



**3** Food waste has increased significantly in Kuwait



**8** Flight trouble: Strained US airlines face July 4 test



**13** Afghan shepherds dream of home from Turkish valleys



**16** Wimbledon, Tour, cricket and rugby find COVID still in the air



# Lebanese president calls for unity to address challenges

## Arab FMs meet to discuss food security, war in Ukraine



BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun meets Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on July 2, 2022. — KUNA (See Page 2)

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Saturday called on Arab leaders to unite in order to tackle the various challenges now facing the Arab world. "We must work together to address different challenges, including defending the Palestinian cause and rights of Palestinian people, putting an end to wars in our countries, and not sparing efforts to fight against terrorism in addition to dealing with the biggest waves of displacement in modern history," reported a statement by Lebanon's Presidency quoted Aoun as saying.

Aoun made the remarks during his meeting at Baabda Palace with Arab foreign ministers, including Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, who had arrived in Beirut for the consultative ministerial meeting of the Arab League. During the meeting, which was chaired by Lebanon, Aoun called on Arab countries to help his country secure a safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland as Lebanon is suffering from a number of crises and can no longer support a big number of displaced refugees on its territory.

Lebanon is determined to resolve its multiple crises, said Aoun, adding the country has successfully held parliamentary elections and is now forming a government and seeking to reach an agree-

ment with the International Monetary Fund to prevent the country from collapse. Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit said the league would support Lebanon, the Lebanese government and its people. The AL's Council of Foreign Ministers meets twice a year, in July and September, to discuss issues that concern the Arab nations.

The Arab foreign ministers discussed during their consultative meeting a range of regional crises, with emphasis on food security and the impact of the war in Ukraine on Arab countries. Praising the tone and atmosphere of the meeting, Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou-Habib said the meeting was a complete success and drew broad participation.

"The transparent, highly responsible and substantive discussions led to consensus on a host of regional and international issues," he said at a joint press conference with Aboul-Gheit. "We felt amity and solidarity from all participants towards Lebanon, which is undergoing challenging economic conditions. All of them hope to see the Lebanese economy recovering as early as possible; their participation in the meeting at this time sent a message of support to Lebanon," Bou-Habib noted.

Continued on Page 6

### News in brief

#### US, Taliban talk in Doha

DOHA: Talks between the United States and the Taliban continued in Doha earlier this week to discuss earthquake aid, the State Department said, months after the two parties last meet in the Qatari capital in March. During the meetings, the US reiterated an earlier pledge of \$55 million in new assistance for earthquake relief, the State Department said in a statement. According to the State Department, US representatives also pushed the Taliban authorities on women's rights. — AFP (See Page 6)

#### New offside system at World Cup

DOHA: FIFA confirmed that a semi-automated offside system will be used at this year's World Cup in Qatar. The data-driven, limb-tracking technology uses both dedicated and broadcast cameras around the stadium to give the exact position of players on the pitch, offering referees precise information within seconds. The term "semi-automated" is used because FIFA insist match officials will still make the final call. — AFP

#### India court slams spokeswoman

NEW DELHI: A ruling party spokeswoman whose remarks on Islam embroiled India in a diplomatic row and sparked huge protests should apologize, India's top court said. "She and her loose tongue have set the country on fire," the Supreme Court said during a procedural hearing on several criminal complaints filed against Nupur Sharma. "This lady is single-handedly responsible for what is happening in the country," it added. "She should apologize to the whole nation." — AFP (See Page 7)

#### Iran man kills teenage daughter

TEHRAN: A teenage girl in Iran was killed by her father who blasted her with a shotgun in the heart, local media said. The death, an apparent so-called "honor killing" in the ultraconservative country, came after the father confronted his 16-year-old daughter after she met a young man in the southern city of Nurabad, women's activists said. — AFP

## Kuwait monitors COVID cases via Immune app

KUWAIT: Kuwait's ministry of health announced on Saturday it has started monitoring positive COVID-19 cases through the Immune app instead of the Shlonik app. A person who tests positive for COVID-19 must isolate for five days, after which they are required to wear a facemask for an addi-

tional five days, the health ministry said in a press statement on Saturday. A user's Immune app automatically turns red once the person tests positive for COVID-19, the ministry explained.

Meanwhile, the world is still not using one of its most effective weapons against COVID - properly ventilating public spaces - more than two years into the pandemic, experts warn. At the moment there is a "fragile, armed peace" with COVID-19, said Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva. "In the hopes of stemming the tide of the pandemic and reducing mortality, we need to reduce the level of contamination, which the vaccine cannot do alone," he told

## Libya anger boils over

TRIPOLI: Libya's rival leaders were under growing street pressure Saturday after protesters stormed parliament as anger exploded over deteriorating living conditions and political deadlock. Libyans, many impoverished after a decade of turmoil and sweltering in the soaring summer heat, have been enduring fuel shortages and power cuts of up to 18 hours a day even as their country sits atop Africa's largest proven oil reserves.

Libya has been mired in chaos and repeated rounds of conflict since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Protesters stormed the seat of

the House of Representatives in the eastern city of Tobruk on Friday night, ransacking its offices and torching part of the building.

In both the main eastern city of Benghazi - the cradle of the 2011 uprising - and the capital Tripoli, thousands took to the streets to chants of "We want the lights to work". Some brandished the green flags of the former Gaddafi regime. Calm appeared to have returned to Tobruk on Saturday, though there were calls on social media for more protests in the evening.

The UN's top Libya envoy Stephanie Williams said that "riots and acts of vandalism" were "totally unacceptable". "It is absolutely vital that calm is maintained, responsible Libyan leadership demonstrated and restraint

Continued on Page 6

## Strong quakes kill five in Iran

TEHRAN: A series of strong earthquakes rocked southern Iran on Saturday, killing at least five people, injuring over 90 others and reducing an entire village to rubble. The quakes, including two of magnitude 6.0, struck west of the major port city of Bandar Abbas in Hormozgan province, the US Geological Survey said. The first rattled an area north of the town of Dezhgan shortly after 2:00 am (2:30 GMT), before a 5.7 tremor hit two hours later followed quickly by the second 6.0 magnitude quake, the USGS said.

Five people were killed, Hormozgan governor Mehdi Dousti said, quoted by official news agency IRNA. Dousti told state television that the village of Sayeh Khosh, close to the epicenter, had been "completely destroyed". "Ninety-three people were injured, of whom only seven are still in hospital for treatment," national emergency services spokesman Mojtaba Khaledi told state television.

The broadcaster showed footage of residential buildings reduced to rubble in Sayeh Khosh, which was plunged into darkness in a power outage. In another video, a family was seen sifting through debris and trying to recover their belongings, as a woman was heard screaming in the background. Ambulances and other vehicles tried to navigate roads covered in rubble as shocked residents wandered through the streets.

AFP. "We need a new phase - improving the quality of indoor air."

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through the air. It is carried in large droplets or fine aerosols when an infected person breathes - and even more so when they talk, sing or shout. In a closed off or poorly ventilated room, these aerosols can remain in the air for some time, moving around the space and greatly increasing the risk of infection.

While it is generally accepted that COVID can be transmitted within two meters via both droplets and aerosols, there is still no consensus on the importance of long-distance airborne transmission indoors.

Continued on Page 6



TOBRUK, Libya: This picture taken early on July 2, 2022 shows a fire inside the building used by Libya's Tobruk-based parliament building in the country's east. — AFP

People spent the night outdoors in the provincial capital Bandar Abbas - with a population of more than 500,000, located about 100 km east of the epicenter - as long queues formed at gas stations there, state media reported. Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi visited Hormozgan province and told state television that restoring water and electricity were among the government's top priorities.

Iran's Red Crescent Society said in the morning that search and rescue operations were nearly over. "We are concentrating on housing the victims of the earthquake," Hormozgan governor Dousti told state television. A provincial heritage official told IRNA the quake damaged 50 historical windmills on Qeshm island, located just off the coast. Iran sits astride the boundaries of several major tectonic

Continued on Page 6

## Local

# Lebanese President appreciates Kuwait's constant support

## Kuwaiti Foreign Minister delivers letter from Crown Prince to Aoun



BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun meets with members of the Kuwaiti delegation, led by Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun spoke highly of the Kuwaiti Amir, government and people for standing by his country in all conditions. During his meeting with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on Saturday, President Aoun praised the historic deep-rooted relationship between the two sisterly countries, according to a statement from the Lebanese presidency. He welcomed Sheikh Dr Ahmad's participation in the Arab foreign ministers' consultative meeting which opened earlier Saturday in Beirut. President Aoun commended the positive impact of the Kuwaiti initiative for improving the relationship between Lebanon and the GCC states, noting that the relations have been improving since the return of ambassadors of both sides. Sheikh Dr Ahmad delivered a letter from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the President. The letter focused on ways to further bolster ties.

### Expression of support

The Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit said on Saturday that the Arab Foreign Ministers held their meeting in Lebanon as an expression of their solidarity and support. He pointed out in a statement to the press, after his meeting with the Arab foreign ministers and President Aoun at Baabda Palace, that the ministers

thanked the president and showed their support for Lebanon. The consultative meeting was held by consensus among all Arab countries to support the Lebanese people and government, he added. They listened to a speech in which Aoun explained the Lebanese situation and the need for international support, as the Arab League wishes Lebanon all the



### Arab meeting coincides with delicate conditions

best and utmost success, he mentioned.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib said that this routine meeting was held in preparation for the upcoming Arab Summit scheduled in Algeria next November. The meeting has no specific agenda; however, it provides Arab Foreign Ministers with a platform to discuss issues pertaining to the Arab region, he added.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati had

international issues of common concern, and highlighted the need to coordinate the stances of both countries towards them. On a separate occasion, Ghanem and Fayeze discussed the sisterly ties between Kuwait and Jordan and explored ways to promote cooperation in all areas, notably the parliamentary one. Both sides commended the distinguished relations between the two sisterly countries and agreed to coordinate stances towards the regional and international issues of mutual concern.

The meetings with the Azerbaijani and Jordanian top lawmakers were also attended by Kuwaiti MP Ahmad Al-Hamad and Charge D'Affaires of Kuwait Embassy in Baku Faisal Al-Mutairi. Themed "Boosting the role of national parliaments in promoting global peace and sustainable development," the NAM Parliamentary Network Conference is being held at Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku under the auspices of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. — KUNA

called on Arabs and more specifically the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to embrace and support Lebanon and its people at this delicate period in its history. In a dinner banquet in honor of the Arab foreign ministers' consultative meeting in Beirut, Mikati added that such urgent matter requires intensifying consultations on the Arab joint action and consensus on issues for the upcoming Arab summit. The premier said that convening the summit is in itself an indication of the will of Arab leaders to overcome all challenges and obstacles to renew joint Arab action and keep pace with regional and international developments in all fields. Mikati reiterated Lebanon's commitment to implementing all UN Security Council and Arab League resolutions, in a way that consolidates the policy of disassociation from any Arab dispute, extends state sovereignty over its entire territory, and prevents all types of offenses towards Arab countries or threats to their security.

### Delicate conditions

The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad had stated Friday the consultative meeting of the Arab foreign ministers coincided with delicate conditions and mounting challenges in the Arab region and the world at large. "Those conditions require that we act in unison to reach a coordinated approach to addressing the current challenges," he

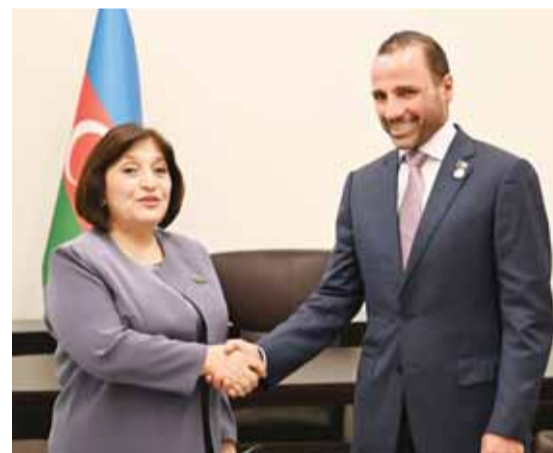
told reporters upon his arrival at Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport. "The meeting provides a chance for debating all affairs completely at ease without being restricted to a specific agenda, unlike the routine consultations being held at the Arab League on a quarterly basis."

"It is such a proper atmosphere that could help produce a united vision for Arab joint action," Sheikh Dr Ahmad pointed out. Dealing with Kuwait-Lebanon relationship, he said both countries maintained firm integrated relations in all weathers, citing as an example the large numbers of Kuwaiti vacationers in Lebanon. The political leaders of both countries maintain close contacts to serve the interests of both peoples and promote cooperation in all fields, he added. Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad had discussed with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and parliament speaker Nabih Berri efforts to strengthen bilateral relations.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister and his Jordanian counterpart Ayman Al-Safadi discussed on Saturday the bilateral ties, as well as the latest developments in the Arab region and beyond. Sheikh Dr Ahmad also held similar talks with Somali Acting Foreign Minister and State Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Balal Mohamed Cusman. The talks took place on the margins of the consultative meeting of the Arab foreign ministers. — KUNA

## Kuwait speaker meets Azerbaijani, Jordanian peers

BAKU: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem met separately with Speaker of the Azerbaijani Parliament Sahiba Gafarova and President of the Jordanian Senate Faisal Al-Fayez on Friday on the margins of the conference of the Parliamentary Network of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held in Baku. His meeting with Gafarova focused on the friendly ties and explored ways to promote cooperation in all areas, particularly the parliamentary one, Al-Dustor news network reported. They also reviewed a range of regional and



BAKU: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets Speaker of the Azerbaijani Parliament Sahiba Gafarova. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets President of the Jordanian Senate Faisal Al-Fayez.

## Czech embassy hosts handover of EU Council presidency event

KUWAIT: On June 30, 2022, a joint press conference was held at the premises of the Czech Embassy in Kuwait to mark the handover of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from France to the Czech Republic. The Ambassador of the European Union Dr Cristian Tudor, the Ambassador of France Claire Le Flecher, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic Jaroslav Siro and Ambassador of France Claire Le Flecher attend the press conference.

Dr Cristian Tudor, Ambassador of the European Union explained the system of the rotating Presidency by saying: "The Presidency of the Council of the European Union rotates among the EU Member States every 6 months. Before taking up this important role, the EU Member State, which holds the Presidency, prepares its detailed program for the topics and priority issues that will be addressed by the Council of the EU in Brussels. The EU Delegation in Kuwait worked closely with the Embassy of France for the past half year to assist them in achieving objectives of their Presidency. I look forward to continuing this excellent cooperation with the Czech Embassy as they take over the role of rotating Presidency tomorrow."

The EU Ambassador added: "Unfortunately, one of these issues during the last six months was the return of war to Europe in the form of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Europe will continue to work with Ukraine and like-minded partners to counter this aggression and eventually Ukraine will prevail. He concluded by saying that the EU Delegation plays an important role in organizing and hosting regular meetings at the level of Heads of Missions for the 17 EU Member States represented in Kuwait, which provide a platform for EU Member States Ambassadors to exchange views and coordinate our work in Kuwait.

Claire Le Flecher, Ambassador of France, underlined how the unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 24 has unexpectedly affected the agenda of the French Presidency of the European Union. She added that contrary to Russian hopes and calculations, the EU has demonstrated strong unity and collective purpose. "The EU has shown its ability to react decisively on many fronts. First, it had to address as a matter of urgency the major humanitarian crisis provoked by the war and great hundreds of thousands having to take shelter in EU countries, primarily neighbors. Second, it quickly started to address the situation from a security and defense viewpoint, through coordinated supplies of military equipment to enable Ukraine to defend its territory, and it adopted for the first time a Strategic Compass expressing how the EU collectively sees and intends to defend its strategic interests. Third, it took strong action to reduce its dependency on Russian energy supplies. And fourth and last, it adopted several rounds of targeted sanctions against Russia."

The EU also had to keep on, as one of the main engines of the world economy, to press on with its recovery agenda, in a context of rising energy and food prices. It is now focusing on how to help low-income countries face the food security crisis triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. As to key long-term challenges, climate change remains by far the most worrying one for the world. Le Flecher added that "Despite the present energy crisis, the stakes are too high not to sustain the course. New progress has been achieved by the EU on its plan for green transition 'Fit to 55'. On this issue as many others, we are happy and very confident to pass the relay to the Czech Presidency, with whom France has strongly coordinated during the past six months."

Jaroslav Siro, Ambassador of the Czech



KUWAIT: (From left) Ambassador of the European Union Dr Cristian Tudor, Ambassador of the Czech Republic Jaroslav Siro and Ambassador of France Claire Le Flecher attend the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Republic, presented the priorities of the Czech Presidency and congratulated Ukraine on the EU candidate country status granted by the EU Member States. In his address, he said: "I am pleased to announce here, that starting on July 1, 2022, the Czech Republic will hold for the next six months the Presidency of the Council of the European Union with the Motto: 'Europe as a task - Rethink, Rebuild, Repower'. It fully reflects the attitude of the Czech Republic to such a responsible task. Let me use this opportunity to thank the French Presidency for their excellent work and performance during their tenure."

He further continued: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has brought along the necessity of a fundamental reassessment of the EU priorities and significantly influenced the preparation of the five Czech Presidency's priorities: sup-

porting Ukraine, energy security of Europe, reinforcement of European defense capacities, strategic resilience of EU's economy and protecting European democracy."

With respect to the relations with Kuwait and the GCC countries, he said: "High on the list of the priorities of our Presidency lies a firm support to the development and strengthening of relations with the Gulf countries, including Kuwait. We support the proposal by the European Commission to grant the Schengen visa waiver to citizens of Kuwait and Qatar, which will help to strengthen people-to-people contacts. Yesterday, the Council of the EU approved the negotiating mandate for the Presidency to negotiate with the European Parliament on the liberalization of short-stay visas for Kuwait and Qatar. This is an important step in legislative procedures of the EU."

Local

# Food waste increased significantly in Kuwait in recent years: Food Bank

## Food bank official suggests passing laws to reduce waste

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A recent report indicated that an individual in Kuwait wastes 95 kg of food annually. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti families waste 397,700 tons of food every year, according to the food waste index report for 2021 issued by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and partner organization WRAP. The report shows that most of this waste comes from households, which dispose 11 percent of the total food available in the consumption stage in the food chain, while food service establishments and retail outlets waste five percent and two percent respectively.

Meshal Al-Ansari, Vice President of Kuwait Bank for Food and Relief, told Kuwait Times the bank had submitted a project proposal to relevant authorities to establish a factory that recycles surplus food to produce chemical fertilizer and animal feed. "Food waste has increased signifi-



Meshal Al-Ansari

cantly in Kuwait in the past few years due to a lack of awareness by individuals and food service establishments, which requires a strong pause to study the laws and legislation that should be set to reduce food waste," Ansari stressed.

Kuwait ranks 20 on the list of top food-wasting countries in the world, according to the report, with 931 million tons of food wasted annually in the world,

which is equivalent to 17 percent of available food. The Food Bank for Food and Relief is a charitable organization approved by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor that was established with the aim of fighting hunger and poverty, as well as reducing food waste through awareness and guidance.

### Bank's activities

Regarding the food bank's mechanisms that are being implemented to reduce or take advantage of surplus food, Ansari pointed out the bank has made an agreement with a volunteer team called "Al-Issa Endowment" to distribute surplus cooked meals from restaurants, hotels and home banquets to needy families in Kuwait. "Meanwhile, the food bank, in cooperation with the ministry of education, has started a campaign that educates and guides school students to learn ways of reducing food waste. It boosts awareness of the

negative effects of food waste and the damage it causes to the individual and society," he said.

"As for the direct role of the food bank, we do not deal with unpacked materials. Our direct work is only related to canned products that have a validity of not less than three months," Ansari said. "Co-ops and companies have a list of monthly sales and have knowledge of monthly surpluses. They allocate a percentage of the surplus for donation, playing a community role and preventing food waste." Ansari pointed out there are companies that refuse to donate surplus food and prefer to waste it, saying they have commercial goals and try to maintain prices. However, "community participation and donation of the surplus returns to the company as double profits," he said.

Ansari strongly agreed on the importance of setting laws and legislations to reduce wastage. "We have income from oil

that covers the costs of wasted food, but now after a big rise in food prices globally, it has become a burden on families and forces them to only buy basic foodstuffs," he said. "With the presence of legislations and regulations that regulate food waste and security, it will help the country to reduce food waste, as well as save huge amounts of money wasted annually."

Ansari warned not to rely on the current food price rise to reduce food waste. "With the rise in prices, people are forced to buy less food, but we must have continuous projects for the future and not think about a reaction to the current situation, because prices may fall in the future or the price of oil will rise, along with lifestyles, which will lead us back to food waste," he said. A special committee should be established by people involved in the food sector to find radical solutions to implement goals and keep up with international communities that work on reducing food waste.

## Kuwaiti academic named among 20 'rising stars' in pharmaceutical sciences

KUWAIT: The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has picked Kuwaiti academic Dr Dalal Al-Taweel among 20 women pharmaceutical scientists and pharmacy educators as the first FIPWiSE Rising Stars, said Kuwait University. "The FIP Rising Stars list aims to promote, encourage and inspire women in the fields of pharmaceutical sciences and education," Kuwait University said in a press statement on Saturday. It is a new feature of the Women in Science and Education (FIPWiSE) initiative established by FIP in 2000 to champion and enable women to achieve their fullest potential and to attract female students and young professionals into these fields.



Dr Dalal Al-Taweel

Dr Dalal Al-Taweel is Assistant Dean for Student and Academic Affairs at Kuwait University's College of Pharmacy. The FIP's list comprises 20 women pharmaceutical scientists and pharmacy educators from 13 countries. The criteria for FIPWiSE Rising Star nominations include demonstrated achievements, innovations and significant impacts in pharmaceutical sciences or pharmacy education, being a "pathfinder" in the profession despite challenges, and going "above and beyond" for the pharmacy profession. — KUNA

## Sheikh Mubarak honors outgoing Australian envoy

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah stressed the importance of the serious endeavor to move Kuwait towards alternative energy, in light of many circumstances that encourage this trend, which has become an inevitable choice with the rapid rise in fuel prices in the world, pointing to the need to benefit from Australia's distinguished experience in relying on alternative energy. He pointed out the trend in developed countries to transition from traditional to renewable energy, noting that Kuwait can use solar power as an effective way to produce clean energy instead of heavy reliance on burning fossil fuel to generate power. Sheikh Mubarak expressed his regret that Kuwait is last among the Gulf countries in this field.

Sheikh Mubarak made those statements while receiving the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert on the occasion of the end of his four-year tenure in Kuwait. Sheikh Mubarak honored the ambassador and praised his efforts during his tenure, which he said was "full of hard work, strengthening bilateral relations between two friendly coun-



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah presents a commemorative plaque to the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert.

tries that share distinguished relations at all political, educational and economic levels." Sheikh Mubarak pointed that Kuwait invests \$16 billion in total annual investments in Australia. Furthermore, he noted that Kuwait also encourages the development of educational relations through the Australian Colleges of Kuwait. Sheikh Mubarak was at the forefront of supporting Kuwaiti students on scholarships to Australia, and he also expanded his economic activity in the field of investment and tourism in Australia, whether through hotel or investment activity in various forms. Sheikh Mubarak discussed with the ambassador the opportunities of development and cooperation in different forms, as well as support

for joint educational activity.

The two sides also stressed the need to support trade cooperation between Kuwait and Australia with the unprecedented Australian vegetable harvest this year and in light of the repercussions of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which affected wheat prices internationally, especially since Australia is one of the friendly countries that supports Kuwait in maintaining its food security, whether in wheat or barley and other basic materials.

Sheikh Mubarak thanked the ambassador for the years he spent in Kuwait as he was accepted by all segments of the society. The ambassador, in turn, praised Sheikh Mubarak's role in promoting cooperation between the two friendly countries. At the end, souvenirs were exchanged.

## Charging spots pop up around Kuwait as electric cars become more popular

KUWAIT: The global push for cleaner modes of transportation had a great leap with electric vehicles becoming more popular in recent years. In Kuwait, one might be able to spot electric cars roaming around with said vehicles using electric charging spots, which started to pop-up in several locations throughout the country. Being environment friendly and aware is perhaps the main driving force behind electric vehicles with several car companies now providing this option for eager clients. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A fully designated parking spot for electric vehicles. — KUNA photos



Electric charging post with the iconic Kuwait Towers in the background.



An electric charging station located at The Avenues Mall.



A sign for a special parking to charge electric vehicles.

local spotlight

## Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination



By Atyab Al-Shatti

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Article 70 of the Constitution of Kuwait, states "The Amir approves conventions by a decree and refers them to the National Assembly for ratification, then to be published in the official gazette as a pillar point to announce the date of commencement of these provisions. After this fundamental legal procedure, conventions shall have the power of national laws and supersede national laws with regards to implementation in case of any conflict."

Through this constitutional principle, conventions' provisions become effective in the legislative system and the national judiciary, but in terms of practice, most of the verdicts issued by the court rely only on national laws as a source of laws and provisions. It is rare to have these verdicts based on conventions which Kuwait has signed, ratified and have become nationally binding. Also, it is rare to find verdicts issued according to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). This reflects the need to implement provisions of international conventions ratified by Kuwait in general and CERD in particular.

Today, it is crucial to harmonize national legislations with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, considering the fact that Kuwaiti law combats discrimination and racism, yet does not define discrimination specifically to combating discrimination. Such a legislative vacuum creates a serious gap between the definition of discrimination as stated in our national regulations and the definition in article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which Kuwait has signed and ratified.

Many relevant national legislations were not harmonized with the convention, particularly labor laws such as law 6/2010 concerning work in the private sector which does not ban direct and indirect discrimination based on reasons mentioned by International Labor Organization (ILO) convention no. 111/1958 concerning discrimination in employment and occupation in respect of all aspects of work, particularly prohibition of sexual harassment and discrimination on multiple grounds, like the sponsor (kafeel) system, lack of social security for female migrant workers and a shortage of providing an appropriate mechanism to help them get their legal rights.

The abovementioned law hasn't been amended since it was enacted in 2010 with respect to discrimination in employment, occupation and the sponsorship system and its mechanisms. Civil service law no. 15/1979 hasn't been amended to prohibit discrimination in employment according to gender, origin, language and religion. Moreover, a number of regulations and administrative decisions restrict the rights stipulated in certain laws, like law no. 15/1979. Article 2 of this law defines the employee as anyone who holds a civil job at a government authority regardless of the nature of their job, title, or being a citizen or migrant worker.

Non-Kuwaiti employees and migrant workers are usually appointed by contracts according to circular no. 6/1979 concerning the rules and provisions of temporary appointment. Such contracts restrict the rights granted to them by the Civil service law. For example, migrant teachers are appointed according to the second contract (B), therefore their salary is fixed based on item B of article 4 of circular no. 6/1979. So, the salary will not be raised periodically and there is no promotion to supervisory positions.

Finally, we trust the humanitarian sense of our authorities to help amend these legislative gaps and enact just laws.

## Local

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## News in brief

Kuwait oil price  
down to \$112.51 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by \$2.91 to \$112.51 per barrel on Friday from \$115.42 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Saturday. Globally, the price of the Brent crude went up by \$2.60 per barrel to \$111.63 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by \$2.67 to \$108.43 pb.

Kuwaiti charity  
distributes rickshaws

ADEN: The Kuwait Relief Society has doled out 50 tricycle rickshaws to needy families in the Western Yemeni governorate of Taiz, the last batch of 150 rickshaws it distributed across the war-ravaged country. In statements to the press on Friday, Abdulrahman Shamsan, head of the local Alhekma society which handed the rickshaws to the targeted families on behalf of the Kuwaiti society, stated that the move is meant to provide poor families with stable work and consequently a source of income. For the same purpose, the Kuwait Relief Society had recently donated 100 fishing boats for 100 Yemeni families, Shamsan added, expressing appreciation to Kuwait's leadership and people for their support to Yemeni people.

## Bonus lists to be revised

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy plans to revise the lists of high achieving employees eligible for bonuses and make sure no worthy candidates were left out, sources told Kuwait Times. The review will include lists from all departments of the ministry, the source said, adding that this came as per instructions of Minister of Public Works, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Ali Al-Mousa in order to find out any manipulation that could have possibly happened during the preparation of the lists.

## Man dies in work mishap

KUWAIT: A worker died when a solid object fell on him inside Sabah Al-Ahmad protectorate in Subiya area on Saturday. The victim, Filipino, worked for an excavation company. Authorities recovered the body and opened an investigation into the incident.

Authorities told to  
implement World Bank  
recommendations

KUWAIT: The government informed concerned authorities to implement the recommendations of a previous study by the World Bank and international advisors and prepare proposed laws, official sources told Kuwait Times. The new Cabinet can place them on top of its priorities in the coming period so current drawbacks, recurring budget deficits and economic problems can be remedied, in addition to the continued failure of replacement policies in the government sector.

The sources said Kuwait has spent millions of dollars on contracts with the World Bank and international advisors to carry out practical studies, and it is not realistic for these studies to be wasted without implementing their recommendations, especially since a lack of implementing these recommendations caused a fall in Kuwait's ratings.

They said a rise in oil prices rescued the budget from deficit, yet it is temporary because prices will go down again to return to square one, so reforms must be made in any way. The first action must be the passing of the public debt law at the National Assembly, as it cannot be postponed. MPs must understand this and the government must fight to implement it.

The sources said recommendations of the World Bank and studies to increase state fees and rentals of state property will be implemented before the end of the current year and services fees will be increased next year, in addition to reducing public expenses, as subsidy allocations will be reduced and food subsidy will only go to those with limited income, while those with high income will not receive it.



KUWAIT: Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan with Kuwait's top students during the event.

Zain celebrates Kuwait's top graduates  
in ceremony at main headquarters

Roudhan to students: 'Pick majors that meet your passion and serve market's needs'



Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan honors one of the students.



Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan recognizes a graduate.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, hosted its special annual ceremony to recognize the outstanding achievements of Kuwait's top high school graduates. The event was held at Zain's main headquarters in Shuwaikh with the attendance of the students' parents and CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan.

At the end of every academic year, Zain holds a special ceremony to recognize Kuwait's top-performing students who excelled in their high school journey. This year, Zain honored top graduates across Kuwait (sciences and humanities), top Kuwaiti graduates (sciences and humanities), top graduates of Religious Education, as well as top graduates of Special Education (sciences and humanities).

Addressing the students and their families, Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "I'm thrilled to welcome you all today to Zain's wonderful world. Seeing today with smiles upon your faces and the faces of your parents is heartwarming, especially after two exceptional years you spent between virtual and physical learning because of the COVID pandemic."

Roudhan continued: "Today we are here to celebrate each and every one of you, to celebrate your exceptional achievements and accomplishments. I congratulate your parents and all of Kuwait for

empowering and nurturing such a distinguished group of young people who will surely lead our future with passion and dedication. We are hopeful for a better tomorrow because we believe in your energy, potential, and capabilities."

Roudhan added: "Before we celebrate, we have to thank God for His blessings. The entire world went through tough times recently, and the pan-

Roudhan stressed: "Now, the most important part of your academic life awaits you, which is college. Universities will race to get your attention, and whether you go for a local or international college, always remember: selecting your major should center around your passion in life. Excelling in your future career is undeniably linked to one's passion. You'll never feel tired working so long that you love what you do."

Roudhan concluded: "My advice to you is to choose majors that serve the market's needs and meet your passion. Pick majors that have a big future, not just in financial benefits, but those that achieve self-happiness, and you are most passionate about."

As a leading national company, Zain firmly believes in the importance of contributing to the progress of the education sector and looks to empower and prepare the youth for the important roles they will play in the future of the country.

Zain is fully committed to supporting young people in their development through a wide variety of community activities and programs, including award programs, educational programs, and career development initiatives. The company's solid CSSR strategy is what drives it to continue being committed to support all sectors of society.

Company  
honored top  
students

demical has affected all sectors, including education. Despite school closures, lockdowns, having to adapt to virtual learning, and living through the mental pressures of the pandemic, you overcame the challenges and achieved the highest levels because of your dedication and determination."

## Rutab dates season arrives in Kuwait; early varieties hitting market



KUWAIT: The rutab dates season has arrived in Kuwait with early varieties of the fruit in all shapes and colors hitting the market. The summer rutab dates have their taste and quality, which push con-

sumers racing to the market to buy them. Some clients prefer certain types of rutab including 'Al-Munsef', a type of date with a dual yellow and brown colors tasting and looking sweet. Rutab

dates were the main source of nutrition in the past especially for nomadic tribes of the Arabian Desert. Dates generally could be stored for a longer period under the right conditions. —KUNA



Dozens missing in shipwreck during China Sea typhoon

Independent Algeria turns 60, but colonial-era wounds remain

Page 6

Page 7



BUCHA, Ukraine: A woman takes a picture of a car destroyed during battles of early April 2022 in Bucha, Kyiv region on July 1, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

## Zelensky accuses Russia of terror

Missiles rain down on Ukraine, killing many civilians

**KYIV, Ukraine:** Missiles rained down on Ukraine killing many civilians and wounding dozens in built up areas as the weekend began, prompting President Volodymyr Zelensky to accuse Russia of state "terror".

Strikes on a southern resort town left 21 dead and dozens wounded after missiles slammed into flats and a recreation centre in Sergiyivka, 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Black Sea port Odessa. Rockets struck residential properties in Solviansk in the heart of the embattled Donbas region, killing a woman in her garden and wounding her husband, a neighbour told AFP Saturday, describing debris showered across the neighbourhood.

The witness said the strike on Friday was thought to use cluster munitions which spread over a large area before exploding, striking buildings and people who were outdoors. The attacks came after Moscow abandoned positions on a strategic island in a major setback to the Kremlin's invasion. Victims of the Sergiyivka attacks included a 12-year-old boy, Zelensky said in his daily address to the nation, adding that some 40 people have been injured and that the death toll could rise. "I emphasise: this is an act of deliberate, purposeful Russian terror—and not some kind of mistake or an accidental missile strike," Zelensky said.

"Three missiles hit a regular nine-storey apartment building, in which nobody was hiding any weapons, any

military equipment," he added. "Regular people, civilians, lived there."

### 'Cruel manner'

Germany swiftly condemned the violence. "The cruel manner in which the Russian aggressor takes the deaths of civilians in its stride and is again speaking of collateral damages is inhuman and cynical," said German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit.

The attacks follow global outrage earlier this week when a Russian strike destroyed a shopping centre in Kremenchuk, central Ukraine, killing at least 18 civilians. President Vladimir Putin has denied his forces were responsible for that attack and Moscow made no immediate comment on the Odessa strikes. On Friday, Zelensky hailed a new chapter in its relationship with the European Union, after Brussels recently granted Ukraine candidate status in Kyiv's push to join the 27-member bloc, even if membership is likely years away.

"Our journey to membership shouldn't take decades. We should make it down this road quickly," Zelensky told Ukraine's parliament. The president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, addressing Ukrainian lawmakers by video link, said membership was "within reach" but urged them to work on anti-corruption reforms. Norway, which is not an EU member, on Friday announced \$1 billion worth

of aid for Kyiv including for reconstruction and weapons. And the Pentagon said it was sending a new armament package worth \$820 million, including two air defence systems and more ammunition for the Himars precision rocket launchers the United States began supplying last month.

### Soup spat

In a decision that further cooled relations between Kyiv and Moscow, the UN's cultural agency inscribed Ukraine's tradition of cooking borsch soup on its list of endangered cultural heritage. Ukraine considers the nourishing soup, usually made with beetroot, as a national dish although it is also widely consumed in Russia, other ex-Soviet countries and Poland.

UNESCO said the decision was approved after a fast-track process prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We "will win both in the war of borsch and in this war," said Ukraine's Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko on Telegram. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said: "Hummus and pilaf are recognised as national dishes of several nations. Everything is subject to Ukrainisation."

### Phosphorus bombs

On Thursday, Russian troops abandoned their positions on Snake Island, which had become a symbol of Ukrainian

resistance in the first days of the war, and sat aside shipping lanes near Odessa's port. The Russian defence ministry described the retreat as "a gesture of goodwill" meant to demonstrate that Moscow will not interfere with UN efforts to organise protected grain exports from Ukraine. But on Friday evening, Kyiv accused Moscow of carrying out strikes using incendiary phosphorus munitions on the rocky outcrop, saying the Russians were unable to "respect even their own declarations". In peacetime, Ukraine is a major agricultural exporter, but Russia's invasion has damaged farmland and seen Ukraine's ports seized, razed or blockaded—sparking concerns about food shortages, particularly in poor countries.

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. Ukraine on Friday asked Turkey to detain a Russian-flagged cargo ship that Kyiv alleged had set off from the Kremlin-occupied port of Berdyansk.

While heavy fighting continued in eastern Ukraine, officials said schools in the Ukrainian capital would reopen at the start of the school year on September 1 for the first in-person classes since lessons went online after the invasion began. Olena Fidanyan, head of Kyiv's education and science department, said land around schools will be checked for explosives and school bomb shelters will be restocked with essentials. — AFP

## On the US border, 'migrants' desperation outweighs fear

**EAGLE PASS, United States:** Selvin Allende is worn out. With his one-year-old daughter on his shoulders and his pregnant wife beside him, he crossed the Rio Grande from the Mexican city of Piedras Negras into Eagle Pass, Texas—a dangerous journey that thousands of migrants undertake every year seeking a better future.

"I was afraid for my daughter in the river. I feel tired, defeated, but with the demand of working if the immigration services listen to us with their hearts," says the 30-year-old Guatemalan. The family left their home in Honduras because of crime and a lack of work, and made the long trip by train and on foot to get here.

He and his wife, walking with a painful gait and eyes half-closed, make their way over to the border patrol waiting for them under one of the bridges that link Mexico and the United States. Their belongings fit in a pair of plastic bags.

The agents look over their passports and those of other people who recently arrived, and take them into custody to study their asylum claims. The scene repeats itself several times a day under the resigned gaze of the security forces. "This never stops. They can cross wherever and whenever," said one National Guard soldier, who did not want to be named.

The reinforcement of security in the last few months has not stemmed the arrival of migrants without visas. In May, authorities detained more than 239,000 people on the Mexican border, a record, though the figure also includes those who tried to enter the US multiple times.

And yet, the journey comes with serious risks, as demonstrated by the case of 53 migrants found dead after being abandoned in a sweltering tractor trailer in San Antonio on Monday. The man suspected of driving the truck has said he was unaware the trailer's air conditioning had failed, according to media reports.

### 'Crying with happiness'

On the Mexican bank of the river trucks come and go, letting off people crossing to the other side. This afternoon the temperature hits 37 degrees Celsius (99 degrees Fahrenheit), and some migrants cool off in the water as they wait for more people to arrive with whom they can cross the treacherous river, which has claimed many lives. One Venezuelan family - five men, two



SAN ANTONIO, United States: Migrants wait in line outside a shelter in San Antonio, Texas. Dozens of migrants wait in line outside a shelter in San Antonio, most of them young men but also some women and children, hoping for a hot meal and a roof over their head. — AFP

women and two children - decide the moment has come. Their crossing lasts 10 minutes, and halfway through, they grab onto each other to brace themselves against the strong currents.

When they arrive on the American side, they shout with happiness before turning themselves over to the border patrol. The relief can be seen in every face. Alejandro Galindo, another Venezuelan crossing the river nearby, is emotional after 26 days of traveling with two companions. "I'm crying with happiness. I want to help my family. In Venezuela we have no future," the 28-year-old says.

### A changing profile

Eagle Pass, a city of 22,000 people about 230 kilometres (143 miles) from San Antonio, has learned to live with the daily presence of the migrants. A few meters from the bridge over the border, several men play golf in the yellowish grass, paying no mind to the people crossing the river. Valeria Wheeler, the director of the shelter Mission Border Hope, witnesses every day the challenges of the wave of migration. In two years, her facilities have gone from taking in between 20 migrants a week to up to 600 a day.

The recent arrivals spend a few hours there, in a

large warehouse with benches, bathrooms and showers, waiting for a relative to pay for their transportation to another city. The migrants' economic profile has changed in recent times, explains Wheeler, 35. Before, they were usually people who could buy an airplane ticket to somewhere near the border. But now they are poorer, and arrive after walking from Mexico or Central America. "They come with physical and emotional wounds," says Wheeler, whose shelter receives only those released by the border patrol and able to seek asylum after getting around Title 42.

The measure, invoked under the administration of former president Donald Trump, applies to all Mexicans and Central Americans, and allows for the deportation of migrants without visas, even if they are seeking asylum, under the pretext of stopping the spread of COVID-19.

For those who try to elude the border patrol and deportation, the journey is even more dangerous than for others. So-called coyotes, or traffickers, are one option, but the price can climb as high as \$10,000, and that's not the worst part, as seen in the case of the 53 people found dead in San Antonio.

"We're here so the people who arrive at the shelter don't have to go through the same thing," says Wheeler. "That's what we're working for." — AFP

## Iranian FM in Syria to calm Turkey tensions

**DAMASCUS:** Iran's foreign minister travelled Saturday to Damascus on what he said was a mission to calm tensions, after Turkey threatened to launch a new offensive on Kurds in northern Syria. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said his visit "was aimed at establishing peace and security in the region between Syria and Turkey", according to Iran's official news agency IRNA.

Iran is a major ally of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and an important trading partner for Turkey. Turkey has launched a string of offensives in Syria since 2016 targeting Kurdish militias as well as Islamic State group jihadists and forces loyal to Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said earlier this year he wanted to encourage one million Syrian refugees to return to their country by building them housing and local infrastructure in their homeland. In recent weeks, Erdogan said he planned to launch a military offensive against Kurdish fighters in Syria waging an insurgency against his country.

These include the US-backed Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which formed a crucial part of an international coalition against the Islamic State group. Amir-Abdollahian's trip to Syria comes five days after he visited Turkey. "After my visit to Turkey... it is necessary to have consultations with the Syrian authorities," Amir-Abdollahian was quoted as saying on Saturday by IRNA.

On Monday Amir-Abdollahian said he understood the need for a new Turkish military operation against Kurdish fighters in northern Syria. "We understand Turkey's security concerns very well," he told a joint news conference in Ankara with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. "We understand that... maybe a special operation might be needed," he said, adding that "Turkey's security concerns must be addressed fully and permanently."

Iran is hostile to Kurdish separatists who carry out operations in both Turkey and Iran. Following the 2011 start anti-government protests in Syria, which devolved into civil war after they were brutally repressed by Damascus, Ankara supported the uprising against Assad as well as armed rebels. Turkey has also launched several military offensives along the border, targeting Kurdish-administered zones in northeastern Syria, where groups it considers terrorists are based.—AFP

## International

# Independent Algeria turns 60, but colonial-era wounds remain

## Macron's move towards reconciliation could face a major test

**ALGIERS, Algeria:** Algeria marks 60 years of independence from France on Tuesday, but rival narratives over atrocities committed during more than a century of colonial rule still trigger bitter diplomatic tensions. The North African country won its independence following a gruelling eight-year war which ended with the signing in March 1962 of the Evian Accords.

On July 5 of the same year, days after 99.72 per cent voted for independence in a referendum, Algeria finally broke free from colonial rule—but memories of

and fomenting "hatred towards France".

Algeria withdrew its ambassador in response. "Relations between the power system in Algeria and 'official France' have been punctuated by crises and pseudo-reconciliations since independence," said Athmane Mazouz, head of Algeria's secularist opposition party RCD. "At this point, all bets are off on whether they can establish better ties."

### 'Take heat out of debate'

France has ruled out any form of apology for the colonial period. But Macron has also made a number of gestures aimed at mending ties with the former colony. Visiting Algiers during his first presidential campaign in February 2017, he described colonisation as a "crime against humanity".

He has since acknowledged the French army was behind the death of Algerian nationalist lawyer Ali Boumendjel and anti-colonialist French mathematician Maurice Audin. France has returned the skulls of 19th century Algerian resistance fighters and opened state archives on the Algerian war.

And the two sides appear to have moved on from the latest crisis. Macron and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune confirmed in a June 18 phone call their desire to "deepen" relations. Tebboune even congratulated Macron on his "brilliant" re-election and invited him to visit Algeria. Historian Amar Mohand-Amer said it was time for "a quick return to a normal situation". "Sixty years after independence, isn't it time we took the heat out of this debate?"

### 'Unstable geopolitics'

Mohand-Amer pointed out that the anniversary celebrations come at a time of raised tensions in the wider region around Algeria. The country cut ties with regional arch-rival Morocco last August, accusing it of "hostile acts".

In early June, Algiers suspended a two-decade-old cooperation pact with Madrid after Spain backed Morocco's stance in the long-running dispute over Western Sahara. To the east, in war-

left tens of thousands homeless, adds urgency to the funding debate. "The United States expressed condolences for the loss of life and suffering in Afghanistan caused by recent earthquakes," the State Department said of the meeting, which was led by Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West.

The United States raised "concerns regarding increased interference by the Taliban in the delivery of humanitarian assistance" and "concerns regarding transparency in delivery of services," the statement said of the aid.

According to the State Department, US representatives also pushed the Taliban authorities on women's rights—a sticking point which led Washington to cancel talks in Doha in March, when the group closed girls' secondary schools in Afghanistan.

"The United States supports the Afghan people's demands that girls be allowed to return to school and that women be allowed to work, contribute to the country's economic growth, and move and express themselves freely," the statement said. The hardline Islamist 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. — AFP

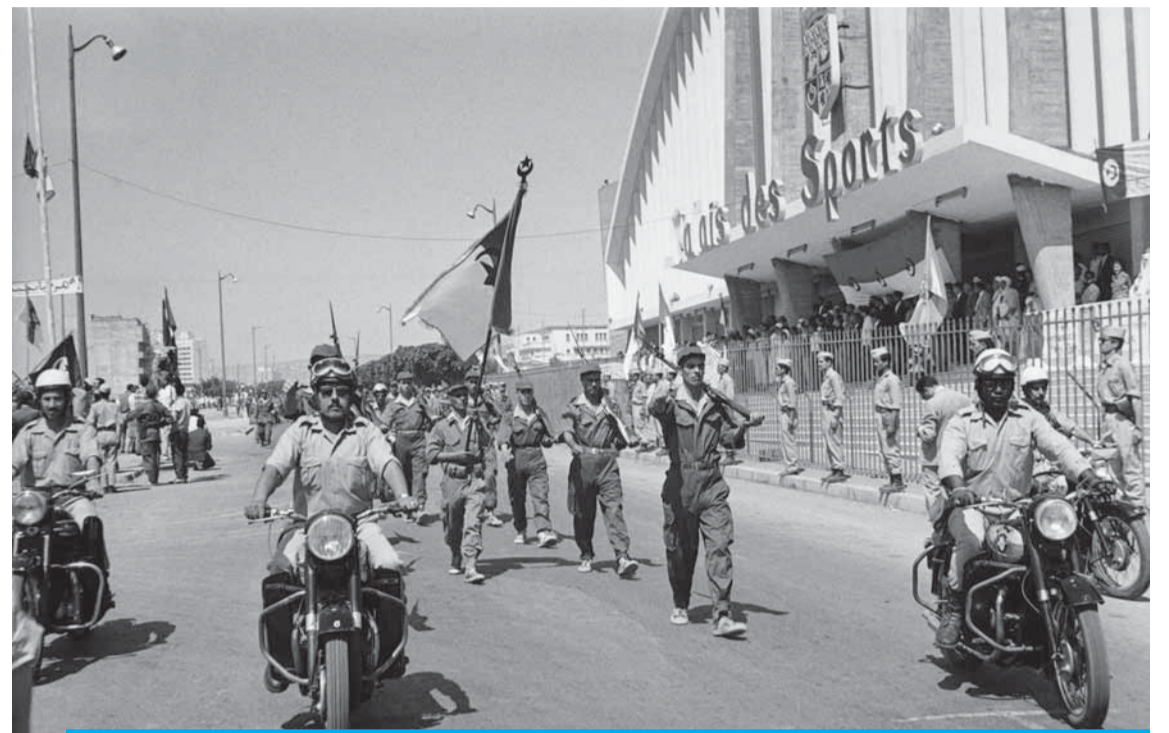
over the risks of famine in Somalia due to draught and reached consensus on offering emergency assistance to the Arab country to alleviate the suffering of the people there, Bou-Habib said. As for the war in Ukraine, the top Arab diplomats were unanimous in their rejection of any politicization of international organizations against the backdrop of this conflict, he added.

Aboul-Gheit said the consultative meeting took place between two regular formal meetings of the Arab League's Council in March and September. "The conferees reviewed preparations for the coming Arab Summit and the impacts of the war in Ukraine on Arab countries in such areas as food security and energy," he noted. They held good discussions on how to help Lebanon recover from the current difficulties and support it in the talks with the IMF, he revealed. On Lebanese-GCC relations, Aboul-Gheit said there is good progress in this relationship, which signals a shared desire to normalize relations. — Agencies

journalist said protesters in Libya's third city Misrata were blocking roads after setting fire to a municipal building on Friday night.

Interim prime minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah leads a Tripoli-based administration while former interior minister Fathi Bashagha draws support from the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and eastern military strongman Khalifa Haftar. "For more than a year, the overwhelming majority of diplomatic and mediation efforts around Libya have been monopolized by the idea of elections, which won't happen for at least two years, given the failure of the Geneva negotiations," Libya expert Jalel Harchaoui told AFP. This year "has been extremely painful for Libyans" because the country "imports almost all its food and the Ukraine war has hit consumer prices", Harchaoui said.

Libya's energy sector, which during the Gaddafi era financed a generous welfare state, has also fallen victim to political divisions, with a wave of forced closures of oil facilities since April. Supporters of the eastern-based administration have shut off the oil taps as leverage in their efforts to secure a transfer of power to Bashagha, whose attempt to take up office in Tripoli in May ended in a swift withdrawal. — AFP



ORAN, Algeria: File photo taken on July 3, 1962, Algerian troops of the National Liberation Army (ALN) parade in front of the Palais de Sports in Oran, during a ceremony celebrating Algeria's independence. — AFP

scarred Libya, the emergence of two rival governments has raised fears of a return to armed conflict after a two-year truce.

And to the south, Mali is in crisis after army officers, disgruntled at the government's failure to roll back a jihadist uprising, ousted president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in 2020. "The very unstable regional geopolitics demand strong positions in the mid to long term and the consolidation of political and economic relations" between Algeria and France, Mohand-Amer said.

But the historian fears that Macron's move

towards reconciliation could face a major test due to gains by extreme right leader Marine Le Pen's party the Rassemblement National in June elections. Le Pen said in March that colonialism had "contributed to Algeria's development" and accused Macron of "spending his life apologising without asking anything in return from an Algerian government that continues to insult France".

Mohand-Amer warned that "the French far right will transform this mandate into a big battlefield of memories, where revisionism and the falsification of history will be omnipresent." — AFP

## Colonial rule still triggers diplomatic tensions

the 132-year occupation continue to mar its ties with France. The country's authorities are planning to mark the anniversary with pomp and ceremony, capped by a vast military parade in Algiers, the first of its kind in 33 years.

A show is also planned at the capital's opera house that "retraces the long history of Algeria", said the minister for independence fighters, Laid Rebiga. The government has even commissioned a logo—a circle of 60 stars containing military figures and equipment—to mark "a glorious history and a new era".

Algeria's war of independence left hundreds of thousands of dead and, despite a string of gestures by French President Emmanuel Macron, a crisis late last year underlined how spiky the issue remains six decades on. Macron reportedly questioned whether Algeria had existed as a nation before the French invasion and accused its "political-military system" of rewriting history

## US, Taliban talk quake aid, foreign reserves in Doha

**WASHINGTON:** Talks between the United States and the Taliban continued in Doha earlier this week to discuss earthquake aid, the State Department said Friday, months after the two parties last met in the Qatari capital in March.

The Taliban is seeking a way to unlock some of the country's foreign reserves—currently frozen by the United States—following a devastating earthquake last month, with the United States looking for assurances the money would go to help the population.

During the meetings Wednesday and Thursday, the United States reiterated an earlier pledge of \$55 million in new assistance for earthquake relief, the State Department said in a statement Friday. And "the two sides discussed in detail US actions to preserve \$3.5 billion in Afghan central bank reserves for the benefit of the Afghan people," the statement said, money which the White House said last week the US was "urgently" working to sort out.

Last week's 5.9-magnitude earthquake in eastern Afghanistan, which killed more than 1,000 people and

## Zionist strike on Syria wounds two civilians

**DAMASCUS, Syria:** An Zionist air strike wounded two civilians on Saturday in the Syrian government's heartland on the war-torn country's west coast, the defence ministry said.

"The Zionist enemy carried out an air strike" after daybreak near the town of Al-Hamidiyah, the ministry said, identifying the locations hit as poultry farms, without elaborating.

The strike was conducted from the Mediterranean Sea, west of Lebanon's northern city of Tripoli, and "led to the injury of two civilians, including a woman", it said in a statement.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said the facility that was struck had formerly been used to keep farm animals but was now used by Lebanon's Shiite militant movement Hezbollah, a Syrian government ally.

The Zionist army told AFP on Saturday that they "do not comment on reports in the foreign media". Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian of Iran, also a staunch ally of Syrian President Bashar al-

Assad, condemned the Zionist strike.

"With its attacks, the Zionist entity is trying to portray Damascus as an unsafe city to obstruct the return of displaced Syrians," he said on Saturday during a visit to the Syrian capital.

Video footage by Syrian's official news agency SANA showed rubble at what it said was the site of the targeted facility. People are seen inspecting the site, where pulverised chunks of concrete and iron lay on the earth in the middle of a field.

Al-Hamidiyah is located south of Tartus, a bastion of the Syrian government and home to a naval port used by Russia, whose armed forces have backed Assad.

Since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, Zionist entity has carried out hundreds of air strikes against its northern neighbour. The raids have targeted Syrian government troops as well as allied Iran-backed forces and Hezbollah fighters.

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said Saturday's strike targeted "warehouses formerly used to raise animals, and which the Lebanese Hezbollah group was using to transport weapons".

Syrian air defence systems did not appear to have been deployed, said the British-based monitor, which has a wide network of sources in Syria.

Last month Zionist strikes on Damascus International Airport rendered its runways unusable for weeks. — AFP

## Lebanese president calls for unity to...

Continued from Page 1

The discussions dealt with the need to continue support to Lebanon, improve the living conditions of the Lebanese people and realize the objectives of the Kuwaiti initiative for Lebanon, he said. The minister noted he raised during the meeting the need of finding a new solution to the crisis of Syrian refugees other than funding their stay in Lebanon. On the Palestine question, he said the conferees discussed the abuses of the Zionist occupation authorities which undermine the possibilities of fair and comprehensive peace based on the two-state vision.

Regarding food security, the meeting mulled

## Libya anger boils...

Continued from Page 1

exercised by all," she tweeted. UN-mediated talks in Geneva this week aimed at breaking the deadlock between rival Libyan institutions failed to resolve key differences.

Presidential and parliamentary elections, originally set for December last year, were meant to cap a UN-led peace process following the end of the last major round of violence in 2020. But voting never took place due to several contentious candidacies and deep disagreements over the polls' legal basis between the rival power centers in east and west.

In Tripoli on Friday, hundreds came out to demand elections, fresh political leadership and an end to the chronic power cuts. The sudden eruption of unrest appeared to be spreading to other areas of the country, with Libyan media showing images of protesters in the oasis city of Sebha, deep in the Sahara desert, torching an official building. A local

## Kuwait monitors COVID cases via...

Continued from Page 1

A team of researchers from the UK Health Security Agency and the University of Bristol reviewed 18 studies in several countries on airborne transmission. In research published in the BMJ this week, they found that people can infect each other when they are more than two meters apart.

We know one thing for sure: if you open a window, or well-ventilate a space, the virus-carrying aerosols dissipate like smoke. But experts say that nowhere near enough is being done to ventilate public and private spaces across the world. "On the

whole, this is an issue that governments have not yet taken up," Flahault said. He called for massively increased funding to ventilate many public spaces, starting with schools, hospitals, public transport, offices, bars and restaurants.

"Just as we knew to filter and treat drinking water" in homes at the beginning of the 1900s, "one can imagine some households will equip themselves with air purifiers and consider opening their windows," Flahault said. Only a few countries have announced ventilation plans since the start of the pandemic.

In March the US government called on all building owners and operators, as well as schools and universities, to "adopt key strategies to improve indoor air quality". The plan, dubbed the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge, is covered by previously announced COVID funding and also includes a review of existing ventilation, heating and air conditioning systems. — Agencies

## Strong quakes kill five in...

Continued from Page 1

plates and experiences frequent seismic activity. The Islamic republic's deadliest quake was a 7.4-magnitude tremor in 1990 that killed 40,000 people in the north, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless. In 2003, a 6.6-magnitude quake in south-eastern Iran levelled the ancient mud-brick city of Bam and killed at least 31,000 people. In Nov 2017, a 7.3-magnitude quake in Iran's western province of Kermanshah killed 620 people. In December 2019 and January 2020, two earthquakes struck near Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant.

Iran's Gulf Arab neighbors have raised concerns about the reliability of the country's sole nuclear power facility, which produces 1,000 megawatts of power, and the risk of radioactive leaks in case of a major earthquake. In February 2020, a magnitude 5.7 earthquake in northwestern Iran killed nine people, including children, in neighboring Turkey and



SAYEH KHOSH, Iran: A view of destruction in the aftermath of an earthquake in this village in Iran's southern Hormozgan province. — AFP

injured dozens on both sides of the border. One person was killed in November last year when Hormozgan province was hit by twin 6.4 and 6.3 magnitude quakes. — AFP

## International

# 'Stop interfering in Afghanistan', says Taliban leader in rare appearance

## More than 3,000 clerics gather in Kabul

**KABUL:** The Taliban's reclusive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada called Friday for the world to stop telling them how to run Afghanistan, insisting sharia law was the only model for a successful Islamic state.

Akhundzada, who has not been filmed or photographed in public since the Taliban returned to power in August, was addressing a major gathering of religious scholars in the Afghan capital called to rubber-stamp the hardline Islamist group's rule.

More than 3,000 clerics have gathered in Kabul since Thursday for the three-day men-only meeting, and Akhundzada's appearance had been rumoured for days—although media are barred from covering the event. "Why is the world interfering in our affairs?" he asked in an hour-long speech broadcast by state radio.

"They say 'why don't you do this, why don't you do that?' Why does the world interfere in our work?" Akhundzada rarely leaves Kandahar, the Taliban's birthplace and spiritual heartland, and apart from one undated photograph and several audio recordings of speeches, has almost no digital footprint.

But analysts say the former sharia court judge has an iron grip on the movement and he bears the title "Commander of the Faithful".

His arrival at the meeting hall was greeted with cheers and chants, including "Long live the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", the Taliban's name for the country.

Akhundzada's appearance comes a week after a powerful earthquake struck the east of the country, killing more than 1,000 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless.

No women are attending the clerics' meeting, but a Taliban source told AFP this week that thorny issues such as girls' education—which has divided opinion in the movement—would be discussed.

### No mention of girls' schooling

Akhundzada did not mention the subject in his speech, which was confined largely to telling the faithful to strictly observe Islamic principles in life and governance.

Since the Taliban's return, secondary school girls have been barred from education and women dismissed from government jobs, forbidden from travelling alone, and ordered to dress in clothing that covers everything but their faces.

The Taliban have also outlawed playing non-religious music, banned the portrayal of human figures in advertising, ordered TV channels to stop showing movies and soap operas featuring uncovered women, and told men they should dress in traditional garb and grow their beards.

In Geneva on Friday, the United Nations human rights chief urged the Taliban to look to other Muslim countries for inspiration on improving the rights of women in a religious context.

Addressing an urgent council debate on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, Michelle Bachelet said they were "experiencing the most significant and rapid roll-back in enjoyment of their rights across the board in decades".

"I strongly encourage the de facto authorities to engage with predominantly Muslim countries with experience in promoting women and girls' rights, as guaranteed in international law, in that religious context," she said.

Akhundzada said the Taliban had won victory for Afghanistan, but it was up to the "ulema"—the religious scholars—to advise the new rulers on how to properly implement sharia law.

"The sharia system comes under two parts—scholars and rulers," he said.

"If scholars do not advise authorities to do good, or the rulers close the doors against the scholars, then we will not have an Islamic system."

Believed to be in his 70s, Akhundzada spoke in strong measured tones, occasionally coughing or



Hibatullah Akhundzada

clearing his throat.

He warned that non-Muslim nations would always be opposed to a pure Islamic state, so the faithful had to endure hardships to get what they wanted. "You have to compete, you have to endure hardships... the present world will not easily accept you implementing the Islamic system," he said.

Women's rights activists have slammed their lack of participation. "Women should be part of the decisions about their fate," Razia Barakzai told AFP Thursday. "Life has been taken away from Afghan women." —AFP



### 'Why does the world interfere in our work?'

## Dozens missing in shipwreck during China Sea typhoon

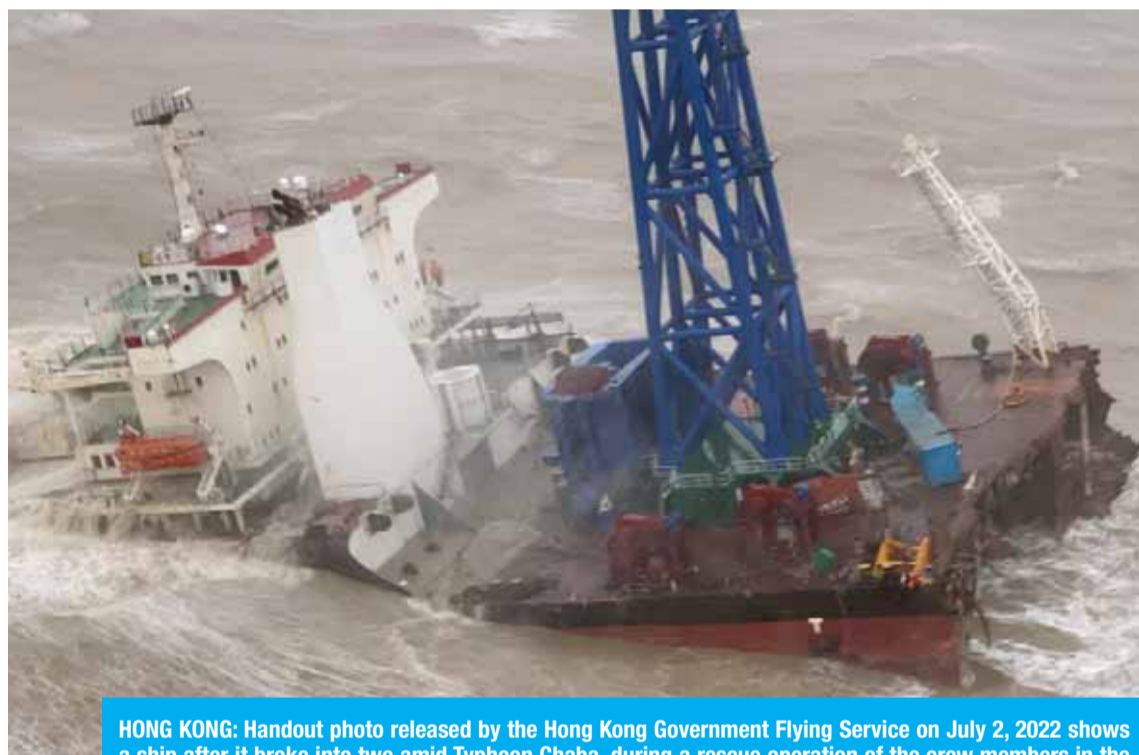
**HONG KONG:** More than two dozen crew members are unaccounted for after their ship broke into two during a typhoon in the South China Sea on Saturday, with rescuers scrambling to find them, officials say.

An engineering vessel that was 160 nautical miles southwest of Hong Kong "suffered substantial damage and broke into two pieces" and the 30-member crew abandoned ship, according to the Hong Kong Government Flying Service.

Three people had been rescued as of 3:00pm local time (0700 GMT) and were taken to hospital for treatment, authorities said. Dramatic footage provided by Hong Kong authorities showed a person being airlifted onto a helicopter while waves crashed over the deck of the semi-submerged ship below.

The three survivors said other crew members may have been swept away by waves before the first helicopter arrived, according to a government statement. Typhoon Chaba earlier formed in the central part of the South China Sea and on Saturday afternoon made landfall in Guangdong province in southern China.

Rescuers in Hong Kong were notified of the incident at 7:25am local time (2325 GMT on Friday) and found the ship near Chaba's centre, where harsh weather conditions and nearby wind



**HONG KONG:** Handout photo released by the Hong Kong Government Flying Service on July 2, 2022 shows a ship after it broke into two amid Typhoon Chaba, during a rescue operation of the crew members in the South China Sea. —AFP

farms made the operation "more difficult and dangerous".

The ship's location recorded wind speeds of 144 kilometres per hour and waves that were 10 metres high, authorities said. The Government Flying Service dispatched two sorties of fixed-wing air-

craft and four helicopter sorties, with mainland Chinese authorities also dispatching a rescue boat.

Rescuers said they would increase the search area "due to the large number of people missing" and extend the operation into the night if conditions allowed. —AFP

## Indian landslide search enters third day, 25 dead

**GUWAHATI, India:** The search for survivors buried under a landslide in India's northeast entered its third day Saturday with 25 bodies pulled from the rubble and nearly 40 people still missing. Security forces and disaster relief teams raced against the clock to find any more survivors trapped under the debris at a railway construction camp in Manipur state.

Most of the victims were reserve soldiers from the Territorial Army who had been working on the railway project. Eighteen people have so far been pulled alive from the earth with no more

rescued overnight, an army statement said, while 12 reservists and 26 civilians remain missing.

The situation at the scene of the landslide was "still serious" with rainfall and bad weather hampering rescue efforts, Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said. India's remote northeast has been pummeled by heavy rainfall in recent weeks, triggering landslides and floods.

Dozens were killed in the region after flooding last month, with relentless rains causing landslides and inundating homes. Earlier this year, at least 10 people, including a four-year-old child, were killed in floods and landslides after unusually heavy rains hit several parts of India.

Experts say climate change is increasing the number of extreme weather events around the world, with damming, deforestation and development projects in India exacerbating the human toll. —AFP



**IMPHAL, India:** Soldiers carry the body of a victim during rescue efforts after a landslide in Noney district in Manipur on July 2, 2022. —AFP

## Snap ballot likely in Greece ahead of tough winter

**ATHENS:** Each time Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis faces the media these days, there is one question he cannot escape. When will he call an early election? The conservative premier has been in power since July 2019 and still has 12 months left of his four-year term.

But soaring energy prices, a three-decade high in inflation, the war in Ukraine and rising tension with Turkey are setting up a daunting scene for the end of the year. Public desperation over the rising cost of fuel and food led the government in recent weeks to roll out fuel and electricity support for poorer households. But even this money has now run out.

"The winter is going to be difficult," noted Nikos Konstandaras, a veteran columnist for Greek liberal daily Kathimerini. Natassa Tsoumbou, a 56-year-old gardener, said she has had major trouble keeping up with the mounting cost of living.

"These past two months, I've only been able to pay part of my bills," said Tsoumbou, who lives in a 70-square-metre (453-square-foot) apartment in north Athens. "You can barely get anything for 20 euros (\$21) at the supermarket," she added.

Greece has spent over 10 billion euros in pandemic relief over the last three years. Another 6.5 billion euros have been set aside for energy and fuel benefits in 2022. The government hopes to replenish state coffers with tourism revenue.

So far, increased visitor traffic from Europe and the United States points to a record year, topping even Greece's last pre-pandemic season in 2019. But for now, Finance Minister Christos Staikouras is fresh out of cash handouts. "Right now there isn't a single euro left in fiscal space," Staikouras told Mega TV over the weekend.

### Toxic campaign

Mitsotakis has repeatedly insisted he intends to see out his four-year term. But he has also suggested this could change if Greece looks set to face a long and "toxic" general election campaign. "I know it's extremely hard to persuade you that elections or a reshuffle aren't going to be held," Mitsotakis told reporters in Brussels last week.

His main opponent, left-wing former prime min-

ister Alexis Tsipras, isn't pulling any punches. Tsipras accuses the government of mismanaging the COVID-19 pandemic, which killed more than 30,000 people, coddling big business and failing to shield Greeks from soaring energy prices.

Last week, he noted with disdain that Mitsotakis and his ministers between them owed 13 million euros in personal debt, despite possessing a portfolio of over 800 properties and 17 million in deposits. "Can these people feel the agony of citizens unable to pay their bills?" Tsipras, who preceded Mitsotakis as premier from 2015 to 2019, tweeted on June 25. "After the election, the party will be over," Tsipras said.

"The country's resources will no longer be exploited by 10 large business groups and an equivalent number of families. No more pimps," he said. Many analysts believe a snap ballot is likely in the autumn, with announcements by Mitsotakis possibly after mid-August. Tsipras said this week he expected an election in September. "All parties are currently on pre-election footing," said Antonis Papargiris, the research director of polling firm GPO.

### Soaring prices dominate

"Rising prices in energy, electricity, fuel... are the dominant issues," he told AFP. The next general

## India's court slams spokeswoman who sparked Prophet row

**NEW DELHI:** A ruling party spokeswoman whose remarks on Islam embroiled India in a diplomatic row and sparked huge protests should apologise for having "set the country on fire", New Delhi's top court said Friday.

Anger engulfed the Islamic world last month after Nupur Sharma's incendiary comments during a TV debate on the relationship between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his youngest wife, with nearly 20 countries calling in their Indian ambassadors for an explanation.

Rallies also erupted around South Asia, with police killing two demonstrators in India, while this week two Muslim men were accused of the grisly murder of a Hindu tailor who had posted in support of Sharma on Facebook. "She and her loose tongue have set the country on fire," India's Supreme Court said during a procedural hearing on several criminal complaints filed against Sharma.

"This lady is single-handedly responsible for what is happening in the country," it added. "She should apologise to the whole nation." Since her comments, Sharma has been subjected to multiple police complaints filed against her across India by members of the public.

While the 37-year-old's whereabouts are unknown, her lawyer was in court asking that the cases be consolidated in New Delhi, a request denied Friday. Sharma was at one time seen as a rising star in the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) but her remarks forced it into damage control.

The party soon suspended the spokeswoman from her post and issued a statement insisting it respected all religions. Since coming to power nationally in 2014, the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been accused of championing discriminatory policies towards followers of the Islamic faith. Critics also say the government has presided over a crackdown on free speech and rights activists.

This week police arrested the Muslim journalist Mohammed Zubair, a vocal critic of the government who had helped draw attention to Sharma's remarks. He was arrested on Monday and remains in custody over a four-year-old tweet about a Hindu god that police said had been the subject of complaints by Hindu groups. —AFP

election will be held under a proportional representation system introduced by Tsipras' left-wing administration.

But Mitsotakis said last month that "double elections" were likely to be needed to produce a stable government. To this end, Mitsotakis passed a new law in 2020 giving the winning party between 20 and 50 additional seats in parliament, depending on its final percentage in votes.

But this new system only comes into effect if no government emerges from the proportional representation vote. A poll for Ant1 TV earlier this week gave Mitsotakis' right-wing New Democracy party 32.5 percent, a 10-point lead over Tsipras' left-wing Syriza. Centre-left party KINAL was third on 12.8 percent.

But one in 10 respondents remains undecided, the poll conducted by MARC showed. To secure a majority of 151 seats in the 300-seat parliament, a party will need to secure around 38.5 percent of the vote, Papargiris said. Under proportional representation, acquiring the same number of seats would require a voting result of well over 40 percent. Mitsotakis remains the country's choice for prime minister over Tsipras, with approval ratings of around 40 percent compared to his rival's score of around 30 percent. —AFP

# Business

SUNDAY, JULY 3, 2022

## Strained US airlines face July 4 test

### Industry struggles to manage surge in demand that exceeds its capacity

**NEW YORK:** US airlines are bracing customers for what will probably be another bumpy holiday weekend as the industry struggles to manage a surge in travel demand that probably exceeds its current capacity. Yu Su, a computer science professor at Ohio State University, was stranded last Saturday night in Charlotte, North Carolina after his connecting flight home never left.

The airline didn't cancel the 8:30 pm flight until around midnight after numerous delays that created "the delusion of hope," said Yu, who never got a clear explanation for the problem. Such horror stories are common these days, sparking headlines that warn of airport chaos over the July 4th weekend and drawing scrutiny from Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and others in Washington.

In recent days, plane tracking sites have reported hundreds of flight cancellations and thousands of delays. In an effort to steer passengers away from "potentially challenging weekend travel days," Delta Air Lines announced Tuesday it would waive change fees for customers to shift one leg of their trip to within the July 1-8 period.

#### Pilot shortage

Although federal COVID-19 relief aid meant airlines didn't need to lay off staff, tens of thousands of workers left the industry after carriers urged early retirements. Today's industry has about 15 percent less staff compared with the pre-pandemic period to handle about 90 percent of pre-2020 passenger volume, estimated analysts at Third Bridge, a consultancy. Lack of crew was the problem for Crystal Fricker's latest flight, which was canceled an hour before she and two other travelers were scheduled to depart Raleigh, North Carolina for Indianapolis.

Unable to find different flights for all three, the group managed to track down a rental car - no small

feat - and drove 10 1/2 hours, arriving at 1 am in time for meetings the next day. "Pretty much every flight I've been on has had some kind of delay," said Fricker, president of Pure Seed, an Oregon seed company. Pilots are the most acute issue in a broad airline industry labor crunch, said Third Bridge analyst Peter McNally.

"There's no short-term fix," McNally told AFP. "The issue becomes most pronounced during these seasonal peaks." Airlines say they're working to address the issue, recruiting pilots and other staff and trimming summer capacity by 15 percent compared with earlier plans. While acknowledging the pilot supply problem, airline industry officials point to other exacerbating factors, including turbulent weather, increased staff absences due to COVID and insufficient personnel at flight traffic control at some key sites.

#### Blame game?

"The industry is actively and nimbly doing everything possible to create a positive customer experience," said Airlines for America CEO Nicholas Calio in a follow-up letter to Buttigieg after a meeting earlier this month. "Not every air traffic variable is within an airline's control." But the Federal Aviation Administration pushed back, saying it "acted on the agency staffing issues raised by airlines" by adding more controllers in high demand areas.

"People expect when they buy an airline ticket that they'll get where they need to go safely, efficiently, reliably and affordably," the agency said. "After receiving \$54 billion in pandemic relief to help save the airlines from mass layoffs and bankruptcy, the American people deserve to have their expectations met."

Senator Bernie Sanders, the Vermont progressive, called on Buttigieg to fine the airlines for delayed or canceled flights, blasting the industry for the messy travel season and "outrageously high" fares. Airlines,

undergo tests.

He said the facility was "a dream come true" and would be able to process 340,000 barrels of oil a day, with the aim of making Mexico self-sufficient in gasoline and diesel. "We will keep our word to achieve energy independence," Lopez Obrador said at the event, which coincided with the fourth anniversary of his 2018 presidential election victory.

It is the first time in more than 40 years that a new refinery has been built in Mexico, the leftist leader said. The final construction cost of the facility in the Gulf coast oil port of Dos Bocas is expected to be around \$12 billion - far above the \$4.0 billion initially envisaged. Mexico produces around 1.7 million barrels of crude oil per day, but a lack of refinery capacity means that it still has to import fuel products.



LOS ANGELES: Travelers check in at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) on July 1, 2022, ahead of the July 4th holiday weekend. — AFP

meanwhile, are trying to reset expectations for customers. In a message to frequent fliers Thursday, Delta Chief Executive Ed Bastian acknowledged "unacceptable" levels of disruption, but said additional hiring efforts and adding more buffer time for crews should help. "Things won't change overnight, but we're on a path towards a steady recovery," Bastian said.

United Airlines expects nearly 5.2 million customers over the Fourth of July period, a 24 percent increase from 2021 and 92 percent of its 2019 level. "We anticipate the Fourth of July travel period to be amongst our busiest travel days of 2022 thus far," said a United spokesperson. United earlier this month announced it

was trimming about 50 daily flights from its Newark, New Jersey hub.

A company memo cited "many factors including airport construction," adding that United had sufficient staff to meet the schedule. Like United and Delta, American Airlines is midway through a recruitment campaign of pilots and other staff. The company has hired 800 new pilots this year, Chief Executive Robert Isom said earlier this month. The company's regional carrier, Envoy Air, is offering pilots triple pay for trips next month in an effort to avoid disruption, according to reports. American Airlines did not respond to AFP questions about the upcoming July 4th weekend. — AFP

## Lopez Obrador: New refinery key to energy independence

**MEXICO CITY:** A major new refinery due to begin operating next year will help Mexico to achieve energy independence and stop exporting crude oil, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Friday. Lopez Obrador cut the red ribbon at a ceremony in his home state of Tabasco billed as the inauguration of the first phase of the Olmeca refinery, which will now

undergo tests.



PARAISO, Mexico: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador inaugurates the first construction stage of the Olmeca Dos Bocas Refinery on July 1, 2022. — AFP

## S Leone slashes 'zeros of shame' from banknotes

**FREETOWN:** Sierra Leone on Friday introduced a new family of banknotes, stripping three zeros off the leone, in a bid to restore confidence in the inflation-hit national currency. The Bank of Sierra Leone announced the move last August, insisting the public's purchasing power would not be affected by the change. "We have removed three zeros from our banknotes but the money yesterday is the same value as today," President Julius Maada Bio said at ceremonies at the central bank where the new bills were unveiled.

A note of 10 new leones is the equivalent of a note of 10,000 old leones, which changes hands for around 75 US cents. Year-on-year inflation in the West African state was 24.87 percent in May, according to the national statistics agency. Rising prices had driven the printing of banknotes, resulting in a mountain of paper money that is costly to sustain and unwieldy for the public.

Shoppers need huge quantities of banknotes for the simplest transactions, and unscrupulous bank tellers sometimes pilfer notes from sealed bundles of bills. "We are removing the 'zeros of shame' to get the currency properly aligned," Morlai Bangura, a central bank director, told AFP earlier in the week. He said the bank had begun distributing the new paper notes to commercial banks last week.

On Friday, customers braving the rain queued at commercial banks to swap their old banknotes for new ones. "The changing of our currency is necessary - we



FREETOWN: A general view of the new banknotes released in Sierra Leone on July 1, 2022. - AFP

were used to carrying bags to the bank to withdraw our money, but not anymore," Alice Frazer, 70, said after exchanging her notes at the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank, a state-owned bank in central Freetown.

The new banknotes have a similar design to the old ones but are smaller in size. "Our current currency is too big to fit into a wallet and we spend too much money printing oversized banknotes," Kelfala Murana Kallon, the central bank governor, told reporters last August as he announced the move. The central bank declined to comment on the cost of the operation.

Sierra Leone's eight million people live in one of the poorest nations in the world, ranking 182 out of 189 countries in the UN's Human Development Index. Its economy, heavily dependent on minerals, was devastated by a civil war that ran from 1991-2002 and left about 120,000 dead. Efforts at rebuilding were set back by an Ebola epidemic in 2014-2016, a fall in world commodity prices and the coronavirus epidemic - all of which have disrupted trade and investment and hit exports. Sierra Leoneans will be able to use both the old and new notes during a transition period until Sept 30. From Oct 1, the old currency will cease to be legal tender. The public will be able to swap the old currency for the new one until Nov 15, Kallon said in a statement. — AFP

## TikTok tells US senators data not shared with CCP

**NEW YORK:** TikTok sought to reassure US senators this week that it is taking all necessary steps to limit access to users' data from outside the United States, including by employees of its parent company, the Chinese group ByteDance. The social media company responded by letter Thursday to questions from nine Republican US senators about its data storage and access policies. The letter was initially published by the New York Times, but TikTok has since confirmed its content to AFP. In response to earlier inquiries from US authorities, TikTok had indicated in mid-June that all of its data on US-based users were now stored on US-based servers operated by the American company Oracle. In its letter on Thursday, TikTok confirmed claims made in a BuzzFeed article that employees based in China had access to US users' data, but only within "robust cybersecurity controls and authorization approval protocols" overseen by the company's "US-based security team."

The company reiterated to the senators that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had never requested data on American users. "We have not provided US user data to the CCP, nor would we if asked," it said. TikTok officials also said that while ByteDance engineers could work on the platform's algorithms, the new protocol ensures that they can only do so in Oracle's computing environment, without extracting data from it. — AFP

## Indian flight makes emergency landing as smoke fills cabin

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian domestic flight made an emergency landing in New Delhi on Saturday after its cabin filled with smoke soon after take-off for the central city of Jabalpur, the airline said. Passengers aboard the flight, operated by commercial carrier SpiceJet, were evacuated safely once the aircraft returned to Delhi's airport. "While passing 5,000 feet, the crew noticed smoke in the cabin," the airline said on Twitter. Video purporting to show the smoke-filled cabin quickly went viral on social media after the incident.

No-frills carrier SpiceJet has been in the news in recent months, with another flight forced to make an emergency landing last month after its left engine caught fire, and aviation authorities coming down hard on the company for faulty training practices. The airline did not disclose how many passengers were on board Saturday's flight, but said the plane had landed "safely" and that an alternative flight had been "immediately arranged" for travelers.

In June, a New Delhi-bound SpiceJet flight with 185 passengers on board made an emergency landing in the eastern Indian city of Patna after an engine caught fire. In May, hundreds of its passengers were stranded inside their planes after the low-cost airline cancelled or delayed flights due to an "attempted ransomware attack", it said. That same month, Indian aviation authorities imposed a fine of one million Indian rupees (about \$12,830) on the airline for training its Boeing 737 MAX pilots on a faulty simulator. — AFP



## Business

# Outgunned island states vow to fight deep-sea mining

About 20 research institutes or companies hold exploration contracts

LISBON: A handful of postage-stamp nations in the South Pacific launched an uphill battle this week against the deep-sea mining of unattached, fist-sized rocks rich in rare Earth metals. The stakes are potentially enormous. Companies keen to scrape the ocean floor five to six thousand meters below sea level stand to earn billions harvesting manganese, cobalt, copper and nickel currently used to build batteries for electric vehicles.

But the extraction process would disfigure what may be the most pristine ecosystem on the planet and could take millennia, if not longer, for nature to repair. The deep-sea jewels in question, called polymetallic nodules, grow with the help of microbes over millions of years around a kernel of organic matter, such as a shark's tooth or the ear-bone of a whale. "They are living rocks, not just dead stones," former US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) chief scientist Sylvia Earle said in Lisbon. "I look at them as miracles."

An incipient deep-sea mining industry also sees them as miraculous, though for different reasons. "High grades of four metals in a single rock means that four times less ore needs to be processed to obtain the same amount of metal," notes The Metals Company, which has formed exploratory partnerships with three South Pacific nations - Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga - in the mineral-rich Clarion-Clipperton fracture zone.

Nodules also have low levels of heavy elements, which means less toxic waste compared to land-based extraction, according to the company. Commercial mining has not started anywhere in the world, but about 20 research institutes or companies hold exploration contracts with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Surangel Whipps Jr, president of Palau, kicked off the anti-mining campaign at the just-concluded UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, flanked by Fiji Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama. "Deep-sea mining compromises the integrity of our ocean habitat and should be discouraged to the greatest extent possible," Whipps said, calling for an open-ended moratorium.

Likeminded neighboring nation states Samoa, Tuvalu



LISBON: Portugal's President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa appears on giant screens as he gives a speech during the 2022 Ocean Conference closing session on July 1, 2022. — AFP

and the Solomon Islands have backed the call, along with more than 100 mostly green party legislators from three dozen nations across the world. A similar motion put to a vote last September before the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - an umbrella organization of 1,400 research institutes, environmental NGOs and indigenous groups - passed easily.

### 'Who's watching?'

"Mining, wherever it occurs, is well known to have environmental costs," said Earle, the scientist. "On the land at least we can monitor, see and fix problems, and minimize the damage. Six thousand meters beneath the surface, who's watching?" But in Lisbon, explicit support from other countries for a temporary ban on ocean-floor mining on the high seas, outside of national territorial waters known as exclusive economic zones (EEZs), was scarce. Chile stepped up, calling for a 15-

year pause to allow for more research.

The United States, along with other developed nations, took a more ambiguous stance, calling for scientific evaluation of environmental impacts but not closing the door to future mining. "We haven't taken an official position on it," US climate envoy John Kerry told AFP in an interview. "But we have expressed deep concerns about adequately researching the impacts of any deep-sea mining, and we have not approved any."

To the surprise of many in Lisbon, France's President Emmanuel Macron appeared to endorse a halt to deep-sea mining on the seas, despite the fact that France holds mining exploration licenses from ISA, the inter-governmental body overseeing exploitation of the ocean floor. "I think we have, indeed, to create the legal framework to stop the high-sea mining and not to allow new activities putting in danger these ecosystems," Macron said at a side event. "We have to promote our

scientists and explorers to better know and discover these high seas."

Deep-sea mining opponents were thrilled with the statement, but are waiting to see what follows. "Is the French government going to put in the diplomatic effort in order to make what he said they'll do actually happen? We'll see," said Matthew Gianni, co-founder of Deep Sea Conservation Coalition. The clock is ticking because last year Nauru, in cooperation with The Metals Company, triggered a rule requiring the ISA to finalize regulations for high-seas mining worldwide within two years.

The ISA, criticized for lacking transparency and favoring corporate interests, meets later this month in Kingston, Jamaica. Sources say they are likely to try to push through draft regulations which, if adopted, could see mining operations licensed by this time next year. — AFP



RAI-OLEKSANDRIVKA, Ukraine: Farmer Serhii Lyubarsky, 59, shows wheat grains in a wheat field next to this village on July 1, 2022 amid Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

## Ukraine wheat harvest hangs in the balance

RAI OLEKSANDRIVKA, Ukraine: Standing in one of his huge wheat fields in war-ravaged southeastern Ukraine, farmer Serhii Lyubarsky wonders how on earth he'll manage to harvest his crops. Between the lack of fuel to run his combine harvester and the risk of being bombed, the chances seem remote. "The harvest is due normally to begin around July 15 but diesel is expensive and anyway there isn't any," he says.

His old combine harvester sits idle in his farmyard in the village of Rai Oleksandrivka, not far from positions held by Russian forces on the other side of the hill, about 30 km west of the city of Lugansk. Lyubarsky farms 170 hectares of land, producing mostly wheat but also barley and sunflowers-grains whose prices have shot up on international markets especially since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a key global producer of wheat. But he has been forced to leave 40 hectares fallow. "We couldn't buy maize seed because the war started," he says, with the imported seeds taking up to two months to arrive. Now the land that is not under cultivation is "used in part by the army to store military equipment", he adds. Pointing to the nearby hill, he says grimly: "Look, Russian soldiers are already over there, eight kilometers" as the crow flies.

For his wheat, time is pressing. "We can wait until August 10 at the latest, but after that, the grains are going to dry out and fall to the ground," he says. He presses an ear of wheat in his hand so that the grains drop, by way of demonstrating what happens if it is not harvested in time.

### 'A match will do'

For fellow farmer Anatolii Moiseyenko from the same village, things are equally uncertain. Although he has enough diesel to harvest his wheat, he's worried about the encroaching combat. "The problem is the war. Is it going to be possible or are rockets again going to fall?" he asks, watching as Ukrainian soldiers pick up a rocket warhead that recently fell in his field. Harvesting "is a bit like playing poker", he says, smiling.

In the neighboring village of Riznikivka, Yaroslav Kokhan knows that his 40 hectares of wheat are already lost. Normally, he says, his son does the harvest because the retired 61-year-old doesn't use the tractor or combine harvester anymore. His son went to live in Krasnodar in southern Russia in 2014, the year Moscow annexed Crimean peninsula from Ukraine following a popular uprising in Kyiv. He used to come back by car several times a year, to sow the wheat, weed it and then harvest it, Kokhan says. This year though, "he was due to come back to Ukraine on February 25, his birthday, but the war broke out the day before", he adds.—AFP

## Bankrupt Lanka's inflation jumps beyond 50%

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's inflation hit a ninth consecutive record in June, official data showed Friday, rising to 54.6 percent a day after the IMF asked the bankrupt nation to rein in galloping prices and corruption. It was the first time the increase in the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) crossed the psychologically important 50 percent mark, according to the department of census and statistics.

The figures came hours after the International Monetary Fund urged Sri Lanka to contain spiraling inflation and address corruption as part of efforts to salvage the troubled economy, which has been ravaged by a foreign exchange crisis. The IMF ended 10 days of in-person discussions with Sri Lankan authorities in

Colombo on Thursday following the country's request for a possible bailout.

The CCPI has been setting new monthly highs since October, when year-on-year inflation stood at just 7.6 percent. In May it reached 39.1 percent. The rupee has lost more than half its value against the US dollar this year. Private economists say consumer prices are rising even faster than shown in official statistics. According to an economist at Johns Hopkins university, Steve Hanke, who tracks price increases in the world's troublespots, Sri Lanka's current inflation is 128 percent, second only to Zimbabwe's 365 percent.

Faced with an acute energy shortage, Sri Lanka is observing a shutdown of non-essential state institutions for two weeks, along with the closure of schools to reduce commuting. The country's 22 million people have been enduring acute shortages of essentials - including food, fuel and medicines - for months. Protests are continuing outside President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office demanding his resignation over the unprecedented economic turmoil and his mismanagement. Sri Lanka went to the IMF in April after the country defaulted on its \$51 billion external debt. — AFP



GALLE, Sri Lanka: People queue to buy liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders near the Galle International Cricket Stadium on June 28, 2022. — AFP

## Automakers report lower US sales amid supply chain woes

NEW YORK: General Motors, Toyota and other automakers suffered a hit to US sales in the latest quarter as supply chain woes continued to crimp inventories, according to results released Friday. GM sold 582,401 autos in the three months ending June 30, a drop of 15 percent from the same period a year ago. The Detroit giant said it is holding 95,000 partially-built vehicles in need of components that it expects to deliver by the end of 2022.

Such maneuvers have become the norm over the

last year as manufacturers try to make headway on as many high-margin vehicles as possible amid limited supply of semiconductors and other key items. On the positive side, GM said it scored strong sales for its pickup trucks, the Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra, despite low inventories. And "pent-up demand" drove sales growth in other vehicles, including the Chevrolet Camaro and Chevrolet Colorado.



## Supply crunch, inflation deflate Japan confidence

TOKYO: Confidence among Japan's largest manufacturers sagged for a second quarter on rising costs and supply constraints, though the service sector was boosted by economic reopening, a key survey showed Friday. The Bank of Japan's closely watched Tankan survey showed confidence among large manufacturers at plus nine, below expectations of 12 and sharply lower than the 14 in the March survey.

A positive figure means more manufacturers see business conditions as favorable than those that consider them unfavorable. The survey reaches about 10,000 firms and is considered to be the broadest indicator of how Japan Inc. is faring. Corporate Japan has faced several problems as the Ukraine war pushes up oil prices amid general inflation that has boosted raw material prices. A global supply chain crunch as well as China's stringent anti-COVID measures have also hampered manufacturing activity.

The yen has depreciated quickly in recent months, meaning imported food and energy products are growing more expensive in addition to general price increases. Japan's large non-manufacturers, however, are more confident as pandemic-related restrictions are lifted, encouraging domestic travel and gradually opening its borders for foreign tourists. The survey found their confidence at a reading of 13, compared with the March survey's nine. The survey also showed that more businesses expect to raise their prices to reflect increasing costs, with large manufacturers seeing consumer prices rising 2.0 percent a year from now. A parts supply shortage, including semiconductors, drove down sentiment among large producers of cars and machinery, key drivers of the economy, Stefan Angrick, senior economist at Moody's Analytics, wrote in a note. "Current sentiment seems a tad better than expected, but the outlook is still fragile," he wrote.

"All things considered, overall business sentiment isn't looking too bad, but with forecasts pointing to renewed declines in the months ahead, a cautious view is warranted," he said. Separately, the internal affairs ministry said Japan's unemployment rate edged up to 2.6 percent in May from 2.5 percent in April. Japan's jobs market has been improving in recent months as the nation's economic activity picks up pace. NLI Research Institute said in a note. "With the end of (Japan's strict anti-COVID measures), individual consumption is picking up, particularly dining and travelling. The employment situation should continue to improve if these restrictions remain lifted," it said. — AFP

GM reaffirmed its full-year profit outlook, but its second-quarter net income range of between \$1.6 billion and \$1.9 billion lagged consensus estimates. Meanwhile, Toyota reported sales of 531,105 over the same period, a drop of 23 percent compared with the 2021 quarter, and the Japanese company also cited "ongoing inventory challenges" hindering its dealerships.

A bright spot has been a jump in sales of Toyota's electric vehicles, which have comprised more than 25 percent of Toyota's sales so far this year. Cox Automotive has forecast a 19.3 percent drop in US auto sales for the second quarter. "Even though economic conditions have worsened in the past months, the lack of supply is still the greatest headwind facing the auto industry today," said Charlie Chesbrough, senior economist at Cox. Hyundai Motor America reported a drop of 23 percent sales drop to 184,191 units. — AFP

## Business

# India bans many single-use plastics to tackle waste

## Unprepared manufacturers, consumers unwilling to pay more

**NEW DELHI:** India imposed a ban on many single-use plastics on Friday in a bid to tackle waste choking rivers and poisoning wildlife, but experts say it faces severe headwinds from unprepared manufacturers and consumers unwilling to pay more. The country generates around four million tons of plastic waste per year, about a third of which is not recycled and ends up in waterways and landfills that regularly catch fire and exacerbate air pollution.

Stray cows munching on plastic are a common sight in Indian cities and a recent study found traces in the dung of elephants in the northern forests of Uttarakhand state. Estimates vary but around half comes from items used once, and the new ban covers the production, import and sale of ubiquitous objects like straws and cups made of plastic as well as wrapping on cigarette packets.

Exempt for now are products such as plastic bags below a certain thickness and so-called multi-layered packaging. Authorities have promised to crack down hard after the ban - first announced in 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi - came into effect. Inspectors were set to fan out from Friday checking that no suppliers or distributors are flouting the rules at risk of a maximum fine of 100,000 rupees (\$1,265) or five-year jail sentence.

### Industry lobbying

Around half of India's regions have already sought to impose their own regulations but as the state of rivers and landfill sites testifies, success has been mixed. Firms in the plastics industry, which employs millions of people, say that alter-

natives are expensive and they have been lobbying the government for a delay to the ban. Pintu, who earns his living hacking the top of coconuts with a machete and serving them to customers with a plastic straw, doesn't know what he will do.

Switching to "expensive paper straws will be tough. I will likely pass the cost to the customers," he told AFP in New Delhi. "I've heard it'll help the environment but I don't see how it'll change anything for us," he added. GlobalData analysts said small packs with plastic straws make up 35 percent of soft drinks volumes, meaning manufacturers will be "badly hit". "(The) price-sensitive masses are unable to foot the bill for eco-friendly alternatives," Bobby Verghese from GlobalData added.

### 'Resistance'

Jigish N Doshi, president of industry group Plastindia Foundation, expects "temporary" job losses but said the bigger issue was firms "which had invested huge capital for machines that may not be useful" after the ban. "It's not easy to make different products from machines and the government could help by offering some subsidies and helping develop and purchase alternative products," Doshi told AFP.

Satish Sinha from environmental group Toxics Link told AFP that "there will be initial resistance" as finding replacements may be hard but it was a "very welcome step". "There will be difficulties and we may pay the price but if you're serious about the environment, this is an important issue that needs a concerted push," he said.



**NEW DELHI:** A man sits on a cart next to a sewer canal filled with plastics and other waste on June 30, 2022. —AFP

One young company trying to be part of the change is Ecoware, which makes disposable biodegradable products at its factory outside Delhi. Chief executive Rhea Mazumdar Singhal told AFP

that the appalling state of landfills and widespread plastic consumption inspired her venture. "We've seen plenty of bans before, but as citizens the power lies with us," Singhal said. —AFP

## Chinese airlines buy almost 300 Airbus planes

**BEIJING:** Four Chinese airlines said Friday they will buy a total of 292 planes from Airbus in a \$37 billion windfall for the aviation giant, as the industry rebuilds after the coronavirus pandemic. The orders come after a bumper year for Airbus, which posted record profits in 2021 after a two-year pandemic slump, giving the company a further boost over US rival Boeing.

China Eastern said Friday it had agreed to purchase 100 A320neo jets and China Southern said on the same day that it would buy 96 of the same model. Air China and its subsidiary Shenzhen Airlines also confirmed the purchase of a combined 96 A320neo planes, according to separate filings. Airbus said in a statement Friday that the deals showed "the positive recovery momentum and prosperous outlook for the Chinese aviation market".

It said the deals "brought to conclusion these long and extensive discussions that have taken place throughout the difficult Covid pandemic". Boeing's business in China - one of the world's largest aviation markets - was hit in recent years by uncertainty over its 737 MAX planes, which were suspended

from use in the country after deadly crashes in 2019. Chinese authorities finally gave the go-ahead for the 737 MAX to resume service last year after making a series of safety adjustments.

In March this year, a Boeing 737-800 crashed in the southern province of Guangxi, killing 132 people in China's worst air disaster in decades. The China Eastern flight was travelling from the cities of Kunming to Guangzhou when it inexplicably plummeted from an altitude of 29,000 feet into a mountainside. Last month, the Wall Street Journal reported that US investigators believe someone on board crashed the aircraft deliberately, citing a person familiar with a preliminary assessment of the incident. —AFP

## DHAMAN receives JCI Accreditation for PHCs in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) announced that it has obtained international accreditation certificate from the Joint Commission International (JCI) for the Quality of Health Service for all its healthcare centers facilities. DHAMAN became the first healthcare institution to obtain this important international accreditation at the level of Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) in Kuwait.



Thamer Arab

The (JCI) is considered the largest accreditation body in the healthcare field in the United States and the world's leader, and the JCI certifications granted by this Commission are deemed an international accreditation for controls and best practices in the field of quality and patient safety.

On this occasion, DHAMAN CEO Thamer Arab said: "We are very proud of this great achievement as it represents a practical embodiment of one of the most important values of DHAMAN, which is the keenness to provide the best health services at the highest levels of international quality. The accreditation of the Joint Commission International (JCI), one of the most important accreditation institutions in the healthcare sector globally, provides a guarantee of the sound implementing of an integrated work plan and studied steps in all departments of the company through its specialized medical, administrative and technical staff".

Arab added that DHAMAN has been keen since its establishment to cooperate with major international bodies in the health sector and to adopt the latest and best international quality standards, to achieve its vision of being the leading provider of high-quality integrated health services, in order to raise healthcare indicators through its integrated network of primary and secondary healthcare services in the various governorates of the State of Kuwait, in implementation of the Company's strategy in building and managing a comprehensive health system that focuses on providing health services based on quality, positive patient interactive experience, and achieving professional competence through carefully selected medical and administrative staff. This vision was reflected on the ground through the health services provided by DHAMAN healthcare centers.

Arab indicated that DHAMAN has worked for more than two years in fulfilling and implementing the requirements for obtaining JCI accreditation and has gone through a number of preparatory steps and received specialists to carry out audit procedures, field visits, and meetings with the concerned parties in the company's departments and sections performing objective and independent evaluation by international consultants and experts with extensive experience in healthcare and their guiding role in key issues of patient safety, quality, and how to continually improve proper healthcare processes and outcomes.

The DHAMAN CEO concluded by thanking all company employees for their determined efforts and hard and continuous work to implement the requirements of the International Committee and to obtain this significant and prominent accreditation, which is an addition to the company's series of achievements and successes. It is noteworthy that DHAMAN has obtained the International Accreditation Certificate (JCI) for DHAMAN Primary Healthcare Centers in Hawally, Farwaniya and Dajeej.

## V Nandakumar of Lulu Group awarded Retail Marcom Icon

**DUBAI:** Top retail professionals of the Middle East were recognized for their tremendous contribution to the industry at the annual RetailME Summit 2022 held in Dubai. The event saw some of the biggest retailers from around the world coming together to share the innovations and trends shaping the retail industry, one of the biggest contributors to the region's economy.

An eminent jury comprising leaders from global organizations such as Facebook, Google, TikTok, Zebra Technologies and Images Retail Magazine had selected the final award winners in the categories of Technology, IT, Ecommerce, Logistics, Marketing and communications across the Middle East.

V Nandakumar, Director of Marketing & Communications, Lulu

Group, the region's top retail organization has been recognized as the Retail Marcom Icon of the year for his dynamic leadership in spearheading and transforming the marketing & communications of brand Lulu over the last 22 years across different countries globally. Last year Nandakumar was ranked among the Top 5 Marketing professionals in the Middle East by the world-famous Forbes magazine.

Other winners included Ahmad AR BinDawood, CEO - Bin Dawood Holding, Kamran Abbasi, CIO - Chalhoub Group, Mark Tesseyman, CEO at Liwa Trading, Mohammed Sajjad, VP Marketing and E-commerce at AZADEA Group, McCarthy, Chief Communications Officer - BinDawood Holding and Warwick Gird, GM -



**DUBAI:** V Nandakumar, Director of Marketing & Communications, Lulu Group being presented with the Retail Marcom Icon Award by Anna Germanos, MENA region head of Meta (Facebook).

Marketing at Spinneys.

Lulu Group is the leading hypermarket & shopping mall player with operations in 23 countries serving 1.6 million shoppers everyday through their 235

branches across ME, Africa, India and the Far East. The leading audit group Deloitte had recently ranked Lulu as one of the Top 20 fastest growing retailers in the world.



## Concept Mercedes Maybach Haute Voiture close to production

**KUWAIT:** Al Mulla Automobiles Co, the sole authorized distributor and exclusive service partner for Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, is excited to share a preview of the Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture. A tailor-made creation, built using fine materials with the most exquisite craftsmanship: inspired by haute couture, Mercedes-Maybach is expanding its model portfolio with an exclusive and limited special edition.

The close-to-production Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture combines the aesthetics and craftsmanship typical of the brand with unusual, fashion-inspired color and material combinations - such as bold nautical blue contrasting with a light, shimmering rose and elegant crystal white. Exquisite nappa leather combines with high-quality boucle fabric and particularly stylish trim elements. Similar to the principle of the limited high-fashion collection, the Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture heralds a new era of exclusivity for the tradition-rich brand. The model will be



brought to market in early 2023 in a strictly limited edition.

The color and equipment concept of the Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture has never existed before. Mercedes-Maybach is fusing the art of high fashion and automotive design at the highest level to create something completely new - a true Icon of Excellence. The Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture embodies our style of 'Sensual Purity' in a new, extraordinary way. It combines beauty and unexpected, extraordinary details that appeal to all the senses.

The Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture provides a concrete preview of an all-new, highly exclusive and limited edition. Mercedes-Maybach has always been considered a pioneer in defining luxury, style and status. Maybach customers are looking for something special and for their expectations to be exceeded. With the Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture special edition, Mercedes-Maybach is realizing its claim to leadership in the high-end segment and combining the world of fashion with the automobile. The result represents the absolute pinnacle of Sophisticated Luxury.

The exterior of the concept car is characterized by a particularly exclusive two-tone paint finish: the upper part and the forged wheels typical of Maybach are finished in dark nautical blue. The lower part and the sides shine in a light, shimmering rose. The sensual and unusual color combination sets the stage for the true showpiece on the automotive catwalk - the interior.

### A bespoke interior inspired by haute couture

The combination of consummate craftsmanship, high-quality materials and extraordinary details creates a new level of exclusivity. The color and material concept is reminiscent of the world of haute couture. The exciting contrast of radiant white and dark nautical blue creates a sensual yet technically modern atmosphere. The seats, the armrests, the lower part of the instrument panel, the steering wheel and the roof lining are upholstered in crystal white nappa leather.

Another highlight is the generous, lacquered trim element on the dashboard support in white chrome look with rose gold-colored flowing lines. It is stylishly framed in rose gold, thus underlining the ultimate luxury of the Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture. Further accents in rose gold can be found on the center console and the Mercedes-Maybach badge at the rear. The radiantly bright look is interspersed with nautical blue nappa leather on the window frames and along the belt-line. A special detail is a stylized star pattern in light grey printed on the leather on the instrument panel, doors, headrests and in headliner. It shows the perfect fusion of the traditional material with modern technology. The extravagance of the Concept Mercedes-Maybach Haute Voiture is further emphasized by white faux fur which is used in the door pockets, inlay mats and scatter cushion.

Lifestyle | Features



Canadian guitarist and former member of Canadian rock groups The Guess Who and Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Randy Bachman, is pictured during a question and answer session for the media.



Canadian guitarist and former member of Canadian rock groups The Guess Who and Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Randy Bachman (left), performs with his original Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins guitar with Japanese musician Takeshi during a Canada-Japan Friendship Concert after a guitar exchange event to coincide with Canada Day at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo on July 1, 2022. — AFP photos

## Anonymous bust turns out to be long-lost Napoleon

An anonymous marble bust picked up in a Paris art market has turned out to be a 200-year-old sculpture of a young Napoleon Bonaparte, Sotheby's said Friday. The auction house said the once-famous bust was going for sale on July 5 in London, expected to fetch between £120,000 and £180,000 (\$145,000 and \$217,000). "It was discarded as an embarrassment after the fall of the empire, deemed valueless and eventually lost without trace for two centuries," Christopher Mason, a Sotheby's specialist said in a statement.

The bust was carved by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Franchi in 1797, commissioned by a 28-year-old Napoleon in Milan after a series of stunning military victories. An unnamed collector came across the sculpture at an art market in 2020, where it was described simply as an "anonymous man in the 19th century style". Olivier Ihl, a researcher at Sciences Po Grenoble Institute, used archival documents and comparisons with other works by Franchi to confirm it had rather more illustrious origins.

A letter even allowed him to pinpoint when it was commissioned: a dinner held by Napoleon at the Palazzo Serbelloni in Milan shortly after his victory over the Republic of Venice. Ihl found evidence that the sculpture was displayed at the Society of Arts in Geneva as part of efforts to bolster Napoleon's image ahead of the region's annexation, and that the emperor saw it himself later that year. After his ignominious fall, the sculpture crashed in price, Sotheby's said, eventually being flogged for a pittance to an unknown Englishman. — AFP

## 'American Woman' rocker reunited with stolen guitar

They say you never forget your first love, and after pining for his stolen guitar for almost half a century, Canadian rock star Randy Bachman has finally been reunited with the instrument which an eagle-eyed fan tracked down in Japan. Bachman, who wrote the original "American Woman" with his band The Guess Who, was in Tokyo for the emotional handover on Friday - 46 years after his cherished orange Gretsch was snatched from a Toronto hotel.

"Wow," a stunned Bachman said, holding the guitar lovingly and tuning it up on stage before playing in a special concert at the Canadian Embassy. The 78-year-old told AFP he had been "pretty much devastated" by the theft. "With that guitar, I wrote many million-selling songs... it was like my magical guitar. And then when it's suddenly gone, the magic is gone." The rocker bought the now vintage 6120 Chet Atkins model as a teenager in

the early 1960s with \$400 painstakingly saved up from mowing lawns, washing cars and babysitting.

He had long admired the instrument, spending hours staring at it in a shop window in Winnipeg with his friend and fellow musician Neil Young. It meant so much to Bachman that he would chain it to hotel toilets on tour. "Everybody in the band made fun of me, but because I worked so hard to get this guitar, I didn't want it stolen." But in 1976, he entrusted the guitar to a roadie who put it in a room with other luggage while the band was checking out. Before they knew it, it was gone.

### Some sleuthing and a handover

Over the decades, Bachman hunted for his Gretsch, which has a small, dark knot in the wood grain on its front, but to no avail — until a Canadian fan decided to help with the search from his home in 2020. William Long compared old images

of the stolen instrument with new and archived pictures of the model on guitar shop websites around the world.

"Yeah, I'm a sleuth," Long, 58, told AFP. "I was confident I was going to find it. I got the process down so quick — I went through 300 images of orange Gretches." None were a perfect match, until he found one on the site of a Tokyo guitar shop with the tell-tale mark. More searching pointed Long to a Japanese musician called Takeshi, who he spotted playing Bachman's beloved guitar in a YouTube video. Takeshi, who had always wanted a vintage Gretsch, says he bought Bachman's guitar in 2014 for around 850,000 yen (\$6,300).

Long alerted Bachman to his discovery, and the musicians arranged to meet in Tokyo to swap Bachman's original guitar with another of the same type, also made in 1957. On Friday, at an event held on Canada Day, the pair shared a

big hug and then jammed together. They performed songs including "American Woman", the 1970 hit later covered by US singer Lenny Kravitz, and "Takin' Care of Business" by Bachman's other band, Bachman-Turner Overdrive.

Bachman is not the only rock star to be reunited with a long-lost guitar: last year, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page also tracked one down that went missing at an airport decades ago. But Bachman, who had given up ever finding the guitar after four decades of searching, said he had been touched by Long's "random act of kindness". "When I was playing it, I looked down and figured - time has stood still, or 50 years has just flown by really fast," he said. "I couldn't have written this if I wrote it as a script. Nobody would believe it. But it's true. It's really great." — AFP

## Germany signs deal to return bronzes to Nigeria

Germany has signed an agreement to begin sending hundreds of Benin bronzes back to what is now Nigeria, rubber-stamping the biggest effort yet by a European country to return the looted artworks. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Culture Minister Claudia Roth signed the deal with their Nigerian counterparts in Berlin after Germany first announced that it would begin returning the bronzes last year. The first two artworks - the head of a king and a plaque depicting three warriors - were on Friday handed over to representatives from Nigeria. "Today we have reason to celebrate, because we have reached a historic agreement - the Benin bronzes are returning home," Baerbock said.

"These pieces are not only magnificent artefacts - they are some of Africa's greatest treasures. But they are also telling a story of colonial violence," she said. Thousands of Benin bronzes, metal plaques and sculptures that once decorat-

ed the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin are now scattered around European museums after being looted by the British at the end of the 19th century. Germany has around 1,100 of the 16th- to 18th-century artefacts, split between some 20 museums.

The biggest collection is held by the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, which has 440 - considered the most important collection outside London's British Museum. Negotiations are still ongoing as to which of the bronzes held by the Ethnological Museum will be returned to Nigeria, and which will remain in Berlin on loan. Nigeria has been negotiating the return of Benin bronzes from several European countries and plans to build a museum in Benin City in southern Edo state, where it hopes to house them.

France in November handed back 26 of the treasures, while two were returned by Britain earlier this year, with talks ongoing for more to follow. Nigeria's Minister of Culture, Lai Mohammed, thanked Germany for having "taken the lead in correcting the wrongs of the past", hailing "the dawn of a new era of cooperation". "This will go down as one of the most important days in the celebration of African cultural heritage," Foreign Minister Zubairu Dada added. — AFP



Sculptures known as the 'Benin Bronzes' are pictured at a ceremony for the signing of an agreement of intent to return them to Nigeria at the German foreign ministry in Berlin, Germany on July 1, 2022.



Guards watch over sculptures known as the Benin Bronzes during a ceremony for the signing of an agreement of intent to return them to Nigeria at the German foreign ministry in Berlin, on July 1, 2022. — AFP photos

## NYPD unit that inspired 'Law & Order: SVU' faces gender bias probe

The US Justice Department will investigate the New York police agency that inspired the hit TV show "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," over its treatment of sexual assault victims. Two federal prosecutors in New York announced Thursday in a joint statement that the Special Victims Unit (SVU) would be investigated to determine whether it "engages in a pattern or practice of gender-biased policing."

Allegations against the agency "include failing to conduct basic investigative steps and instead shaming and abusing survivors and re-traumatizing them during investigations," the statement said. "Victims of sex crimes deserve the same rigorous and unbiased investigations of their cases that the NYPD affords to other categories of crime," Damian Williams, the US attorney for the Southern District of New York, said in the statement.

His Eastern District counterpart Breon Peace added that in recent months "we have learned concerning information from a variety of sources of historical issues about the way the Special Victims Division has conducted its investigations for many years." The Justice Department said it plans to conduct a comprehensive review of the SVU's policies, procedures, and training for investigations of sexual assault crimes. New York Mayor Eric Adams, who is the city's former police chief, as well as the current chief Keechant Sewell said they will cooperate with the probe.

The NYPD is the largest municipal police force in the United States with some 36,000 uniformed officers and 19,000 administrative employees. "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit" is part of the wildly popular "Law & Order" TV franchise, and has been on air on NBC since 1999. With no fewer than 23 seasons, it is the longest-running prime-time series in US TV history - and NBC said on Wednesday that season 24 will launch in September this year. — AFP



A large quantity of rubbish floats next to houses at Sao Jorge neighborhood in Manaus, Brazil. — AFP photos

## Waterways in Manaus choked by tons of trash

In Manaus, the largest city in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, tons of stinking trash fill the canals and streams, giving one the feeling that they're visiting a post-apocalyptic wasteland. On the west side of the city, in a poor neighborhood where homes have been erected on stilts, a worker uses an excavator to scoop up a bucket-load of bottles, pieces of plastic and even home appliances that have been tossed in the water.

Not far from the city's main port, municipal workers wearing orange uniforms gather garbage from a boat and pile it onto a big barge floating on the Rio Negro, one of the Amazon River's main tributaries. With the rising water levels signaling an end to the rainy season, the mounds of trash are often intermingled with leaves and tree branches. Each day, nearly 30

tons of debris is plucked from the water. In some areas, the water is almost completely covered.

The massive influx of trash to Manaus's waterways occurs around this time every year, but city authorities believe the situation has gotten worse in recent weeks. From January to May, city workers have removed 4,500 tons of trash, most of which could have been recycled instead of being thrown in the river. "The people who live on the water's edge throw garbage straight into the streams... few people put it in the trash," says Antonino Pereira, a 54-year-old Manaus resident who complains that the stench is unbearable.

According to the city's undersecretary of sanitation, Jose Reboucas, if the population was more aware of the costs associated with littering, the city could save one million reais (about \$190,000) per month. "The awareness of the population will be very beneficial for our city and especially for our environment," he told AFP. The Amazonian region is also facing a major threat from deforestation, with more than 3,750 square kilometers (1,450 square miles) of jungle chopped down since the beginning of the year. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Feature



Olena Shcherban, Ukrainian ethnologist and historian, who studies borscht and has 365 of its unique recipes from all over Ukraine in her private collection, wearing Ukraine's traditional clothes and headdress cooks borscht in clay pots in the wood stove in the village of Opishnya in Poltava region.- AFP photos



Participant cooks borscht in Kiev, during an event to promote UNESCO bid to recognize the traditional beetroot and cabbage dish as part of Ukraine's historical heritage.

## BEET THIS: UKRAINE WINS FIGHT TO PROTECT BORSHCH SOUP

The UN's cultural agency on Friday inscribed the culture surrounding beetroot soup known as borscht in Ukraine on its list of endangered cultural heritage, a recognition sought urgently by Kyiv after its invasion by neighboring Russia. Ukraine prizes borscht, a nourishing soup with beetroot as its base, as a national dish even though it is also widely enjoyed in Russia, other ex-Soviet countries and Poland. The Ukrainian culture of borscht cooking "was today inscribed on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding," by a UNESCO committee, it said.

The decision was approved after a fast-track process prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the "negative impact on this tradition" caused by the war, the agency said. "People are unable not only to cook or grow local vegetables for borscht, but also to come together" to eat it, "which undermines the social and cultural well-being of communities," it said, using one of several alternative spellings for the soup.

Kyiv hailed the move as a much-needed



An illustration photo shows plate of beetroot borscht soup with sour cream in Moscow.

ed victory on the cultural front after four months of Russian bombardments. For the first time in history, the nomination jumped the queue and was considered in an expedited fashion given "the military aggression against Ukraine in real time and the real threat to the cultural object," Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzeppar said on Twitter, adding: "Ukrainian Borscht derussified!"

Ievgen Klopotenko, a well-known Ukrainian cook, said the UNESCO deci-

sion underscored a wider recognition of Ukraine's gastronomical heritage. "We had hundreds of pages of proof that borscht cooking culture is actually Ukrainian, and the whole engine of Russian propaganda was against us," he said on Facebook. "Victory in the borscht war is ours," Ukraine's Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko said on Telegram, adding that Ukraine "will win both in the war of borscht and in this war."

### 'Fabric of society'

Adding a landmark site or traditional activity to the UNESCO list aims to mobilize attention to ensure it is preserved against risks that would jeopardize its existence. The committee said the war had "threatened the viability" of Ukraine's borscht culture in Ukraine. "Whether as part of a wedding meal, the focus of food-related competitions or as a driver of tourism, borscht is considered part of the fabric of Ukrainian society, cultural heritage, identity and tradition," it noted.

But Moscow slammed the decision, with foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accusing Kyiv of trying to

appropriate the soup for "one people... one nationality... This is xenophobia," she said. She later said on Telegram: "To give the world a culinary example of 'modern Kyiv nationalism,' I will cite a fact: hummus and pilaf are recognized as national dishes of several nations." "Borscht has no nationality! Just like bread, potatoes, cabbage - Is it national? What nationality can it have!" a 60-year-pensioner in Moscow who gave her name as Tatyana told AFP.

But Alexey Gorbunov, a 49-year-old decorator in Moscow, was more sympathetic. "Certainly, it is part of both Russian and Ukrainian legacies, but I think it's an explicit symbol of Ukraine which I directly associate with Ukraine, especially the one with pampushka (savory buns) and garlic," he said. UNESCO insisted that Ukrainian borscht was a version of a dish popular elsewhere. Nonetheless, "Ukrainian borscht - the national version of borscht consumed in several countries of the region - is an integral part of Ukrainian family and community life." — AFP

## Metaverse years from being global phenomenon: Pioneer

Big brands are rushing to the metaverse but the path to profit is still unclear and mass adoption may be years away, one of the sector's biggest players, Sebastien Borget, told AFP in an interview. Borget is co-founder of The Sandbox, a platform that began life as a game for mobile phones and PCs but is transforming itself into a virtual world where anyone can buy land in the form of digital tokens.

Fashion brands like Gucci and Adidas, financial firms Axa and HSBC, and Warner Music are among those who have already chosen to set up shop in The Sandbox. "Above all, it is a place for creativity and experience," said Frenchman Borget, distancing himself from the idea that it is simply a commercial venture.

"Brands don't go there to monetise, we don't know how to do that." Enthusiasts are convinced that internet users in the near future will shop, mingle with friends or go to concerts in platforms like The Sandbox or its main competitor Decentraland. Users will strap on virtual reality headsets, buy and sell cryptocurrencies and have all their transactions stored on the blockchain - a kind of digital ledger. At least that is the theory.



French Co-Founder and COO of The Sandbox, decentralized gaming virtual world, Sebastien Borget takes part in the Viva Technology (Vivatech) show in Paris. — AFP

### Digital owners

The Sandbox is still largely a quest game where players hop through landscapes illustrated in block graphics, collecting treasures and vanquishing enemies. Players are also encouraged to build their own worlds and invent games. The metaverse version - where players largely do the same thing but can earn cryptocurrency rewards and buy extra kit for their avatars - has only opened to the public for special events.

Some 350,000 people visited during its last opening in March, said Borget, far short of his aim to attract "hundreds of millions". "We hope to achieve this within five to 10 years," he said. But there is still plenty of public scepticism about the metaverse and the wider web3 phenomenon - an idea for a blockchain-based internet centred on individuals rather than big social media platforms. Cryptocurrency trading underpins the commercial side of web3, but the main coins are wildly unstable and transactions can suck up a huge amount of energy.

The crypto ecosystem is largely unregulated, has gaping security flaws and little in the way of insurance, leaving users open to fraud and scams. But Borget is confident that the offer of a space for individuals to socialise, trade, play - and crucially own their digital footprint - will win out. "For the first time, users have ownership of their digital content," he said. "The avatar, the wearables, the equipment, the land, the houses... everything belongs to them. They can dispose of it as they want."

### Early adopters

Despite his focus on the social and creative aspects, The Sandbox has a clear commercial motive. It takes five percent commissions on all transactions as well as pocketing profit from the sale of virtual land. Its revenue was \$200 million last year. Plenty of major companies have jumped in, Borget highlighting that The Sandbox has only 166,464 plots of virtual land on offer.

"This map has a finite number of plots, which is not the case for all decentralized virtual worlds," said Borget. "We have sold 70 percent of them so far." The firm's sales of virtual land topped \$500 million last year and Borget claimed his metaverse had 64 percent market share. But Borget said brands were still searching for the best way to develop their virtual shops and offices. "Brands were slow to embrace the web," he said. "With web3 they are trying to get in a little earlier so as not to repeat their past mistakes." — AFP



Gogol Centre actors and personnel stand on stage after a performance in Moscow.

## Rebel Moscow theatre shuts doors after final show

The Gogol Centre theatre, one of the last bastions of artistic freedom in Vladimir Putin's Russia, shut its doors Thursday night with a defiant final show called "I Don't Take Part In War". The emotional play protesting against the Kremlin's military intervention in Ukraine marked a dramatic end of an era for the Russian capital's ever-shrinking opposition and intelligentsia circles.

Previously run by rebel director Kirill Serebrennikov, who left Russia after criticizing Moscow's offensive in Ukraine, the Gogol Centre staged daring plays for a

decade, often testing increasingly strict laws and Moscow's sharp conservative turn. Thursday's performance had some of the audience in tears when actors recited poems by Soviet poet and soldier Yuri Levitansky, a Soviet poet and soldier who was born in what is now Ukraine.

The play's name was taken from one of Levitansky's emblematic verses: "I don't take part in war, it takes part in me." As the show ended, the theatre's outgoing artistic director, Alexei Agranovich announced: "The Gogol Centre is closed. Forever." This week the Moscow authorities announced a change of leadership at a number of the capital's top theatres. They include the Gogol Centre, which will now function under new management and its old name - the Nikolai Gogol Drama Theatre.

Serebrennikov, who transformed the theatre company into a national cultural beacon, accused the authorities of "murdering" the Gogol Centre. On Thursday,

he addressed the audience via video link from Avignon in southeastern France. "The Gogol Centre is an idea, the idea of freedom. Freedom is not dead. Freedom lives on as long as we live," he said. Another prominent Moscow theatre, the Sovremennik, will also have a change of management, authorities said.

These changes are seen as part of an increasing crackdown on any dissent since President Putin sent troops into Ukraine. Before the play, some spectators lay roses against the theatre's white walls. "They are closing everything, blocking everything," Daria Kozhevnikova, a 36-year-old teacher who came to see the play, told AFP. She paused, before smiling uneasily: "Soon we will all be shackled together by one chain." Her voice trembled and she appeared on the verge of tears. "It was a place where I felt good."

### 'Symbol of freedom'

"The Gogol Centre is a place of free-

dom," said 39-year-old marketing specialist Aliya Talibova, who also came to see the play. "Now they are taking it away from us." Actor Ilya Vinogorsky, 22, said the closure of the theatre in its current iteration was "very painful". "This should not be happening. Especially in the 21st century, when we claim to be a civilized society and state."

Serebrennikov was artistic director of the Gogol Centre between 2012 and 2021. The 52-year-old was caught up in a high-profile fraud case that his supporters say was punishment for challenging the Russian authorities. He was forced to leave his post in February 2021. In his address, Serebrennikov vowed that despite the closure in Moscow, the theatre's mission would live on. "There was this building. There will be another," he said. "I hope some day the war will end and the beautiful Russia of the future will emerge." — AFP



Gogol Centre actors and personnel stand on stage after a performance in Moscow.



A spectator poses with a backdrop as he waits for performance in the Gogol Centre in Moscow. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



A horseshoe crab is seen on a beach at the James Farm Ecological Preserve in Ocean View.



Horseshoe crabs spawn on a beach at the Ted Harvey Wildlife Area near Dover.

Horseshoe crabs are seen on a beach at the James Farm Ecological Preserve in Ocean View, Delaware. On a bright moonlit night, a team of scientists and volunteers head out to a protected beach along the Delaware Bay to survey horseshoe crabs. — AFP photos

# HORSESHOE CRABS - 'LIVING FOSSILS' VITAL FOR VACCINE SAFETY

On a bright moonlit night, a team of scientists and volunteers head out to a protected beach along the Delaware Bay to survey horseshoe crabs that spawn in their millions along the US East Coast from late spring to early summer. The group make their way up the shoreline laying a measuring frame on the sand, counting the individuals inside it to help generate a population estimate, and setting right those unfortunate enough to have been flipped onto their backs by the high tide.

With their helmet-like shells, tails that resemble spikes and five pairs of legs connected to their mouths, horseshoe crabs, or Limulidae, aren't immediately endearing. But if you've ever had a vaccine in your life, you have these weird sea animals to thank: their bright blue blood, which clots in the presence of harmful bacterial components called endotoxins, has been essential for testing the safety of biomedical products since the 1970s, when it replaced rabbit testing.

"They're really easy to love, once you understand them," Laurel Sullivan, who works for the state government to educate members of the public about the invertebrates, tells AFP. "They're not threatening at all. They're just going about their day, trying to make more horseshoe crabs." For 450 million years, these otherworldly creatures have patrolled the planet's oceans, while dinosaurs arose and went extinct, and early fish transitioned to the land animals that would eventually give rise to humans.

Now, though, the "living fossils" are listed as vulnerable in America and endangered in Asia, as a result of habitat loss



Laughing gulls feed on horseshoe crab eggs on a beach at the James Farm Ecological Preserve in Ocean View, Delaware.

and overharvesting for use in food, bait, and the pharmaceutical industry, which is on a major growth path, especially in the wake of the COVID pandemic. Recruiting citizen scientists helps engage the public while also scaling up the government's data collection efforts, explains the survey project's environment scientist Taylor Beck.

### Vital ecological role

"Crabs" are something of a misnomer for the animals, which are in fact more closely related to spiders and scorpions, and are made up of four subspecies: one that inhabits the Eastern and Gulf coasts of North America, and the other three in Southeast Asia. Atlantic horseshoe crabs have 10 eyes and feed by crushing up food, such as worms and clams, between their legs then passing the food to their mouths.

Males are noticeably smaller than females, whom they swarm in groups of up to 15 when breeding. Males grasp females as they head to shore, where the females deposit golf ball-size clusters of 5,000 eggs for the males to spray their sperm on. Millions of these eggs, tiny green balls, are inadvertently churned up onto the beach surface, where they are a vital food source for migrating shorebirds, including the near-threatened Red Knot.

Nivette Perez-Perez, manager of community science at the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays, points out a vast band of eggs that stretch nearly the whole beach at the James Farm Ecological Preserve. As she gestures, aptly-named laughing gulls with bright orange beaks swoop down to feast. Like others in the area, Perez-Perez long ago succumbed to the crabs' charms. "You're so cute," she tells a female she has picked up to point out its



anatomical features.

### Just flip 'em

Breeding is a dangerous business for horseshoe crabs as it's on the beach that they are at their most vulnerable: as the tide washes in, some end up on their backs, and while their long hard tails can help some right themselves, not all are so lucky. Around 10 percent of the population is lost each year as their exposed undersides bake in the Sun.

In 1998, Glenn Gauvry, founder of the Ecological Research & Development Group, helped start the "Just flip 'em" campaign, encouraging members of the public to do their part by gently picking up upturned crabs that are still alive. "Where it matters most of all, is changing the heart," he tells AFP on Delaware Bay's Pickering Beach, proudly sporting a "Just flip 'em" baseball cap festooned with

horseshoe crab pins. "If we can't get people to care and to connect to these animals, then they're less likely to want legislation to protect them."

Every year around 500,000 horseshoe crabs are harvested and bled for a chemical called Limulus Amebocyte Lysate, vital for testing against a type of bacteria that can contaminate medications, needles and devices like hip replacements. Estimates place the mortality rate of the process at 15 percent, with survivors released back to sea. A new synthetic alternative called recombinant factor C appears promising, but faces regulatory challenges. Horseshoe crabs are a "finite source with a potentially infinite demand, and those two things are mutually exclusive," Allen Burgenson, of Swiss biotech Lonza, which makes the new test said. — AFP



Abdullah Umari, 55 years old Afghan shepherd, gather sheep to be milked in Tunceli, in Dersim mountains, in the middle of the Eastern Anatolia Region.



Suleyman Ezam Huseyni, a 29-year-old Afghan shepherd, walks to mountains with his donkey and two shepherd dogs near Tunceli.

## High up in Turkish valleys, Afghan shepherds dream of home

In Turkish mountains so high the silver clouds almost touch the top of his head, the homesick Afghan shepherd prepares his baaing flock for a good shear. The pebbly valley around him was once full of Kurds, who staged a violently suppressed rebellion in Tunceli in the early years of the modern Turkish state. But the Kurds in the eastern Mercan Valley have been gradually replaced by Afghans, who fled here by foot and truck across Iran from the poverty and bloodshed back home. Now, with two decades of conflict behind them, some are thinking of going back, no matter the resurgent Taliban's hardline rule.

"Nobody would leave their country unless they had to," says Hafiz Hasimi Meymene, a 20-year-old with a fiancée impatiently waiting for him in Afghanistan. "We come here, make money through

shepherding, and send it to our families," he says. A handful of nylon tents are tied down to the hard ground around him, the Afghan families' new homes. A few men crouch in a shed, milking their sheep and goats. Their friend ushers the flock into a pen with a whack of a slender stick.

### Mixed emotions

"Next year, I will return to Afghanistan. The war is over," Meymene says. "When the (Afghan) state was fighting the Taliban,

the economy was hit hard. But now we are planning to return." President Recep Tayyip Erdogan estimates that 300,000 Afghans now live in Turkey, which also hosts 3.7 million people from war-ravaged Syria. Tunceli native Mustafa Acun says the locals have grown used to Afghans taking care of their herds. The 67-year-old works alongside them, making cheese and yoghurt from sheep's milk. "I mean, our children either cannot or do not want to do this job," he says looking up from his stool, tending to

some steaming pots over an open flame. It is surprisingly dangerous work.

### 'Love the mountains'

An old rifle hangs off one of the men's shoulders, the better to shoot the wolves and bears that come out hunting at night. This is also a good time to graze the sheep, which suffer in the baking sun. The rifle did not keep two of Abdullah Umari's animals from being torn apart and eaten by a bear the other week. "I take care of the flock like this," the 55-year-old Afghan said, the rifle casually swinging behind his back. "I have been here for seven years. I worked for three years and returned to Afghanistan. But then I decided to come here again," he recalls, glossing over the pain and danger of each voyage.

"God willing, if my health allows, I will go back to Afghanistan in August," when the summer heat begins to subside. But although 29-year-old Suleyman Ezam had not seen his Afghan wife and two little children for four years, says he will miss working as a shepherd in the Turkish mountains with his dogs. "I love the mountains," Ezam says after showing a photograph of his four-year-old daughter on his phone. "The mountains of Turkey are so beautiful." — AFP



Abdullah Umari, 55 years old Afghan shepherd, talks with children while owners milk sheep in Tunceli, in Dersim mountains, in the middle of the Eastern Anatolia Region. — AFP photos

## White rhinos return to Mozambique park after 40 years

A Mozambican park welcomed its first white rhinos in 40 years on Friday after 19 of the threatened animals completed a 1,600-kilometre truck ride from South Africa, conservationists said. The rhinos were reintroduced to Zinave National Park in southern Mozambique under an initiative to restore wildlife and boost the local economy. Wildlife in the 4,000-square-kilometre haven was decimated by Mozambique's decades-long civil war, which ended in 1992, and by poaching.

"The return of the rhino allows for Zinave to be introduced as a new and exciting tourism destination in Mozambique," said Werner Myburgh, head of Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), the conservation group that led the project. Zinave is now the only national park in Mozambique to house all "Big Five" African game animals—elephant, rhino, lion, leopard and buffalo—Myburgh said in a statement.

Since 2015, 2,400 animals from 14 species have been released into the reserve. The rhinoceroses were hauled to Zinave from neighboring South Africa over several days in June, in what the PPF said was the longest-ever transfer of rhinos by road. On Friday, some of the animals were released from their enclosures into a sanctuary featuring extra security to protect them from poachers. The ceremony was attended by President Filipe Nyusi and Environment Minister Ivete Maibaze.

"The protection of biodiversity is a universal imperative and together we will continue to fight for the preservation of our natural heritage," said Nyusi. "Only then will future generations be able to enjoy the benefits of nature and join our mission of preserving our natural resources." — AFP

## Sports

# Sainz edges revived Hamilton in second Silverstone practice

## Alonso set an early fastest time for Alpine before Sainz

**SILVERSTONE, United Kingdom:** Carlos Sainz outpaced local hero Lewis Hamilton in Friday's second practice at the British Grand Prix, his Ferrari edging the revived Mercedes by one tenth of a second on a rain and wind-affected day. The Spaniard, recording his first session-topping time since the Australian Grand Prix in April, clocked a best lap in one minute and 28.952 seconds to beat the seven-time world champion, who appeared to have rediscovered his verve, by 0.163 seconds. Another Briton, Lando Norris of McLaren, was third fastest for McLaren, ahead of world champion and series leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull and Charles Leclerc of the second Ferrari.

Fernando Alonso was sixth for Alpine ahead of Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull, George Russell in the other Mercedes, Daniel Ricciardo and Aston Martin's Lance Stroll. For Hamilton, who lost a piece of his car's bodywork in the final minutes, it was a solid demonstration of the potential of his Mercedes.

After an embattled week during which he has rebutted offensive com-

ments from various critics, including revelations of a vulgar attack by Nelson Piquet, this was a classic Hamilton riposte. On a blustery and cool day punctuated by more off-track news and reaction at the former airfield, the Red Bulls led the field out to make up for lost time after the wet opening session had allowed little meaningful running.

### Protest

Alonso set an early fastest time for Alpine before Sainz and then Leclerc went top. Both Ferraris were running with more new parts for their power units. Verstappen struggled with the conditions and a minor mechanical problem. "It's like something is touching-I don't know what-and it's very windy out here," he said. Hamilton reported the familiar bouncing problem that has blighted his and Mercedes' season but after work on the rear of his car, jumped to second fastest, ahead of Norris and Verstappen, with a lap that generated appreciation from the big Friday crowd.

For Hamilton, the support of his fan base had been important during a try-

ing week of offensive criticism from those critics-including Piquet, Bernie Ecclestone and Jackie Stewart-who he described as "older voices" undeserving of the platform supplied by the media. Advised to retire by Stewart and insulted with a racial slur by Piquet, Hamilton had also acceded to the sport's new enforcement of a 'bling ban' by removing a nose stud.

It emerged on Friday that Piquet had not only used a racist slur, but had also used homophobic language in a further offensive comment during his appearance in a Brazilian podcast last November. Piquet was banned from the Formula One paddock and had his membership of the British Racing Drivers Club suspended on Thursday, when his comments were first reported. New footage of further comments by Piquet was revealed on social media on Friday. This included insulting remarks aimed at Keke and Nico Rosberg and both racist and homophobic slurs against Hamilton.

To add to the public furor, as F1 unified in support of Hamilton, the local Northamptonshire police revealed it had



**SILVERSTONE, Northamptonshire:** Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton drives during third practice ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. —AFP

uncovered a plot by protesters seeking to disrupt the race with a track invasion. Chief Inspector Tom Thompson said: "We have credible intelligence that a group are planning to disrupt the event on race day." He added an appeal to the

group, warning them their plans were reckless and dangerous and could jeopardize lives. "Protesting is everyone's human right in this country and we are happy to speak to you to help facilitate a peaceful protest." —AFP

## Six-try New Zealand romp past Ireland 42-19 in first Test

**AUCKLAND:** New Zealand scored six tries in a compelling attacking display to beat Ireland 42-19 in the first Test of the three-match series at Eden Park on Saturday. The All Blacks were in command after opening up a 28-5 half-time lead and Ireland's problems were compounded by captain Johnny Sexton being forced off with a head knock that will put him in doubt for the second Test in a week's time.

The home side's finishing was the difference in a relatively even contest, their individual skill often the basis of breaks while Ireland had to work hard to create their three tries. New Zealand loose forward Ardie Savea scored two tries, including a dynamic second-half score, while fullback Jordie Barrett converted all six tries and crossed the line himself in a 17-point haul.

The result maintains Ireland's record of having never beaten the All Blacks in New Zealand, a run they were hoping to overturn after winning three of the previous five Tests between the nations. It also extends New Zealand's remarkable unbeaten streak at Eden Park, where they have won 45 of 47 Tests since 1994 with two draws.

Ireland's hopes nosedived when they lost Sexton to concussion in the first half. The veteran fly-half failed a head injury assessment and is likely to miss the second Test in Dunedin next Saturday under World Rugby protocols, adding to a mounting injury list.

New Zealand also had to overcome disruption in the build-up, losing the services of seven members of coaching and playing staff to COVID-19. But it did not show in a strong response to heavy defeats to Ireland and France on their northern hemisphere tour at the end of 2021.

### Storming Savea

Ireland applied enormous pressure in the opening exchanges, completing 18 phases of play before seasoned wing Keith Earls darted across for his 35th Test try. New Zealand were scoreless through the first 20 minutes but the floodgates opened soon afterwards, firstly when Jordie Barrett barrelled across, set up by a charge from debut wing Leicester Fainga'anuku.

Momentum swung on the half-hour mark when All Blacks wing Sevu Reece pounced on a loose Garry Ringrose pass and raced 80 metres to score. In the same passage of play Ireland captain and playmaker Sexton was struck by an accidental forearm from New Zealand counterpart Sam Cane and was unable to return to the field.

New Zealand created two tries in two minutes before the break through short kicks. Quinn Tupaea capitalised on a slick Beauden Barrett grubber before a chip and chase from Aaron Smith resulted in Savea's first try. —AFP

## Galthie hails young France side after beating feisty Japan

**TOYOTA VITY:** France head coach Fabien Galthie praised his young team for finding "the key to open all the doors" after stretching away in the second half to beat a spirited Japan 42-23 on Saturday in the first Test. The Six Nations champions fielded an inexperienced line-up at a steamy Toyota Stadium and struggled to impose themselves in the first half with temperatures soaring to 33 degrees Celsius.

The sides were level 13-13 at half-time and Galthie said his players managed to "rethink and get on the front foot" after the break. A Matthis Lebel try shortly after the interval helped France click into gear before further tries from Damian Penaud, Yoram Moefana and Pierre Bourgarit gave next year's World Cup hosts a comfortable win in the end.

"We adjusted what we had wanted to do but had failed to implement in the first half for a lot of reasons, notably because of the intensity of the Japanese players," the coach said. "We had made errors which we do not normally make. We managed to find the solutions, the key to open all the doors."

Galthie handed first caps to lock Thomas Jolmes and No.8 Yoan Tanga, with Thomas Lavault also coming off the bench to make his debut. Several of the France squad that won the Grand Slam earlier this year were rested for the trip to Japan and Galthie was pleased with how the players coming in took their chance.

"One has to remember that this is a young side with very little experience as a unit — their aver-



**TOYOTA CITY, Japan:** France's Matthieu Jalibert (C) is tackled by Japan's Takuya Yamasawa (L) and Ben Gunter (R) during the rugby union international Test match between Japan and France at Toyota Stadium in Toyota City, Aichi prefecture. —AFP

age age is just 25," he said. "It is a young team but they were able to assess at half-time what had gone on in the first half and to learn those lessons and react accordingly in the second half." Japan also fielded an unfamiliar line-up after the 2019 World Cup hosts were hit by a spate of injuries and COVID cases.

### 'It's frustrating'

Fly-half Seungshin Lee was winning only his second cap at the age of 21 after being drafted into the

starting line-up the day before the game when Takuya Yamasawa tested positive for the virus. Japan scored two tries through Tevita Tatafu and Siosaia Fifita, and captain Atsushi Sakate said they will be looking for "revenge" when they meet France again next week at Tokyo's Olympic stadium.

"It's frustrating — there are lots of things we can improve on," said Sakate. "We made mistakes but we managed to play the kind of rugby that we're aiming for. We need to take what we did well and work to do it better." —AFP

## Johnson, Ortiz share LIV Golf lead in Portland

**LOS ANGELES:** Dustin Johnson and Carlos Ortiz shared the second-round lead in the LIV Golf Series stop in Portland on Friday as players jumping to the breakaway circuit continued to face criticism. Johnson, the former world number one whose two major titles include the 2020 Masters, briefly threatened to make it a runaway before three late bogeys saw him settle for a four-under par 68 and an eight-under total at Pumpkin Ridge. He'll go into the final round of the 54-hole, shotgun start event neck and neck with overnight leader Ortiz, who birdied the final hole to cap a 69.

They are two strokes ahead of South African Branden Grace, who also signed for a 69. "I'm really happy with the way I'm swinging it," said Johnson, who at 17th in the world is the highest-ranked player

to risk the wrath of the US PGA Tour and make the jump to the lucrative new circuit. "Tomorrow I just need to go and do the same thing, just drive in the fairway." Johnson made his LIV debut in the inaugural event near London in June while Mexico's Ortiz is playing for the first time.

Ortiz won his lone US PGA Tour title at the Houston Open in 2020, joined the list of players suspended by the US circuit after teeing off in the upstart Saudi-backed series. The DP World Tour has also sanctioned members lured by the massive paydays on offer that included signing bonus and a \$20 million purse for this week's 48-player field with an additional \$5 million prize money on offer in a team competition.

DP World Tour chief executive Keith Pelley launched a scathing attack Friday on players who threatened the tour with legal action unless their sanctions - fines and suspensions - for competing in LIV Golf were rescinded. Pelley called their demands, made in a letter that was published in The Telegraph, contained inaccuracies and that the players knew "there would be consequences if they



**NORTH PLAINS, Oregon:** Carlos Ortiz of Mexico hits his tee shot on the fifth hole during round two of the LIV Golf Invitational - Portland at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains, Oregon. —AFP

chose money over competition."

Hostility from the established tours and concerns over the human rights record of LIV's Saudi backers apparently aren't slowing the upstart circuit. Golf Digest reported Friday that the series has accelerated growth plans for 2023 with 14 events rather than 10 and plans a name

change to the LIV Golf League. The report, citing an unnamed LIV Golf official, said the quick expansion is a product of signing several top US PGA players ahead of this week's event, including Americans Bryson DeChambeau, Patrick Reed, Brooks Koepka and Matthew Wolff. —AFP

## Lampaert shocks 'big guys' in rain-drenched Tour de France opener

**COPENHAGEN:** Belgian Yves Lampaert shocked the favourites to pull on the leader's yellow jersey after the rain-drenched first stage of the Tour de France, an individual time-trial in the Danish capital on Friday. Quick-Step rider Lampaert suffered less thanks to a later start than the pre-race favourites on the slippery 13.2km route, finishing five seconds ahead of compatriot Wout van Aert, with defending champion Tadej Pogacar third best seven seconds off the pace.

Massive crowds lined the streets as riders sped past the Little Mermaid statue, the harbour-front Blox building and the Amalienborg palace, where Crown Prince Frederik joined the celebration. Lampaert was overwhelmed with emotion as the 31-year-old realised he would wear the overall leader's yellow jersey on Saturday's second stage.

"I was hoping for a top ten, but not this," said the 2021 Belgian time-trial champion. "I beat the big guys. Somehow I managed to beat the best riders in the world. I'm just a farmer's son from Belgium, so this is something I would have never dreamed of. My mind is exploding. "I think I'll only realize what I have done after the Tour, when I'll return to my family. I'm so happy with this victory and honored to wear the yellow jersey."

Two-time defending champion Pogacar pulled on

the white jersey as the fastest under-25 rider. "It's great to be back on the Tour, the white jersey was my aim today," said the Team UAE leader. "I loved the crowds and my time was good for the GC (General Classification) against my rivals," he said. Dutch rider Mathieu van der Poel had set the early pace when the rain was at its heaviest. His face creased in pain from the relentless effort and stress of the rain-slick road, van Aert then took the lead ahead of his arch-rival, world champion Filippo Ganna, who suffered a puncture along the way.

### Tricky conditions

Slovenian Pogacar threw down the gauntlet to his title rivals cruising through the puddles, the 23-year-old all-rounder sprinting out of every corner in an expert ride. British hope Adam Yates was a picture of

grim determination at the start gate but after producing a top drawer chrono, finished 23sec off the winner while his teammate Geraint Thomas was only a couple of seconds slower. After a week of sweltering sun with Danes flocking to their beach hidos, rain began to fall on Copenhagen an hour ahead of the race.

But Danes enjoy an outdoor lifestyle and were almost uniformly equipped with colorful ponchos, producing a party atmosphere. Runner-up on the 2021 Tour, former fish-factory worker Jonas Vingegaard was cheered loudest as the 25-year-old local rider went for broke to finish just 8sec off Pogacar's time. "I'm just happy I didn't fall," said Vingegaard after several riders hit the tarmac in the tricky conditions. His Team Jumbo-Visma co-leader, former Vuelta a Espana winner Primož Roglic of Slovenia, was only a second faster. —AFP

Sports

# Lyon stars as Australia crush Sri Lanka inside three days

## Australians seal a 10-wicket victory

GALLE: Spinner Nathan Lyon starred with a match haul of nine wickets as Australia wrapped up the opening Test on Friday with a crushing victory over Sri Lanka before lunch on the third day. The hosts were bundled out for 113 in their second innings allowing the Australians to seal a 10-wicket victory in their first over back at the crease in Galle. Lyon, whose five-for helped bowl out Sri Lanka for 212 in the first innings, and fellow spinner Travis Head took four wickets each to send the hosts packing before the morning was over. It was a huge victory for Australia, who suffered a 3-0 whitewash in Sri Lanka on their last tour in 2016.

"Amazing win. Turning up this morning I didn't think it was going to happen that fast," skipper Pat Cummins said. "Really proud of the squad. It's really foreign conditions for us." Opener Usman Khawaja (71) and Cameron Green (77) stood out in Australia's first innings effort of 321 that made them take control in extreme spin conditions. Green put on crucial partnerships with

Khawaja and then wicketkeeper-batsman Alex Carey, who made 45, to handle the spinners with aplomb.

"Players go through their whole careers looking for a method in these conditions, and in his first knock he's found it," Cummins said of the 23-year-old Green who was named man of the match. "Really happy for him, he was the difference." Sri Lanka suffered a blow before play began when Angelo Mathews was ruled out due to COVID-19, with Oshada Fernando named his replacement. Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne started strong, smashing four boundaries in the 17-run first over of the innings off Mitchell Starc.

### Head joins spin party

But the tables soon turned when Lyon and fellow spinner Mitchell Swepson took charge. Lyon got skipper Karunaratne caught behind for 23 after just 20 balls while Swepson trapped Pathum Nissanka lbw for 14. The leg-spinner then got Oshada caught out in the 12th over as Sri Lanka slipped to 63-

4. Wickets kept tumbling with Sri Lanka's batsmen desperately trying to hit their way out of trouble. Head, a left-handed batsman and an occasional spinner, struck twice in his first over to claim Dinesh Chandimal - his first Test scalp - and Dhananjaya de Silva.

Swashbuckling opener David Warner brought an easy finish to formalities, hitting a four and a six off Ramesh Mendis to bring up the win in four balls. Earlier in the day, fast bowler Asitha Fernando took Australia's last two first-innings wickets with the tourists adding eight to their overnight 313, for a commanding lead of 109. Ramesh Mendis took four wickets while debutant Jeffrey Vandersay took two. "We bowled well in patches. I think Ramesh bowled really well but the others couldn't support him," said Karunaratne.

The skipper said it was difficult to bat against Lyon, who managed to turn the ball heavily. "We just wanted to put pressure on him, and play a couple of shots," he said. "The approach was really good, the intention was really good, but I



GALLE, Sri Lanka: Australia's David Warner plays a shot during the third day of first cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Australia at the Galle International Cricket Stadium. —AFP

think sometimes we took bad decisions." The third day started early after abysmal weather shortened play on Thursday, with strong winds collapsing a spectator stand. The second and final Test begins July 8 at the same venue. —AFP

## NHL Sharks fire Boughner as coach after missing playoffs

SAN FRANCISCO: Bob Boughner was fired on Friday as coach of the San Jose Sharks along with three of his assistants after the team missed the National Hockey League playoffs. The 51-year-old Canadian went 67-85 with 23 overtime losses after being promoted from assistant coach in December 2020 when the Sharks fired Peter DeBoer. The Sharks, also seeking a new general manager, had not missed the playoffs in three consecutive campaigns since the team took the ice in 1991.

"As we progress through our search for the next general manager of the Sharks ... it has become apparent that the organization is in the process of an evolution," Sharks assistant general manager Joe Will said. "The bottom line is we have missed the playoffs for the past three seasons, which isn't acceptable to our owner, our organization, or to our fans. As part of this evolution and evaluation, we felt it was in the best interest of the club to allow the next Sharks general manager to have full autonomy related to the make-up of the on-ice coaching staff moving ahead."



Bob Boughner

The firing leaves two NHL coaching vacancies after the Boston Bruins hired Jim Montgomery on Friday, leaving only the Sharks and Winnipeg Jets in search of head coaches ahead of Thursday's NHL Draft in Montreal. The Sharks went 32-37-13 this season, finishing 20 points behind the Nashville Predators for the last Western Conference playoff berth. Boughner is 147-147-45 overall as an NHL coach having had a two-season stint with the Florida Panthers from 2017-2019.

### Bruins ink Montgomery

Montgomery, 53, replaces Bruce Cassidy, who was fired June 7 after six seasons with the Bruins. Boston went 51-26-5 this season and qualified for the Stanley Cup playoffs in each of Cassidy's six seasons. The Bruins haven't gotten past the second round since reaching the 2019 final, where they lost to St. Louis.

"Jim has a winning history and throughout the interview process he conveyed his ability to connect with all types of players while also demanding that his teams play with structure," Bruins general manager Don Sweeney said. Montgomery spent the past two seasons as an assistant for the Blues, including helping them advance to the Western Conference second round this season, when they lost in six games to the eventual champion Colorado Avalanche. Montgomery coached the Dallas Stars for two seasons, going 61-43-10, before being fired in 2019 and later checking himself into an alcohol abuse recovery program. —AFP



BIRMINGHAM, England: England's Stuart Broad (L) unsuccessfully attempts to run out India's Mohammed Siraj on Day 2 of the fifth cricket Test match between England and India at Edgbaston. —AFP

## Ton-up Pant turns tables on England

BIRMINGHAM: Rishabh Pant gave Ben Stokes' England a taste of their own medicine with a superb counter-attacking century as India recovered from a top-order collapse to 338-7 at stumps on Friday's opening day of the COVID-delayed fifth Test. Recalled England great James Anderson and fledgling quick Matthew Potts reduced India to 98-5 at Edgbaston after Stokes won the toss under overcast skies.

Pant responded with a brilliant 146 off just 111 balls. The wicketkeeper hit 19 fours and four sixes while dominating a partnership of 222 with fellow left-hander Ravindra Jadeja, 83 not out at stumps. England came into this match following a 3-0 whitewash of Test world champions New Zealand, several times hitting themselves out of trouble in their first series under captain Stokes and red-ball coach Brendon McCullum. The aggressive approach has been dubbed 'Bazball' in honor of McCullum's nickname, but the 24-year-old Pant has played this way for pretty much his entire career. "In English conditions, especially where you know one bowler is pitching on the same spot, then it is important to disturb him," Pant told reporters. "As a player I give my 100 percent. Yes, I might play some different shots sometimes, but I try to play my percentage (strokes)."

### 'Under pressure'

England assistant coach Paul Collingwood paid tribute to Pant by saying: "He is certainly entertaining, doesn't take a backward step and he puts you under pressure." But having seen England reach three stiff targets against New Zealand, he added: "The guys are confident they can chase down no matter what in the fourth innings." Pant was especially severe on Jack Leach, swinging himself off his

feet while slogging a four and later driving the left-arm spinner one-handed for six.

Leach, fresh from a 10-wicket haul and the player award in the third Test against New Zealand, conceded an expensive 71 runs in nine wicketless overs. Part-time off-spinner Joe Root succeeded where the frontline bowlers had failed when Pant edged a drive to Zak Crawley at slip. It was the end of a double century partnership that lasted a mere 39 overs, with Pant's hundred his fifth in 31 Tests and third against England. Potts, who only made his international debut against New Zealand, had earlier added to his growing reputation by removing Virat Kohli for 11. The 23-year-old had dismissed Black Caps skipper Kane Williamson three times in four innings. On Friday, following a 90-minute rain delay, the paceman took two wickets for five runs in seven balls to reduce India to 71-4. Potts had Hanuma Vihari plumb lbw for 20 before he induced Kohli to play on. It is nearly three years since India's star batsman made the last of his 27 Test hundreds.

Friday's match should have been played in Manchester last September only to be postponed just hours before the scheduled start because of coronavirus concerns within the India camp. India, 2-1 up in the five-match contest, were without captain Rohit Sharma on Friday after he was ruled out with COVID-19. Fellow opener KL Rahul, who with Rohit scored heavily in England last year, had already been sidelined with a groin problem.

Both teams have experienced major upheaval since they last met, with Chris Silverwood and Root replaced as England's coach and Test captain respectively. Kohli stepped down as India captain in February, with paceman Jasprit Bumrah leading the side for the first time at Edgbaston, while Rahul Dravid succeeded the retiring Ravi Shastri as coach in November. By playing the game, albeit almost a year later than schedule, India are helping fill an estimated £40 million (\$48 million) hole in English cricket's finances. —AFP

## Players twist for glory at the table football WCup

NANTES: Dressed in athletic wear and using special hand grips for extra power, more than 1,000 players of table football are taking part in a World Cup this week in western France. At stake in the six-day competition are bragging rights for the champions, as well as an opportunity for organizers to press for the game to be recognized by more countries worldwide as a sport. Traditionally played in bars or outdoors, and often accompanied with alcohol, cigarettes and shouting, table football is usually seen as a bit of fun.

But the World Cup in the city of Nantes has brought together the most dedicated fans from around the globe who view it as more than light entertainment between friends. "It's a wonderful competition, but it's not just a race for the medals," Farid Lounas, the head of the France-based International Table Soccer Federation, told AFP. "The main objective is to institutionalize this discipline which brings people together and which, by only needing a table, transcends social class," he added.

Many players have flown long distances to be present from countries as diverse as Japan, Iran and the United States. "We came at our own expense. We have no support, neither from the authorities nor from anyone. We manage as we can," said Jules Epotie, 42, a sports manager from Cameroon in West Africa. China, Iran, Somalia, Switzerland, Armenia and latterly Italy recognise table football as a sport. But France - the home of the game, according to one theory on its origins - has declined several requests to give it sporting status which would open up new funding and facilities.

### Livestreamed

Not everyone is bothered, however, with veteran French player Georges Gomes saying he enjoyed the biennial competition mostly as a social event. "There is absolutely nothing to gain in terms of money, material or anything else. There are only titles," he told AFP. "But above all, it's the pleasure of being present and enjoying a social moment, meeting people from different nations."

The competition is being played in a cavernous sports hall on an island in the centre of Nantes, where spectators are invited to wander around the tables to watch the games - because seeing the small ball from the stands is impossible. Another problem is the huge variation in the rules for playing between and within countries, with the federation authoring a 50-page booklet that serves as the final word in case of disputes. —AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075

Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265

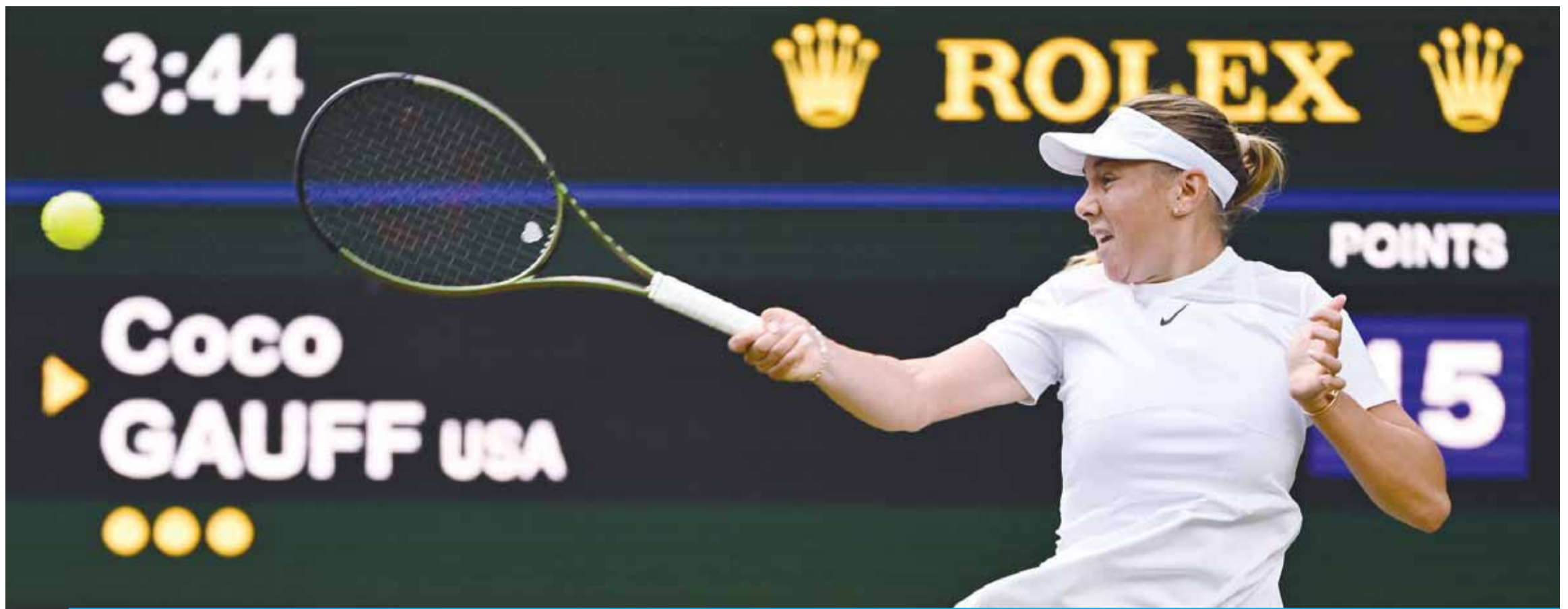
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## 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, United Kingdom: US player Amanda Anisimova returns the ball to US player Coco Gauff during their women's singles tennis match on the sixth day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on July 2, 2022. —AFP

## Tomljanovic reaches Wimbledon last 16

### Anisimova beats US rival Gauff to reach fourth round

LONDON: Ajla Tomljanovic reached the Wimbledon last 16 on Saturday—a surprise for her father, who only booked her into tournament accommodation until after the second round. Despite making the quarter-finals last year, Ratko Tomljanovic had only reserved their nearby house until Friday.

"I was like, you thought I'd lose second round," said Tomljanovic. "At least book it till like Sunday. So it's a good problem to have. I'm not really satisfied being in the third round and then moving houses."

The 29-year-old Australian said finding a new place was a headache. "The problem was it's so hard to find something. London is packed, and I didn't want to stay an hour away. He didn't take it well. I gave him a lot of grief yesterday." Tomljanovic managed to find a hotel near the All England Club on Friday.

With that settled, she was able to seal a 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 win over Czech 13th seed and 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejickova. However, there was more bad news from Ratko on Saturday. "Today when I finished, he's like, 'Oh, I have to book again'. I was, like, 'you're kidding me'."

"He wasn't kidding but he managed to book the same hotel, so I have a room probably until Tuesday. "But I don't care. I said, even if someone is joining me in my room, I'm not leaving this hotel." Next up for the world number 44 is a last-16 clash against either world number one Iga Swiatek or French veteran Alize Cornet.

She says her father will keep booking her flights and hotels as he has done throughout her career even if his explanation for the hotel blunder left her bamboozled. "He's like, 'Ajla, hungry rats swim the fastest', whatever

that means," she added. "I'm like, 'I'm not a rat and I'm not hungry. I just want my house from the beginning till the end, or maybe you should just believe in me a little more.'"

Earlier, Amanda Anisimova came from behind to beat 11th seed Coco Gauff 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 6-1 in an all-American clash on Wimbledon's Centre Court on Saturday. French Open finalist Gauff took the first set after a tie-break but was broken three times in the second set as the 20th seed levelled the match.

A break in the fourth game of the decider put Anisimova in the box seat and she swept into a 5-1 lead with another break. The 20-year-old served out to love to set up a fourth-round match against Serena Williams's conqueror Harmony Tan, who defeated British wild card Katie Boulter earlier on Saturday. —AFP

### Wimbledon, Tour, cricket and rugby find COVID still in the air

PARIS: As fans again fill stadiums this summer, a string of COVID-19 cases in major events suggest it is too early to cheer pandemic-free sport. After being cancelled in 2020 and requiring spectators to test last year, this year's Wimbledon seemed to signal a return to sunnier days as the United Kingdom relaxed its pandemic rules.

Then 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini, 2017 finalist Marin Cilic and Spanish 17th seed Roberto Bautista Agut withdrew. They had all tested themselves and owned up to their positive results. "We paid the price, we ate our black bread with a year of bubbles and tests. We all got vaccinated," said tennis player Alize Cornet before adding: "COVID is part of our lives now."

British player Liam Broady suggested less well-off competitors might think twice about disqualifying themselves. "At the end of the day, if you have got a bit of a cold, you play the main draw of Wimbledon for £50,000 and a chance at more. I'm not sure some of the lower-ranked guys are going to, scout's honour, take themselves away and do a COVID test," Broady said.

The Women's Euros which kick off on July 6 in England are also relying on honesty. France coach Corinne Diacre said her team would do what European governing body UEFA asked "which is not much".

"The only constraint...imposed on us by UEFA, will be to wear a FFP2 mask when we arrive at the stadium and in the changing rooms," she said. Adding that the squad would take the masks off "once we are among ourselves." "We will have to take them off anyway to play," she said.

Also in the UK, the rearranged England-India cricket Test, cancelled last year because of fears of an outbreak in the Indian camp, started Friday without visiting captain Rohit Sharma and home wicket-keeper Ben Foakes, both recovering from COVID.

Foakes was forced out after feeling ill and testing positive halfway through England's last Test with New Zealand. The same thing happened in Sri Lanka on Friday as all-rounder Angelo Mathews went into isolation before the third day of a Test with Australia. The world swimming championships in Budapest is relying on self-testing by individuals or teams.

#### 'COVID is everywhere'

A few days before the Tour de France started on Friday, the International Cycling Union (UCI) decided to reintroduce tests. They acted after some 30 riders were forced out of the Tour of Switzerland which ended on June 21 and several cases were detected just before the Tour.

Yet even if a rider tests positive, team doctors, the Tour and the UCI medical director, will discuss the case before deciding whether to remove him from the peloton. In an event where fans crowd the roadside, Tour boss Christian Prudhomme has asked riders to "refuse selfies and autographs".

Teams for two of the weekend's opening summer rugby union internationals have been reshaped by COVID. The French rugby team faced tougher protocols in Japan. The squad had to undergo three days of quarantine and tests after arriving.

"Unfortunately, we're used to this," fly-half Antoine Hastoy told a press conference. "We've been living with it for over two years. We're doing our best not to let the virus spread through our ranks." Second row Thomas Lavault said the squad was trying to balance team spirit with caution. —AFP

### USA, Dominican Republic earn 2024 Olympic berths

SAN PEDRO SULA: The United States beat Honduras 3-0 in the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Under-20 Championship on Friday to secure a berth in the 2024 Paris Olympic football tournament. The Dominican Republic also punched their ticket to Paris, beating Guatemala 4-2 in a penalty shootout after the teams played to a 2-2 draw.

For the Dominican Republic it will be a first appearance in the Olympics, while the United States will return to the Games for the first time since 2008. The USA took control early, with goals from Paxten Aaronson in the third minute, Alejandro Alvarado in the 22nd and Quinn Sullivan in the 43rd giving them a 3-0 lead. They made it stand up against a determined Honduras side, who saw Jefryn Macias sent off in the 87th minute.

In the first semi-final, Guatemala grabbed a 2-0 lead with a goal from Arquimides Ordonez in the 23rd minute and an own-goal from Dominican defender Sebastian Manon in the 29th. The Dominican Republic scored two goals in three minutes in the second half as Guillermo De Pena struck in the 62nd and Edison Azcona made it 2-2 in the 64th. After neither team could find a decider through extra time, it went to the shootout in which Adhony Maria converted the winning shot. —AFP



SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras: US players celebrate after winning their Concacaf U-20 World Cup semifinal football match against Honduras at the General Francisco Morazan stadium in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. —AFP

### NBA moves heat up as Jazz 'trade' center Gobert to T'Wolves

NEW YORK: The Utah Jazz agreed to trade star center Rudy Gobert to Minnesota. ESPN reported Friday amid a welter of free agency deals that included Zach LaVine's \$215-million decision to stay with the Chicago Bulls. ESPN said France's Gobert, a three-time Defensive Player of the Year, would head to Minnesota in exchange for Malik Beasley, Patrick Beverley, Jarred Vanderbilt, No. 22 draft pick Walker Kessler and four first-round NBA Draft picks.

The 30-year-old Gobert has spent all nine of his NBA seasons with Utah, where he has helped the Jazz reach the playoffs for six straight years. Last season, Gobert averaged 15.6 points per game, a league-leading 14.7 rebounds and 2.1 blocks. In Minnesota, the player dubbed the "Stifle Tower" will be teaming with another star big man in Karl-Anthony Towns, who has reportedly agreed to a four-year, \$224 million extension.

Earlier Friday, LaVine's agents announced the coveted free agent had agreed to a five-year max-

imum deal worth \$215 million to remain with the Bulls. Klutch Sports Group also announced that Jusuf Nurkic has agreed to a four-year contract worth \$70 million to stay with the Portland Trail Blazers and John Wall has agreed to a two-year deal worth \$13.2 million to play for the Los Angeles Clippers. The deals come on the first full day of NBA free agency for the 2022-23 campaign. Most deals are announced by agents or reports but no actual NBA contracts can be signed before Wednesday.

LaVine, 27, helped last year's US Olympic team bring home Tokyo gold and then completed a second straight NBA All-Star campaign with 24.4 points, 4.6 rebounds and 4.5 assists a game over 67 contests for the Bulls. After missing the playoffs for four consecutive seasons, Chicago went 46-36 and made the post-season, losing to Milwaukee in the first round. LaVine underwent left knee surgery in May.

Bosnian big-man Nurkic, 27, has spent the past six seasons with Portland after playing his first three NBA campaigns for Denver. Nurkic averaged 15.0 points, a career-high 11.1 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 1.1 steals a game for the Trail Blazers last season. Portland went 27-55 and missed the playoffs for the first time since 2013. Wall, a 31-year-old US guard taken first in the 2010 NBA Draft by Washington, has averaged 19.1 points, 9.1 assists and 4.3 rebounds a game over nine seasons with

the Wizards and last season in Houston.

#### Booker, Morant stay put

Other reported deals struck in the first hours of NBA free agency have center Mitchell Robinson staying with the New York Knicks, according to ESPN and the New York Daily News, on a four-year deal worth \$60 million while Gary Payton II joins Portland on a three-year deal for \$28 million, also according to ESPN. Spanish guard Ricky Rubio, 31, has reportedly reached a deal on a three-year contract worth \$18 million with the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The free agency negotiating period had barely opened on Thursday when it was reported that two-time reigning MVP Nikola Jokic planned to sign a five-year \$270 million extension with the Denver Nuggets - the largest contract in NBA history. Devin Booker has reportedly agreed to a four-year, \$224 million deal to stay in Phoenix while young Memphis star Ja Morant is expected to ink a five-year extension worth \$193 million. —AFP



Rudy Gobert