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Ghanem insists the world needs neutral third voice

Speaker says unresolved Palestinian issue a disgrace to world order

OPEC+ stays the course on output boost

VIENNA: Major oil producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia stuck to a previously decided output boost on Thursday, despite calls for bigger increases to tame crude prices. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated concerns about oil supplies, sending prices to record highs this year. But a respite is not in sight. In their monthly video conference, which lasted about an hour, the 23 members of OPEC+ agreed to add another 648,000 barrels per day in August, the same as for July. Analysts had widely expected

the move, calling the gathering of the Vienna-based Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and their partners a "rubber stamp" meeting. Jeffrey Halley, analyst at OANDA trading platform, said before the meeting that he did not expect surprises as "OPEC+ can't even meet its present targets, and hasn't for a long time".

The 13 members of OPEC, chaired by Saudi Arabia, and their 10 partners, led by Russia, drastically slashed output in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdowns sent demand plummeting. Since last year, they have been gradually increasing output again. In recent months, the United States and other top oil consumers urged OPEC+ to open the tabs more widely.

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BAKU: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Thursday the world is in dire need of a principled neutral third voice that calls for applying law and justice amid lingering risks worldwide. Addressing the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Conference held in Baku, Ghanem said the fact that the Palestinian issue remains unresolved is proof of the continuing perils in different world regions.

Ghanem regretted that although NAM was created 67 years back, the risks that led to its inception are still looming large, pointing out hypotheses pertinent to a potential third world war, not to mention civil wars and regional tensions. The speaker cited the old but unresolved dossier of Palestine and the Zionist occupation of Palestinian territories as a clear-cut paradigm in this regard, saying its continuation is a disgrace to the past and present world order. He stressed the major challenge for the movement now is how to promote its main idea of being



BAKU: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem addresses the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Conference on June 30, 2022. — KUNA

moderate and fair.

Ghanem thanked Azerbaijan for its proper management of the Non-Aligned Movement since it took over its rotating presidency three years ago, in addition to all efforts it has exerted during its term. Focusing on the role of national parlia-

ments in promoting global peace and sustainable development, the conference, which kicked off in Baku earlier Thursday, brings together parliamentary delegations from more than 40 countries, and representatives of nine international parliamentary organizations. — KUNA

Russia quits Snake Island in major blow

KYIV: Russian troops have abandoned their positions on a captured Ukrainian island, a major setback to their invasion effort that weakens their blockade of Ukraine's ports, defense officials said on Thursday. The news from the Black Sea came as NATO leaders wrapped up their summit in Madrid, intent on demonstrating their unity and determination to back up Kyiv with advanced weapons in the face of Moscow's assault.

Snake Island became a symbol of Ukrainian resistance in the first days of the war, when the rocky outcrop's defenders told a Russian warship that called on them to surrender to "go f*** yourself," an incident that spurred a defiant meme. It was also a strategic target, sitting aside shipping lanes near Ukraine's port of Odessa. Russia had attempted to install missile and air defense batteries while under fire from drones.

Now, however, Ukraine has begun to receive longer range missiles and military gear from its Western backers, and the Russian position on Snake Island seems to have become untenable. "In the end, it will prove impossible for (President Vladimir) Putin to hold down a country that will not accept his rule," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said, stressing that any eventual peace deal would be on Ukraine's terms. "We've seen what Ukraine can do to drive the Russians back. We've seen what they did around Kyiv and Kharkiv, now on Snake Island."

The Russian defense ministry statement described the retreat as "a gesture of goodwill" meant to demonstrate that Moscow will not interfere with UN efforts to organize protected grain exports from Ukraine. But Kyiv claimed it as a win. "They always downplay their defeats this way," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter. "I thank the defenders of Odessa region who took maximum measures to liberate a strategically important part of our territory," Valeriy Zaluzhny, the Ukraine military's commander-in-chief, said on Telegram.

In peacetime, Ukraine is a major agricultural exporter, but Russia's invasion has damaged

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Marcos Jr praises rule of father

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on Thursday praised his dictator father's rule after being sworn in as the country's new leader, completing a decades-long effort to restore the clan to the country's highest office. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr, 64, won last month's elections by a landslide, securing the biggest victory since his father and namesake was ousted by a popular revolt in 1986.

He succeeds the hugely popular Rodrigo Duterte, who gained interna-

tional infamy for his deadly drug war and has threatened to kill suspected dealers after he leaves office. In the last act of reviving the family brand, Marcos Jr took the oath in a public ceremony at the National Museum in Manila in front of hundreds of diplomats, dignitaries and supporters.

With his 92-year-old mother Imelda sitting meters away, Marcos Jr praised the late patriarch's regime, which critics describe as a dark period of human rights abuses and corruption that left the country impoverished. "I once knew a man who saw what little had been achieved since independence... but he got it done," Marcos Jr said after being sworn into office, claiming his father built more roads and produced more rice than his predecessors.

Continued on Page 6



MANILA: New Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr takes the oath as president of the Philippines as his wife Louise looks on during the inauguration ceremony at the National Museum on June 30, 2022. — AFP

Salmonella hits biggest choc plant

BRUSSELS: Production has been halted in the world's biggest chocolate plant, run by Swiss giant Barry Callebaut in the Belgian town of Wieze, after salmonella contaminations was found, the firm said Thursday. A company spokesman told AFP that production had been protectively halted at the factory, which produces liquid chocolate in wholesale batches for 73 clients making confectionaries.

There have been no reports so far

of any chocolate consumers infected by the salmonella, which causes salmonellosis, a disease that causes diarrhea and fever but is only dangerous in the most extreme cases. "All products manufactured since the test have been blocked," spokesman Korneel Warlop said. "Barry Callebaut is currently contacting all customers who may have received contaminated products. Chocolate production in Wieze remains suspended until further notice."

Most of the products discovered to be contaminated are still on the site, he said. But the firm has contacted all its clients and asked them not to ship any products they have made with chocolate made since June 25 at these Wieze

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BRUSSELS: The Barry Callebaut production site is seen in Wieze on June 30, 2022. — AFP

Houseboats on Nile being towed away

CAIRO: Dozens of vibrantly colored floating homes have for decades dotted the banks of the River Nile, rare havens of leafy seclusion in the Egyptian capital's hustle and bustle - but maybe not for much longer. Residents of the 30 or so houseboats that

remain moored on the banks of the Nile last week received eviction orders, giving them less than two weeks before their homes are taken away to be demolished.

The boats have long occupied a special place in the Egyptian collective consciousness, having been the centerpiece of conversations in Nobel Prize laureate Naguib Mahfouz's "Chitchat on the Nile", as well as various classics from the golden age of Egyptian cinema. But while many have campaigned to protect the houseboats for their historic value,

the authorities have argued they are an eyesore standing in the way of the state's grand development plans.

Residents have been offered no alternative accommodation or compensation, unlike others who previously faced evictions, and many have nowhere else to go. Barely a week after the eviction order, some boats have already been towed off and impounded in a state marina, despite petitions and campaigning, even by pro-government television pundits. — AFP (See Page 12)

Local

European Parliament to discuss visa liberalization for Kuwait

EU ambassadors take first step by approving negotiating mandate

BRUSSELS: Preparatory work is underway in the European Parliament for the negotiations to start with the Council of Ministers on lifting of Schengen visa for Kuwaiti citizens, European Parliament sources said Thursday. EU ambassadors Wednesday approved the negotiating mandate for the EU Council of Ministers on the lifting of Schengen visa for Kuwait. On the basis of this mandate, the Council which represents the 27 EU states, will start negotiations with the European Parliament.

"At the moment, preparatory work is underway,

which was the first step in the European Parliament procedure, said the sources. It will now first be discussed by the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee for its approval, before discussions and vote in the full European Parliament, noted the sources.

First step

European Union ambassadors had on Wednesday approved the negotiating mandate for the EU Council of Ministers on the liberalization of short-stay Schengen visas for Kuwait and Qatar. On the basis of this mandate, the EU presidency will start negotiations with the European Parliament, said an EU statement. Czech Republic takes over the rotating EU Presidency from France on July 1. The Council, which represents the 27 EU member states, confirmed the EU Commission's proposal to provide for visa-free travel for the citizens of these two Gulf countries when travelling to the EU for a maximum duration of 90 days per 180-day period.

"The Council thus took the first step towards visa liberalization with Kuwait and Qatar, which should apply after the conclusion of bilateral agreements with these countries, in particular to ensure that full reciprocity of this exemption for EU citizens is maintained," it noted. The entry into force of the exemption should also take place after the effective entry into operation of the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS), scheduled for 2023.

In its negotiating mandate, the Council stressed



that particular attention should also be paid to regional coherence, notably with a view to strengthening people-to-people contacts and travel between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It therefore called on the

European Commission to proceed rapidly to the assessment of the situation of these countries against the benchmarks with a view to exempting the other GCC member states from the visa requirement. — KUNA



Official discussions likely to start after August 29

but there isn't yet a date for the next official steps. Most probably these will be discussed after the summer recess, when the Parliament's legislative work continues on August 29," the sources told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

The visa liberalization proposals for Kuwait was made by the European Commission on April 27 and announced in the European Parliament in May,

Kuwait expects 542,161 passengers during Eid holiday

KUWAIT: Departures and arrivals to and from Kuwait International Airport during Eid Al-Adha holiday, which falls between July 7 and July 16, are expected to be around 542,161 passengers, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said Thursday. DGCA General Director Yousef Al-Fouzan stated to the press that total flights during said period will be around 3,484 flights. He explained that the total of arriving flights carrying 285,155 passengers will reach 1,737, whereas departing flights, carrying 257,006 passengers, will amount to 1,747 flight. Fouzan indicated that the most popular travel destinations are Cairo, Dubai, Istanbul, Doha and Jeddah. He further affirmed the direc-



Yousef Al-Fouzan

torate's readiness for the Eid holiday and summer season, commending the cooperation of other government bodies. — KUNA

Kuwait Oil Minister touts OPEC+ success in managing oil markets

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Mohammad Al-Fares said Thursday the OPEC+ alliance succeeded in managing the oil markets through a larger production increase than planned during July and August 2022. Fares made the remark in a press release, issued by the Ministry of Oil, after heading Kuwait's delegation partaking in 42nd Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC) and 30th OPEC+ meetings, held via video conferencing. He said this decision contributed to calming markets and showing the strength of

the alliance in a collective decision to ensure the security of supply. He stressed that OPEC has fully succeeded in meeting the needs of the oil market by pumping more oil in line with high levels of demand.

The minister added the OPEC+ agreement calls for an increase in the production of member states by 648,000 barrels per day in August, praising the role of OPEC+ in market stability and supply security, and the alliance is a key element in the market balance that must be maintained for the market's benefit. Fares highlighted that



KUWAIT: Minister of Oil Dr Mohammad Al-Fares heads Kuwait's delegation partaking in 42nd Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC) and 30th OPEC+ meetings, held via video conferencing Thursday. — KUNA

Kuwait's quota production will rise up to 2.811 million, while stressing Kuwait's full commitment to the agreed production quotas. This will enable countries to continue regain large part of their production levels achieved pre COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020, he said. The Kuwaiti oil

minister's delegation comprised Governor of the State of Kuwait to OPEC Muhammad Al-Shatti and National Representative of the State of Kuwait to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Salem Hamoud Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Kuwait participates in int'l civil aviation symposium

KUWAIT: Kuwait, represented by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), participated in the Global implementation support symposium organized by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Istanbul, Turkey recently.

Kuwait's delegation was headed by DGCA Deputy Director General for Aviation Safety, Air Transport and Civil Aviation Security Duaj Khalaf Al-Otaibi, Director of Aviation Safety Hussam Al-Rasheed, and Director of the Technical Office Marzouq Al-Shareefi.

Otaibi met on the sidelines of the

symposium with ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos and discussed cooperation between Kuwait and the organization. Several issues related to air safety and aviation security were also discussed.

Juan Carlos commended Kuwait's development projects to upgrade the infrastructure at Kuwait International Airport, particularly the building of the new T2 terminal with a capacity of 25 million passengers per year. He also lauded the efforts of DGCA under the Chairmanship of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: Photos showing vehicles driving through heavy dust in Mutlaa on Thursday. Local authorities advise motorists to exert extra cautious while driving in open areas over the weekend when heavy dust is expected to cause drop in visibility. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Local

Despite laws, Kuwait domestic helpers still vulnerable to abuse

Some workers unaware of rights, others too afraid to confront sponsors

By Saoud Al-Marzouq

KUWAIT: Throughout the last 40 years, there have been many instances of domestic workers having their basic human rights violated in Kuwait. Few laws have been written and enforced by the Kuwaiti government throughout this period to protect the rights of domestic workers in Kuwait, as they do not fall under the protection of the regular Kuwaiti labor law, and despite the passing of the domestic worker law in 2016.

If both the Kuwaiti sponsor and the domestic worker are unaware of the basic rights and responsibilities they are afforded under the domestic worker law, then those laws are but ink on paper. Kuwait Times spoke with multiple

break under article 22, as she is afraid of challenging her sponsor verbally or in court.

Dream becomes nightmare

Domestic workers imagined that having the privilege to work in Kuwait would be heaven, until Suzie found herself sleeping in a tiny room with nine other housemaids. This is in direct conflict with article 9 of the domestic worker law, which states that adequate housing must be provided for domestic workers.

The conditions in which Suzie and many other domestic workers live, in many cases, are dire and appalling. Some are forced to work long hours, sometimes under the direct sun, and are given inadequate compensation for doing so. Being given insufficient food, privacy and housing is not uncommon. In some instances, their living conditions are comparable to the living conditions of working-class New Yorkers documented by journalist and photographer Jacob Riis in the 1920s. The notorious photographs that Riis took sparked the rise of the labor movement in the United States in the decades to come.

Domestic workers are not the only ones who are not aware of their rights, but citizens too. Farhan Al-Shemiri confirmed to Kuwait Times that he has no clue about the basic rights that domestic workers have, including paragraph 3 of the domestic worker law's article 22 which guarantees domestic workers the right to a weekly day off. "Have they made this law?" he wondered.

Shemiri agreed that domestic workers should get some of their rights, but stressed that the sponsor has the right to keep the maid's passport. "I don't think domestic workers must keep their passports with them," he insisted, even though article 12 states otherwise. "Domestic workers will run away if they have their passport in their possession," he added.

Abu Abdullah however disagrees with Shemiri. "Honestly, the concept of keeping the domestic worker's passport with the sponsor will change nothing, because at the end of the day, their passport being in their possession or not isn't the decider for whether or not they will run away. That the passport is in my hands will not necessarily tie them to me. If they want to run away, they will," he argued.

The sources said the circulars targeted assistant undersecretaries, department directors and heads of divisions of various sectors, as tens of security officials are expected to leave and be replaced by new officials in the next few months, adding the new appointment chart is almost ready with the minister and undersecretary.

Sources said the government will issue a decision after the formation of the new Cabinet to give financial incentives to senior leaders who reached 60 years of age with the rank of major general, brigadier and colonel at the interior ministry, defense ministry, national guard and fire force.

It is known that military leaders can remain in their posts until the age of 65 and will not be sent into retirement against their wish before that age. Sources said that widespread reshuffles will take place and will include undersecretaries and directors to coincide with the new plan and changes to expats' residency permits and fees.



Workers' rights

Stripping domestic workers of their rights is also unacceptable to Abu Fahad, who vehemently disagrees with not protecting them by Kuwaiti labor laws, affirming that maids are also workers at the end of the day and have to get their rights. "The offices - both in Kuwait and abroad - that recruit domestic workers, are responsible for educating them as soon as they arrive at the airport. Yet, despite the offices' knowledge of widespread abuse, they look the other way because they want to profit," he said, blaming recruitment offices for an irresponsible lack of care.

On the other hand, recruitment offices say labor employment offices abroad are the ones that are responsible for informing domestic workers about their basic human rights and safeguarding the livelihoods of their workers. One of the offices said recruitment offices in Kuwait inform new maids of the conditions written in their contract -

no more and no less, pointing out that their rights are supposed to be explained by the office recruiting them in their home country. "The office abroad should inform them about their salary, bonus and the likes."

Another recruitment office told Kuwait Times that they are aware that domestic workers are not familiar with their rights under Kuwaiti law because many offices do not feel the obligation to inform them about their rights and how to adequately protect themselves against sponsors who do not respect them.

Abdulrahman Al-Ghanim, General Secretary of the Kuwait Trade Union Federation, helped pass the domestic worker law in 2016. In an interview with Migrant-Rights, he said: "We hope it will be a good first step to start regulating and centralizing recruitment and other issues of expat workers." The next step lies in making these laws a reality for domestic workers in Kuwait.



Sponsors keep passports to 'prevent escape'

Kuwaiti sponsors, domestic workers and recruitment offices to learn more about people's awareness of their basic rights and responsibilities.

The regular hours of work for domestic workers shall not exceed a total of 12 hours per day, but this is not the case for Maria, who told Kuwait Times she works unstopably. "I am working unpaid overtime. I do not know that there is a law that defines working hours and paid overtime," she said sadly, unaware of her rights under article 28 of the domestic worker law.

As for Perlah, the struggle is in keeping her passport, although article 12 specifically mentions that she has the right to keep her passport in her possession. "My passport is with my sponsor. I'm afraid to request to get it back, as it will spark anger and suspicion that I will run away," she said. Gloria only gets one day off a month to rest, despite being aware of her legal right to a weekly

Interior Minister seeks to retire long-serving officials

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's plans to launch strict campaigns to ensure security and arrest residency violators and intensify field action around the clock, in addition to not resorting to granting grace periods for violators to leave the country, made Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to ask new security leaders to replace many of the old ones, according to senior sources. The ministry sent direct circulars to leaders who reached 60 years of age to ask for their retirement and leave their posts, because they will not remain in their posts after October, sources told Kuwait Times.



Ministry Inspectors confiscate counterfeit automobile parts

KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Ministry inspectors confiscated thousands of counterfeit automobile oil filters for several types of vehicles. Violators had kept the filters in a Sulabiya farm, a camels' resting area and in transport vehicles to keep them away from inspectors, the ministry said in a press statement. Inspectors are accounting for the distributed filters in order to pull them out of oil changing shops, it added.

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News in brief

Traffic, visa fines payment available on 'Sahel' app

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior launched new e-services through the 'Sahel' app, including payment of traffic, residency and visit visas' fines. The new services also include paying for deportees' travel tickets and obtaining medical test results for expatriates. In addition, the services include renewal and transfer of temporary visa (article 14) for expatriate residents. The new services come as per instructions of First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and as part of efforts to make the ministry's services more accessible to the public through use of the latest technology and online methods, the ministry said in a statement.

Earth farthest from sun Monday

KUWAIT: The Earth will be farthest away from the sun next Monday morning in an annual phenomenon known as the Aphelion, said Al-Ojairi Scientific Center for Research in Astronomy Thursday. Head of Public Relations at the center Khaled Al-Jam'an indicated that the distance between the sun and the earth would be 152,096,150 kilometers. He noted that the average distance between the two celestial bodies was at 149,600,000 kilometers, adding that opposite to the Aphelion was the Perihelion, where the earth is nearest to the sun by 147,099,590 kilometers. The next Perihelion will occur in January of 2023, Jam'an revealed. Despite the Aphelion occurring, the temperature in Kuwait and the northern hemisphere this time of the year remain high, he pointed out, adding that was due to the 82-degree angle of the sunrays reaching the earth.

Kuwait deplores Yemen attack

KUWAIT: Kuwait on Wednesday condemned a car bomb attack on the convoy of a Yemeni military official in the southern city of Aden, which left scores of people either dead or injured. Kuwait will always remain vehemently opposed to "all forms of violence and terrorism," a foreign ministry statement underlined, wishing a speedy recovery for those wounded in the attack.

Kuwait oil down to \$116.91 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 55 cents to reach \$116.91 per barrel on Wednesday, compared with \$117.46 pb a day earlier, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Thursday. Globally, Brent crude futures dropped by \$1.72 to \$116.26 pb, as the West Texas Intermediate crude fell by \$1.98 to \$109.78 pb.

Kuwait's May crude oil exports to Japan up 2.2%

TOKYO: Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in May rose 2.2 percent from a year earlier to 5.55 million barrels, or 179,000 barrels per day (bpd), up for the third month in a row, government data showed Thursday. As Japan's fourth-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 6.9 percent of the Asian nation's total crude imports, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report. Japan's overall imports of crude oil grew 7.7 percent year-on-year to 2.60 million bpd, up for the 10th straight month. Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 94.5 percent of the total, up 1.6 percentage points from the year before. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) returned to be Japan's No.1 oil supplier, with imports from the country jumping 24.0 percent from a year earlier to 1.17 million bpd, followed by Saudi Arabia with 873,000 bpd, up 5.8 percent. Qatar ranked third with 179,100 bpd and Ecuador fifth with 66,000 bpd, respectively. Japan is the world's-third biggest oil consumer after China and the US. —KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A view of the sunset from Kuwait City. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait backs UN efforts to transform global education

Minister participates in UNESCO-hosted summit in Paris

PARIS: Kuwait on Wednesday said it supports the mission of the United Nations' (UN) cultural agency UNESCO to transform the education sector around the world, citing classroom development as a national priority. The bulk of Kuwait's national development plans often revolves around the goal of educational development, the country's education minister Dr Ali Al-Mudhaf told a UNESCO-hosted summit in the French capital Paris, highlighting such gatherings as a valuable opportunity to hammer out joint plans on the matter. More than 140 of his counterparts from around the world, he said his country plans to set in motion a raft of education

reforms aiming to build an all-inclusive and complete education system, one that caters to the needs of students of all levels and capabilities, he underlined. Describing education as the "greatest tool" to boost human capital, UN chief Antonio Guterres threw his weight behind the talks and UNESCO's mission to achieve quality universal education by the year 2030. Echoing the UN chief's remarks, UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay emphasized that the world should strive for exemplary education given the challenges in today's world, saying that that the right to learn should be inalienable for everybody. —KUNA



PARIS: Kuwait's education minister Dr Ali Al-Mudhaf speaks during a UNESCO-hosted summit in Paris, France. —KUNA

Zain launches free Hajj roaming promotion

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, launches its special promotion for customers traveling to perform Hajj this year. The promotion allows postpaid and prepaid customers to keep in touch with their loved ones by using Internet and voice calls at no cost at Hajj locations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Zain launches this special promotion every year to keep customers who travel to the Sacred House connected to each other and to their loved ones for free during Hajj season without any cost from their part. The company is keen on being close to its customers every year by sharing this spiritual occasion with them.

Zain now offers FREE roaming service to its customers performing Hajj only when subscribing to

one of the following packages: the all-new weekly postpaid roaming PLUS package (KD 13) that includes 30 local minutes and 30 minutes to Kuwait during the week, and 3 GBs of daily Internet (fair usage policy applies), weekly postpaid Internet roaming package (KD 7), as well as the weekly prepaid eeZee roaming package (KD 9) that includes 25 local roaming minutes, 25 SMS messages, and 5 GBs of Internet weekly.

Upon their arrival to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, customers can simply manually select Zain KSA as their preferred network and then activate one of the above packages through the Zain app or send ROAM to 99990 for postpaid customers or send 9 to 99990 for prepaid customers. The limited time offer starts from July 1 and continues until July 16 and is only valid at Hajj ritual locations.

Zain continuously offers services that are tailored to match its customers' expectations and needs during their travels, and to keep them connected to their loved ones and businesses with more convenience and around the clock.

By launching this exciting offer, Zain continues to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in



offering the best services and offers to meet customers' professional and personal telecommunications needs.



KUWAIT: The National Library of Kuwait hosted a workshop to teach children how to build their own libraries. Twenty five kids aged between six and 14 years participated in the workshop, held as part of the library's 'Future Architects' series. —KUNA photos



Security, rain make for muted start to Xi's anniversary visit

'No progress made' on Iran nuclear talks



SAN ANTONIO, United States: People pray during a vigil for the 53 migrants who died in a trailer in San Antonio, Texas on June 29, 2022. — AFP

Texans mourn migrants who died in truck tragedy

'You put yourself in their place because you also lived through it'

SAN ANTONIO, United States: Texas residents gathered under a scorching sun Wednesday to mourn the 53 migrants who died this week after they were abandoned in a trailer in soaring temperatures, leaving tokens of flowers, candles and bottles of water.

The mourners, several of whom said they or their loved ones had also migrated to the United States illegally, gathered at the site in San Antonio where the truck was found on Monday to erect large wooden crosses and pay their respects. Immigration authorities have said 53 people died, many of dehydration and heatstroke after they were shut inside the trailer with no water during a day when ambient temperatures rose to 103 degrees Fahrenheit (39.4 degrees Celsius).

Eleven others are still being treated in local hospitals, authorities said. "All of this breaks my heart because I have family who have been through the same thing,"

said Veronica Vazquez, 37. "All my cousins, my uncles, came to the United States illegally, some over the river and others through the desert," she said.

Roberto Alvarez, who lives in the area, brought roses and candles. The 48-year-old himself came to the United States as an undocumented immigrant.

"You put yourself a little bit in their place... because you also lived through it," he said. According to Francisco Garduno, head of Mexico's National Migration Institute, the dead included 27 Mexicans, 14 Hondurans, seven Guatemalans, and two Salvadorans.

The nationalities of the other three were not yet revealed. Four men have been arrested and charged over the incident so far, according to a statement from the district attorney's office of western Texas. The office said a 45-year-old named Homero Zamorano had been arrested at the scene, where he was spotted "hiding in

the brush after attempting to abscond."

He was also spotted on surveillance footage driving the truck at an immigration checkpoint, the statement said, adding that he has been charged with one count of alien smuggling resulting in death, and faces life in prison or execution if convicted. Garduno said the suspected driver had initially pretended to be one of the survivors.

High on meth?

The local daily San Antonio Express-News reported the man was "very high on meth," citing a law enforcement officer. Federal law enforcement agents arrested two other men Tuesday at the address linked to the tractor-trailer's registration, court documents showed.

Juan Francisco D'Luna-Bilbao and Juan Claudio D'Luna-Mendez, both Mexican nationals who over-

stayed US tourist visas, were charged with illegal possession of multiple firearms, the documents alleged. They face up to ten years in prison.

The fourth man, Christian Martinez, was arrested in eastern Texas on Tuesday, the district attorney's statement said. He was charged with one count of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens resulting in death, and also faces life in prison or potentially the death penalty, it said. Officials from Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras, who met at Mexico's embassy in Washington, issued a joint statement in which they pledged to help the victims and their families. They said that they would form a rapid action group to target and dismantle human trafficking networks. San Antonio police were first alerted to the trailer on Monday, after a worker near an isolated road in San Antonio heard a cry for help and went to investigate. — AFP

4 protesters killed in Sudan rallies

KHARTOUM: At least four Sudanese demonstrators were killed Thursday as the security forces sought to quash mass rallies of protesters demanding an end to military rule, pro-democracy medics reported. AFP correspondents reported security forces firing tear gas and stun grenades to disperse tens of thousands of protesters, the latest crackdown on the anti-coup movement in the past eight months. At least two of the four were shot dead by "bullets to the chest", the medics said, reporting a total death toll of 105 from months of protest-related violence. "Even if we die, the military will not rule us," protesters chanted, urging the reversal of an October military coup by army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, that prompted foreign governments to slash aid, deepening a chronic economic crisis.

"Down with Burhan's rule," others chanted, with protests and violence flaring in both the capital Khartoum and its suburbs, including the twin city of Omdurman. The medics had previously reported one demonstrator was shot dead on Wednesday during small-scale protests in the run-up to the main rallies. An AFP correspondent said internet and phone lines had been disrupted since the early hours of Thursday, a measure the Sudanese authorities often impose to prevent mass gatherings.

Security was tight in Khartoum despite the recent lifting of a state of emergency imposed after the coup. Troops and police blocked off roads leading to both army headquarters and the presidential palace, witnesses said. Shops around the capital were largely shuttered. Activists have been calling for "million-strong" rallies.

UN special representative Volker Perthes said Thursday that "violence needs to end", while the US embassy in Khartoum urged restraint and "the protection of civilians so that no more lives are lost". Sudan's foreign ministry has repeatedly criticized the UN envoy's comments, saying they were built on "assumptions" and "contradict his role as facilitator" in troubled talks on ending Sudan's political crisis.

The latest protests come on the anniversary of a previous coup in 1989, that toppled the country's last elected civilian government and ushered in three decades of iron-fisted rule by Islamist-backed general Omar Al-Bashir. They also come on the anniversary of 2019 protests demanding that the generals, who had ousted Bashir in a palace coup earlier that year, cede power to civilians.

Those protests led to the formation of the mixed civilian-military transitional government which was toppled in last year's coup. Sudan has been roiled by near-weekly protests as the country's economic woes have deepened since Burhan seized power last year. "June 30 is our way to bring down the coup and block the path of any fake alternatives," said the Forces for Freedom and Change, an alliance of civilian groups whose leaders were ousted in the coup.—AFP



PARIS, France: Xavier Noguera (L), lawyer of defendant Mohammed Amri, and Johnathan De Tave, lawyer of defendant Ali El Haddad Asufi, speak to the press at the Palais de Justice courthouse in Paris after of the verdict in the trial of the November 13, 2015, Paris terror attacks. — AFP

French court jails for life sole surviving Paris 2015 attacker

PARIS: The sole surviving member of an Islamic State terror cell that killed 130 people in Paris in November 2015 was handed a whole-life sentence on Wednesday at the end of a trial that aimed to draw a line under the worst peace-time atrocity in modern French history.

Salah Abdeslam, a 32-year-old Frenchman of Moroccan origin, was captured alive by police four months after the bloodbath at the Bataclan concert hall and other locations. His sentence, the toughest possible, was read out by the head of a five-judge panel overseeing the trial of 20 men accused of involvement in the assault on the capital. Wearing a khaki-coloured polo shirt, he stood motionless and showed no emotion as he was declared guilty and sentenced by chief judge Louis Peries during an hour-long speech. "The sentences are quite heavy," one tearful survivor, Sophie, told AFP as she left the court in central Paris. "I feel a lot of relief. Ten months of hearings—it's helped us to rebuild."

The trial has been the biggest in modern French history, the culmination of a six-year international investigation whose findings run to more than a million pages.

The other 19 suspects, accused of either plotting or offering logistical support, were also found guilty, with their sentences ranging from two years to life in prison.

All of the attackers except for Abdeslam blew themselves up or were killed by police during or after the assault. Hundreds of victims and witnesses packed out the benches of the specially constructed courtroom as the sentences were read out.

"My first reaction is that we have the feeling of turning a page after the verdicts," Gerard Chemla, a lawyer representing victims at the trial, told reporters.

Change of heart?

Abdeslam had begun his appearances last September by defiantly declaring himself as an "Islamic State fighter" but finished tearfully apologising to victims and asking for leniency. In his final statement, he urged the judges not to give him a full-life term, seeking to emphasize that he had not killed anyone himself.

"I made mistakes, it's true. But I'm not a murderer, I'm not a killer," he said. His lawyers had also argued against the whole-life sentence, which prosecutors had demanded. It offers only a small chance of parole after 30 years and has been pronounced only four times previously since being created in 1994.

Abdeslam, a one-time pot-smoking lover of parties, discarded his suicide belt on the night of the attack and fled back to his hometown, Brussels, where many of the extremists lived. He told the court that he had had a change of heart and decided not to kill people. "I changed my mind out of humanity, not out of fear," he insisted. But after hearing that his suicide belt was defective, the judges concluded that this "cast serious doubt" on his apparent "renunciation". They ruled he was a "co-author" of the attacks which "constituted a single crime scene."

A team of 10 jihadists laid siege to the French capital, attacking the national sports stadium, bars, and the Bataclan in an assault immediately claimed from Syria by the IS group. The attacks shocked France, with the choice of targets and the manner of the violence seemingly designed to inflict maximum fear, just 10 months after a separate assault on the Charlie Hebdo magazine.

In one instance, the court heard a recording of gunmen taunting people trapped in the Bataclan as they fired on them with Kalashnikov machine guns from a balcony above.

The huge loss of life marked the start of a gruesome and violent period in Europe as IS ramped up attacks across the continent. France, under then president Francois Hollande, declared the country "at war" with the extremists and their self-proclaimed caliphate in Syria and Iraq.—AFP

Czechs take over EU presidency braced for 'bad weather'

PRAGUE, Czech Republic: The Czech Republic will take over the rotating six-month presidency of the European Union on Friday with all eyes on Ukraine, which has been battling Russian forces since February.

To kick off its presidency, the Czech government will meet European commissioners at a chateau for talks, followed by a concert. But the Czech turn at the helm-taking over from France-is unlikely to offer much leisure as the war rages on four months into the Russian invasion, analysts say. "This presidency is not geared for good weather, but for bad times," Pavel Havlicek of the Prague-based Association for International Affairs told AFP. The Central European country of 10.5 million people, an EU-member since 2004, has vowed to focus largely on aid to Ukraine and the war's repercussions.

It wants to help contain the refugee crisis, launch a post-war reconstruction effort, boost the EU's energy security, defence capacities and economic resilience, and improve the resilience of its democratic institutions.

"All the priorities are very well chosen and if we manage to put at least some of them on the table, start talks with partners and reach at least some decisions, I'd say we will not have wasted time," said Havlicek.

Pro sanctions

The Czechs have won respect abroad by doing their part to help Ukraine, he added. Since the invasion began on February 24, the Czech Republic has welcomed nearly 400,000 Ukrainian refugees and provided sizeable financial and military aid to Kyiv.

Within the EU it is also a vocal supporter of sanctions against Russia. Rightwing Prime Minister Petr Fiala, a former political analyst who co-wrote a 992-page book about the EU, recently said he would try to organise a summit with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The event would also be attended by western Balkan countries whose EU bids, backed by the Czech Republic and others in the region, have recently stalled. But the summit, which would offer Ukraine a Marshall Plan-like US initiative to help western Europe rebuild after World War II—would only be held if the war were over by then. But political analyst Jiri Pehe said this precondition made the project unrealistic. "The conflict will hardly end before the end of the Czech presidency," he told AFP. "I think the Czechs will just try to organise a summit on Ukraine and... persuade other countries to keep helping the country."

The Czechs were ill-placed to lead a debate on economic recovery or energy security, said Pehe. The country faces high inflation, has yet to join the eurozone and relies on nuclear energy, dismissed by some EU members including Germany, he added.—AFP

International

Zionist parliament dissolves, sets fifth election in less than four years

November vote will in part be a contest between Netanyahu and Lapid

JERUSALEM: Zionist lawmakers dissolved parliament on Thursday, forcing the country's fifth election in less than four years, with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid set to take over as caretaker prime minister at midnight. After the unanimous 92-0 vote, the centrist Lapid embraced outgoing Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, whose year in charge of an unwieldy, eight-party coalition was ultimately undone by its ideological divisions.

Lapid, whose Hungarian-born father survived the Holocaust, went immediately to Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial centre after the parliament vote. "There, I promised my late father that I will always keep Zionist entity strong and capable of defending itself and protecting its children," the 58-year-old said in a statement.

The newly called election set for November 1 marks another sign that Zionist entity remains mired in

reality", said Yohanan Plesner, president of the Zionist Democracy Institute think-tank.

The only solution to such "dysfunction," he said, were "long-over-due electoral and constitutional reforms". The November vote will in part be a contest between Netanyahu and Lapid, a former TV news anchor and celebrity who has surprised many since being dismissed as a lightweight when he entered politics a decade ago.

Lapid was the architect of the Bennett-led motley alliance that took office in June 2021, ending Netanyahu's record 12 consecutive years in power and passing Zionist's first state budget since 2018.

Bennett led a coalition of right-wingers, centrists, doves and Islamists from the Raam faction, which made history by becoming the first Arab party to support an Zionist government since the Jewish state's creation in 1948. Raam party chief Mansour Abbas faced backlash from some Arabs but on Thursday defended his decision to take part in Zionist governance.

"We succeeded in pushing ourselves as a political force," Abbas said, adding that Raam would continue advocating for Arab society, making sure that issues like poor living conditions for his Bedouin constituents, were "on the table rather than underneath it".

Farewell address

The coalition came apart last week after some Arab lawmakers refused to renew a measure that ensures the roughly 475,000 Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank live under Israeli law. They said it marked a de facto endorsement of a 55-year occupation that has forced West Bank Palestinians to live under Zionist entity military rule.

For Bennett, a staunch supporter of settlements, allowing the so-called West Bank law to expire was intolerable. Dissolving parliament before its June 30 expiration temporarily renews the measure.

Bennett has argued that his coalition was successful in its brief tenure and showed ideological rivals can govern together.

"No one should give up their positions, but it is certainly possible and necessary to put aside, for a while, ideological debates and take care of the economy, security and future of the citizens of Zionist entity," he said in his farewell address Wednesday.

Bennett will stay on as alternate prime minister responsible for Iran policy, as world powers take steps to revive stalled talks on the Islamic republic's nuclear programme.

Zionist entity opposes a restoration of the 2015 agreement that gave its arch foe sanctions relief in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme.

Lapid will retain his foreign minister title while serving as Israel's 14th premier. He will find himself under an early microscope, with US President Joe Biden due in Jerusalem in two weeks. — AFP



JERUSALEM: Head of Zionist entity's conservative Islamic Raam party Mansour Abbas embraces Zionism Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid, following the dissolution of the parliament, in Jerusalem on June 30. — AFP



Era of political gridlock

an unprecedented era of political gridlock, with early opinion polls indicating the results may again be inconclusive.

The religious nationalist Bennett has said he will not contest the vote and is stepping back from politics, tweeting the Hebrew word "Toda" (thank you), after lawmakers sealed his departure from office. He later hosted Lapid for a short handover ceremony.

Hawkish former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has assured that he and his allies — extreme-right nationalists and ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties — will finally rally a majority, following what he described on Thursday as a "failed (coalition) experiment".

"We are the only alternative. A strong, nationalist, responsible government," said Netanyahu, who is on trial over corruption charges he denies.

'Deeply polarised'

Regarded by both allies and critics as a tireless political brawler, Netanyahu was already campaigning Thursday, telling shoppers at a Jerusalem mall that combating rising living costs — which he blamed on Bennett's "bad government" — will be his "first mission" after returning to office.

Zionists being forced to the polls for a fifth time since April 2019 highlighted their "deeply polarised

'No progress made' on Iran nuke talks

DOHA: Indirect talks in Qatar's capital between Iran and the US on reviving a 2015 nuclear deal have concluded with "no progress made", a State Department spokesperson said late Wednesday. The negotiations in Doha were an attempt to reboot long-running European Union-mediated talks on a return to the 2015 agreement between Tehran and world powers.

No time limit was previously announced on the most-recent negotiations, which had been taking place in a Doha hotel with special envoy Robert Malley heading the US delegation. But by Wednesday night, a US State Department spokesperson said the "indirect discussions in Doha have concluded".

"While we are very grateful to the EU for its efforts, we are disappointed that Iran has, yet again, failed to respond positively to the EU's initiative and therefore that no progress was made," the spokesperson told AFP in an email. EU coordinator Enrique Mora had earlier said the parties engaged in "two intense days of proximity talks" in Doha

that had "not yet" yielded the progress the EU team sought.

"We will keep working with even greater urgency to bring back on track a key deal for non-proliferation and regional stability," he said on Twitter earlier in the day, posting a photo of himself meeting with Iran's chief negotiator Ali Bagheri.

The comments came after Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said that the talks would last only two days. The parties have "exchanged views and proposals on the remaining issues", he said. An EU source told AFP that the discussions, which come two weeks before US President Joe Biden makes his first official visit to the region, were supposed to last several days.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian had said Iran was "serious" about finalising a deal in Doha, but that it wouldn't cross its "red lines". "If the American side has serious intentions and is realistic, an agreement is available at this stage and in this round of negotiations," he was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA earlier Wednesday.

IRNA has previously described the "red lines" as lifting all sanctions related to the nuclear agreement, creating a mechanism to verify they have been lifted and making sure the US does not withdraw once again from the deal. — AFP

OPEC+ stays the course on...

Continued from Page 1

The group finally decided at its last meeting in early June to add 648,000 barrels per day to the market in July, up from 432,000 in previous months. But the larger-than-expected boost failed to cool prices. Since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb 24, the international benchmark, Brent North Sea Crude, has added around 17 percent, while the US benchmark WTI has jumped more than 18 percent.

Analysts have warned that only a recession may be able to bring down prices. "The prices will likely push higher unless the recession fears take the upper hand," said Ipek Ozkardeska, an analyst at

Swissquote Bank. Several OPEC+ members have been failing to meet the output quotas, while Iran and Venezuela - and now also Russia - are blocked by sanctions.

The United Arab Emirates said this week it was close to its oil output ceiling, ahead of a regional visit by US President Joe Biden, who is expected to lobby for increased production. Biden will visit neighboring Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, as part of his tour next month, but analysts doubt it will convince OPEC+ to boost output.

On Monday, at the meeting of the G7 club of industrialized nations in Germany, French President Emmanuel Macron was caught on camera telling Biden details of a conversation with UAE leader Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. According to Macron, Sheikh Mohamed said the UAE was at its "maximum" capacity and Saudi Arabia also faced a limit for raising production. — AFP

Marcos Jr, who appears to be more polite and businesslike than Duterte, was swept to power with the help of a massive social media misinformation campaign. Pro-Marcos groups bombarded Filipinos with fake or misleading posts portraying the family in a positive light while ignoring the brutality and theft of billions of dollars from state coffers during the patriarch's 20-year rule. Crucial to Marcos Jr's success was an alliance with Duterte's daughter Sara, who secured the vice-presidential post with more votes than him, and the backing of rival dynasties.

Many expect Marcos Jr will be less violent and more predictable than the elder Duterte, but activists and clergy fear he could use his victory to entrench himself in power. "Marcos Jr's refusal to recognize the abuses and wrongdoings of the past, in fact lauding the dictatorship as 'golden years', makes him very likely to continue its dark legacy during his term," leftist alliance Bayan warned. Marcos Jr, who previously distanced himself from his father's rule but not criticized it, urged the gathering on Thursday to not look "back in anger or nostalgia".

He has filled most cabinet positions, with a mass swearing-in at the palace Thursday. But the most influential adviser during his six-year term will likely be his wife, Louise, who is widely believed to have run his campaign. Sergio Ortiz-Luis, president of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, said the country had a "big chance that we can be moving forward and ahead of the pack" under Marcos Jr. "We are very optimistic on the quality of the leadership that we have now," said Ortiz-Luis. — AFP

Salmonella hits biggest...

Continued from Page 1

plant, which is in Flanders, northwest of Brussels. "Food safety is of the utmost importance for Barry Callebaut and this contamination is quite exceptional. We have a well-defined food safety charter and procedures," the firm said.

Belgium's food safety agency AFSCA has been informed and a spokesman told AFP it had opened an investigation. An AFSCA spokesman said investigators would "gather all the information in order to trace the contamination". The Wieze plant does not make chocolates to be sold directly to consumers, and the firm has no reason yet to believe that any

contaminated goods made by clients have yet made it onto shop shelves.

The scare comes a few weeks after a case of chocolates contaminated with salmonella in the Ferrero factory in Arlon in southern Belgium manufacturing Kinder chocolates. Belgian health authorities said on June 17 that they had given the green light to restart the Italian giant's factory for a three-month test period. Swiss group Barry Callebaut supplies cocoa and chocolate products to many companies in the food industry, including industry giants such as Hershey, Mondelez, Nestle or Unilever.

World number one in the sector, its annual sales amounted to 2.2 million tons during the 2020-2021 financial year. Over the past financial year, the group, which has a head office in Zurich, generated a net profit of 384.5 million Swiss francs (\$402 million) for 7.2 billion francs in turnover. The group employs more than 13,000 people, has more than 60 production sites worldwide. — AFP

Marcos Jr praises rule...

Continued from Page 1

"So will it be with his son. You will get no excuses from me."

Ahead of the swearing-in, Duterte received Marcos Jr at the riverside Malacanang presidential palace - which the Marcos family fled from into exile 36 years ago. Duterte, 77, wore a mask and a traditional formal shirt, characteristically unbuttoned at the top and with sleeves rolled up, for the meeting with Marcos Jr, who he once described as "weak". The ceremony comes days after the Supreme Court dismissed final attempts to have Marcos Jr disqualified from the election and prevent him taking office.

As rising prices squeeze an economy already ravaged by COVID-19, Marcos Jr has made tackling inflation, boosting growth and ramping up food production his priorities. He has taken the rare step of appointing himself agriculture secretary to lead the overhaul of the problem-plagued sector. Marcos Jr has also pledged to defend the Philippines' rights to the disputed South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost entirely. He promised Thursday that "we will go very far under my watch" - but has offered scant detail on how he will achieve his goals and few hints about his leadership style after largely shunning media interviews.

Russia quits Snake Island...

Continued from Page 1

farmland and seen Ukraine's ports seized, razed or blockaded - threatening grain importers in Africa with famine. Western powers have accused Putin of using the trapped harvest as a weapon to increase pressure on the international community, and Russia has been accused of stealing grain. On Thursday, a ship carrying 7,000 tons of grain sailed from Ukraine's occupied port of Berdyansk, said the regional leader appointed by the Russian occupation forces.

Evgeny Balitsky, the head of the pro-Moscow administration, said Russia's Black Sea ships "are ensuring the security" of the journey he said, adding that the port had been de-mined. Separately, the Russian defense ministry said its forces are holding more than 6,000 Ukrainian prisoners of war who have been captured since the Feb 24 invasion. The conflict in Ukraine has dominated the NATO summit in Madrid, where the leaders said Russia "is the most significant and direct threat to allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area".

This came as NATO officially invited Sweden and Finland to join the alliance, and US President Joe Biden announced new deployments of US troops, ships and planes to Europe. Biden said the US move was exactly what Russian President Putin "didn't want" - and Moscow, facing fierce resistance from

Ukrainian forces equipped with Western arms, reacted with predictable fury. Putin accused the alliance of seeking to assert its "supremacy", telling journalists in the Turkmenistan capital of Ashgabat that Ukraine and its people are "a means" for NATO to "defend their own interests." "The NATO countries' leaders wish to... assert their supremacy, their imperial ambitions," Putin added.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz dismissed Putin's comments as "ridiculous" and said the Russian leader "has made imperialism the goal of his politics". NATO leaders have funneled billions of dollars of arms to Ukraine and faced a renewed appeal from President Volodymyr Zelensky for more long-range artillery. "Ukraine can count on us for as long as it takes," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said at the summit, which ends Thursday, as he announced a new strategic overview that focuses on the Moscow threat.

The document, updated for the first time since 2010, warned the alliance "cannot discount the possibility" of an attack on its members. Kuleba welcomed NATO's "clear-eyed stance on Russia". Russian missiles continued to rain down across Ukraine. In the southern city of Mykolaiv rescuers found the bodies of six slain civilians in the rubble of a destroyed building, emergency services said.

The city of Lysychansk in the eastern Donbas region - the current focus of Russia's offensive - is also facing sustained bombardment. "The Russians are throwing almost all of their resources at capturing Lysychansk," Sergiy Gaiday, regional governor of Lugansk, which includes the city, said on Telegram. "It's hard to find a safe spot in the city." — AFP

International

Prophet row murder sparks fury on Indian social media

Lal had been targeted after a Facebook post expressing support for Nupur Sharma

NEW DELHI: The gruesome killing of a Hindu tailor has inflamed religious tensions in India and sparked a furious response on social media, including calls for reprisal attacks against the country's Muslim minority. Two Muslim men have been arrested over Tuesday's attack, committed in apparent retaliation for inflammatory comments about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made by a spokeswoman for India's governing party weeks earlier.

Footage of the murder and attempted beheading of Kanhaiya Lal, which went viral online, also showed his attackers brandishing large knives and threatening to kill Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India has a long history of communal violence and authorities have shut down internet connections and imposed a curfew in the city where the attack took place to prevent unrest.

But social media platforms have been consumed by angry reactions to the killing, with some users demanding violent retribution against both the accused murderers and other Muslims. Members of public Telegram groups dedicated to promoting and defending Hinduism called on each other to pick up weapons and attack Muslims, or discussed the virtues of storming a police station to attack the two accused men.

The far-right Hindu group Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) used social media to issue a nationwide protest call against Islamist terrorism and complain that Muslims had routinely upset the religious sentiments of India's majority religion. "You should be afraid of the day when Hindus too start giving reply to the insult," senior VHP figure Surendra Kumar Jain said in a video posted online,

and watched nearly 75,000 times across Twitter and Facebook.

Though many prominent voices said the killing was an indictment of Islam, many of the loudest voices condemning the attack came from Muslim religious groups. "There is no room for justification of violence in Islam," wrote the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, one of at least half a dozen prominent India-based Muslim groups to condemn the attack while also calling for calm. "Peace should not be disturbed. Nobody should try to take advantage of this ugly crime."

'Hindu lives matter' goes viral

A day after his murder, Lal's name had been mentioned more than 200,000 times on Twitter, along with a grab bag of hashtags condemning the attack. The hashtag "Hindu lives matter" was being posted more than 2,000 times an hour on Thursday.

Lal had been targeted after a Facebook post expressing support for Nupur Sharma, a BJP spokeswoman who last month made inflammatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during a TV debate. Her comments led to violent protests in India and embroiled the country in a diplomatic row, with nearly 20 countries calling in their Indian ambassadors for an explanation.

The BJP went into damage control after Sharma's comments, suspending her from the party and issuing a statement to insist that it respected all religions. But since coming to power nationally in 2014, Modi's party has been accused by rights groups and foreign governments of championing discriminatory policies towards India's 200-million strong Muslim minority.

the city and forced to spend days in quarantine hotels.

In the mall, a 23-year-old postgraduate student who gave her name as Natalie said she felt distant from the Chinese leader. "We all know that (Xi) won't actually come into contact with everyday people. So I don't see why I have to pay attention," she said.

Some on social media pointedly shared decades-old pictures of visits by Queen Elizabeth II to Hong Kong, with visibly more relaxed security and close proximity to spectators. But others AFP spoke to throughout the day were more understanding.

"Of course I want to see the president if possible," said a 76-year-old woman surnamed Xu. "But we are just small ordinary people. Watching TV will be fine too." Details of Xi's visit have been kept under tight wraps, with media access tightly restricted.

Kelvin Lam, a financial professional in his 40s, said he could understand the reason for Covid-related restrictions. "But I think it would be better if they make things less secretive," he said. "More transparency is better."

Thunderstorms swept through the city all day

Indian soldiers guarded the twin routes of Pahalgam and Baltal leading to the shrine to the Hindu god Shiva. Over 400 sandbag bunkers manned by armed soldiers dot the Himalayan landscape surrounding the shrine and along the routes to two base camps.

Authorities restricted locals from visiting the two tourist resorts of Pahalgam and Sonmarg that serve as base camps during the pilgrimage. All traffic was being halted on the main highway to the start while convoys guarded by armed soldiers passed through, with all connecting roads blocked with coils of razor wire.

Dilip Sharma, from the northern Indian state of Rajasthan, said he was ecstatic to be able to undertake the pilgrimage again after three years. "You can't imagine how happy I am at being able to pay my obeisance to the lord again. I want to thank the government of India for very good arrangements," Sharma told an AFP photographer along the trek to the shrine.

The event used to be low-key, with a few thousand pilgrims attending, until an armed insurgency against the Indian rule of Kashmir erupted in 1989. Since then the religious practice-and accompanying

also barred from attending. Some speeches are being broadcast on state radio-with clerics calling for absolute loyalty to the Taliban's rule.

"Obedience is the most important principle of the system," Habibullah Haqqani, the head of the gathering, said in his opening remarks. "We must obey all our leaders in all affairs, sincerely and truly, and should obey in a good manner."

Deadly quake

The gathering comes a week after a powerful earthquake struck the east of the country, killing over 1,000 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless. Even before the quake, the Taliban were struggling to administer a country that had long been in the grip of economic malaise, utterly dependent on foreign aid that dried up with the overthrow of the Western-backed government in August 2021.

Officials from the United States were due to meet

Security, rain make for muted start to Xi's anniversary visit

HONG KONG: A brewing typhoon warning and a strict closed loop system made for a muted beginning to President Xi Jinping's visit to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China on Thursday.

Xi's trip is a show of strength and pomp for the Communist Party, showcasing its control after a political crackdown that quashed dissent in the once outspoken city. But at a mall next to the high-speed rail terminus where Xi arrived, a salesperson surnamed Luk said he felt the trip was "low-key" and said he knew little about it.

"I don't feel the city is in a festive mood for his visit," said Luk, 42. "I still think 25th anniversary is worth celebrating, it's a milestone in terms of time, though it's hard to say we are in a better spot today." The visit is taking place in a strict closed loop system, with Xi and anyone he comes into contact with cut off from the rest of

Huge Hindu pilgrimage in Kashmir begins

PAHALGAM, India: Thousands of chanting devotees from across India began trekking up through Himalayan passes in Indian-administered Kashmir Thursday at the start of a huge pilgrimage, accompanied by a major security operation. Critics accuse the Hindu nationalist government of using the annual Amarnath procession to reinforce New Delhi's claims over the disputed Muslim-majority region.

Authorities expect around a million people to take part in a pilgrimage to the cave shrine at 3,900 meters (12,800 feet) containing a holy stalagmite over the coming 43 days. The procession, which sees pilgrims trek uphill for several days or be transported by donkey or helicopter did not take place for two years because of the pandemic.

On Thursday devotees chanted religious hymns as tens of thousands of

Clerics meet to rubber-stamp Taliban rule

KABUL: Two gunmen were shot dead in the Afghan capital Thursday near the site of a gathering by thousands of religious scholars called to endorse the Taliban's hardline Islamist rule. Taliban officials said the two started firing from a rooftop near where the meeting was taking place, but were "quickly eliminated by Mujahideen with the help of Allah the Almighty".

Officials have provided scant details of the three-day men-only "jirga"-a traditional gathering of influential people that settles differences by consensus-and the media is



BANGALORE, India: Activists of the right wing Hindu Janajagruti Samithi organisation shout slogans during a protest against the recent killing of Hindu tailor Kanhaiya Lal in Udaipur allegedly by two Muslim men for supporting a former spokeswoman of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) party. —AFP

Amnesty this month said authorities had waged a "vicious" crackdown on Muslims who took to the streets to protest Sharma's remarks, including by demolishing homes with bulldozers. Since the attack on Lal, party members have taken to social media to criticise Muslim nations that had complained about Sharma's comments for remaining silent on the killing.

Several also took aim at Indian journalist Mohammed Zubair, who had helped draw attention to the remarks by Sharma that eventually saw her suspended from the BJP. In one tweet, Kapil Mishra,

a BJP politician, accused Zubair and his supporters of being "responsible" for the tailor's death.

Zubair, who has drawn frequent attention to hate speech by Hindu fringe groups, was arrested on Monday. He remains in custody, with police citing a four-year-old tweet about a Hindu god they said had been the subject of complaints by Hindu groups.

Police opened an investigation into Sharma this month after a complaint by a member of the public about her remarks, but she has not been arrested and her current whereabouts are unknown. —AFP



HONG KONG, China: Traffic police direct traffic near West Kowloon Station in Hong Kong on June 30, 2022, as Chinese President Xi Jinping arrives in Hong Kong to attend celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the city's handover from Britain to China. —AFP

Thursday, with the city's weather service warning that it would launch a typhoon warning later that night. At a wet Victoria Park, previously the scene of annual July 1 rallies but this year the site of scattered displays about the handover, those who had braved the weather forecast were unimpressed by what was on offer. —AFP



BALTAL, India: Hindu devotees gather in the early morning before starting their pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Amarnath from a base camp, near Baltal on June 30, 2022. —AFP

security mobilisation-have grown, as has its political significance.

The territory is divided between India and Pakistan and claimed by both. Rebels have often said that the pilgrimage is not a target but have warned in the past that if the religious event was used to establish Hindu domination of the territory they would act. In 2017 suspected rebels

attacked a bus, killing 11 pilgrims.

On Thursday some of the pilgrims chanted a slogan equating Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi to a deity, an AFP videographer said. As an additional security measure this year, authorities assigned all pilgrims a unique radio identification tag to closely monitor their movement. —AFP

senior Taliban leaders in Qatar Thursday for talks on unlocking some of Afghanistan's reserves, with Washington seeking ways to ensure the money goes to help the population rather than the Islamist group.

A Taliban source told AFP this week that criticism of the regime would be allowed at the three-day jirga, and thorny issues such as the education of girls-which has divided opinion in the movement-would be discussed. But women would not be allowed to attend the gathering, with deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi telling state broadcaster RTA on Wednesday there was no need because they would be represented by male relatives. "When their sons are in the gathering it means they are also involved," he said.

Women's rights activist Razia Barakzai told AFP Hanafi's comments were "intolerable logic". "Women should be part of the decisions about their fate," she said. "Life has been taken away from Afghan women." —AFP

Taliban to meet US on releasing frozen funds after quake

DOHA: The United States and the Taliban plan talks Thursday in Qatar on unlocking some of Afghanistan's reserves following a devastating earthquake, officials said, with Washington seeking ways to ensure the money goes to help the population. The White House said it is working "urgently" on the effort, but a member of the Afghan central bank's board said it could take time to finalise.

The Taliban's foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, arrived in the Qatari capital Doha along with finance ministry and central bank officials for talks, Taliban foreign ministry spokesman Hafiz Zia Ahmed said.

The State Department said its envoy on Afghanistan, Tom West, would take part and said the United States was focused on a range of interests including human rights and opening schools for girls. "None of these engagements should be seen as 'legitimising' the Taliban or its so-called government but are a mere reflection of the reality that we need to have such discussions in order to advance US interests," said a spokesperson for the US State Department, which does not recognize Taliban rule over Afghanistan.

The Taliban took over in August 2021 after the United States gave up a 20-year military effort. Washington at the time froze \$7 billion in reserves and the international community halted billions in direct aid that Afghanistan and its population of roughly 40 million people had relied on.

The currency has collapsed and the country descended into a serious economic crisis, although some assistance has been restored. Last week's 5.9-magnitude earthquake in eastern Afghanistan, which killed more than 1,000 people and left tens of thousands homeless, adds urgency to the funding debate.

"Negotiations are underway and it is our expectation that a final proposal under discussion will be finalised," said Shah Mehrabi, member of the Supreme Council of the Central Bank of Afghanistan. However, details on "the mechanism to transfer the reserves to the Central Bank has not been finalised," he told AFP. "It is going to take a while. These things do not happen overnight."

'Get these funds moving'

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said over the weekend that efforts were underway "to get these funds moving" from the frozen reserves. "We are urgently working to address complicated questions about the use of these funds to ensure they benefit the people of Afghanistan and not the Taliban," she told reporters travelling with President Joe Biden to Europe. In question are \$3.5 billion in frozen reserves, half the total blocked by the US government.

"I have argued that these reserves should be released to the Central Bank," said Mehrabi, who also is an economics professor at Montgomery College in the suburbs of the US capital. He proposed a "limited, monitored release of reserves" of about \$150 million each month to pay for imports.—AFP

Business

FRIDAY, JULY 1, 2022



CLOMBO: Motorists queue along a street to buy fuel at a Ceylon petroleum corporation fuel station in Colombo.— AFP

IMF urges bankrupt Sri Lanka to tackle corruption and raise taxes

Millions labor through chronic shortages

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka should stamp out corruption and substantially raise taxes to rescue its economy, the International Monetary Fund said Thursday after bailout talks with the bankrupt island nation. Representatives from the global lender of last resort have just concluded a 10-day visit to the capital Colombo to map out a resolution to the South Asian country's unprecedented economic crisis.

Their meetings follow months of lengthy blackouts and days-long queues for petrol as a financial crunch leaves Sri Lanka without the funds to meet

its energy needs. But the IMF said more work was needed to set the nation's finances right and repair its runaway fiscal deficit before a deal could be struck on a funding arrangement to address its balance of payments crisis. "Given the low level of revenues, far-reaching tax reforms are urgently needed," the lender said in a statement.

Sri Lanka needed to "reduce corruption vulnerabilities", contain spiraling inflation and bring an end to costly energy subsidies that had long been a drain on the government budget without hurting more vulnerable citizens, the statement added. "The

authorities have made considerable progress in formulating their economic reform program and we are looking forward to continuing the dialogue with them," it said.

Sri Lanka has already reversed drastic 2019 tax cuts introduced by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa which have been blamed for precipitating the economic crisis. It has also scaled back energy subsidies, with the cost of fuel rising by up to 400 percent this year, and in April the government defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt. Sri Lanka's 22 million people have labored through chronic shortages of

food, pharmaceuticals and other essentials this year, and already severe hardships have worsened in recent weeks.

The island nation is almost completely without petrol and the government has shut down non-essential public services in an effort to conserve fuel. The UN estimates that about 80 percent of the public are skipping meals to cope with food shortages and record prices. Protests have demanded Rajapaksa's resignation for the government's mismanagement of the crisis, but the president has so far refused to stand down.— AFP

CBK provides banks with new notes for Eid Al-Adha

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the completion of the process of providing all local banks with new Kuwait currency notes of various denominations to meet the needs of citizens and residents on the occasion of approaching Eid Al-Adha. CBK stated that those wishing to obtain new currency notes should visit their appointed bank branches during the official working hours. CBK congratulated all citizens and residents on this occasion, asking the Almighty Allah to bestow blessings and peace on the State of Kuwait and the Islamic world.



PARIS: The logo of mobile app 'Snapchat' is displayed on a tablet in Paris.— AFP

Subscription version of Snapchat makes debut

SAN FRANCISCO: US tech firm Snap on Wednesday launched a subscription version of Snapchat as it looks to generate more money from the image-centric, ephemeral messaging app. Snapchat+ is priced at \$4 a month and will provide access to exclusive features, the California-based company said in a blog post. It said that these would include priority tech support and early access to experimental features. The subscription version of the service is making its debut in Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, Snap said.

Snap in February reported its first quarterly profit, but two months later warned that it saw the economic outlook as having darkened considerably. The company said that more than 332 million people around the world use Snapchat daily. "This subscription will allow us to deliver new Snapchat features to some of the most passionate members of our community," Snap said in the blog post.— AFP

British Airways owner to buy 14 Airbus jets

LONDON: British Airways parent IAG said Thursday it has ordered 11 Airbus A320neo aircraft and three A321neos worth \$1.7 billion, as the aviation sector seeks to recover from the pandemic. The airline conglomerate, which also owns Aer Lingus and Iberia, has converted options to buy the fuel-efficient single-aisle jets after negotiating a "substantial" discount, it said in a statement.

The planes, due for delivery in 2024 and 2025, will replace older A320ceo aircraft in IAG's short-haul fleet. This is in addition to the conversion of eight options in March for six A320neos and two A321neos. "These modern, more fuel-efficient aircraft will bring both cost efficiencies and environmental benefits to IAG airlines," the company added in the statement.

The firm will announce engine selection and financing options nearer to the delivery time. Thursday's news is a boost to Airbus after IAG last month ordered 50 fuel-efficient 737 MAX jets worth \$6.25 billion from the European planemaker's fierce US rival Boeing. The Boeing deal was a vote of confidence in the crisis-hit MAX jet after two deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019.

The raft of orders come amid signs of recovery in the aviation sector, which was ravaged by the Covid pandemic. British low-cost carrier EasyJet this month



LONDON: A British Airways Boeing 787 comes in to land at Heathrow airport in west London.— AFP

exercised options to buy 56 A320neo aircraft worth \$6.5 billion and due for delivery between 2026 and 2029. IAG in May forecast a return to annual profit after narrowing COVID-induced losses as travel restrictions were eased. The group had collapsed into losses during 2020 and 2021 as the pandemic grounded planes and slammed demand.

Nevertheless, airlines and airports are currently struggling to recruit sufficient staff as skies reopen

after the lifting of pandemic lockdowns, which saw the industry slash thousands of jobs. Against this backdrop, British Airways workers at London's Heathrow airport voted last week to strike over pay, as surging inflation erodes wages and sparks industrial unrest. The staff in customer-facing roles like check-in voted by more than 90 percent in favor, trade unions said, threatening a "summer of strikes" as Britain's cost-of-living crisis worsens.— AFP

Hong Kong history: From backwater to trading metropolis

HONG KONG: Modern-day Hong Kong is best known for its sprawl of skyscrapers and role as a bustling financial hub and regional trade conduit off the southern coast of mainland China. But the territory was once a quiet backwater of rural hamlets and fishing communities, where mountainous terrain dominated sparse human settlement. Twenty-five years since the city was handed back to China by colonial power Britain, here are key points in its evolution:

Ancient history

Remnants of burial grounds and early rock carvings show human life in Hong Kong as far back as the Stone Age. The territory is thought to have come into the fold of the Chinese empire under the Han dynasty between 206 BC and 220 AD. Increasing numbers of Han Chinese from the mainland began to settle in Hong Kong, alongside boat-dwelling communities also thought to have originated from southern China.

Trade boom

Hong Kong's sheltered main harbor became a place to replenish supplies for trading ships plying the maritime silk road between Asia, Africa and the Middle East, flourishing from around the 7th century. As well as silk, China exported porcelain and tea and received everything from spices to plants and textiles. Hong Kong's outlying islands were also a haven for Chinese pirates—its current territory includes 260 islands, many of them uninhabited.

European arrival

Portuguese, Dutch and French traders arrived on the south coast of China in the 1500s and Portugal set up a base in Macau, which neighbors Hong Kong. But in the 18th century, China imposed restrictions on the Europeans in a bid to contain their influence. Britain was angered after an imperial edict banned its trade in opium from India to China, which had led to the spread of addiction. After Chinese authorities seized a vast haul of the drug, Britain attacked in 1840 and reached northern China, threatening Beijing, in the First Opium War. To make peace, China agreed to cede Hong Kong Island to Britain in 1841. The Kowloon peninsula followed in 1860 after a second Opium War, and Britain extended north into the rural New Territories in 1898, leasing the area for 99 years.

British rule

Hong Kong was part of the British empire until 1997, when the lease on the New Territories expired and the entire city was handed back to China. Under British rule, Hong Kong transformed into a commercial and financial hub boasting one of the world's busiest harbors. Anti-colonial sentiment fuelled riots in 1967 that led to some social and political reforms—by the time it was handed back to China, the city had a partially elected legislature and retained an independent judiciary. Hong Kong boomed as China opened up its economy in the late 1970s, becoming a gateway between the ascendant power and the rest of the world.

Return to China

After lengthy negotiations, including between former leader Deng Xiaoping and British ex-prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the two sides signed off on the future handover of Hong Kong in 1984. The Sino-British declaration said Hong Kong would be a Special Administrative Region of China and would retain its freedoms and way of life for 50 years after the handover date on July 1, 1997. Beijing says Hong Kong's One Country, Two Systems model remains intact. But critics, including Britain and other Western powers, say China has eviscerated the city's unique freedoms, especially in the wake of huge democracy protests that broke out in 2019.— AFP

Business

Europe revives Syria phosphate imports, profiting Russian firm

Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, Poland receiving Syrian phosphates

BEIRUT: Syrian phosphates used for fertilizer are being exported to Europe in bulk, benefitting a Russian firm and the sanctions-hit Damascus regime, a report said Thursday. Italy, Bulgaria, Spain and Poland are among the EU states receiving Syrian phosphates, according to the report by a consortium of investigative journalists led by Lighthouse Reports and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. Serbia and Ukraine are also major buyers of Syrian phosphates. Serbia has imported \$72 million since 2017, while Ukraine has imported \$30 million over the past four years, the investigation said, citing customs documents and trade data.

Italy and Bulgaria resumed trade over the past two years. Spain and Poland started importing Syrian phosphates in January, with the former purchasing around \$900,000 and the latter \$37,000 so far this year, according to trade data reported to the United Nations. The regime in Syria has since 2015 been heavily backed by Russia in its long-running civil war. International sanctions do not ban the import of Syrian phosphates but key Russian and Syrian players involved in the trade are sanctioned by the US or Europe, which raises questions over liability.

The trade is growing fast as the war in Ukraine drives up fertilizer and phosphate prices, raising demand for cheap and high-quality Syrian phosphates which were among the country's top exports before the outbreak of war in 2011. The export deals are managed by companies linked to Stroytransgaz, a Russian construction giant that controls Syria's Tartus port and state-run fertilizer factories, along with the right to extract and sell phosphates for a period of 50 years from a key mine, according to the report.

Thirty per cent of the revenues from phosphate sales



RAQA: A man and his son commute in a motorized cargo tricycle in Syria's northern city of Raqa.— AFP

are reserved for the Syrian state, according to experts not involved in the report. Stroytransgaz is owned by a close associate of President Vladimir Putin. It denies it is working in Syria but the investigation said it found senior officials from the Russian company oversee these contracts.

The sales to Europe are carried out quietly, with cargo ships disabling their tracking systems while heading towards Syria and reappearing en route to Europe later, according to the investigation. The European sales are propping up a complex network of shell companies and middlemen, including Lebanese shipping company

Mediterranean Petroleum and Shipping, the investigation alleged. Two trading companies managed by a Lebanese businessman have arranged for Syrian phosphates to arrive in Serbia via Romania, according to the report.

Phosphate sales to Europe help line the pockets of Syrian and Russian war profiteers, including a Syrian militia-turned-security company owned by two business figures close to the Damascus regime, the report added. The report also asserts that the trade boon offers no benefits for Syrian farmers who have struggled since the government scrapped fertilizer subsidies last year amid shortages and price hikes.— AFP

drifted lower as major oil producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia were Thursday expected to keep to a decision on a limited boost to output despite the risk of high oil prices may help push the global economy into recession.

'Terrible mood'

Stock markets are "in a terrible mood across Europe", said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. "There really is a lack of good news for investors to cling onto, and the near-term outlook looks bleak." The threat of an extended period of elevated inflation and painful interest rate hikes has left traders fretting over the threat of a prolonged economic downturn, while the Ukraine war continues

to sow uncertainty. "Recession continues to be the primary concern at the moment... as countries continue to grapple with spiraling inflation and cost-of-living crises," said Mihir Kapadia, head of Sun Global Investments.

The surge in inflation to multi-decade highs has forced central banks to swiftly raise interest rates, dealing a hefty blow to equities as companies faces higher borrowing costs. The Federal Reserve is next month expected to announce a successive 75-basis-point hike in US interest rates. There had been hope that policymakers would ease off their hikes as economies show signs of slowing, but analysts say some officials are less concerned about a recession than letting prices run out of control.—AFP

Russia gas crisis prompts Uniper bailout talks

FRANKFURT: Energy giant Uniper has entered into bailout talks with the German government as dwindling Russian gas supplies to Europe drove prices for the fuel higher. "Uniper entered into discussions with the German government on possible stabilization measures," the energy company said in an ad-hoc statement late on Wednesday. The options available to the group included extending further credit lines from the public lender KfW or an equity investment in Uniper.

Russian energy company Gazprom reduced deliveries via the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany by 60 percent in mid-June, attributing the move to a delayed repair. The German government has dismissed Gazprom's technical justification for the cut, instead labeling it a "political" decision in retaliation for the West's support for Ukraine after Moscow's invasion.

Following Gazprom's decision, the German government raised the alert level under its emergency gas plan, bringing it a step closer to rationing the fuel. Uniper was receiving "only 40 percent of the contractually committed gas volumes from Gazprom", it said. The gas squeeze forced the energy provider to buy short-term substitute supplies "at significantly higher prices".

The purchases were necessary "to ensure security of supply for its customers", it said. But the higher cost of the energy could not currently be passed on, leaving it with "significant financial burdens". Uniper was already under stress from rising gas prices at the end of 2021, CEO Klaus-Dieter Maubach said in a statement, with the company securing a credit line from the KfW. Since then, the situation had "noticeably deteriorated due to the war in Ukraine," Maubach said. The lack of clarity surrounding the "duration and scope of Russian gas supply restrictions" left the outlook for the company uncertain, with future gas prices "difficult" to predict, Uniper said.—AFP

Stocks sink on recession fear

LONDON: World stock markets mostly sank Thursday on intensifying recession fears, while oil prices receded before an OPEC output decision. Frankfurt and Paris each tumbled 2.7 percent in early afternoon eurozone deals, and London shed 1.9 percent. That followed a largely downbeat performance in Asia, although Shanghai rose after data showed a forecast-beating improvement in China's services sector on easing COVID restrictions. Crude futures



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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 30 JUNE 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	1,033	1,043	1,063	1,030	33	27,469,579	12	1.16%	9.84%	1,038	1,055	21.5	2.06	2.7%	0.99
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	313	319	320	312	8	34,456,513	9	2.90%	20.05%	316	321	22.0	1.50	2.1%	1.12
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	204	206	208	204	4	13,049,147	3	1.48%	-1.72%	206	212	30.3	0.63	1.9%	1.14
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	244	241	245	241	4	4,398,963	-2	-0.82%	0.82%	238	242	17.1	0.89	2.0%	1.34
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	825	871	888	823	65	75,840,432	57	7.00%	15.16%	861	890	31.0	4.21	1.3%	1.22
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	761	773	790	761	29	7,422,054	12	1.58%	8.51%	773	791	62.4	3.86	0.6%	1.06
204	National Investments	Financial Services	269	300	311	269	42	21,580,367	36	13.64%	36.99%	296	310	6.5	0.93	15.4%	1.75
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	154	147	159	146	13	8,719,550	-2	-1.34%	3.52%	147	161	26.5	0.77	3.4%	0.96
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	92	92.5	95	91	4	8,683,444	1.7	1.87%	-21.61%	90	95	90.1	0.53	9.9%	1.20
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	140	140	148	138	10	18,289,978	0	0.00%	-19.44%	140	150	20.3	1.00	2.1%	1.03
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	750	753	771	742	29	2,016,320	12	1.62%	0.65%	734	764	16.5	1.78	1.7%	1.11
501	National Industries	Financial Services	249	253	259	235	24	44,786,194	9	3.69%	5.00%	234	260	3.8	1.12	4.4%	1.44
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,311	1,339	1,455	1,311	144	2,631,519	30	2.29%	53.73%	1,319	1,350	13.6	1.10	4.4%	0.86
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	910	923	925	910	15	1,446,190	22	2.44%	8.33%	915	935	12.4	1.73	6.5%	0.95
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	327	315	330	315	15	3,759,699	-4	-1.25%	-9.22%	313	335	14.7	0.77	5.6%	1.03
603	Agility	Industrials	816	813	824	803	21	16,488,663	1	0.12%	3.24%	810	824	51.2	0.94	2.1%	1.44
605	Zain	Telecommunications	596	594	604	594	10	18,492,108	1	0.17%	-0.17%	595	602	14.8	2.28	5.5%	0.87
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,116	3,095	3,185	3,080	105	1,009,681	-20	-0.64%	-4.00%	3,065	3,100	6.4	3.83	12.9%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	199	192	206	190	16	5,630,721	-2	-1.03%	-11.93%	184	195	NULL	0.68	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,888	1,890	1,970	1,815	155	2,260,313	20	1.07%	46.51%	1,880	1,939	24.6	15.10	1.7%	1.39
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	259	267	274	255	19	120,349,451	13	5.12%	5.65%	268	279	16.4	1.72	3.2%	1.73
821	Warba Bank	Banking	244	243	246	240	6	11,247,892	3	1.25%	-11.31%	229	243	28.3	1.32	0.0%	1.06
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	410	423	430	407	23	4,789,274	18	4.44%	-26.75%	405	432	20.6	1.17	3.7%	0.41
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	395	399	402	393	9	2,659,175	3	0.76%	2.30%	391	400	33.9	1.58	2.5%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	202	207	207	201	6	2,448,465	5	2.48%	-9.21%	205	213	15.7	2.57	8.8%	0.54
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,354	2,393	2,450	2,339	111	460,768	53	2.26%	18.47%	2,350	2,349	26.5	8.98	2.8%	0.80
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	828	836	846	820	26	10,848,732	14	1.70%	-	830	860	6.3	1.87	-	-

* As of end of week closing

Business

Survey: China's image slips further in developed world

Concerns grow over Beijing's rising military, economic power

WASHINGTON: Increasingly large majorities in the developed world see China unfavorably, with record levels of criticism in the United States, Germany and South Korea, a survey said Wednesday. A 19-nation survey by the Pew Research Center showed a further deterioration of China's reputation over the past several years, as concerns grow about Beijing's rising military and economic power, its human rights record and the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eighty-two percent of Americans, 80 percent of South Koreans and 74 percent of both Germans and Canadians viewed China unfavorably, the survey said - record levels in each country. China's unfavorability also hovered around near-record highs of 87 percent in Japan, 86 percent in Australia and 83 percent in Sweden.

China's reputation eroded especially sharply in South Korea, against which Beijing in 2017 launched a campaign of economic retaliation after Seoul and the United States set up an anti-missile system that the two allies say is in response to North Korea, not China. Beijing has also imposed economic punishment over actions by Australia, where concerns have been heightened in recent months after the country spotted Chinese spy ships near its waters.

China's image fell even in some nations with which it has comparatively warm relationships. A record 50 percent saw China unfavorably in Greece, which has welcomed major Chinese investment since its economic crisis. One outlier was

Zionist entity, where opinions on China were almost evenly divided and, in contrast to Western nations, most people called for prioritizing economic relations even without addressing human rights. The survey took answers from 24,525 adults from February 14 to June 3.

Sowing division

Meanwhile, China has accused Group of Seven countries of irresponsibly sowing division after the forum condemned Beijing's trade practices in an end-of-summit statement. G7 leaders had slammed China's "non-transparent and market-distorting" international trade tactics on Tuesday, in a statement that also vowed to reduce "strategic dependencies" on the Asian giant.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Wednesday hit back at the criticism, saying the statement showed the allies were "keen to create divisions and confrontations without any sense of responsibility or morality". The G7 should "advance globalization" rather than encourage division "at a critical time for the international community fighting the pandemic and striving for economic recovery," Zhao said at a regular press conference.

The G7 statement, in which leaders pledged to "foster diversification and resilience to economic coercion, and to reduce strategic dependencies," came hours before the leaders joined a larger group of their counterparts at a NATO summit in Madrid. There, the 30-member alliance was also poised to toughen its stance against Beijing. —AFP



BEIJING: A man rests on a bench while sheltering under an umbrella, along a road in Beijing on June 30, 2022. —AFP

Services, manufacturing rebound in China after COVID-19 curbs eased

BEIJING: China's factory and services activity picked up in June, official data showed Thursday, fuelled by the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in major cities such as Shanghai and Beijing. The non-manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a key gauge of activity in the world's second-biggest economy, defied expectations and surged to 54.7 points in June after three months of sluggish performance. It was the first time since February that the reading was above the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction. It sat at 47.8 in May.

"As the situation of domestic epidemic prevention and control continued to improve and a package of policies... to stabilize the economy was implemented at a quicker pace, the overall recovery of our country's economy has accelerated," National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) senior statistician Zhao Qinghe said in a statement. In particular, business activity in industries severely hit by the pandemic such as rail and air transport picked up in June, the statement said.

Construction activity also helped fuel the PMI boost. But the "surprisingly rapid recovery in services" likely reflects a one-off boost from reopening, said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics. Manufacturing PMI rose to 50.2 points in June - similar to analyst expectations - up from 49.6 in May. As work resumed after COVID lockdowns, production and demand in the sector picked up and delivery times improved, according to the NBS.

China is the only major economy still pursuing a zero-COVID approach of eliminating outbreaks as they emerge, using snap lockdowns and mass testing. While the country is shortening quarantine times for new international arrivals, President Xi Jinping warned this week that China "would have faced unimaginable consequences" had it adopted a herd immunity or hands-off approach, signaling the government would persist with its current policy.

The approach has taken a harsh toll on the economy, with shops and factories forced to stop operations and supply chains strained. The non-manufacturing rebound in June was "mainly due to more construction activity", said Iris Pang, chief economist for Greater China at ING. "We think that it will be challenging for the government to achieve the 5.5 percent GDP target set in March. There will need to be a lot more infrastructure activity if the government is to achieve this target." —AFP



SHANGHAI: Vehicles make their way amid heavy traffic conditions on a highway during the evening in the City of Shanghai. —AFP



TIKAMGARH, India: In this picture taken on June 9, 2022, volunteers from Jal Saheli 'Friends of water' participate in the construction of a check dam on the dried up Bachedi stream in Agrotha village. — AFP photos

India women water warriors transform parched lands

CHHATARPUR: As the monsoon storms bear down on India, a dedicated group of women hope that after years of backbreaking labor, water shortages will no longer leave their village high and dry. The world's second-most populous country is struggling to meet the water needs of its 1.4 billion people - a problem worsening as climate change makes weather patterns more unpredictable.

Few places have it tougher than Bundelkhand, a region south of the Taj Mahal, where scarce water supplies have pushed despairing farmers on the plains to give up their lands and take up precarious work in the cities. "Our elders say that this stream used to run full throughout the year, but now there is not a single drop," said Babita Rajput while guiding AFP past a bone-dry fissure in the earth near her village.

"There is a water crisis in our area," she added. "All our wells have dried up." Three years ago, Rajput joined Jal Saheli ("Friends of Water"), a volunteer network of around 1,000 women working across Bundelkhand to rehabilitate and revive disappeared water sources. Together they carry rocks and mix concrete to build dams, ponds and embankments to catch the fruits of the June monsoon, a season which accounts for about 75 percent of India's annual rainfall.

Agrotha, where Rajput lives, is one of more than 300 villages where women are chalking out plans for new catchment sites, reservoirs and waterway revitalizations. Rajput said their work had helped them retain monsoon rainwater for longer and revive half a dozen water bodies around their village. Though not yet self-sufficient, Agrotha's residents are no longer among the roughly 600 million Indians that a government think-tank says face acute water shortages daily.

The women's efforts provide a rare glimmer of hope as national shortages worsen. Water utilities in the capital New Delhi fail to meet demand in summer, with trucks regularly travelling into slums to supply residents unable to draw water from their taps. India's NITI Aayog public policy centre forecasts that around 40 percent of the country's population could be without access to drinking



Women collect water from a well in Agrotha village.

water by the end of the decade.

'Government has failed'

Erratic rainfall patterns and extreme heat have been linked to climate change in Bundelkhand, which has suffered several long dry spells since a drought was declared at the turn of the century. Civil society activist Sanjay Singh helped train women in Agrotha to harvest and store rainwater after the surrounding land was desiccated by drought.

By doing so he helped the village rediscover knowledge that was lost decades earlier, when water went from being a community-managed resource to one administered by India's government. "But government has failed to ensure water to every citizen, particularly in rural areas, pushing villagers to go back to the old practice," he told AFP. Before Agrotha's irrigation project began, women had to walk miles every day in a desperate and often fruitless search for a well that was not dry.

In India's villages, fetching water is traditionally the responsibility of women, several of whom have faced violence from their husbands after being unable to find enough for their households, Singh said. He added that drought had brought big social changes to the region, pushing men to move to cities and leave their families behind. But since it was founded in 2005, the Jal Saheli initiative has helped more than 110 villages become self-reliant

for their water needs and aided in reversing the outward flow of people.

Dust bowl to oasis

In the nearby Lalitpur district, the elderly Srikumar has seen the initiative transform her community from a dust bowl into an oasis. She heard about the volunteer group a decade ago after suffering through years of water shortages, by the end of which every well and hand pump in her village of 500 people had run dry. Most of the farms in the area had turned barren because of a lack of irrigation, and dehydrated cattle herds were dying in summer temperatures close to 50 degrees Celsius. "Villagers suffered a lot during those days," Srikumar said. "Farming was impossible and men were fleeing their homes to cities to earn a living."

With the help of Singh's charity, Srikumar and a dozen other volunteers dug a football field-sized reservoir near the village that holds up to 10 feet of water after the monsoon rains arrive. The village now has enough water reserves to meet its needs year-round and replenish the earth that had dried out before their intervention. "Things have changed for good. We have enough water now, not just for our homes but also for our cattle," she told AFP. "Our lives would have been miserable without this pond," she added. "It would have been very difficult to survive." — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



SWITZERLAND, WHERE LUXURY IS PART OF THE DNA

Charm, atmosphere and pure relaxation are the insignia of the Swiss luxury hotels and destinations. Hospitality and tradition blend seamlessly with modern infrastructure and distinguished elegance, inspiring architecture and refined design. Guests can indulge their senses, sample the finest cuisine, and buy exclusive brands in stylish shops surrounded by beautiful landscape and green nature. Furthermore, various luxurious activities such as the peak walk on Glacier 3000, an exclusive ride in the VIP gondola to Jungfrauoch, shopping in Geneva, Lucerne as well as Zurich, or dining in the many exquisite restaurants in Montreux Riviera are not to be missed.

In its newly launched brochure, Switzerland Tourism is presenting its six most exclusive destinations as well as 16 of its most luxurious hotels.

Luxury watch shopping in Geneva

Geneva is driving its guests through glamorous shopping sites that offer a myriad of international high-end brands. For example, the Rues Basses shopping square, which features designers such as Burberry, Cartier, Bulgari, Harry Winston, and others. While on the rue du Rhone, one of the city's most luxurious locations, visitors can explore Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Versace, Chanel, Dior and many other sought after fashion names, not to forget the timeless watches in the city that identifies with horology, where brands like Omega, Patek Philippe, Montblanc, Bucherer, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Piaget and others call Geneva their home.

The luxurious Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich

The Bahnhofstrasse is one of the most

luxurious shopping areas of the world and offers everything that fans of Swiss quality craftsmanship desire. Renowned watch and jewelry boutiques, such as Beyer and Bucherer, are rowed up like pearls on a necklace. Of course, world-famous fashion labels, including Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Loro Piana, Dior, Burberry, and more, can also be found here. In addition, the city's finest confectioneries, galleries such as

Luxury shopping in Lucerne

Switzerland is known as the land of chocolate, cheese, and watches. The handcraft of watchmaking has more than 100 years of tradition in the Alpine republic. In Lucerne's old town, the boutiques of Bucherer, Embassy or G. belin welcome friends of Swiss precision craftsmanship with open arms. Quality products from the Rolex, Breitling or IWC Schaffhausen

hosts no less than six wellness & spa centres, one vinotherapy pop up spa and four clinics all offering a serene environment conducive to healing. Leading specialists in rejuvenation treatments, rehabilitation and cosmetic surgery bring their skills to the fore to ensure their guests' welfare. As an exquisite supplement the destination also counts three restaurants totalling 3 Michelin Guide stars and 27

Europe, an exclusive visit to the Ice Bar will wait for the VIP guests. A Jungfrau Railways tour guide will be accompany the guests along their adventure.

Adventure on Glacier 3000 in Gstaad

Gstaad is considered one of the most luxurious destinations in Switzerland. Visitors experience top quality and diverse



Hauser & Wirth or Gmurzynska, as well as various luxury hotels are at home on the Bahnhofstrasse. Exclusive, tradition-steeped Swiss department stores, such as Grieder, Jelmoli, and Globus, complete the pleasurable shopping experience on Zurich's prestigious boulevard. Directly at Zurich Airport, another shopping paradise for the style-conscious has been created. Besides shopping, visitors can also taste the one-of-a-kind chocolate from Laderach or dine at the Sablier Rooftop Restaurant & Bar.

brands make visitors' hearts beat faster and impress with their classically timeless designs. If you want to spend a royal night in Lucerne, you can stay at the Hotel Schweizerhof, where Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain has already been a guest.

Health clinics and gastronomic restaurants in the Montreux Riviera

The Swiss Riviera can boast on a myriad of renowned clinics at the cutting edge of healthcare and premises fully dedicated to wellbeing and health. The area



restaurants listed in the Gault&Millau guide.

Exclusive VIP Offer on Jungfrauoch

The new Eiger Express tricable gondola takes visitors from Grindelwald Terminal to the Eiger Glacier station in just 15 minutes. With a direct transfer option, guests will reach the Jungfrauoch - Top of Europe in only 45 minutes. Guests can enjoy sparkling beverages at the Platinum Lodge and then board the exclusive VIP Eiger Express gondola. At the Top of

services in all areas. Alpine authenticity, proudly maintained traditions, and a touch of glamour give the destination a special flair and make Gstaad so refreshingly different from the rest of the world.

The only suspension bridge in the world that connects two mountain peaks is not to be missed. It is called Peak Walk by Tissot and can be found at Glacier 3000. The bridge offers a stunning view onto the Alps and far off into the distance, which is certainly a memorable adventure.



Photographs of the Sex Pistols, by Dennis Morris are seen during the exhibition "SID: Superman is Dead" and the Sex Pistols at The Rock 'n' Roll Wall of Fame Gallery in London.

Sex Pistols show shines light on 'violence of punk'

Dennis Morris was the official Sex Pistols photographer, taking some of the most iconic images of the 1970s punk trailblazers. More than 40 years after the band shot to notoriety, an exhibition of Morris's classic photographs is revealing the mayhem and violence that surrounded the band to a new generation of fans.

The immersive show-"SID: Superman is Dead"-also features a recreation of a hotel room bassist Sid Vicious smashed up in 1977. The floor surrounding an unmade bed is littered with glass from smashed pictures, pages ripped from a Bible and a wrecked television. Drugs paraphernalia cover a bedside table.

"You read about Sid Vicious and you would think he was really a violent person, but he was actually quite a gentle person, very shy," Morris told AFP at the central London gallery staging the show. Vicious epitomized the "live fast, die young" mantra and ended up dead in New York at the age of 21 from a drugs overdose.

Months earlier he had been charged with stabbing his girlfriend Nancy Spungen to death. "When he took heroin he completely changed, he became a completely

different person and that was awful, he basically just fell apart," said Morris.

Razors

In Morris's original photograph of the hotel scene recreated for the exhibition, Vicious is seen half-naked lying between two beds while an unidentified person-"probably a fan"-is curled up asleep on one of them. "One night Sid went absolutely berserk and completely destroyed his bedroom," he said.

"My room was next door to his and eventually when the commotion stopped I pushed the door open to his room and there was complete devastation," Morris, 62, originally wanted to be a war photographer, but made his name photographing reggae legend Bob Marley. One of the

aims of the installation was to give a sense of the "energy and violence of punk".

The Sex Pistols' 1977 anti-monarchy tirade "God Save the Queen" coincided with Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee and provoked strong reactions. Singer John Lydon-aka Johnny Rotten-and two producers were attacked with razors. At other times Morris remembers being "chased down the road" by pro-monarchists when they spotted Lydon.

"With Sid I found my war... they came out against the queen and there was this reaction which was shocking because people became quite violent sometimes," the British photographer said. "It became quite scary but for me it was really an opportunity to live out my dream (of documentary photography). I was there 24/7."



Photographer Dennis Morris explains an installation of a hotel room trashed by Sid Vicious during his exhibition "SID: Superman is Dead" and the Sex Pistols at The Rock 'n' Roll Wall of Fame Gallery in London. — AFP photos



Photographs of the Sex Pistols, by Dennis Morris are seen during the exhibition "SID: Superman is Dead" and the Sex Pistols at The Rock 'n' Roll Wall of Fame Gallery in London.

Respect for Queen

Lydon-now 66 and a US citizen-recently said he had attended a street party for the queen's Platinum Jubilee this month. He said his dislike of the monarchy as an institution was as strong as ever, but he "totally respected" the 96-year-old head of state. Whether Vicious would have changed his views will never be known, but Morris said he had also developed a "deep respect" for the queen.

"She's held it together over the generations, despite coming to it at a very young age, and that's a really tough thing to do," he added. "I was never really against them (the royals) but over the years I've grown up. "None of us were against it really, it was just something that was said to create a reaction. All our parents had a picture of the queen on their wall or of Jesus, that's how it was... we were just rebelling."

Sid was 'innocent'

Morris firmly believes that Vicious had "star quality" but his damaged background made an early death almost inevitable. "His problem was that at the age of 14 his mother gave him heroin. And it was his mother who gave him the heroin that killed him," he added. After being released on bail from New York's notorious Rikers Island jail following Spungen's death, he was terrified of going back, he said. "Because of his reputation he got raped quite a few times so when he came out on bail he said to his mother, 'I just can't go back to prison, I just can't do it', so she went out and scored and that's what killed him." —AFP

Russian film director denounces 'murder' of his former theatre

Russia's celebrated film director Kirill Serebrennikov, who left the country after criticizing its offensive in Ukraine, has accused the authorities of "murdering" his former theatre that he had built into a top cultural venue. On Wednesday evening, Moscow authorities announced a change of leadership at a number of the capital's top theatres including Sovremennik and Gogol Centre. The Gogol Centre would get its old name back-The Nikolai Gogol Drama Theatre, they said. Between 2012 and 2021 Serebrennikov was artistic director of the Gogol Centre, which he transformed into a national cultural beacon. "Yes. Gogol Centre has been shuttered. That's it," Serebrennikov wrote on messaging app Telegram. "From the point of view of art, this is not just sabotage-this is murder."

He said the change of leadership was punishment for the venue's "honesty" and an "attempt at freedom," including efforts to protest Moscow's offensive. He said Gogol Centre's last piece of work will be a play dubbed "I do not take part in a war." Serebrennikov, known for deploying daring on-stage nudity and profane language-and for modern adaptations of Russian classics-left Russia after President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine. The 52-year-old was caught up in a high-profile fraud case that his supporters say was punishment for challenging the Russian authorities.—AFP



Film director Kirill Serebrennikov



This picture from the Giza side of the Nile River shows houseboats moored along the Giza bank in the Agouza district, days before their expected removal as part of a wider decree to clear all of the river banks in the area.



Egyptian-British national Omar Robert Hamilton, 37, stands at the balcony of his houseboat located in the Agouza district. — AFP photos

Cairo's floating heritage risks being towed away by grand projects

Dozens of vibrantly colored floating homes have for decades dotted the banks of the River Nile, rare havens of leafy seclusion in the Egyptian capital's hustle and bustle—but maybe not for much longer. Residents of the 30 or so houseboats that remain moored on the banks of the Nile last week received eviction orders, giving them less than two weeks before their homes are taken away to be demolished.

"Buying this houseboat was my dream," celebrated British-Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif told AFP. "I furnished it to accommodate my grandchildren and spend my last days here." The boats have long occupied a special place in the Egyptian collective consciousness, having been the centerpiece of conversations in Nobel Prize laureate Naguib Mahfouz's "Chitchat on the Nile", as well as various classics from the golden age of Egyptian cinema.

But while many have campaigned to protect the houseboats for their historic value, the authorities have argued they are an eyesore standing in the way of the state's grand development plans.

Residents have been offered no alternative accommodation or compensation, unlike others who previously faced evictions, and many have nowhere else to go. For Manar, a 35-year-old engineer who poured everything into buying her houseboat four years ago, it's a devastating blow.

"I sold my apartment, my father sold his car, and we used my two retired parents' severance pay," said Manar, who did not wish to give her full name. "People from the slums have been rehoused, the state even moved graves when it built a road through a cemetery, but for us, nothing."

'Uncivilised sight'

Barely a week after the eviction order, some boats have already been towed off and impounded in a state marina, despite petitions and campaigning, even by pro-government television pundits. Soon, the sight of these houses, perched on metal caissons along the banks of the working-class neighborhood of Imbaba opposite the upscale island of Zamalek, will only remain a memory.

The first warning came in 2020, when the governor of Cairo "suspended new houseboat parking authorizations". Residents had since received no news, until the eviction order came on June 20, leaving them "with no time to file an appeal", according to one resident.

Adding to the pressures, authorities have been demanding parking and registration fees amounting to between 400,000 and one million pounds per residence (\$21,000 to \$53,000) — about 20 times more than previous annual fees. Ayman Anwar, head of the state-affiliated Central Administration for the Protection of the Nile River in Cairo, said residents were given ample warning.

"In 2020, the state banned the use of barges as dwellings, because they are an uncivilised sight and pollute the Nile," he said on a talk show this week. The process echoes previous forced evictions and demolitions in Cairo's central neighborhoods, such as Bulaq and Maspero. But while it may have started in poor informal settlements, the steamroller of development has now made its way into more affluent neighborhoods and homes. The only alternative appears to be to transform every houseboat into a commercial enterprise. "At my age, to become a cafe manager?" exclaimed Soueif, who is in her 70s. "It's forced evic-



This picture from the Cairo side of the Nile River shows houseboats moored along the Giza bank in the Agouza district.

tion, no matter what you call it."

'A lost cause'

The banks of the Nile were once among the few public spaces where residents of Cairo—a sprawling megalopolis of more than 20 million people—could escape the din. Dotted with cafes, visitors from across social strata would sip tea and juice by the water, for a modest price.

On the opposite bank of the Nile, the development Mamsha Ahl Masr ("the Egyptian people's promenade" in Arabic) has drawn a lukewarm response. The promenade is heralded by the state as one of many "megaprojects" launched by

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and executed by the army, the crowning jewel of which is a sparkling new capital, rising out of the sands 50 kilometers (30 miles) east of Cairo.

"It's a disaster," Soueif said. "Every square inch must be profitable. There is no more public space, people can no longer be outside without paying." But the promenade, with its restaurants, a planned marina and open-air theatre, will "guarantee public access to the Nile", the government insists. Awad, who has lived with his family on their houseboat for 25 years, says "a square meter of commercial space is worth 1,000 pounds, so of

course they'd rather rent the space out to cafes than keep us".

"It's tragic," said Awad, who also did not wish to give his last name. Now in his sixties, he laments the loss of "pieces of Cairo's heritage" dating back to the times of the late King Farouk as well as Umm Kalthoum and Mounira al-Mahdiyya, iconic divas of the 20th century. "It's a lost cause. We can't do anything, we are told that it's a decision from above," he said, cigarette in hand, gesturing towards the sky. — AFP



One of the houseboats usually moored across the bank of Nile River between the Zamalek district of Egypt's capital Cairo (right) and the Agouza district of its twin city of Giza (left) is towed away by authorities.



This picture shows one of the houseboats moored along the Giza bank in the Agouza district.



A family of fishermen sits in a boat as one of the houseboats (background) usually moored across one of the banks of the Nile River between the Zamalek district of Egypt's capital Cairo (right) and the Agouza district of its twin city of Giza (left) is towed away by authorities.

Francis Bacon painting of Lucian Freud sells for £43.3m

A painting by Irish-born British artist Francis Bacon of fellow UK painter Lucian Freud sold on Wednesday for £43.3 million (\$52.5 million, 50.2 million euros), according to Sotheby's auction house. The price is an auction record for a painting by Bacon sold in London and also for any single panel painting by the artist.

"Study for Portrait of Lucian Freud", painted in 1964, "exemplifies an iconic pairing of two of the most significant painters within the canon of twentieth-century art", said the auction house. The figurative work depicts a restless, bare-chested Freud, with a distorted face, sitting on a bench.

"The present work is testament to

Francis Bacon's capacity to provoke emotion and capture in paint the complexities of the human psyche," added Sotheby's. The artists were close friends but also artistic rivals fascinated by the human figure and sat for each other on multiple occasions.

Bacon's 1969 triptych "Three Studies of Lucian Freud" sold in 2013 for \$142.4 million, and held the record for the most

expensive work of art at auction until being unseated by Picasso's "The Women of Algiers (Version O)" in 2015. Snapped up by a New York gallery, it is composed of three panels or pieces which show the artist Freud sitting on the same chair but painted from different angles. Bacon died in 1992 and Freud in 2011. — AFP



Security guards walk past "Study for Portrait of Lucian Freud" by Irish-born British artist Francis Bacon displayed as part of the "British Art Jubilee Sale" auction at Sotheby's in London. — AFP

Kenya arrests 'fake policewoman' after TV appearance

Kenyan investigators said Wednesday they had arrested a would-be MP for impersonating a police officer after she appeared in full regalia on a television program where she talked about law and order. The woman, identified as Monica Wamaitha Gitau, was taken into custody after police were notified of her appearance on a local language TV station, the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) said on Twitter.

Gitau, who is running for parliament in Kenya's national elections in August, was asked about security and politics and provided responses dressed in the distinctive blue uniform of Kenya's police force. Police were less than convinced about her credibility, the DCI said.

"She is currently assisting with investigations for the offence of impersonating a police officer." According to a police report of the incident seen by AFP, when

confronted Gitau claimed to have been a serving officer who retired in 2011.

"She couldn't give a satisfactory account on why she wore the persian blue color police uniform with full police badges," the report said. In 2013, Kenya pledged to root out impostors in its police force after the high-profile arrest of a man accused of masquerading as a top provincial security official for a decade.

Under-equipped, badly paid and trained, the police force has a poor reputation in the East African country, where it is considered among the most corrupt organizations in the country, according to Transparency International. Under Kenyan law, someone found guilty of impersonating a police officer can receive a prison sentence of up to 10 years, a fine of up to a million Kenyan shillings (\$8,500), or both. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Dancers rehearse on the set of the #DDX talent show organized by media action group Munathara ("debate") in Hammamet, about 65 kilometers southeast of Tunisia's capital. — AFP photos



A dancer rehearses on the set of the #DDX talent show organized by media action group Munathara ("debate") in Hammamet.

Young Arab artists dream of freedom in unique talent show

Young musicians, dancers, actors and comedians from across the Arab world took to the stage in Tunisia to express their visions of freedom, more than a decade after the Arab Spring uprisings. The show, performed under the stars at a seaside theatre in the resort of Hammamet and broadcast across the region, featured winners of an online video competition to complete the phrase: "I will only be free when..." It was the latest in a string of talent and debate programs organized by media action group Munathara ("debate"), which aims "to spark much-needed conversations about rights, freedoms and social change in the Arab world", according to founder Belabbas Benkredda.

"Public debates even about fundamental rights can be very polarizing, especially on social media," the 43-year-old Algerian-German said.

Munathara was born in 2012, the year after the Arab Spring revolts, kicked off by the ouster of Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, which had sparked high hopes for democracy in a region with an overwhelmingly young population. But ironically, as Munathara marked its 10th anniversary with the show in Hammamet on Saturday, it was overshadowed by President Kais Saied consolidating a power-grab that has sparked fears for Tunisia's democratic gains. Other coun-



Palestinian musician Ahmed Al-Grinawi performs with his Oud (Ud, or oriental lute) on the set of the #DDX talent show organized by media action group Munathara ("debate").

tries in the region have seen the rise of even more repressive systems than before, while others have witnessed devastating civil wars.

'Freedoms under attack'

Munathara was founded at "a time of great hope and aspiration-but the optimism has given way to cynicism, including among youth", Benkredda said. "The Arab world's Gen Z came of age politically amid

increasing despair and social division." Syrian refugee and stand-up comedian Mohamed al-Kurdi, one of the performers in Saturday's show, said that today, "young people's freedom is restricted, and not just in the Arab world".

"All over the world freedoms are under attack," the 23-year-old added, sitting at the edge of a stage bathed in spotlights during a break from rehearsals. Kurdi, whose TikTok account "MidoKrdi" has over



Participants pose for a photo with a cutout frame depicting an Instagram social media post on the set of the #DDX talent show.

2.3 million followers, said that rather than dealing with politics, he wanted to discuss "the limits we impose on ourselves: fear of failure, fear of success. These things rein in our freedom." For Saturday's event, he teamed up with fellow comedian and actress Dana Ali Makki, 22, in a comedy act about an overbearing husband and his wife.

Makki, from the southern Lebanese region of Nabatiyeh, said she believed young Arabs had slightly more freedom than a few years ago. "People can be a bit different from their parents and from the society and culture they grew up in," she said. "There's more subversion against customs, traditions, religion and society." Asked how she defined her own freedom, she said: "I'm free when I'm able to say whatever I want, loudly, without being afraid of anyone. Free of all the restrictions society imposes, especially on women."

'Learn to resist!'

The show, the fourth of its kind, also served as a showcase for up-and-coming talent, such as Ahmed al-Qrinawi from Gaza, a Palestinian enclave under Israeli blockade for the past 15 years. He was a twice-published poet when he started teaching himself the oud—a kind of lute widely played in the Middle East—at the age of 22. He would sit under a shelter he

built on the family's roof in Gaza City, to avoid the disapproving ears of his conservative family.

To learn music theory, he used copies of music books borrowed from friends at a music school he couldn't afford to attend. Last weekend, three years later, he appeared on stage playing an unusual seven-stringed oud, home-made with the help of a carpenter friend. He said he had only heard about the competition shortly after the deadline, and composed, recorded and submitted his song in just an hour. Fortunately, judges accepted the entry, and he went on to become one of the winners and perform with a professional band.

"I will only be free when I have a normal country, where death doesn't keep an eye on me," runs the first line of his song. "In Gaza there's no freedom," Qrinawi said. "Freedom's not just about food and drink. You can get a bird and put it in a cage and bring it food, but it's still in captivity." For Lebanese actress and comedian Makki, who has a tattoo on her forearm reading "resist", the show was a chance to deliver another message. "You can't stay in your house with your hands tied or stay silent," she said. "Learn to say no to oppression and repression." — AFP



Lebanese comedian and actress Dana Ali Makki speaks on the set of the #DDX talent show.



Sudanese leftist activist Ahmed Abuhuraira Hassan poses on the set of the #DDX talent show.



Syrian refugee and stand-up comedian Mohamed al-Kurdi, whose TikTok account "MidoKrdi" has over 2.3 million followers, gestures on the set of the #DDX talent show.

Singer R Kelly gets 30 years in jail over sex crimes

Disgraced R&B singer R Kelly was sentenced to 30 years behind bars on Wednesday for leading a decades-long effort to recruit and trap teenagers and women for sex. The sentence, stiffer than the 25 years in prison that prosecutors had sought, caps a long downfall for the 55-year-old former superstar.

"I'm grateful that Robert Sylvester Kelly is away and will stay away and will not be able to harm anyone else," victim Lizzette Martinez told reporters outside the Brooklyn federal court. In September, the "I Believe I Can Fly" artist was found guilty on all nine charges he faced, including the most serious of racketeering.

"The public has to be protected from behaviors like this," judge Ann Donnelly said, handing down the term. Breon

Peace, the US attorney for the Eastern District of New York hailed the sentence as a "significant outcome" for the 11 victims who testified about the "horrific and sadistic abuse they endured."

Kelly's lawyers called for a lighter sentence with a maximum of approximately 17 years. Attorney Jennifer Bonjean told the judge that her client was the product of a "chaotic" upbringing that included being sexually abused as a child.



In this file photo singer R Kelly appears during a hearing at the Leighton Criminal Courthouse in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP photos

"Mr Kelly rejects that he's this monster," Bonjean said, later telling reporters outside court that she would appeal. Kelly, a three-time Grammy Award-winner, chose not to speak at the hearing due to pending litigation. The sentence comes just over a month before jury selection is due to start in Kelly's separate, long-delayed federal trial in Chicago on August 15.

In that case, Kelly and two of his former associates are alleged to have rigged the singer's 2008 pornography trial and hid years of sexual abuse of minors. The musician who once dominated R&B also faces prosecution in two other state jurisdictions.

#MeToo milestone

Kelly's conviction in New York was widely seen as a milestone for the #MeToo movement: It was the first major sex abuse trial where the majority of accusers were Black women. It was also the first time Kelly faced criminal consequences for the abuse he for decades was rumored to have inflicted on women and children.

Prosecutors were tasked with proving Kelly guilty of racketeering, a federal charge commonly associated with organized crime syndicates that depicted Kelly as the boss of an enterprise of associates who facilitated his abuse. Calling 45 witnesses including 11 victims to the stand, they painstakingly presented a pattern of crimes they say the artist born Robert Sylvester Kelly carried out for years with impunity, capitalizing on his fame to prey on the less powerful.

To convict Kelly of racketeering, jurors had to find him guilty of at least two of 14 "predicate acts"—the crimes elemental to the wider pattern of illegal wrongdoing. Lurid testimony intended to prove those acts included rape, druggings, imprisonment and child pornography.



Jovante Cunningham, one of Chicago-born R&B singer R Kelly's victims, speaks to the media after the hearing at Brooklyn Federal Court in New York.

His accusers described events that often mirrored one another: Many of the alleged victims said they had met the singer at concerts or mall performances and were then handed slips of paper with Kelly's contact details by members of his entourage. Several said they were told he could bolster their music industry aspirations.

But prosecutors argued all were instead "indoctrinated" into Kelly's world-groomed for sex at his whim and kept in line by "coercive means of control," including iso-

lation and cruel disciplinary measures, recordings of which were played for the jury. Core to the state's case was Kelly's relationship with the late singer Aaliyah.

Kelly wrote and produced her first album—"Age Ain't Nothin' But A Number"—before illegally marrying her when she was just 15 because he feared he had impregnated her. His former manager admitted in court to bribing a worker to obtain fake identification allowing the union, which was later annulled. — AFP

Sports

With royal backing and Snoop Dogg rap, Malaysia minnows challenge best in Asia

'Southern Tigers', continental giants face off

News in brief

Basra to host 25th Gulf CUP

DOHA: Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) Executive office assured the 25th GCC Cup will take place in Iraq's Basra City for between January 6th and 19, 2023. In a statement, the AGCFF's President Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Bin Ahmad Al-Thani, explained that a session was held to discuss the upcoming agenda and to decide on event 25's location in Basra following their recent visit on its facilities. The AGCFF's secretary general Jassem Al-Rumaihi presented a detailed explanation on Basra's preparations and arrangements for hosting the championship. —KUNA

S Korea bids to host Asian Cup

SEOUL: South Korea officially submitted its bid to host the 2023 Asian Cup following China's withdrawal due to the coronavirus, the Korean Football Association (KFA) said Thursday. China was due to host the games in June and July next year, but pulled out of staging the tournament last month due to challenges over its strict zero-COVID strategy. The Asian Football Confederation then invited new bids to host the quadrennial tournament, saying interested countries must submit by June 30. Top regional sides including Japan, South Korea, Australia and reigning champions Qatar had already qualified, as have China. "Today, the KFA officially submitted a letter of intent to host the 2023 AFC Asian Cup to the Asian Football Confederation," the KFA said in a tweet. "South Korea is trying to host and win the Asian Cup for the first time in 63 years! We ask for your support and interest!" —AFP

Boca supporters arrested

SAO PAULO: Three supporters of Argentine football giants Boca Juniors have been arrested in Brazil, accused of racism and making a Nazi salute during their team's match away to Corinthians, local authorities said on Wednesday. Two of the fans were arrested for a "racial slur" having allegedly directed monkey chants at Corinthian fans during Tuesday night's Copa Libertadores last 16 clash. The third fan was arrested for "racism" and "apology for crime" for having allegedly raised his arm in a Nazi salute. Sao Paulo's security ministry said in a statement that all three were "caught red-handed" at the Neo Quimica Arena in Brazil's largest city and spent the night in police cells, where they remain. The first two face between one and three years in prison if found guilty. Their bail was set at 20,000 reais (\$3,850), the inspector in charge of the case told CNN Brasil. The third fan, for whom no bail was granted, faces between three and six months in jail if found guilty. —AFP

Burglary at Ronaldo house

MADRID: Six people have been arrested in connection with the three-million-euro burglary at the house belonging to former Brazil forward Ronaldo, AFP learned on Thursday from sources close to the investigation. Paris Saint-Germain player Marco Verratti was staying at Ronaldo's house in Ibiza but was not home when the burglars struck on Monday, making off with jewellery and money. Two people were arrested in the port of Denia in eastern Spain and four others were held in the southern city of Malaga, these sources told AFP without further details. According to the Spanish press, four of the six arrested are Albanian, the other two being a Spaniard and a Romanian, making up an organised gang specialising in burglary. Press reports also claim that the Spanish police recovered a large part of the loot, estimated at around three million euros. —AFP



Giorgio Chiellini

L AFC 'perfect for me': Chiellini

LOS ANGELES: Veteran Italy and Juventus defender Giorgio Chiellini said Wednesday he's looking forward to bringing a high level of play and a wealth of experience to Los Angeles FC as they pursue the Major League Soccer crown. "I am fully convinced that this club is perfect for me," Chiellini said in his first official press conference for LAFC, flashing his new No 14 jersey. LAFC have yet to win a major honor since joining MLS as an expansion team in 2018. They currently lead the league with 33 points from 16 matches, and are clearly doing all they can to ensure they stay on top. Since announcing the acquisition of Chiellini two weeks ago, the club have confirmed the imminent arrival of Wales captain Gareth Bale on a 12-month contract that features options through 2024. Meanwhile, longtime franchise cornerstone Carlos Vela has agreed to an extension through the 2023 season. —AFP

JOHOR BAHRU: A wealthy prince and some astute promotion involving US rapper Snoop Dogg have helped turn Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim from footballing minnows into one of Asia's top clubs. The club, commonly known as JDT, has its roots in the former Johor FC and other clubs in the southern state, who kicked around the lower reaches of Malaysian football with an occasional minor cup win as their only honors.

But that all began to change in 2012, when Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, crown prince of the Johor royal family, took control of football in the state. With their new nickname of "Southern Tigers", JDT have dominated Malaysian football since 2014, winning the country's top-flight Super League in each of the last eight seasons. In April they became the first team from Malaysia to reach the knockout stages of the Asian Football Confederation's Champions League.

Now the club from the sleepy country of 32 million will in August face continental giants and two-time Asian champions Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan for a place in the last eight. "This is the harvest of a seed that was planted 10 years ago, with a lot of effort," JDT's head coach Benjamin Mora told AFP at the club's training centre in state capital Johor Bahru.

"We're a very small team compared to the giants of Asia," the Mexican manager said, but added that JDT's "fighting spirit" made them serious contenders. When Tunku Ismail became president of the football association in Johor, just north of city-state Singapore, its state team was average at best. He pushed through a major organisational revamp, upgrading stadiums and bringing in top players and foreign staff.

The team was rebranded in 2013 as Johor Darul Ta'zim - the last two words mean "abode of dignity" in Arabic, an official honorific for the state in Muslim-majority Malaysia. Tunku Ismail, the eldest son of the powerful Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, established the club in 2013 before he was announced as its owner in 2016. His father, the sultan, heads one of Malaysia's nine Islamic royal families and, while he is a ceremonial ruler, wields considerable influence. He is a flamboyant figure - he has his own private army, and has built a house inspired by his favorite cartoon, The Flintstones.

Pogacar set as Denmark reaches Tour de France fever pitch

COPENHAGEN: With one day remaining ahead of the Tour de France's 'Grand Depart' in Denmark, Tadej Pogacar sounded a warning to those hoping to dethrone the double champion. The world's greatest bike race embarks from Copenhagen on Friday and if the 30,000 fans who turned out for the unveiling of the teams on Wednesday is anything to go by the Danish public will be out in force for the three opening stages here. A confident Pogacar was thrilled by the prospect. "I can't wait," the fresh-faced 23-year-old Slovenian said. "We are all ready, we have a strong team and it's just a matter of not stressing too much until Friday." The opening stage around the streets of Copenhagen may be hit by rain.

"I don't know what to think about the time-trial but I'm ready and I'm sure it's going to be fast. It's short and technically challenging," he said before the 13.2km individual test. "Everyone seems to be stressed but we are confident," said the surprise 2020 winner who defended his title 12 months ago. Jumbo-Visma's co-captain in Dane Jonas Vingegaard said he was hoping

to simply survive the first week rather than attack it. But his teammate Wout Van Aert, possibly the world's best one-day racer, was planning to open with a bang after two editions impacted by COVID-19.

"Wearing the yellow jersey myself at the beginning of the race has been a big goal for me this season," said Belgian Van Aert, one of the favorites to win the opening stage. "I was surprised by the amount of people on the road sides. After two years, we can finally have a Grand Depart with huge crowds," he said. His key rival could be Ineos's Italian world time-trial champion, the gentle-giant Filippo Ganna. "Lots of people want this yellow jersey so it won't be easy," said Ganna, who won the Giro d'Italia's opening day time-trial in May. "Now I want the yellow jersey for my museum too," he said.

The 2018 champion Geraint Thomas is racing his 12th Tour de France, and has promised Pogacar, Vingegaard and the rest of the contenders his Ineos team will be racing aggressively, in the manner they have adopted this season to such success. On a darker note Danish police raided the hotel of

Morata to return to Atletico as loan at Juventus ends

MILAN: Alvaro Morata will return to Atletico Madrid after his loan at Juventus comes to an end on Thursday, the Serie A club have announced. The Spanish international forward will leave Turin after the two clubs failed to come to an agreement that would have allowed him to extend his stay in Italy. "Alvaro Morata's adventure at Juventus has come to an end," the Italian club said in a statement. "The Spanish forward, on loan from Atletico Madrid over the last two seasons, leaves the Bianconeri for the second time and returns to the ranks of the Colchoneros."

Bangladesh hope to rebound in T20 series with West Indies

ROSEAU: Comprehensively beaten in both Test matches by the West Indies, Bangladesh's cricketers are hoping the clouds of uncertainty ahead of their three-match T20 International series will blow away in time for Saturday's opening encounter at Windsor Park in Dominica. While it is expected the visitors will be much more competitive in both the T20Is and then the three-match One-Day International series which rounds off their tour, question marks over the availability of key players could have an unsettling effect



JOHOR BAHRU: This picture shows a nutritionist preparing food at the Johor Darul Ta'zim football club training centre in Johor Bahru. —AFP

Tough fight ahead

Mora - who started with JDT's reserve team in 2015, before becoming the main team's coach in 2017 - said the crown prince's hands-on approach had helped the side. For most owners, "their priorities are not the game (but) the industry" and connections they can make, he said. But Tunku Ismail is "all in", and takes an interest in everything, "merchandise ... foreign players, local players, staff, training sessions," Mora added.

The revitalized team won the Super League in 2014, and the following year became the first Malaysian side to win the AFC Cup, Asia's second-tier continental club tournament, defeating Tajikistan's Istiklol 1-0. In an effort to boost their profile, JDT recently roped in Snoop Dogg to perform a rap called "Pioneers", alongside Malaysian hip-hop artist Joe Flizzow.

The colorful music video features scenes of the players, flag-waving supporters and fireworks exploding above their state-of-the-art, 40,000-seat, Sultan

Ibrahim stadium, which was opened in 2020. Defender Mohamad Aidil Zafuan Abdul Radzak, who has been with the club since 2013, said access to new equipment, such as oxygen therapy machines and infrared saunas, made a big difference. "I haven't seen other teams in Malaysia having what JDT has," the 34-year-old said.

JDT's players now make up the bulk of the national team, with 13 of them in the 23-man line-up at the 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers in June. However, it remains to be seen whether they can make a difference to the poor performance of the national side, which is ranked just 147th in the world. Despite their rapid rise, JDT face a tough fight against Asia's best sides in the Champions League's knockout stages in August, having been drawn against Japan's Urawa Reds. "It's going to be almost impossible because the Japanese and Korean teams are very strong," Mora said. JDT will have to play "almost perfect games, without mistakes," he added. —AFP



COPENHAGEN: Slovenia's cyclist Tadej Pogacar (left) and riders of the UAE Team Emirates ride during a training session, in Koge, on June 29, 2022, ahead of the start of the 2022 edition of the Tour de France cycling race, in Copenhagen, on July 1, 2022. —AFP

Bahrain-Victorious early on Thursday, but after two hours of searching all the team cars, nothing was requisitioned.

Fjords and bridges

Whoever wins on Friday, Saturday's second stage runs 202.5km from Roskilde to Nyborg along verdant roads adjacent to fjords and it culminating with a 20km crossing of the Great Belt Bridge where a second

equally tense struggle for the lead is expected. Some 12 million cars and trucks cross the bridge each year but the 176-strong peloton is liable to be subject to strong crosswinds on the sea crossing. Sunday's final day in Denmark is a 182km run from Vejle to Sonderborg, a municipality that boasts more than 300km of bike paths in a nation where five times more journeys are made by bicycle than by car. —AFP

Morata was in his second spell at Juve after being loaned there by Atletico in 2020, winning the Italian Cup the following year and scoring 32 times in all competitions. He previously played for the club between 2014 and 2016, when he won two league and cup doubles and reached the final of the Champions League in 2015. The 29-year-old was happy at Juventus and said that he wanted to stay in Turin. "Having the chance to wear this shirt is one of the best things that ever happened to me," Morata said in a farewell message on Instagram.

Juventus needed to pay 35 million euros to make Morata's move permanent according to the deal struck with Atletico, but Italian media report that he could still return if the Spanish side lower their asking price during the summer. Juve also made official the departures of Paulo Dybala and Italy international Federico Bernadeschi, whose contracts expire on Thursday. In March the club's

on a squad in dire need of stability and direction.

Even after he endorsed Bangladesh's greater affinity to the white ball formats of the game, and especially the 50 overs-per-side version, information coming out of Dhaka suggests Test captain Shakib al Hasan will miss the ODI leg of the campaign. This is apparently because these matches do not form part of the ODI Super League where points are earned towards qualification for next year's World Cup in India.

"I expect us to be a lot more competitive in the white ball formats," said Shakib in the immediate aftermath of his team's ten-wicket defeat in the second Test in St Lucia on Monday which gave the West Indies a 2-0 sweep of the series. "The One-Day format is something we always do well in and we are not far behind in the T20 format either so I believe we will put on a show



Spain's forward Alvaro Morata

CEO Maurizio Arrivabene said that Dybala's contract would not be renewed, with the Argentina striker hotly tipped to sign for arch rivals Inter Milan. —AFP

and be very competitive against the West Indies."

'Turned the corner'

Recent history bears out that confidence as Bangladesh won both the ODI and T20I series on their last visit to the region in 2018. At last year's World T20 in the United Arab Emirates and Oman, West Indies just managed to hold on for a three-run victory over the Bangladeshis, the only victory for the then title-holders at the main group stage of a massively disappointing campaign. Apart from Shakib's anticipated absence for the ODIs, there is also speculation that three players originally selected in the T20I squad - Mohammad Saifuddin, Shohidul Islam and Yasir Ali - will not be involved in the two matches in Dominica at the weekend and the finale in Guyana on July 7. —AFP

Sports

Alpine launches program to find women F1 drivers

'Physical ability is no barrier for women'

PARIS: Formula One's Alpine team said physical ability is no barrier for women to compete in their sport as they launched a program to have a female driver in the next eight years. Only two women have ever started a Grand Prix, the Italian pair of Maria Teresa de Filippis, who qualified in three in 1958, and Lella Lombardi, who raced in 12 between 1974 and 1976, picking up a point. There has since been a belief that physical strength was a drawback to the progress of women in the sport.

That was backed up on Tuesday by Jamie Chadwick, champion of the W series, an all-female championship, who said reaching Formula One via its feeder series Formula Two and Three is "extremely physical." Alpine's CEO Laurent Rossi, however, rejected that notion, as the team launched a program to mentor women drivers. "The number one criteria is not physical ability, far from it," Rossi told AFP. "The proof is that Fernando Alonso continues to drive very well. If a 40-year-old man can drive in Formula One then a woman on top form at 28 years old is as capable."

Rossi said there were examples of women in other industries working in similar extreme conditions. "There are women who fly fighter jets, who are astronauts, who are used to much more powerful G-forces," he said. "It's something that society wanted to peddle for years, and is one of the cliches that need to be eradicated," he added. In the coming weeks Alpine will search for up to five candidates aged between 10 and 12, with a view to having at least one of them racing by 2030.

"We really have to be able to detect potential from as young as possible so they can follow the training program," Alpine's director of human resources Claire Mesnier said. "Right now, I'm not sure that I can say that we're exploring the whole talent pool, knowing 50 percent of humanity are women," she added. Mesnier said that Alpine's current drivers, two-time champions Alonso and Frenchman Esteban Ocon, are participating in the program. "Esteban and Fernando will be the main ambassadors," she said. Alpine next race is at the Austrian Grand Prix on July 10. —AFP



MONTREAL: Fernando Alonso of Spain driving the (14) Alpine F1 A522 Renault leads Carlos Sainz of Spain driving (55) the Ferrari F1-75 during the F1 Grand Prix of Canada at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal, Quebec. —AFP

France's coach hands Jolmes, Tanga debuts

TOKYO: France head coach Fabien Galthie on Thursday handed debuts to lock Thomas Jolmes and number eight Yoan Tanga for the first rugby Test against Japan in Toyota on Saturday. The 2023 World Cup hosts have brought a young squad to Japan with several of the players who led them to the Six Nations Grand Slam this season rested. Flanker Charles Ollivon returns to captain the side after missing the Six Nations through injury.

Several of Galthie's starting line-up played in the Barbarians' 52-21 thrashing of England at Twickenham two weeks ago. The coach said he wants to see his young side "grab the opportunity" in a France jersey. "It's a hungry team," said Galthie. "Everything is possible. We often tell the players when they come into the locker room 'it is you who takes the shirt'. We are here to put out and prepare the best team but it is you who are the authors of your own destiny."

Galthie said he had "no doubts" that flanker Ollivon was ready to resume the captaincy after suffering a knee injury in June 2021. He played a key part in taking Toulon to the European Challenge Cup final last month and impressed while leading the Barbarians. "He is very comfortable, he has regained his abilities and he is stringing together some matches," Galthie said.

"He has already proved himself with the game against England and he has a second captaincy and a new chapter with the France team." Japan head coach Jamie Joseph made six changes from the side that thrashed Uruguay 43-7 last weekend for his team's "massive challenge" against France. Three players have been ruled out because of COVID, with scrum-half Naoto Saito, hooker Shota Horie and full-back Ryuji Noguchi all unavailable. Temperatures are forecast to soar to 35 degrees Celsius by kick-off time in steamy Toyota. Joseph admitted his players will find it tough to deal with the heatwave conditions that have seen record June temperatures in Japan this week, but believes France "will find it even more challenging". "We've got to keep the game as fast as possible and back our ability to handle the heat a little bit better," said Joseph as he named his team.

"No doubt France will have tactics and ways of trying to slow the game up so that they can get plenty of rest." Joseph brought World Cup veterans Wimpie van der Walt and Ryohei Yamanaka back into the starting line-up as Japan look to get some game time under their belts. COVID disruptions mean the 2019 World Cup hosts have played only eight Test matches since reaching the quarter-finals on home soil two-and-a-half years ago. "It's a starting point for us," said Joseph. "We're way behind in terms of Test matches together, and then that's compounded by the fact that some of our key players are out through injury." South African-born wing Gerhard van den Heever keeps his starting place for Japan after winning his first cap at the age of 33 and scoring last week against Uruguay. Centre Dylan Riley, who also scored against the South Americans, wins his sixth cap. —AFP



Owen Farrell passes the ball during the British and Irish Lions training session. —AFP

Farrell 'not happy' as Lawes named captain

PERTH: Eddie Jones admitted Owen Farrell "wasn't very happy" after Courtney Lawes was named England captain Thursday for the opening Test against Australia, a match the under-pressure coach is desperate to win. Veteran back Farrell had been Jones's go-to man as skipper since 2018, but ankle injuries forced him to miss the entire Six Nations this year with Lawes taking the armband.

Jones opted to stick with experienced blindside flanker Lawes for the opening Test of the three-match series, although Farrell returns, having last played in the 32-15 win over the Wallabies in November 2021. "Owen's a bloke who expresses his feelings clearly. He wants to be captain. When I told him he wasn't going to be captain, he wasn't very happy," said Jones. "Courtney Lawes has got a good sense of togetherness, he's calm, engaging with the players. He's the right fit for this tour."

Veteran scrum-half Danny Care was handed a first start since 2018 while big forward Billy Vunipola is back for the first time since March last year. Australia also sprung some surprises with lock Cadeyrn Neville and hooker David Porecki awarded debuts in a powerful pack, while playmaker Quade Cooper got the nod over James O'Connor. Farrell will start at inside centre with Joe Marchant at outside centre. Joe Cokanasiga and Jack Nowell are on the wings and Freddie Steward at full back.

Jonny May, second only to Rory Underwood in England's list of all-time leading try-scorers, was

not in the match-day 23 after contracting COVID on arrival in Perth last week. In another blow for the squad, Bath lock Charlie Ewels suffered a knee injury in training on Wednesday and has been ruled out of the tour. Hooker Jamie George joins props Ellis Genge and Will Stuart up front with Maro Itoje and Jonny Hill in the second row. Tom Curry is openside flanker and Australian-born Vunipola makes his first appearance for England since the Six Nations last year at No.8.

Expectations high

England have won all eight of their Tests against the Wallabies since former Australia coach Jones took charge after the 2015 World Cup, including a 3-0 series whitewash six years ago. But performances this year have been lacking and Jones admitted he was under the gun. "Every international coach is under pressure, I'm under pressure because the results aren't good enough," he said. "Our expectations are high, the media's expectations are high, everyone's expectations are high and that's ok." Australia coach Dave Rennie stressed the importance of the lineout maul against England, an area where Neville excels. "Nev is a very big man... very important to us from the set-piece point of view, very good at the maul, lineout and scrum. Same with Porecki," he said.

Angus Bell, Darcy Swain, Allan Alaalatoa, Rob Leota and Rob Valetini join them in the pack with flanker Michael Hooper leading the side again in his 119th Test. Veteran Cooper won the battle for the No.10 shirt ahead of O'Connor, who failed to make the bench, and will reunite with fellow Japan-based backs Samu Kerevi and Marika Korobete. Cooper will also reignite his partnership with scrum-half Nic White for the first time since leading the Wallabies to five straight Test wins in 2021. —AFP

Fainga'anuku to debut against Ireland, COVID hits All Blacks again

AUCKLAND: Powerhouse wing Leicester Fainga'anuku will make his All Blacks debut after being named Thursday in the side to start the first Test against Ireland as COVID struck down another New Zealand coach. Canterbury Crusaders standout Fainga'anuku will start on New Zealand's left wing at Eden Park in Auckland on Saturday, while another uncapped Pacific Islands-born player, bruising Waikato Chiefs forward Pita Gus Sowakula, will be on the bench.

Ireland coach Andy Farrell named all four of his New Zealand-born players in the match-day 23 for the opening Test of a three-match series. Jamison Gibson-Park will start at scrum-half with James Lowe on the wing while Joey Carbery and Bundee Aki, who captained Ireland against the Maori All Blacks on Wednesday, are on the bench. They are joined in the replacements by Cian Healy, despite the veteran prop limping off during the 32-17 defeat in Hamilton. Veteran fly-half Johnny Sexton will captain the side in his 106th international.

All Blacks scrum guru Greg Feek on Thursday became the seventh member of the New Zealand coaching or playing staff to test positive for COVID-19 this week. Head coach Ian Foster, who also tested positive and has been in isolation along with assistants John Plumtree and Scott McLeod, conceded that the disrupted build-up had not been ideal. "Clearly it's been intriguing but it is what it is," said Foster, who could be cleared to rejoin the team on Saturday.

"We're excited with the team we're putting out there and it doesn't change that there's a statement that we want to make on the first Test of the year," he said via video link. Second-row forward Scott Barrett was a surprise choice at blindside flanker, after niggles to Akira Ioane and Dalton Papalii. Barrett's last start in the unfamiliar role came in the 2019 World Cup semi-final defeat to England where he was replaced at half-time, leading to widespread criticism. "I don't spend too long thinking about the 2019 game," Foster said. "This one, we're very clear about the strategy."

"He's bringing a bruising defense and a ball-carrying art to his game now. He's probably our most dynamic lock ball-carrier at the moment so we can probably utilize that a little bit at six." The powerful 22-year-old Fainga'anuku replaces Will Jordan, who is one of three players with COVID, along with Jack Goodhue and David Havili. Farrell said the All Blacks can cope with the disruption better than any international team, pointing to the quality of the Maori performance in outclassing his midweek side. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Maternity Hospital	24843100		
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700		
Chest Hospital	24849400		
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010		
Adan Hospital	23940620		
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075

Kaifan	24849807	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shamiya	24848913	Shaab	22518752
Shuwaikh	24814507	Qibla	22459381
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Nuzha	22526804	Mirqab	22456536
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Sharq	22465401
Qadsiya	22515088	Salmiya	25746401
Dasmah	22532265		

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Mohmed Munsif** holder of Passport No. U0748866 do hereby change my name to **Mohammed Munsif** (as Given name) **Fayyaz Surve** (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known by the name **Mohammed Munsif Fayyaz Surve** and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C 2014) 30/06/2022

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WIMBLEDON: Spain's Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Lithuania's Ricardas Berankis during their men's singles tennis match on the fourth day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships on June 30, 2022. —AFP

Nadal centre stage at Wimbledon as COVID forces third withdrawal

Agut becomes the third player to withdraw from Championships

LONDON: Rafael Nadal tops the bill at Wimbledon on Thursday after Roberto Bautista Agut became the third player to withdraw from the Championships following a positive coronavirus test. In early results on the fourth day of the tournament, women's fourth seed Paula Badosa set up a third-round clash against two-time winner Petra Kvitova.

Second seed Nadal, hunting a rare calendar Grand Slam, takes on Lithuanian journeyman Ricardas Berankis in the second round on Centre Court with his path to the semi-finals opening up. Spanish 17th seed Bautista Agut became the third potential dangerman in Nadal's half of the draw to pull out with COVID, following the withdrawals of 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini and 2017 finalist Marin Cilic. "Today I have notified @Wimbledon of my withdrawal. I have tested positive for Covid-19," tweeted the 34-year-old Bautista Agut, a semi-finalist in 2019.

"Fortunately, the symptoms are not very serious, but I think it is the best decision. Thanks for your support. I hope to come back soon." His exit means that Colombia's Daniel Elahi Galan receives a walkover into the last 32. Wimbledon was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic while the 2021 edition was run at reduced capacity with players confined to a bubble, but this year it is back to business as usual at the All England Club.

Nadal has also benefited from a shock first-round exit for Canada's sixth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime, who took him to five sets at the French Open. The major threat to the Spaniard's hopes for a third Wimbledon crown on his side of the draw is Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who plays

Australia's Jordan Thompson. Nadal, 36, is halfway to a calendar Slam after winning the Australian Open and French Open this year. The feat has not been achieved since 1969.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion struggled with crippling foot pain at Roland Garros but has received treatment aimed at reducing the pain and was moving freely in his first-round match on Tuesday. Seeds are also tumbling on the other side of the men's draw, with notable early losers including third seed Casper Ruud and last year's semi-finalist Hubert Hurkacz. But top seed Novak Djokovic, seeking to draw level with Pete Sampras on seven Wimbledon titles, is already safely through to the last 32.

Badosa sets up Kvitova clash

In the women's tournament, Badosa beat Romania's Irina Bara 6-3, 6-2 while Czech 25th seed Kvitova came through 6-1, 7-6 (7/5) against Ana Bogdan, also from Romania. Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014, blew a 5-1 lead in the second set but held her nerve to come out on top in the tie-break. Badosa said she expected a tough contest against Kvitova, who won the Eastbourne tournament on grass last week. "She plays very well on grass," said the Spaniard. "She won last week. I practice with her on grass, as well, so I know what I'm going to find out there. "She has confidence as well, but I think I have the game that I could play a tough match against her. Of course I think I will have my opportunities there."

Top seed Iga Swiatek, who has won her past six tournaments, takes on Dutch player Lesley Pattinama Kerkhove, looking to extend her winning run to 37



WIMBLEDON: Spain's Paula Badosa returns the ball to Romania's Irina Bara during their women's singles tennis match on the fourth day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon on June 30, 2022. —AFP

matches. "It's amazing for me to have that kind of streak," said the 21-year-old French Open champion. "It just shows how much work we've been putting for every match. "I'm pretty happy that I could show consistency because it was always my goal." Simona Halep, the 2019 champion, plays Belgium's Kirsten Flipkens while 11th seed Coco Gauff faces Romania's Mihaela Buzarnescu. —AFP



Japan's Kento Momota

Malaysia Open: Japan's Momota claws through

KUALA LUMPUR: Japanese badminton ace Kento Momota narrowly pulled through his first Malaysian match in over two years on Thursday as he recovers from a car accident in 2020 that sent his career spiralling downwards. In a nail-biting encounter lasting 55 minutes, the world number two beat Hong Kong's Angus Ng Ka-long 11-21, 21-8, 21-18 in the second round at the Malaysia Open.

Momota walked into Kuala Lumpur's Axiata Arena the fresher of the pair after his opponent in the first round, Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen, forfeited their game on Wednesday. Cries of "Momota, Momota" greeted the former two-time world champion from the mostly Malaysian crowd as he and Ng - ranked 13th in the world - took to the court.

But victory did not come easily for Momota with unforced errors forcing the 27-year-old to tumble 11-21 in the first set. Recovering in the second game, Momota then dominated Ng 21-8 and kept his nerve to win 21-18 in a tight final contest. Momota's career took a hit in January 2020 when he was involved in a road accident just hours after his victory at the Malaysia Masters, a tragedy that killed his driver and left Momota with a fractured eye socket.

Out of action for a year, the left-hander has found it hard to bounce back from injury, flopping at the Tokyo Olympics and losing in the first round at four of five singles tournaments he has entered this year. Momota, who last triumphed in Malaysia in 2020, will next face Indonesia's world number 26 Shesar Hiren Rhustavito in the last eight. —AFP

Kuwait thump Najma to clinch handball trophy

HYDERABAD, India: Kuwait Club of Kuwait ended Bahrain's Najma Club's season-long unbeaten run by defeating them 28-23 in the final of the 24th Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship. Kuwait, beaten by Najma by just one point in their group game earlier in the tournament, first gained a lead of 5-3 in the 8th minute of the game and never relinquished the advantage, winning easily in the end.

The Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship (AHF Club League Championship) is the official competition organized by Asian Handball Federation for the men's handball clubs of Asia, and takes place every year. In addition to crowning the Asian champions, the tournament also serves as a qualifying tournament for the IHF Super Globe. —Agencies



HYDERABAD, India: Kuwait Club of Kuwait team members celebrate after beating Bahrain's Najma Club's 28-23.