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Parliament dissolved over 'threats to national unity'

New polls must be held within two months



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group photo after receiving His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and members of his Cabinet at Bayan Palace. — Amiri Diwan

MoI halts issuance of family visit visas

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior has decided to extend its decision to halt the issuance of family visit visas until the end of this current year. According to sources, the Ministry of Interior said that security of the state and the parliamentary elections are of vital importance to the Ministry. The Ministry will deploy its personnel - and will increase its presence in strategic areas during electoral gatherings, election day and campaigns. The new elections will be held at the beginning of October. Files related to security need adequate time to be studied, especially the ones related to issuing family visas. A commission is currently waiting for a report to harmonize and to fix the population imbalance in the country.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A few hours after swearing-in the new Cabinet, Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday issued an Amiri decree dissolving the National Assembly less than 20 months after its election, paving the way for holding snap polls within two months. Invoking constitutional powers delegated to him by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in November, the Crown Prince cited prolonged political disputes, giving priority to personal interests and to actions that undermine national unity as some of the reasons for dissolving the National Assembly.

"To rectify the political scene which involved lack of harmony and non-cooperation, differences and disputes, giving precedence to personal interests and ... undertaking practices and actions that undermine national unity ... it became neces-

sary to resort to the people ... to rectify to the course in a way to achieve their national interests" the decree said.

The decree to dissolve the Assembly, elected on December 5, 2020, was issued a few hours after the new Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, was sworn in. The premier and the 12 Cabinet members took the constitutional oath before the Crown Prince, then immediately held a brief meeting and passed the decree that dissolved the Assembly.

Under the Kuwaiti constitution, fresh polls must be held within the next two months, otherwise the dissolution will be considered as null and void and the outgoing Assembly will be revived. The new Cabinet was announced on Monday, a week after Sheikh Ahmad was named a new prime minister, replacing Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

This was the 10th time in Kuwait's 60 years of parliamentary democracy that the National

Assembly was either suspended, dissolved or revoked by the court. Social media activists warmly welcomed the dissolution, with some declaring it as the start of a new era in Kuwait's democracy path. It was unclear when the decree inviting voters to elect the new Assembly will be issued but it must be issued by a few weeks before the election date which cannot exceed October 2.

Since the new government did not arrange for passing the 2022/2023 budget through the Assembly, an Amiri decree passing the budget is expected to be issued soon. It will then be approved or rejected by the new assembly. Several members of the dissolved Assembly said they will contest the polls. They included Abdulkarim Al-Kundari, Khaled Al-Oteibi, Abdullah Al-Mudhaf, Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf, Muhammad Al-Sayer, Saud Al-Mutairi, Thamer Al-Suwait and others.

US kills Qaeda chief in Afghan drone strike



Ayman Al-Zawahiri

KABUL: A United States drone strike killed Al-Qaeda chief Ayman Al-Zawahiri at a hideout in Kabul, President Joe Biden said Monday, declaring "justice had been delivered" to the families of the 9/11 attacks. Zawahiri's assassination is the biggest blow to Al-Qaeda since US special forces killed Osama bin Laden in 2011, and calls into question the Taliban's promise not to harbor militant groups.

It was the first known over-the-horizon strike by the US on a target in Afghanistan since Washington withdrew its forces from the country on August 31 last year, days after the Taliban swept back to power. The Taliban condemned the drone strike Tuesday, but made no mention of casualties nor did they name Zawahiri.

"Justice has been delivered and this terrorist leader is no more," Biden said in a sombre televised address, adding he hoped Zawahiri's death would bring "closure" to families of the 3,000 people killed in the US on September 11, 2001. Zawahiri was believed to be the mastermind who steered

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US Speaker Pelosi defies China threats

TAIPEI: United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi landed in Taiwan on Tuesday evening, defying a string of increasingly stark warnings and threats from China that have sent tensions between the world's two superpowers soaring. Pelosi, second in line to the presidency, is the highest-profile elected US official to visit Taiwan in 25 years and Beijing has made clear that it regards her presence as a major provocation, setting the region on edge.

Live television images showed the

82-year-old lawmaker, who flew on a US military aircraft into Taipei Songshan Airport, being greeted on arrival by foreign minister Joseph Wu. Pelosi is currently on a tour of Asia and while neither she nor her office confirmed the Taipei visit, multiple US and Taiwanese media outlets reported it was on the cards - triggering days of anger from Beijing.

Moments before her arrival, Chinese state media announced advanced Su-35 fighter jets were crossing the Taiwan Strait. The brief report had no details on timing or precise location of the crossing. "The US breach of faith on the Taiwan issue is despicable," Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said in comments

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TAIPEI: A US military aircraft with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on board lands at Songshan Airport in Taipei on August 2, 2022. Pelosi (inset) landed in Taiwan on August 2 evening, defying days of increasingly stark warnings from China that have sent tensions between the world's two superpowers soaring. — AFP

Tehran slams 'destructive' US sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran on Tuesday slammed as "destructive" new US sanctions targeting its crucial energy sector and vowed a response, at a time when nuclear talks have stalled for months. US President Joe Biden's administration "is not stopping this unproductive and destructive action even at a time when efforts are underway to resume negotiations to revive the Iran nuclear deal," said foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani. Iran will "show a firm and immediate response" to the sanctions announced the previous day and "take all neces-

sary measures to neutralize" their potential impacts on the country's trade, Kanani vowed in a statement.

The US government blacklisted six companies Monday that it said helped Iran export petrochemicals to East Asia in avoidance of sanctions over Tehran's nuclear program. Three Hong Kong-based trading companies and one United Arab Emirates firm were hit with US Treasury sanctions for helping Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industry Commercial Co. ship "millions of dollars worth" of petroleum and petrochemical products to unnamed East Asian buyers, the Treasury said.

In addition, the US State Department blacklisted two shipping firms, based in China and Singapore, for helping arrange the shipments. The sanctions block any assets the entities own under US jurisdiction and ban US persons or entities from doing business with them, effectively constricting their access to the global financial system.

The move came as talks in Vienna between Iran and several major powers, including the United States, to revive the frayed 2015 international agreement on the Iranian nuclear program have been at a standstill since March. Last Tuesday, EU foreign policy chief and coordinator of the nuclear talks between Iran and world powers, Josep Borrell, submitted a new draft text and urged all sides to accept it or "risk a dangerous nuclear crisis".

Kanani criticized the Biden administration for "continuing and even expanding" the "failed" policies of his predecessor Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew the United States from the nuclear deal in 2018. Tehran, for its part, has been gradually backing away from its obligations. Iran had expressed "optimism" on Monday that the nuclear talks would resume after Borrell's draft compromise was reviewed. — AFP

Local

Martyr's Bureau commemorates Kuwait's fallen heroes on invasion's anniversary

KU students to design murals to immortalize martyrs' memory



KUWAIT: People visit a wing set up by the Martyr's Bureau at the Avenues Mall to commemorate the memory of Kuwait's martyrs on the occasion of the Iraqi invasion's anniversary. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A visitor looks at pictures of martyrs at a wing set up by the Martyr's Bureau at the Avenues Mall to commemorate the memory of Kuwait's martyrs on the occasion of the Iraqi invasion's anniversary.

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti martyrs deserve to be commemorated in honor and appreciation for their great sacrifices and heroisms which they offered to protect Kuwait's freedom and safety, General Director of the Martyr's Bureau Salah Al-Oufan said on Tuesday.

Oufan said in his press statement, "on the occasion of the 32nd anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Martyr's Bureau celebrates the martyrs of Kuwait under the slogan 'Kuwait is the steady existence' which is one of the words of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which the martyrs embodied in their sacrifice in the most wonderful images for the sake of Kuwait."

Oufan stated that the Martyr's Bureau is setting up a wing in the Avenues Mall and 360 Mall, starting from Tuesday until Thursday, which includes pictures and names of 1,314 martyrs of Kuwaiti nationality and 14 of other nationalities, calling on citizens and residents to visit the wing.

Models and murals

Regarding the participation of students from the College of Architecture at Kuwait University in the exhibition, Oufan said, "the students participated with designs of 10 models and murals, and the public will vote to choose the best designs which will be adopted as new edifices to be set in highways and parks." He stressed on the importance of the participation of the new generation who did not live through the period of the Iraqi invasion, in order for them to express their national spirit.

Dean of the College of Architecture at Kuwait University, Omar Khattab, thanked the Martyr's Bureau for the distinguished role they play in reminding Kuwait and the world of the tragedy that occurred during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, saying that it is an important constant reminder to preserve the future of the country and the identity of the Kuwaiti citizens. The College of Architecture at Kuwait University has always been among the first of participants in all national events through their teaching methods which seek to connect students with real projects and the urban environment they are studying, he added.

"The student participation in the design of the monument aims to commemorate the martyrs of Kuwait, through an artistic and architectural design work that will be set in the opposite of the



"Do not let the blood of our martyr's go to waste"

Martyr's Bureau's building," he said. "It will have a very big role in reminding people of the martyrs and their role they played in sacrificing their lives to defense of the homeland Kuwait." Khattab emphasized the importance of the role of the Martyr's Bureau in preserving this important memory, presenting his condolences to the families of the martyrs.



General Director of the Martyr's Bureau Salah Al-Oufan.



Dean of the College of Architecture at Kuwait University Omar Khattab.



Aisha Waleed Al-Saleh, daughter of a Kuwaiti martyr.

Heroic martyrs

Shaikha Al-Qandi, Head of media releases and publication division at the Martyr's Bureau, said that "The exhibition contains pictures and names of the heroic martyrs of Kuwait who sacrificed themselves for this country. The exhibition contains 1,313 martyrs since Al-Samita border war to this day, which also includes the martyrs of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to 1,112 photos of the martyrs whose photos are available at the Martyr's Bureau."

He added, "This year, we have cooperated with the college of architecture at Kuwait University in the 18th Cultural Martyr Competition to create a design for the martyr's memorial and present it to government agencies that cooperate with the Martyr's Bureau to commemorate our martyrs."

Kuwait Times met Aisha Waleed Al-Saleh, a daughter of a Kuwaiti martyr, and she expressed her pride saying "when the Iraqi invasion took place, I was less than



Art works at a wing set up by the Martyr's Bureau at the Avenues Mall to commemorate the memory of Kuwait's martyrs on the occasion of the Iraqi invasion's anniversary.

one year old, so I don't remember anything about that period of time. But with the help of the Martyr's Bureau and with the help of my mother, I was very proud to be a part of the family of the Martyr's

Bureau, a daughter of a martyr and being a Kuwaiti citizen." For her message to her fellow Kuwaitis, Aisha said "Preserve and take care of Kuwait, and do not let the blood of our martyr's go to waste."



KUWAIT: The remains of Kuwait's martyrs are laid to rest during a military procession. —KUNA photos

Remains of Kuwait's martyrs tell stories of sacrifice, patriotism

KUWAIT: The love of one's homeland could be expressed in various forms and actions; however, there is no higher honor than sacrificing life for the safety of family and country. With the return of Kuwaiti martyrs' remains to their homeland, those heroes had solidified their legacy of sacrifice and patriotism in the hearts and minds of their countrymen and family.

Brother of Martyr As'ad Al-Sultan, Ahmad Al-Sultan said that his sibling had finished high school when the Iraqi invasion occurred on August 2, 1990, noting that his brother was detained by the invading forces with his whereabouts undetermined until 2021 when authorities notified the family about the discovery of his remains in March of that year. Sultan indicated that he recognized the remains of his brother through his personal belongings, revealing that the martyr was killed by a gunshot to the head and hip. Nevertheless, Ahmad Al-Sultan expressed pride in his brother's sacrifice, saying that his martyrdom was not in vain.

Similarly, son of Martyr Najj Abdullah, Fahad Najj said that his father was detained two weeks after the Iraqi invasion, affirming that Najj Abdullah was part of the courageous Kuwaiti resistance. He was a brother-in-arms with two other martyrs and resistance members Jehad Al-Mutawa and Hassan Al-Shimmari, recounted Fahad Najj, adding that his father was sent to Iraq after being detained. In 2021,

the Interior Ministry contacted the family and was informed about the sacrifice of my father, he added. Fahad Najj said that after DNA test confirmed the remains of his father, he had to identify the body via personal belongings.

Kuwait had 612 missing persons and POWs, said Assistant at the Amiri Diwan and Director General of the Kuwait Martyrs Bureau Salah Al-Awfan, adding that it was paramount for the country to know the fate of Kuwait's prisoners. He indicated that there were 240 remains of Kuwaiti martyrs laid to rest in Kuwait, adding that the remains of 260 martyrs were still yet to be found. There are 53 martyrs named by Kuwaiti courts with their families requesting for the retrieval of their remains, he indicated. The process of returning the remains was not easy; the State of Kuwait had to hold conferences in Kuwait and abroad in the early 1990s to propagate this just cause, an effort, which led to international conference and meetings to determine the whereabouts of Kuwait's Prisoners of War (POW).

The lack of information and sources were the main obstacles facing Kuwaiti officials, but despite the circumstances, the POW and missing persons committee at the Foreign Ministry continued the quest to find the remains in coordination with the International Red Cross (IRC), United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Iraqi authorities. The efforts had resulted in the discovery of mass graves throughout Iraq and with DNA sampling and test conducted by the forensic department at Kuwait Interior Ministry, many of the martyrs remains were discovered. When the thorough identification processes were concluded, Kuwaiti authorities would contact family members of the martyrs, putting them at ease and informing them about their sons and daughters sacrifices. —KUNA

Kuwait's cultural scene documents Iraqi invasion

KUWAIT: Art and cultural production have always been essential in the human journey on earth, in which existence and experience of what one goes through for generations is immortalized. It is no different when Kuwait went through an invasion in 1990 carried out by a neighbor that left its effects on social and political areas. Several Kuwaiti artists and writers who chronicled the artistic nightmare stressed in separate interviews the importance of this human activity in history so that generations can learn lessons.

Abdulaziz Al-Mussallam, the artist and author, composed and presented the first theatrical performance immediately after the liberation in 1991, said that it is vital to instill loyalty and belonging to the land because it will push inhabitants to the fateful defense of their land. He referred to the efforts in how to manage the crisis and war, the heroism of the Kuwaiti resistance, the altruism of people in the Arab Gulf, the leadership and people who opened their homes to Kuwaitis. Musallam added that the numerous theatrical works that are still shown on media

channels because of the professionalism of the writers and artists who work on them carried many human values that stood out during the war, including the values of loyalty and sacrifice. He pointed out the play, Free Kuwait, shown in April 1991 at Dasma Theater, had several messages, the most important of which was the call to return to construction and look to the future, in addition to a message of gratitude to the world for their role in restoring one's homeland. He stated that the play, Desert Storm, shown between 1991-92, documented the heroism of the people of Kuwait and its residents in confronting the invaders.

Meanwhile, Head of the Artists and Media Syndicate Dr Nabil Al-Failakawi confirmed that the Iraqi invasion formed a national epic, followed by an abundance of artistic and literary works. The plays in particular dealt with the subject in a comic and sarcastic manner for several reasons, perhaps the most important of which are venting about the Kuwaiti people, as well as the comedy's ability to convey messages and meanings in an enjoyable way, he added. Despite the horrorfulness of wars, they usually inspire the greatest works that survived history, he explained, pointing out that there are many cinematic works about historical wars, so these works serve as a window for the generations that did not witness that event in seeing it and learning about human suffering and heroism. —KUNA

EU: Iraqi invasion underlines necessity of global unity

BRUSSELS: The European Union stated Tuesday that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, three decades ago, and the current Russian military operation in Ukraine underline necessity of a global united stand against violations of international law. "The lesson from the invasion of Kuwait and the invasion of Ukraine is that only if the international community joins forces, it can withstand and push back on the reckless disregard for territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries and disregard for the international rules and violation of the UN Charter," EU lead spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy, Peter Stano, told

KUNA, in an exclusive statement. He further noted that, "Such acts have to be encountered with determination of the entire international community because if not, the rule of law would be replaced by the rule of the gun."

"In such a world no one would be safe from the territorial and imperial ambitions of those reckless actors. The lesson also is that each injustice is eventually reversed and punished. There cannot be impunity and there needs to be accountability for the violations and crimes committed," stated the EU spokesperson. Stano added that, "In order to prevent such reckless acts from happening again, aggressors have to be stopped very early on, as soon as there are signs of their violent intentions." The top EU spokesperson commented saying, "they have to be stopped in a collective effort by the international community, when all countries that respect and value the rules join forces because prevention is always cheaper than dealing with the destructive aftermath afterwards. —KUNA

Local

Kuwait's Crown Prince urges new Cabinet to live up to people's aspirations

Sheikh Mishal receives Prime Minister, Cabinet during oath-taking ceremony



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addresses the new Cabinet members, as His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah looks on. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah takes his oath.



Defense Minister Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah takes his oath.



Oil Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Fares takes his oath.



Housing Minister Issa Al-Kandari takes his oath.



Foreign Minister Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah takes his oath.



Public Works Minister Ali Al-Mousa takes his oath.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and members of his Cabinet, which included:

- 1 - Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah — Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior.
- 2 - Dr Mohammad Abdullatif Al-Fares — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs.
- 3 - Issa Ahmad Al-Kandari — Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Urban Development and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs.
- 4 - Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah — Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- 5 - Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares — Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communication and Information Technology.
- 6 - Abdulrahman Baddah Al-Mutairi — Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs.
- 7 - Dr Ali Fahad Al-Mudhaf — Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
- 8 - Justice Jamal Hadhel Al-Jalawi — Minister of Justice, Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement and Minister of Awqaf (Endowment) and Islamic Affairs.
- 9 - Dr Khaled Mhawes Al-Saeed — Minister of



Commerce Minister Fahad Al-Shuraian takes his oath.



Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi takes his oath.



Municipal Affairs Minister Dr Rana Al-Fares takes her oath.

Health.

10 - Abdulwahab Mohammad Al-Rushaid — Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment.

11 - Ali Hussein Al-Mousa — Minister of Public Works and Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

12 - Fahad Mutlaq Al-Shuraian — Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development.

During the oath-taking ceremony for the government, His Highness the Crown Prince delivered a speech conveying greetings from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the government. His Highness the Amir, said His

Highness Sheikh Mishal, would like to congratulate the Prime Minister for choosing his government members. His Highness the Crown Prince took the chance to thank His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for leading the previous Cabinet, affirming that they went above and beyond to serve Kuwait and its people. Addressing the new government, His Highness the Crown Prince stressed that the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet had a great responsibility in addressing the aspiration and dreams of the people of Kuwait, saying that they should use the powers at their disposal to overcome challenges and seek overall development. He wished the government the best of luck in attending to its duties under the guidance of His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah thanked His Highness the Amir for approving the Cabinet line-up, pledged to work as one team and to achieve progress, advancement and prosperity under His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince's leadership. The members of the government have heard and would implement the tents of the leadership's speech on June 22, 2022, saying that it was a paramount mission for the government of Kuwait, said His Highness the Prime Minister. Senior state officials attended the oath-taking ceremony. — KUNA



Education Minister Dr Ali Al-Mudhaf takes his oath.



Justice Minister Jamal Al-Jalawi takes his oath.



Health Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed takes his oath.



Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid takes his oath.

Kuwait's new Cabinet convenes maiden meeting

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet held its first meeting under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace on Tuesday. Emerging from the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares said that the prime minister had thanked the new ministers for shouldering responsibility at this critical juncture. The prime minister underlined the judicious directives of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, especially the latter's address to the nation on June 22, in addition to his pieces of advice to the new ministers following the oath-taking ceremony, which mainly focused on necessarily doubling efforts in order to speed up development, fulfilling people's expectations, respecting constitution and solving citizens' problems. He also pointed out top priorities for the new government to translate the instructions of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, and to do its utmost to address

serious challenges with a view to pushing forward the country's development process and safeguarding its stability.

During the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on behalf of the new Cabinet ministers, expressed much appreciation and gratitude for the trust of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. He vowed that he and his colleagues would work together as a single group to put the political leadership's directions in place in order to serve the nation and citizens, achieve development, growth and prosperity, accelerate development, offer high-quality services to the public and wipe out corruption in all its forms. Furthermore, the Cabinet expressed thanks and gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for his sincere efforts to serve the dear nation during his tenure, while commending his great accomplishments.

On the 32nd anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of the State of Kuwait, the Cabinet renewed its gratitude to the friendly countries who contributed to liberating the State of Kuwait and restoring its international legitimacy, sovereignty, freedom, and dignity. The Cabinet also called on the Kuwaiti people, on this painful anniversary, to preserve the security and stability of the homeland, to unite and boost cooperation in serving the country



KUWAIT: Members of Kuwait's new Cabinet pose for a group photo on the sidelines of their maiden meeting. — KUNA

under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. On the other hand, the Cabinet touched on several global developments, where it expressed con-

ferences to the US Joe Biden over the victims of the floods that swept through the state of Kentucky, wishing the injured speedy recovery, hoping that the US overcome the natural disaster. — KUNA

local spotlight

US close to
age of time

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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The meeting that took place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between US President Joe Biden and leaders of some Middle Eastern countries in the middle of July revealed how far leaders of the US are from benefitting from the wisdom of history.

Ibn Khaldoun, the founder of social science, said that nations were like individuals: They grow and become strong then become weak. He showed that the last generation of any nation, which is the generation nations start going down with, is characterized by the inability to understand others, rather it sanctifies its culture and considers it (the end of history and last human), according to American Scientist Francis Fukuyama, sanctifies it and seeks to impose it on everyone.

As the end of the history of man is unknown, also it was not possible to determine its beginning, then the consideration of our presence as the end of change, and imposing the culture of a nation on the remnants of nations is something extremely dangerous and this is what Ibn Khaldoun warned against and considered as the last stage in the civilization age of any nation.

The control of the elite over the USA's capabilities and their pressure on all in order to impose their values that are derived from their excess luxury, this pressure is one of the signs of the end for all previous civilizations, and it is not likely for any civilization to go through the dangers without falling in them.

The American Democratic Party that exchanges power in the US, was not satisfied with promoting its culture and values in its society, but it tries hard to take that culture to other nations. It is using the freedom and democracy it implements as weapons with which it confronts other nations, while at the same time ignores those values in its regime and those who are in orbit, as it is clear that it has a party double standard for evaluation according to its relations, and this what is referred to by sociologists as "predominance of interests."

On the other hand, this party does not care about the values and ethics of the rest of civilizations, and its backup of homosexuals and its support for them out of its borders, and its desperate defense of nonmedical abortion and terminating life while inside the wombs, all that is considered a clear sign on the fall of countries. When the right of luxury is a right for them only without consideration of the interest of others including the souls that are aborted inside the wombs without justification, then that civilization becomes a selfish negative energy that reflects the course of "Promotion", so with it the descending process, continuous descending, that can be slow, but at the end the balance of power will change and civilization will move to another location.

In October 1998, the US house of representatives voted to start procedures to impeach the 42nd President of the US Bill Clinton for committing grave and misdemeanor crimes, and the accusation of Clinton, the democrat, is lying under oath. A large number of representatives spoke, and most their speeches revolved around keeping the civilization values that keeps the US in the leadership of the world. Members of congress used the impeachment procedures to express fears towards the clash of values with the conditions of strength and the US losing its values, and then the start of descending from the throne of power. Where is the United States now from those speeches and instructions? It seems the past two decades witnessed changes in this power, that made the fears congress members spoke about then close to the age of time.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A man visits the Martyr's Museum at the Martyr's Bureau headquarters in Kuwait City on August 2, 2022, on the 32nd anniversary of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait recalls proudly the solidarity,
sacrifice of its people: Governor

KUWAIT: In remembrance of the 32nd anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the governor of Al-Ahmadi Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that "We all proudly remember the solidarity of the Kuwaiti people, and their hold of their sovereignty and the richness of their pure nation. We also remember proudly the wisdom of the late Amirs, Their Highnesses Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during his position as Foreign Minister, as well as their ability to gather all the forces of good in the world on the rightful side of Kuwait."

Sheikh Fawaz added: "Our faith is in the noble heroism of the Kuwaiti resistance and our faithful sons and daughters whose efforts resulted in the return of righteousness to the rightful and the annihilation of the

aggressor, which continued afterwards with the gather to reconstruct and remove the effects of the shameful aggression. This will remain a witness on the strong will of this great nation."

Sheikh Fawaz concluded, "From our hearts, we ask God Almighty that our innocent martyrs may rest in peace, and to hasten the return of our prisoners, and to save our precious Kuwait, and to give it lasting peace and keep its flag high under the wise guidance of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister. May Allah bless them all."

Meanwhile, Dr Khaled Al-Saeed released a similar statement, saying: "Great greetings to our national martyrs, and we recall in pride the sacrifice of our medical staff for the sake of their nation, and for holding the values and morals of the noble

profession."

"Today marks the 32nd anniversary of the shameful Iraqi invasion on our Kuwaiti nation," he said. "We remember the heroic tales of our great people, and our national martyrs who will remain a proud influence and our example for the love and dedication of the nation. We also remember in appreciation the efforts given by our medical staff during the invasion, which has set an example to the world in sacrifice, and by continuing to provide their medical services and honoring their vows and by performing their national and professional duties with utmost dedication. Therefore, great greetings to our national martyrs, and we have great pride to the great sacrifices of our medical staff for the sake of their nation, and for holding the values and morals of the noble profession. Their efforts were essential in passing this



Ahmadi Governor
Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

period and bringing back our dear nation back to liberation. We ask Allah Almighty for security and safety for our precious nation, and we hope all the stability and prosperity for it."



KUWAIT: (From left) Maj Gen Khaled Al-Obaidi, Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei, and Defense Attache of the Chinese Embassy Senior Colonel Xue Chuanlai cut the cake during the ceremony. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Chinese embassy
celebrates Army Day

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of China in Kuwait held a reception on Monday to celebrate Army Day, which falls on August 1, the day that celebrates the founding of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1927. This year marks the 95th anniversary of the founding of the PLA.

On the sideline of the event, Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei said that the Chinese military has distinguished relations with Kuwait, stressing the importance of friendship and cooperation relationships both countries are keen to develop. He noted that he will make every effort to push forward the development of distinguished Chinese-Kuwaiti relations, especially in the military and security aspects, praising Kuwait's consistent role on issues related to the issues of Taiwan, the South China Sea, and others.

"Kuwait is a friendly country, as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Kuwaiti-Chinese diplomatic relations last year, while Kuwait was the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with China. China is taking realistic steps to maintain international peace and security, as it is the second largest contributor among the permanent

members of the UN Security Council to the budget of UN peacekeeping operations and the largest in terms of the number of troops," Jianwei added.

In his remarks, Defense Attache of the Chinese Embassy to Kuwait Senior Colonel Xue Chuanlai said that the traditional friendship and strategic partnership between China and Kuwait have stood the test of changing international and regional climate.

He added, "This year, we are further expanding the depth and width of pragmatic cooperation by aligning the Belt and Road Initiative with Vision 2035, and much more benefits have been brought to the two peoples. Military ties composed a vital part of the bilateral relationship, and some progress has been witnessed in the past years."

He noted that the past 95 years have been an extraordinary and glorious journey for the PLA, witnessing remarkable contribution to the independence, liberation, and rejuvenation of China, explaining that China has dispatched almost 50,000 troops to 25 peacekeeping operations, and sent over 120 vessels in escort missions for more than 7,000 Chinese and foreign ships. In addition, 16 Chinese peacekeepers have laid down their lives while on duty in other countries, he added. In his turn, Representative of the Kuwaiti Chief of General Staff Maj Gen Khaled Al-Obaidi stressed the strength and durability of the relationship between the two countries and the keenness of the political and military leadership to consolidate it, expressing his appreciation to the Chinese side for the role they play in developing relations.

Kuwait to unveil linked
state budget after
parliamentary polls

KUWAIT: Kuwait's forthcoming parliament will be tasked with passing a state budget linking government bodies after elections are over, the country's finance minister said on Tuesday, ruling out the need to approve the measure under a "decree of necessity." The decision comes as "per the directives" of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid told KUNA, saying the measure is in line with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's decision to dissolve parliament. "Postponing the measure until elections are over will come under clearer guidelines," added the minister, saying the move should be approved no later than November. He went on to underline the government's "readiness" to discuss the state budget, along with other matters including Kuwait's "financial status," with the next lineup of lawmakers.

Meanwhile, informed sources have confirmed to Kuwait Times that the new government will discuss the appointment of the nominees in many leading positions. Meanwhile, there are more than 100 leading positions of undersecretaries and their assistants which are vacant. This has been a cause for criticism, which has caused delays in decision-making and confirmation of technical projects which are listed on the development plan. Government usually suspends hiring or transfers before elections in order to avoid allegations of interference or malpractices. The government wishes to remain fair and unbiased during the election process. There are important files concerning hiring of officials with many names who have been nominated for various positions. These files still await legal confirmation.



China population to begin shrinking by 2025: Officials

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat, Azhar Azizan Harun (4R), and Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (3L) posing with their delegation before a meeting at the Parliament House in Kuala Lumpur. —AFP

US warns China against overreacting

China need not turn any visit by Pelosi into a 'crisis'

SINGAPORE: The White House on Monday warned China against overreacting to a trip by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, saying she would have every right to visit the self-ruled island despite Beijing viewing it as a highly provocative challenge.

China need not turn any visit by Pelosi into a "crisis," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters, even as he warned that Beijing may be "positioning" itself for a show of military strength around the island.

Media reports have said that Pelosi, currently on an official Asia tour, will stop off in Taiwan and meet President Tsai Ing-wen on Wednesday-if so, the highest-level US visit to Taipei in decades. Beijing, which views Taiwan as its territory, has reacted furiously to the idea, warning President Joe Biden that his administration was playing "with fire" and announcing a series of live-fire military drills in the Taiwan Straits.

While the White House and State Department are both understood to be opposed to Pelosi's trip, Kirby made it clear that the speaker-who is second in line to the US presidency-was entitled to go where she pleased.

"The speaker has the right to visit Taiwan," he told reporters, adding: "There is no reason for Beijing to turn a potential visit consistent with longstanding US policies into some sort of crisis." Kirby cited intelligence

that China was preparing possible military provocations that could include firing missiles in the Taiwan Strait or "large scale" incursions into Taiwan airspace.

Pelosi kicked her trip off Monday with a stop in Singapore, where Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong urged her at a meeting to strive for "stable" ties with Beijing. Her itinerary also includes Malaysia, South Korea and Japan, but the prospect of a Taiwan visit has dominated attention.

'Nothing has changed'

Speculation about Pelosi's plans has coincided with an uptick in military activity across the region. Kirby said the United States "will not be intimidated" from continuing to move freely in the Pacific region. However, he sought to lower tension by stressing several times that US policy was unchanged toward Taiwan. This means support for its self-ruling government, while diplomatically recognising Beijing over Taipei and opposing either a full independence bid by Taiwan or a forceful takeover by China.



'Speaker has the right to visit Taiwan'

"Nothing has changed," he said. "There's certainly no reason for this to come to blows." Kirby confirmed that Pelosi is traveling on a military aircraft and said Washington does not fear a direct attack but warned it "raises the stakes of a miscalculation."

Pelosi's office has said her trip "will focus on mutual security, economic partnership and democratic governance in the Indo-Pacific region," referring to the Asia-Pacific. The statement did not mention Taiwan. But visits by US officials there are usually kept secret until delegations land.

China's ambassador to the United Nations Zhang Hun labelled such a visit "very much dangerous, very much provocative" as he spoke to reporters Monday. "If the US insists on making the visit, China will take firm and strong measures to safeguard our sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said at a briefing.

The Global Times, China's state-run tabloid, suggested that Pelosi might use "emergency excuses like an aircraft fault or refuelling" to land at a Taiwanese

airport. "If she dares to stop in Taiwan, it will be the moment to ignite the powder keg of the situation in the Taiwan Straits," Hu Xijin, a former Global Times editor and now commentator, tweeted.

And the Chinese army's Eastern Theater Command shared footage on social media site Weibo featuring a combat-ready army with fighters and helicopters taking off, amphibious troops landing on a beach and a stream of missiles raining down on various targets.

"We will bury all enemies who invade our territory," a short text accompanying the footage read. "We're ready to fight," it added. "Advance towards a joint combat and a victorious war."

Taiwan government silent

Taiwan's 23 million people have long lived with the possibility of an invasion, but the threat has intensified under Chinese President Xi Jinping. American officials often make discreet visits to Taiwan to show support but a Pelosi trip would be higher-profile than any in recent history.

Taiwan's government has remained silent on the prospect of a Pelosi visit and there has been minimal local press coverage. "I really hate what the Chinese are doing," Hsu Ching-feng, a fruit vendor in Taipei, told AFP. "But there's nothing us common folks can do about it but ignore them." —AFP

Death toll from Kentucky flooding rises to 37

JACKSON: The death toll from flooding in eastern Kentucky rose to 37 on Monday as more rain hampered recovery operations and possible severe weather overnight threatened to provoke further damage. "We are ending the day with more heart-breaking news out of Eastern Kentucky. We can confirm the death toll has now risen to 37, with so many more still missing," tweeted Andy Beshear, governor of the south-central US state.

"Let us pray for these families and come together to wrap our arms around our fellow Kentuckians," he added. Beshear has said he expects the death toll to continue to rise as search and rescue teams fan out across flood-hit areas and recover more bodies.

Their efforts were hampered by more rain on Monday, with a series of new storms forecast to

arrive overnight. "If things weren't hard enough on the people of this region, they're getting rain right now," Beshear said earlier in the day. "There is severe storm potential today in all of the impacted areas."

"That is just not right." The National Weather Service issued flood watches for most of eastern Kentucky for the evening and into Tuesday morning, warning that "a complex of storms is expected to move over the region tonight."

"Heavy rain rates which could lead to flash flooding along with severe thunderstorms are possible," the weather agency tweeted. Last week, some areas in eastern Kentucky received more than eight inches (20 centimeters) of rain in a 24-hour period, provoking unprecedented flash flooding.

The water level of the North Fork of the Kentucky River at Whitesburg rose to a staggering 20 feet within hours, well above its previous record of 14.7 feet. Some areas in the mountainous Appalachia region are still inaccessible following the flooding that turned roads into rivers, washed out bridges and swept away houses.

The floods hit a region of Kentucky that was already suffering from grinding poverty-driven by the decline of the coal industry that was the heart



BUCKHORN: Volunteers work at a distribution center of donated goods in Buckhorn, Kentucky, following historic flooding in Eastern Kentucky. —AFP

of its economy. President Joe Biden has issued a disaster declaration for the state, allowing federal aid to supplement state and local recovery efforts.

The eastern Kentucky flooding is the latest in a series of extreme weather events that scientists say are an unmistakable sign of climate change. Nearly 60 people were killed in western Kentucky by a tornado in December 2021. —AFP

Kansas votes on abortion rights in US test case

LEAWOOD, United States: Voters in the Midwestern state of Kansas headed to the polls Tuesday in the first major ballot on abortion since the US Supreme Court ended the national right to the procedure in June.

The vote is heavy with consequences for Kansans themselves, who will decide whether to remove the right to an abortion from the traditionally conservative state's constitution. But it is also being seen as a test case for abortion rights nationwide, as Republican-dominated legislatures rush to impose strict bans on the procedure following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade.

Other states including California and Kentucky are set to vote on the issue in November, at the same time as midterm elections to Congress in which both Republicans and Democrats hope to mobilize their supporters nationwide around the question of abortion.

The Kansas ballot centers on a 2019 ruling by the state's supreme court that guarantees access to abortion-currently up to 22 weeks. In response, the Republican-dominated state legislature introduced an amendment known as "Value Them Both" that

would scrap the constitutional right-with the stated aim of handing regulation of the procedure back to lawmakers. But in the opposing camp, activists see the campaign as a barely-masked bid to clear the way for an outright ban-a conservative state legislator having already introduced a bill that would ban abortion without exceptions for rape, incest, or the life of the mother.

For Ashley All, spokeswoman for pro-abortion rights campaign Kansans for Constitutional Freedom, the amendment would deal a blow to "personal autonomy." Activists also complain that the phrasing of the ballot question is counterintuitive, and potentially confusing: voting "Yes" to the amendment means abortion rights being curbed, while people who wish to keep those rights intact must vote "No."

All eyes on Kansas

Abortion rights advocates in Kansas are looking nervously to neighboring Oklahoma and Missouri which are among at least eight states to have passed near-total bans-the latter making no exceptions for rape or incest-while Midwestern Indiana adopted its own rigid ban on Saturday.

Kara Miller Karns, a voter in Leawood, Kansas, said she planned to vote for the status quo on Tuesday, saying it was "not acceptable" for her daughters to grow up with fewer rights than she did. But in the same neighborhood, 43-year-old Christine Vasquez said she planned to back the constitutional amendment-in hope it would clear the way for a future vote on an abortion ban.



LEAWOOD, United States: Residents vote early at Leawood City Hall in Leawood, Kansas. Voters in the US state of Kansas headed to the polls on August 2, 2022. —AFP

"I believe that life starts at conception," she told AFP ahead of the ballot. The outcome in Kansas could mean a boost or a blow to either side of the highly charged US abortion debate-and the eyes of the nation will be fixed on the state on Tuesday.

Kansas leans heavily toward the Republican party, which favors stricter abortion regulations, but a 2021 survey from Fort Hays State University found that fewer than 20 percent of Kansas respondents agreed that abortion should be illegal even in cases of rape or incest. —AFP

Texas man gets seven years for Capitol riot

WASHINGTON: A Texas militia member was sentenced to more than seven years in prison on Monday, the longest jail term yet for a participant in the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by supporters of former president Donald Trump.

Guy Reffitt, 49, was convicted in March of bringing a gun to Washington, interfering with police and impeding an official proceeding-the certification by Congress of Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the November 2020 presidential election.

Reffitt, a member of a right-wing militia called the Texas Three Percenters, was also found guilty of obstruction for threatening his teenage son and daughter if they spoke to law enforcement about his involvement in the attack on the Capitol.

Reffitt's then 18-year-old son did go to the FBI despite his father's warning that "traitors get shot" and delivered emotional testimony against his father in court. US District Judge Dabney Friedrich sentenced Reffitt to 87 months in prison, the stiffest sentence meted out to a Capitol riot defendant so far.

Two men who pleaded guilty to assaulting police officers were sentenced previously to 63 months in prison. US Attorney Matthew Graves said Reffitt's sentence "holds him accountable for his violent, unconscionable conduct."

"Guy Reffitt came to the Capitol on Jan. 6 armed and determined to instigate violence," Graves said in a statement. "He and others contributed to the many assaults on law enforcement officers that day, putting countless more people-including legislators-at risk."

Reffitt, an oil industry worker from Wylie, Texas, was the first person to go on trial on charges stemming from the January 6, 2021 attack on Congress. Dozens of other participants in the Capitol riot have been sentenced after entering into plea agreements.

Video of Reffitt confronting police on the steps of the Capitol and urging on the pro-Trump crowd was played for the jury during his trial. Prosecutors also displayed text messages from Reffitt in which he promised to drag lawmakers out of Congress "by their hair."

Reffitt was wearing body armor and a helmet, carrying zip-tie handcuffs and armed with a .40 caliber handgun when he arrived at the Capitol, according to prosecutors. —AFP

International

Afghans cast doubt on Kabul killing of Al-Qaeda chief

Justice has been delivered to the Egyptian with a \$25 million bounty on his head

KABUL: Many Afghans expressed shock or doubt Tuesday that Al-Qaeda's chief had been killed in Kabul by a US drone strike, saying they couldn't believe Ayman al-Zawahiri had been hiding in their midst. "It's just propaganda," Fahim Shah, 66, a resident of the Afghan capital, told AFP.

Late Monday, US President Joe Biden announced Zawahiri's assassination, saying "justice has been delivered" to the Egyptian with a \$25 million bounty on his head. A senior US official said the 71-year-old was on the balcony of a three-storey house in the upmarket Sherpur neighbourhood when targeted with two Hellfire missiles shortly after dawn Sunday.

"We have experienced such propaganda in the past and there was never anything in it," Shah said. "In reality, I don't think he was killed here." The Taliban admitted earlier Tuesday that the US had carried out a drone strike, but gave no details of casualties-and did not name Zawahiri, who was considered a key plotter of the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

On Sunday, the interior ministry had denied reports of a drone strike, but Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Tuesday that was because an investigation was underway. Kabul resident Abdul Kabir said he heard the strike Sunday morning, but still called on the United States to prove who was killed.

"They should show to the people and to the

world that 'we had hit this man and here is the evidence,'" Kabir said. "We think they killed somebody else and announced it was the Al-Qaeda chief... there are many other places he could be hiding-in Pakistan, or even in Iraq."

The strike is sure to further sour already bitter relations between Washington and the Taliban, which pledged to stop Afghanistan from being a sanctuary for militants as part of the agreement that led to the US troop withdrawal last year. University student Mohammad Bilal was another who thought it unlikely Zawahiri had been living in Kabul.

"This is a terrorist group and I do not think they will send their leader to Afghanistan," Bilal said. "Leaders of most terrorist groups, including the Taliban, were either living in Pakistan or in the United Arab Emirates when they were in conflict with former Afghan forces," he said.

A straw poll, however, found some believers in the capital. Kabul housewife Freshta, who asked not to be further identified, said she was shocked to learn of Zawahiri's killing. "It's so uncomfortable to know that he was living here," she said.

A shopkeeper who also asked not to be named said he too wasn't surprised. "Any terrorist group can enter our land, use it and get out easily," he told AFP. "We don't have a good government. We are unable to protect ourselves, our soil and our property." — AFP



WASHINGTON: This photo released on August 2, 2022 by the White House shows US President Biden meeting with his national security team to discuss the counterterrorism operation to take out Ayman al-Zawahiri. — AFP

Iran steps up Bahai persecution with arrests

PARIS: Iranian authorities have stepped up persecution of the Bahais with a wave of arrests of prominent members of the country's biggest non-Muslim minority, leaving the battered community in shock, activists said on Monday.

The Bahais in Iran, who have been subjected to harassment ever since the inception of the Islamic republic in 1979, had already complained that dozens of community members had been arrested, summoned or subjected to house searches in June and July.

But the intensification of the persecution reached a new peak on Sunday when 13 Bahais were suddenly arrested in raids on the homes and businesses of 52 Bahais across the country, Diane Alai, the representative of the Bahai International Community (BIC), told AFP.

She said those detained included prominent Iranian Bahai figures Mahvash Sabet, Fariba Kamalabadi and Afif Naemi who had previously each served a decade in jail and been part of a now disbanded Bahai administrative group known as the Yaran.

"This is an outrageous move," Alai told

AFP. "It is an escalation." "We did not want to believe that this was going to happen but we could see it in the making," she said, noting a "campaign of incitement to hatred" in pro-government media.

James Samimi Farr, of the Bahais of the United States, added: "For whatever reason there is an emboldened effort to persecute our community and test the waters of what can be done against us."

Iran's intelligence ministry said Monday it had arrested members of the Bahai minority suspected of spying for a centre located in Zionist entity and of working illegally to spread their religion. They had been instructed to "infiltrate educational environments at different levels, especially kindergartens across the country", it said.

Bahais are used to accusations by Iran of links to Zionist entity, whose northern city of Haifa hosts a centre of the Bahai faith established due to the exile of a Bahai leader well before the State of Zionist entity was established.

Such allegations contain "not one shred of proof," said Alai. Samimi Farr said: "The government has felt emboldened to persecute us on flimsy pretexts that have been disproved again and again". The Islamic republic recognises minority non-Muslim faiths including Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism but does not extend the same recognition to Bahaim with followers estimated to number 300,000 in Iran. — AFP

Did US use secret 'flying ginsu' missile?

WASHINGTON: Notorious Al-Qaeda head Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed by two missiles fired at his Kabul home-but pictures showed no sign of an explosion, and US officials say no one else was harmed. That points to the use again by the United States of the macabre Hellfire R9X, a warhead-less missile believed equipped with six razor-like blades extending from the fuselage that slices through its target but does not explode.

Never publicly acknowledged by the Pentagon or CIA-the two US agencies known to undertake targeted assassinations of extremist leaders-the R9X first appeared in March 2017 when Al-Qaeda senior leader Abu al-Khayr al-Masri was killed by a drone strike while traveling in a car in Syria.

Photos of the vehicle showed a large hole through the roof, with the car's metal, and all of the interior, including its occupants, physically shredded. But the front and rear of the car appeared completely intact. Up until then, Hellfire

missiles-fired by drones in targeted attacks-were known for powerful explosions and often extensive collateral damage and deaths.

Since 2017, a handful of other finely-targeted attacks show similar results. Details of the mysterious weapon leaked out, and it was dubbed the "flying ginsu," after a famous 1980s television commercial for ostensibly Japanese kitchen knives that would cut cleanly through aluminum cans and remain perfectly sharp.

Also called the "ninja bomb," the missile has become the US munition of choice for killing leaders of extremist groups while avoiding civilian casualties. That is apparently what happened with Zawahiri.

A US official told reporters that on the morning of July 31, Zawahiri was standing alone on the balcony of his Kabul residence, when a US drone launched the two Hellfires. Apparent photographs of the building show windows blown out on one floor, but the rest of the building, including windows on other floors, still in place.

Members of Zawahiri's family were present in the home, but "were purposely not targeted and were not harmed," the official said. "We have no indications that civilians were harmed in this strike," the official added. — AFP

Ayman al-Zawahiri

Al-Qaeda leader



Key ideologue behind the global terror network for several decades

- ▶ Born in Egypt in 1951
- ▶ Studied medicine in Cairo, becoming an eye surgeon
- ▶ Became involved with Egypt's radical Islamist community at a young age
- ▶ Later linked up with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, becoming Al-Qaeda's main strategist

Had central roles in Al-Qaeda's 1998 attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the Sept 11, 2001 attack on the US

Took command of Al-Qaeda after bin Laden's death in 2011

July 31, 2022
Killed in a US high-precision drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan

AFP

France, England see driest July on record

LONDON: France and parts of England saw their driest July on record, the countries' weather agencies said, exacerbating stretched water resources that have forced restrictions on both sides of the Channel. In France, where an intense drought has hammered farmers and prompted widespread limits on freshwater use, there was just 9.7 millimeters of rain last month, Météo France said.

That was 84 percent down on the average levels seen for July between 1991 and 2022, and made it the second driest month since March 1961, the agency added. Meanwhile swathes of southern and eastern England recorded the lowest rainfall in July on record, the UK's Met Office. The whole of England recorded an average of 23.1 mm of rain-the lowest figure for the

month since 1935 and the seventh lowest July total on record, it said.

The Met Office has been compiling records since 1836. The low rainfall in both countries has been coupled with a summer of unprecedentedly high temperatures, which topped 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in England last month for the first time ever.

Climate scientists overwhelmingly agree that carbon emissions from humans burning fossil fuels are heating the planet, raising the risk and severity of droughts, heatwaves, and other extreme weather events. Analysis by an international team of researchers released last Friday found climate change caused by human activity made the recent record-shattering UK heatwave at least 10 times more likely to occur.

Water companies on both sides of the Channel are struggling to respond to the parched conditions. Nearly all of France's 96 mainland regions have imposed water use restrictions, also a record. The country is bracing for its third heatwave this summer, beginning in the southeast on Monday before heading north toward Paris. — AFP

pendence declaration by Taiwan or a forceful takeover by China. Meanwhile, Moscow said it was "absolutely in solidarity with China", calling the prospect of a Pelosi visit "pure provocation". China has refused to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has been accused of providing diplomatic cover for the Kremlin by blasting Western sanctions and arms sales to Kyiv.

Pelosi left Kuala Lumpur Tuesday after meeting Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri and Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah. So many people were tracking the US military plane ferrying her on FlightRadar that the website said some users experienced outages. The plane took a circuitous route that studiously avoided the South China Sea - which Beijing claims - before heading up the east coast of the Philippines. Press access around Pelosi has been tightly restricted so far and limited to a handful or short statements confirming meetings with officials.

Her itinerary includes stops in South Korea and Japan - but the prospect of a Taiwan trip had dominated attention. Taipei's government remained silent on whether she would visit even as local media published reports showing her presence was all but guaranteed. The capital's famous Taipei 101 skyscraper was illuminated with the words "Speaker Pelosi... Thank You" on Tuesday night before her plane had arrived.

Taiwan's 23 million people have long lived with the possibility of an invasion, but that threat has intensified under Xi, China's most assertive ruler in a generation. The island's military on Tuesday said it was "determined" to defend it against increased threats by China over the potential Pelosi visit. — AFP

US kills Qaeda chief in Afghan...

Continued from Page 1

Al-Qaeda's operations-including the 9/11 attacks-as well as bin Laden's personal doctor.

A senior administration official said the 71-year-old Egyptian was on the balcony of a three-storey house in the Afghan capital when targeted with two Hellfire missiles after dawn Sunday. "We identified Zawahiri on multiple occasions for sustained periods of time on the balcony where he was ultimately struck," the official said.

The house is in Sherpur, one of Kabul's most affluent neighborhoods, with several villas occupied by high-ranking Taliban officials and commanders. The Taliban's interior ministry previously denied reports circulating on social media of a drone strike, telling AFP a rocket struck "an empty house" in Kabul, causing no casualties.

Early Tuesday, however, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that an "aerial attack" was carried out. "The nature of the incident was not revealed at first," he said. "The security and intelligence agencies of the Islamic Emirate investigated the incident and found in their preliminary investigations that the attack was carried out by American drones."

Although Biden did not mention the Taliban in his televised address, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "by hosting and sheltering" Zawahiri, the Islamist group had "grossly violated the Doha Agreement" which paved the way for America's withdrawal. Zabihullah, in turn, accused Washington of breaking the 2020 deal.

"Such actions are a repetition of the failed experiences of the past 20 years and are against the interests of the United States of America, Afghanistan, and the region," he said. Zawahiri, who grew up in a comfortable Cairo household before turning to violent radicalism, had been on the run since the 9/11 attacks. He took over Al-Qaeda after bin Laden was killed, and had a \$25 million US bounty on his head.

News of his death comes a month before the first anniversary of the final withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, leaving the country in the hands of the Taliban insurgency that fought Western forces for two decades. Under the Doha deal, the Taliban promised not to allow Afghanistan to be used again as a launchpad for international jihadism, but experts believe the group never broke ties with

Al-Qaeda. "What we know is that the senior Haqqani Taliban were aware of his presence in Kabul," the senior US official said.

Afghan Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani also heads the feared Haqqani Network, a brutal subset of the Taliban blamed for some of the worst violence of the past 20 years and which has been described by US officials as a "veritable arm" of Pakistani intelligence. In Sherpur, locals told AFP they long thought the targeted house - surrounded by high walls and barbed wire, and now with green tarpaulin covering the balcony where Zawahiri was believed to have been killed-was empty.

"We have not seen anybody living there for almost a year," said an employee of a nearby office. "It has always been in dark, with not a single bulb lit." Some residents found it hard to believe that Zawahiri had been hiding in their midst. "It's just propaganda," Fahim Shah, 66, told AFP. "They should show to the people and to the world that 'we had hit this man and here is the evidence,'" added Abdul Kabir.

Zawahiri lacked the potent charisma that helped bin Laden rally jihadists around the world but willingly channelled his analytical skills into the Al-Qaeda cause. Still, the group is believed to have been degraded since the US invasion of Afghanistan, and the White House official said Zawahiri was "one of the last remaining figures who carried this kind of significance". The organization is "at a crossroads", said Soufan Center researcher Colin Clarke. "Despite Zawahiri's leadership, which minimized AQ's losses while rebuilding, the group still faces serious challenges going forward. For one, there's the question of who will lead Al-Qaeda after Zawahiri's gone."

Zawahiri's father was a renowned physician and his grandfather a prayer leader at Cairo's Al-Azhar institute, the highest authority for Sunni Muslims. He became involved with Egypt's radical Islamist community at a young age and published several books which came for many to symbolize the movement. He left Egypt in the mid-1980s, heading for Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar where the resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was based.

Thousands of Islamist fighters were flooding into Afghanistan at the time, setting the stage for Zawahiri's first meeting with bin Laden. In 1998 he became one of five signatories to bin Laden's "fatwa" calling for attacks against Americans. Jihadist monitor SITE said some militants were questioning the veracity of the report he had been killed, while others believed Zawahiri had achieved his desire of "martyrdom." — AFP

US Speaker Pelosi defies...

Continued from Page 1

published on his ministry's website earlier Tuesday that did not specifically mention Pelosi.

China considers self-ruled, democratic Taiwan as its territory and has vowed to one day seize the island, by force if necessary. It tries to keep Taiwan isolated on the world stage and opposes countries having official exchanges with Taipei. In a call with US President Joe Biden last week, Chinese President Xi Jinping warned the United States against "playing with fire" on Taiwan. While the Biden administration is understood to be opposed to a Taiwan stop, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Pelosi was entitled to go where she pleased.

"There is no reason for Beijing to turn a potential visit consistent with longstanding US policies into some sort of crisis," he told reporters. The last House Speaker to visit Taiwan was Newt Gingrich in 1997. Kirby cited intelligence that China was preparing possible military provocations. He said that while Washington did not fear a direct attack on Pelosi's plane, it "raises the stakes of a miscalculation".

Kirby reiterated, however, that US policy was unchanged toward Taiwan. This means support for its self-ruling government, while diplomatically recognizing Beijing over Taipei and opposing a formal inde-

International

China population to begin shrinking by 2025: Officials

Total fertility rate has dropped below 1.3 in recent years

BEIJING: China's population will begin to shrink by 2025, officials have said, as family sizes grow smaller and citizens age. The world's most-populous country has been grappling with a looming demographic crisis as it faces a rapidly ageing workforce, slowing economy and its weakest population growth in decades.



Families are becoming smaller

And although officials relaxed the nation's strict "one-child policy" in 2016 and last year allowed couples to have three children, the birth rate has plunged to a record low. "The growth rate of the total population has slowed down significantly, and it will enter a stage of negative growth in the '14th Five-Year Plan' period," the National Health Commission said Monday, referring to the period between 2021 and 2025.

In January, authorities said that forecasts expected the population to enter zero growth "or even negative growth" in that five-year span. "Presently, our country's policy system for childbirth support is not perfect, and there is a big gap with population development and the

people's expectations," the NHC said in its latest report.

The total fertility rate has dropped below 1.3 in recent years, it added, while the country is expected to enter a stage of severe ageing around 2035, with more than 30 percent of the population older than 60. Families are also becoming smaller, "weakening" the functions of pension and childcare, the health commission said, calling for improving child-raising support and for policies on housing, education and taxation to help reduce burdens on families.

Authorities in some parts of China are already introducing family-friendly policies in a bid to combat the slowing birth rate. The eastern city of Hangzhou announced Monday that families with three children would be able to borrow 20 percent more than the maximum limit when applying for housing provident fund loans for the first time.

Other cities like Nanchang and Changsha have also rolled out supportive policies, according to state media. Higher costs of living and a cultural shift as people gravitate towards smaller families have been cited as reasons behind the lower number of babies.

The "one-child policy" was introduced by top leader Deng Xiaoping in 1980 to curb population growth and promote economic development, with some exceptions made for rural families and ethnic minorities.

The global population is expected to hit eight billion in November 2022, according to UN projections, with India on course to surpass China as the world's most-populous country in 2023. — AFP



BEIJING: A woman pushes a trolley with twins along a street in Beijing on August 2, 2022. China's population will begin to shrink by 2025, officials said. — AFP

Imran Khan's party accepted illegal donations

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan: Pakistan's ex-premier Imran Khan's party accepted millions of dollars in illegal funds from foreign individuals and groups, the election commission ruled Tuesday. The case dates back to 2014 when a disgruntled founding member of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) filed a case against his party leadership accusing it of financial irregularities.

The Election Commission Pakistan found that Khan's party concealed 16 bank accounts and accepted donations from foreigners or foreign groups based in Australia, Canada, the UAE and the Cayman Islands. Pakistani law bars political parties from receiving funds and donations from foreign individuals and companies.

The commission also said that financial details submitted by Khan were "found to be grossly inaccurate". Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif — who came into power in April after Khan's ouster — said the commission's verdict showed "yet again that he (Khan) is a certified liar".

"(The) Nation should ponder over the implications of his politics funded by foreigners," Sharif said in a tweet Tuesday. The party has denied the accusations. Responding to the decision, senior PTI leader Fawad

Chaudhry said the party had taken funds from "overseas Pakistanis", not foreign nationals.

"Overseas Pakistanis are the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and we would continue to rely on them for funding," Chaudhry told reporters. Cricket star-turned-politician Khan swept into power in 2018 thanks to an electorate weary of the dynastic politics of the country's two major parties, with the popular former sports star promising to sweep away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism.

But in April, he was kicked out following a no-confidence vote — brought down in part by his failure to rectify the country's dire economic situation, including its crippling debt, shrinking foreign currency reserves and soaring inflation.

He also reportedly fell out with the country's powerful military. Khan has since staged a series of rallies, touting a claim he was pushed out of office in a "foreign conspiracy" and heaping pressure on a coalition of former opposition parties now in power. PTI has been sent a notice to explain the prohibited funds, or it can challenge the order in court.

The commission meanwhile could pursue confiscating the prohibited funds, while the government could take the case to the Supreme Court to ban Khan's PTI party. However, legal expert Osama Malik said: "Politically it would not be an ideal precedent for one group of political parties to ban their rivals."

The commission is also investigating a foreign funding case against two other major political parties — Sharif's ruling PML-N and its coalition partner Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Both parties deny the claims. — AFP



ISLAMABAD: The main petitioner Akbar S Babar (C), a disgruntled founding member of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) who filed a case against his party leadership accusing it of financial irregularities, arrives at the Pakistan's election commission office in Islamabad. — AFP

HK court ruling to lift lid on national security cases

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong court delivered a landmark ruling on Tuesday that will help lift the lid on secrecy-shrouded pre-trial hearings held under a national security law. The security law was imposed by Beijing after huge democracy protests and has largely snuffed out dissent in the city.

About 100 people have been charged under the law with the vast majority denied bail, held for months — some more than a year — in pre-trial detention. Precedent-setting decisions have been made in lengthy pre-trial hearings but the media have been unable to cover legal arguments because of strict reporting restrictions, even though multiple defendants have asked for them to be lifted.

On Tuesday, High Court judge Alex Lee ruled that if a defendant asks, the restrictions must be lifted around hearings and proceedings for referring a case to the High Court. The magistrate has no right to refuse "to lift the reporting restrictions at the instance of the accused," Lee wrote in his judgement.

The ruling will set a precedent for other cases and should allow the media to report more details on how the national security law is being applied. China says

the security law was needed to restore stability after huge and sometimes violent democracy protests in 2019. Critics say it has dealt a blow to Hong Kong's freedoms and transformed the city's legal landscape — a bedrock of its business hub reputation. Tuesday's successful appeal was brought by Chow Hang-tung, a prominent jailed democracy activist and lawyer.

Chow was also a key organiser of Hong Kong's annual commemorations of the deadly 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, a huge pro-democracy event outlawed since the protests. Last September, she and two other Tiananmen vigil leaders, Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho, were charged with "incitement to subversion", which carries up to a decade in jail under the security law.

While members of the public have been allowed to attend pre-trial hearings in the past year, reporting has largely been limited to names, hearing dates and what a judge rules. Tuesday's ruling is expected to affect the biggest national security trial currently winding its way through the courts — the prosecution of 47 prominent activists on subversion charges.

Four defendants in that case recently made an application to remove reporting restrictions. The group is charged with subversion for joining a primary election to choose opposition candidates. The majority have been in custody for over a year and the few granted bail must adhere to strict speech curbs. Hong Kong authorities say the court tried to topple the government. Those on trial counter they were engaging in legal politics and that their prosecution reveals how far freedoms have faltered in Hong Kong. — AFP

Russia's Lavrov to visit Myanmar

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will travel to Myanmar on Wednesday for meetings with the conflict-racked country's junta leaders, his ministry said. As Moscow's ties with the West unravel over the intervention in Ukraine, the Kremlin is seeking to pivot the country towards the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

"Talks are planned with the foreign minister and with the Myanmar leadership," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters on Tuesday. She added that defence and security cooperation would be on the agenda among other topics.

Russia and its ally China have been accused of arming Myanmar's junta with weapons used to attack civilians since last year's coup. More than 1,500 civilians have been killed in a military crackdown since the coup on February 1, 2021.

Last week, the announcement of the junta's execution of four democracy activists was condemned by the UN Security Council in a rare consensus on the post-coup crisis. The statement was endorsed by Russia and China — the junta's two allies that have previously shielded it at the UN.

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was in Moscow on a "private" visit in July and reportedly met officials from Moscow's space and nuclear agencies. In July, Lavrov visited Egypt, Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda and Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, a bomb blast and a spate of shootings in a Myanmar-China border town have killed two people and wounded at least nine, rescue workers and locals said on Tuesday. No group has so far claimed the attacks in Muse, Myanmar's main gateway to China, which is home to several militia groups jockeying for control over lucrative casinos and the drug trade.

One woman died and five people were wounded in a bomb attack on a police traffic post on Monday, said a local NGO worker who requested anonymity. Later that night, the police station was attacked "with small arms and heavy weapons", the worker said, killing another person and leaving four wounded.

A member of a volunteer rescue group who helped transport people to hospital confirmed the two deaths but put the wounded tolls higher, saying six people, five of them militia members, had been

injured in the bombing, and another five injured in the police station attack.

A separate, drive-by shooting on Tuesday morning injured two more suspected militia members, both the NGO worker and the rescuer said. Local media also reported the attacks. A police spokesman for the area could not be reached for comment.

Muse is home to several militia groups controlled by Myanmar's army — which has an agreement with China not to station troops along the border. The military uses the militias as proxies in a long-running conflict with ethnic rebel groups which operate in the area, including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

TNLA spokesman Major Tar Aik Kyaw told AFP his group was not involved in the Muse attacks. Violence has soared across Myanmar since the military's coup last year, with the junta leading a bloody crackdown on dissent in addition to its long-running conflicts with the ethnic groups. Muse lies on the path of a proposed \$8.9 billion high-speed rail link from China's landlocked Yunnan province to Myanmar's west coast, part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

But the region is awash with weapons and a centre for meth production as armed rebels and militias jostle for a share of any potential windfall. In 2018, two Chinese nationals were among 19 people killed when ethnic rebels attacked security force posts and a casino near Muse. — AFP

Sri Lanka brushes aside India concerns on Chinese ship

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Tuesday brushed aside Indian concerns over a scheduled visit by a Chinese ship, saying it was coming only to refuel and replenish supplies. The research and survey ship Yuan Wang 5 is due to dock in the Chinese-run Hambantota Port in southern Sri Lanka on August 11, according to analytics website MarineTraffic.

Indian media reports said that New Delhi was worried the vessel would be used to spy on its activities and that it had lodged a complaint with Colombo. It is a dual-use spy vessel, employed for space and satellite tracking and with specific usage in intercontinental ballistic missile launches, according to Indian broadcaster CNN-News18.

Sri Lankan government spokesman Bandula Gunawardena said that the cabinet discussed the ship's visit on Monday and that it would still be allowed to dock. "Both India and China are helping us at this very crucial time when we are facing an unprecedented economic crisis," Gunawardena said.

"The President (Ranil Wickremesinghe) informed the cabinet that this matter will be diplomatically resolved by talking to all sides. Both are important friends." The vessel is to spend about a week at Hambantota taking in fuel and other supplies and will not undertake any work

while in Sri Lankan waters, Gunawardena said. Another minister, Manusha Nanayakkara, told the same press conference that 18 previous such port visits to Sri Lanka had been made by Chinese research vessels and that the Yuan Wang 5 was stopping "only for bunkering". There was no immediate comment from the Indian High Commission in Colombo.

However, New Delhi last week made it clear that it will closely monitor "any bearing on India's security and economic interests and takes all necessary measures to safeguard them". India remains suspicious of China's growing influence in its southern neighbour Sri Lanka, which owes large amounts of money to Beijing for infrastructure projects, including the \$1.4-billion Hambantota Port.

Two Chinese submarines berthed in Sri Lanka in 2014 despite Indian objections. Since then, there have been no such Chinese submarine visits to Sri Lankan ports. Sri Lanka gave a Chinese company a 99-year lease on the port, located along the main East-West international shipping lanes, in 2017 after being unable to keep up with debt repayments on the facility.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$51 billion in foreign debts in April and has since opened bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund. The country's 22 million people have been enduring severe shortages of food, fuel and medicines since late last year when the government ran out of foreign exchange to finance most imports.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, whose brother Mahinda Rajapaksa borrowed heavily from China while president from 2005-15, was forced to flee and step down last month when protesters overran his palace. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2022

Business

Zain awarded prestigious World Finance 'Best Corporate Governance Award 2022'

Al-Kharafi: Outstanding achievement for Kuwait for two years in a row

- **Bader Al-Kharafi:** Zain is committed to providing all stakeholders accurate and transparent access to company information, beyond the minimum disclosure requirement
- Zain's Investor Relations and Corporate Governance team proactively raising awareness on issues related to the environment, social, and governance matters

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, listed on the Boursa Kuwait, announced it has won the World Finance 'Best Corporate Governance Award 2022' for Kuwait for the second consecutive year. Zain's Investor Relations and Corporate Governance Framework continue to attract high praise and gain market confidence as the functions provide stakeholders including shareholders, industry analysts, and regulatory authorities with accurate, timely, and actionable information in a transparent and accountable manner.

As a leading entity listed on the Premier Market, Zain is in regular communication with the country's Capital Markets Authority (CMA), as it fully abides by and seeks to exceed the regulations issued by all financial regulatory bodies in Kuwait including the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the CMA and Boursa Kuwait.

Bader A-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO said, "It is an outstanding achievement to be recognized as possessing the 'Best Corporate Governance' practice in Kuwait for two years in a row, and this milestone justly rewards our Investor Relations and Corporate Governance team's high ethical standards, professionalism and diligence."

Al-Kharafi added, "As a publicly traded organization, it is necessary for us to disclose certain information, though in Zain's case we proactively seek to go beyond this minimum disclosure requirement. The publication of our annual and sustainability reports, regulatory disclosures, Corporate Governance framework, as well as our operational and financial results reporting, all point to our goal to be as informative, transparent, and supportive as possible to all stakeholders, that require company and financial information from us."

Zain's Corporate Governance framework helps the company to mitigate risks and facilitates an effective board oversight over the company's executive management by monitoring the implementation of policies when running daily operations. Corporate Governance promotes strong internal controls to improve integrity of financials



and establishes a culture of compliance. This governance structure has helped Zain to win the confidence of the market and attract global investors.

In Kuwait, there are 11 principles on which Corporate Governance laws are based. The principles include disclosure to achieve transparency, composition and independence of the board of directors, value creation through appointing qualified members of the board and qualifications and management, performance assessment of the board, promoting ethical standards and enforcing the code of conduct, ensuring accounting integrity, applying sound systems for Internal Audit and Risk management, and focusing on corporate social responsibility.

Zain's board plays an important role in ensuring that Zain conducts its business in a fashion that is consistent with the highest standards of governance and ethical behavior and that it contributes positively to society. One of the Group's business priorities is to comply with legal and regulatory business requirements, demonstrated through developing its operations to reflect the latest



Zain Kuwait HQ building

changes in corporate governance best practices. Zain focuses on the environmental, social and governance (ESG) indicators, and ensures that ESG issues are integrated into business strategy.

Zain's business environment depends on better empowerment of decision makers through diversity and inclusion, working with integrity and honesty, and adhering to the company's code of ethical conduct to achieve our targets.

The ethical guidelines of Zain's Code of Conduct are extensive and exist to guide and empower the Board of Directors and executive management to make the right choices, as individuals and as a company. Adhering to the Code of Conduct allows Zain to exercise a positive impact on the industry, communities in which it operates, and beyond; and build a company all can be proud of, where corporate responsibility is a key competitive advantage.

Zain's Investor Relations and Corporate Governance departments are also working to raise awareness on issues related to the environment,

social, and governance matters in response to global trends and best practices. Accordingly, Zain has developed new policies and is working to increase transparency in addition to focusing on social responsibility. Such policies and procedures are flexible, and take into account both short- and long-term challenges and risks.

Zain Group has placed sustainable growth at the forefront of its priorities, as the board and executive management believe in building positive relationships between all stakeholders, by strengthening Corporate Governance. World Finance is a print and online magazine providing comprehensive coverage and analysis of the financial industry, international business and the global economy. Since being founded nearly 20 years ago, the publication is read in over 100 countries, with a readership of 120,000 per issue on average. The annual World Finance Awards select and analyze some of the most diverse and succinct governance platforms and recognize leading organizations in this important area.



Saudi consumer spending rises 13.4% in June

RIYADH: Consumer spending in Saudi Arabia rose by 13.4 per cent annually in June as the Arab world's largest economy continues to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Cash withdrawals, as well as point-of-sale (POS) transactions, climbed 1 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively, during the month, according to a report.

"Most sectors saw annual rises, while 'jewelry', 'furniture' and 'hotels' recorded annual declines in June, at 2.3 per cent, 5.9 per cent and 7.9 per cent, respectively," Riyadh-based Jadwa Investment said, citing POS transactions by each sector.

Saudi Arabia, the world's leading oil exporter, recovered in 2021 from the coronavirus-induced slowdown, with economic activity picking up momentum this year as oil prices rose.

The kingdom's economy grew 9.9 per cent in the first quarter, recording its highest rate of growth in the past 10 years on the back of higher oil prices and rising oil-related activities.

In the second quarter of this year, the country's economy grew 11.8 per cent, according to flash estimates released by the kingdom's General Authority for Statistics (Gastat) this week. The kingdom's headline, seasonally adjusted S&P Global purchasing managers' index, which indicates business con-

ditions in the non-oil private sector of the economy, also rose in June amid economic recovery.

Inflation, on the other hand, climbed by 2.3 per cent annually and by 0.2 per cent on a monthly basis in June, driven by price increases in the food and beverage, and restaurant and hotel segments, the latest data shows. Crude oil production edged up 1 per cent, month on month, in June, to an average of 10.6 million barrels per day, in line with the OPEC+ agreement, while Saudi crude oil and refined products exports reached 8.5 million bpd in May, according to the report.

OPEC and its allies including Russia have been boosting production on a monthly basis as they unwind record output cuts put in place during the pandemic. The production pact expires at the end of this month. Real estate prices rose by 0.7 per cent annually in the second quarter and by 0.3 per cent on a quarterly basis, driven by an increase in the prices of residential property.

Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, recorded the highest increase in residential prices, at 4.4 per cent year on year, during the second quarter, the report said. Foreign exchange reserves at the Saudi Central Bank surged by \$15 billion on a monthly basis in June to \$466.7 billion as both bank deposits and foreign securities increased by \$8.5 billion and \$6.8 billion, respectively, during the month, according to the data.

The country's economy is forecast to grow 7.7 per cent in 2022 and 3.1 per cent next year, Jadwa said. The International Monetary Fund, in its latest forecast, estimates that the kingdom's economy will grow 7.6 per cent in 2022 and 3.7 per cent in 2023, after expanding 3.2 per cent last year. —Agencies

Emirates Steel Arkan's Q2 profit surges on sales

ABU DHABI: Emirates Steel Arkan, the largest public steel and building materials company in the UAE, swung to a profit in the second quarter on rising sales volumes and commodity prices. The company, formed after the merger of Emirates Steel and Arkan Building Materials last year, posted a net profit of \$56.43 million in the three-month period ended June, it said in a statement on Tuesday to the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, where its shares are traded.

It attributed the results to higher sales volumes and elevated prices, enhanced operational efficiency and a supportive commodity market environment. "Ever since our merger last year, the group has been reporting strong revenue and profit growth in all three quarters," group chief executive Saeed Alremeithi told the National. "Clearly, operational efficiencies resulting from the merger and

high commodity prices have helped."

In the second quarter, the company's revenue rose more than 13 times to \$700.2 million.

"During the second quarter, the management continued the integration of Arkan and Emirates Steel, creating increased opportunities for growth and employment," said chairman Hamad Alhammadi. "The group is also actively supporting Operation 300bn, the UAE's industrial strategy, which will enhance prospects for new business." "During the first half of 2022, the group enhanced the efficiency of its plants [and] that brought about significant cost savings," Alremeithi said. "We have in place a process of prudent raw materials inventory management and keep finished product volumes at low levels to take advantage of and manage the risks associated with increasing price volatility."

During the first six months of the year, Emirates Steel Arkan significantly reduced its debt burden by bringing down the net debt-to-equity ratio to 21 per cent at the end of June, from 32 per cent at the end of December. "Profitable trading income, very tight working capital control and inventory management helped us to achieve significant cost efficiencies to reduce our debt ratio," chief financial officer Stephen Pope said. —Agencies

Australia bumps interest rates to tame inflation

SYDNEY: Australia's central bank raised interest rates by another 50 basis points Tuesday while pledging to "do what is necessary" to bring soaring inflation under control. The Reserve Bank of Australia's fourth successive increase saw its central rate rise to 1.85 percent, and officials put borrowers on notice of more.

Governor Philip Lowe said inflation—already at the highest level in decades—was expected to reach 7.75 percent this year, and may take two-three years to bring back to stable levels. The bank, like others around the world, faces a difficult balancing act in trying to curb consumer prices without stalling the already slowing economy. "The path to



SYDNEY: A billboard marking recently sold property is seen in front of a newly-constructed house in western Sydney on August 2, 2022, as Australia's central bank raised interest rates taking the cash rate to 1.85 percent. —AFP

achieve this balance is a narrow one and clouded in uncertainty, not least because of global developments," said Lowe. —AFP

Business

Sri Lanka seeks remittances jumpstart from electric cars

Desperate bid to boost cash-strapped nation's depleted foreign reserves

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka offered its overseas workers the right to buy electric vehicles duty-free on Tuesday to encourage them to send money home and boost the cash-strapped nation's depleted foreign exchange reserves. The island nation banned vehicle imports in March 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic began to hit its finances, culminating in the president's flight and resignation last month. But in an effort to woo the more than two million Sri Lankans employed abroad, they will be exempted from the ban and allowed to bring in electric cars and motorcycles duty-free.

Before the ban, the duties would have ranged from roughly \$5,000 to nearly \$50,000, depending on the model. "We are offering this never-before tax concession to encourage our expatriate community to send foreign exchange home through the legal banking system," foreign employment minister Manusha Nanayakkara told reporters following Monday's cabinet decision.

Overseas workers will only be able to use half their

remitted funds for the purchase, which can have a maximum value of \$65,000, he added, while those who have sent home smaller amounts can buy home appliances duty-free at the airport. But overseas workers will have to remit their earnings through official channels to be able to benefit from the offer and that will see them converted to Sri Lankan rupees at official rates. Expatriates are known to be using informal means to send money home because of better exchange rates as the country's central bank is accused of keeping the rupee artificially overvalued.

Sri Lanka's overseas remittances, once a key source of foreign exchange for the economy, have fallen by more than 50 percent, from \$3.3 billion in the first half of 2021 to \$1.6 billion in the same period this year. The financial crisis has forced Sri Lanka to default on its \$51 billion foreign debt and open bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund, while essential goods such as fuel and medicines are in acutely short supply. — AFP



COLOMBO: Motorists queue up along a street to buy fuel from Lanka IOC fuel station in Colombo on August 1, 2022. — AFP



TEHRAN: Iranians walk at Valiasr square in the capital Tehran. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi came to power a year ago, amid attempts to revive a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. — AFP

A year on, Iran's Raisi faces economy in trouble

TEHRAN: A year after Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi took power, his government has curbed the COVID pandemic but faces a sharp downturn of the sanctions-hit economy as nuclear talks remain stalled.

Having pledged to help especially the poor, the ultraconservative cleric now faces runaway consumer prices that have sparked protests. Raisi was elected in June last year in a ballot for which less than half of voters turned up, after his major rivals had been disqualified by electoral bodies.

He was inaugurated on August 3 by the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, and sworn in two days later as head of government in the Islamic republic. When he formed his cabinet, Raisi named his two top priorities: controlling the region's worst COVID outbreak, and turning around the battered economy.

Iran's vaccination campaign, long hampered by US sanctions, was massively stepped up using Chinese and Russian drugs. For Hamidreza Taraqi, a top official in the Islamic Coalition Party, part of the conservative alliance backing the Raisi, the government has "succeeded in curbing the coronavirus and in eliminating its effects". The UN World Health Organization says more than 58 million Iranians, or some 70 percent of the population, have now been fully vaccinated. "Raisi's government did oversee widespread coronavirus vaccinations after the state reversed course and approved foreign vaccine imports," said Henry Rome of the US-based consultancy Eurasia Group.

But on the economic front, Raisi's record is more mixed as Iran remains hit by biting sanctions that keep it isolated from global financial systems.

Nuclear talks

Iran had hoped for greater prosperity after its 2015 landmark nuclear deal with major powers gave it sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its atomic pro-

gram. But former US president Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew Washington from the agreement and reimposed a punishing sanctions regime. The economic pain has deepened popular distrust in Iran toward the government, both under the previous president, the moderate Hassan Rouhani, and under Raisi.

The darker mood, say analysts, was reflected in the record abstention rate at last year's election, which came after the repression of protest movements, especially from December 2017 and again in November 2019. Iran had returned to economic growth under Rouhani after the 2018-2019 recession.

But, hit by Trump's sanctions which dramatically curbed crucial oil exports, Iran's GDP per capita is now not expected to recover to its pre-crisis level until next year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

'Social turmoil'

In April 2021, with President Joe Biden in the White House, talks on rescuing the nuclear accord began in Vienna. The negotiations resumed in November 2021 after a pause around Iran's presidential polls but have yet to produce a breakthrough, while the Raisi government faces a budget deficit that economists consider abysmal. Inflation, which has been eroding household purchasing power for years, in June reached 54 percent from a year earlier, according to the latest official data. And the rial currency, which had recovered somewhat early this year on hopes of a deal in the nuclear talks, has since resumed its rapid descent, and reached a new low in June against the dollar.

Then in May, the government started to lift state subsidies on flour and to raise prices on food staples such as oil and dairy products—measures that especially penalized the poor whom Raisi had championed. "The country's economic horizon is far from clear... and economists predict we will face more rising prices," Mehdi Rahmani, editor of the reformist newspaper Shargh, told AFP.

The rising cost of living has driven protests in several Iranian cities in recent months.

Much now depends on how the nuclear talks go, said Rome. "If the nuclear negotiations collapse, as appears likely," he said, "Iran will likely face more significant economic and social turmoil." — AFP

nology venture capital fund in the Middle East with more than \$500 million in capital, invested in Homzmart for the first time. Existing investors including Riyadh-based asset manager Impact46, Dubai-based Nuwa Capital, San Francisco-based Rise Capital and Outliers Venture Capital, an early-stage fund with offices in the US and the Middle East, also participated in the company's latest funding round.

"Homzmart is a building a category-defining company in the \$80 billion furniture market with solid unit economics and an experienced team. We are thrilled to double down with [co-founders] Mahmoud and Ibrahim as they expand Homzmart's footprint to the rest of the region starting with Saudi Arabia," said Mohammed Almeshekeh, managing partner of Outliers Venture Capital.

The e-commerce platform is a one-stop shop that connects consumers with retailers and manufacturers selling home furniture, lighting and decor. Homzmart sales grew more than 30 times in its first year of operation, fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, as consumers swapped physical outlets for online shopping sites. — Agencies

Global markets edge down over US-China tensions

LONDON: Stock markets fell Tuesday as investors dumped risky equities on spiking US-China tensions over a possible visit by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan. Wall Street stocks retreated early Tuesday following mixed corporate earnings. Traders were already skittish after a string of data showed economies beginning to take a hit from surging inflation and central bank interest rate hikes aimed at taming prices.

A possible meeting between Pelosi and Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen is sure to anger Beijing, which views the island as its territory and has said the White House was playing "with fire". While observers do not think the move will spark a conflict, US officials said China was preparing possible military provocations that could include firing missiles in the Taiwan Strait or "large-scale" incursions into Taiwan's airspace.

Heightened tensions between the world's two superpowers have sent shivers through trading floors, compounding worries that Russia's invasion of Ukraine could escalate into a wider war.

Investors 'very nervous'

"We're seeing more risk aversion as Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan generates numerous unsettling headlines at a time of strained ties between the US and China," said OANDA analyst Craig Erlam. "Pelosi's proposed visit has been met with numerous threats from Beijing including an unspecified military response," he said, adding that the reported trip was "making investors very nervous".

Reports of the visit hit US stocks, with all three main indexes dropping at the start of trading Tuesday.

Asian stocks also fell earlier, though some markets recovered as the day wore on. Hong Kong and Shanghai led losses, shedding more than two percent, while Taipei was off more than one percent along with Tokyo. In Europe, Frankfurt was down 0.2 percent and Paris by 0.2 percent, while only London was up 0.1 percent after oil giant BP announced soaring profits.

"Objectively, given the potential seriousness of some kind of confrontation with China, the market is not reacting with abject fear about the outcome," said market analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com. The safe-haven yen jumped to a two-month high against the dollar. The Taiwan dollar meanwhile sank to its lowest since April 2020 before bouncing back.

Rising rates

The flare-up in tensions comes less than a week after US President Joe Biden and Xi Jinping held phone talks during which the Chinese leader warned the United States not to "play with fire". The market selloff comes as investors try to assess the outlook for the global economy as leaders try to bring down sky-high inflation by lifting rates while at the same time maintaining growth. Australia's central bank raised its central interest rate for a fourth time by another 50 basis points Tuesday. The Bank of England is also under pressure to make a more aggressive rate hike of 50 basis points this Thursday. Oil prices extended Monday's steep losses that were fuelled by falling demand expectations. — AFP

British Airways halts short-haul Heathrow flight sales

LONDON: British Airways on Tuesday suspended ticket sales for short-haul London Heathrow flights until at least Monday, in order to meet the hub's request to cap flights due to staff shortages. The carrier has been among the worst affected by sector-wide turmoil, as airlines eye recovery after the lifting of COVID pandemic travel restrictions.

BA has already axed thousands of short-haul flights this year as it struggles to meet strengthening demand with sufficient staff.

"As a result of Heathrow's request to limit new bookings, we've decided to take responsible action and limit the available fares on some Heathrow services to help maximize rebooking options for existing customers," BA said in a statement on Tuesday.

The carrier, which is owned by airline conglomerate IAG, added it took the decision "given the restrictions imposed on us and the ongoing challenges facing the entire aviation industry". BA has already been operating a pared-down flights schedule.

In early July, it cut 10,300 short-haul flights up to the end of October. That brought total flight cancellations to 13 percent of its entire summer schedule. Separately, BA had last month avoided a strike by its Heathrow ground staff after making an improved pay offer.—AFP



Ferrari delivered 3,455 cars worldwide in the second quarter, up 28.7 percent on the previous year — AFP

Ferrari lifts annual target after record orders

MILAN: Luxury Italian carmaker Ferrari raised its financial targets for the year on Tuesday after reporting record orders in the second quarter. The iconic firm delivered a total of 3,455 cars worldwide in the second three months of 2022, up 28.7 percent on the

previous year, according to a statement.

"The quality of the first six months and the robustness of our business allows us to revise upward the 2022 guidance on all metrics," said chief executive Benedetto Vigna. "Also the net order intake reached a new record level in the quarter."

Turnover jumped 24.9 percent to 1.29 billion euros (\$1.3 billion), while net profit rose 22 percent to 251 million euros. For 2022, the group is targeting revenues of 4.9 billion euros, compared to 4.8 billion previously. Europe, the Middle East and Africa remained Ferrari's biggest market in the second quarter, although deliveries spiked 116 percent in the region of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. — AFP

Egypt's Homzmart raises \$23m in expansion push

CAIRO: Cairo-based furniture online marketplace Homzmart has raised \$23 million in its latest funding round, as the startup plans to expand its services, the company's top executive said. "Another major double down on Homzmart's expansion vision and the solid milestones that the company keeps achieving," Mahmoud Ibrahim, co-founder and chief executive of Homzmart, said in a LinkedIn post on Monday.

The latest funding round brings the total amount raised by the Egyptian company to nearly \$40m. That includes \$1.3 million in February 2020 when the company was founded, and \$15 million in November for its expansion into Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

Saudi Technology Ventures (STV), the largest tech-

Business

Sanctions have huge toll on Russian economy: Report

Domestic economic activity at a standstill since Feb 24 invasion

MOSCOW: The Russian economy has been deeply damaged by sanctions and the exit of international business since the country invaded Ukraine, according to a new report by Yale University business experts and economists. Even though Moscow has been able to pull in billions of dollars from continued energy sales at elevated prices, largely unpublished data shows that much of its domestic economic activity has stalled since the February 24 invasion, according to the report released in late July.

"The findings of our comprehensive economic analysis of Russia are powerful and indisputable: Not only have sanctions and the business retreat worked, they have thoroughly crippled the Russian economy at every level," said the report from the Yale School of Management.

"Russian domestic production has come to a complete standstill with no capacity to replace lost businesses, products and talent," the 118-page report said. The report was produced by Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, president of the Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute, and other members of the institute, a mix of economists and business management experts.

With Moscow having halted or pared the release of official economic statistics, including crucial trade figures, Sonnenfeld's group tapped into data held by companies, banks, consultants, Russian trading partners and others to build a pic-

ture of Russian economic performance.

They also said they obtained unreleased data from experts on the Russian economy, and data in other languages which supported their conclusions. Even if Russia is able to earn more foreign exchange on gas and oil exports, that has not offset the impact of Western sanctions.

And, they argue, the country's dependence on Europe to buy 83 percent of its energy exports leaves it under a greater medium-term threat. "Russia is far more dependent on Europe than Europe is on Russia," they said.

Car industry crashes

Russia largely survived Western economic sanctions after Moscow's 2014 seizure of the Ukraine region of Crimea. President Vladimir Putin pushed a program of replacing some imports with domestic products and built up a cushion of financial reserves.

But the country's industry remained heavily driven by foreign capital investment and the import of higher-tech inputs that Russia had not mastered, like semiconductors. The barrage of deeper sanctions after the invasion took aim at both of those vulnerabilities, the report said.

Some 1,000 foreign companies halted their activities in the country, potentially impacting up to five million jobs, according to the report. Industrial output plunged, and Russian retail sales

and consumer spending have fallen at an annual rate of 15-20 percent. Imports have plunged across the board, the report said: crucial imports from China fell by more than half.

A key example of Russian problems, according to the report, is the automobile sector.

Car sales went from 100,000 a month to 27,000 a month, and output has stalled due to a lack of parts and machinery. Without access to imported components, Russian producers are putting out cars without airbags or modern anti-lock brakes, and only with manual transmissions.

Threat to gas revenues

The report challenged the belief that the Russian economy was surviving thanks to the tens of billions of dollars the country reaps each month from oil and gas exports. Last week the IMF said the Russian economy, though contracting, was doing better than expected due to its energy and commodity export income. The Yale report said data indicates energy revenues have been falling for the last three months. If Western Europe succeeds in cutting itself off from Russian natural gas, Moscow faces an "unsolvable" situation with a lack of a market for its output, according to the report.

"Any decrease in oil and gas revenues or oil and gas export volumes would immediately put a strain on the Kremlin's budget," it said. —AFP



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting with members of the Security Council in Moscow. The Russian economy has been deeply damaged by sanctions and the exit of international business since the country invaded Ukraine. —AFP

EU halves its reliance on Russian gas

BRUSSELS: The European Union has halved its reliance on Russian gas by buying from other suppliers, but cannot go much further without reducing its energy consumption, the bloc's top diplomat has said.

Josep Borrell said deliveries from Russia make up only 20 per cent of Europe's gas imports at present, compared with 40 per cent before the war in Ukraine began. The bloc has partly offset Russia's gas cuts by buying more liquefied natural gas (LNG), for example from the US, which arrives on ships and now makes up 37 per cent of imports, up from 19 per cent previously.

The American Petroleum Institute said last week that the US sent more gas to Europe in June than Russia delivered by pipeline, a first that it said "would have been unthinkable a few years ago". However, not all countries can import LNG directly because they are landlocked or do not have the required facilities, with Germany hurrying to build those on its northern coast.

Pipeline deals with Norway, Algeria and Azerbaijan have also helped the EU to diversify its supplies after years of heavy dependency on Russia which left many countries exposed when war broke out.

In a blog post, Borrell said more diversification would follow but said the "hard truth" was that "for this winter, we are approaching the limits of what extra gas we can buy from non-Russian sources." "So, the bulk will have to come from energy savings," he said. "Winter comes every year but the one we face promises to be exceptional."

EU members last week made a voluntary commit-



BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the share of LNG imports had almost doubled. —AFP

ment to cut their gas consumption by 15 per cent during the winter, so that the gas they do receive from Russia will go further. However, member states carved out a number of exceptions and took the power to declare a gas crisis - which would make the energy cuts mandatory - away from the European Commission.

There is no certainty about how much gas Europe will receive from Russia, which has drastically reduced supplies to Germany through the Nord Stream pipeline. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the bloc "must prepare

for the worst" because Russia has partially or completely cut off supplies to several member states already, most recently its neighbor Latvia.

Mr Borrell said he would work on building a global coalition on energy efficiency in the same way that the EU helped to win backing for a pledge on methane at last year's Cop26 summit. He said European countries leading by example would give the bloc more credibility to push for energy efficiency at the UN General Assembly and at Cop27 this autumn. "It is still true that the best energy of all is the one you don't need," he said. —Agencies

BP profit triples to \$9.3bn on soaring energy prices

LONDON: British oil giant BP rebounded to second-quarter profit on soaring energy prices, it said Tuesday, after a big loss linked to its Russia exit following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Net profit hit \$9.3 billion in the three months to June—a threefold increase from the same period last year, the company said in a results statement. And it contrasted sharply with a \$20.4-billion loss after tax in the first quarter, when it took a vast write-down after its decision to leave Russia.

BP is the latest energy major to post bumper second-quarter earnings as oil and gas prices have surged in the wake of key producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Prices also spiked after countries lifted COVID pandemic lockdowns, spurring global energy demand. British rival Shell revealed last week a fivefold surge in net profit to \$18 billion while France's TotalEnergies raked in nearly \$6 billion.

US majors ExxonMobil and Chevron last week logged record profits for the same period. Turning to the third-quarter outlook, BP forecast Tuesday that oil prices will "remain elevated ... due to ongoing disruption to Russian supply, reduced levels of spare capacity and with inventory levels significantly below the five-year average".

It warned gas prices will also remain "elevated and volatile" as Russia also squeezes European supplies in retaliation for Western sanctions over the assault on Ukraine. The gas outlook was "heavily dependent on Russian pipeline flows or other supply disruptions", BP added.

The group's share price jumped about four percent in London trade, as investors welcomed news of a dividend hike and a \$3.5-billion stock buyback. Revenues were catapulted 86 percent to almost \$68 billion from a year earlier.

Windfall tax pleas

At the same time, BP posted a net loss of \$11.1 billion for the first half of 2022. That was sparked by a colossal first-quarter charge of \$24.4 billion, linked to a decision to exit its 19.75-percent stake in Russian energy group Rosneft as well as its other activities in the country.

That wiped out the overall benefit of high energy prices in the first half. Gas prices, which skyrocketed in March after Russia launched its invasion of neighboring Ukraine, surged last week after Moscow curbed crucial deliveries to Europe. The market remains at its highest level since March after state-run Gazprom suspended gas deliveries to Latvia on Saturday. Back in Britain, the government in May proposed a temporary windfall tax on BP and its UK rivals including Shell to help ease a cost-of-living crisis.

The proceeds will help to fund a multi-billion-pound support package for consumers hit by surging domestic electricity and gas bills. UK



annual inflation hit a new 40-year high of 9.4 percent in June.

Rocketing Chevron and ExxonMobil earnings also prompted calls for a windfall profits tax on the sector in the United States, which faces the highest inflation in four decades as well.

A similar plea was made by left-wing politicians in France after TotalEnergies published its second-quarter earnings, but President Emmanuel Macron's government has opposed such a move.

Britain-based campaigners slammed BP on Tuesday over its latest results. "While households are being plunged into poverty with knock-on impacts for the whole economy, fossil fuel companies are laughing all the way to the bank," said Doug Parr, chief scientist at green campaign group Greenpeace UK. —AFP

Natural disaster losses hit \$72bn in H1 2022: Swiss Re

ZURICH: This file photograph taken on February 19, 2009, shows the headquarters building of reinsurer Swiss Re in Zurich. —AFP

ZURICH: Total economic losses caused by natural disasters hit an estimated \$72 billion in the first half of 2022, fuelled by storms and floods, Swiss reinsurer giant Swiss Re estimated Tuesday. Though the figure is lower than the \$91 billion estimate for the first six months of 2021, it is close to the 10-year average of \$74 billion, and the weight is shifting towards weather-induced catastrophes. "The effects of climate change are evident in increasingly extreme weather events, such as the unprecedented floods in Australia and South Africa," said Martin Bertogg, Swiss Re's head of catastrophe perils. The Zurich-based group, which acts as an insurer for insurers, said the losses were also propelled by winter storms in Europe as well as heavy thunderstorms on the continent and in the United States.

So-called secondary natural disasters like floods and storms—as opposed to major disasters such as earthquakes—are happening more frequently, the reinsurer said. "This confirms the trend we have observed over the last five years: that secondary perils are driving insured losses in every corner of the world," Bertogg said.

"Unlike hurricanes or earthquakes, these perils are ubiquitous and exacerbated by rapid urbanization in particularly vulnerable areas," he said. "Given the scale of the devastation across the globe, secondary perils require the same disciplined risk assessment as primary perils such as hurricanes." Swiss Re said floods in India, China and Bangladesh confirm the growing loss potential from flooding in urban areas. Man-made catastrophes such as industrial accidents added on a further \$3 billion of economic losses to the \$72 billion from natural disasters, taking the total to \$75 billion—which is down on the \$95 billion total for the first half of 2021.

Total insured losses stood at \$38 billion: \$3 billion worth of man-made disasters and \$35 billion worth of natural catastrophes—up 22 percent on the 10-year average, said the Swiss reinsurer, warning of the effects of climate change. February's storms in Europe cost insurers \$3.5 billion, according to Swiss Re estimates. Australia's floods in February and March set a new record for insured flood losses in the country at so far close to \$3.5 billion—one of the costliest natural catastrophes ever in the country.

Severe weather and hailstorms in France in the first six months of the year have so far caused an estimated four billion euros (\$4.1 billion) of insured market losses. —AFP

Ecuador says will pay \$374m to oil company Perenco

QUITO: Ecuador said Monday it would pay \$374 million due to Anglo-French oil company Perenco under a settlement ordered in a dispute over profits. Work was

under way to figure out payment terms, the economy ministry said, after Perenco announced it had secured a freeze of all Luxembourg bank accounts used by Ecuador to make bond coupon payments.

Perenco filed suit over a decade ago against Ecuador for \$1.42 billion, after the South American country increased from 50 percent to 99 percent its share of profits after an increase in the oil price.

In 2019, Perenco was awarded a settlement against Ecuador by the International Center for Investment Disputes (ICSID), an autonomous organ of the World

Bank. In a statement on Monday, Perenco said it had managed to freeze "bank accounts in Luxembourg from which payments are made on Ecuador's bond coupons."

This served, it said, "to highlight the risks the international investment community faces in any dealings with Ecuador." The company added: "Unless and until Ecuador fulfils its obligations under the Washington Convention and its express undertaking to pay Perenco in full, Perenco has been left with no choice but to take steps to enforce its payments rights against Ecuador in

Luxembourg and other jurisdictions." The government in Quito said Monday it had not received notice of the freezing of its assets in Luxembourg. In 2017, the ICSID also ordered Ecuador to pay \$337 million to US oil company Burlington Resources.

Burlington Resources was working in two oil blocs in Ecuador alongside Perenco in 2008, but halted operations after Ecuador demanded more of the profits. Ecuador accused both companies in 2009 of abandoning their operations in the country, and cancelled their contracts. —AFP



This undated handout picture released by Rio de Janeiro's State Health Department shows Brazilian conjoined twins Bernardo (left) and Arthur (right) with their parents Adriely and Antonio Lima in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos



This undated handout picture released by Rio de Janeiro's State Health Department shows Brazilian conjoined twins Bernardo (left) and Arthur (right) with their parents Adriely (second left) and Antonio Lima, after the twins' operation at the Instituto Estadual do Cerebro Paulo Niemeyer (IECPN) hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



This undated handout photo released by Gemini Untwined shows conjoined twins Bernardo and Arthur Lima before their operation at the Instituto Estadual do Cerebro Paulo Niemeyer (IECPN) hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



This undated handout photo released by Gemini Untwined shows conjoined twins Bernardo and Arthur Lima after their operation at the Instituto Estadual do Cerebro Paulo Niemeyer (IECPN) hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Conjoined twins separated with help of virtual reality in Brazil

Conjoined twins born in Brazil with a fused head and brain have been separated in what doctors described Monday as the most complex surgery of its kind, which they prepared for using virtual reality. Arthur and Bernardo Lima were born in 2018 in the state of Roraima in northern Brazil as craniopagus twins, an extremely rare condition in which the siblings are fused at the cranium. Joined at the top of the head for nearly four years-most of that spent in a hospital room outfitted with a custom bed-the brothers are now able to look each other in the face for the first time, after a series of nine operations

culminating in a marathon 23-hour surgery to separate them. London-based medical charity Gemini Untwined, which helped carry out the procedure, described it as the "most challenging and complex separation to date," given that the boys shared several vital veins. "It was the most difficult, complex, challenging surgery of my career," said neurosurgeon Gabriel Mufarrej of the Paulo Niemeyer State Brain Institute (IECPN) in Rio de Janeiro, where the procedure was performed. "No one believed it was possible at first. Saving them both was a historic accomplishment."

Members of the medical team, which included nearly 100 staff, prepared for the delicate final stages of the surgery on June 7 and 9 with the help of virtual reality. Using brain scans to create a digital map of the boys' shared cranium, surgeons practiced for the procedure in a trans-Atlantic, virtual-reality trial surgery executed in both Britain and Brazil. British neurosurgeon Noor ul Owase Jeelani, the lead surgeon for Gemini Untwined, called the prep session "space-age stuff." "It's just wonderful, it's really great to see the anatomy and do the surgery before you actually put the children at any risk," he told British news

agency PA. "To do it in virtual reality was just really man-on-Mars stuff." Pictures and videos released by medical staff showed the boys lying side-by-side post-surgery, little Arthur reaching out to touch his brother's hand. The boys are still recovering, and may need further procedures as they develop, doctors said. Speech is difficult for them, and Bernardo has a motor deficit on the right-hand side, Mufarrej said. "They will take some time to get to the point where we want them to be. But I believe in them," he said. — AFP

Beyonce to remove offensive lyric after disabled community outcry

Beyonce will remove a derogatory term for disabled people from her new song "Heated," a spokesperson said Monday, after its use was condemned as offensive by campaigners. The US pop megastar will re-record the track from her latest album "Renaissance" on which she originally sang the lyrics "Spazzin' on that



In this file photo US singer/songwriter Beyonce arrives for the world premiere of Disney's "The Lion King" at the Dolby theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

a**, spazz on that a**." "The word, not used intentionally in a harmful way, will be replaced," a spokesperson for Beyonce told AFP via email. Co-written with Canadian rapper Drake, the dance track appears to use the word "spaz" in the colloquial sense of temporary

losing control or acting erratically. But disability campaigners noted that the word is derived from "spastic." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, spasticity is a movement disorder involving stiff muscles and awkward movement, suffered by 80 percent of people with cerebral palsy. In June, US singer Lizzo re-recorded her song "Grrrls" to remove the same term following complaints that it was derogatory.

Australian disability campaigner Hannah Diviney said the inclusion of the word by Beyonce "feels like a slap in the face to me, the disabled community & the progress we tried to make with Lizzo." "Guess I'll just keep telling the whole industry to 'do better' until ableist slurs disappear from music," she tweeted. Beyonce's eagerly anticipated seventh solo studio album "Renaissance" was released Friday, drawing mainly positive reviews with its nods to disco and electronic dance.

Other collaborators on the album-which leaked online in the days prior to its official release-include Nile Rodgers, Skrillex, Nigerian singer Tems, Grace Jones, Pharrell and Beyonce's rap mogul husband Jay-Z. In an Instagram post published soon after the album's release, Beyonce said creating the album "allowed me a place to dream and to find escape during a scary time for the world. "My intention was to create a safe place, a place without judgment," she wrote. "A place to be free of perfectionism and over thinking. A place to scream, release, feel freedom." — AFP



Easter Island welcomes back tourists post-pandemic

Chile's Easter Island, a popular Pacific Ocean tourist destination, officially reopened to the world Monday after more than two years of coronavirus closure. The first flight with tourists-many with bookings made before the pandemic-was due to touch down on Thursday, tourism official Veronica Kunze told reporters. "We have to open the island, but we have to do it safely," she added. Arrivals must be fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, and show a neg-

ative PCR test. The island, located 3,500 kilometers west of the coast of Chile, is world-famous for its "moais," huge stone statues in human form partially buried in the Earth.

The island's main source of revenue was domestic and international tourism before flights were grounded on March 16, 2020, following the first reported cases of coronavirus in Chile. Easter Island used to receive some 160,000 tourists per year, arriving on two flights daily.

In the two years without tourists, islanders resorted to bartering and planting their own vegetable gardens, officials said. The island has reported only two coronavirus cases, with no hospitalizations or deaths. The reopening will be gradual, with some two flights a week at first, said Kunze. The local hospital had been reinforced, she added, and now boasts an isolation unit as well as a PCR laboratory. — AFP



Smoke billows from scorched earth after a fire erupted at the Cinecitta studios southeast of Rome.



Firefighters hose down a structure to extinguish a fire at the Cinecitta studios southeast of Rome. — AFP photos

Fire destroys set at Rome's Cinecitta studios

A fire broke out on Monday at Rome's legendary Cinecitta Studios, virtually destroying a set being dismantled but causing no

injuries, emergency services and the studio said. Three teams of firefighters were on the site southeast of the Italian capital, which in its heyday was frequented by some of the country's greatest stars, from Federico Fellini to Sophia Loren. "A fire has broken out in an area where a set was being decommissioned," a spokesman for Cinecitta told AFP, adding that nobody had been injured. Firefighters said that "much of the papier-mache reconstruction has been destroyed" on the affected set,

which depicted Renaissance Florence, but that the flames were limited and under control.

The fire disrupted filming of a Charlize Theron movie, the sequel to Netflix film "The Old Guard", according to production coordinator Natalia Barbosa. She told AFP the fire grew rapidly amid high winds and soaring temperatures and the set was evacuated as a precaution. "We've lost two days of filming," she said. It was not immediately clear what caused the fire, although

much of Italy is a tinderbox this summer due to a severe drought.

Cinecitta suffered a major fire in August 2007, in a warehouse where the sets of television blockbuster "Rome" were stored, before spreading to other buildings in the vast complex. Cinecitta-which means "the city of cinema" in Italian-has been the backdrop of more than 3,000 films, including 51 Oscar winners. The studios were inaugurated in 1937 to churn out propaganda for the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini.

They were later used to make such classics as William Wyler's "Ben-Hur" in 1959 and Fellini's 1960 "La Dolce Vita". In recent decades, major productions have become more scarce, although the studios are planning a major makeover using money from the European Union's post-pandemic recovery fund. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Iguanas reproducing on Galapagos island century after disappearing

A land iguana that disappeared more than a century ago from one of the Galapagos Islands is reproducing naturally following its reintroduction there, Ecuador's environment ministry announced Monday. The reptile from the *Conolophus subcristatus* species, one of three land iguanas living on the archipelago, disappeared from Santiago Island in the early part of the 20th century according to a 1903-06 expedition there by the California Academy of Sciences, the ministry said.

In 2019, the Galapagos National Park

(PNG) authority reintroduced more than 3,000 iguanas from a nearby island to restore the natural ecosystem of Santiago, which lies at the center of the Pacific archipelago. The remote island chain was made famous by British geologist and naturalist Charles Darwin's observations on evolution there. In 1835, Darwin recorded a huge number of iguanas of all ages on Santiago.

PNG director Danny Rueda said "187 years later we are once again seeing a healthy population of land iguanas with adults, juveniles and newborns. "It's a

great conservation achievement and strengthens our hopes of restoration on the islands that have been severely affected by introduced species." Located close to 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) off the coast of Ecuador, the Galapagos islands are home to unique flora and fauna and are a Natural World Heritage site. —AFP

A Land Iguana (*Conolophus subcristatus*) is seen in Santa Cruz Island, Galapagos Archipelago, in the Pacific Ocean, 1000 km off the coast of Ecuador. — AFP



WWE-style wrestling hits Bangkok - with a Thai twist

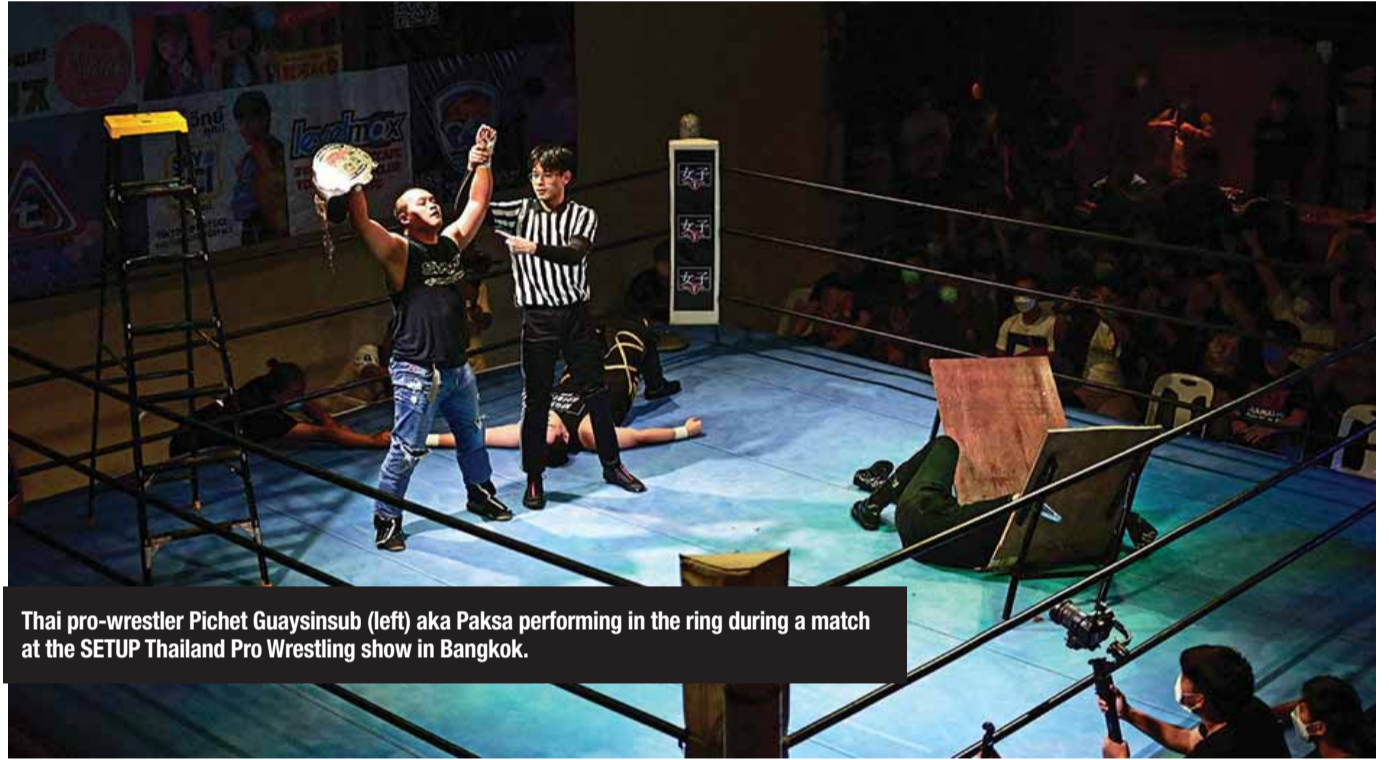


This photo shows Thai pro-wrestler Tanapol Mahavong aka P'Suchart working in his room apartment in Bangkok a week before the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show.

A fighter bursts through a flimsy tarpaulin curtain and bounds into the ring wearing a helmet and the unmistakable bright orange jacket of a Bangkok motorbike-taxi rider-it's Thailand's take on WWE wrestling. The 25-year-old wrestler with the stage name "P'Suchart" was one of almost 20 individuals slapping, slamming and smacking one another at SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling. The part-sport, part-show has been slowly gaining popularity in the country and co-founder Pumi Boonyatud hopes to carve out a space for local wrestlers using distinctively Thai characters.

A crowd of about 250 in Bangkok suggests it could take off. "We try to put some of the Thai fighting background... together with professional wrestler training," the 32-year-old said, in order to create "what we call the real Thai version of wrestling". "P'Suchart", real name Tanapol Mahavong, was first captivated by wrestling when he played video games as a child. He believes that "character-building is more important than wrestling skills".

"Wrestling skills you can train for, build them up, if you put enough energy into it then you could become a good wrestler," he told AFP. "But to have a good character is a whole different story," he said, adding his motorbike-taxi wrestling persona was inspired by a character in the Thai film "Heart Attack". Like many on the stage Saturday evening, he trains and performs around his nine-to-five job as an editor.



Thai pro-wrestler Pichet Guaysinsub (left) aka Paksa performing in the ring during a match at the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show in Bangkok.

"When I train hard and my body gets beaten and bruised up, the manager of my office would tell me to go home and rest," Tanapol said.

And although he ultimately lost his bout, the spectacle in the ring definitely struck a chord with the crowd. "They won me as a fan," said American tourist Jerry Massey,

who had stumbled across promotions of the show and pitched up to see how it measured up. "This is something different for me," said the 45-year-old, a fan of pro-wrestling in the United States.

"We saw chairs shattered tonight, we saw paint shots tonight, you could really feel it in your body being so close to the action,"

Massey added. "I was absolutely impressed." As Tanapol puts it: "Anyone can become a good wrestler, but not everyone can be an entertaining wrestler." — AFP



Photo shows pro-wrestler Monomoth grimacing in the ring during a match at the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show in Bangkok.



This photo shows Thai pro-wrestlers Tanapol Mahavong aka P'Suchart (right) and Bital Srisawat aka Bital Hasdin (left) practice at a gym in Bangkok a week before the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show.



This photograph shows Singaporean pro-wrestler Andrew Tang (center) aka "The Statement" performing in the ring during a match at the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show in Bangkok.



This combination of photographs show pro-wrestlers posing during the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show in Bangkok. — AFP photos



This photo shows Thai pro-wrestler Bital Srisawat aka Bital Hasdin lifting his opponent in the ring during a match at the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show in Bangkok.



This photo shows pro-wrestler Hoshitango (left) jumping on Thai pro-wrestler Bital Srisawat aka Bital Hasdin (right) in the ring during a match at the SETUP Thailand Pro Wrestling show in Bangkok.

Lifestyle | Features



This photo shows macaque monkeys at Bayon Temple in Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.



This photo shows a gibbons reaching for a banana in a tree in the forest at Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.



This photo shows macaque monkeys at Bayon Temple in Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.



This photo shows gibbons eating fruit in a tree in the forest at Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.



This photo shows otters in the forest at Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.

Giant tortoise on track halts trains in England

A large tortoise on the track caused trains to come to a halt in south-eastern England, a rail company informed frazzled travelers Monday. Greater Anglia rail company tweeted that trains between the city of Norwich and Stansted Airport were stopped for more

than an hour due to a "giant tortoise". The operator first announced the line was blocked by "animals on the railway" early on Monday afternoon. One passenger on a train to Norwich, Diane Akers, posted a photo of the tortoise standing on the track just after noon, reporting to the train company: "it's still alive but injured".

The tortoise's shell appeared to have a large gash on top. "I couldn't believe my eyes to be honest!" Akers wrote. A Greater Anglia customer adviser called Georgie later wrote that the tortoise was injured and had been taken to a specialist team for treatment. "We have been informed that he will make a full recovery," the adviser updated.

One passenger, Lydia Jane White, tweeted: "Train delayed because of a giant tortoise, too heavy to lift, stuck on the train tracks after having escaped from a local wildlife centre" is not something I thought I'd ever hear from a train driver!". The railway line reopened around 1.5 hours later, while knock-on delays were predicted. The bizarre delay came as UK passengers have experienced several days of train strikes this summer as railway employees' trade unions demand pay rises reflective of inflation.— AFP



This photo shows macaque monkeys next to Bayon Temple in Angkor Park in Siem Reap province. — AFP photos

Baby boom: The endangered wildlife revival at Cambodia's Angkor Wat

The melodic songs from families of endangered monkeys ring out over the jungle near Cambodia's Angkor Wat temple complex—a sign of ecological rejuvenation decades after hunting decimated wildlife at the site. The first pair of rare pileated gibbons were released in 2013 as part of a joint program between conservation group Wildlife Alliance, the forestry administration and the Apsara Authority—a government agency that manages the 12th-century ruins.

The gibbon duo, named Baray and Saranick, were born from parents rescued from the wildlife trade and produced offspring a year later. "We have now released four different pairs of gibbons within the Angkor forest and they have gone on to breed and now seven babies have been born," Wildlife Alliance rescue and care program director Nick Marx told AFP.

"We are restoring Cambodia's natural heritage back into their most beautiful cultural heritage." Globally, gibbons are one of the most threatened families of primates, while the pileated gibbon is listed as endangered. Marx says his team rescues some 2,000 animals a year and many more will soon call the Angkor jungle home. There are hopes that once the baby gibbons reach sexual maturity in about five to eight years, they will also pair up and mate. "What we are hoping for the future is to create a sustainable population of the animals... that we released here within the amazing Angkor forest," Marx said.

'Big victory'

Cambodian authorities have hailed the gibbon baby boom that began in 2014. "This means a big victory for our project," Chou Radina from the Apsara Authority said, adding that as well as gibbons, tourists could now see great hornbills flying over Angkor Wat. The program has released more than 40 other animals and birds including silvered langurs, muntjac deers, smooth-coated otters, leopard cats, civets, wreathed hornbills, and green peafowl. All were rescued from traffickers, donated or born in captivity at the Phnom Tamao wildlife sanctuary near Phnom Penh.

The Angkor Archaeological Park—which contains the ruins of various capitals of the Khmer Empire, dating from the ninth to 15th centuries—has some of the oldest rainforest in Cambodia. It is also the kingdom's most popular tourist destination. Since Angkor Wat became a world heritage site in 1992, its jungle, which covers more than 6,500 hectares, has benefited from increased legal and physical protections. There are hopes that wildlife sightings will also spark interest in local and foreign tourists and boost conservation education efforts.

Ongoing threats

Rampant poaching, habitat loss from logging, agriculture and dam building has stripped much wildlife from Cambodian rainforests. Last year, authorities



This photo shows Wildlife Alliance conservationist Nick Marx looking at otters in the forest at Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.



This photo shows local resident Moeurn Sarin placing fruits for gibbons in the forest at Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.

removed 61,000 snare traps, environment ministry spokesman Neth Pheaktra said, adding that the government had launched a campaign to discourage hunting and eating of wildlife meat. But widespread poverty even before the pandemic left many households without much choice but to continue hunting so their families could eat protein.

Animals are also hunted for traditional medicine and to be kept as pets. According to Global Forest Watch, from 2001-2021 Cambodia lost 2.6 million hectares of tree cover, a 30 percent decrease since 2000. Commercial interests are trumping protection efforts in some quarters—the Phnom Tamao zoo and wildlife rescue centre is under threat from a shadowy rezoning development plan, Marx said.

Back at Siem Reap—the gateway city to Angkor Wat—villager Moeurn Sarin shops at the market for bananas, watermelon, rambutan and fish to feed the pileated gibbon families and otters. "We are happy to conserve these animals," the 64-year-old said, adding he likes to watch the gibbons' tree swinging antics. "In the future, these animals will have babies for the young generation to see."—AFP



This photo shows Wildlife Alliance conservationist Nick Marx looking at a gibbons in a tree in the forest at Angkor Park in Siem Reap province.



Sports

Murray, Venus defeated in Washington openers

Ymer ousts Murray as Halep, Pegula win

WASHINGTON: Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray of Britain crashed out in the opening round of the ATP and WTA Washington Open on Monday, falling to Sweden's Mikael Ymer. The 35-year-old Scotsman fell to 115th-ranked Ymer 7-6 (10/8), 4-6, 6-1 after two hours and 50 minutes at the US Open tuneup tournament. "I'm excited," said Ymer, who saved four set points in the first set. "A lot left to do but it's a very good start of the American swing."

World number 50 Murray, the 2012 and 2016 Olympic champion, is trying to earn a seeding at the US Open, which he won a decade ago. "It's still possible," Murray said. "I would just need to have a good run in Canada or Cincinnati really. It's pretty straightforward if I was to make a quarterfinal or a semifinal, which right now after a loss like that doesn't seem realistic. "I do feel like if I play very well that I could do that. But I'll need to certainly play better than I did today."

Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams, playing her first singles match in nearly a year, was also eliminated in the opening round, falling to Canadian qualifier Rebecca Marino 4-6, 6-1, 6-4. "It was nice to have the crowd behind me," Williams said. "Definitely a great experience. It's my first match so I didn't think I played well a lot of the times. "Just trying to shake off some rust. That's just to be expected. All I can do is just play another tournament and play better."

Williams had not played a WTA singles match since falling to Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei 49 weeks ago in Chicago. Ymer, who lost his only career ATP final last August in Winston-Salem, will next

face 15th seed Aslan Karatsev. Ymer won 75 percent of his first-serve points, 49-of-65, and smashed 37 winners past Murray, who made only 25 with 35 unforced errors, five more than Ymer. Murray had a set point in the 12th game of the first set but sent a backhand wide and Ymer held into a tiebreaker.

Murray had three more set points in the tiebreak but Ymer smashed two forehand winners and a forehand volley winner to pull level at 7-7, prompting Murray to toss his racquet in frustration. Ymer, 23, took the set on a backhand volley winner. "Had chances in the first set to close that out," Murray said. "Didn't get it. Yeah, frustrating." While Murray clawed back to force a third set, Ymer raced to a 4-0 lead, they exchanged breaks on double faults and Ymer ended the match on a backhand crosscourt winner.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep, coming off a Wimbledon semi-final run, beat Spanish qualifier Cristina Bucsa 6-3, 7-5. "Always the first round is difficult when you change the surface," third seed Halep said. "I know it's going to take time to make the game more solid." US top seed Jessica Pegula cruised 6-2, 6-2, over US wildcard Hailey Baptiste. Pegula won the most recent WTA Washington event in 2019 after two missed years due to COVID-19. "It definitely feels weird," Pegula said. "It's great to be back."

Edmund wins ATP return

Britain's Kyle Edmund made a triumphant return to ATP singles after three left knee sur-



WASHINGTON: Andy Murray of Great Britain returns a shot to Mikael Ymer of Sweden during Day 3 of the Citi Open at Rock Creek Tennis Center on August 01, 2022. —AFP

geries and a 20-month layoff by defeating Japanese qualifier Yosuke Watanuki 6-4, 7-6 (10/8). Edmund, who next faces British 16th seed Daniel Evans, played in his first tour-level singles

match since October 2020 at Vienna, a month before his first operation. "I didn't find it easy today," said Edmund. "I hung in there and I got my reward in the end." —AFP

Talking points as F1 takes a break

PARIS: Fernando Alonso's move to Aston Martin to replace retiring Sebastian Vettel next year was the focus of interest in Formula One after the Hungarian Grand Prix. Here AFP looks at talking points as the world championship heads into its annual summer holiday shutdown:

Ferrari's problems

Team boss Mattia Binotto faced increasing pressure on Monday after Sunday's flop as Ferrari started the Hungarian Grand Prix second and third, with Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc, but finished fourth and sixth. World champion Max Verstappen and his Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez went from 10th and 11th to first and fifth with a comprehensive demonstration of smart team-work and strategy. Red Bull lead the constructors championship with 431 points. Ferrari has 334. Rising Mercedes are third on 304. Although Ferrari have had the fastest car for much of the season, notably in qualifying, they have squandered that advantage with bungled strategy calls, driver error, engine and other technical failures and a lack of consistency and reliability.

Former driver Johnny Herbert, a pundit on Sky Sports F1, described their latest flop as "embarrassing". Leclerc, 80 points adrift in the title race, pleaded to stay out on the track on medium compound tyres while leading with 30 laps to go, but was called in, switched to hards and fell down the order. Binotto remained calm and blamed an unexpected drop in car and tyre performance, but promised another in a series of in-depth reviews.

Mercedes recovery

The Mercedes recovery after a dismal and bumpy start to the season has revived seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, not only rekindling his belief he will secure a 104th career victory this year, but also energising him for a bid for a record eighth drivers' title. The 37-year-old Briton's run of five consecutive podium finishes, including two successive seconds, has confirmed the team are back as a competitive - if not yet winning - force. Hamilton said: "For sure, if we take this pace into the second half of the season, we can start to fight those other guys!"

Alonso move triggers 'silly season' Fernando Alonso's swift move to take Sebastian Vettel's seat has triggered 'silly season' speculation forecasting more action in the driver market for 2023. The first vacancy to fill will be at Alpine. Reserve driver Oscar Piastri, winner of the 2020 Formula Three and 2021 Formula Two titles, is an obvious candidate. The Australian, managed by former Red Bull driver and compatriot Mark Webber, is regarded as a major talent. Another vacant seat could be at Williams, where Nicholas Latifi will be out of contract this year. Williams may be interested in Piastri, if he misses the Alpine seat, or Mercedes reserve Nyck de Vries.

Bouncing and porpoising

While the drivers take to the European beaches for their vacations, many teams will keep working on solutions to the 'porpoising' and bouncing problems that have affected many cars this season. The ruling body the FIA is scheduled to introduce measures to control the problem and safeguard drivers starting from the Belgian Grand Prix, but some teams, notably Red Bull, remain opposed to any changes affecting the 'ground effect' formula introduced this season. Red Bull have designed a car that is less prone to porpoising and have reaped the reward in results. Team boss Christian Horner has warned of rifts in the paddock and pitlane if new rules are introduced mid-season.

Abusive behavior

Abusive behavior from fans at races and on social media has prompted a response by Formula One. It launched a 'Drive it Out' campaign on Saturday, but there were continued reports of abusive behavior and filmed reports on social media showing Max Verstappen fans allegedly burning Lewis Hamilton merchandise at the Hungaroring. "It is not acceptable," said the 24-year-old Dutchman. "I definitely don't agree with that because it's disgusting." The recent incidents in Austria and Hungary follow others when fans cheered drivers crashing their cars or generally booed or abused them. —AFP

China's former golf world number one Shanshan retires

HONG KONG: China's former world number one and 2016 Olympic bronze medalist Feng Shanshan announced her retirement from professional golf and the LPGA Tour on Tuesday. "Now it is time for me to try something different," said Feng, who will turn 33 on Friday, in a statement posted on her official Instagram page.

The announcement comes a year after her last competitive appearance, at the Tokyo Olympics, where Feng had strongly hinted she was about to retire. "In recent years, the global pandemic has changed a lot of things, and has me reflecting," she said. "It is time to slow down a little, focus more on my personal growth, and spend some time with my family." Feng told AFP in Tokyo it had been an honor to represent her country, for potentially the last time.

"We're representing our own countries and we're not playing for prize money, we're playing for honor," she said at Kasumigaseki Country Club, where she could not repeat her medal heroics of five years earlier, finishing eighth. "Out of all my achievements, I would say a medal at the Olympics is very special," said Feng, whose only major win came at the 2012 US PGA Championship. "Even though I've been a major winner, think about it, we have five majors every year, in four years we have 20 chances to win a major."

'My last dance'

"So I would say it's harder, much harder, to get a medal at the Olympics. It was the most memorable moment of my career." Brought up in China's southern Guangdong province, neighboring Hong Kong, an 18-year-old Feng became the first Chinese player



China's Feng Shanshan

to earn an LPGA tour card in 2007. The easy-going Feng went on to be the first Chinese player, man or woman, to win a major and lifted 10 LPGA titles during her 14 active years on the tour. In 2017, Feng became the only Chinese golfer to date to reach the world number one ranking.

During a supremely consistent career, Feng registered 18 top-10 finishes in majors, two of them in 2021 even as she was winding down her playing commitments. It seems clear that golf will remain a big part of Feng's life, even in retirement. Since December she has been helping to coach China's

women's national team. "I will be devoting my heart and sweat off the course in helping young talents grow," she wrote. "Golf has brought me everything. Maybe now is my chance to give back." She also left the door open for a final appearance on the LPGA tour to say goodbye, possibly when the elite women's circuit returns to Asia later in the year for events in South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. "Due to the pandemic, I have never made an official farewell to people who support me on the golf course," Feng said. "I hope to see all my LPGA friends again in the near future for my last dance." —AFP

McCoy lifts West Indies

BASSETTERRE: A record-breaking six-wicket haul by Obed McCoy paved the way for a nervy series-leveling five-wicket win for the West Indies over India in the second T20 International of the five-match series at Warner Park in St Kitts on Monday. Comfortable winners of the opening encounter in Trinidad three days earlier, India were dismissed for 138 off 19.4 overs with left-arm seamer McCoy returning the outstanding figures of six for 17, the best-ever by a West Indian in T20 Internationals.

Opening batsman's Brandon King's 68 set the home side on their way to what looked a comfortable victory before they stumbled towards the end and needed an unbeaten 31 from wicketkeeper-batsman Devon Thomas to reach the target at 141 for five off 19.2 overs and set the stage for the third match at the same venue on Tuesday.

McCoy, who has endured a succession of injury setbacks in the previous 12 months, looked to be back to his best and gave the West Indies the perfect start when he claimed the vital wicket of Indian captain Rohit Sharma with the first ball of the match. He also completed his four-over effort with a

wicket - Bhuvneshwar Kumar - off his final ball and in between added the scalps of Suryakumar Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Dinesh Karthik and Ravi Ashwin as India's vaunted batting line-up labored on pitch offering disconcerting bounce.

"I went into this match with a much clearer mind than the last game," said McCoy after receiving the 'Man of the Match' award. "I am enjoying the challenge bowling at the start of the innings and at the death and so far I am really learning a lot from these experiences." Hardik Pandya topscored with 31 but no-one in the visitors' line-up was really able to get on top of a disciplined West Indies bowling effort. King's polished innings at the start of the West Indies reply came off 52 balls with eight fours and two sixes.

When he was yorked by Avesh Khan in the 15th over though at 107 for four, India looked to tighten the screws, only for Khan to spoil his earlier good work when he bowled a no-ball at the start of the critical final over of the match and Thomas capitalized to take his relieved team across the line. "We didn't bat well. We just didn't apply ourselves, but that can happen," was Sharma's assessment of his team's batting performance. "But as I have said many times already, when you're trying to achieve something as a batting group you won't always succeed, so we aren't going to change our plans based on this result." —AFP



BASSETTERRE: Obed McCoy (right), of West Indies, celebrates the dismissal of Rohit Sharma, of India, during the second T20I match between West Indies and India at Warner Park in Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis on August 01, 2022. —AFP

Wimbledon champion Rybakina falls at WTA San Jose event

SAN JOSE: Reigning Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan lost to seventh seed Daria Kasatkina on Monday in a first-round match at the WTA San Jose hardcourt tournament. World number 12 Kasatkina won 11

of the last 12 games to win 1-6, 6-2, 6-0 in Rybakina's debut match since winning her first major title.

Kasatkina will next play American Taylor Townsend, who eliminated Australian Storm Sanders 6-1, 6-4 at the US Open hardcourt tuneup event. After 23rd-ranked Rybakina rolled through the opening set in 35 minutes, Kasatkina dominated the final two. American Madison Keys, the 2017 US Open runner-up, defeated China's Zhang Shuai 6-4, 6-2 to book a second-round date against Tunisian Ons Jabeur, who lost

to Rybakina in last month's Wimbledon final.

Japan's Naomi Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam champion, and American sixth seed Coco Gauff would meet in a second-round matchup if both win their openers on Tuesday. Former world number one Osaka will face China's Zheng Qinwen while 18-year-old Gauff, this year's French Open runner-up, meets Anhelina Kalinina of Ukraine. Osaka, whose ranking has slid to 41st, has not played since losing her first-round match at the French Open. She had suffered a right ankle injury in a tuneup event at Madrid. —AFP

Sports

S America nations to launch official 2030 World Cup bid

Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile declare intentions

MONTEVIDEO: Four South American countries will on Tuesday launch an unprecedented joint bid to host the 2030 World Cup with the hope of bringing the global showpiece back to its first home. Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile's intention to bid has long been in the making. More than three years ago they committed to create a local organizing committee to co-ordinate with South American football's governing body CONMEBOL to plan their bid. But it has taken until now for the "Juntos 2030" (Together 2030) bid to be made official.

It centers on the desire to "bring the World Cup back to its original home: South America," said CONMEBOL president Alejandro Dominguez. The very first edition of the World Cup in 1930 was held

in Uruguay and won by the hosts, beating their neighbors Argentina 4-2 in the final. The joint South American bid aims to stage the 2030 final in the very same Centenario stadium that hosted the first title match 100 years earlier.

"For us it should be called the 2030 Centenary World Cup," said Uruguay's sports minister Sebastian Bauza. "What we have to focus on is the Centenary World Cup. The 100 year celebration of the first World Cup will be here. Back to the legend, back to its roots!" Should it be successful, though, the two tournaments could not be more different. In 1930 there were only 13 teams and the entire tournament was played in the same city-Montevideo-in just three stadiums.

In 2030 there will be 48 teams with around 15 stadiums used across the four countries. If successful it would be the first time that as many as four countries host the World Cup. The 2026 tournament has already been awarded to three countries-Canada, Mexico and the United States. Despite the Latin American region being one of the worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic, Chile's sports minister Alexandra Benado insisted in an interview published on Monday that all four countries remain in a position to host the tournament.

"Our proposal will be austere and sustainable and will meet FIFA's demands," Benado told El Mercurio newspaper. The joint South American bid will likely come up against at least two other pro-

posals. Spain and Portugal have officially submitted a joint bid while Morocco have repeatedly insisted they will bid to become only the second ever African country to host the finals.

The United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland decided in February to abandon a joint bid that would have seen five FIFA member federations hosting the tournament. There has also been tentative talk of an Israeli bid alongside the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. The last World Cup to be hosted in South America was Brazil 2014. More than half of the 21 World Cup finals already staged have been in Europe but later this year Qatar will host the finals, only the second time they will be in Asia. —AFP

Bahrain Tennis team concludes training in Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Bahrain's Tennis Juniors' team members were in Kuwait for a three-week training camp at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis complex under the supervision Rafa Nadal Kuwait Academy. Head of the delegation, member of the board of Bahrain Tennis Federation (BTF) Mohammad Salman conveyed the message of the President of BTF Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa to the President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait - thanking them for their continued support.

He said his players benefitted a lot in Kuwait - both technically and physically. He praised Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah international Tennis Complex and Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait, adding that they have outstanding trainers. Mohammad Salman appreciated the role of Kuwait Tennis Federation and its president in supporting the players.



Woods rejects \$700-800m LIV offer

NEW YORK: Tiger Woods turned down an offer of about \$700-800 million to take part in the Saudi-funded LIV Golf series, the rebel circuit's chief Greg Norman said. Fifteen-time major champion Woods has always made clear his opposition to the series which is threatening to tear golf apart and triggered accusations of Saudi "sportswashing". Speaking in an interview on Fox News with Tucker Carlson, LIV chief executive Norman was asked if it was true that the American golf legend was offered "700, 800, a billion dollars" to join the breakaway circuit.

"That number was out there before I became CEO so that number's been out there, yes," Norman, a former world number one who is the public face of LIV Golf, said in the interview at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey, where the third LIV Golf Invitational was held last weekend. "And look, Tiger is a needle-mover, right? So of course you are going to look at the best of the best. They had originally approached Tiger before I became CEO, so yes, that number is somewhere in that neighborhood."

The 46-year-old Woods has consistently declared his loyalty to the PGA Tour and said he has no intention of following the likes of other major winners, such as Phil Mickelson, Bryson DeChambeau, Sergio Garcia and Dustin Johnson in jumping ship to the upstart LIV. "I disagree with it," Woods said ahead of the British Open in St Andrews last month when asked about his fellow profession-



LIMERICK: US golfer Tiger Woods plays out of a bunker on the fifth fairway on the second day of the JP McManus Pro-Am golf tournament at the The Golf Course at Adare Manor in Limerick, south-west Ireland. —AFP

als who have been tempted to join the hugely lucrative but deeply controversial circuit. "I think that what they've done is they've turned their back on what has allowed them to get to this position," Woods said.

"And who knows what's going to happen in the near future with world-ranking points, the criteria for entering major championships? "Some of these

players may not ever get a chance to play in major championships.

That is a possibility. We don't know that for sure yet." The LIV series, spearheaded by Norman and bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, offers record prize money of \$25 million per 54-hole event with shotgun starts and no cut. —AFP

Jota and Liverpool ink long-term deal

LONDON: Diogo Jota has signed a "new long-term deal" with Liverpool, the Premier League giants announced Tuesday. Neither the exact length of the contract, nor its worth, were disclosed. British media reported the Portuguese forward, who joined Liverpool from English rivals Wolves in 2020 would be staying at Anfield until at least 2027. The 25-year-old has become an important figure at Liverpool, scoring 34 goals in 85 appearances.

He was a central figure as Liverpool were narrowly denied a historic quadruple last season as they were pipped to the Premier League title by a point by Manchester City and lost the Champions League final 1-0 to Real Madrid after winning the League and FA Cup. Jota is sidelined with a hamstring injury and will miss Liverpool's opening match of the new Premier League season, against Fulham on Saturday. "Really proud, I have to say," Jota told Liverpool's website. "Obviously since I arrived two years ago I established myself as an important player in this team. That's what I wanted from the beginning. "Now, signing a new long-term deal, it's obviously from the club's perspective proof of the belief in myself as a player. For me, it's really good to establish I'll be here for a while. "So, the beginning of a new season, let's do it." Jota will be part of a Liverpool forward line enhanced by the recent arrivals of Darwin Nunez and Luis Diaz. Mohamed Salah will continue to spearhead the attack, with Roberto Firmino another option, but Sadio Mane has moved to Bayern Munich. —AFP

Egypt, Saudi champions to inaugurate stadium

DOHA: Qatar announced Monday that the club champions of Saudi Arabia and Egypt will inaugurate the Lusail stadium to be used for the World Cup final on September 9. The match between Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal and the Egyptian champions, who are not yet decided, will be "the final milestone in our journey ahead of the big kick-off on November 21," said Hassan Al Thawadi, secretary general Qatar's organizing committee.

The 80,000 capacity gold colored venue, in the Lusail new city just north of Doha, was the last of the eight World Cup stadiums to be completed. A test event is to be staged there on August 11 when a Qatar championship match between Al-Arabi SC and Al-Rayyan is held. Lusail, whose design was inspired by the decorative motifs on Arabic and Islamic bowls and art pieces, will host matches in every round of the World Cup leading up to the final on December 18. —AFP

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Clinics

CHANGE OF NAME

I, DAANYAAL JUNAID, son of JUNAID ISMAIL and holder of Indian Passport No. S9923330 having permanent residence in Bengaluru Karnataka, India and residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under, given name:


DAANYAAL JUNAID and Surname: SAIT. (C# 2032)

I, Ronald Baptist Naronha, holder of Passport No. L0034115 do hereby change my name to Ronald Baptist Naronha for all purpose. I will henceforth be known in the name Ronald Baptist Naronha, and I also undertake to carry out this name change in



all my documents. (C# 2029)

I, Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz holder of Passport No. T5332471. Do hereby inform you to add my surname Khan. I will henceforth be known as Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz Khan. Old Name - Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz, New Name - Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz Khan (C# 2030)

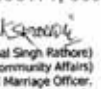
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Abdullah Salem	22549134	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Nuzha	22526804	Mirqab	22456536
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Sharq	22465401
Qadsiya	22515088	Salmiya	25746401



NOTICE
July 31, 2022

Mr. Liyakath Ali Shaik, son of Mr. Shavali Shaik, resident of 27-140-142, Yeti Gadda Palyam, Punganur, Chittoor-517247, Andhra Pradesh and Ms. Kowsar Bee Shaik, daughter of Mr. Moddin Basha Shaik, resident of No. 57/1, 1st Main Road, Chinnanna Layout, Kavalbyrasandra, Bengaluru-560032, Karnataka both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22531325).


 (Kamal Singh Rathore)
 First Secretary (Community Affairs)
 and Marriage Officer,
 Embassy of India, Kuwait.
 Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in



LONDON: (From left) Malaysia's Ridwan Sahrom, Australia's Matthew Glaetzer, England's Joe Truman, New Zealand's Sam Webster, Trinidad and Tobago's Kwesi Browne and Scotland's Jack Carlin compete in the men's Keirin second round cycling event on day two of the Commonwealth Games, at the Lee Valley VeloPark in east London. —AFP

Proud powers into semi-finals

Peaty targets redemption; Kenny, Glaetzer strike gold

BIRMINGHAM: World champion Ben Proud powered into the semi-finals of the men's 50m freestyle at the Commonwealth Games on Tuesday as breaststroke star Adam Peaty prepared for a shot at redemption. England's Proud, who won the world title in Budapest in June, was third-quickest in the heats, behind compatriot Lewis Burras, who touched in 22.09sec, and Australia's Tom Nowakowski.

"This is what the whole thing's about," said the 27-year-old, who is aiming for a third straight 50m freestyle Commonwealth title. "In the butterfly (he won gold on Saturday) it was about reclaiming my title after a few years. "The freestyle has been with me the whole time. I work a lot harder for it, I put in work every single day. "This is something I am going to do to prove that I have consistently been at the top for eight years."

Canadian world champion Kylie Masse topped the charts in the women's 50m backstroke heats in a time of 27.57, with Australia's Bronte Job and Kaylee McKeown also in the mix. England's Luke Greenbank (1min 56.33sec) was quickest in qualifying for the final of the men's 200m backstroke, ahead of compatriot Brodie Williams. Australian teenager Elizabeth Dekkers was fastest in the women's 200m butterfly heats, timing 2:07.62, while compatriot Sam Short dominated the men's 1500m freestyle heats, touching in 15:02.66.

Ten gold medals are on offer on Tuesday evening on the penultimate night of action at the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, including medals in para swimming. England's Peaty, the world record holder in the 50m breaststroke, is desperate to avenge his "devastating" loss in the 100m event. But the 27-year-old, who missed the recent world championships with a foot fracture, will face a stiff challenge, with Australia's Sam Williamson the quickest in qualifying. Australia lead the way in the Commonwealth pool with 16 golds out of a possible 33.

Emotional cycling finale

Meanwhile, England's Laura Kenny and Australian Matthew Glaetzer won Commonwealth Games gold medals on an emotion-packed final day at the track cycling on Monday. Kenny, who has suffered a miscarriage and an ectopic pregnancy since competing at last year's Tokyo Olympics, admitted she had thought it was "going to be my last race".

However, she re-focused and won the women's 10-kilometre scratch on the same track where 10 years ago, aged 20, she won double Olympic gold. Glaetzer battled back from thyroid cancer to compete at the Olympics but after some wretched luck in Birmingham - coming to grief in the keirin and then stripped of his bronze medal in the sprint on Sunday - he won the men's 1,000m time trial.

New Zealand's Ellesse Andrews won her third gold of the Games, landing the women's keirin. Her compatriot, Aaron Gate, also won for the third time at the Games, taking gold in the men's 40km points race. Kenny - watched by husband, fellow cycling great Jason Kenny - whipped off her helmet and whirled her right hand in the air, pointing to the raucous crowd before dismounting and draping herself in the flag of St George.

'Lost spark'

It was a sharp contrast from her emotions in the lead-up to the race. Kenny, who has a young son, had taken bronze in the team pursuit and then finished 13th in the points race on Sunday. She admitted her confidence had been shaken by a horrific crash on that day that had resulted in her team-mate, Matt Walls, being taken to hospital. Her race on Monday was also marred by a crash that led to Indian rider Meenakshi

Meenakshi being stretchered off the track. "You see something like that (Walls going over the barrier into the crowd)... I was having a serious confidence crisis," she told the BBC.

"I just didn't want to be on the track and when that happens I race badly and I don't get a result. "And that's what happened. Whereas today I was so fired up. I kept saying to myself in the toilet, 'I can do this.'" Kenny, who secured England's only track cycling gold at the Commonwealths, said she had told her husband on Sunday night the game was up. "I can't believe it. Honestly, I said to Jase (Jason Kenny) 'I think this is going to be my last race,'" she said.

"I've lost the spark, training doesn't come that easy. I have absolutely just lost motivation. "Then last night I was messaging my new coach Len and I was like 'No, I'm not giving up. I have one more roll of the dice, please just help me. "It could not have been better set up if I tried." Glaetzer had a beaming smile as he stood on the top step of the podium. The 29-year-old had soaked up the applause on his lap of honour, with an Australian flag tied around his neck, Superman style.

"I'm making a habit of bouncing back at the Commonwealth Games," said Glaetzer, who timed 59.505sec. "I'd rather not have such lows to come back from, but it shows there is always a new day and we can always try again," he said. New Zealand and Australia dominated the Commonwealth Games track cycling, which included para track events, winning eight gold medals apiece. Most of the events at the Commonwealths are being held in Birmingham but the track cycling took place at the Lee Valley VeloPark in London. —AFP

Premier League clubs flex financial muscle

MANCHESTER: Premier League clubs have splashed an estimated £1 billion (\$1.2 billion) in the arms race for new talent ahead of the start to the 2022/23 season on Friday, but champions Manchester City remain the side to beat. After winning four league titles in five years, Pep Guardiola's squad has been bolstered by the biggest name arrival of the summer in Erling Haaland. The Norwegian had his choice of Europe's top clubs after scoring 85 goals in 88 games for Borussia Dortmund and followed in the footsteps of his father Alf Inge - a former City captain - to the blue side of Manchester.

Haaland may have had a debut to forget as he missed a glaring opportunity towards the end of City's 3-1 Community Shield defeat to Liverpool on Saturday, but Guardiola warned the pretenders to his side's throne that "the goals will come". "There is no reason not to be confident," added Guardiola. "What these guys have done, not just in the Premier League, but in the cups, the steps we have made in Europe and in many things." In a window of significant change at the Etihad, Argentine forward Julian Alvarez and England international midfielder Kalvin Phillips have also arrived. But Guardiola has let plenty of experience go to Premier League rivals with Gabriel Jesus and Aleksandr Zinchenko heading to Arsenal and Raheem Sterling joining Chelsea. Liverpool are best placed to pounce on any slipping of City's standards.

Jürgen Klopp's side were denied a historic quadruple by the finest of margins last season as they were pipped to the title by a point and lost the Champions League final 1-0 to Real Madrid after winning the League and FA Cup. The Reds have also refreshed their front line with the imposing presence of Darwin Nunez coming in to compensate for the loss of Sadio Mane to Bayern Munich. Nunez did make an immediate impact in the Community Shield, winning a penalty and scoring to turn the game in Liverpool's favor late in the game.

Tottenham title challenge?

City and Liverpool have dominated English football for the past five years, but if there is to be a challenge from the chasing pack, it could come from Tottenham. Ahead of Antonio Conte's first full season in charge, the Italian has been heavily backed by the normally thrifty Spurs board with the signings of Richarlison, Yves Bissouma, Ivan Perisic, Djed Spence, Clement Lenglet and Fraser Forster. Crucially, Tottenham have also retained the star duo of Harry Kane and Son Heung-min as they aim for a first league title in 62 years.

Arsenal have been in blistering pre-season form with Jesus on fire in thrashings of Chelsea and Sevilla. Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel blasted his side as "not competitive" after losing 4-0 to the Gunners in Orlando and the Blues are a team in transition following Todd Boehly's takeover. There is also plenty of work ahead for new Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag with the uncertain future of Cristiano Ronaldo hanging over start of a new era for the Red Devils.

New boys Forest outspend Newcastle: Amid the scale of big spending from English clubs, Newcastle have been surprisingly quiet in their first summer window since a takeover from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund. The Magpies have spent just short of £60 million on Dutch defender Sven Botman, England goalkeeper Nick Pope and a permanent deal for left-back Matt Targett. New boys Nottingham Forest have splashed over £70 million on 12 new signings in the two-time European champions' first season back in the top flight for 23 years.

That sum does not even include a one-year deal for Jesse Lingard worth a reported £200,000-a-week after he joined on a free transfer from Manchester United. Aston Villa's transfer business is arguably the best example of the growing financial gulf between the Premier League and the rest of Europe. —AFP

US PGA Tour offers record \$415 million in 2022-23 season

MIAMI: Faced with a growing challenge from the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series, the US PGA Tour announced a 2022-23 season schedule on Monday offering a record \$415 million in prize money. The PGA boosted the prize money at eight invitational tournaments, with The Players Championship set to pay out \$25 million, and will offer \$145 million in bonus money, including \$75 million for the FedEx Cup playoffs, which will be trimmed to 70 players from the current 125. The move comes as the LIV Golf Series has offered the highest purses in history to lure big-name talent from the PGA to its upstart tour, which is set to rise from eight events in 2022 to 14 in 2023.

LIV Golf has drawn protests and claims of "sportwashing" from critics citing Saudi human rights issues but such stars as Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, Henrik Stenson, Bryson DeChambeau, Paul Casey and Patrick Reed have jumped to the rebel series that debuted in June. The US PGA, which will return to a season that coincides with the calendar year starting in 2024, tightened its playoffs and boosted select purses after comments from fans, PGA commissioner Jay Monahan said.

"The overwhelming sentiment was they wanted more consequences for both the regular season and the playoffs and to further strengthen events that traditionally feature top players competing head-to-head," Monahan said. "We feel strongly we've accomplished all of these objectives." The 2022-23 PGA season will have 47 tournaments, including three playoff events next August with a field of 70 at the St. Jude Championship in Memphis, 50 at the BMW Championship in Chicago and the top 30 in points advancing to the season-ending Tour Championship at East Lake in Atlanta.

After the season ends, late 2023 will feature events for those outside the top 70 to earn status for the 2024 PGA



ST ALBANS: South African golfer Charl Schwartzel plays a last shot on the 18th hole during the third and final day of the LIV Golf Invitational Series event at The Centurion Club in St Albans, north of London. —AFP

campaign plus a series of "international events" featuring the PGA top 50 in a limited field, no-cut format. No other details were revealed about those events. The St Jude and BMW will see a jump in prize money from \$15 million to \$20 million. The January Tournament of Champions will see its purse rise from \$8.2 to \$15 million next year. It will become the leadoff event of the PGA season when the schedule changes in 2024.

Four events will see prize money jump from \$12 million to \$20 million: the Genesis Invitational in February hosted by Tiger Woods, the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill in March, the Jack Nicklaus-hosted Memorial in June and the WGC Match Play in March. Prize money will jump from

\$20 million to \$25 million for The Players Championship in March. The Scottish Open, Barbasol Championship and Barracuda Championship will remain co-sanctioned with the DP World Tour.

The 2022-23 campaign will begin on September 15-18 with the Fortinet Championship at Napa, California, with the Presidents Cup the following week at Quail Hollow. The CJ Cup has been moved from South Korea to South Carolina and will be played in October with the Bermuda Championship the following week. The Rocket Mortgage Classic, won Sunday by Tony Finau, will start June 29 next year while the 3M Open moves to the end of July. —AFP