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Court bars ex-MP Dahoum from running in elections

Decree on date for National Assembly polls expected next week

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The administrative court on Thursday barred former opposition MP Bader Al-Dahoum from running in the upcoming elections after rejecting his petition to reenlist him on the election rolls. The court also rejected the appeals of 35 other voters who were not listed by the ministry of interior for a variety of reasons. The court is expected to continue looking into more petitions in the coming days.

Dahoum was elected to the National Assembly in the previous elections on Dec 5, 2020. A year later, the constitutional court, whose rulings are final, disqualified his election win based on a law that bars people convicted on political cases from running in polls. Dahoum said on Twitter that he will challenge the verdict at the court of cassation, the top court in the country, because the verdict violated a previous ruling issued by the court of cassation allowing him to run in polls in 2020.

After the court completes looking into the election petitions, the election decree setting the date for the upcoming Assembly polls will be issued and published in the official gazette early next week. When the decree is published in the gazette, the election department of the interior ministry will start from the next day the registration of candidates who wish to run for the 50 seats in the Assembly.

The registration of candidates continues for 10 days. The door for with-

drawals will then open until seven days before the election date, expected to be on Sept 29. Top candidates including former MPs have already announced they are running in elections. They include veteran opposition leader and former three-time speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, 87, who is expected to contest the speaker's post if he wins a seat.

Other candidates who said they are running include MP Obaid Al-Wasmi, who left the opposition ranks to form an alliance with the previous government

and former speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. Former MPs Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, Abdullah Al-Kandari, Osama Al-Shaheen, Abdullah Al-Saqabi, Askar Al-Enezi, Hamad Al-Matar, Musaed Al-Mutairi, Osama Al-Munawer and many others have announced they are bidding for re-election.

Kuwait, with a population of 1.42 million, has some 800,000 eligible voters, half of them women. The country is divided into five electoral constituencies, each electing 10 lawmakers.

Two smugglers killed, 80 kg of narcotics seized



KUWAIT: Two smugglers were killed and another was injured during a shootout with Kuwaiti coastguardsmen at sea, who foiled an attempt to smuggle 80 kilograms of narcotics to Kuwait hidden in a boat. After the Drugs Control General Department received tips about a smuggling attempt via sea, a warrant was obtained and the boat was stopped. The suspects then fired at the coastguard boats, so coastguardsmen returned fire, killing two and injuring a third. When the boat was searched, 79 kilograms of hashish and one kilogram of shabu were found.

MoH hastens steps to transfer expats to private hospitals

KUWAIT: Informed sources have revealed that meetings that took place between the ministry of health and Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman) resulted in an agreement on accelerating the company's plan to start operating its health centers to receive expatriates and start treating them there instead of government clinics and hospitals, as

part of the health ministry's plan to allocate its facilities to Kuwaitis only.

The sources indicated that the initial agreement was made for Dhaman to start receiving all workers in the private sector from next year, as its construction and equipment plan for its medical facilities is proceeding according to plan, pointing out that the ministry of health in the first stage will only receive expatriates working in the government sector at public clinics and hospitals. Later, they will also be prevented from treatment at government hospitals and will be treated in Dhaman hospitals.

The sources indicated that the health ministry indicated that Jaber Hospital is reserved for Kuwaitis only, and this will also be applied to the new Jahra

Hospital, which has officially opened, as well as the new Farwaniya Hospital, whose first operational phase was recently inaugurated. This reservation will be implemented at all hospitals at a later stage, starting from Amiri Hospital, then Sabah Hospital.

The sources indicated that government hospitals can receive expats suffering from serious illnesses or involved in accidents, as these are urgent medical cases that cannot be delayed. They said health insurance for expatriates will be discussed and appropriate decisions will be taken, whereby a resident can choose to be treated at Dhaman hospitals or other private hospitals, provided this is within the conditions for obtaining or renewing their residency.

World Cup fans to get Saudi visas

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia will offer multiple-entry visas to fans at the Qatar World Cup, officials said on Thursday, as neighboring Gulf countries look to reap benefits from the competition. People with a Hayya Card, which is reserved for ticketholders and used to access Qatar during the tournament, will be able to apply for the electronic visas, the foreign ministry said. The move comes as Qatar, which has a population of 2.8 million, tries to accommodate an expected 1.2 million visitors during the November 20-December 18 World Cup, and as Saudi Arabia ramps up efforts to attract tourists.

"Holders of the visa will be able to enter and exit the Kingdom several times during the validity of their visa," the ministry said on Twitter. Deeply conservative Saudi Arabia largely cut itself off from visitors for decades until it started issuing tourist visas in 2019, part of attempts to diversify its oil-reliant economy.

The Gulf power shares a land border with gas-

rich Qatar, which is hosting the first World Cup in the Middle East and the first held in winter months.

The Saudi visas will be in effect 10 days before the start of the World Cup and will be valid for 60 days. Given the pressure on accommodation in Qatar, Saudia, Kuwait Airways, flydubai and

Oman Air will put on more than 160 daily shuttle flights to bring fans on day-trips for matches.

Qatari officials say more than 20,000 fans could arrive each day on shuttle flights from Gulf countries, some of which are offering special hotel packages. Large numbers of Saudis will also flood across the border. Saudi Arabia's Group C clash with Lionel Messi's Argentina is one of the most in-demand games, World Cup CEO Nasser Al-Khater told the official Qatar News Agency in a Twitter interview late on Wednesday.

Argentina's first round group games against archrivals Mexico on Nov 26 and Saudi Arabia on Nov 22 were the "most requested". Both matches will be at the 80,000-capacity Lusail stadium, where the World Cup final will be staged on Dec 18. The official did not give figures but the Argentina-Mexico match was sold out in the first round of online sales at the start of the year.

FIFA said this month 2.45 million tickets have



DOHA: In this photo taken on July 4, 2022, Qatar 2022 CEO Nasser Al-Khater looks on during a FIFA World Cup national team workshop. — AFP

been sold for the first World Cup in an Arab nation, which Khater promised would be "a great carnival". There are 3.2 million tickets in total with more than one million going to sponsors and FIFA partners. Argentina and Mexico have been named among the top ticket-buying countries along with Qatar, the United States, England, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Brazil and Germany. Qatar has said it expects about 1.2 million visitors at the 32-nation event that starts Nov 20. — AFP

News in brief

Boxer dies after blow to head

NEW DELHI: An Indian kickboxer died after a blow to the head during a bout at a national championships, a doctor said on Thursday, the second such fatality in two months. Yora Tade, 24, collapsed in the ring after sustaining a kick to the head from his opponent Kesav Mudel during the final match in the southern city of Chennai on Sunday. He was given immediate first aid and taken to a hospital for emergency brain surgery, but died two days later. — AFP

Iran exiles sue Raisi in US

WASHINGTON: An exile group announced a New York lawsuit against Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi Thursday, challenging US authorities to take action against him as he is expected to arrive next month for the UN General Assembly. The National Council of Resistance of Iran said the suit accused Raisi of torture and murder in a 1988 crackdown on Iranian dissidents. The civil lawsuit says that in 1988, Raisi was a member of the so-called "death commission", four judges who directly ordered thousands of executions as well as torture of members of the opposition People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran. — AFP

Macron looks to 'future' on Algeria trip

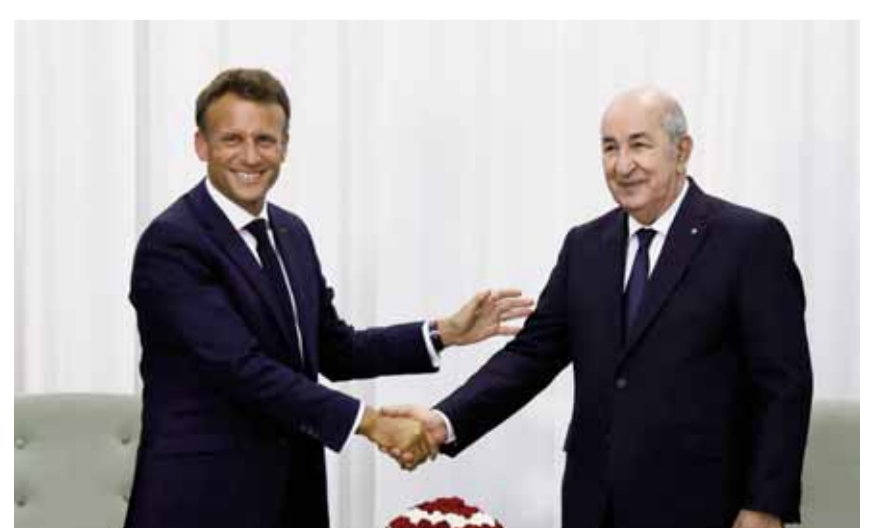
ALGIERS: French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Algeria on Thursday for a three-day visit aimed at mending ties with the former French colony, which this year marked its 60th anniversary of independence. The first French president to be born after Algerian independence, Macron is hoping "to lay a foundation to rebuild and develop" a sometimes difficult relationship with the North African nation, his office said.

Accompanied by seven ministers, Macron landed at 3:30 pm (14:30 GMT)

at Houari Boumediene Airport in the capital Algiers, where he was warmly greeted by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. The two men, wearing face masks, walked along a red carpet lined by ceremonial guards, then a military band played both national anthems.

Later, Macron visited a monument to martyrs of the country's war for independence, which ended more than 130 years of French colonial rule in 1962. Accompanied by Algeria's top diplomat Ramtane Lamamra, Macron laid a wreath at the site and observed a minute of silence, according to state news agency APS. The French leader, on his second visit to Algeria since he took power in 2017, "has chosen to direct this visit towards the future, (focusing on) start-ups, innovation, youth, new sectors," his office said.

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ALGIERS: French President Emmanuel Macron shakes hands with Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune prior to their bilateral meeting at the presidential palace on August 25, 2022. — AFP

Local

UNGA President says Kuwait 'exemplary' model for wisdom

Shahid also hails Kuwaiti-Maldivian relations and cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait plays as an exemplary model for wisdom, said Abdullah Shahid, President of the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday, in reference to the Arabian Gulf country's mediation efforts. "I conveyed to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah my gratitude for the support Kuwait has rendered to me, both as the President of the General Assembly, and as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives," he told KUNA in an interview.

He commended the role Kuwait takes as "an exemplary model for wisdom, where it plays an integral role in diffusing tensions towards a more peaceful and stabilized region." "We discussed a range of issues from COVID-19 recovery, impacts of climate change, and impacts of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine," Shahid noted.

As for meeting his counterpart, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Shahid branded the Kuwaiti top diplomat as a "pillar" of support throughout (my) 'Presidency of Hope'. "We discussed extensively, among other issues, the situation of peace and security in the region and around the world. Sheikh Ahmad briefed me on mediation efforts undertaken by Kuwait and the exemplary work done by Kuwait in the humanitarian field," he said.

On his meeting with Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi, Shahid said that during his presidency, he has prioritized the full participation of youth in decision-making to shape the future. He also commended the "For the youth, with the youth" approach by Kuwait to empower

young Kuwaiti women and men, deeming it as an important step.

Kuwait-Maldives ties

Kuwaiti-Maldivian relations and cooperation level are "exemplary", he noted. "Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1977, Kuwait has been a key development partner for the Maldives." The Maldives has been receiving assistance from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) since the late 1970s. The first loan was in 1976 for the Hulhumale Airport expansion project. The Fund also supported the expansion of the airport for a second time in 1987, and a third time in 1998.

"This is the main international airport in the Maldives, and it's significant because it was also around the time that we introduced the country for tourism, and the expansion of the airport was essential to drive the tourism industry forward. The Fund is also involved in the current expansion project of the airport," Shahid noted.

Additionally, the Fund has supported Maldives in many areas such as fisheries, port development and in the tsunami recovery phase. Ongoing support includes water and sanitation and shoreline protection. Another notable project undertaken with support from the government of Kuwait, according to Shahid, is the construction of the Islamic Centre in Male. It is the main mosque in Male, which also houses a library and other facilities. It is also part of the skyline of Male city and of tremendous value to the Maldives.

Welcoming Kuwait's recent announcement to operate direct flights to the Maldives, Shahid said:

"As you would know, tourism is a key contributor to GDP of the Maldives (over 25 percent), and a key source of foreign currency (over 60 percent). Over 48,000 people are directly employed in the tourism sector. And the indirect benefits are multifold. So this is an industry that impacts our economy, but also the people."

He added: "Not only will the assumption of direct flights increase the number of tourists from Kuwait, and the region, it will also support people-to-people connections. Tourism brings cultures and peoples together. And this move will bring Kuwaitis and Maldivians even closer together."

International challenges

On challenges he witnessed on the international level, Shahid pointed out that the 76th session of the UN General Assembly started amidst a "once-in-a-century pandemic, a deepening climate crisis, and then was witness to the undesirable and patently avoidable military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine." "Multilateralism continues to be challenged. And we question the effectiveness of the international institutions that have carried us through, from the end of the Second World War," he said.

However, Shahid noted: "Small states like Kuwait and the Maldives know all too well, the importance of these institutions," adding, "In our globalized world these issues interconnect with each other. We cannot address them working separately, because global threats require global solutions." On Kuwait's contribution within the UN to addressing international challenges and conflicts, he said: "To a large



Abdullah Shahid

extent, the foundations of the Kuwaiti foreign policy have been laid by the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah: a champion of Arab unity and diplomacy, as he sought to increase Kuwait's visibility and importance on regional and global stages through establishing the country as a mediator and peacekeeper."

Kuwait has been an example of an effective and impactful non-permanent member of the Security Council during its membership in the 2018-2019 period, Shahid said, noting, with high admiration, the constructive and qualitative role Kuwait undertook in the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. — KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid and senior economic officials. —KUNA

PM: Kuwait banks on competent youth to advance development

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah welcomed at Seif Palace on Thursday Minister of Finance and State Minister for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid, Director-General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Governor of Central Bank of Kuwait Basel Al-Haroon, Managing

Director of Kuwait Investment Authority Ghanem Al-Ghenaiman and Deputy Director-General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Emad Al-Naqib.

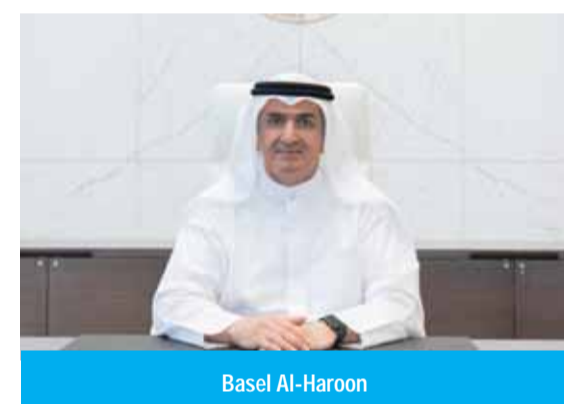
During the meeting, they addressed a host of economic issues aiming at achieving the state's sustainable development and ambitious vision. HH the Prime Minister underlined that in the coming stage, it is essential to count on and empower competent Kuwaiti young men and women in order to advance development, reflecting the country's development vision and investing their energies to create a better future. HH the Prime Minister's Diwan Chief Abdulaziz Al-Dhakeel was also present at the meeting. — KUNA

CBK to test first product for open banking

KUWAIT: Keen to enable new fintech and support open banking to help bring about innovative business models in the field of financial services, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has given the green light to test a first-of-its kind product within the regulatory sandbox. In a press statement, CBK Governor Basel Al-Haroon said the CBK spares no effort to support advanced fintech, adding that the new open banking product that has been initially launched in the market within the regulatory sandbox is the first of its kind in Kuwait.

The product operates within an open banking model and provides the users with analytical services for transactions processed on their bank accounts with different banks, along with e-payment services, he said. Haroon shed light on the importance of fintech to CBK, which can be defined as new technologies that relate to the financial industry and aim to improve financial activities, including the launch of advanced products, services and business models in the financial services industry.

To this end, the CBK launched the regulatory sandbox in 2018 and updated the same in 2019 to broaden the scope of accepted products and services, he said. The regulatory sandbox is a safe space that allows for experimentation with innovative



Basel Al-Haroon

products and services related to fintech without jeopardizing the stability of the financial and banking system, Haroon added.

On other CBK efforts to support and regulate open banking, the governor noted that CBK specialists had conducted a wide study, concluding that there is a need for open banking regulatory framework and for application programming interface (API) specifications. For this purpose, the CBK has formed an "Open Banking Working Group", which includes specialists from Kuwaiti banks, and has also formed the "CBK Open Banking Working Group" which comprises of CBK specialists and representatives of Kuwaiti banks, Haroon noted.

In conclusion, the governor praised the cooperation of Kuwaiti banks in supporting the development of open banking, stressing the CBK's role as a motivator and its keenness to deploy the latest technology to enhance banking and financial services in the country. — KUNA

Kuwaiti cultural program at Amman int'l book fair

AMMAN: Kuwait will participate in the 21st Amman International Book Fair from September 1 with a cultural program featuring the latest products and publications. Kuwait is the guest of honor at the prestigious cultural event. Speaking to KUNA, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani said Kuwait's participation would include a high-level delegation headed by Minister of Information and Culture Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi, who will be partaking in a cultural symposium.

He affirmed that the level of Kuwaiti representation at the event reflected the strength of relations and the keenness on the part of Kuwait in support of all Arab causes, chiefly the Palestinian cause. During a press conference in the presence of Kuwait Embassy's repre-



AMMAN: Kuwaiti and Jordanian officials are seen at the event. — KUNA

sentative Mishal Al-Mutairi, Jordanian Minister of Culture Haifa Al-Najjar revealed that the Kuwaiti cultural program would feature a symposium under the title of "Arab cultural scene", noting that Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture Mutairi would be present at the event along with several Arab officials.

She affirmed that choosing Kuwait as the guest of honor displayed the deep-rooted and historic relations between Kuwait and Jordan. The Kuwaiti cultur-

al program would include other events focusing on displaying support to the Palestinian struggle for independence from Zionist occupiers and other events highlighting the recent Kuwaiti cultural and dramatic productions. A score of Kuwaiti intellectuals, writers, actors and senior figures will be present at the event. The Amman book fair will see the participation of 400 publishers from Jordan, the Arab region and the world. — KUNA

Raids continue to arrest illegals, lawbreakers

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's security sectors carried out extensive security campaigns in Ahmadi and Farwaniya governorates on August 23 and 24 that resulted in arresting many violators and lawbreakers. The ministry said security campaigns are ongoing across the country to apprehend outlaws and violators and ensure public safety and security. The ministry urged the public to carry their documents, cooperate with the police and avoid harboring any illegal workers and report them through the emergency hotline.

The raids in Farwaniya governorate resulted in arresting many violators in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Khaitan, of which 17 were arrested for absconding, 15 over expired residencies, one wanted person, one intoxicated person, one unli-



KUWAIT: Arrested people are boarded onto buses as raids to arrest residency violators and lawbreakers continue around the country.

quid vendor, four without documents and 230 others for further investigations, as well as impounding a vehicle on theft charges.

Ahmadi governorate security campaigns resulted in arresting 87 people, of which seven were for expired residencies with absconding residency status and two persons without docu-



ments, while the remaining were taken into police custody for further investigations. The operations also resulted in shutting down four bootleg breweries in Fintas. Both Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh are under intense surveillance and security campaigns, where many violators and outlaws have been arrested.

Ambassador presents credentials as representative to UN

KUWAIT: The new Kuwaiti Ambassador to Austria Talal Al-Fassam presented his credentials Thursday as the permanent representative of Kuwait to the UN headquarters in Vienna. During the meeting with the Deputy Director General of the UN Office in Vienna Dennis Thatchachawalit, Fassam commended the role of the international organization with its progression, especially with UN offices such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and UN Commission on International Trade Law. Kuwait's Embassy in Vienna said in a statement received by KUNA. He also renewed Kuwait's support for the international organization and its keenness to work on strengthening the existing cooperation and partnership between Kuwait and the UN in Vienna. — KUNA



VIENNA: Kuwaiti Ambassador Talal Al-Fassam presents his credentials to Deputy Director General of the UN Office in Vienna Dennis Thatchachawalit. — KUNA

Local

Outgoing EU ambassador hails strong relations with Kuwait

Tudor hails proposal to lift Schengen visa requirement for Kuwaitis



EU Ambassador to Kuwait Cristian Tudor.



KUWAIT: Tudor poses for photos with guests at the event. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The European Union Delegation in Kuwait held a reception on Wednesday at St Regis hotel in Kuwait City to bid farewell to Cristian Tudor, the first EU resident ambassador of the first EU Delegation in Kuwait, upon the completion of his tenure in the country. In his farewell speech, Tudor said that the achievements in EU-Kuwait relations would not have been possible, had it not been for the support of the Kuwaiti authorities.

"Kuwait will continue to play an important role for the EU in the Gulf and will remain the EU's natural partner and ally. I am confident that there will be more opportunities to boost EU-Kuwait cooperation, especially following the first EU strategy towards the Gulf, which focuses on broadening EU-Gulf cooperation," Tudor said. He extended his gratitude to the Kuwait senior leadership including HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince, as well as the government, noting that his three-year tenure in Kuwait was remarkable from both professional and personal perspectives.

"During the pandemic, we had to improvise and find creative online ways to engage with local partners. As a result, we managed to deliver on some exciting projects - such as online training for female candidates running for the 2020 parliamentary

elections and an online lecture explaining what the European Union is about to young Kuwaitis. These projects raised our visibility among the wider public and contributed to establishing the EU as a brand in Kuwait," he pointed out.

Since Tudor arrived in Kuwait to oversee the opening of the new EU Delegation in Kuwait in 2019, EU-Kuwait relations have reached unprecedented levels, especially with the European Commission's historic proposal earlier this year to lift the Schengen visa requirement for Kuwaiti nationals. He said he is delighted to contribute to this proposal, which reflects the strong partnership between the EU and Kuwait.

In conclusion, the EU ambassador said: "I will miss Kuwait, and the diwanis where I had lively discussions with Kuwaitis from all walks of life. I will also remember the lovely Kuwaiti food, in particular machboos laham, among the many other delicious Kuwaiti dishes. But most importantly, I will miss the friendships I established in this hospitable country."

Kuwait was the first Gulf country with whom the EU signed a cooperation arrangement in 2016. Since then, cooperation between the EU and Kuwait has expanded to a large variety of fields including trade, investments, research, education, development and humanitarian aid, as well as security. During the first visit of EU High Representative/



Vice President Josep Borrell to Kuwait in March, he said for the European Union, "Kuwait stands out as a close and reliable friend. The EU wants to be Kuwait's partner of choice in implementing Kuwait's

2035 vision." EU engagement with Kuwait has also focused on people-to-people contacts including engagement with the Kuwaiti civil society on issues such as women's empowerment and human rights.



KUWAIT: Old and new buildings are seen in downtown Kuwait City. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Kuwaiti professionals prefer to set up their own business

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A recent survey revealed that two-thirds or 66 percent of professionals in Kuwait prefer to work on their own or establish their own company, if given the opportunity. The results showed 51 percent of employees are currently considering establishing their own companies, while 32 percent stated that they tried to establish a private business in the past, while 10 percent of respondents said they had never thought about entrepreneurship before.

The survey by Bayt.com showed the reasons why professionals prefer private work is self-realization (55 percent) and achieving a balance between professional and personal life (49 percent), followed by large returns (42 percent) and establishing a company that can be passed on to children (42 percent). As for people who preferred to work in companies in Kuwait, whose percentage reached 25 percent, the main reasons for their preference were regular income (67 percent), learning new skills (43 percent) and job stability or security (33 percent).

Most attractive sectors

Fast-moving consumer goods (12 percent) and IT, internet and e-commerce (11 percent) are the most attractive sectors for entrepreneurs, followed by commerce/retail (10 percent) and real estate, construction and real estate development (10 percent).

Meanwhile, entrepreneurship continues to grow in Kuwait, despite the challenges entrepreneurs face when setting up their companies. The survey indicates that entrepreneurship is becoming more popular than ever, and many

entrepreneurs are looking to grow their start-ups and establish businesses. In fact, 7 out of 10 respondents plan to hire new employees in the next year. The challenges that entrepreneurs in Kuwait face before establishing their companies include obtaining the capital needed to establish a business (60 percent), irregular returns (40 percent) and the fear of hiring people who do not have the right competencies (36 percent).

Guidance and support

The survey showed the benefits that entrepreneurship brings to societies and the economy as a whole. Entrepreneurs are viewed very positively in Kuwait, with respondents seeing that entrepreneurs are constantly looking for new opportunities (82 percent) and contributing to creating new jobs (79 percent).

Among the most important tips that respondents in the Middle East and North Africa gave to entrepreneurs is not to be afraid of failure (44 percent), and to develop an appropriate business plan (12 percent). In addition, more than a quarter of respondents believe that innovation is the key to success for entrepreneurs (30 percent), followed by hiring the right people (24 percent) and obtaining the necessary capital (22 percent).

Zafar Shah, Research Director at YouGov said: "Entrepreneurs are the primary source of new job creation, increasing innovation and eventually creating a stronger economy. Our latest survey explores the relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship in the MENA more deeply, using the data to produce new and deeper perspectives."

Data for the Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa 2022 was collected online from June 22 to July 19, 2022. Results are based on a sample of 2,727 respondents from the following countries: UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Sudan among others.

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News in brief

Ministry of education issues academic calendar for 2022-23

KUWAIT: The academic calendar for the 2022-23 academic year was issued by the ministry of education. "Kindergarten teachers and technical supervisors will start work from Sunday, September 11, while Tuesday, September 13, will be the start of work in elementary and middle schools, and the following Sunday at high schools," the ministry said. The ministry also assigned dates for students. "Kindergarten students will start school from Sunday, September 18, followed by first graders on September 19. Elementary and middle school students will start school on Tuesday, September 20, while high school students will start from Sunday, September 25," it added. New teachers will undergo training courses from Tuesday, September 13 for seven days, split into managerial and technical training.

3 insurance companies suspended until Sept end

KUWAIT: The Insurance Regulatory Unit (IRU) has suspended three insurance companies until Sept 30. "The decision to suspend the companies came after violations including not adhering legal procedures, not completing judicial sentences, not paying compulsory fees and not providing documents related to complaints against the companies," the IRU announced during a press conference. The IRU stressed that it will not be lax against any violating insurance companies and legal procedures will be taken against all violators according to the laws and regulations. "The suspended insurance companies cannot issue new insurance papers or renew or extend any existing documents during the suspension period," the IRU added.

Panel to study nationalizing volunteer work in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Social Affairs Fahad Al-Shuraian met a committee to organize and improve volunteer work in Kuwait. "A committee is going to be formed to study to nationalize volunteer work and organize efforts to benefit all who need it in the country," the social affairs ministry announced in a press conference. Shuraian will be heading a monthly meeting with representatives of volunteer societies at the ministry of social affairs, and a complete transparent process is going to be applied.

Commerce ministry asks for equal allowance

KUWAIT: A request by the Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraian issued a formal request to the Civil Service Commission to equalize the allowance of ministries' employees with the employees of other ministries. "Around 5,000 employees make great efforts in their work; therefore, in order to ensure fairness, they must have allowances equal to employees of other ministries as soon as possible," Shuraian said in his request.

Kuwait's CPI hits 4.24% in July

KUWAIT: The Consumer Price Index (CPI) annual rate registered in July 2022 an increase by 4.24 percent, compared to July 2021, said the Central Statistical Bureau on Thursday. In a press release, the bureau revealed that the CPI increased monthly by 0.08 percent to 125.4, as a result of high prices of major groups in the movement of the indices. CPI for the Foods Food and Beverage group increased by 7.75 percent, the same with the Cigarette and Tobacco group prices, which rose by 0.07 percent, compared to numbers in July 2021.

The prices of Clothing and Footwear group prices increased by 5.69 percent. Housing Services group increased by 2.17 percent and Household Furniture group prices hiked by 1.86 percent. The statement went on to say that Health group prices went up by 2.13 percent, while the Transportation group prices increased by 4.30 percent. Communication group prices rose by 2.03 percent and Recreation and Cultural group prices increased by 3.51 percent. The prices of the Education group went up by 19.05 percent. Prices of Restaurants and Hotels group increased by 2.67 and the prices of Miscellaneous Goods and Services group rose by 2.86 percent. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People relax on a pier at sunset. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

KRCS readies convoy of relief and medical aid for Gaza

CAIRO: An official of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society announced on Wednesday a convoy of aid, relief and medical aid is being readied to send it to the Gaza Strip, in coordination and cooperation with the Egyptian and Palestinian Red Crescent Societies. Khaled Al-Zaid, Director of Public Relations and Media at KRCS and head of its mission in Cairo, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the aid convoy will set off in two days to the Rafah crossing to deliver aid to Gaza.

Zaid referred to a donation campaign by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society about 10 days ago under the slogan "Gaza is in our hearts", expressing thanks to the private sector and people for their fruitful cooperation with the society to buy health and relief materials for the Gaza Strip. He praised the joint cooperation with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society during the past period to introduce health, medical aid and medicines to people in the Gaza Strip following the recent Zionist attack on Palestinians in the Strip.

Around 10,000 food baskets have been distributed in the Gaza Strip in cooperation with the Palestinian Red Crescent, he said, in addition to distributing fuel to power stations, ambulances and hospitals. Zaid stressed that the Palestinian issue is a "permanent issue" for the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and the Kuwaiti people, noting that aid was sent to Gaza through the Rafah crossing in 2006, 2014 and 2021. He said that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, in cooperation with its Egyptian counterpart, continues to give to serve humanity, serve the needy and overcome all difficulties to deliver aid to brothers in Gaza.

Director of the Procurement and Warehousing Department at the Kuwait Red Crescent Society Abdulrahman Al-Saleh stressed in a similar statement to KUNA the keenness of Kuwait to help afflicted and affected countries, whether due to wars or natural disasters. Saleh said in order to complement the assistance provided by Kuwait to



CAIRO: Kuwait Red Crescent Society staff ready an aid convoy in preparation for sending it to the Gaza Strip. — KUNA

all countries of the world, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society is preparing assistance for brothers in the Gaza Strip in cooperation with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

He praised the joint cooperation between the Red Crescent Societies, especially the Kuwaiti and Egyptian ones, for charitable work both inside Egypt and neighboring countries. Executive Director of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society Dr Rami Al-Nazer said in a statement to KUNA that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, since the out-

break of events in Gaza, has been keen to communicate with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society to find out the latest developments there.

He pointed out that the Egyptian and Kuwait Red Crescent Societies agreed on cooperation with the Palestinian side to meet the needs of emergency medical supplies for the Gaza Strip. He explained that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society rushed to send a team to prepare relief materials and medical supplies from the Egyptian market with the help of volunteers from the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. — KUNA

Scores of violating basements closed, brewery busted

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality has closed more than 85 violating basements being commercially exploited in investment properties during its inspection campaign, which began on August 4. The head of the municipality's violations department Abdullah Jaber said in a statement to reporters on the sidelines of a tour by inspection teams in the Capital governorate on Wednesday that a violating basement that was being commercially exploited in an investment building in the Capital governorate was closed.

Jaber explained the campaign aims to ensure that the owners are committed to evacuating violating warehouses and abide by their commitments to the regulations and laws of the municipality and fire department. He stressed the need to vacate violating basements voluntarily by the owners of the properties, stressing that non-compliance with the laws of the Municipality and Kuwait Fire Force will lead the owner to be given citations, including administrative closure and a block on the owner of the property.

Jaber pointed out that the application of the law aims to preserve the lives of people, explaining the ignition of these materials poses a real danger to residents of these buildings, and also poses difficulties for the fire force to put out fires with the presence of these dangerous materials. He pointed out the campaign will continue until it is confirmed that there is no basement rented in investment buildings in violation of the requirements of the Kuwait Fire Force, pointing out there will be no exceptions to removing stores in investment buildings that violate the law and threaten people's lives.

Meanwhile, during an inspection campaign on violating basements, a basement in Mahboula was found to be brewing alcoholic beverages illegally. "Fifty-eight basements were found to be violating regulations during the campaign on basements which started three weeks ago," manager of the inspection department of Hawally Municipality Mubarak Al-Ajmi said. "Blocks on 30 of these basements have been made, and an eviction period has been given to eight basements," he said. Twenty other violating properties are awaiting further legal procedures.



KUWAIT: Municipal inspectors check a basement store. — KUNA



KUWAIT: An illegal alcohol brewery was found in a basement in Mahboula.



Former Pakistan premier Khan granted bail by anti-terror court

Officer in charge of Texas school shooting police response fired



LVIV, Ukraine: An elderly man mourns during a ceremony for the fallen soldiers of Ukraine at the Lychakiv Cemetery in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv on August 24, 2022, marking six months since the start of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Ukraine station strike toll climbs

Russia says killed over 200 Ukraine troops in rail strike

KYIV: The death toll from an air strike on a train station in central Ukraine rose to 25 on Thursday, as the EU warned those "responsible for Russian rocket terror will be held accountable". The warning came as Russia issued a counter-claim saying it targeted soldiers and killed 200 Ukrainian servicemen in the attack Wednesday on a rail hub in Chaplyne city of the Dnipropetrovsk region. The attack struck six months to the day since Russia began its invasion of Ukraine, which was also the day Ukraine celebrates its 1991 independence from the Soviet Union.

On Thursday, state rail operator Ukrainian Railways said the toll had risen overnight from 22 to 25, and included two children with a further 31 people injured. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had warned at the weekend Russia might do something "particularly cruel" to mark Ukraine's independence celebrations.

Moscow claimed to have slain over 200 Ukrainian troops and 10 units of military equipment in the attack. In a daily press briefing, the defense ministry said the train was "en route to combat zones" in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine, which Russia seeks to fully control. But EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell "strongly" condemned "another heinous attack by Russia on civilians". "Those responsible for Russian rocket terror will be held accountable," he said on Twitter.

'Fight until the end'

Washington warned Wednesday that Moscow was

preparing to hold "sham" polls in occupied areas of Ukraine that would seek to formalize its control. "Russian leadership has instructed officials to begin preparing to hold sham referenda," White House national security coordinator John Kirby said.

"We can see a Russian announcement of the first one or ones before the end of this week."

and that's why Ukraine will win," he added. Earlier, Zelensky issued his own defiant morning video address, saying: "We don't care what army you have, we only care about our land. We will fight for it until the end." Referring to Russia, he vowed Ukraine "will not try to find an understanding with terrorists". "Ukraine is the whole of Ukraine," he said. "All 25 regions, without any concession or compromise."

Fresh aid

The US marked the occasion by announcing \$3 billion in fresh military aid. The new funding will help Kyiv acquire more materiel for its armed forces, locked in a grinding war of attrition with Russian troops in the east and south, with neither side advancing significantly.

Johnson unveiled his own £54 million (\$64 million) package of aid, including 2,000 "state-of-the-art drones" as well as anti-tank munitions. Gatherings were banned in the capital Kyiv and Zelensky had urged citizens to be on guard against "Russian terror".

Nevertheless he and his wife marked a minute of silence for fallen Ukrainian soldiers and laid yellow and blue floral bouquets at a memorial in central Kyiv.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the anniversary of the start of Russia's war in Ukraine a "sad and tragic milestone". European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU has been standing with Ukraine "from the very beginning" and "will be for as long as it takes". —AFP



Johnson visits Kyiv; EU vows accountability

On Ukraine's Independence Day, messages of solidarity poured in from Ukraine's international allies.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson paid a surprise visit to Kyiv, hailing Ukraine's staunch defense, as sirens sounded throughout the day. Putin had failed to account for the "strong will of Ukrainians to resist", Johnson said.

"You defend your right to live in peace, in freedom,

media, with state newspaper Jornal de Angola's front page on Thursday saying: "MPLA leads the count."

"I voted for UNITA, and I do not believe in these results," said Jorge, a 40-year-old mechanic who did not give his surname, accusing the electoral commission of being in cahoots with the ruling party.

"I feel really bad. The country is not going to change, it's always the same story," Lourenco, 68, a Soviet-educated former general who had promised a new era for the southern African nation when he succeeded veteran leader Jose Eduardo dos Santos five years ago, has trumpeted a list of achievements. The incumbent is credited with making far-reaching reforms, including boosting financial transparency and efficiency in parastatal organizations, fighting sweeping nepotism and corruption, and promoting business-friendly policies to lure foreign investors.

"I am happy, the MPLA has given young people opportunities, there is more work and transparency," said 27-year-old shopkeeper Madalena Antonio commenting on the early results. "The government did what it could do. Things will get better."

Voter tampering fears

The MPLA traditionally wields a grip over the electoral process, and state media and opposition and civic groups have raised fears of voter tampering. Results in past elections have been contested, in a process that can take several weeks.

UNITA's deputy leader Abel Chivukuvuku had said earlier the party's own tally showed it was ahead.

Liberators of Soviet Latvia and Riga from the German Fascist Invaders had featured statues of soldiers and a woman surrounding a central obelisk.

Local officials were forced to take down the monument after parliament voted to remove all remaining Soviet statues, plaques and bas-reliefs by mid-November.

Latvia's ethnic Russian community—which makes up 30 percent of the population—had protested against the removal of the Victory Memorial.

Every year, thousands of ethnic Russians rallied at the monument on May 9 to commemorate the victory over Nazi Germany in 1945. Most Latvians see this date as the beginning of Soviet occupation, which lasted until 1991.

A group of activists attempted to demolish the monument with dynamite in 1997 but the explosives detonated unexpectedly, killing two people. —AFP

Angolan president leads in poll results

LUANDA: Angolan President Joao Lourenco was Thursday heading for likely victory over his charismatic rival after the country's most hotly contested election in its democratic history, with most of the ballots counted. Vote counting began after polls closed on Wednesday in the oil-rich nation, where multi-party elections were only introduced in 1992.

The election had been overshadowed by Angola's many woes—a struggling economy, inflation, poverty and drought, compounded by the death of a former strongman president.

Preliminary results published on Thursday by Angola's electoral commission gave the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) 52.08 percent of the vote with more than 86 percent of ballots counted. The main opposition group, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), led by Adalberto Costa Junior, 60, was at 42.98 percent.

An earlier count released overnight had given a much wider margin to the MPLA, which has ruled Angola for nearly 50 years after the country gained independence from Portugal.

Residents in Luanda reacted with mixed feelings to the preliminary count that was given ample coverage by local

Latvia removes controversial Soviet monument

RIGA: Latvia on Thursday took down a Soviet-era monument in Riga following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, despite protests from the Baltic state's ethnic Russian minority to keep it.

Demolition machinery was used to remove the 79-metre (259-foot) World War II memorial, which has become a rallying point for pro-Kremlin supporters in Latvia, according to an AFP journalist at the scene. Latvia, like fellow Baltic states Estonia and Lithuania, is a NATO and EU member that has shown strong support for Ukraine in the conflict with Russia.

Built in 1985, the Monument to the



DENPASAR, Indonesia: In this file photo taken on October 12, 2016, mourners visit the memorial for victims of the 2002 Bali bombings during the 14th anniversary of the blasts in the Kuta tourist area near Denpasar, on the Indonesian resort island of Bali. —AFP

Bali bomb attack survivors fume over jail term cut

DENPASAR: Almost two decades after the Bali bombings left Thiolina Ferawati Marpaung with permanent eye injuries, news that one of the masterminds could be released early has caused fresh trauma. Indonesia's latest reduction to Umar Patek's prison sentence—revealed last week by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and confirmed by AFP—means the bomber could be released on parole before the island marks the 20th anniversary of the attacks in October.

"That is a galling prospect for survivors of the attack, which killed 202 people, including 88 Australians. "It is not that I don't respect other people's rights, but he has hurt the survivors and families with his evil and inhumane acts," Marpaung told AFP by phone from Denpasar, the resort island's biggest city. The smell of smoke triggers vivid memories of the blasts that sent shards of broken glass tearing into her eyes, Marpaung said. Patek—a member of an Al-Qaeda-affiliated group who was captured in the same Pakistani town where Osama bin Laden was killed—should be kept locked up, she said.

"Please let him serve what he deserves as a terror convict, not like a chicken thief whom we can easily forgive," the 47-year-old said. But Indonesia says Patek is giving up his extremist beliefs after completing a deradicalization program.

He was granted a sentence reduction on August 17 because he had served two-thirds of his 20-year prison term and shown progress towards reform, said Teguh Wibowo, spokesperson of the Law and Human Rights Ministry office in East Java.

"He has dutifully undergone a deradicalization program and behaves well in the prison," Wibowo said, referring to Indonesia's rehabilitation scheme to make terror convicts abandon extremism and pledge loyalty to the state. The attacks on a nightclub and bar were the deadliest in Indonesian history and led to a crackdown on extremism in the country, which has the largest Muslim population in the world.

Tied side-by-side to wooden posts on a small prison island, the attackers were executed by firing squad in 2008 after a years-long probe.

Patek was found to have made the bombs used in the assault on Bali, a Hindu island popular with foreign tourists. He was captured with a \$1 million bounty on his head after nearly a decade on the run. Prosecutors only sought a life sentence for the 52-year-old on a charge of premeditated murder because he showed remorse during his 2012 trial. Any release from prison must be approved by Indonesia's Ministry of Justice. —AFP



LUANDA, Angola: An election official holds up a ballot paper as votes are counted at a polling station in Luanda on August 24, 2022, during Angola's general elections. —AFP

"Our poll counting centers... give us clear provisional indication of a winning trend for UNITA in all provinces of the country," he told a live-streamed night conference. "We are confident, calm and tranquil." More than 14 million people were registered to vote.

Angola is Africa's second largest crude producer, but the oil bonanza also nurtured corruption and nepotism under dos Santos, who died in Spain last month.

The low-key, night-time repatriation of his remains in the final leg of campaigning has added a macabre touch to the election. —AFP



RIGA, Latvia: In this file photo taken on May 09, 2019 people attend festivities to mark 74 years since the end of World War II and to commemorate the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, on May 9, 2019 at the Victory Monument in Riga, Latvia. —AFP

International

Calls for restraint as fighting returns to northern Ethiopia

Fresh fighting scuppers a truce and casts a shadow over hopes for peace

ADDIS ABABA: The international community appealed for restraint on Thursday after fighting resumed in northern Ethiopia between government forces and Tigray rebels, scuppering a truce and casting a shadow over hopes for peace.

The situation on the ground was unclear a day after fresh fighting erupted on the border of Tigray, where the warring sides accused each other of

concerned that renewed fighting puts that at risk. We call on the Ethiopian Government and TPLF to redouble efforts for peace to bring a permanent end to the conflict."

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell urged both sides to pull back from "a full blown war", saying: "Reports of renewed conflict in Northern Ethiopia cast a shadow on the prospect for peace."

UN chief Antonio Guterres and envoys from Britain, Turkey, the African Union and the East African trade bloc IGAD made similar calls for restraint and a commitment to dialogue.

'Defend sovereignty'

On Thursday, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen told diplomats that Ethiopia was "prepared to defend the nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty". "But it is equally committed to using peaceful means to put an end to the conflict and collaborating with humanitarian organizations to lessen needless suffering," he told a gathering of foreign envoys in Addis Ababa.

He also accused the TPLF of commandeering aid supplies meant for Tigray, which is in the grips of a major humanitarian crisis. The UN's World Food Programme on Thursday accused the TPLF of seizing half a million litres of fuel from a warehouse in Tigray, a region the rebels have held since ousting government troops in June 2021.

"We demand the Tigrayan Authorities return these fuel stocks to the humanitarian community immediately. As the next harvest is not until October, our deliveries of life-saving food could not be more urgent or critical to the survival of millions," WFP executive director David Beasley said in a statement. Vicky Ford, the UK's Minister for Africa, said the resumption of fighting would "only deepen the already catastrophic humanitarian situation" in Tigray where food, fuel and medicine is scarce.

suspension to be lifted through a statement from his lawyer, criticizing his treatment since the shooting. "Chief Arredondo will not participate in his own illegal and unconstitutional public lynching and respectfully requests the Board immediately reinstate him, with all backpay and benefits and close the complaint as unfounded," lawyer George Hyde said in a statement released shortly before the school board's vote.

Texas state lawmakers also slammed Arredondo in a report last month, saying he "did not assume his preassigned responsibility of incident command" and made analytical errors because he did not have all the necessary information. The lawmakers said the situation was "chaotic" due to the 376 on-scene officers' "lackadaisical approach" to subduing the gunman. They said no other officers offered to help or replace Arredondo during the massacre.

Seventy-three minutes elapsed between the first officers' arrival and the shooter's death, an "unacceptably long period of time." "The void of leadership could have contributed to the loss of life," the report said. "It is plausible that some victims could have survived if they had not had to wait 73 additional minutes for rescue," according to the report.

Following the release of the Texas lawmakers' report, local media reported that Uvalde police lieutenant Mariano Pargas had been suspended while the city investigated his role in the shooting response. The United States has faced a spate of

comes as Algeria moves to fill a vast shortfall in gas supplies to Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

European nations are seeking to end their dependence on Russian hydrocarbons, giving Algeria - Africa's biggest gas exporter with direct pipelines to Spain and Italy - renewed clout. "The French president will certainly ask Algeria to make an effort to try to increase its gas production," said Algerian economist Abderrahmane Mebtoul.

But Macron's office has said gas is not a major feature of the visit - although the head of French energy firm Engie, Catherine MacGregor, will be on Macron's delegation. Macron has long ruled out issuing an apology for the highly sensitive issue of colonialism, but he has made a series of gestures aimed at healing past wounds.

In Algiers, few have much sympathy towards Macron, who during his first election campaign had described French colonialism as a "crime against humanity". "Before he was president, he used nice words, he visited (Algeria), but right after he went back to France, he changed," said computer scientist Othmane Abdellouche, 62. "He used a totally different discourse".

But businessman Kamel Moula, who heads the Council of Economic Renewal Algerian, told the TSA news website that he wanted to see "a new mode of cooperation" between the two countries that would see them "jointly conquer new markets".

French historians say half a million civilians and combatants died during Algeria's bloody war for independence, 400,000 of them Algerian. The Algerian authorities say 1.5 million were killed. Tebboune's office said in October that over 5.6 million Algerians were killed during the colonial period.

Algerian rights groups have also urged Macron not to overlook human rights abuses by the government that came to power after long-time leader Abdelaziz Bouteflika stepped down in 2019. Tebboune, a prime minister under Bouteflika, has clamped down on the Hirak opposition movement that forced his predecessor to resign. — AFP



HUMERA, Ethiopia: A damaged tank stands abandoned on a road near Humera, Ethiopia in this file photo. — AFP

The March truce paused the worst of the bloodshed and allowed for aid convoys to slowly return to Tigray, where the UN said last week nearly half the population is suffering from a severe lack of food.

Stalled talks

Since the end of June, Abiy's government and the rebels have repeatedly stated their willingness to enter peace negotiations, but disagreed on the terms of such talks. In recent weeks, too, they have accused each other of preparing for battle. Addis Ababa wants talks without preconditions under the auspices of the AU, which is headquartered in the Ethiopian capital.

The rebels are demanding electricity, telecommunications and banking services be restored to Tigray before talks begin, and reject the AU's envoy

Olusegun Obasanjo as mediator.

In a statement dated August 23, TPLF leader Debretson Gebremichael said "two rounds of confidential face-to-face" meetings with top civilian and military officials had taken place, the first acknowledgement by either side of direct talks. Abiy sent troops into Tigray in November 2020 to topple the TPLF after months of tensions with the party that dominated Ethiopian politics for three decades until he took office in 2018.

The 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner said the move came in response to rebel attacks on army camps. The TPLF mounted a comeback, recapturing Tigray and expanding into Afar and Amhara, before the war reached a stalemate. The conflict has killed untold numbers, with widespread reports of atrocities including mass killings and sexual violence. — AFP



Situation on ground unclear

igniting the first major clashes in five months. Rebel authorities in Tigray said on Wednesday that government forces failed to breach their defensive lines, but offered little detail on the status of combat or casualties.

The government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has also not provided an update on the fighting, or whether combat has spread beyond the scenes of Wednesday's battles on Tigray's southern border.

Spokespeople for Abiy's government and the rebel Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) did not respond to AFP's requests for comment about the situation on the ground. The return to combat has alarmed the international community, which has been pushing both sides to peacefully resolve the brutal 21-month war in Africa's second most populous nation.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the truce reached between the warring parties in March had "reduced violence and saved lives". "We are

Officer in charge of Texas school shooting police response fired

HOUSTON: The widely criticized police officer in charge of the response to the Uvalde, Texas school shooting that saw 19 children and two teachers killed was fired Wednesday, US media reported.

The Uvalde school board voted unanimously to terminate the contract of district police chief Pete Arredondo, the Texas Tribune reported. The state's public safety chief previously said Arredondo had placed "the lives of officers before the lives of children" and made "terrible decisions" while managing the crime scene. Nineteen young children and two teachers were killed when a teenage gunman went on a rampage at Robb Elementary School on May 24 in America's worst school shooting in a decade. Police eventually shot and killed the gunman.

Local police have been under intense scrutiny since it emerged that more than a dozen officers waited for over an hour outside a pair of adjoining classrooms where the shooting was taking place and did nothing as children lay dead or dying inside.

Arredondo, who was suspended in June pending an investigation, earlier on Wednesday asked for his



UVALDE, US: Family members who lost loved ones in the massacre at Robb Elementary School arrive for the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District Board special meeting to consider the firing of Police Chief Pete Arredondo on August 24, 2022 in Uvalde, Texas. — AFP

brutal gun massacres in recent months, including at a grocery store in a predominately Black neighborhood in New York state and at an Independence Day parade in Illinois. In June, US lawmakers broke a

decades-long stalemate on firearms control, passing the first major safety regulations in almost 30 years, less than 24 hours after the Supreme Court bolstered the constitutional right to bear arms. — AFP

Macron looks to 'future' on...

Continued from Page 1

Algerian media said Macron's visit showed both countries' desire for relations built around "a new vision based on equal treatment and balance of interests". It also reflected "a recognition of Algeria's central role in the region" and the country's "return to the international scene".

Macron, who will meet entrepreneurs in Algiers as well as young people in the second city Oran, is accompanied by a 90-strong delegation. France's chief rabbi Haim Korsia, the son of Algerian-born Jews, withdrew from the trip at the last moment after testing positive for COVID-19.

His planned attendance had been criticized by prominent Islamist politician Abderrazak Makri and social media users in Algeria, where the Palestinian cause is widely supported.

Ties between Paris and Algiers have been particularly stormy since last year, when Macron questioned Algeria's existence as a nation before the French occupation and accused the government of fomenting "hatred towards France". Tebboune withdrew his country's ambassador in response and banned French military aircraft from its airspace.

But Macron's office said he "regretted" the misunderstandings caused by his comments, and his aides believe both sides have moved on. They note the resumption of normal diplomatic relations and overflights to French army bases further south in Africa. Analyst Mansour Kedidir said that "given instability in the Maghreb region, conflicts in the Sahel and the war in Ukraine, improving ties between France and Algeria is a political necessity".

Macron and Tebboune will discuss the situation in Algeria's southern neighbor Mali, as well as the growing influence in the region of Russia, Algeria's top arms supplier. France's latest efforts to mend ties

US forces strike source of rocket attacks in Syria

WASHINGTON: US attack helicopters on Wednesday struck several targets used by Iran-backed militants to fire rockets at bases housing American troops in northeastern Syria, the US military's Central Command said. "US forces responded today to rocket attacks at two sites in Syria, destroying three vehicles and equipment used to launch some of the rockets," Centcom, which oversees US military operations in the Middle East, said in a statement.

Macron promises teacher pay rises amid 4,000 vacancies

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday promised more pay rises for teachers amid a recruitment crisis that has led to around 4,000 school vacancies ahead of the start of term.

A week before classes open after the summer holidays, Macron told school heads that efforts to raise teacher salaries which began in 2020 would "continue." He added that "no teacher will start their career with less than A2,000 net" per month, which would represent a rise of about 10 percent compared with now. Figures from the education ministry showing that 4,000 teacher jobs remain vacant have led to a debate in recent weeks about how to attract more people to the profession.

Education Minister Pap Ndiaye acknowledged in July that salaries were "objectively not at the sort of level that one would expect."

The government had already promised an unconditional raise for new teachers but will also offer task-based increases for teachers who agree to take on extra responsibilities.

Two or three suspected Iran-backed militants responsible for one of the attacks were killed, Centcom added. Three US service members sustained minor injuries when several rockets hit both the Conoco and Green Village bases in Deir Ezzor, a strategic, oil-rich province bordering Iraq, on Wednesday evening.

The facilities are run by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, allies of the United States and other coalition partners that are maintaining a mission against the remnants of the Islamic State.

The strike comes a day after another US attack targeted facilities in Deir Ezzor that Washington said were used by Iran-backed militias. White House spokesman John Kirby said the strikes destroyed infrastructure including ammunition depots in "direct response" to an August 15 attack on the small contingent of US troops in Syria. — AFP

Teachers with 15 years' experience make around \$40,000 a year before tax in France, according to data from the OECD, below the average of their peers in other rich countries and around half the level of their German equivalents. Shortages have led to controversial recruitment efforts including rapid "job dating" interviews.

A school district in Versailles southwest of Paris organized 30-minute interviews with 2,000 candidates from outside the profession in June. State teachers are usually required to have a master's degree in education and pass a tough certification exam, but the education ministry is lowering these demands for temporary "contract teachers".

Sophie Venetitay, secretary general of the biggest secondary school union, the Snes-FSU, said it was a "return to class with shortages". "We've seen school authorities and the ministry improvising in every way possible to make sure there is a teacher in front of every class," she told AFP.

"But even if this objective is reached, you have to ask yourself what the cost will be, if these teachers have not been trained," she said.

Key sectors across the economy in France and Europe more widely are struggling to find staff after the COVID-19 epidemic. The official unemployment rate in France stands at 7.4 percent, with 2.3 million people officially out of work, according to statistics agency INSEE. — AFP

International

Former Pakistan premier Khan granted bail by anti-terror court

Khan accuses govt of trying to score a 'technical knockout'

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan accused the government Thursday of trying to score a "technical knockout" against him, after being granted bail on charges brought under the country's anti-terrorism act. Khan's court appearance is the latest twist in months of political wrangling that began when he was ousted by a vote of no confidence in the national assembly in April.

The former cricket star retains widespread support, however, staging mass rallies railing against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government and scoring successes in recent provincial assembly by-elections.

A court judgement was not immediately available, but officials from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said he had been granted "interim bail" until September 1. The latest allegations against Khan stem from a weekend rally when he criticized a magistrate responsible for keeping a PTI official in police custody, after party leaders said he was "tortured".

Outside the court, Khan repeated his criticism of the judge and said the government was running scared because of his popularity. "Due to that fear, they are looking for technical knockouts. Just to save themselves, they are making a mockery of the country," he said.

The political crisis comes as officials struggle to deal with record monsoon rains that have flooded a vast swathe of the country. Figures from the national disaster agency showed Thursday that 903 people had died in the floods since June, and more than 180,000 were forced to flee their rural homes.

The economy is also in free fall, with the country at risk of defaulting on foreign loans unless, as

expected, the International Monetary Fund approves the resumption of a \$6 billion bailout package next week. Khan and other senior party officials have faced a raft of charges since being booted from office.

Political history

The country has a history of those in power using the police and courts to stifle their political opponents, and premier Sharif has several pending cases brought against him while in opposition. One senior PTI official, Shahbaz Gill, has been in detention for nearly two weeks after being arrested following a TV interview in which he urged army officers to disobey orders that went against the interests of the country.

Khan said Gill had been tortured and sexually abused in custody, and vowed action against those responsible. "That includes the inspector general, deputy inspector general of police and a magistrate who sent him on physical remand despite knowing he was tortured," he said.

Khan said the government had turned the country into a "banana republic". "There is no law here and any charges can be brought against anyone," he said.

Khan's main goal is an early general election—the next one must be held before October next year—but the government has shown no sign of wanting to go to the polls.

"I think if an election is not called soon, Imran Khan's popularity will further grow so he shouldn't be concerned," said Talat Masood, a former general and now political analyst. "These massive demonstrations show that Imran Khan has the



ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan (center) arrives to appear before an anti-terrorism court in Islamabad on August 25, 2022. — AFP

backing of millions of supporters, but this also shows that the public lacks interest in parliamentary democracy," he said.

Khan swept into power in 2018 thanks to an electorate weary of the dynastic politics of the country's two major parties, promising to sweep away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism. But under his rule the country's economy went

backwards, and the IMF suspended the loan programme that the new government has only just gotten back on track.

Khan also lost the support of the powerful military. Still, analyst Masood said he doubted the former premier would be jailed on any of the charges he faces. "The courts might fine him, but going harder will be counterproductive," he said. — AFP

More than 180 killed in a month by Afghan floods

KABUL: More than 180 people have been killed and 3,000 homes destroyed by floods in Afghanistan over the past month, a government spokesman said Thursday.

Zabihullah Mujahid said the scale of the damage had been worse because of the mismanagement of infrastructure by the previous government. However, the hardline Taliban regime that returned to power a year ago is also struggling to cope. "If the floods and the losses increase, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan does not have that many resources to respond to all of it," Mujahid told a press conference in Kabul.

Heavy rains have lashed several provinces, with the worst of the flooding in the east of the country.

Dozens of Afghans die every year in torrential rains—especially in poor rural areas where badly



Stranded people wade through a flooded area after heavy monsoon rainfall in Rajanpur district of Punjab province on August 25, 2022. — AFP

constructed houses can easily collapse. Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan the country has been plunged further into economic and humanitarian crises, worsened by the freezing of billions in

assets held abroad and a slash in aid funding.

The Taliban called on the international community, particularly Muslim countries, to help the government meet the needs of flood victims. — AFP

Rohingya refugees mark 'Genocide Remembrance Day'

YANGON: Thousands of Rohingya refugees held "Genocide Remembrance Day" rallies on Thursday across a huge network of camps in Bangladesh, marking five years since fleeing a military offensive in Myanmar. In August 2017 around 750,000 of the mostly Muslim minority streamed over the border with mainly Buddhist Myanmar to escape the onslaught, which is now the subject of a landmark genocide case at the UN's top court.

Today there are nearly a million Rohingya—half of them under 18 — in rickety huts in camps where the mud lanes regularly become rivers of sewage during monsoon rains. Thousands staged rallies in many of the camps on Thursday, holding banners, shouting slogans and demanding a safe return to their home state of Rakhine in western Myanmar.

"Today is the day thousands of Rohingya were killed," young leader Maung Sawyedollah said with tears in his eyes as he led a rally in Kutupalong—the world's largest refugee settlement. "Five years ago this day nearly one million Rohingya were displaced. On this day in 2017 more than 300 of our villages were burnt down to ashes," he said.

"All we want is a safe and dignified return to our homeland," said Sayed Ullah, another community



A Rohingya refugee woman walks past the solar panels along a street at a Hindu Rohingya camp in Ukhia on August 24, 2022. — AFP

leader. "Unfortunately, our cries have fallen on deaf ears. The international community is not doing anything," he added. Other protesters recalled the horror of the Myanmar offensive, which the government says was a legitimate response to militant attacks.

"First they burnt our house. My mother was hiding in the house and they dragged her from there. First they cut her hands and then cut her throat," said Sufia Khatun, 42.

Several attempts at repatriation have failed, with

Rohingya refusing to return without guarantees for their security and rights in Myanmar, where many see the minority as foreigners. Rohingya say that the security situation in the Bangladeshi camps—surrounded by barbed wire—is also deteriorating, with at least 100 people killed since 2017. Much of the violence is blamed on a Rohingya insurgent group and gangs involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking, which find easy recruits among the many bored young men in the camps. — AFP

nance of the church—but has only fuelled speculation he is on his way out. Francis, who has cancelled numerous events in recent months and been forced to use a wheelchair due to knee pain, said last month "the door is open" to stepping down.

If he did follow his predecessor Benedict XVI and resign, a conclave involving all cardinals aged under 80 would be called to choose a successor. After this weekend, Francis will have chosen around 90 out of the 132 cardinals eligible to elect a new pope, around two-thirds of the total—precisely the percentage needed for any proposed name to pass.

Global choices

The naming of cardinals, normally an annual event, is always scrutinized as an indication of the future direction of the Catholic Church and its priorities for its 1.3 billion faithful.

But Francis's choices for cardinals do not automatically guarantee that the next pope would be someone reflecting his own priorities, Vatican specialist Bernard Lecomte told AFP. "We always have the impression there will be continuity, but in reality, his-



MARSEILLE, France: Archbishop of Marseille Jean-Marc Aveline poses for a picture in his office in Marseille, southern France, August 24, 2022. Nicolas Pope Francis announces that he will create 20 new Cardinals at a Consistory next August 27, 2022. — AFP

tory has shown the opposite," said Lecomte, citing the "balancing" from one pope to the next throughout the 20th century. — AFP

News in brief

Two Bulgarian police officers killed

SOFIA: Two police officers were killed Thursday as they tried to stop a bus carrying migrants in Bulgaria, authorities said, as the government made a renewed promise to crack down on illegal migration. The bus, which was carrying 47 passengers, including children, blew through two police checks in Bourgas, on the shores of the Black Sea. "A patrol then chased it and blocked its way" before being hit by the speeding bus, senior ministry official Stanimir Stanev told the press. Two police officers, aged 30 and 43, died instantly, he said. — AFP

UK ex-embassy to Myanmar detained

YANGON: Myanmar authorities have arrested Britain's former ambassador to the country and her husband, a prominent artist and one-time political prisoner, for allegedly violating immigration laws, a diplomatic source said on Thursday. Vicky Bowman, who served as envoy from 2002 to 2006, was arrested on Wednesday in the commercial hub Yangon, the source said, requesting anonymity. A spokesperson for the embassy said they were "concerned by the arrest of a British woman in Myanmar," without mentioning Bowman by name. — AFP

Albanians crossing Channel removals

LONDON: The UK on Thursday vowed to speed up removals of Albanians illegally entering the country as official statistics showed they were now the largest single group making small-boat crossings of the Channel. A total of 2,165 Albanians made the dangerous crossing from northern France during the first six months of 2022, compared with 815 during the whole of 2021. In previous years, asylum seekers from war zones made up the vast bulk of small-boat arrivals. — AFP

Russian anti-torture activist in hospital

MOSCOW: Russian anti-torture activist Igor Kalyapin was in hospital after being attacked by a person claiming to be a police officer, the Presidential Human Rights Council said Thursday. Kalyapin is a member of Russia's Human Rights Council, an advisory group with the Kremlin that reports to President Vladimir Putin. For over two decades, he was also head of the "Committee Against Torture" NGO, which reports instances of abuse by law enforcement. "Igor Kalyapin was attacked by an unknown person" on Wednesday in the Nizhny Novgorod region some 400 kilometers (248 miles) east of Moscow, the council said on social media. — AFP

Putin ups Russian army headcount

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday signed a decree to increase the headcount of the country's army, as Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine enters its seventh month. Russia's army will have over two million people, including 1.15 million servicemen, starting January next year, according to the decree published on a government portal. Putin last set the army headcount in 2017 at around 1.9 million people with 1.01 million soldiers. — AFP

As rumors swirl, Pope Francis names new cardinals

ROME: Pope Francis, who recently raised the possibility of retiring due to his declining health, will create 20 new cardinals on Saturday—many of whom could one day choose his successor.

It is the eighth consistory since the 85-year-old was elected in 2013, but is being particularly closely watched for signs of the kind of Catholic Church he hopes to leave behind. The new cardinals include men known for their progressive views and their pastoral work, and they hail from around the world: from Brazil to Nigeria, India, Singapore and East Timor.

After Saturday's swearing-in at St Peter's Basilica, they will join a two-day meeting of all cardinals starting Monday. The gathering was called earlier this year to discuss the pope's new constitution for the govern-

FRIDAY, AUGUST 26, 2022

Business

Oil prices to rebound to \$125 in coming months, says UBS

Demand for crude in non-OECD countries globally remains strong

LONDON: Oil prices are likely to rebound to \$125 in the coming months due to tight market supply, declining spare capacity and low oil inventories, according to Swiss bank UBS. In a research note on Thursday, UBS strategists said the latest remarks by Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman about a disconnect between oil futures prices from market fundamentals and that OPEC+ has the means to deal with market challenges including cutting production at any time, suggests "there is a desire to defend oil prices to stay above the level of \$90 per barrel".

"We continue to believe that fundamentals point to higher prices. Spare capacity is below 2 million barrels per day, and oil inventories stand at a multi-year low," authors of the UBS report said.

On Wednesday, Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Mohammad Al-Faris repeated statements made by other energy ministers and industry analysts that "structural supply weaknesses caused by years of underinvestment have led to extremely limited worldwide spare capacity".

This situation has contributed to "extraordinary volatility in the oil markets at a time when these markets need stability like never before to allow participants to plan future production capacity increases to meet rising demand", he said.

UBS said while oil demand in OECD countries has been lackluster lately, it remains strong in non-OECD countries, which account for 54 per cent of the total demand globally. Oil prices gained this week after Prince Abdulaziz's comments. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest exporter of oil, leads the OPEC+ alliance of 23 oil produc-

ers along with Russia. "The European Union intends to cut its dependence on Russian waterborne crude imports by December 5 and refined products by February 5. This will likely cause some disruptions as Russian oil imports to the EU amounted to 2.8m bpd in July. Also, ending sales from the strategic oil reserves of OECD countries will remove more than 1 million bpd of supply from November, pointing to tighter markets at the end of the year," the report said.

Brent, the global benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, was trading 0.68 per cent higher at \$101.90 a barrel at 4.02pm UAE time. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, was up 0.43 per cent at \$95.30 a barrel. Oil prices have been volatile this year, with Brent shooting up to nearly \$140 a barrel in March following the outbreak of Russia's war in Ukraine and subsequent supply concerns. Western countries imposed sanctions on Russia, the world's second largest energy exporter, for its military offensive in Ukraine.

Prices have since receded on mounting concerns of a global recession, its impact on demand and more recently, the potential revival of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. "Oil traders are focused on two things and two things only, and that is the possibility of the Iranian nuclear deal taking place, which could bring Iranian oil on the market ... and secondly, and more importantly, the output from Opec," said Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at Avatrade. Should OPEC scale back its oil output, that would address trade concerns about Iranian oil destabilizing the oil supply and demand curve, he said.

Edward Moya, a senior market analyst at



Oil prices are expected to rebound to \$125 in the coming months due to tight market supply, declining spare capacity and low oil inventories, according to Swiss bank UBS.

Oanda agreed, pointing to an expected continued decline in US stockpiles over the coming weeks over strong export demand. "Oil prices could

surge over the next few weeks if OPEC+ is forced to cut output and if Iran nuclear deal talks falter again," he said. — UBS Research Note

Grain prices ease back but fertilizer costs a growing risk

LONDON: Grain prices have dropped sharply from the record highs they reached following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but another menace to global food security remains: a shortage of fertilizer.

The conflict sparked fears of famine in poorer countries reliant on agricultural goods from Ukraine and Russia, two nations that were responsible for nearly a third of global wheat exports last year.

Wheat prices reached a peak of nearly C440 (\$440) a ton on the European market in mid-May, double the level of one year ago, as crucial Ukrainian shipments were stuck at port due to a Russian naval blockade in the Black Sea.

But prices have fallen to around €300 in August. "The situation began to calm down at the end of May, beginning of June with the first reassuring harvest forecasts for Europe and the resumption of Ukrainian exports, first by road and rail, then by sea," said Gautier Le Molgat, analyst at consultancy Agritel.

Kyiv and Moscow reached an agreement in July, brokered by the United Nations and Turkey, that allowed Ukraine to resume grain shipments in the Black Sea. The agreement opened a shipping corridor for 20 million tons of maize, wheat and sunflower seed oil stocked in Ukraine. According to the Joint Coordination Centre which manages the sea corridor, more than 720,000 tons have already left Ukraine.

"Thanks to intensive international cooperation, Ukraine is on track to export as much as four million



The conflict sparked fears of famine in poorer countries reliant on agricultural goods from Ukraine and Russia, two nations that were responsible for nearly a third of global wheat exports last year. —AFP

metric tons of agricultural products in August," a senior US State Department official told AFP on Tuesday.

Strong ruble

In addition to more supplies reaching markets and helping lower prices, the deal has led to a drop in insurance premiums, reducing transport costs. But the reduction in tensions is, for the moment, benefitting Ukraine more than Russia, which is expecting a bumper harvest of 88 million tons of wheat.

Russian wheat exports in July and August are running 27 percent lower than last year, according to estimates by the Russian market research firm SovEcon. That is due to fierce competition on the international grain market, as well as the strong val-

ue of the ruble and a high Russian export tax. "As a result, farmers remain reluctant sellers," said Andrei Sizov, SovEcon's managing director.

The low volume of Russian exports is one of the main reasons why wheat prices have remained so high, said Sizov.

One of the reasons prices have not come down further is the surge in energy prices, due to the post-pandemic recovery and the war. Higher oil prices impact transportation costs, while natural gas is a feedstock for manufacturing the chemical fertilizers that most farmers now use. "Fertilizer prices have tripled in the last 18 months and the hard part of my job is forecasting what they will do in the next 18 months," Joel Jackson, a fertilizer analyst at BMO Capital Markets, said at an analyst conference in July in the United States. —AFP

Saudi non-oil exports jump 31% in Q2

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's non-oil exports grew 31 per cent annually in the second quarter of 2022, rising to 86.2 billion Saudi riyals (\$23bn), as the kingdom continued efforts to diversify its economy away from hydrocarbons. Non-oil export growth was also up on a quarterly basis by nearly 10 per cent from 7.6 billion riyals in the first quarter, according to data released on Wednesday by the General Authority for Statistics.

Growth was driven by chemical and allied industry products, which made up more than 35 per cent of total non-oil merchandise exports and were up 49 per cent on an annual basis. They were followed by plastics and rubber products, which accounted for about 29 per cent of the total.

Overall, the kingdom's total value of exports during the second quarter amounted to 429.8 billion riyals, up about 85 per cent from 232.2 billion riyals in the same period last year, mainly driven by rising oil exports. Oil exports increased 106.5 per cent annually by 177.2 billion riyals in the second quarter, Gastat said. The share of oil exports in total exports also rose to 80 per cent from 71.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2021, amid rising crude prices, data showed.

Overall, the kingdom recorded a trade surplus of 258.86 billion riyals in the second quarter of 2022, compared with 91.75bn riyals in the same period last year. Saudi Arabia's economy is set to grow at the quickest pace in a decade and will likely be one of the world's fastest-growing economies this year, according to the International Monetary Fund. It is projected to expand 7.6 per cent this year after 3.2 per cent growth in 2021, according to the IMF.

The kingdom's economy has continued to improve as it recovers from the coronavirus-induced slowdown. It grew 11.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2022, mainly led by a boost in the oil sector, according to data released by Gastat last month. Non-oil economic activity also climbed 5.4 per cent in the three-month period to the end of June, supporting the growth of the Arab world's largest economy. Non-oil growth will increase to 4.2 per cent in 2022 before returning to its medium-term potential of 4 per cent, according to the IMF.

Despite the recent high volatility in the oil market, owing to Ukraine war-related trade and production disruptions, the price of Brent is expected to average \$103.88 a barrel this year, its highest level since 2013, according to IMF projections. This is about 50 per cent higher than the 2021 average, with prices expected to fall to \$91.07 in 2023.

Even with rising concerns about a potential global recession and rising inflation that have derailed the momentum of the economic recovery from the pandemic, data points to oil demand holding up in the third quarter of this year at an average of 100.3 million barrels per day, from 98.7 million bpd in the second quarter, according to MUFG Bank estimates.

Brent, the global benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, was trading 1.18 per cent higher at \$101.40 a barrel at 3.23pm UAE time on Wednesday. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, was also up 1.18 per cent at \$94.85 a barrel. —Agencies

US GDP contracted 0.6% in Q2, less than initial report

WASHINGTON: The American economy contracted in the April-June quarter but not as much as initially reported, as revised data showed stronger US exports and spending, according to government data released Thursday. Second quarter GDP fell 0.6 percent, annualized, less than the 0.9 percent drop the Commerce Department announced in the initial estimate last month.

Coming after the steep 1.6 percent contraction in the first quarter, the data still feeds concerns about a recession in the world's largest economy, which is often defined as two quarters of negative growth.

But many economists have argued that definition does not apply to the current situation, given that the very strong labor market and resilient US consumer mean the downturn is not widespread throughout the economy. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics notes that incomes also increased in the latest quarter, which bodes well for continued upward revisions to the data.

"We are reasonably confident that when the comprehensive revisions are published in October, the declines in GDP in Q1 and Q2 will be revised



The American economy contracted in the April-June quarter but not as much as initially reported.

away," he said. The report said the upward revision in the most recent data "primarily reflected an upturn in exports and a smaller decrease in federal government spending," as well as higher consumer spending. "The increase in consumer spending reflected an increase in services (led by food services and accommodations)," the report said.

Meanwhile, S shares started the trading day on a positive note Thursday, buoyed by encouraging economic news, even as investors are bracing for more tough inflation talk from Federal Reserve

Chair Jerome Powell. About 30 minutes into the session, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.2 percent at 33,029.24.

The broad-based S&P 500 gained 0.7 percent to 4,169.73, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index increased 0.9 percent to end at 12,545.44. Official data showed initial applications for unemployment benefits fell last week, dispelling concerns about a weakening job market, while GDP in the second quarter contracted by 0.6 percent, much less than first reported. —AFP

Business

Musk lawyers seize on Twitter whistleblower revelations

Court clash shows Musk battle plan in Twitter fight

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk's lawyers jumped Wednesday on the revelations of a Twitter whistleblower to try to force the platform to surrender vast amounts of information for their fight to cancel the billionaire's buyout bid.

The Tesla boss's team told a US judge the former Twitter security chief's allegations of major security gaps and problematic practices had bolstered their case, which has struggled for momentum in court.

accounts," Spiro told Judge Kathaleen McCormick in a court in the eastern state of Delaware. Twitter won some early battles in the case, including a fast-track trial date, and its stock had risen as analysts have predicted the platform would prevail over the mercurial billionaire. Yet Zatko's whistleblower complaint to US authorities, which surfaced on Tuesday, has been seized upon by Musk's attorneys to try to gain momentum in the case.

'They want a do-over'

Spiro tried to convince the judge to order Twitter to hand over billions of "data points," including user phone numbers and locations, arguing the information is needed to prove Twitter was dishonest about spam accounts. Twitter lawyer Bradley Wilson countered that the company deceived nobody, and that Musk wants a "do-over" regarding questions he should have asked before he made his unsolicited buyout offer early this year.

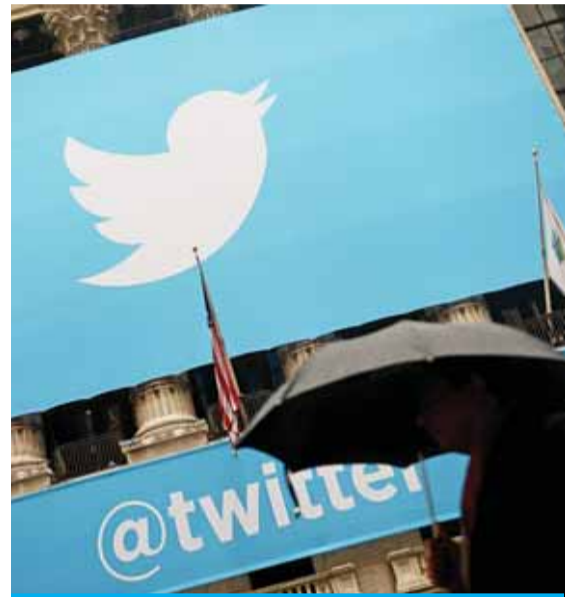
While Twitter has pointed out that Musk opted not to perform due diligence typically seen in merger deals, Spiro told the judge the billionaire trusted the firm's filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The market watchdog was one of the recipients of Zatko's complaint, which accuses Twitter of issuing untrue statements on account numbers because "if accurate measurements ever became public, it would harm the image and valuation of the company."

It was not immediately clear whether the complaint, and its use by Musk's attorneys, would change the course of the case. The judge has not yet issued a ruling on Musk's attorneys' data demands, and Zatko's impact could be clearer after his planned testimony before US lawmakers on September 13.

Twitter opposes handing over certain types of data for reasons including the potential to violate user privacy protected by law, its attorney Wilson argued.

"They want a do-over: they want to recount the spam," he said of Musk's team.

"They want to get all of the information that the reviewers had so that they can have their experts, I presume, do a count of their own and see if they can come up with a different number." Even if Musk's experts come to a different conclusion about the number of spam accounts at Twitter, that would not amount to a breach significant enough to let him break the buyout contract, Twitter attorneys argue. — AFP



NEW YORK: In this file photo, a banner with the logo of Twitter is set on the front of the New York Stock Exchange in New York. Twitter faced scrutiny from US market regulators over how the platform calculates the number of false or spam accounts, a topic at the heart of the firm's legal battle with Elon Musk. — AFP

Musk has tried to back out of the \$44 billion agreement by saying Twitter misled him on the number of false or spam accounts, prompting strong denials and a lawsuit from the social media firm. Musk attorney Alex Spiro cited repeatedly Twitter whistleblower Peiter Zatko in a 90-minute hearing on what data the firm should be forced to handover ahead of their October trial.

"The way Mr. Zatko puts it, management had no appetite to properly measure the prevalence of bot



MELBOURNE: A file photo taken on August 26, 2021 shows travellers arriving at a Qantas terminal at Melbourne Airport as Australian airline Qantas reported August 25, 2022 that its business had started to bounce back after three years of pandemic turmoil, which cost the airline \$17 billion in revenue. — AFP

COVID 'existential crisis' over: Qantas

SYDNEY/WELLINGTON: Australian national carrier Qantas reported Thursday that its business had started to bounce back after three years of pandemic turmoil, which cost the airline \$17 billion in revenue. "These figures are staggering and getting through to the other side has obviously been tough," chief executive Alan Joyce said.

"We always knew travel demand would recover strongly but the speed and scale of that recovery has been exceptional." By the end of June, domestic travel was above pre-pandemic levels, Qantas reported, with 20 new routes added to meet demand for leisure travel around Australia.

A sluggish rebound in international travel—still lagging below 50 per cent of pre-pandemic highs—was "offset by a record performance" in the group's freight business. But the fourth quarter travel surge was not enough to make up for a year plagued by Omicron and Delta wave lockdowns, which caused a

third straight loss before tax of Aus\$1.2 billion (\$830 million).

Releasing its full-year results Thursday, Qantas declared that "the existential crisis posed by the pandemic (was) now over" and it would shift focus to operational challenges. Earlier this month, the airline asked its senior executives to work as baggage handlers because of labor shortages—a serious issue across Australia's long-locked-down economy. The move was controversial because Qantas had sacked about 2,000 ground staff during COVID-19 lockdowns—a mass axing Australia's federal court ruled in May was illegal.

Qantas has vowed to appeal the verdict to the High Court. Earlier this week, Joyce apologized to Qantas customers for the lengthy delays at airports across the country as travel rebounded, offering flight vouchers to frequent flyers worth 50 Australian dollars.

"Over the past few months, too many of you have had flights delayed, flights cancelled and bags misplaced... it's not good enough," he said. "On behalf of the national carrier, I want to apologize and assure you that we're working hard to get back to our best." — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 25 AUGUST 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,065	1,070	1,072	1,065	7	16,435,993	7	0.66%	12.69%	1,064	1,075	19.3	2.07	2.3%	0.99
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	348	358	360	348	12	46,797,045	10	2.87%	34.73%	346	364	20.1	1.66	1.9%	1.18
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	214	219	223	213	10	8,734,608	6	2.82%	4.48%	217	224	35.0	0.69	1.7%	1.18
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	234	248	252	233	19	40,991,396	15	6.44%	3.75%	248	252	20.9	0.91	1.9%	1.33
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	890	904	969	888	81	120,193,842	22	2.49%	19.52%	902	917	31.2	3.94	1.2%	1.18
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	829	860	910	829	81	5,911,705	31	3.74%	20.73%	847	862	57.1	3.49	0.5%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	297	296	303	295	8	5,727,477	-1	-0.34%	35.16%	296	310	11.1	1.18	15.2%	1.74
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	157	159	161	156	5	12,175,003	3	1.92%	11.97%	153	161	87.2	0.83	3.2%	0.96
252	Al Intiaj Investment	Financial Services	92	92.8	95	91.9	3.1	5,854,746	0.5	0.54%	-21.36%	90	95	NULL	0.54	9.7%	1.17
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	126	126	128	121	7	30,903,922	1	0.80%	-27.50%	124	132	15.3	0.92	2.3%	1.00
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	800	825	829	800	29	2,311,353	24	3.00%	10.28%	809	825	17.3	1.87	1.6%	1.14
501	National Industries	Financial Services	284	286	294	283	11	32,868,491	2	0.70%	18.70%	278	287	6.6	1.20	3.9%	1.43
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,495	1,480	1,510	1,470	40	399,970	-15	-1.00%	69.92%	1,450	1,490	13.7	1.38	4.0%	0.84
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	921	921	944	918	26	1,041,435	-4	-0.43%	8.10%	915	935	10.4	1.89	6.5%	0.92
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	318	315	319	313	6	3,124,488	-2	-0.63%	-9.22%	313	323	12.0	0.77	5.8%	1.02
603	Agility	Industrials	853	865	886	848	38	29,564,814	15	1.76%	9.84%	846	875	66.6	1.48	1.9%	1.44
605	Zain	Telecommunications	621	620	628	618	10	12,917,240	-2	-0.32%	4.20%	617	621	14.7	2.27	5.3%	0.84
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,470	3,481	3,495	3,421	74	954,865	11	0.32%	7.97%	3,461	3,499	8.0	3.83	11.5%	0.70
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	197	195	199	192	7	2,006,396	-3	-1.52%	-10.55%	195	203	NULL	0.73	0.0%	1.14
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,933	1,930	1,999	1,925	74	2,466,424	-20	-1.03%	49.61%	1,880	1,939	15.9	14.19	2.3%	1.35
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	-	305	-	-	-	-	-	-	20.68%	-	-	17.9	2.04	2.8%	1.78
821	Warba Bank	Banking	246	249	254	245	9	27,236,330	3	1.22%	-9.12%	243	249	29.4	1.36	0.0%	1.07
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	409	416	420	409	11	2,904,299	5	1.22%	-27.96%	405	432	42.7	1.22	3.8%	0.44
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	416	419	425	414	11	1,920,366	1	0.24%	2.30%	415	423	32.0	1.73	2.4%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	198	198	199	196	3	6,195,563	2	1.02%	-13.16%	196	201	15.2	2.23	9.1%	0.51
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,377	2,380	2,435	2,367	68	184,487	-19	-0.79%	17.82%	2,350	2,439	25.6	8.24	2.7%	0.74
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	854	867	868	854	14	5,877,307	11	1.29%	#DIV/0!	860	887	13.6	4.00	#VALUE!	0.98

* As of end of week closing

Business

Gas prices approach record peak on Russian supply fears

Global equities rise on the eve of Powell speech

LONDON: European natural gas prices climbed Thursday towards a record peak on heightened fears over Russian supplies, while global equities rose on the eve of a key speech from Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell. Europe's benchmark Dutch TTF gas contract advanced to 318 euros per megawatt hour before paring gains.

That was not far from the record high 345 euros struck in March shortly after key gas producer Russia invaded Ukraine.

Prices have spiked in recent days as a three-day halt in Russian deliveries to Germany via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline approaches. At the same time, one-year forward contracts for electricity prices in both France and Germany surged on Thursday to record pinnacles on worries over a winter energy crunch.

'Unstoppable march upwards'

"Gas is on a seemingly unstoppable march upwards again, a dramatic move which will intensify the energy crisis," said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter. "Already plans are being brought in to save energy which will darken streets across Germany and make public buildings colder, but much tougher measures may have to be enforced given dwindling gas reserves."

In stock market trade, European equities pushed higher mirroring Asian gains.

Frankfurt also drew some strength from news that the German economy expanded by an anaemic 0.1 percent in the second quarter. That was upgraded from the prior projection of zero growth, but ana-

lysts remain downbeat.

"I'm trying to find a reason to be optimistic on the back of that, but in reality it just means the economy may take a little longer to fall into recession," warned OANDA analyst Craig Erlam.

"With the energy crisis unlikely to improve, this likely means another quarter of flat growth at best before the economy falls into recession later this year." Asian indices rose after China unveiled fresh measures to boost its economy. Traders followed a positive lead from Wall Street, where the Dow, Nasdaq and S&P 500 all closed higher.

Meanwhile, central bankers are meeting in Jackson Hole in the US state of Wyoming this week.

All eyes are on Powell's Friday speech for clues about the Federal Reserve's plans to tame runaway inflation with higher borrowing costs. There are concerns that the Fed's fight against soaring inflation could lead to a recession in the United States, which could, in turn, hit a global economy that is still recovering from the COVID pandemic.

China stimulus

Central banks around the world are trying to find a delicate balance between curbing inflation and avoiding recessions. The challenge has been compounded this year by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has sent energy and food prices skyrocketing.

Traders are also keeping an eye on how China will repair the economic damage from its strict COVID controls, a crisis in its property sector and power shortages caused by a record-breaking heatwave.

Fresh measures to shore up the economy were



LONDON: European natural gas prices climbed Thursday towards a record peak on heightened fears over Russian supplies.

announced by China's State Council on Wednesday, including steps to encourage lending, consumption and investment, according to the official Xinhua news agency. They also included support for elec-

tricity producers and agriculture, two sectors hit especially hard by the heatwave, though Xinhua's readout of the State Council meeting did not mention the extreme weather. —AFP

EDF asks UK govt to double energy support package

PARIS: Energy giant EDF on Thursday urged the UK government to double its energy support package for Britons to help offset an expected steep hike in household bills. Regulator Ofgem is due to announce its latest energy price cap on Friday, with dire predictions it will leave many struggling to pay their bills.

The current maximum amount companies can charge customers in England, Scotland and Wales for each unit of energy used is £1,971 (\$2,332) a year. But it is expected to go up by some £1,600 from October, with a further hike to a total of £4,600 a year likely from January.

'Catastrophic'

EDF's managing director for customers in the UK, Philippe Commaret, said the hike, at a time of double-digit inflation that has ramped up the cost of living, would be "catastrophic".

With millions at risk of being plunged into fuel poverty, he told AFP in an interview that the government needed to go further. At present, all UK households are being offered a one-off discount of £400 to help them pay their energy bills for six months over winter. "We're suggesting that the government revisits this £400 and use it for the last three months of 2022," said Commaret. "(That) amounts to doubling the subsidy by the end of the year and then work on a more sustainable solution for 2023."

Energy prices rose sharply as the world economy reopened after the coronavirus pandemic and consumption increased, particularly in Asia. The cost of wholesale gas and electricity has risen further as supplies were squeezed by Russian restrictions on gas exports after the invasion of Ukraine.

In theory, the UK market should have been more protected because it imports less Russian gas than its European neighbors. But unlike countries such as France, where household energy bills are capped, the UK government passed on the increase to customers. —AFP

Finland's Fortum takes heavy loss from Russian gas cuts

HELSINKI: Finnish state-owned utility Fortum announced Thursday a massive 7.4-billion-euro (\$7.4-billion) loss for the second quarter, as its German subsidiary Uniper struggled with shortfalls in Russian gas supply. Russia's war in Ukraine has caused turmoil in European energy markets, and EU states have accused Russia of choking supplies in retaliation for Western sanctions over the war.

To fulfil its contractual obligations, the German energy giant Uniper has had to source replacements for curtailed Russian gas at significantly higher prices, Fortum said. "The supply shortfalls of Russian gas and surging gas prices caused dire financial difficulties for our subsidiary Uniper," Fortum's chief executive Markus Rauramo said in a statement. The loss is a consequence of heavy provisions due to gas curtailments and cuts in value of long-term gas contracts regarding its German unit, the company said.

Uniper, which accepted a government rescue package last month, last week reported a net loss in the first six months of the year of 12.3 billion euros. The German government agreed in late July to take an around 30-percent stake in Uniper, which was threatened with bankruptcy as a result of the energy crisis. Until that deal, Fortum owned around 80 percent of its German subsidiary, but that share will go down to 56 percent. —AFP

MateBook X Pro: Industry's first skin soothing metallic body

KUWAIT: Finding innovations within the world of laptop design can prove challenging. From their appearance to their design and even their colourway options, current laptop products tend to follow a generic formula which, to put it simply, often makes one laptop brand almost indistinguishable from another. Current laptop designs are reliable, absolutely, but do they fully match up to the needs of global consumers? Laptops are central to the way we work and, increasingly, to the way we conduct our private lives, yet current offerings fail to take account of the growing appetite for choice and innovation. It is imperative that the current industry keeps pace with consumer habits and preferences, whether it is design, durability, or environmental credentials.

Ultimately, it is the ability to respond to current consumer trends and to break away from the standard mould which makes Huawei's new MateBook X Pro so notable. Huawei has demonstrated a refreshing ability to move towards an authentic, and even original, brand identity. With its unique innovations in terms of colour, design, and materials, the MateBook X Pro is further testament to how much these design changes can transform, and indeed revolutionize, the user experience.

Pure, Invisible, and Lightweight

For the MateBook X Series, the smart laptop flagship line-up of Huawei, the principles of purity and invisibility are central to its design success. The newly launched Huawei MateBook X Pro gives a simple yet classic look, an effortless fusion of timeless, high-end aesthetics and the cutting-edge technology that Huawei is becoming so known for. Indeed, for the Huawei MateBook X Pro, its lightweight appearance is not simply a matter of aesthetics so much as an integral part of its improved user experience.

Like the other laptops in Huawei's catalogue, the new Huawei MateBook X Pro offers an Infinite FullView Display, which, teamed with its 3:2 aspect ratio, ensures that users acquire truly unlimited visual immersion. This visual engagement is further bolstered by the form of the Huawei MateBook X Pro



itself, with the thin metal body of the device fitting perfectly with the 14.2-inch Real Colour Display. The 12th Gen Intel Core processor and Super Turbo technology additionally contribute to this sense of a completely smooth-running, efficient process.

Studding design

This level of care and consideration is shown further in the Huawei MateBook X Pro's use of new material processing techniques. MateBook X Pro launched the Premium Edition, unlike standard laptop products that generally adopted the machined aluminum alloy body, anodizing process and sand-blasting technology, the Huawei MateBook X Pro favors a skin-soothing metallic body and original matte surface over the usual glossy veneer. Whilst this striking look does provide a helpful distinction from the overused metallic luster that currently dominates, this matte finish comes with additional design benefits, namely the creation of a unique, anti-scratch surface and a more comfortable grip. What's more, the use of magnesium alloys and the Micro-arc oxidation coating allows for improved durability and wear resistance, ultimately helping to protect the Huawei MateBook X Pro from the structural fragility that commonly hampers laptops.

If that wasn't enough, the Micro-arc oxidation process comes with proven environmental benefits, which far outweigh the traditional anodizing method. It is not only a production process that is free from toxic substances and heavy metals but a material product that is highly durable and dirt resistant. Given the increased demand for more environmentally friendly modes of production, it is heartening to find a laptop product which is so responsive to the



needs of its customer base. As the HUAWEI MateBook X Pro goes to show, integrating more of an environmental ethos into the design process doesn't necessarily have to diminish the quality of the laptop itself, so much as enhance it.

Building a new benchmark for PC industry

Indeed, what feels so noteworthy about the Huawei MateBook X Pro is the thought shown towards producing a laptop that speaks so directly to the needs of the business world: from its portability, at just 1.26kg in weight of the Premium Edition, to the way it's structurally designed to be as connected and fully integrated as possible, the Huawei MateBook X Pro is the optimum working tool, capable of satisfying both the current appetite for thinner, more lightweight devices and the practical need for a more linked-up user experience. For users with extra Huawei devices, there is even the chance to collaborate and access data across multiple products thanks to the Super device innovative features, which demonstrate an exceptional awareness of how important correspondence and compatibility is for an efficient smart office experience.

California set to ban fossil fuel cars by 2035

SAN FRANCISCO: All new cars sold in California by 2035 will have to be zero emission under plans set to be adopted by the state this week, as the biggest economy in the United States drives a nationwide fossil fuel evolution. Proposals to be debated by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) this week will formalize targets set by Governor Gavin Newsom and will likely prod other US states in the same direction.

The plans, which board member Daniel Sperling recently told CNN he was "99.9 percent" confident would be adopted, also include incremental steps mandating more than a third of 2026 car sales in the state be zero emission, and over two-thirds by 2030. "This is monumental," Sperling told CNN. "This is the most important thing that CARB has done in the last 30 years. It's important not just for California, but

it's important for the country and the world." California's more-than 40 million consumers make it the biggest market in the United States.

As such, rules imposed there impact manufacturers' production plans across the country, as well as further afield, because they cannot afford to miss out. This means California can, in effect, set national standards. The likely ruling Thursday comes on the heels of a climate law signed last week by US President Joe Biden, which sets aside hundreds of millions of dollars in incentives for clean energy programs.

Biden and his Democratic Party are rushing to make up climate policy ground they feel was lost under former president Donald Trump, who yanked the United States out of the Paris Climate Accord and reversed what many environmentalists viewed as already-weak progress in combating the fossil fuel emissions that drive global warming. In recent years jurisdictions around the world, notably in Europe, have set their sights on the polluting automobile sector.

Norway is aiming to have all new cars produce zero tailpipe



HAWTHORNE, US: In this file photo, a Tesla Inc electric vehicle charges at a supercharger station in Redondo Beach, California. All new cars sold in California by 2035 will have to be zero emission under plans set to be adopted by the state this week, as the biggest economy in the United States drives a nationwide fossil fuel evolution. —AFP

emissions by 2025.

The UK, Singapore and Israel are eyeing 2030, while the European Union wants to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2035. Human-caused global warming has already raised average temperatures

around the planet, affecting weather patterns and worsening natural hazards like wildfires and storms. Scientists say dramatic action is required to limit the damage, and point to curbing emissions from fossil fuels as key to the battle. —AFP

Lifestyle | Feature



Visitors look at *Sinjerli Variations I-V*, by American painter Frank Stella in 1977, during the "Minimalism and Conceptual Art" exhibition, which showcases works from the 19th and 20th-centuries by American and European artists, at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in the Iranian capital.— AFP photos



A visitor looks at an installation by Bulgarian-born artist Christo and his late wife Jeanne-Claude.

Thousands throng to Iran museum with Western art masterpieces

More than 20,000 people have flocked to an Iranian museum showcasing renowned Western artists' works, some for the first time—part of a treasure trove amassed before the Islamic Revolution. The museum's collection is reputed to be the greatest line-up of modern masterpieces outside Europe and the United States, and includes multi-million-dollar pieces, much of which has been kept under wraps since the 1979 revolution. The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art "surprises me every time," said visitor Shahin Rajabi, 35. "The current show is no exception."

The current "Minimalism and Conceptual Art" exhibition features 132 works by 34 world-famous contemporary artists, museum director Ebadreza Eslami said, including Marcel Duchamp, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and the duo Christo and Jeanne-Claude. "The reception has been marvelous," Eslami said, particularly after long closures in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said one of the main factors for the footfall of this exhibit was that "38 masterpieces" were being displayed "for the first time". AFP saw visitors at the museum this week, some stopping to study details while others were busy taking photos as they made their way intently through the museum. "I loved the last room of the exhibit in particular, where the artist had worked with the fluorescent light," said visitor Rajabi, referring to American artist Dan Flavin's "Untitled" work.

'Very valuable'

The museum was inaugurated in 1977 during the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was



A visitor looks at artwork by German artists Bernd and Hilla Becher.

deposed by Islamic revolutionaries two years later. Its design was inspired by Iran's desert wind towers—an architectural element used to catch and circulate cool air in hot environments. Most of the collection was built up by the shah's wife, former queen Farah Pahlavi, who deployed a team of experts to tour Western auctions and snap up prestigious paintings and sculptures to boost the country's cultural profile. The museum also holds an important collection of Iranian modern and contemporary art.

But the international works went underground after the Islamic republic's founder Ruhollah Khomeini railed against "Westoxification", deploring Western moral and sexual depravity which he said had infected the Islamic world. The

themes of many of the Western works have been considered too risqué to be publicly shown, and have spent much of the past decades languishing in storage. The museum counts some 3,500 works, hundreds of which are "very valuable", head of public relations Hassan Nofereesti said. They include masterpieces by Western artists from Paul Gauguin to Pablo Picasso, Rene Magritte, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol and Alberto Giacometti, according to Iran's culture ministry.

Visitors double

The current show, which runs until mid-September, includes a collage by Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto titled "Green Curtains", and an untitled work made from



Visitors look at artwork by American artist Sol LeWitt.

hemp by Canadian-American sculptor Jacqueline Winsor. Curator Behrang Samadzadegan said "some 20,000 people" have visited since the show opened in late June—about twice the normal turnout. Describing the theme of the show, he added "when we are talking about minimalism, we are primarily talking about the environment not the work". Standing in front of the "Rock Salt & Mirror" by American artist Robert Smithson, 28-year-old painter Solmaz Daneshvar said she "greatly enjoyed" the display.

The exhibition, however, was at the centre of controversy this month when an amateur video surfaced showing two silverfish insects underneath the frame of a rare image by the late German pho-

tographic duo of Bernd and Hilla Becher. The video, whose authenticity could not be independently verified by AFP, went viral. The museum later made a formal apology, assuring concerned art lovers that the work by the Bechers, who are known for their photos of industrial structures, was not damaged. It also closed its doors for two days for fumigation. In 2015, the museum held an exhibition of 42 works by Western artists including Pollock's masterpiece "Mural on Indian Red Ground", valued by Christie's auction house experts in 2010 at \$250 million. — AFP



A visitor looks at an installation by American painter Frank Stella.



A visitor looks at an installation by American artist Dan Flavin.



An installation by Bulgarian-born artist Christo and his late wife Jeanne-Claude.

Famed Winston Churchill photograph stolen from Canada hotel

The heist of a famed portrait of a scowling Winston Churchill has gripped Canada's capital since it was discovered the photograph hanging at an Ottawa hotel for decades had been swapped for a fake. Police were called in after staff at the Fairmont Chateau Laurier hotel in Ottawa last Friday noticed the picture of the late British prime minister was askew and didn't match those of other portraits gifted by the late Armenian-born Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh.

The "Roaring Lion" portrait was taken by Karsh after the wartime leader addressed the Canadian parliament in 1941, becoming a symbol of British defiance in World War II. As speculation swirls over the heist, former hotel guests have shared their snaps of the portrait over the years, helping to narrow down the date when it could have gone missing from December 25, 2021 to January 6, 2022.

"Somebody probably wanted that picture either for their private collection or to sell it. I don't know," Genevieve Dumas, general manager at the Fairmont Chateau Laurier, told AFP. The portrait is estimated to be worth \$100,000, but Dumas said it is priceless. "It means a lot to us. It's part of Karsh history, the hotel's history as well as Canadian and British wartime history," she said. "We're deeply saddened by this brazen theft," she added. "We just hope to get it back."



Yousuf Karsh's famous portrait of Winston Churchill, taken in December 1941 in Ottawa.

Karsh and his wife, after fleeing the Armenian genocide and settling in Canada, lived at the hotel for 18 years. He also had a studio there until 1992. His other portrait subjects included the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr, Albert Einstein, Ernest Hemingway and Queen Elizabeth II. According to historical accounts, Karsh plucked a cigar from Churchill's mouth just before taking his portrait, which made the British premier grimace.

The image is arguably the most iconic of Churchill and widely circulated, even appearing on the British five pound note. "I knew after I had taken it that it was an important picture, but I could hardly have dreamed that it would become one of the most widely reproduced images in the history of photography," Karsh said in an excerpt on his website.

Dumas described how maintenance staff had been the first to notice something wasn't right with the portrait that hung in a reading room adjacent to the main lobby. The hotel, which had hosted Karsh's first exhibition in 1936, also confirmed with the photographer's estate that a signature on the print was a fake. Police are now reviewing security footage, but because the theft occurred when COVID-19 restrictions were in place, Dumas said the thief likely wore a mask. — AFP

Marijuana use on the rise among young Americans

Marijuana use by young Americans reached record levels last year and the use of hallucinogens is also on the rise, according to a new study. Forty-three percent of the 5,000 young adults between 19 and 30 years old surveyed reported past-year marijuana use in 2021, up from 34 percent in 2016 and 29 percent in 2011, the Monitoring the Future study by the University of Michigan found. Twenty-nine percent reported using marijuana in the past month in 2021, up from 21 percent in 2016 and 17 percent in 2011.

Daily marijuana use rose from six percent in 2011 to eight percent in 2016 to 11 percent in 2021. The authors of the study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, said the 2021 figures for marijuana use were the "highest levels ever recorded since these trends were first monitored in 1988."

As for hallucinogens, eight percent of the young adults reported using LSD, MDMA, mescaline, peyote, "shrooms" or PCP in the past year, up from five percent in 2016 and three percent in 2011. Nearly 82 percent of those surveyed reported drinking alcohol in the previous 12 months, down slightly from 83.5 percent in 2016 and 83.8 percent in 2011. The study did not cite any reasons for the rise in marijuana use among young adults, but recreational cannabis is now legal in nearly 20 US states. — AFP





Mack Rutherford, 17, the youngest person to fly solo around the world, poses for photographers with the Guinness World Record certificates, after landing at Sofia West airport near Radomir. — AFP photos



Mack Rutherford, 17, the youngest person to fly solo around the world, is seen in the cockpit of his plane after landing at Sofia West airport.



Mack Rutherford, 17, the youngest person to fly solo around the world, is congratulated by his mother after landing at Sofia West airport.

British-Belgian teen becomes youngest round-the-world solo flier

Mack Rutherford, a British-Belgian 17-year-old, landed in Bulgaria on Wednesday to become the youngest person to fly solo around the world. Five months and a day after taking off from Bulgaria in March, Rutherford returned to the small airport near the town of Radomir, an hour from the capital Sofia, to claim his record. "I am trying to show with this trip that young people can make a difference, just follow your dreams," the teenager said after landing.

"I am not sure there are any other records I want to break at all, I just want to go back to school to catch up," he added. Dressed in an aviator's suit, with his dark curly hair tamed by a blue cap, the slight teenager voiced regret that the adventure was over, describing a "definite sense of freedom when you are flying".

Rutherford comes from a line of pilots. His family boasts four generations of flyers, and Mack got his first taste of being at the controls when he was just seven. His record-breaking flight covered 54,000 kilometers (34,000 miles) in 221 hours of flying time across 30 coun-

tries. He had to face temperatures of up to 48 degrees, not least during the many hours spent waiting for over flight authorizations. His solo ordeal also included a forced landing on the uninhabited island of Attu, west of Alaska, due to strong winds.

Ukraine war changed plans

His sister and parents, who were at the Radomir airport to greet the young aviator, also said his food supply had become soaked with fuel at one stage, forcing him to make do with some chocolate cakes. Even before Rutherford took off in March, his preparations were upended by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, forcing a change in the flight path. Instead of flying over Russia, Rutherford diverted south through Pakistan, India, South Korea and Japan before flying for 10 hours over the Pacific Ocean to reach the United States: "The most difficult stage," he said.

"This kind of journey requires a lot of control at all levels, you have to be able to control your emotions, your stress," his mother, Beatrice de Smet told AFP.



Mack Rutherford, 17, the youngest person to fly solo around the world, waves to journalists and relatives, after landing at Sofia West airport near Radomir.

"He did it like a boss," said Sam Rutherford, the adventurer's father and a retired military pilot. Mack Rutherford's feat was recognised by the Guinness World Records group, with a certificate confirming that he had beaten the record

set last year by 18-year-old Travis Ludlow of Britain. He also achieved the feat in an ultralight aircraft, taking the record from his sister Zara as the youngest pilot to do so. A good loser, Zara said she was "very happy" for her

brother. She remains the youngest woman to complete a solo round-the-world flight, which she did at the start of the year at the age of 19.—AFP



Belgian illusionist and 2022 World champion of Magic Laurent Piron poses in Soumagne near Liege. — AFP photos



Belgian magician's paper dance casts a spell

A crumpled ball of paper that takes on a life of its own and leads the apparently perplexed magician on a playful dance—it's a simple but poetic and engaging scene. Belgian magician Laurent Piron's twirling "Paper Ball" is not a spectacular showstopper, but last month it won the former street performer the title "World Magic Champion". Now this champion has returned from the Quebec contest to his home outside Liege in eastern Belgium, ready to pull a list of global bookings out of his sleeve.

The World Championship of Magic is held once every three years, but Piron had already spent several years refining Paper Ball to recapture the story-telling skills of an earlier era. "Many older magicians came up to me after my act to say

that they had been taken back into their childhood and had forgotten the techniques," Piron told AFP.

"That's what we wanted to do with this paper ball. We don't care about the trickery—the goal is to create magical emotion." It's a different approach to that of a magical showman like David Copperfield, the American best known for appearing to walk through the Great Wall of China and making the Statue of Liberty vanish.

But the legendary magician was also touched by Piron's smaller-scale illusion, and when the Belgian got home there was a voicemail from Copperfield congratulating him. "He loved it. Even though he does big shows, he is a true lover of magic. He's still the undisputed master—he knows all the tricks," the 35-year-old said. "But we mystified him with this act." The son of a sound engineer, Piron grew up as a do-it-yourself hobbyist and started doing magic tricks at 18, learning basic techniques with a friend.

Stage magic

At 22, he left for Vancouver, Canada, and fell in with street magicians. "The street gave me professional knowledge and a relationship with the public. If the audience doesn't like you, they go on

their way," he said. "You have to have enough energy, catchphrases, jokes, and catch the eye. The street taught me to develop my character to attract the crowd." After several years "following the sun" through Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Europe, the magician returned to Belgium in search of a place on stage.

"I have always liked theatrical magic, a narrative that brings in visuals—not just glitter boxes or a rabbit out of a hat—and then I discovered 'La Magie nouvelle,'" he said. The movement's practitioners mix illusions with narrative arts, and seeks to escape the "power struggle" between the entertainer and an audience always trying to guess the tricks. Piron underwent formal training with France's CNAC circus schools and is now a leading member of the Alogique theatre company.

He hopes the new style will promote magic from being the poor relation of the performing arts, and encourage his peers to study lighting, visual effects and narrative. And, thanks to his award, he has pulled invitations to perform in Japan, Britain and Las Vegas out of the hat. For his next trick, he'd like to book Broadway. — AFP



Belgian illusionist and 2022 World champion of Magic Laurent Piron poses in Soumagne near Liege.

Trouser snakes: US smuggler admits carrying reptiles in pants

A man who hid snakes and lizards in his trousers as he tried to sneak them into the United States as part of a \$750,000 reptile smuggling enterprise faces decades in prison, officials said Wednesday. Jose Manuel Perez masterminded the six-year scheme from his home in southern California, which involved bringing 1,700 animals into the United States from Mexico and Hong Kong.

In a plea deal with the Department of Justice, Perez acknowledged that he had paid mules to transport some of his illicit cargo, and at other times had made border crossings himself. The animals that he netted, which included Yucatan box turtles, Mexican box turtles, baby crocodiles and Mexican beaded lizards, were sold to clients across the country for upwards of \$739,000, documents show.

His downfall came in March when he tried to drive from Mexico with 60 creatures secreted around his groin and in other parts of his clothing. After initially telling customs officers he was transporting his pet lizards in his pockets, he was found to have 60 reptiles on him.

They included arboreal alligator lizards and Isthmian dwarf boas, a kind of snake that changes color and whose defense mechanisms include bleeding from its eyes. Three of the reptiles were dead. Perez, who admitted two counts of smuggling, each of which carries up to 20 years in prison, and one of wildlife trafficking, which carries a maximum five-year jail term, will be sentenced on December 1. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

British Museum showcases ancient vessels smashed in Beirut blast

Eight ancient glass vessels shattered in the 2020 Beirut explosion go on display at the British Museum from Thursday, walking visitors through the painstaking international project to piece them back together. The vessels, from the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods, were reconstructed at the world-famous museum's conservation laboratories, and will be shown as part of its "Shattered Glass of Beirut" showcase, before returning to Lebanon later this year. "(It) tells a story of near destruction and recovery, of resilience and collaboration," said Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum.

The vessels were among 74 contained within a case at the American University in Beirut (AUB). The case fell over when the shockwave of the port blast, which occurred three kilometers (two miles) away on August 4, 2020, hit the building, smashing the glass objects inside. A team of experts had the daunting task of sorting every shard of glass, deciding if it was part of an ancient vessel, rather than display case, and which vessel it belonged to, Duygu Camurcuoglu, a senior conservator at the British Museum, told AFP.

"It's all pretty much done by hand or by eye-brainwork basically. You have to know certain techniques to be able to carry out this work," she added. Once the pieces had been sorted, the conservators began the mammoth jigsaw-puz-

zle exercise of reassembling the vessels. "It's a case of using an adhesive to reconstruct the vessels," said Camurcuoglu. But they could not just use anything. "We don't use superglue, we don't use UHU," she joked.

'Scars'

The most challenging vessels were the "large dish and the Byzantine pitcher," Camurcuoglu recalled. Eighteen of the vessels have so far been conserved as part of an emergency recovery campaign in Beirut, along with the eight vessels at the British Museum and two that emerged unscathed from the fall. Experts hope that at least half of the remaining 46 objects in Beirut can be conserved soon too. The collaborative project between the British Museum and the AUB's Archaeological Museum began in 2021, following an offer of help from the London institution.

Conservators agreed early on to make the vessels structurally sound but leave imperfections caused by the shattering visible, bearing witness to the explosion. The exhibition will take visitors on the journey undergone by the glass vessels, from the moment of the blast to their display in the famous London museum. Lighting will be used in the display to illuminate cracks and gaps in the glass. "We really wanted to highlight the damage these objects went through, so we can all look at the scars, and remem-



British museum press assistant Stella Scobie examines the newly conserved ancient glass vessels damaged during the 2020 Beirut port explosion, displayed at the British Museum in London, on August 24, 2022 ahead of an exhibition which will walk visitors through the laborious conservation project. — AFP photos

ber how they were revived together," said Camurcuoglu.

The vessels are considered important in telling the story of the development of revolutionary glass-blowing techniques in Lebanon in the 1st century BC, enabling the mass production of glass objects and

making them available for common use. Their restoration, and the teamwork involved, is a source of pride to the conservators, said Camurcuoglu. "We all individually felt that, I think, we contributed to something by working on these objects-by sharing this pain, these

emotions. "So it's not only about the conservation... but also the working together and achieving something together," she added. — AFP



Francoise Mouly, art editor of The New Yorker, stands for a photo in her office at The New Yorker in New York City. — AFP photos

New York, cartoonist Sempe's spiritual home

Over the course of his storied career, Jean-Jacques Sempe became a fixture on the newsstands of New York, illustrating more than 100 covers of the prestigious New Yorker magazine. After republishing one of those iconic covers on an inner page this week, the magazine will reuse one of his drawings on the cover of its September 5 edition, said the periodical's art editor Francoise Mouly. This week's drawing by Sempe—who died on August 11 at age 89 — depicts a tiny person carrying a briefcase as he walks a red carpet into the heart of the city, surrounded by enormous skyscrapers.

It's a theme Sempe toyed with for much of his career: normal people navigating the mundanities of life, dwarfed by the world's gigantism. The cultural weekly founded in 1925 is known as much for its covers that showcase artists as it is for its investigative reports, commentaries and satires. Sempe worked with

The New Yorker from 1978 to 2019. Mouly, a French woman who worked with Sempe for 30 years and has been the magazine's art editor since 1993, told AFP it "will be the 114th cover" from the beloved illustrator.

114 covers

Both New York City and the esteemed New Yorker were childhood dreams of Sempe, who suffered a difficult childhood, dropping out of school at age 14 before lying about his age to join the army. In the 1970s, he met the American illustrator Ed Koren, who took him



Francoise Mouly, art editor of The New Yorker, speaks during an interview with AFP in her office.

around Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens, introducing him to the magazine's journalists and editors. In August 1978, the French artist signed his first cover, which showed a bird in business casual at the edge of an open window, hesitating to take flight.

With his 113 covers, Sempe traced his love for New York, which he traveled on foot and by bike, amazed by the Big Apple's colors, energy, cats, green spaces, music, and tiny humans traversing great swaths of urbanity. "Jean-Jacques was a very modest man, very humble," said Mouly, who is married to

cartoonist Art Spiegelman, who wrote the renowned "Maus." Sempe "was expelled from school, from the army—he was self-taught and found it marvelous to be published in an American magazine," the 66-year-old editor and graphic artist said.

At home in New York

For Mouly, Sempe "always felt like himself in New York." Much of his popularity stemmed from his depiction of "individuals, a man, a woman, alone in the city-half of my colleagues would say to me, 'That's me, that's me!'" said Mouly with a smile. "Like me, I thought this morning on my bike, 'I'm the drawing of Sempe, the little old lady on her bike heading to work.'" Sempe even has his place on the city's walls.

At the intersection of 47th Street and Ninth Avenue in Manhattan stands a giant mural signed by the illustrator behind the beloved "Little Nicolas" series of children's books—a man carrying a woman on a bicycle, trailed by a boy on two wheels. In 2009, the publisher Denoel put out a book of Sempe drawings entitled "Sempe in New York." Another book, "Sempe in America," is planned for September, according to Mouly. "The New York of Sempe will live on," she said. — AFP



A sample of the work created by French cartoonist Jean-Jacques Sempe, who created 113 covers for The New Yorker magazine between 1978 and 2019, are displayed at The New Yorker office in New York City.

'Star Wars' spy thriller 'Andor' explores galaxy's murky underworld

Following a glut of flashy, lightsaber-whirring "Star Wars" television series, spy thriller "Andor" aims to stand apart with its grounded and morally ambiguous origin story of the galaxy's brave rebels, said star Diego Luna. The new series, out next month, is the latest in a cluster of "Star Wars" shows intended to hyperboost Disney+, after the streaming platform's hit launch show "The Mandalorian" and Ewan McGregor's recent "Obi-Wan Kenobi." "Andor" is itself a prequel to fan-favorite spin-off movie "Rogue One," delving into the murky past of that film's hero Cassian Andor (Luna), and the fledgling Rebellion that was eventually joined by the likes of Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia.

"This is a show about real people. It's very dark times in the galaxy. There (are) no Jedis around," Luna told a recent virtual press conference. "These people are having to articulate a reaction to oppression. It's the most grounded 'Star Wars' you'll get." It finds Cassian on a decayed industrial planet where inhabitants scrape by through salvage and repair work, and discontent with the fascist Empire is brewing.



In this file photo Mexican actor Diego Luna arrives for the 91st Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

The show travels to the galaxy's capital Coruscant, where Mon Mothma (Genevieve O'Reilly) faces danger and deception as she balances her public duties as a young senator with her clandestine support for the rebels. And the series-created by Tony Gilroy, who penned the wildly popular Jason Bourne spy films, as well as "Rogue One"—spends substantial screen time with agents of the evil Empire itself, fleshing out their own backstories and motives.

"Tony is not a writer that lives in the language of right and wrong, or black and white," said Luna. "He spends most of his time in the complexity of the gray areas, in the contradictions of characters." While future "Star Wars" movies have been pushed back or placed on hold, following diminishing box office returns and mixed reviews, the franchise's small-screen offerings continue to rapidly expand.

Up next are a third season of "The Mandalorian," and Jude Law's "Skeleton Crew." At 12 episodes, the first season of "Andor" is longer than previous "Star Wars" shows. Another dozen are planned for a second season, taking its storyline right up to the events of "Rogue One." "It takes time to understand each character, and it has time for each storyline," said Luna. "I just think it's very rich. It's powerful, and people are going to like it, hopefully." "Andor" premieres on September 21. — AFP



Pallbearers carry the coffin of late French cartoonist Jean-Jacques Sempe, who passed away at 89 after his funeral ceremony at the Saint Germain-des-Prez church in Paris.



A sample of the work created by French cartoonist Jean-Jacques Sempe.



A sample of the work created by French cartoonist Jean-Jacques Sempe.

Sports

Lee's bid for Malaysian badminton history meets surprise early end

Three of the top five men's seeds in Tokyo have now crashed out before the q-finals

TOKYO: Lee Zii Jia's bid to become Malaysia's first badminton world champion ground to a halt on Thursday with a third-round loss to China's unseeded surprise-package Zhao Junpeng. Number five seed Lee was one of the main contenders for the title this week in Tokyo but he fell into an early hole that he could not dig himself out of, going down 21-19, 11-21, 21-19.

Three of the top five men's seeds in Tokyo have now crashed out before the quarter-finals and Lee said that Zhao had "controlled the match". "This is sport," said the 24-year-old, who joined number two seed Kento Momota and number three Anders Antonsen in making an early exit.

"You've got to win, you've got to lose, and I think no matter what the result is, we have to accept it." Danish number one seed Viktor Axelsen made it through to the quarter-finals with a 21-19, 21-16 win over Thailand's Sittthikom Thammasin, but India's Lakshya Sen and China's Shi Yuqi both fell by the wayside.

Rising star Sen came into the tournament fresh from winning gold at the Commonwealth Games but he could not find a way past Indian compatriot HS Prannoy in a 17-21, 21-16, 21-17 loss. "In the second game I could have taken the opportunity because it was close," said the 21-year-old Sen, who was seeded nine.

'It's a secret'

"In the third game it was very important for me to get a good start but I was always down by one or two points and that made the difference."

Prannoy, who stunned Momota in the second round, now faces the world number 23 Zhao in the quarter-finals. Shi was returning from a 10-month ban from the Chinese Badminton Association for making "inappropriate comments" following a 2021 match where he withdrew on match point.

Indonesian Anthony Sinisuka Ginting nipped his comeback in the bud with a 21-11, 13-21, 21-18 win and the number six seed's reward was a quarter-final match-up against Axelsen. "Today was not an easy game and tomorrow's will be more tough, so I will do my very best and enjoy it," said Ginting, who was cheered on by a small but vocal group of Indonesian fans. "Of course (Axelsen) has weak points but it's a secret for me." Axelsen has not dropped a game so far in Tokyo but he needed several attempts to finish Thammasin off when he had him on the ropes.

The Dane is looking to be more ruthless against Ginting and said he would "have to be 120 percent ready". "I have to play better than I have done so far," said the top-ranked Axelsen.

"It's always my goal to do so." Defending champion Loh Kean Yew also reached the quarter-finals after opponent Angus Ng of Hong Kong withdrew during the second game.

On the women's side, defending champion and number one seed Akane Yamaguchi made short work of Japanese compatriot Sayaka Takahashi in a 21-18, 21-7 win. Yamaguchi will next face former world number one Carolina Marin after the Spaniard fended off four match points to beat China's He Bingjiao 16-21, 21-15, 22-20.



TOKYO, Japan: Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia hits a return against Zhao Junpeng of China during their men's singles match on day four of the Badminton World Championships in Tokyo on August 25, 2022. —AFP

"To be away for more than one year, not playing these kinds of games against top players, sometimes your confidence is not really high,"

said Marin, who only returned from a serious knee injury in May. "But today, to get this victory gives me some confidence for sure." —AFP

Australia make six changes for South Africa

ADELAIDE, Australia: Reece Hodge was recalled to start at fullback to deal with an expected aerial assault from world champions South Africa on Saturday as Australia coach Dave Rennie rang the changes.

The 57-Test utility Hodge comes in for Tom Wright after the Wallabies' struggles under the high ball in a demoralising defeat to Argentina in San Juan just under a fortnight ago. Hodge was one of six changes to the side that lost 48-17 with Wright shifting back to the right wing and Marika Korobete on his familiar left for the Rugby Championship clash in Adelaide.

Noah Lolesio was handed another chance in the problematic playmaker position at fly-half with Quade Cooper injured and James O'Connor axed from the squad after starting in the last Test. The 22-year-old Lolesio was used by Rennie in all three Tests against England this year but then made way for Cooper, with O'Connor then preferred.

Veteran fly-half Bernard Foley, who hasn't played for the Wallabies since the 2019 World Cup but was a shock recall to the squad, failed to make the match-day 23. "It's great to have a number of experienced players back in the mix this weekend," said Rennie.

"We understand that respect is earned daily and we get an opportunity to earn it against the current world champions on Saturday afternoon." Nic White is again at scrum-half, with inside centre Hunter Paisami returning to the starting team in place of Lalakai Foketi, reigniting his mid-field combination with Len Ikitau.

After leaving Argentina early for a family bereavement, Allan Alaalatoa is back at tighthead prop alongside returning hooker Folau Fainga'a and James Slipper.

The 119-Test veteran Slipper skips the side again in the absence of Michael Hooper, who is on mental health leave. Matt Philip replaces Darcy Swain in the second row alongside Rory Arnold, with the back row of Jed Holloway, Fraser McReight and Rob Valetini unchanged.

Assistant coach Dan McKellar said he expected the team to rise to the challenge. "We were pretty filthy about how we performed in San Juan," he said. "You've got two choices, bitch and moan and blame others or stick tight, stick together and take on board the feedback."

Australia (15-1): Reece Hodge; Tom Wright, Len Ikitau, Hunter Paisami, Marika Korobete; Noah Lolesio, Nic White; Rob Valetini, Fraser McReight; Jed Holloway, Matt Philip, Rory Arnold; Allan Alaalatoa, Folau Fainga'a, James Slipper (capt) Replacements: David Porecki, Scott Sio, Taniela Tupou, Darcy Swain, Rob Leota, Pete Samu, Tate McDermott, Andrew Kellaway. —AFP

Form, bragging rights on line as giants clash in Asia Cup

DUBAI: India's Virat Kohli has the chance to find form before the World Cup while Babar Azam will look to keep Pakistan's psychological edge when the rival countries clash as the headline acts of the Asia Cup starting this weekend.

Cricket giants India and Pakistan could square up three times during the two weeks of the T20 competition in the United Arab Emirates. The six-nation tournament was moved from Sri Lanka because of political unrest and it takes on extra significance this year because the T20 World Cup in Australia is coming up fast, in October and November.

Sri Lanka meet Afghanistan in Saturday's opening match but all eyes will be on India and Pakistan, who clash in Dubai on Sunday. India will be looking to avenge their 10-wicket humiliation by Pakistan at the same venue in last year's T20 World Cup, and skipper Rohit Sharma is trying to keep his players level-headed as the expectation and excitement among fans hits fever pitch.

"Everyone watches the game and it's a high-pressure game without a doubt, but within the group we want to create a normal atmosphere," he told Star Sports. "We don't want to hype this game too much. It's important to tell the players who haven't played against Pakistan or played them just one or two times that it's just another opposition." India head coach Rahul Dravid has Covid and India late on Wednesday appointed former batsman VVS Laxman to take charge in an interim capacity.

Shaheen injured

The match will be Kohli's 100th T20 international and a chance for the batting great to emerge from his prolonged slump before the World Cup. The 33-year-old has not scored a century in any format since 2019 but should be refreshed after being rested for tours of the West Indies and Zimbabwe.

Kohli, who has 27 centuries in 102 Tests, was

South Africa recall Harmer against England in 2nd Test

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom: South Africa captain Dean Elgar won the toss and elected to bat against England in the second Test at Old Trafford on Thursday as the Proteas recalled off-spinner Simon Harmer. Harmer, a stalwart wicket-taker with English county side Essex, returned in place of towering left-arm quick Marco Jansen in the only change to the XI that overwhelmed England by an innings and 12-runs in the first Test at Lord's last week.

The pitch at Old Trafford should offer more assistance to spinners as the game goes on, with Harmer joining an attack that already features slow left-arm Keshav Maharaj. Although Thursday's overcast conditions promised to aid fast bowlers, history was on Elgar's side — no team has ever won the toss in a Test at Old Trafford, chosen to bowl and gone on to win the match.

"There's a little bit overhead but we've got to play what's in front of us and it looks quite dry, hence why we've gone with the extra spin option with Simon Harmer," said Elgar at the toss. "When you go with two spinners, you have to back yourself, go positive and bat first...Marco Jansen misses out, he did nothing wrong in the first game but it is just horses for courses."

Defeat in the first Test was England's first loss under their new red-ball leadership team of captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum following a run of four successive wins. "We were going to



DUBAI: File photo shows, India's captain Virat Kohli (L) and his Pakistan's counterpart Babar Azam greet each other before the start of the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between India and Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai. —AFP

replaced by Rohit as all-format skipper earlier this year. Pakistan's fortunes will mainly depend on in-form skipper Azam, fresh from two big half-centuries in his team's 3-0 ODI sweep of the Netherlands.

Azam, 27, tops the world T20 and ODI batting rankings and led his team to victory last year against India with an unbeaten 68. Pakistan have brought in pace bowler Mohammad Hasnain in place of Shaheen Shah Afridi, India's T20 destroyer last year, who has been forced out by a knee injury.

Defending champions India, who won the last Asia Cup in 2018 when it was played over 50 overs, and Pakistan will be joined in Group A by Hong Kong who defeated the UAE in the final qualifier on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are in Group B. The top two teams from each group progress to a Super 4 stage, which could witness

another contest between India and Pakistan. The great rivals could then meet for a third time should they both reach the September 11 final. Sri Lanka, led by Dasun Shanaka, could be the India-Pakistan party-pooper. They are capable of reaching the final, having enjoyed success in recent home series against a backdrop of a dire economic crisis.

Victory would bring some welcome cheer to the cricket-crazy island nation ravaged in recent months by food and fuel shortages and rolling blackouts. Afghanistan have the ability to upset any side, their ace being leg-spinner Rashid Khan, one of the world's leading T20 bowlers who can exploit and turn in the subcontinent-like UAE pitches.

Bangladesh have been boosted by the return of all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan to lead the team, who said his priority was to see an improvement in performances of the struggling side with the World Cup fast approaching. —AFP



MANCHESTER, United Kingdom: England's captain Ben Stokes appeals successfully for LBW (leg before wicket) against South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen on day 1 of the second Test match between England and South Africa at the Old Trafford cricket ground. —AFP

have a bowl so it worked out okay!" said Stokes. "I think it looks fantastic bowling conditions with the attack we have."

England had already recalled Ollie Robinson on Wednesday in the only change to their side at Lord's. The Sussex seamer replaced fellow paceman Matthew Potts. Robinson enjoyed an impressive first year in Test cricket after making his debut in the 2021 English season, taking 39 wickets in nine matches at

an average of 21.

However, his fitness was publicly criticised by England bowling coach Jon Lewis during the Ashes and he has been hampered by injuries since then. "It's great for Ollie Robinson to be back in," said Stokes. "The dedication he has shown to get back in is a sign of what he can bring, along with a great skill set. He has that added bounce which could be an asset at Old Trafford." —AFP

Sports

Dybala aiming to avoid tears on Juve return with Roma

Zaniolo has been Roma's most impressive performer

MILAN: Paulo Dybala will lead the Roma charge on Saturday as the team seek to build on a perfect Serie A start when he returns to Juventus, the ground he last left in tears. Roma travel to Turin following two single-goal wins from matches with Salernitana and Cremonese but with some of their pre-season optimism deflated by injuries to Georginio Wijnaldum and Nicolò Zaniolo.

Zaniolo has been Roma's most impressive performer in their opening two matches but after the Italy international suffered a dislocated shoulder on Monday the onus will be on star signing Dybala to strike a blow against his former club, who let him go in the summer.

The Argentina forward was in bits as he said goodbye to Juventus fans back in May, sitting on the Allianz Stadium pitch with Dusan Vlahovic well after the fans had gone home and pondering his future after management decided to end his seven-year spell at Italy's biggest club.

Protracted negotiations over a contract renewal ended with Juve pulling out of a verbal agreement to increase his salary to eight million euros plus bonuses, considered too expensive by the club hierarchy.

The 28-year-old was tipped to join Juve's biggest rivals Inter Milan for most of the summer but after they signed Romelu Lukaku the deal became impossible to do for a club who are attempting the tricky balancing act of cutting costs while still remaining competitive. So in swooped Roma for possibly the best value deal of the European transfer window, the capital club and in particular Jose Mourinho convincing a proven performer to take a fraction of what he was asking Juve in order to play for a team on the up.

Allegri under fire

Dybala will be charged with improving Roma's record at the Allianz Stadium—one win in 12 defeats in

all competitions—and they might fancy their chances this weekend against a Juve side which has failed to convince fans or pundits of their title credentials.

Juve and in particular coach Massimiliano Allegri were heavily criticised for their drab display at Sampdoria on Monday night, where star striker Dusan Vlahovic was starved of service. Vlahovic only touched the ball nine times while Juve's midfield, shorn of the injured Paul Pogba for another few weeks, more resembled a black hole than an engine room.

Allegri should have Leonardo Bonucci and goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny back for the clash but as the coach pointed out in a baffling post-Samp interview with DAZN, the one positive for Juve "is that we haven't conceded in two games". Juve's midfield deficiencies should lessen the impact of Wijnaldum's tibia fracture for Roma, who will also have Lorenzo Pellegrini and Tammy Abraham in attack for a match which will show whether pundits were right to pick them as a dark horse for the Scudetto.

Level on points with Roma but leading the early standings are Napoli, who are on a high after netting nine times ahead of Sunday's trip to Fiorentina. New-boy Khvicha Kvaratskhelia has bewitched supporters with two sublime attacking displays against Verona and Monza but the Viola - in Conference League action at FC Twente on Thursday—are an altogether trickier proposition.

Inter Milan get the ball rolling on Friday at Lazio, another team who have been tipped to trouble the top four, while champions AC Milan host Bologna with rumours swirling that Chelsea might make a late bid for star winger Rafael Leao.

Key stats

- 5 - The number of league titles Dybala won in seven years at Juventus.
- 3 - Kvaratskhelia has netted three times and set



ROME: AS Roma's British defender Chris Smalling (R) celebrates with Argentinian forward Paulo Dybala after scoring a goal during the Italian Serie A football match between AS Roma and Cremonese at the Olympic Stadium in Rome. —AFP

up another for Napoli.	Fixtures (times GMT)	1730), AC Milan v Bologna, Spezia v Sassuolo (both 1945)
	Friday	
Monza v Udinese (1730), Lazio v Inter (1945)		
	Saturday	
Cremonese v Torino, Juventus v Roma (both		Sunday
		Verona v Atalanta, Salernitana v Sampdoria (both 1730), Fiorentina v Napoli, Lecce v Empoli (1945). —AFP

Woods, McIlroy launch in-arena golf series

WASHINGTON, United States: Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy launched a new technology-sparked golf series made for television on Wednesday, with team competition before live audiences using giant video screens with a January 2024 debut.

McIlroy and Mike McCarley, founder of TMRW Sports, announced the partly virtual golf league on the eve of the season-ending US PGA Tour Championship at East Lake in Atlanta. "It's rooted in the traditions of the game, but it's taking a big step into the future," McCarley said. "It starts with having the two biggest superstars in the game, Tiger and Rory, committed to play."

Events would be played at a yet to be determined venue that would be custom made to allow for playing chips and putts live and sending longer shots into a video screen for virtual results. Golfers would hit longer shots into huge screens that produce a virtual result similar to what would be seen on a regular course. Turfed playing area adjacent on the venue floor would allow spectators to cheer live short-game shots and putting.

The setting combines the atmospheres for in-arena gaming events, with music and entertainment, with the physical skills required for successful golf shotmaking with 18 holes done in a television-friendly two-hour format. "TGL is the next evolution within professional golf," Woods tweeted. "I'm excited to be a part of this exciting new venture, which will harness technology to bring new approaches to the sport we love." The PGA Tour will partner on the project, with six teams of three PGA players each competing in a regular season of 15 Monday night matches leading to a semi-final and final, with the season having a January-April window.

"I think it's a great opportunity for PGA Tour players

Smith to headline top Australian golf events

SYDNEY: World number two Cameron Smith confirmed Thursday he will headline Australia's two top golf tournaments later this year, saying he was "so excited" to be



ST ANDREWS, United Kingdom: File photo shows US golfer Tiger Woods watches his drive from the 14th tee during his second round on day 2 of The 150th British Open Golf Championship on The Old Course at St Andrews in Scotland. —AFP

to show a different side of themselves primetime on Monday night," McIlroy said. "It's great for brand exposure to try to engage a different audience."

The idea is trying to excite a younger sports fan audience about golf, McIlroy said. "I just think it's going to be a really cool concept," McIlroy said. "Tiger and I are incredibly excited."

The less-strenuous physical format would allow Woods to compete without the long walking of courses that has been more difficult since he suffered severe leg injuries in a car crash 18 months ago. "Who knows where we're going to see Tiger Woods play golf next?" McIlroy said. "We don't know what his schedule is going to be. We don't know how his body is going to be."

"But to be able to see him still showcase his skills on primetime, on TV without really any wear and tear on his

body, I think to be able to see Tiger hit golf shots and still sort of provide people with a glimpse of his genius, I think it is a really good use of his time."

Players would serve as part-owners in the new league, McIlroy said. Events would be staged in one location but McCarley said it could move around in later years, but is likely to remain on Mondays so golfers can compete in tour events with routine schedules.

"Monday nights is the time that all this makes sense because that's when it fits in guys' schedules," McCarley said. "It's a combination of the overall media landscape but also how this is going to work for a player's schedule." Asked about the prize money involved, McCarley said, "I see the terms boatload and truckload being thrown around a lot lately. Maybe it'll be in between those two." —AFP

heading home. The British Open champion has enjoyed a phenomenal year, but has also been at the centre of speculation that he is on the verge of defecting from the US PGA Tour to the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series.

Smith will tee off at both the Australian PGA Championship in Brisbane from November 24 — an event he won in 2017 and 2018 — and the Australian Open in Melbourne on December 1. "I've had an unbelievable year and to be coming home to play tournaments is the icing on the cake," he said in a statement. "I'm so excited to see friends and family again. Some of them I haven't seen for years now and once I get to the

golf course, I've got my eye on some more trophies." Both events are co-sanctioned by the DP World Tour, but even if Smith joins Greg Norman's LIV series he will be eligible to play with Australasian Tour members not currently banned if they commit to the breakaway league.

The men's and women's Australian Open will take place at the same time and the same venues this year as part of efforts to widen golf's appeal. Held at the famous Sandbelt area of Melbourne, the Victoria Golf Club will be the primary venue across all four days with Kingston Heath Golf Club hosting play on the opening two days. —AFP



WINSTON SALEM: Thiago Monteiro of Brazil returns a shot from Benjamin Bonzi of France during their third round match on day five of the Winston-Salem Open at Wake Forest Tennis Complex. —AFP

Draper beats Thiem to reach last eight at Winston-Salem

WINSTON-SALEM, United States: Britain's Jack Draper defeated 2020 US Open champion Dominic Thiem 6-1, 6-4 on Wednesday to reach the ATP Winston-Salem Open quarter-finals. The 20-year-old Englishman, who reached his first ATP Masters Series quarter-final two weeks ago at Montreal, ousted the Austrian who won his first major title two years ago in New York.

Thiem missed most of last year with a right wrist injury, including the chance to defend his US Open title. World number 231 Thiem hadn't played a hardcourt match since March 2021 until this week but advanced to the third round when top seed Grigor Dimitrov retired in the second set of their second-round match. Dutch second seed Botic van de Zandschulp advanced by beating Spain's Jaume Munar 6-3, 6-3 to book a quarter-final match against French 10th seed Benjamin Bonzi, who dispatched Brazil's Thiago Monteiro 7-5, 6-2.

Two other Frenchmen advanced with Richard Gasquet rallying past American Steve Johnson 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-3 and Adrian Mannarino ripping Spanish eighth seed Albert Ramos 6-3, 6-3. Mannarino will next face US fourth seed Maxime Cressy, who ousted Italy's Lorenzo Sonego 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 7-6 (7/3) while Gasquet faces Serbian Laslo Djere, who outlasted Australian Jason Kubler 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (9/11), 6-3. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Adaliya	22517144
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Khaldiya	24848075
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Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shamiya	24848913
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shuwaikh	24814507
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Adan Hospital	23940620	Nuzha	22526804
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Qadsiya	22515088
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
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Kaizen center	25716707
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I, PARVEEN SANJAY SINGH holder of Passport No. N5214061 do hereby change my name to PARVEEN SIDDIQUI (as Given Name) USMANALI (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name PARVEEN USMANALI SIDDIQUI and I also undertake to carry out this

name change in all my documents. (C# 2045) — 26-08-2022.

I, TOSIF MOHAMMED Father Name RAIS MOHAMMAD holder of passport No. V6052629 do hereby change my name to TOSIF MOHAMMAD Father Name RAISE MOHAMMAD for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name TOSIF

MOHAMMAD Father Name RAISE MOHAMMAD and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2042)

I, Yasir Mohammad, holder of Passport No. R8277909, do hereby change my name to Mohd. Yasir (as given name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known

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LOS ANGELES: Vanessa Bryant (3R), wife of the late Los Angeles Lakers basketball player Kobe Bryant, her daughter Natalia Bryant (2L), and close friend Sydney Leroux (2R) depart the court house in Los Angeles, California, after a verdict was reached in Bryant's federal negligence lawsuit against Los Angeles County. —AFP

Jury awards \$31m damages over Kobe Bryant crash photos

Relatives of other victims of the crash were granted a total \$2.5m in compensation

LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles County must pay \$31 million in damages to Kobe Bryant's widow and a co-plaintiff over graphic photos taken at the site of the helicopter crash that killed the basketball star and eight others, a jury ordered Wednesday. Sheriff's deputies and firefighters who rushed to the scene of the January 2020 crash snapped pictures of the carnage, including the mangled remains of the Los Angeles Lakers legend and his 13-year-old daughter, Gianna.

A trial in Los Angeles heard how some of these first responders showed the photographs to members of the public—including a bartender—while one deputy texted them to a friend as the pair played video games.

Vanessa Bryant and Chris Chester, whose wife, Sarah, and daughter, Payton, also perished in the crash, sued for emotional damages over the pictures, which they said they feared would one day surface on the internet.

The civil jury ordered the county to pay \$16 million to

Bryant, and \$15 million to Chester, after deliberating for just a few hours. The award represents redress for past and future suffering. Bryant wept while the verdict was read and left court without speaking to waiting reporters.

She later posted a picture on Instagram of her with her late husband and daughter, with the caption: "All for you! I love you! JUSTICE for Kobe and Gigi!"

'Accountability'

Chester's lawyer on Tuesday had called for \$1 million for every year of the plaintiffs' expected lives, a figure that amounted to \$40 million for 40-year-old Bryant, and \$30 million for 48-year-old Chester. "You can't award too much money for what they went through," said attorney Jerry Jackson.

Bryant's lawyer Craig Lavoie said he was asking for "justice and accountability" for the basketball great-a-

hero to the city of Los Angeles—and his widow. "We're here because of intentional conduct. Intentional conduct by those who were charged with protecting the dignity of Sarah and Payton, and Kobe and Gianna."

"The county violated Mrs Bryant and Mr Chester's constitutional rights," Lavoie said, asking the jury to hold the county liable for "the constitutional violations of its employees." For the county, Mira Hashmall said that while employees had broken confidentiality policies, Bryant and Chester's privacy had not been violated because the pictures had never been in the public domain.

"This is a photo case, but there are no photos," she told jurors earlier. "There's a simple truth that cannot be ignored—there's been no public dissemination."

After the verdict, Hashmall said she and fellow lawyers would be consulting with the county about "next steps." "Meanwhile, we hope the Bryant and Chester

families continue to heal from their tragic loss," a statement said. Relatives of other victims of the crash were last year granted a total \$2.5 million in compensation over the photo-taking. The jury's order came as Los Angeles celebrated "Mamba Day" on August 24, or 8/24, the two numbers Kobe Bryant wore over 20 years as a professional.

An investigation into the crash found the pilot had probably become disoriented after flying the Sikorsky S-76 into fog as he transported his passengers to a girls' basketball tournament in nearby Thousand Oaks.

Kobe Bryant is widely recognized as one of the greatest basketball players ever, a figure who became the face of his sport during a glittering two decades with the Los Angeles Lakers.

He was a five-time NBA champion in a career that began in 1996 straight out of high school and lasted until his retirement in 2016. —AFP

Nadal eyes 23rd major as Djokovic clings to forlorn US Open hope

NEW YORK: Rafael Nadal targets a fifth US Open and 23rd Grand Slam title in New York from next week as Novak Djokovic clings desperately onto a forlorn hope of even being allowed to set foot in New York. Nineteen years after making his debut, the 36-year-old Nadal drags his injury-prone body into a tournament he won in 2010, 2013, 2017 and 2019, the year of his last appearance.

The Spaniard has had to sit out the US Open four times in his career and there are once again fresh doubts over his physical ability to survive a gruelling two weeks at Flushing Meadows. Since an abdomen injury forced him to hand Nick Kyrgios a walkover into the Wimbledon final, Nadal has played just once — a first-up loss to Borna Coric in Cincinnati.

"I need to move forward and just start to think about the energy that the crowd give me in New York," said Nadal, who has already captured two of the season's three Slams at the Australian and French Opens. "It's a very special place for me, and I enjoy it. There have been unforgettable moments there, and I'm going to try my very best every single day to be ready for that."

Nadal has become accustomed to overcoming setbacks, winning a 14th French Open in June despite playing the whole tournament with pain-killing injections in his foot. An added incentive for Nadal is the opportunity to reclaim the world number one spot from defending

champion Daniil Medvedev, the man he defeated in the 2019 final. While Nadal trains in New York, career-long rival Djokovic remains in Europe, steadfastly refusing to withdraw from the tournament in the hope of a last-minute change of policy by the US authorities.

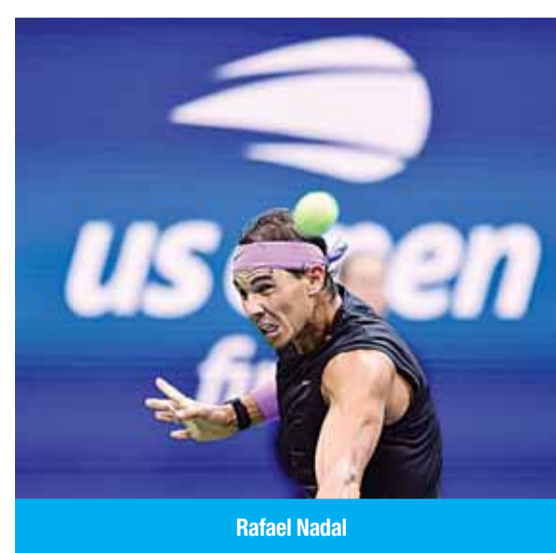
The famously unvaccinated Djokovic, who won the last of his three US Open crowns in 2018, is barred from entering the United States for refusing to take the COVID vaccine.

Djokovic ban 'joke'

Tennis legend John McEnroe has blasted the Djokovic ban as a "joke." "At this point, in the pandemic, we're two and a half years in, I think people in all parts of the world know more about it, and the idea that he can't travel here to play, to me is a joke," said McEnroe. Ironically, during the height of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, Djokovic was allowed to compete at New York where he was champion in 2011, 2015 and 2018. The 35-year-old hasn't played since securing a seventh Wimbledon title last month, a victory which extended his Slam record to 21.

His controversial vaccination stance also saw him deported from Melbourne in January where he had been hoping to defend his Australian Open title. Only last month, Djokovic said he was "preparing to play" in the tournament. He will be put out of his agony on Thursday when the draw takes place. With Roger Federer still absent from the tour and with question marks over Nadal's fitness and Djokovic's presence, the race for the men's title is likely to be as open as recent years.

Marin Cilic, Stan Wawrinka, Dominic Thiem and Medvedev have all broken the New York stranglehold of the 'Big Three' since 2014. Medvedev will be especially



Rafael Nadal

fired up having been banned from Wimbledon along with all other Russian players following the invasion of Ukraine.

On his reappearance on the tour following the All England Club cold shoulder, the 26-year-old claimed the hardcourt title in Los Cabos. World number two and 2020 runner-up Alexander Zverev misses out through injury while fourth-ranked Carlos Alcaraz, a quarter-finalist in 2021, looks to convert potential into a maiden Slam triumph at 19. Apart from Felix Auger-Aliassime, a semi-finalist last year, the rest of the current top 10 have endured a bitter-sweet relationship with New York. Stefanos Tsitsipas, Casper Ruud, Cameron Norrie and Hubert Hurkacz have all yet to make the second week. —AFP

Serena prepares for final curtain call at US Open

NEW YORK: After a glittering 27-year professional career in which she became one of the greatest players of all time, Serena Williams is preparing to bid farewell to tennis at the major where it all began.

The 40-year-old sporting icon ended the guessing game surrounding her future earlier this month by revealing that the "countdown" to her retirement had started, with her final Grand Slam appearance coming at next week's US Open in New York.

"There comes a time in life when we have to decide to move in a different direction," Williams wrote. "That time is always hard when you love something so much. But now, the countdown has begun. I have to focus on being a mom, my spiritual goals and finally discovering a different, but just (as) exciting Serena. I'm gonna relish these next few weeks." That announcement set the stage for what will be an emotional farewell for Williams, who won the first of her 23 Grand Slam singles titles as a 17-year-old at the 1999 US Open, beating Martina Hingis in the final.

That breakthrough victory confirmed what had become apparent ever since her professional debut four years earlier: that Williams, alongside sister Venus, was a rising force in women's tennis. While 1999 marked her first singles Slam, by then Williams had already won mixed doubles titles at Wimbledon and the US Open in 1998. Her win in the 1999 singles final would light the touchpaper for the most dominant career of any female player in the Open era, her 23 Grand Slam titles second only to Margaret Court's 24.

While a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam singles title is likely to remain beyond her next week, Williams has nevertheless produced a collection of records that in all probability will never be broken.

With seven Australian Open singles titles, seven Wimbledon titles and six US Open titles, Williams is the only player, male or female to win three different Grand Slams six times or more. In total, she has won 39 Grand Slam titles - with 14 women's doubles crowns and two mixed doubles titles to go alongside her 23 singles victories.

Her longevity is also unmatched. She was first ranked world number one in 2002, and last held the position in 2017 - an interval of just under 15 years. Williams also holds the record for the longest gap between her first and last Grand Slam wins: 17 years and 139 days between her 1999 US Open win and the 2017 Australian Open in Melbourne, when she was pregnant with daughter Olympia. —AFP

Kuwait 'Zain' Premier Football league

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait "Zain" Premier Football league in its 61st year got underway with a new board of directors, new sponsor "Zain" and a modified format. Ten teams are competing in the premier league: Al-Nasr, Al-Arabi, Al-Salmiya, Tadhamon, Kuwait, Jahra, Sahel, Qadsia, Kazma and Fahaheel.

President of Kuwait Football Association (KFA) Abdallah Al-Shaheen said Kuwait football league was going through hardships and could not make any achievement during the past 10 years and he noted FIFA's claims that "KFA does not have any

clear philosophy for development", and this is what the new board adopted now.

Al-Shaheen said KFA decided to adopt the idea of total renewal of the national team adding "there will not be players of an older age on it. Commenting on ticket prices, he said this is left for the clubs and KFA will not interfere in them. He said the matches of His Highness the Amir Cup and His Highness the Crown Prince Cup will be held at Jaber Stadium. Al-Shaheen said the premier league champion will receive KD 100,000, second place will receive KD 60,000 and third place will receive KD 40,000. As for the first league the champion will receive KD 30,000 and second place KD 20,000.

Schedule of matches:

Friday 26/8
Kuwait vs Jahra at 6:50 PM

Zain First Round Matches Zain Premiere League 2022 - 2023		
Jahra	6:50	Kuwait SC
Al-Qadsia	9:10	Al-Sahel
Al-Fahaheel	8:10	Kazma

Sahel vs Qadsia at 9:10 PM

Saturday 27/8
Kazma vs Fahaheel 8:10 pm.