nagakura to Amazonia with Ailton Krenak," on display at the Tomie Ohtake Institute in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP photos

10 languages. The Indigenous leader, who is discreet on his personal life, married fellow activist Irani Krenak in 2000. They had three children, one of whom died in an accident. Another daughter from a previous relationship also died.

Different vision

Krenak rejects the notion that European colonizers brought "civilization" to the Americas. In fact, they brought a way of life that divorced humankind from nature, leading to a world where corporations "devour forests, mountains and rivers," he writes. Krenak proposes a different way of life, akin to that of the native communities who resisted colonialism, fiercely clinging to their land.

About four years ago, he moved to his people's land on the banks of the Rio Doce river, home to around 350 Indigenous people. But even there, what he

calls the "corporate monster" is inescapable. A case in point: a notorious mine dam collapse in 2015 that caused an environmental disaster on the river, a vital source of water and food for his people.

The accelerating destruction of nature affects everyone, Krenak says. "It's not just Indigenous peoples who are threatened by the damage anymore. Now white people are, too," he says, wearing a striped shirt and traditional feather necklace. For now, he says, he is "biding (his) time" hoping for political and social change. But in the end, he says, he expects the Earth to move beyond humankind. "My hope is that we'll be discarded as quickly as possible so the planet can continue its magnificent journey." — AFP

Dominica to create world's first sperm whale reserve

Dominica is set to create the world's first sperm whale reserve, designating a swath of ocean where large ships and commercial fishing are restricted and visitors can swim alongside the gentle marine giants. The Caribbean nation said it hoped the new protected zone of 300 square miles (nearly 800 square kilometers) off its western coast — roughly the size of the island itself — would boost valuable tourism revenue but also help sequester more carbon in the deep sea, an often overlooked benefit of whale conservation. "The 200 or so sperm whales that call our sea home are prized citizens of Dominica," said Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit in a statement Monday. "Dominica is honored to establish the first Sperm Whale Reserve on our planet."



An 18-meter-long sperm whale swims in the Mediterranean sea, off the coast of Nice, southern France, on July 22, 2009. — AFP

Sperm whales are the largest toothed predators on Earth, living in matrilineal societies with distinct cultures and dialects. Growing up to 50 feet (16 meters) long, they are found across the globe, from Iceland to New Zealand. But they have a particular affinity for the majestic blue waters off Dominica, which provide critical feeding and nursing grounds. Marine biologist Shane Gero told AFP he began studying the Dominican whales in 2005, with his research showing the population was experiencing a decline as a result of ship strikes and unintentional entanglements in fishing gear as well as plastic pollution.

"We're losing individual animals and the families that researchers and the operators who do whale watching here know very well," he said. Individuals live up to 90 years, and the Dominican whales communicate in a specific series of clicks thought to convey: "I'm from Dominica, are you?" Several Dominican whales have been given names, such as "Can Opener," "Fingers" and "Hope," and remember certain tour operators they've come to know.

Ecotourism and climate benefits

The reserve's boundaries were defined based on studies of where the roughly 50 whale families find food and shelter, though a corridor will be carved out to allow ships to dock at Roseau, the island's capital and largest city, Francine Baron, CEO of the Climate Resilience Execution Agency for Dominica told AFP. Success or failure will hinge on stringent regulations and implementation. A law required to operationalize the reserve should be passed by Dominica's parliament "within weeks," said Baron, a former foreign minister, promising there would be "legislative teeth."

Vessels 60 feet or longer would likely be prohibited, while small-scale, artisanal fishing would be allowed to continue. Kristen Rechberger, CEO of Dynamic Planets which is advising the government, told AFP the idea would be to do something akin to the mountain gorilla tourism program of Rwanda, where foreign visitors pay \$1,500 to hike a whole day then spend an hour with the primates. Conserving sperm whales also carries climate benefits that derive from their feces.

Sperm whales dive to hunt squid, then return to the surface where they breathe, rest and defecate. Their nutrient-rich feces foster plankton blooms which capture carbon dioxide from seawater. When the plankton dies it becomes a carbon sink, helping mitigate impacts of climate change.

Assuming 250 whales in Dominica's waters, each year they lock up to 4200 metric tons of carbon, equivalent to keeping 5,000 cars off the road — significant for a small island nation, said Enric Sala, founder of nonprofit Pristine Seas which is also advising Dominica. "So the whales are part of the climate resilience plan of Dominica," he said. "Whale poop, who would have thought?" — AFP



A picture shows the Swedish Match factory of Snus located in Gothenburg, Sweden.



A picture shows the Swedish Match production line of portion Snus.



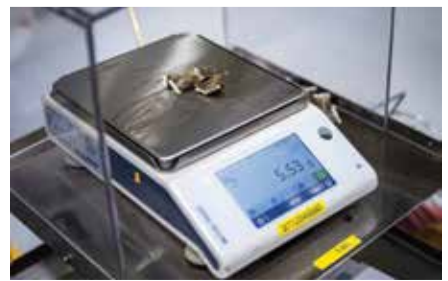
A picture shows the Swedish Match production line of portion Snus in the company's factory in Gothenburg, Sweden.



A picture shows the Swedish Match production line of portion Snus.



A worker operates a machine on the production line of snus, a smokeless tobacco product that is placed under the upper lip, at the factory of Swedish Match, in Gothenburg, Sweden. — AFP photos



A picture shows small bags of snus being weighed at the Swedish Match production line of portion Snus.

Why Sweden going smoke-free may not be such good 'snus'

Sweden is poised to become Europe's first smoke-free country largely thanks to the popularity of snus, a kind of moist snuff which is placed under the upper lip. But some are worried the tobacco industry is peddling a "fairytale" that is too good to be true. Used by one in seven Swedes, snus has, according to the government, helped slash the number of smokers from 15 percent of the population in 2005 to 5.2 percent last year, a record low in Europe.

A country is considered smoke-free when less than five percent of its population are daily smokers. Snus has been banned in the European Union since 1992. But Sweden negotiated an exemption when it joined the bloc three years later.

At the Swedish Match factory in the western city of Gothenburg, thousands of doses of snus wend their way through a complex web of machinery producing the sachets. The company sold 277 million boxes of snus in Sweden and Norway in 2021. "We have used it for 200 years in Sweden. (It's) part of the Swedish culture, just like many other European countries have their wine culture," Swedish Match spokesman Patrik Hildingsson told AFP.

Clad in a white lab coat, he described the manufacturing process. "Tobacco comes from India or the United States. It goes through this silo and is then packed inside the pouches like tea bags and then into these boxes." There are two types: traditional brown snus, which contains tobacco, and white snus, which is made of synthetic nicotine and often flavored.

Conquering the young

Traditional snus is mostly sold in Sweden, Norway and the US. White snus, introduced about 15 years ago, falls into a legal void in the EU since it doesn't contain tobacco. It was

banned this year in both Belgium and the Netherlands. But it is hugely popular with young people in Sweden, with its use quadrupling among women aged 16 to 29 in four years.

Fifteen percent of people in Sweden say they use some form of snus daily, a figure that has risen slightly in recent years. At the same time,



This picture shows a man as he smokes a cigarette in Sundbyberg, near Stockholm.

the country has seen a sharp drop in smokers even though cigarettes are less than half the price they are in Ireland. Just five percent of Swedes say they smoke regularly, according to 2022 data from the Public Health Agency, putting Sweden 27 years ahead of the EU's 2050 smoke-free target. "It's very positive," Swedish Health Minister Jakob Forssmed told AFP.

"A very important decision was the smoking ban in restaurants from 2005, and then at outdoor restaurants and public places in 2019," he said. "Many Swedes also say that switching to snus helped them stop smoking." The government has also backed the snus industry, hiking taxes recently on cigarettes by nine percent while cutting those on traditional snus by 20 percent.

"With all these regulations it's almost impossible to smoke. Snus doesn't smell, and the nicotine rush is much stronger than with a cigarette," said Thorbjorn Thoors, a 67-year-old window

repairman who has used snus since his teens and quit smoking decades ago.

Linked to cancer?

But the decision to lower taxes on snus does not sit well with Ulrika Arehed Kagstrom, head of the Swedish Cancer Society. "It came as a complete surprise and I was really disappointed," she said.



A picture shows caps for packages of snus at the Swedish Match production line of portion Snus.

"It shows that they really completely bought the fairytale from the tobacco industry, (which is) trying to find a new market for these products and saying that these are harm reduction products."

"We don't have enough research yet," she insisted. "We know that snus and these kinds of nicotine products cause changes in your blood pressure and there is a risk of long-term cardiovascular disease." Arehed Kagstrom fears that just like with smoking it will take years to show "to what extent these products were harmful".

A June 2023 study by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health showed that the risk of throat and pancreatic cancer was three and two times greater, respectively, among frequent snus users. However, in 2017, a study in the International Journal of Cancer concluded there was no link between cancer and snus. — AFP

Lifestyle



A close up shows the hands of African faith healer Cheick Issa before a consultation in his office in Paris.--AFP photos



Tree barks called "Djoro" used by African faith healer Cheick Issa "to fight the evil eye" are photographed in his office in Paris.



Rosaries used by African faith healer Cheick Issa are photographed in his office before a consultation.

Pogba, potions and impotence

The secret world of witch doctors in France

"There's a lot of jealousy in football," said Sheikh Issa, holding up a piece of bark and a bottle of a yellowish potion. Which is why many professional players beat a path to the African faith healer in the Paris suburbs looking for ways to ward off the "evil eye" and other afflictions. Since World Cup winner Paul Pogba was sensationally accused of having spells cast on his French teammate Kylian Mbappe, the surprisingly influential role folk healers or "marabouts" play in the game has begun to come to light.

a witch doctor to hex Mbappe, but both the former Manchester United star and the healer told police they did nothing of the kind. The marabout said the substantial payments Pogba made to him were for "good works in Africa". With three out of 10 people in France prone to believe in some sort of sorcery, according to a 2020 survey, AFP has been investigating this closed world for the past year. We discovered how faith healers are "half feared and half despised"—as one anthropologist put it—and why they hold such sway in some communities.

School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris told AFP. "And for some it works. Placebo effect or not, from the moment people believe it can make a difference," it can, she added.

But Monsieur Fakoly, a Guinean healer working in Paris, who comes from a line of marabouts, had his own view of how it works. "Every one of us has a star. If it is dirty, people fail and have bad luck. So you have to purify the soul," he said. "Prayers and advice will help the person feel better. We listen, we give medicine, but not the kind you get in a pharmacy!" said the healer, one of eight interviewed by AFP.

miracle working can call themselves a marabout.

Some charge no more than a dozen euros for an appointment, though the price can go up to several hundred or thousands for a sacrifice, even tens of thousands in some cases. Therapist Assa Djelou regularly receives clients who have been let down by marabouts. She said some have a "dangerous" hold on people. Rather than "facing up to reality", the healers convince people their problems "have been caused by spells cast on them, which can lead to anxiety and depression". The French police only get involved when there are complaints about fraud or practicing medicine illegally. But such cases are rare and there's a "taboo" about talking about it, said Djelou.

'Dependent' on witch doctors

In sport, where superstition is commonplace, things can also quickly get out of hand. "Careers are short and the least injury" can be catastrophic, said Thibault,



African faith healer Cheick Issa rinses his mouth with a powder before starting a consultation with Raymond, one of his clients.



Rosaries used by African faith healer Cheick Issa are photographed in his office before a consultation in his office.



African faith healer Cheick Issa notes in geomantic what he feels from the consultation with Raymond, one of his clients.

"This is what I use to treat a player who keeps getting injured in big games," said Sheikh Issa, whose name we have changed at his request. He was really low and "I had to clean his star", said the Ivory Coast-born "traditional practitioner", who claims to be able to "see both the past and the future".

With so much money at stake, and careers that can end on a single tackle, elite sports people "regularly turn to witch doctors and to the paranormal", said Joel Thibault, an evangelical pastor who is a spiritual advisor to French striker Olivier Giroud and other top athletes. All this had been discreetly going out of the public eye until Pogba—whose parents come from Guinea—fell victim to an alleged extortion attempt by some of his entourage last year.

His brother later claimed Pogba paid

'A gift'

Sheikh Issa wears jeans in the street, but when he welcomes his clients into his surgery he sports a long African boubou robe. "I don't believe in gris-gris or amulets, I believe in the Koran and in plants," said the 45-year-old, who also runs a cleaning business. The tools of his trade are arranged around him in a couple of dozen bottles and plastic bags—tree bark that protects you from the "evil eye", ground seeds that "keep you lucky", and potions to "add sheen" and charisma to "politicians, lawyers and business people" who Sheikh Issa said come to him looking to "be loved and admired".

And, of course, remedies to enhance "sexual power", he said pointing to another bottle. France is a "stressful country and some people are weak in bed", added Sheikh, a little sheepishly. Afterwards they call and say, "Thank you, Sheikh."

Sheikh Issa got "the gift" from his mother "who read shells" and his father, who is an imam. He trained with faith healers in West Africa—where people often consult marabouts—after studying at a koranic school. He said his reputation took off when he "helped" a politician become a government minister. His three phones buzz constantly with messages.

Most of the Sheikh's clients—who he insists only pay the cost of importing his plants and his travel expenses—are mostly African and South Asian, although some come from both the French Caribbean and France itself. One summer's day when AFP visited his consulting room, a young Comorian woman "who lives with spirits and self harms" was waiting to see him along with "a Moroccan desperate" about his failing bakery. "People don't talk when they come for the first time," he said. "I have to guess" what is wrong. Some are having trouble at home or at work, have health problems or are looking for "the love of their life", he said.

'Everyone has a star'

The mostly West African witch doctors operating in France—who see themselves as healers of the soul—have learned to adapt to malheurs of their French clients. Many go to them as others would go to a psychologist or a clairvoyant, experts say. Anthropologist Liliane Kuczynski, author of the definitive book, "African marabouts in Paris", found clients come from a wide social spectrum, from undocumented migrants to graduates and teachers.

"Far from being obscure and marginal, belief in superstitions and the paranormal has become a constantly rising majority phenomenon," French polling company Ifo found in 2020. "Marabouts are particularly gifted with emotional intelligence," anthropologist Marie Miran-Guyon of the

'The spirits are working on me'

Raymond, 61, had just arrived in Sheikh Issa's consulting room. Sheikh slowly shook his hand, pressing his thumb to "test the energy... I feel it's angry, that things are not good." Then Raymond picked up a pen and brought it to his lips without saying a word. In



Juventus' French midfielder Paul Pogba reacts after being tackled during the UEFA Europa League semi-final first leg football match between Juventus and Sevilla at the Juventus stadium in Turin.--AFP photos

the silence, Sheikh wrote in his notebook, then traced some lines between the letters to evoke the "16 spirits" using a technique called geomancy. "My ears are hot, I feel a bar in the middle of my forehead," he told his client. "The spirits are working on me."

Raymond—who asked that we not use his real name—was convinced his ex-wife had "cast a spell on him" after they divorced a decade ago. He was tired and in pain and "I went to work like a zombie". Rather than go to a doctor he sought succour at a prophetic African church, but to no avail. So he began to consult healers who read shells. "All they did was take my money," he said. A fellow construction worker recommended Sheikh Issa. "It was if he had lived alongside me all those years," Raymond recalled. "He recounted my life from A to Z. I couldn't believe it." Sheikh prepared him potions in West African jars called canaris. "Take the canari home wash yourself with the potion," Raymond remembered him telling him. From that day on "I got my health back", said Raymond.

'Taboo'

"Some (marabouts) are like psychotherapists... while others are swindlers," said anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). Some come from a Sufi tradition with a deep "religious culture and desire to help", he said, but others know little more than "a few surahs of the Koran and extract the maximum for their victims," he added. Anyone who says they have the gift and some knowledge of Islam, divination and



France's forward Kylian Mbappe arrives in Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines as part of the team's preparation for the upcoming UEFA Euro 2024 football tournament qualifying matches.

the pastor who has supported several top athletes. Sometimes they need help because they "do not have the inner strength to get over everything" thrown at them. But "what these marabouts do is very dangerous", he claimed. Former footballer Cisse Baratte told AFP how he fell under the influence of witch doctors as a rising young player plucked from the Ivory Coast to play in France. Soon he had become "dependent" on the amulets, "protection belts" and sacrifices they made for him.

The legendary French football manager Claude Le Roy, who managed six African national teams, knows the problem well. He was even threatened and branded the "white sorcerer" for driving marabouts away from his staff and players. "Some players have a need to talk with their marabouts, it can comfort them, and it is also a link with their homeland," he added.

Even though he insists that "he doesn't believe in the slightest" in their powers, Le Roy is still troubled by one incident. In 1997, after a catastrophic away leg in the Champions League against Steaua Bucuresti which they lost 3-0, Paris Saint-Germain had to win by four goals to go through. Desperate for anything that might help, the club paid "a grand Malian marabout" 500 euros. "He asked us for photos of the players and their numbers, and just before the home leg told us that number 18 would score the fourth goal in the 37th minute." PSG won 5-0, with its number 18 scoring the fourth goal in the 41st minute.—AFP

Footballers who fell under the spell of witch doctors

"It was like a spiral," said Gilles Yapi Yapo, a former Ivory Coast international football star who said he was cheated out of 200,000 euros (\$213,000) by a witch doctor. "You are like a slave and it can be really damaging," the 41-year-old said of the two years he spent under the spell of a traditional healer, or marabout. The midfielder, who now manages a team in the Swiss second division, was "going through a difficult period" playing for the French Ligue 1 side Nantes when his uncle recommended he see a healer in Paris.

"I wasn't really attracted by the occult," Yapi Yapo told AFP, "but growing up in the Ivory Coast going to a marabout was normal, and it isn't seen as bad as long as you are not looking to harm anyone." The healer said his family had been "cursed", which was stopping him "succeeding and being happy" and prescribed making "sacrifices to counteract the curses". Sacrificing a cock, goat or ram started at 500 euros and began to climb to "colossal sums", he said.

Then one day it became darker, "something like black magic", Yapi Yapo said. "The marabout made me believe that the spirits he worked for liked me and wanted to make me rich. "That was the bait," he said.

'Sacrifice his son'

The sacrifices needed to attain these riches cost "40,000, 50,000, then 60,000 euros". When the footballer got financially stretched, the witch doctor said that "if he has no more money he'll have to sacrifice his son". I had the strength to say 'stop' and I never went back to him," Yapi Yapo said. In two years, he said he was conned into paying 200,000 euros, and got "nothing positive back". "He knew how to put me into a spiral and I lost the ability to think clearly..."

The footballer said his Christian faith helped give him the strength to put an end to the hold the marabout had on him. Some witch doctors "threaten vengeance", he said, "so there is a fear of breaking away from them." Joel Thibault, an evangelical pastor to several top athletes in France, has had to deal with the "disastrous consequences" of footballers and basketball players caught in similar circumstances.



FC Basel's Ivorian midfielder Gilles Yapi Yapo heads the ball during the final training session ahead of the second UEFA Champions League group E match between FC Basel 1893 and FC Bayern Munich in Basel.--AFP

"I know there are clubs that allow players to go to Senegal after they get injured because doctors can't treat them. They come back and play with amulets and protection belts." Those who go to healers in France have told him "that when things are going less well they are told to make more sacrifices, to pay more for them, and then it spirals," Thibault added. "I see the damage... players who are depressed and who have had suicidal thoughts."

'He became like a god'

Another Ivory Coast-born footballer, Cisse Baratte told AFP how he went through the same hell. When he began playing for a top club in Abidjan at 16, he was told that healers could make him perform better and protect him "from jealousy". "I fell into the trap," he admitted. Baratte, now 55, started by taking "showers with potions" prescribed by a witch doctor, having sacrifices made and wearing a leather protection belt that had verses of the Koran sewn into it.

"As soon as I got injured or things weren't going well, I would go to him. He became like a god to me... You become dependent and he took advantage of that." He turned to witch doctors again when he began playing in Europe in the 1990s. "I was always injured," he said. "The marabout said that it was because I wasn't taking the showers with the potions at the right time or because it was cold..." In the dressing rooms, he noticed teammates from Senegal or Cameroon also had "protection" -- "perfumes" or belts under their jerseys.—AFP

Alleged sex victim of Japan pop mogul dies after online abuse

A man who had said he was sexually abused by the founder of Japan's top boyband agency has died after receiving a torrent of on-line harassment, local media reported Tuesday. The man in his 40s, who had belonged to a group of alleged victims, was found dead in an apparent suicide last month in western Osaka prefecture, public broadcaster NHK said, citing police sources. The man was not named.

The Yomiuri daily reported that the man had received disparaging comments on social media, such as "Your lie will be exposed" and "You want money", after he went public with accusations of sexual abuse by Johnny Kitagawa, the founder of boyband empire Johnny & Associates. The agency admitted in September that Kitagawa, who died aged 87 in 2019, had sexually assaulted teenage boys and young men seeking stardom over decades.

Prior to the man's death, three members of the group of alleged victims had filed reports to police about being harassed online after they told media about the alleged sexual abuse. The deceased man had "asked the boyband agency to take action against abuse, but they only called on people to stop it without taking concrete measures", his family said in a statement, according to



Johnny Kitagawa

NHK and other local media.

"His emotional distress became even more severe as it was compounded by the recurrence of the sexual trauma he had originally suffered," the fam-

ily said, adding that he had reported the sexual abuse to the agency in May but had not heard back from a company representative other than receiving a promise to reply. The family was "still in disbelief and stunned by his sudden departure", they added.

Johnny & Associates announced last month that it would be renamed "Smile-Up" and dedicated solely to redressing survivors of Kitagawa's abuse, before being shuttered and transferring its talent to a new management company. Allegations that Kitagawa abused young men who wanted to be stars surfaced in Japanese media in 1999. But it was not until this year that they ignited full-on soul-searching, following a BBC documentary and denunciations by victims.—AFP

Sports

Hosts India braced for 'pressure' WCup semi against New Zealand

India boast a formidable fast-bowling line-up

MUMBAI: India may be the outstanding team at the Cricket World Cup but New Zealand fast bowler Lockie Ferguson has insisted both sides will "start from zero again" when they meet in Wednesday's semi-final in Mumbai.

Tournament hosts India head into the knockout match having won all nine of their group game, with star man Virat Kohli the event's leading batsman with 594 runs and captain Rohit Sharma not far behind on 503.

Meanwhile, India boast a formidable fast-bowling line-up in Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Mohammed Shami. If successful teams are fortunate as well as good, then India certainly had a lucky break when an injury to all-rounder Hardik Pandya paved the way for Shami's return, with the experienced seamer having since taken 16 wickets in five matches at a stunningly low average of under 10.

In addition spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav are also capable of taking wickets without being flogged for runs. And yet the fact remains India have been waiting since a 2011 triumph over Sri Lanka in Mumbai to win a third World Cup title, while their last major piece of silverware was the 2013 Champions Trophy.

New Zealand, losing finalists at the last two 50-over World Cups, won their opening four games of this edition only to lose their next four. But fast bowler Ferguson told reporters ahead of a training session in Mumbai on Monday: "We kind of all start from zero again. So come Wednesday, it'll be a good challenge."

Four years ago, New Zealand defeated India by just 18 runs in a rain-affected World Cup semi-final in Manchester that spanned two days. "That was obviously very pleasing for us at the time but four years have gone past, we've played a lot of cricket in between," said Ferguson.

Five of the India side who featured in the 2019 semi-final — Rohit, Kohli, Rahul, Bumrah and Jadeja — are set to be involved again on Wednesday. "You're at a pointy end in a tournament now," admitted India coach Rahul Dravid.

"There is going to be a certain amount of pressure but I think the way we have responded to the pressure so far gives us a lot of belief." Dravid's argument is supported by the manner of India's four-wicket win against New Zealand in the group stage at Dharamsala last month. Despite Daryl Mitchell's 130, India held New Zealand to 273, with Shami taking 5-54 before Kohli made 95 and

Jadeja, demonstrating his big-match temperament, a valuable 39 not out.

'Awesome' Ravindra

Wednesday's match takes place at Rohit's Wankhede Stadium home ground, where India bowled out Sri Lanka for just 55 to win by 302 runs in the group stage, with the aggressive 36-year-old opener leading from the front at what could be his last World Cup.

"Rohit has certainly been a leader, without a doubt," said India batting great Dravid. "He's cracked open games for us." New Zealand, however, have a proven world-class batsman of their own in captain Kane Williamson who, following an injury-plagued tournament, returned to form with 95 on his comeback against Pakistan.

Trent Boult and Tim Southee lead an experienced pace attack featuring the lively Ferguson, with miserly left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner (16 wickets at under 25) an often under-rated threat. New Zealand also boast a break-out star in left-handed batsman Rachin Ravindra, with the 23-year-old son of Indian-born parents having already scored 565 runs, including three hundreds, in his debut World Cup.

"You dream of playing against In-



MUMBAI: India's Suryakumar Yadav exercises during a practice session at the Wankhede Cricket Stadium in Mumbai on November 14, 2023, on the eve of their 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) semi-final match against New Zealand. — AFP

dia and a full crowd at the Wankhede, a ground with so much history," said Ravindra. Meanwhile, an admiring Ferguson said of his team-mate: "I've seen Rachin progress from the domestic stage and played some New Zealand A games with him.

"He's got an exceptional attitude... He's a huge fan of cricket, but also works hard extremely on his batting and bowling." Ferguson added: "It's been awesome to see him develop through this World Cup." — AFP

S Africa hope for fifth time lucky in Australia showdown

KOLKATA: South Africa insist they will not be burdened by scarring from their chequered record in Cricket World Cup knockout matches when they clash with Australia on Thursday for a spot in the final. The Proteas have made four semi-final appearances in the showpiece - in 1992, 1999, 2007 and 2015 - but have fallen to defeat every time, twice losing to Australia.

In 1999, they lost to Australia after a dramatic tie at Edgbaston which saw their rivals go through due to a better group stage finish. Eight years later, South Africa went down by seven wickets after being bundled out for just 149 at St Lucia.

Kolkata's Eden Gardens, however, could be the stage for redemption for South Africa who made the semi-finals by winning seven of their nine league matches. They have also been racking up impressive totals including the highest score in World Cup history of 428 in the game against Sri Lanka. The Proteas have won their last four meetings with Australia, including a 134-run thrashing in the league stage of this World Cup in Lucknow four weeks ago. "There isn't a lot of mystery about what's lying ahead," said fast bowler Gerald Coetzee who has claimed 18 wickets in seven matches.

"We can get calmness out of that, knowing what to expect." Five-time winners Australia are coming off seven straight wins. That run included Glenn Maxwell's one-man rescue mission when his unbeaten 201 led Australia to victory from the brink of defeat at 91-7 against Afghanistan.

Rassie van der Dussen, who made 76 in South Africa's concluding group stage win over Afghanistan to take his tournament total to 442 runs, also shrugged off past disappointments. "I was 10 years old (in 1999), so I don't remember too much," said Van der Dussen. "In that year they had a really good chance to win the World Cup. I think we have a good chance as well."

Bavuma fitness worry

Australia opener Travis Head was four when the drama of Edgbaston was played out in 1999 so prefers to focus on the challenge ahead. "The boys have been invested for a long time so if we're going to spend that much time here we might as well try and go the whole way," said Head.

"We've put in a lot of hard work over the last couple of months to get to this stage, so we want to make the most of it." The fitness of South Africa captain Temba Bavuma remains a concern after he picked up a hamstring injury against Afghanistan.

But Bavuma is expected to play on Thursday after he batted in the nets at Eden Gardens. South African batting has stood out at the World Cup. Opener Quinton de Kock's 591 runs is second only to the 594 of Virat Kohli.

The 30-year-old De Kock, who will quit one-day internationals at the end of the tournament, has four centuries to his name. One of those came against Australia in the group stage. But chasing remains an issue for the Proteas as their two defeats — against India and the Netherlands — both came batting second. Australia have mastered chases. After Maxwell's epic knock against Afghanistan, Mitchell Marsh smashed an unbeaten 177 as Australia overhauled the 306 of Bangladesh with 32 balls and eight wickets to spare in their last league match.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa's 22 wickets has put him on top of the bowling charts. Opening batsman David Warner is one run short of 500 including two centuries and a highest of 163 in the win over Pakistan.

Left-arm quick Mitchell Starc and Maxwell both missed the game with Afghanistan but are expected to return for what will be Australia's eighth semi-final in 13 editions. However, rain could play spoilsport with downpours forecast for Thursday as well as Friday's reserve day. — AFP

400 shooters to partake in annual shooting championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Annual Shooting Championship will have around 400 shooters from Kuwait and GCC countries, said President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng. Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi.

Al-Otaibi, who Chairs the higher organizing committee said the Kuwait shooting community is honored to organize this major tournament.

Eng. Al-Otaibi said this year's championship will include the Olympic skeet, trap, pistol and rifle and archery for both men and women, as he appreciated the patronage of HH the Crown Prince, which made it one of the most important sports events second to HH the Amir International Grand Prix, adding that this

Kuwait International Inspire Championship concludes in Arifjan

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Inspire Championship for cars and motorcycles concluded at Kuwait Motor City in Arifjan area, with 250 racers from Kuwait, Gulf and Arab countries, as Ahmad Al-Enezi ended in first place in the 180 car category, Firas Al-Rifae in the 200 category, Mohammad Al-Abdallah in the 220 category, Yousuf Al-Hindi in the 240 category, Yousuf Al-Sayegh 270 category and Fahad Al-Ibrahim in the electric cars.

The motorcycles results first place went to Ahmad Al-Attar in the 1000cc category and Mohammad Al-Abdallah 1300cc category, Mohammad Burashed in the extreme bike, while Sadeq Al-Tamimi won first place in the classic cars category.

Chairman of Inspire Cars and Motorcycles Sports Club Dr Falah Al-Muhawesh was happy with the

stc sponsors 'Flare Festival' for fourth consecutive year

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, sponsored the 8th 'Flare Festival'. The 3 days event, which took place from November 9th till November 11th at the Marina Crescent, strongly aligns with stc's corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework. The strategic alliance with Flare Fitness under the Weyak umbrella that focuses on supporting Kuwaiti SMEs and start-ups as well as young entrepreneurs, now in its fourth year, reflects stc's dedication to nurturing the fitness community in Kuwait.

Flare Festival, considered one of the largest events of its kind in Kuwait, witnessed an impressive turnout, where a significant number of spectators came to see athletes compete for different championship titles. The festival saw participation from 3,000 competitors across all tournament events, with a total of over 20,000 attendees over the course of three days.

In recognition of its continuous support and primary sponsorship, stc, represented by Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications and Ahmed Al-Nowaihet, Public Rela-

tions and Social Media Manager at stc, was honored during the closing ceremony in the esteemed presence of Sheikh Fahad Naser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the president of the Kuwait Olympic Committee. The Company expressed gratitude towards all the individuals and teams whose contributions were integral to the festival's success.

The festival provided athletes with a prestigious platform to compete in their chosen sports, with tournaments including The Heat, The Hindrance Race, The Student Competition, The Barbell, The Gravity, The Padel, The Sea-Master, and the Knockout. It also welcomed athletes and guests from the region, fostering a sense of community and sportsmanship.

Additionally, stc in collaboration with Gamestore, hosted a FC24 PS5 tournament on November 10th with the participation of 64 teams where the 1st and 2nd place winners received special prizes from stc, while attendees were presented with gifts from stc.

In line with previous years, stc also encouraged its employees to participate in the event as part of its ongoing commitment to promote a culture of health and teamwork.

Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are proud to sponsor the Flare Festival for the 4th consecutive year. stc strongly supports such initiatives that bring the sports community together to compete and show true sportsmanship. Flare Festival has become one of the most anticipated fitness events in Kuwait and the core values behind our



Group picture of officials, press and media.

continued support by the political leadership enabled Kuwait Shooting to make several significant achievements, while pointing to the role of the Public Authority for Sport along with other state entities.

He said this championship is important to prepare for international events especially that

qualifying for Paris 2024 Olympics including the Asian Championship Kuwait will host in January 2024 with 47 countries participating.

He said the Kuwait Shooting qualified for the Champions Championships through Khalid Al-Mudhaf in Qatar next week.



success of the Championship and the positive participation of racers.

He said "we are happy with hosting and organizing the tournament that lasted two days and had different sports, entertainment and awareness activities in addition to the competitive races in all stages. He lauded the support of Public Authority for Sport and other entities.

Chairman of the organizing committee Hussein Al-Sheikh said the Championship did not have any objections, as competitions were exciting and strong at all stages and witnessed world records as Mohammad Burashed scored a speed of 336 km/h in the extreme bike. Also Ahmad Al-Attar scored a new world record of 291.6 km/h in the 1000cc category.



CSR framework, especially focusing on the area of health, fitness, and well-being." She then thanked Flare Fitness, and all those who played a role in organizing the festival, which turned out to be a great success.

She added, "stc has always been a strong supporter of local sports and the empowerment of the younger generation. When it comes to supporting local initiatives, we are dedicated to backing the growth of SMEs under the Weyak initiative that focuses on supporting Kuwaiti young entrepreneurs as part of our commitment to the community. As a key player in Kuwait's market, stc works closely with various organizations, both government and private, to create

long-lasting partnerships.

Managing Partner at Flare Fitness, Youssef Ahmad Al-Shaya, said "We would like to thank stc once again for their unwavering support as a main sponsor of Flare Festival for the fourth year running. Their commitment plays a crucial role in the success of this festival, which has grown over the years to become a key event in the local and regional sports community. The Flare Festival welcomes participants from all over the region, and serves as a celebration of health, fitness, and community spirit. It provides a platform for athletes to shine and for families to come together in the spirit of sportsmanship and wellness."

Sports

Egypt captain Salah leads African stars into World Cup qualifying

Salah was the second highest ranked African in Ballon d'Or last month

JOHANNESBURG: Prolific Liverpool scorer and Egypt captain Mohamed Salah will be among the stars in action this week when 2026 World Cup qualifying in Africa kicks off with two matchdays. His two Premier League goals against Brentford at the weekend raised his total to 200 in English football, and he is now set to shine against Group A rivals Djibouti and Sierra Leone.

Salah was the second highest ranked African in the Ballon d'Or last month behind Napoli and Nigeria forward Victor Osimhen, who misses the first matchdays due to an injury. Omar Marmoush of Eintracht Frankfurt and Mostafa Mohamed of Nantes are other Egyptians who have been scoring regularly in major European leagues this season.

Djibouti, who face Egypt in Cairo on Thursday, are among the weakest African national teams and have twice suffered eight-goal hidings in World Cup qualifiers. Sierra Leone will be handicapped at having to stage a home fixture against Egypt on Sunday in Liberia because they lack an international-standard stadium.

Egypt have won the Africa Cup of Nations a record seven times, but struggle in World Cup qualifying, reaching the finals only three times, compared with eight appearances by Cameroon. The strongest challenge to Salah and his teammates could come from Burkina Faso, ranked 10th in Africa, five places below Egypt. Guinea-Bissau and Ethiopia are the other Group A contenders.

Nigeria must do without Osimhen, one of the favourites to win the CAF Footballer of the Year award next month, and injured AC Milan winger Samuel Chukwueze against Lesotho and Zimbabwe. But Portuguese coach Jose Peseiro has many talented replacements to choose from, including Victor Boniface of Bayer Leverkusen and Taiwo Awoniyi of Nottingham Forest.



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian striker #11 Mohamed Salah runs with the ball during the English Premier League football match. — AFP

There are concerns, however, about the Super Eagles' defence with Cyprus-based goalkeeper Francis Uzoho coming under fire for his performances in two recent friendly matches. Zimbabwe are back in international football after a FIFA ban for government

interference prevented them competing in 2024 Cup of Nations qualifying.

Biggest threats

They are among 17 African countries who cannot play at home either because of sub-standard stadiums or safety concerns and will host Nigeria in the Rwandan city of Butare. South Africa are

considered the biggest threats to Nigeria in Group C, but will tackle Benin at home and Rwanda away minus star Lyle Foster.

The Burnley forward and only South African in the Premier League has been sidelined by the recurrence of a mental health issue. Former Premier League manager Chris Hughton admits he is under pressure as Ghana coach ahead of qualifiers at home to Madagascar and away to the Comoros.

"They are two games we must do well in," he said amid media calls for his dismissal after a four-goal friendly hiding by the United States last month. Veteran Andre 'Dede' Ayew, who joined Ligue 1 outfit Le Havre last weekend, has been recalled, but an injury rules out another midfielder, Thomas Partey from Arsenal.

Last December in Qatar, Morocco became the first World Cup semi-finalists from Africa, but they will not be involved in matchday one as opponents Eritrea withdrew without an explanation. So Saudi Arabia-based goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, Paris Saint-Germain defender Achraf Hakimi and Sevilla forward Youssef en-Nesyri go into action for the Atlas Lions only next Tuesday.

Their belated entry into qualifying will be away to Tanzania in Group E, which also includes resurgent Zambia, Congo Brazzaville and Niger, who are set to hire Moroccan coach Badou Zaki. The nine group winners after 260 qualifiers that stretch to October 2025 qualify for the record 48 nation finals in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

There could be a 10th African qualifier as the best four runners-up enter a mini-tournament and the winners advance to inter-continental play-offs with two finals places up for grabs. — AFP



Group photo

Al Sayer announces Toyota Gazoo Racing GR Yaris Cup in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Embarking on a historic journey for the development of motorsport in the State of Kuwait and encourage young and affluent drivers to come forward and participate in unique events, Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est Co. has announced the launch of Gazoo Racing (GR) Yaris Cup supported by Toyota Motor Corporation in association with Kuwait Motor Town and Suffix Sports.

The event was attended by Faisal Bader Al Sayer Chairman, Bengt Schultz COO, Martin Aherne Senior Business Director Toyota Group Sales, Hamad Al Fouzan Senior Manager Toyota Sales Administration, Group Business Heads and Senior Manager, representatives from the sponsoring brands in the presence of members of the press and media.

The Federation Internationale de l'Automobile



Martin Aherne

Bengt Schultz

(FIA) certified event will be the first grass root level one-make race initiated by an automotive distributor in the region and will feature 10 Kuwaiti racing drivers backed by a strong track record of achievements in the field of motorsports.

According to Martin, "We are excited to introduce a thrilling new season for all the racing enthusiasts with GR Yaris Cup. Toyota and Al Sayer are reaching out to support aspiring Kuwaiti racers who are looking forward to accelerating their racing career, winners of Karting competition progressing towards rally and circuit racing. For the debut season, we are fortunate to have 15 top class drivers with us for the first edition. Our vision is to make this a regional championship in the future with the support of other Toyota distributors. Further we are also planning to branch out this championship to other GR models in the coming years".

GR Yaris Cup 2023 Drivers are as follows:

- Mohammad Al Abdulrazzaq
- Ali Al Sabah & Jaber Al Sabah
- Mohammad Al Kazemi
- Mohammad Al Sabah
- Ahmad Al Humaidhi & Nasser Al Ali



Chairman Faisal Bader Al Sayer with board members

- Ahmad Al Ghanem
 - Ahmad Al Kandari
 - Mohammad Al Nusif & Salem Al Nusif
 - Mohammad Al Sayer & Ahmad Khaled Mohammed Saleh
 - Mohammad Al Mannaie & Abdullah Al Sayer
- Ahmad Al Majed Chief Operating Officer Suffix Sports said "Suffix is proud to be involved in the event with Al Sayer, a collaboration that seeks to redefine the realm of motorsports awareness, extending it beyond conventional sports boundaries. SUFFIX and Al Sayer are committed to elevating motorsports into a lifestyle, culture, and passion. By fusing their expertise into the event as it aims to bridge the gap between motorsport enthusiasts and newcomers, delivering unprecedented international standard results. This groundbreaking initiative underscores SUFFIX's dedication to pioneering concepts and their ambition to be part of remarkable endeavors".

The inaugural race of the GR scheduled will be held during 16th to 18th November at Kuwait Motor Town followed by races during the months of December, January, February, and the final race scheduled in March. Visitors will be treated with a unique spectacle by experiencing a thrilling atmosphere at the venue. Additionally, each event will also feature a GR village which will showcase the latest GR models in addition to unique Toyota models such as the Mirai, GR Corolla, BZ4X, Rav4 PHEV.

Motorsports enthusiasts will get a chance to interact with the Chief Engineer of the GR Yaris and the Chief Manager from TGR All Japan Rally Team for the round 2 race which will be held in December along with a unique drift session by a leading GR World Rally Championship driver.

Warning for Japan as Asian heavyweights begin WCup qualifying

TOKYO: Japan, Australia and Jurgen Klinsmann's South Korea will launch their qualifying campaigns on Thursday for the 2026 World Cup, with Palestine also among the 36 teams in action in Asia. A record eight direct spots and one intercontinental playoff berth are up for grabs for Asian Football Confederation sides at the expanded World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Nine groups of four in the AFC will play each other home and away, with the top two from each going through to the final qualifying round. Japan will be expected to book their place at an eighth straight World Cup after a phenomenal run of form since last year's tournament in Qatar, where they reached the last 16.

The Blue Samurai have won their last six games, plundering 24 goals and conceding just five along the way. They travelled to Europe in September and beat Germany 4-1 and Turkey 4-2 -- results which cost both opposing managers their jobs.

Hajime Moriyasu, whose side kick off their campaign against Myanmar in Osaka, warned that a Group B also featuring Syria and North Korea would not be easy. "They are teams that wouldn't look out of place in the final round," the coach said, despite Japan thrashing Myanmar 10-0 at home when they met in 2022 World Cup qualifying.

"We can't afford to slack off and we need to keep striving to be better," he added. South Korea initially struggled when German legend Klinsmann took over as coach in February, but results have picked up in recent games.

The Koreans scored 11 goals without reply in friendly wins over Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Vietnam, and begin their qualifying campaign at home to Singapore. China and Thailand have also been drawn in what looks like being one of the toughest groups of the qualifiers. "We will be very serious with every World Cup qualifying game," said Klinsmann, who was without a win in his first five games in charge. "Getting points right away is very important."

Australia, who joined Japan and South Korea in reaching the World Cup last 16 in Qatar, being their campaign against Bangladesh in Melbourne. Coach Graham Arnold told reporters that the time for "experimenting is over", with the Asian Cup in Qatar also just two months away. — AFP

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Change of Name

I, Adapala Santhamma W/o A.Venkata Subbaiah (old name), R/o D.No.1/73, Obili Village and Post. Pengalur Mandal, Annamaya Dist., A.P, hereby changed my name and my husband's name as S. Fathima W/o Server Ali Mohammed (new name) #4557 - 15-11-2023

I, Sunny holder of Indian Passport No. - T1939237, Indian permanent address- Village Bajrawar Bajraur Hoshiarpur Punjab- 146104, India, present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Sunny (Given Name) and Pathania (Surname). #4555 - 14-11-2023

I SAIFEE (current name in passport) holding of Indian Passport NO.

MO404358 Having permanent Address Jawad Darwaza, Pipli Chowk, Nimbahera, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, India 312601 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as : SAIFEE (Given Name) and BOHRA (Surname) #4556 - 14-11-2023

I, MD Ibadullah S/o Ataulah holder of Indian passport No. 8987281 having permanent address vill-sukhipur, PO-Badshahnagar, PS-Tikaitnagar, Barabanki, Pin: 225401, Uttar Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Mohamad Ibadullah (given name) and Khan. (surname) #4067- 14-11-2023

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Zverev overpowers Alcaraz, Medvedev prevails in ATP Finals Russian derby

Tsitsipas quits ATP Finals with back injury



TURIN: Russia's Daniil Medvedev celebrates after winning the first round-robin match against Russia's Andrey Rublev at the ATP Finals tennis tournament in Turin. — AFP photos



TURIN: Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas (R) embraces Denmark's Holger Rune after withdrawing from their group stage match at the ATP Finals tennis tournament in Turin on November 14, 2023.

TURIN: Alexander Zverev battled back from a set down to beat Carlos Alcaraz 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-4 at the ATP Finals on Monday as Daniil Medvedev won a Russian derby against Andrey Rublev in straight sets 6-4, 6-2. Germany's Zverev, a two-time winner at the year-ending tournament, put on a powerful display to see off world number two Alcaraz who is not on top form after returning from injury at the end of last month.

Zverev is tough opposition on hard courts like the one at the Pala Alpitour in Turin and made full use of his height and power in the Red Group clash to see off Alcaraz who looks far from being the ageless Novak Djokovic's main rival for the title.

The 26-year-old Zverev rattled off 16 aces and was only broken once over the course of an impressive win in which he hit more winners and made significantly fewer unforced errors than out-of-sorts Alcaraz. "In the beginning of this year, I was nowhere near at his level," Zverev told reporters.

"I'm just happy to be back at the level where I'm competitive with those guys, where I feel like I can win, I feel like I can compete for tournaments again." Wimbledon champion Alcaraz has struggled with lower back and left foot problems which had kept him out of action since the Shanghai Masters in early October until the Paris Masters.

He was dumped out early in the French capital by Russian qualifier Roman Safiullin and flagged towards the end of a bruising contest with giant Zverev, the

number seven seed in Turin. However Alcaraz insisted that he was not struggling back to form after his lay-off.

"I'm one of the players who has played most matches on tour... I feel good physically," insisted Alcaraz. "I don't think I need more matches (to be in top condition)." Before Zverev's win Novak Djokovic was presented with the trophy for finishing the season as world number one.

'The pinnacle'

The 24-time Grand Slam winner secured that position after winning his thrilling Green Group opener with Holger Rune on Sunday, a match which lasted more than three hours. Djokovic is red-hot favourite to claim his seventh Finals title which would put him out of his own as the record winner, one ahead of retired great and old rival Roger Federer.

"Winning Grand Slams and being number one in the world are probably the pinnacles of the sport," said Djokovic on court. Medvedev moved above Zverev — his next opponent — to top the Red Group with a straightforward win over his childhood friend Rublev who once again had the worst of a match between the two Russians.

Third seed Medvedev, who has five titles by his name this season, has now won seven of his nine matches with Rublev and needed just one hour and 31 minutes to prevail. The match turned on the game which would end up handing Medvedev the first set, a 17-point thriller which took more than 10 minutes

to resolve and featured four break and set points. Rublev has had a fine season and won this season's Monte Carlo Masters, but struggles to step up when it counts. And he lost his head after losing the first set, giving up his serve in the first game of the second and from there allowing Medvedev to cruise to victory to take charge in the group.

Meanwhile, Stefanos Tsitsipas pulled out of the ATP Finals on Tuesday after a back injury led to him retiring from his match with Holger Rune early in the first set. Sixth seed Tsitsipas was trailing the opening set 2-1 when he was forced to quit the Green Group match, handing Finals debutant Rune his first ever win in the season-ending tournament.

"My apologies to all the fans and the crowd who came to support me today. Really I'm gutted that I wasn't able to finish the match," Tsitsipas, 25, told reporters. "My doctors and the countless visits that I had in the last few days suggested that I play... Unfortunately I felt terrible on the court. I did what I could do in best possible way to be ready and fit for this match, but it didn't work out for me."

Hubert Hurkacz will now step in to play Tsitsipas' final match against Novak Djokovic with no chance of progressing to the semi-finals following two defeats for the Greek. Tsitsipas said after pulling out that he had felt problems during his warm up and that once on the court he felt too much pain to complete the match. "The pain was very big," he added.

"I've gone through pain during matches in the past...

But this was clearly too much to handle and I had to take the difficult decision to do what I did." He had insisted that there was nothing wrong with him physically after Sunday's straight-sets defeat to Jannik Sinner, playing down reports of an elbow injury which curtailed practice ahead of his tournament opener.

However Tsitsipas hinted that a lack of rest in a packed schedule could have contributed to him having to drop out. The ATP has come under fire from players and coaches for scheduling which often leads to late-night matches and short recovery times during tournaments.

"I do believe that it's maybe a combination of a lack of rest and not that good a preparation," he said. Later Djokovic will attempt to reach the semi-finals with a match to spare when he takes on home hope Sinner, who is aiming to become the first ever Italian to reach the tournament's last four.

Djokovic secured top spot in the year-end world rankings for a record-extending eighth time with his opening win over Rune on Sunday and will qualify if he beats Sinner. This year the 36-year-old has won three Grand Slams to take his total to an all-time best 24, as he bids for a seventh Finals title.

Victory in Turin would make him the record winner in the singles, one ahead of old foe and retired great Roger Federer. Sinner meanwhile will make the semis if he beats Djokovic in two sets, a tall feat as he has lost all three of his previous encounters with the Serb. — AFP

Italy, Netherlands, Wales aim to secure Euro qualification

PARIS: Reigning champions Italy are preparing for a decisive qualifier with Ukraine for a place at Euro 2024, while former winners the Netherlands and 2016 semi-finalists Wales are also aiming to book their tickets to the finals in Germany.

The last two rounds of qualifying matches take place over the next week, and a total of 12 countries will secure their spots in next month's draw in Hamburg for the tournament to go with nine who are already guaranteed to be there.

Continental heavyweights Spain, France, England, Belgium and Portugal have already qualified along with hosts Germany, Turkey, Scotland and Austria for the 24-nation finals which will run June 14 to July 14 next year. Italy, who beat England on penalties at Wembley in the final of the last European Championship in 2021 to claim the title for the second time, still have work to do to avoid missing another major tournament.

Having failed to qualify for either of the last two World Cups, there is a danger the Azzurri will not be in Germany to defend their title after a qualifying campaign during which coach Roberto Mancini quit either side of defeats home and away to England.

Ukraine aim to deny holders

Yet the equation is simple for the team now coached by Luciano Spalletti — whatever happens when they face North Macedonia in Rome on Friday, win against Ukraine in Germany next Monday and they will qualify.

A draw against Ukraine will suffice if they beat North Macedonia first. Lose their last game, on the other hand, and Ukraine will progress to the finals instead, while Italy will drop into the play-offs next March which will determine the final three qualifiers.

That is a scenario they will desperately want to avoid, having failed to qualify for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups after losing play-off ties to Sweden and North Macedonia respectively.

"We have to handle the fear. It will be there by our side as we go," indicated Spalletti this week when asked about the high stakes facing his team in the Group C final.



COPENHAGEN: Danish players warm up prior to a training session in Helsingør, Denmark. Denmark will play home against Slovenia on November 17, and away in Northern Ireland on November 20, in the UEFA Euro 2024 qualifying group H. — AFP

le. Meanwhile, there appears little prospect of the Netherlands failing in their bid to join France in qualifying from Group B. A win at home to the Republic of Ireland in Amsterdam on Saturday will do the job for Ronald Koeman's side. And if they slip up, they will have another chance when they face Gibraltar on Tuesday.

Croatia still in running

Assuming they do wrap up qualification, that will leave Euro 2004 winners Greece to settle for a place in the play-offs, as determined by their performances in the last UEFA Nations League. Wales have recovered from a wobble as they adapt to life without Gareth Bale and are now hopeful of securing a spot at a third consecutive Euro finals.

Rob Page's side appeared up against it in Group D following defeats by Armenia and Turkey in June, but a 2-1 win over Croatia in Cardiff last month, when Harry Wilson scored twice, has left them with qualification in their own hands.

Poland to miss out?

A win in Armenia on Saturday, and another at home to already-qualified Turkey three days later, will take them through. "The mindset we've got is we can get a result against anyone. We've shown that," said Wales captain Ben Davies. Croatia are ready to take advantage of any slip-up by the Welsh, but otherwise the 2018 World Cup runners-up, and 2022 semi-finalists, will have to try again in the play-offs.

Other nations poised to qualify include Denmark, Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia and Slovakia, while Albania are set to go to a second Euro in three editions. They need just a draw away to minnows Moldova on Friday in order to qualify from Group E, in which Robert Lewandowski's Poland look likely to miss out. They, like Erling Haaland's Norway, could at least still get into the play-offs, as they aim to avoid the fate of Sweden, the biggest nation to already be eliminated. — AFP

Tatum leads Celtics rally past Knicks, Bucks pip Bulls

NEW YORK: Jayson Tatum and Kristaps Porzingis led a second-half fightback as the Boston Celtics overpowered the New York Knicks 114-98 in the NBA on Monday. Tatum finished with 35 points — including 17 in the fourth quarter — while Porzingis added 21 to fire the Celtics to their eighth win of the season.

"First half, they were scoring at will, but second half we started making stops," Tatum said after the Celtics bagged their third straight victory. "We've had three games in four days, now we go out on the road for a week and play some good teams — hopefully we can keep it going." Tatum added.

New York caused Boston problems in the first half, edging into an eight-point lead in the second quarter with Jalen Brunson and Julius Randle both influential at Boston's TD Garden. But Jaylen Brown drained a superb three-pointer from 25 feet on the stroke of half-time to cut the Knicks' lead to just one point at 53-52 heading into the break.

That parting shot from Brown was to herald a third quarter rally from Boston that ultimately took the game away from the Knicks, who had been chasing a fourth straight victory. Porzingis led the third quarter onslaught with 11 points from 3-of-3 shooting, including two from outside the arc, along with 3-of-3 from the free throw line.

Tatum then turned it on in the fourth quarter with his 17-point display as the Celtics outscored the Knicks 30-22 in the final frame to complete victory. Tatum finished with five three-pointers throughout the game from 13-of-

23 shooting, with six rebounds and seven assists. Porzingis's 21-point haul included three from three-point range, while Brown had 22 points, five rebounds and six assists.

Brunson led the Knicks scorers with 26 points while Randle finished with 25. Josh Hart added 16 points with Quentin Grimes chipping in 12 points. "I like that we're finding different ways to win," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said afterward. "We have to understand that it's not always going to be easy, but it's how we respond that's important."

The Celtics improved to 8-2 to remain second in the Eastern Conference behind the Philadelphia 76ers (8-1). Elsewhere Monday, the Toronto Raptors pulled off a remarkable comeback to snatch victory over the Washington Wizards, overturning a 23-point second-half deficit to win 111-107.

The Wizards looked to be cruising to victory after roaring into a 64-45 half-time lead against a misfiring Toronto offense. But the Raptors flipped the script after half-time, outscoring Washington 66-43 in the final two quarters to take the win. Pascal Siakam inspired the Toronto fightback with 39 points, while Scottie Barnes added 19 and Jakob Poeltl 13. Kyle Kuzma led Washington's scoring with 34 points.

In Milwaukee, 35 points from Giannis Antetokounmpo helped the Bucks bounce back from consecutive defeats on the road to clinch a 118-109 win over the Chicago Bulls. Milwaukee jumped on Chicago early, opening up a 17-point lead at the end of the first quarter before the Bulls rallied in the second and third quarters. — AFP