

News in brief

◆ The UK yesterday

announced the opening of a military base in the far north of Norway to strengthen NATO's capabilities in the Arctic amid concerns following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The newly established Norwegian site, called Camp Viking, will serve as a hub for Royal Marines Commandos, said Britain's Royal Navy. It described the troops as "the tip of the Arctic spear" and "the unit the UK turns to when it needs troops able to fight in cold weather extremes. "A new Arctic operations base will support Britain's commandos for the next 10 years as the UK underscores its commitment to security in the High North," the statement added. Norway, which borders Russia, refuses to host permanent bases for foreign soldiers, so Camp Viking is due to remain open for just a decade. The purpose-built base, located around 40 miles (65 kilometres) south of Tromsø, will be able to accommodate all personnel from the elite commando-led Royal Marines force which reacts to emerging crises in Europe.



UK opens military base in northern Norway

◆ The leaders of the United States, Britain and Australia will meet

in the United States next week to discuss security and foreign policy, the British Prime Minister's office announced on Wednesday, ahead of an expected nuclear submarine deal aimed at countering China's growing assertiveness in the Pacific. After 18 months of negotiations, it is anticipated that Australia will reveal plans to obtain eight nuclear-powered submarines, in what Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has called "the single biggest leap" in defence capability in his country's history. The deal is part of the fledgling regional security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States known as AUKUS.

Australia, US, Britain leaders to meet, submarine deal expected



States known as AUKUS.

◆ US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi reaffirmed their countries' close military ties Wednesday, Sisi's office said, during the Cairo leg of Austin's regional tour. Sisi highlighted "Egypt's eagerness to strengthen its strategic partnership with the United States", particularly in military and security cooperation, presidential spokesman Ahmed Fahmy said. The Pentagon chief's stop in Cairo comes on the heels of his surprise visit to Baghdad ahead of the 20th anniversary of the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein, as well as after talks in Amman with staunch US ally King Abdullah II.

Austin and Sisi reaffirm US-Egypt military ties: presidency



CURIOSER & CURIOSER

White tiger cub found dumped on Greek street: animal park



picture courtesy of Yahoo Athens, Greece

Greece's leading animal park yesterday said it had recovered a rare white tiger cub found abandoned on a nearby street earlier this week.

Attica Zoological Park outside Athens said the four-month-old female cub, which was found beneath a garbage bin near the premises, was paralysed from the waist down.

"No one knows where it came from or how it got here," park founder Jean Jacques Lesueur told Proto Thema daily, adding that the feline was likely abandoned on Monday.

"It's in terrible condition," he said.

Conservation group World Wildlife Fund (WWF) describes white tigers as "a genetic anomaly," with none known to exist in the wild.

They are often the result of inbreeding, exposing them to a host of health problems at birth.

The park says it hosts more than 2,000 animals from 290 different species.

It was criticised last year after an alpha male chimpanzee escaped its enclosure during operating hours, and was later shot dead for public safety reasons.

NATO chief warns Bakhmut may fall 'in coming days'

Wagner claimed to have captured the eastern bank of the industrial town

● The intense fighting around Bakhmut has been the longest and bloodiest in Russia's more than year-long invasion

● Zelensky told CNN that his armed forces were resolved to stay in Bakhmut

AFP | Kyiv, Ukraine

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned yesterday the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut may fall into Russian hands in the coming days following months of intense fighting.

His remarks come as Russia's Wagner mercenary group, which has spearheaded the attack on Bakhmut, claimed to have captured the eastern bank of the industrial town that has been devastated in the longest battle since Moscow invaded.

In Stockholm, EU ministers were discussing plans to ramp up defence production and rush ammunition to Ukraine as it burns through thousands of howitzer shells each day.

Wagner chief and Kremlin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin said on social media Wednesday that his forces "have taken all of the eastern part of Bakhmut", a salt-mining town with a pre-war population



Ukrainian servicemen fire a 105mm Howitzer towards Russian positions, near the city of Bakhmut

of 80,000.

The intense fighting around Bakhmut has been the longest and bloodiest in Russia's more than year-long invasion, which has devastated swathes of Ukraine and displaced millions of people.

"What we see is that Russia is throwing more troops, more forces and what Russia lacks in quality they try to make up in quantity," Stoltenberg told reporters in Stockholm on the sidelines of an EU defence ministers meeting.

"We cannot rule out that Bakhmut may eventually fall in the coming days," the head of the

US-led military alliance said, adding that "this does not necessarily reflect any turning point of the war".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned in an interview with CNN what could happen if Bakhmut falls to Russian forces.

"We understand that after Bakhmut, (Russian forces) could go further" and attack nearby cities in the Donetsk region.

"They could go to Kramatorsk, they could go to Sloviansk, it would be an open road for the Russians after Bakhmut to other towns in Ukraine, in the Donetsk

direction," Zelensky said in an interview set to air Wednesday.

Russia aims for 'further offensive'

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told military officials during a televised meeting on Tuesday that taking control of the city would allow for "further offensive operations" in eastern Ukraine.

Prigozhin estimated the day before that between "12,000 and 20,000" Ukrainian troops were still defending the town.

Zelensky told CNN that his

Pele's widow to inherit 30 percent of his

AFP | Sao Paulo

The widow of late football legend Pele will inherit 30 percent of his assets, according to his will, which also mentions a woman who could be Pele's unrecognized daughter, the widow's lawyer said on Tuesday.

The will states that Marcia Cibele Aoki, Pele's third and last wife, will inherit his mansion in



Marcia Aoki

Guaruja, a seaside resort town south of Sao Paulo, where the couple lived, according to her lawyer Luiz Kignel.

Other assets belonging to Pele, who died after battling cancer in late December at age 82, include more real estate and a stake in the Pele brand, Kignel said, adding that a complete inventory has yet to be made.

The remaining 70 percent is reserved for Pele's children, in-

cluding an unrecognized daughter that he may have.

In September 2022, a court in Sao Paulo ordered Pele to submit to a DNA test, according to the G1 website. The test must now be performed on one of his seven recognized children.

135 years after abolition

AFP | Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

It sounded like a good job: Picking grapes at a vineyard in southern Brazil.

It was only when workers were awakened with electrical shocks, beaten and threatened with death that they realized they had been recruited into the nightmare of modern-day slavery.

One hundred thirty-five years after Brazil became the last country in the Americas to abolish



slavery, in 1888, stories like this are disturbingly common -- and have been growing more so.

"There are more and more people in Brazil working in conditions resembling slavery," says Italvar Medina, a prosecutor on the national anti-slave labor task force, CONAETE.

The number of workers freed from slave-like conditions in Brazil has more than doubled in two years, from 936 in 2020 to 2,075