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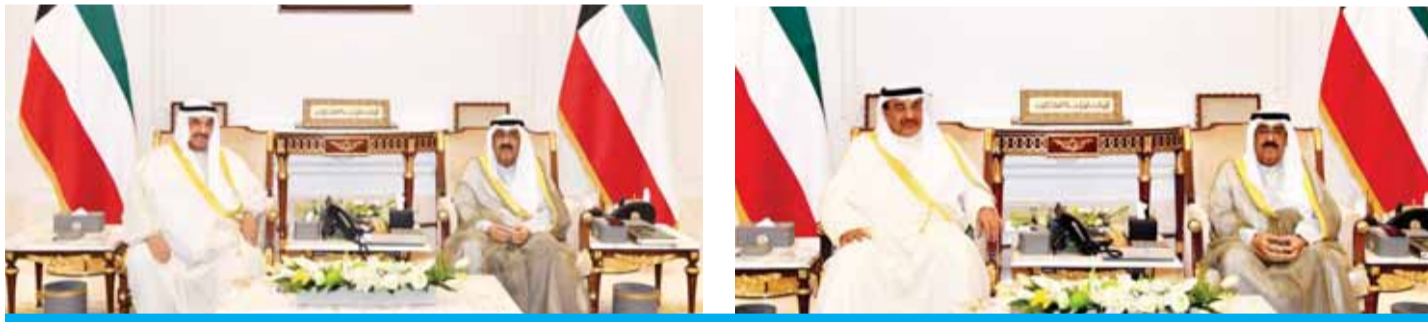


16 Qatar's 'majlis' gamers target eSports big leagues



Crown Prince consults with top officials on new Cabinet

Customary consultations held before new premier is named to form govt



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, former speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, former prime minister HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on July 5, 2022. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held talks on Tuesday with current and former National Assembly speakers and prime ministers as part of customary consultations before naming a new premier. HH the Crown Prince met National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and former speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun. He also met HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, who has resigned, and ex-premier HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He also held phone talks with former premier HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, who is outside the country.

Under the Kuwaiti constitution, HH the Amir or his deputy should hold consultations with current and former speakers and premiers before naming a personality to form a new Cabinet. Sheikh Sabah submitted his

resignation in early April following a grilling by opposition MPs and after 26 lawmakers, two more than the required quorum, said they will support a motion to declare non-cooperation with the premier.

The resignation was accepted by HH the Amir and Sheikh Sabah and the Cabinet were asked to continue as a caretaker government to run emergency matters. In a national speech last month, HH the Amir announced plans to dissolve the National Assembly and call for fresh polls to end ongoing political disputes between the government and opposition MPs that had effectively paralyzed the functioning of the government and the Assembly for months.

Forming a new Cabinet is important to issue the Amir's decree dissolving the Assembly. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal can rename Sheikh Sabah to form a new Cabinet or can name a new personality to form the government.

News in brief

Kuwaiti women get work exemptions

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower has decided to exclude Kuwaiti women from a ban on working in certain fields, including in the oil sector, to benefit from their skills. The board of PAM issued a decision to exempt supervisory, management, follow-up and operational roles that Kuwaiti women can perform as they do not require strenuous physical efforts.

Euro hits 20-yr low against dollar

LONDON: The European single currency sank Tuesday to its lowest level against the dollar since 2002 as data pointed to a growing recession risk in the eurozone. Just before 0900 GMT, the shared eurozone unit tumbled to \$1.0306, threatening a push towards dollar parity for the first time since the euro's creation in 1999. — AFP

Philippine schools to fully reopen

MANILA: The Philippines will fully reopen all schools in November for the first time in more than two years, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said Tuesday, as experts warn of a growing education crisis sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The country is one of the last to resume full-time in-person classes since the pandemic began, with schools shuttered in March 2020 in tandem with lengthy lockdowns. — AFP

Monkeypox cases top 5,000

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said on Tuesday that 5,322 laboratory-confirmed cases of monkeypox had been reported to it in the current outbreak, 85 percent of which are in Europe. The number has increased by 56 percent in eight days. The previous figure given by the WHO, for the period up to June 22, was 3,413 cases. — AFP

Scientific Center successfully breeds sand tiger sharks

KUWAIT: The Scientific Center Kuwait (TSCCK) announced a major global scientific achievement with the successful breeding of the endangered sand tiger shark and the successful care of the newborn sharks - under the umbrella of a carefully mapped out strategy to ensure their continued health and wellbeing. A first of its kind achievement for the center, this new milestone sets TSCCK apart as one of a few centers globally to have successfully bred this endangered species.

To celebrate the scientific feat, TSCCK held a press conference on Tuesday, where attendees were able to

see the baby sharks for themselves, who have now become part of an impressive group of sand tiger sharks that the center has cared for for more than 20 years - becoming one of the most popular marine creatures at TSCCK.

The famed sand tiger shark Bibi, who is estimated to be more than 20 years old herself, gave birth to the new baby sand tiger sharks, one male and one female, on Jan 23, 2022, at TSCCK Aquarium. The baby sharks were named Bader and Badriya, a choice made by the public via a vote held on TSCCK's Instagram account. (See Page 2)



KUWAIT: Mohammad Al-Sanousi, assistant manager and public relations and sales officer at the Scientific Centre, points at six-month-old sand tiger sharks Bader and Badriya as they swim in a tank at the facility on July 5, 2022. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait, Iran sign agreement to fight sandstorms

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Environment Public Authority signed an agreement with Iran's Department of Environment to cooperate on combating sand and dust storms affecting the region and find appropriate solutions. Director General of EPA Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabah said the cooperation agreement is directed at finding the source of the sand and dust storms in the region.

Sheikh Abdullah explained in his statement that these storms originate far from the area but negatively affect people in the region, "so we are working with specialists to establish more green spaces". He said Kuwait seeks to establish targeted environmental projects and hold joint studies and research with the countries of the region, in addition to exchange experiences and benefit from the experiences of others in this field.

Ali Salajeh, Assistant to the Iranian President and Head of the Department of Environment, said "cooperation in a wide variety of fields will be our



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and Iranian officials sign an agreement to combat sandstorms on July 5, 2022. — KUNA

focus as we consider what we can do to redirect these environmentally devastating storms". Iran has begun research on this topic and is ready to present the results of its analyses to Kuwait for better collaborative efforts between both countries, he added.

Public buildings in several Iranian provinces were closed Tuesday due to pollution unleashed by a sandstorm, local media said. The closures applied to the southwestern province of Khuzestan, the central province of Isfahan, North Khorasan in the northeast and Kerman in the southeast, state television said.

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Saudi hands out billions, Makkah sees hajj boom

RIYADH/MAKKAH: Saudi Arabia announced Monday it was disbursing billions of dollars directly to citizens to ease the effects of inflation amid growing online expressions of frustration over rising prices. "A generous royal order was issued approving the allocation of financial support in the amount of 20 billion riyals (around \$5.3 billion) to face the repercussions of rising prices globally," the official Saudi Press Agency reported, attributing the decision to King Salman. Roughly half that amount would come via direct cash transfers to social security beneficiaries.

Earlier on Monday, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "stressed the need to take into account the neediest citizens in the face of international developments that resulted in rising costs of some basic needs", a separate SPA report said. Chairing a meeting of the kingdom's economic affairs council, Prince Mohammed reportedly made the point that government offices must respond to global supply

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Local

Kuwait's Scientific Center introduces new sand tiger baby sharks 'Bader' and 'Badriya'

One of few centers globally to successfully breed the endangered species

KUWAIT: The Scientific Center (TSCK), one of the centers of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), announced a major global scientific achievement, with the successful breeding of the endangered sand tiger shark and the successful care of the newborn sharks - under the umbrella of a carefully mapped out strategy to ensure their continued health and wellbeing. A first of its kind achievement for the center, this new milestone sets TSCK apart as one of a few centers globally to have successfully bred this endangered species. To celebrate the scientific feat, TSCK held a press conference on Tuesday in the presence of a number of representatives of major institutions, entities, and key figures in the world of environmental sciences, preservation, biodiversity and sustainability. At the conference, the attendees were able to see the baby sharks for themselves, who have now become part of the impressive group of

Department and their expertise, not to mention the excellent management of the scientific center," Ablani said.

Ablani further noted: "The biggest challenge for the Scientific Center was to safeguard the lives of the young sharks after their birth, as the fact is that sand tiger sharks babies need extreme care to be able to survive. Therefore, we find it very difficult to reproduce this breed of sharks, and the survival of this type of sharks is considered rare, and very successful models are few and far in between."

"Once the birth took place safely, the Aquarium team, led by Global Consultant Andrew Clarke, rushed the youngsters out of the main tank in time, where they were transferred to the nursery ponds to ensure their safety - and where they were closely monitored for all aspects, especially their feeding. The team then performed a CT scan of the youngsters to ensure their health. The team also put in place a strategy to take care of the newborns and ensure their proper growth, by providing the right amount of food they need at the right time."

About Bader and Badriya's condition, Ablani said: "The baby sharks are in excellent health. Each one of them weighed about 3.5 kg at birth and began to feed about five days after birth, which is the norm for this type of shark given that they are born with egg yolks and the remains of the fetuses they ate during the gestation period in their stomachs. At the age of four months, the youngsters weighed about 9.5 kg and reached a length of about 130 cm. Currently the Center's specialized staff carefully weighs the amount of food they are fed, to be able to track how much each of them consumes, and we use this information to determine their growth rates. We also collect morphometric measurements (weight and height) monthly."

Ablani continued: "These sharks have great ecological importance and value in maintaining the marine bio-balance, as well as scientific value in terms of what they mean for the field of scientific research. With this information, we will learn more about sand tiger sharks, and will help other facilities around the world that struggle to breed and nurture them. We can also use this information to better understand their natural history and help provide vital information about some of the environmental threats to which these animal populations are exposed to in nature - such as poaching, bycatch, and other threats, which are thankfully in decline. Our daily observations also give us insight into their natural and reactive behaviors."

Impressive achievement

Meanwhile, Rana Al-Nibari, TSCK's General Manager, said: "We are proud of this impressive achievement, which confirms our full commitment to the environment and our eagerness to do everything possible to achieve our mission and vision of contributing to the preservation and sustainability of the environment. This is not simply through awareness efforts, but by playing an active and effective role in driving action and fostering a culture of preservation. Our success in breeding sand tiger sharks is attributable to our high-quality facili-



KUWAIT: Sand tiger sharks 'Bader' and 'Badriya' swim in a fish tank at The Scientific Center on Tuesday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Dr. Salem Al-Ablani, biologist and former member of the TSCK Board of Directors, speaks during the press conference.



Rana Al-Nibari, TSCK's General Manager, addresses the conference.

ties, the experience of our specialized staff and our world class consultants."

The Scientific Center continues to contribute scientific information that is set to help other aquarium centers around the world to preserve the survival of sand tiger sharks, which are one of the species listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Nibari further added: "We are pleased to share our experience with all aquarium centers in the world to help contribute to saving these sharks from extinction and ensure their populations sustainability. We also hope to continue to produce later generations of them in the Scientific Center's Aquarium."

It is worth mentioning that, since opening its doors in 2000, the Scientific Center has been relentless in its efforts towards environmental and wildlife preservation. The Center has continued to develop its facilities over the course of the past

22 years, ensuring they are maintained in accordance with the highest possible international standards, which has led TSCK to obtain accreditation by the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA). To date, the center remains among a select handful that have obtained this accreditation in the Arab world, due to the high standards required by the association to obtain this particular honor. This is especially important as this accreditation allows international centers to benefit from and exchange the necessary experiences that would contribute to preserving the environment and sustaining the lives of animals.

At the conclusion of the conference, Nibari thanked all the attendees and invited shark lovers and those interested in conservation issues to come to the Mijbil Al-Mutawa Aquarium to watch the newborns, Bader and Badriya, during its annual Shark Week event, which takes place this year during the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

Breakthrough in sand tiger shark conservation efforts

sand tiger sharks that the Center has cared for now for more than 20 years - becoming one of the most popular marine creatures at TSCK.

The famed sand tiger shark Bibi, who is estimated to be more than 20 years old herself, gave birth to the new baby sand tiger sharks, one male and one female, on January 23, 2022, at TSCK Aquarium. The baby sharks were named Bader and Badriya, a choice made by the public via a vote held on TSCK's Instagram account.

Suitable environment

Dr. Salem Al-Ablani, a biologist and a former member of the TSCK Board of Directors, said that over the course of 22 years, the Scientific Center was able to provide and maintain a suitable environment for sand tiger sharks that enabled them to reproduce naturally and continuously without any artificial interference during those years. According to scientific studies, this type of shark is one of the rarest species that breeds in aquariums, due to various stressors such as crowding, diet, and water temperature. The gestation period of females ranges from 12 to 14 months, and it is difficult to maintain her pregnancy for this length of time under all the factors inside an aquarium's environment. The successful birth of two baby sharks is a clear indication of the good conditions that characterize TSCK's aquarium's environment. The birth of healthy youngsters also indicates that the nutritional value of the sharks' diet is very high, "which is reflected very positively on the excellent breeding practices of the staff of the Marine and Wildlife

Kuwait Fire Force, symbol of dedication, sacrifice

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) and its members have become a symbol of sacrifice and dedication through efforts to protect lives and fend off dangers. No matter what the situation was whether a ferocious fire or a horrific car accident, KFF teams came to the rescue of people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Locally, the KFF have been very active in stopping fires and dealing with accidents, earning appreciation from the masses. Speaking to KUNA on KFF operations, head of public relations and media at the force Colonel Mohammad Al-Ghareeb affirmed that the staff was always ready for any emergency throughout the year, saying that there was no season for the staff to relax because catastrophe could hit at anytime and anywhere. He noted that any incident could occur at any given time, revealing that the majority of fire incidents occurred due to an electric short from appliances.

Since the start of this year, fire incidents have decreased by eight percent in residential areas, Ghareeb indicated, affirming that the KFF, along with the help of the people and society in general, were eager to increase that percentage. He stressed that prevention and preparation was key in avoiding any tragedy, saying that each facility, building, or house should be equipped with fire extinguishers and necessary tools in case of an emergency. In the summer season and school break, accidents tend to occur more frequently, he said, calling on people to be vigilant and stop any mishaps from the get-go. Ghareeb stressed that the KFF was very eager to provide lectures on how to avoid accidents, saying this was part of its duty to society.

The KFF tackled several fires in recent years namely



KUWAIT: Firefighters battle a blaze in Kuwait.

the one in Mubarakiya traditional market and bazaar, which ate up a large part of the historical sites in that area. Since the beginning of the year, KFF handled several other fires, which engulfed areas between 1,000 to 3,000 square meters in several locations in the country. During the operations, several KFF members were slightly wounded, but their efforts managed to prevent tragedies at a wider scale.

The KFF also took part in international fire prevention events and conferences to increase its knowledge and help to battle any outbreaks. In addition to its firefighting duties, the KFF also issues permits and warning tickets for violators. While the KFF does best on a national level, the force had been providing assistance abroad. In 2021, KFF lent a hand to Turkey as well as Greece to fend off forest fires, sending fire fighters and vehicle to assist in the job of saving human lives. The Kuwaiti leadership also instructed the KFF to donate machinery to Algeria, Tunisia, and elsewhere in a gesture of solidarity and aid. — KUNA



A fire engine displayed to the public during an exhibition near Kuwait Towers.



Kuwait Fire Force marine rescue boats.



Kuwaiti firemen participate in battling forest fires in Turkey. — KUNA photos

ISESCO prompt Kuwait's Naif Palace as an Islamic Heritage spot

RABAT: ISESCO decided to apt Kuwait's Naif Palace as an Islamic Heritage Site during the Heritage Committee's 10th session on the Islamic World. Dr. Walid Al-Saif, advisor to secretary-general of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), said that prompting Naif Palace amongst ISESCO's Heritage index is of "great importance historically, as it is one of the most significant Islamic castles." He also pointed out the historical, political, and cultural relevance of the place, as well as its architectural construct that prompt the place for such an addition to ISESCO's heritage index. The Palace covers an

area of 28,882 square meters, consisting of 214 rooms that were used for storing weapons and artillery while other rooms were used to host guards and soldiers, as the palace is located near the city walls and main gate. It's a marvel of Kuwait's first quarter of the 20 century's antiquities, with wide open courtyards and large hand-crafted wooden doors in addition to the Islamic style arches surrounding the internal design of the building.

Ramadan is when this palace is publicly significant as it is used for the firing of the iftar cannon that is a tradition in Kuwait ever since the

city walls were erected. "Standing in the middle of the courtyard, you can see the long liwan from both the northern and eastern side with arches and columns of Islamic architectural design." In 1950, the Palace became headquarters of Public Security Directorate to serve as a place to settle issues, difference, as well as unlawful cases, under the auspices of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabah. The decision finally came following two days of sanctioned meetings as the committee closely examined the historical relevance of the palace. — KUNA



The iftar cannon outside the Naif Palace in Ramadan.

Local

Pakistani-German bike traveler speaks of 'wonderful time' spent in Kuwait

Kuwait a multicultural country with extremely friendly people: Abrar Hassan



Pakistani-German biker and vlogger Abrar Hassan poses for a picture in front of Kuwait Towers.



Abrar Hassan arrives at the Kuwaiti border.



Abrar Hassan in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Traveling to more than 80 countries, some of them on a bike, has been a dream come true for Pakistani-German biker and vlogger Abrar Hassan. He recently completed a long journey covering some 9,000 km on his motorcycle from Germany to the Saudi holy city of Makkah, passing through five countries in 50 days, including Kuwait.

From being afraid to ride a motorcycle to becoming a motorcycle traveler, Hassan took Kuwait Times on his journey to the world, telling the story of his beginnings and how he became a famous adventurer with his bike.

Kuwait Times: Tell us more about yourself.

Abrar Hassan: I am Abrar Hassan, a Pakistani-German traveler. I am an aerospace engineer by profession and have been working in the automobile industry for the past 12 years.

KT: How and when did you start traveling?

Hassan: I've been traveling since 2008, but started traveling on a bike from 2020. I couldn't continue doing what I was planning due to COVID restrictions, and had to cut short my trip and go back to Germany to continue my job.

KT: How many countries have you visited so far?

Hassan: I have visited probably more than 80 countries, with 16 countries on motorcycle.

KT: How was your experience in Kuwait? Where did you go?

Hassan: I had a great time in Kuwait. Unfortunately, I only spent a few days there as I wanted to be in Madinah for the start of Ramadan. But the time I spent in Kuwait was wonderful with great memories, and I wish to go back to explore Kuwait properly.

KT: What did you learn about Kuwaiti culture?

Hassan: The people are extremely friendly and welcoming. It is a multicultural country and people from different backgrounds living there is something unique.

KT: You are touring countries on a low-budget trip. How does this work?

Hassan: Well, it is hard to manage a budget, especially in European and Middle Eastern countries, but I was comfortably traveling within my budget of \$50 a day in Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. The hotels are probably the biggest issue for the budget, but by camping, we can reduce the cost.

KT: Why did you choose to travel on a motorbike? What challenges do you face?

Patience, respect for others among lessons learned from trip

Hassan: I wanted to do something out of my comfort zone, so I learned to ride a bike in 2019 and 2020, then left home to travel the world. It was probably the best decision I ever made, even though every day is a challenge. Often, border crossings or issues with the bike make it difficult, but it is a learning experience that makes travel even more memorable.

KT: How did the pandemic affect your travels? Where did you stay?

Hassan: I had planned to travel to Mongolia, but due to COVID, I couldn't go further than Iran and had to get special permission to even enter Pakistan, where I stayed for a few months. But I could travel in Pakistan, and had a great time riding in probably the most beautiful mountains in the world with not many tourists and cheap accommodation options.

KT: Tell us more about your trip from Germany to Pakistan. How was it?

Hassan: It was challenging, a great learning experience, and full of memories. I was probably also lucky that most tourist places, hotels, etc were empty due to the pandemic, which made it a lot easier for me to explore.

KT: What did your childhood look like? Did you imagine yourself as a motorbike traveler?

Hassan: I'm from a small village and it had always been a dream to travel, but we couldn't afford to go even on family holidays. After graduation, a well-paid job in Germany helped me to save money to fulfill my dream of traveling. I was always afraid of bikes, but my fear led me to learn to ride one to get out of my comfort zone and have an adventure every day I'm on the road.

KT: What is the scariest moment you witnessed during your journey?

Hassan: The scariest moment was riding off-road in Turkey (Bayburt to Trabzon on the D915) in bad weather with no visibility in the mountainous area with a huge drop on one side. The other time was while crossing the border from Iran to Pakistan, when I faced a very uncomfortable interrogation to assure Iranian authorities that I hadn't filmed anything illegal there.

KT: How do you plan for your travel? What do you prepare?

Hassan: I do spend a lot of time planning my travel and go through blogs, YouTube, and news about the areas I will visit to get as much information as possible. I mainly prepare for the route and things I should see along the way, so I can be well prepared to share them with my audience. I spend some time learning the history, culture and geography of the areas.

KT: Tell our readers about the lessons learned from your journey and how someone can start their trip on a motorbike.

Hassan: There are a lot of things I have learned and changes I have seen in myself, especially the patience to deal with difficult moments, respect for other cultures and people, being friendly and not judging others.



KUWAIT: Kuwait University Director Dr Yusef Al-Roumi, Acting Dean of Admissions and Registration Dr Mishal Al-Gharabally, and Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeh at Zain's booth.

ments and divisions, and answered questions and inquiries from visitors. Zain is always eager to participate in career fairs all year round as part of its Human Resources strategy, which closely focuses on supporting the education sector hand in hand with various universities, colleges, and educational institutions in Kuwait (both public and private), with the aim of providing stu-

dents and graduates with career opportunities in the private sector. Zain is committed to playing an active role in the investment in the human capital of Kuwait. The company seeks to provide young and eager Kuwaitis with job opportunities that allow them to apply their practical skills, achieve their potential, and fully develop their capabilities.

the "compensation of educational loss" project under the theme "restrengthening education for all". Dr Yaqoub said the program is prepared to compensate students for what they lost during the pandemic according to scientific research and studies and training on basic skills including four main items, Arabic and English languages, mathematics and science for students from fourth to eighth grades. Dr Yaqoub said work at the 12 centers, two centers for each educational zone (for boys and girls), will start from Sunday, July 17, for four weeks at a rate of four classes per day from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon.

Zain sponsors Kuwait University career fair

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of Kuwait University's Human Capital Investment Exhibition and Career Fair. The event is organized by the Deanship of Admissions and Registration until 7 July at the main campus in Shuwaikh under the patronage of Kuwait University Director Dr Yusef Al-Roumi.

Zain took part in the event's inauguration ceremony, attended by Kuwait University Director Dr Yusef Al-Roumi, Acting Dean of Admissions and Registration Dr Mishal Al-Gharabally, and Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeh.

Kuwait University's Human Capital Investment Exhibition and Career Fair is being organized in conjunction with the issuing of the second semester's certificates. The event serves students and fresh graduates from all colleges and majors, featuring employers from both the public and private sectors.

Through its booth, Zain introduced students and graduates to its leading experience in the telecom sector, as well as its internal policy and wonderful workplace environment. The company also presented the available job vacancies, provided a detailed explanation of the nature of work at various depart-

Ministry prepares plan to tackle 'educational loss'

KUWAIT: Senior education ministry officials met Tuesday to discuss the operational plan for "educational loss", which is the term used to describe students' failure to obtain necessary learning and edu-

In my view

Re-engineering administrative operations

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi

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There is a need to reconsider regulations and financial and administrative structures in every facility or establishment, be it public or private, after the passing of sufficient time from the completed job, and clearly explain the positives and negatives. The idea here is general, but it applies to every job, whatever its size may be, because the difference will be in details, but the outlines are the same, and these are the existing principles for business general management.

The talk here will be about the general structure of the government, or the so-called resumption of the structural engineering of administrative operations, that is re-engineering the methods used in designing the structure by the highest government entity (office of the prime minister and ministers), as we notice through the distribution of responsibilities that duties given to ministers deal with them as if each of them is a super-human!

I will mention one example of the duties and responsibilities given to the education and higher education minister, as he has the following responsibilities:

- Kuwait University
- Public Authority for Applied Education and Training
- Secretariat General of the Higher Council of Private Universities
- National Center for Education Development
- National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance
- Kuwait Academy of Art
- Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research

Ask yourself: Can the minister manage all the above with professionalism, harmony and direct contact?

There are those who will say that the minister's responsibility is only political, and this is not realistic, and first we must define political responsibility according to this situation in particular and not a general definition. How can he be politically responsible about areas in which he does not have decision making abilities? Also, I will ignore how these entities were created, with some of them only good for being no more than a department in any administration. The interweaving of responsibilities and structural confusion is clear in the situation of these entities, some of whom are good for nothing.

Another question: Can any official really manage all these entities directly? Of course not! Daily correspondence, advisors' consultations and personal efforts may realistically not be enough. In addition, and here is an important factor, that this official does not have enough time for management on a daily basis. He may not stay in the ministry for more than a few months, and he may not find enough time to manage all these entities and its departments, as the minister has preoccupations, in meetings at the Cabinet and its committees, National Assembly and its committees, protocol meetings and official dinners.

So, this situation should end, and many entities that constitute a burden on the state and whose productivity is not equal with its allocations must be looked at seriously. The state suffers from slackness and obesity due to these lesions that are administratively harmful. There should be a quick mechanism to control these entities and trim them to their right size, and either remove non-productive or merge similar entities administratively. Meanwhile, productive entities should be developed further in a way that does not affect the general administrative system.

Local

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News in brief

Kuwait sends condolences over Chicago shooting

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its sympathies and solidarity to the United States following arbitrary shooting incident in Chicago, which killed and injured a number of people. The State of Kuwait gave its sincere condolences to the government and people of the US and to the families of the victims, wishing those injured a swift recovery.

Arab Journalists rejects 'manipulation'

CAIRO: The Federation of Arab Journalists on Tuesday condemned American examiners "definitive conclusion" regarding the origin of the bullet that killed Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. The federation said in a statement that the report aimed to absolve the Zionist entity from deliberately targeting and killing Abu Akleh. It added that the federation supported Palestinian stance, which proved that the Palestinian journalist was killed by a bullet fired by Zionist entity forces. They called on all media authorities around the world to achieve justice and conduct an impartial international investigation.

Kuwait oil price up to \$114.56 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up \$2.05 to \$114.56 per barrel on Monday as opposed to \$112.51 pb the previous day, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Tuesday. The price of the Brent crude at the global market rose \$2.26 to \$113.89 per barrel, the same with the West Texas Intermediate, which climbed by \$2.20 to \$110.63 pb.

Kuwait's Consumer Prices Index up 4.52% in May 2022

KUWAIT: The Consumers Price Index (CPI) increased in Kuwait by 4.52 percent in May 2022 on annual basis compared with the same period in 2021, said the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) on Tuesday. In a statement to the press, the CSB revealed that the CPI increased monthly to 124.8 by 0.16 percent, because of high prices of major groups in the movement of the indices. The statement provided the annual price movement for May 2022, saying that Food and Beverages increased by 8.23 percent from the numbers from May of 2021. It added that Cigarettes and Tabaco stood still with at 135.0 points. Clothing and Footwear prices increased by 6.37 percent, while housing services went up by 2.26 percent. The CSB revealed that Furnishing and Equipment Household maintenance went up by 2.27 percent, adding that Health increased by 1.78 percent. Transport increased by 4.90 percent, communication by 2.29 percent, recreation and culture by 3.88 percent, and Education by 18.95 percent, said the CSB. Restaurants and Hotels went up by 2.77 percent, Services and Miscellaneous goods at 3.21 percent. —KUNA

Mawashi ready for Eid Al-Adha

KUWAIT: Al-Mawashi Livestock Transport and Trading Company affirmed, on Tuesday, their readiness for Eid Al-Adha and welcomes people at their slaughterhouses directly after Eid prayers. Al-Mawashi CEO Osama Boodai told KUNA that they started taking orders from people who wish to sacrifice, through the phone or their smartphone application (Al-Mawashi), after Eid prayers and they will confirm the slaughter and delivery process completion via message. Boodai added that the prices of sheep start from 75 KD (\$244) for Australian sheep and 135 KD (\$440) for Al-Naimi sheep. He also added that Al-Asima slaughterhouse, affiliated to Al-Mashawi, would provide veterinarian to check the health of the livestock, adding the slaughtered livestock will be handed daily after eleven o'clock at Al-Rai. They also added that they will receive individuals during the morning shift and charities during the night shift, as well as a separate place will be designated for people who wish to slaughter more than five livestock. Al-Mawashi Livestock Transport and Trading Company, established in 1973, is a Kuwaiti company that provides livestock transports and considered the oldest livestock trading company in the region. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Pigeons drink water and feed on breadcrumbs left on the side of a road in Kuwait. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Kuwait-based charity organizes Syrian migrant medical camp



BEIRUT: Kuwaiti medical team members conduct a small operation on a Syrian migrant in northern Lebanon.



Kuwaiti medical team members perform an operation on a patient in Lebanon. —KUNA photos

BEIRUT: The Kuwait-based Global Charity Association for Development "Tanmeia" has set up a medical camp in Tripoli, northern Lebanon to conduct small operations for Syrian migrants and needy Lebanese there. Delegation chief Hussain Al-Saeed told the press that the operation began implementation on June 29th through Kuwait

Airways and help from the Kuwaiti embassy, in association with Lebanon's Grass Association. In the past days, medical procedures and supply demands were met as part of the campaign, while 60 cases at Tripoli's Hospital Dar Al-Shifa were also being treated for eye operations and major as well as minor surgeries. From Al-Bahar eye-care

Hospital in Kuwait, Dr Abdul-Wahab Al-Kandari stated to the press that in collaboration between Kuwait and Lebanon, we were able to serve our patients and figured out that "blue water" Glaucoma cases were quite pervasive and urgently in need of operations which was inaccessible to many. —KUNA

KRCS honors outstanding students of impoverished families

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said on Monday they were always seeking to build the human being to achieve development goals and community needs. Sayer's remarks came in a speech during a ceremony honoring outstanding students of impoverished families, and who are registered in KRCS. Sayer reassured that the goals for the service of humanity, development, and growth are in line with Kuwait's strategy, which pays great attention to the development of the individual and society through human capabilities. Sayer added that the goal of honoring the outstanding is to celebrate and congratulate students with their parents having confidence in their abilities and capabilities to achieve what they dream of and rise on the ladder of success and excellence. Sayer, also honoring Maha Al-Barjas, the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for the Asia and Pacific region. —KUNA





French man gets life for killing student

Sudan anti-coup protests hold firm, sceptical of army promises



KHARKIV, Ukraine: A woman holding a dog stands by a huge crater made from the hit of a rocket close to the destroyed school building in Kharkiv. — AFP

Fighting rages in eastern Ukraine

Russia targets Kharkiv with 'high-precision' weapons killing 150 Ukrainian servicemen

SLOVIANSK, Ukraine: Fighting raged Tuesday in and around Ukraine's eastern Donbas region as Russian troops tried to build on recent battlefield gains, while NATO pressed ahead with Finland and Sweden's historic membership bids. With the war now well into its fifth month, Kyiv's allies committed Tuesday to support Ukraine through what is expected to be a long and expensive recovery, and agreed on the need for broad reforms to boost transparency and battle corruption.

The talks in Switzerland heard that the rebuilding of war-shattered Ukraine is estimated to cost at least \$750 billion. But on the battlefield the conflict continued to wreak devastation, with Ukraine's presidency reporting Russian shelling and missile strikes in several regions overnight. In Moscow, the defence ministry reported that over the past 24 hours, Russian forces have targeted the city of Kharkiv with "high-precision" weapons killing up to 150 Ukrainian servicemen.

The attack followed shelling in Donetsk, which Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday ordered his troops to continue assaulting as they bid to take total control of the Donbas.

In Brussels, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg announced the process to ratify Sweden and Finland as

the newest members of the military alliance had formally launched. "With 32 nations around the table, we will be even stronger and our people will be even safer as we face the biggest security crisis in decades," he said in a joint press statement with the Swedish and Finnish foreign ministers.

Sweden and Finland both announced their intention to drop decades of military non-alignment status and become part of NATO in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

'Fighting continues'

After abandoning its initial war aim of capturing Kyiv following tough Ukrainian resistance, Russia has focused its efforts on securing control of the Donetsk and Lugansk areas which make up the Donbas region.

Ukraine said its forces were still defending "a small part" of Lugansk province—the northeastern portion of the Donbas—despite Moscow claiming that its troops were now in full control there.

Russia on Sunday captured the strategic city of Lysychansk, near the border between Lugansk and Donetsk, after the Ukrainian army said it had retreated to save lives among outnumbered and outgunned

forces. Lysychansk's fall one week after the army also retreated from the neighbouring city of Severodonetsk-frees up Russian forces to advance on Kramatorsk and Sloviansk in Donetsk.

"Fighting continues on the administrative borders of the region," the Ukrainian presidency said Tuesday. In a sign Moscow was trying to consolidate supply lines for the next push, Ukraine's armed forces said Russian forces in Lugansk were "taking measures" to restore transport infrastructure behind the fighting lines.

In Sloviansk, about 75 kilometres (45 miles) west of Lysychansk in Donetsk, the situation was calm mid-morning Tuesday, while artillery fire could be heard outside the city, AFP reporters on the ground noted.

Further east, Russian forces were closing in on the small city of Siversk—the first on the road from Lugansk — after days of shelling. Two Ukrainian Red Cross minibuses were headed there to evacuate willing civilians, according to AFP reporters.

'Accountable'

To the southwest in the Moscow-occupied Kherson region, Russia's troops were deploying helicopters and various artillery to try to stem Ukrainian counter-

attacks. "Ukrainian aviation and missile and artillery units continue to strike enemy depots and invaders' concentrations, in particular in the Kherson region," Ukraine's armed forces added.

The intensifying battles in southern Ukraine come as Kremlin-installed authorities in Kherson announced that an official from Russia's powerful FSB security services had taken over control of the government there. Kherson city, which lies close to Moscow-annexed Crimea, was the first major city to fall to Russian forces in February.

Moscow has since launched a campaign of so-called Russification, trying to introduce the ruble, giving out Russian passports and opening a first Russian bank at the end of June. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday reiterated calls for an increased supply of weapons from the West so Kyiv can keep up the resistance and its counter-offensives to regain lost territories. At the meeting of Ukraine's allies in Lugano he also urged the democratic world to unite in rebuilding his country. Leaders from dozens of countries, international organisations and businesses signed off Tuesday on a declaration spelling out the principles and priorities of the reconstruction effort. — AFP



DELIL SOULEIMAN: File photo shows the Kurdish-run al-Hol camp, which holds relatives of suspected Islamic State (IS) group fighters in the northeastern Hasakeh governorate. — AFP

France repatriates 51 from Syria camps

PARIS: France repatriated 35 children and 16 mothers from camps in Syria holding family members of suspected Islamic State jihadists on Tuesday in the largest such operation by Paris after pressure from campaigners.

The French government had long refused mass repatriations of the hundreds of French children detained in Kurdish-controlled camps, dealing with them on a case-by-case basis that rights groups criticised as deliberately slow. "France has today undertaken the return to the country of 35 French minors who were in camps in northeast Syria. This operation also includes the return of 16 mothers from these same camps," a statement from the foreign ministry said.

It added that the minors were handed over to child protection services while the mothers would face judicial proceedings that lawyers expect to lead to their prosecution for terror offences. One of the women was 37-year-old Emilie Konig, a Muslim convert from northwest France who became a notorious recruiter for the group and urged supporters in the West to carry out attacks, a security source told AFP. Family members of the returnees said that French officials had entered the sprawling and squalid Roj camp on Monday to select orphans and women with medical problems for the flight home. "It's a 180-degree turn from the French govern-

ment to repatriate women as well. It gives us hope, but there are still a lot of children over there," the aunt of one of the repatriated women told AFP, asking not to be named. Western countries have faced a dilemma over how to handle their citizens detained in Syria since the end of military operations against the Islamic State group there in 2019. Thousands of extremists in Europe decided to join the group as fighters, often bringing their wives and children to live in the "caliphate" declared in territory conquered in Iraq and Syria.

Until now, France had prioritised its security over welfare concerns for the detained, pointing to a series of attacks by IS jihadists, including the November 2015 assaults on Paris that left 130 people dead. In a 2019 poll by Odoxa-Dentsu Consulting, seven out of 10 people surveyed were opposed to bringing back the children of jihadists to France. Before Tuesday's operation, Paris had repatriated 126 children since 2016. The decision to return 51 people in a single operation points to a change in policy that came after Germany and Belgium announced that they would bring back all of their minors from Syria. Around 150 remain in Syria, lawyers and campaigners said on Tuesday. "Our country has isolated itself more and more by choosing inhumanity and irresponsibility, unlike Germany, Belgium and many other European countries," the French campaign group Collective for United Families said in a statement on Tuesday. A UN watchdog also increased the pressure in February when it said that France had violated the rights of children by leaving them for years in inhuman and life-threatening conditions.—AFP

Police arrest suspect after gunman kills six at US parade

HIGHLAND PARK: Police arrested a suspect Monday after a mass shooting left six dead at a US Independence Day parade in a wealthy Chicago suburb, casting a dark shadow over the country's most patriotic holiday. Robert Crimo, 22, was identified as a "person of interest" and became the target of a massive manhunt across the town of Highland Park in Illinois, where a rooftop gunman with a high-powered rifle turned a family-focused July 4 parade celebration into a scene of death and trauma.

Firing into the holiday crowd, the shooter caused scenes of chaos as panicked onlookers ran for their lives, leaving behind a parade route strewn with chairs, abandoned balloons and personal belongings. Emergency officials said around two dozen people, including children, were treated for gunshot injuries, with some in critical condition.

After a brief car chase, Crimo was taken into custody "without incident," Highland Park police chief Lou Jogmen told reporters. Earlier, police had warned that he was armed and "very dangerous." Crimo bills himself as a musician, and goes by the online moniker "Awake the Rapper." The shooting is part of a wave of gun violence plaguing the United States, where approximately 40,000 deaths a year are caused by firearms, according to the Gun Violence Archive website. And it cast a pall over America's Independence Day, in which towns and cities across the country hold similar parades and people—many dressed in variations on the US flag—hold barbecues, attend sports events and gather for firework displays.

In another July 4 shooting, two police officers were wounded when they came under fire during a fireworks display in Philadelphia, local officials said. CBS News aired video taken from a high-rise building showing crowds fleeing in panic as fireworks burst in the sky.

Philadelphia police commissioner Danielle Outlaw said both officers had been released from hospital after receiving treatment, and that authorities were still investigating the exact circumstances of the incident.

In Highland Park, Emily Prazak, who marched in the parade, described the mayhem. "We were getting ready

to march down the street and then all the sudden waves of these people started running after, like running towards us. And right before that happened, we heard the pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, and I thought it was fireworks," Prazak told AFP.

She added: "This is the day that we celebrate our country. This is also a day that our freedom got stolen from us—because many of us residents here, in this building even, we're all locked down."

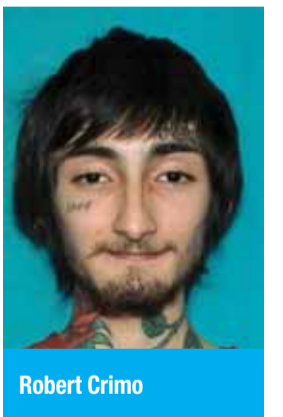
Don Johnson, who attended the parade, said he initially thought the gunshots were a car backfiring. "And finally, I heard the screams from a block down and people running and carrying their kids and everything, and we ran into the gas station, and we were in there for three hours," he told AFP.

"I've seen scenes like this over and over again on the TV and in different communities, and didn't think it was going to happen here ever," he said. Police officials said the shooting began at 10:14 am, when the parade was approximately three-quarters of the way through.

"It sounds like spectators were targeted... So, very random, very intentional and very sad," said Lake County Major Crime Task Force spokesman Christopher Covelli. Five of the six people killed, all adults, died at the scene. The sixth was taken to the hospital but succumbed to wounds there.

Dr Brigham Temple of Highland Park Hospital, where most of the victims were taken, said it had received 25 people with gunshot wounds aged eight to 85. "Four or five" children were among them, he said, and that 16 people were later discharged.

Police said the shooter used a "high-powered rifle," and "firearm evidence" had been located on the rooftop of a nearby business. "All indications is he was discreet, he was very difficult to see," said Covelli. US media reported that Crimo's online postings included violent content that alluded to guns and shootings. His YouTube and other social media accounts were not viewable Monday night. One YouTube video posted eight months ago features images of a young man in a bedroom and a classroom along with cartoons of a gunman and people being shot, the Chicago Tribune reported. A voice-over says "I need to just do it." — AFP



Robert Crimo

International

NATO launches membership process for Sweden, Finland

'This is an historic day, for Finland, for Sweden, for NATO'

BRUSSELS: NATO on Tuesday kicked off momentous accession procedures for Sweden and Finland, aiming to expand the military alliance to 32 countries in reaction to Russia's war in Ukraine. "This is an historic day, for Finland, for Sweden, for NATO, and for Euro-Atlantic security," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said after protocols were signed launching the required ratification process in all alliance countries.

The foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland, alongside Stoltenberg, also qualified the occasion as "historic". "The membership of both Finland and Sweden will not only contribute to our own security, but to the collective security of the alliance," said Finland's Pekka Haavisto.

The two Nordic countries had long maintained

border with Russia-asked to come under NATO's mutual-defence umbrella. Their bids hit a road-bump when Turkey, a NATO member, threatened to block their entry.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had accused Sweden and Finland of being havens for Kurdish militants he has sought to crush, and for promoting "terrorism". He also demanded they lift arms embargoes imposed for Turkey's 2019 military incursion into Syria.

But Erdogan dropped his objections last week, in time for a NATO summit in Spain, after negotiations resulted in concessions-and a US promise of new warplanes for Turkey. The summit ended up extending invitations to Sweden and Finland to formally apply, leading to lightning-fast negotiations on Monday then Tuesday's signing.

Security commitments

Erdogan says he could still slam the door shut if Sweden and Finland don't follow through on their promises, which include possible extradition agreements. The months-long period during which all NATO countries have to ratify the Nordic countries' membership is a risky moment, not only because of Turkey's threat but also because the NATO mutual-defence clause is not yet applicable.

Stoltenberg said: "I count on allies to deliver a quick and swift and smooth ratification process." He emphasised that "many allies have already made clear commitments to Finland and Sweden's security" during the interim period, and pointed out a boosted NATO presence in their region.

Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde said security assurances had been made by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and



BRUSSELS: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde give a press conference after the signing of the accession protocols of Finland and Sweden at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

NATO members in the Nordic and Baltic regions.

Several NATO members flagged expedited ratification for Sweden and Finland. "Moments after Finland and Sweden's accession protocols were signed in Brussels, I summoned my government and proposed to Estonian parliament to convene tomorrow for accelerated ratification," Estonian Prime

Minister Kaja Kallas tweeted.

Germany's parliament was poised to ratify as early as the end of this week. Sources in the ruling coalition said a first reading of the text was likely on Wednesday, with the final two readings on Friday. "This is the fastest accession process in NATO's history so far," Stoltenberg said. — AFP



Sudden change of course

non-alignment status, even though they have held exercises with NATO and have inter-operable weapons systems. They announced intentions to join NATO in May, triggered by Russia's February invasion of Ukraine and ongoing war there.

In a sudden change of course, Sweden and Finland-the latter of which fought a Soviet invasion in 1939-1940 and shares a 1,340-kilometre (830-mile)

Zionist PM visits Paris with Lebanon gas row on agenda

PARIS: Zionist entity Prime Minister Yair Lapid departed on his first foreign trip in office Tuesday to France, where he will ask for backing on a gas dispute with Lebanon that days ago saw Zionist entity shoot down three Hezbollah drones.

Lapid took over the premiership on Friday following the collapse of Zionist entity's coalition government, which will see the country return to the polls in November for its fifth election in less than four years. The new leader was confronted with his first test a day later, when Lebanon's Hezbollah movement launched three drones towards an offshore gas field in the eastern Mediterranean.

Speaking before his departure from Tel Aviv, Lapid said he will raise the matter with French President Emmanuel Macron. "We will also discuss of course what has occurred recently off the coast of Lebanon," Lapid said. "There have been repeated attacks on

Zionist entity's gas rigs. Zionist entity will not accept this type of attacks on its sovereignty."

Lebanon rejects Zionist entity's claim that the Karish gas field lies within its territorial waters. Zionist entity and Lebanon resumed negotiations on their maritime border in 2020, though the Karish site sits outside of the disputed area and is marked as Zionist on previous United Nations maps. The US-backed talks have been stalled by Beirut's demand that the UN maps must be modified.

Hezbollah's backers Iran will also be on the agenda at the bilateral talks in Paris, as Zionist entity stands firmly opposed to international efforts to

revive a nuclear accord with Tehran. "It's important that our position against this agreement is heard," Lapid said Tuesday.

Zionist officials fear that giving Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme could allow Tehran to boost funding to Hezbollah, as well as the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

A senior Zionist official said the Lebanon gas issue will be high on agenda during talks at the Elysee Palace in Paris. "We will ask France to intervene to secure the negotiations that we want to lead until the end of the gas issues," the official told journalists travelling with the premier. — AFP

French man gets life for killing student

STRASBOURG: A French court on Tuesday sentenced a convicted rapist to life in prison for the murder of a student who he claimed until the end to have killed accidentally. Sophie Le Tan vanished on her 20th birthday after failing to return from what was supposed to be a visit to a rented apartment outside the eastern city of Strasbourg on September 8, 2018.

She was described by those close to her as a serious and likeable young woman. Her dismembered body was found by hikers in a forest in October 2019. Jean-Marc Reiser, now 61,

was arrested a week after she disappeared and was tracked down by police through phone records.

After speaking to other students who responded to the same property advert only to be stood up, investigators believe Reiser used it to lure young women, observing the agreed meeting spot to see if they came alone.

A search of his flat uncovered large bloodstains that had been carefully cleaned up, as well as Le Tan's DNA on a saw in the cellar, according to court documents. For two years, Reiser denied any involvement in Le Tan's death, before claiming in January 2021 that she died in a fall after he struck her. He stuck to that version of events until the end of the trial.

"There was nothing premeditated about that madness, for which I still have no explanation," he told the court on Tuesday. "I had no

reason to be angry at Sophie Le Tan. I had nothing against her," he said.

But after two hours of deliberations, the jury sentenced him to life in prison for murder, without the possibility of parole for the first 22 years. After Le Tan's remains were discovered, court documents said it was no longer possible to determine the cause of her death or whether she had suffered sexual violence.

Addressing Le Tan's mother, father and other family members in the courtroom, Reiser said he accepted that they would never forgive him. "I am guilty of their daughter's death even if I never wanted it. This will haunt me for the rest of my days," he said.

Reiser was previously convicted of rape in 2003 and has served several prison sentences. In 2001, he was acquitted for lack of evidence in connection with another disappearance dating back to 1987. — AFP



STRASBOURG: The mother of Sophie Le Tan, Thi Huong Thi Huong, walks with cousin Laurent Tran van Miang after the verdict at the end of the trial of Jean-Marc Reiser, accused of murdering student Sophie Le Tan in 2018. — AFP

Algeria marks 60 years of independence

ALGIERS: Algeria marks 60 years of independence from France on Tuesday with a huge military parade, but memories of violence during the colonial period continue to overshadow ties between the two. The North African country won its independence following a grueling 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 percent voted for independence in a referendum, Algeria finally broke free from colonial rule - but memories of the 132-year occupation continue to mar its ties with France. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune placed a wreath at the Martyrs Sanctuary memorial in Algiers on Tuesday, then rode in an open-top car with armed forces chief Said Chanegriha to inspect several military units before the parade officially set off.

Authorities had on Friday closed a 16-km stretch of a major artery in Algiers for the army to carry out final rehearsals for the parade, the first in 33 years. The closure has caused huge tailbacks on roads leading to the eastern suburbs of the capital. Tebboune is hosting several foreign dignitaries including Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, Tunisia's Kais Saied and Niger's Mohamed Bazoum.

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 dead, but six decades on, despite a string of gestures by French President Emmanuel Macron, France has ruled out any form of apology for the colonial period.

"There's no way we can forget or erase the human genocide, the cultural genocide and the identity genocide of which colonial France remains guilty," said Salah Goudjil, speaker of the Algerian parliament's upper house, in an interview published by newspaper L'Expression on Monday. French-Algerian ties hit a low late last year after Macron reportedly questioned whether Algeria had existed as a nation before the French invasion and accused its "political-military system" of rewriting history and fomenting "hatred towards France".

Algeria withdrew its ambassador in response, but the two sides appear to have mended ties since. On Monday evening, Macron's office said he had sent Tebboune a letter expressing "his best wishes to the Algerian people and... his wish that the already strong ties between France and Algeria continue to be strengthened". It also said a wreath would be placed in Macron's name at a memorial in Paris for European victims of a mass killing in Oran on July 5, 1962. Tebboune has also marked the occasion by announcing an amnesty that could lead to the early release of thousands of people detained in connection with the Hirak mass protest movement. — AFP

Authorities on Monday had announced a 24-hour closure of government offices in Tehran and Alborz provinces, along with the judiciary and schools, owing to the effects of the sandstorm. Such weather events, which can lead to hospitalizations due to respiratory complaints, have long hit the region but have become more frequent in recent years. They have been especially prevalent this year in neighboring Iraq, where at least 10,000 people were hospitalized with breathing problems caused by sandstorms in May alone. — Agencies

Saudi hands out billions, Makkah...

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chain issues and rising prices to protect consumers' interests.

Meanwhile, "Business is back", exclaimed Abdullah Mekhlafi at the shop where he sells prayer mats in Islam's holiest city, which is preparing for the biggest influx of hajj pilgrims since the coronavirus pandemic began. Two years of drastic restrictions on the number of pilgrims who could perform the hajj emptied shops and hotels across the Saudi Arabian city of Makkah. But business owners are hoping for a quick recovery as hundreds of thousands of worshippers flock to the region this week.

"We had few customers (during the last two hajj seasons), but today business is back, thanks to God. It's the same as before, and even better," 30-year-old Mekhlafi told AFP. One million people, including 850,000 from abroad, will be allowed at this year's hajj, one of five pillars of Islam which all able-bodied Muslims with the means are required to perform at least once in their lives.

In 2019, about 2.5 million people took part in the rituals, which include circling the Kaaba at the Grand Mosque in Makkah, gathering at Mount Arafat and "stoning the devil" in Mina. The following year, after the pandemic took hold, foreigners were barred and the total number of worshippers was capped at 10,000 to stop the hajj from turning into a global super-spreader. That figure rose to 60,000 fully vaccinated Saudi citizens and residents in 2021.

The hajj, which costs at least \$5,000 per person, and umrah pilgrimages that occur at other times of year are usually a significant revenue earner for Saudi Arabia, especially its tourism sector. In normal times, they generate about \$12 billion annually, keeping the economy humming in Makkah. The city has seen a construction boom in recent years that

has brought new shopping malls, apartment buildings and luxury hotels - some offering spectacular views of the sacred Kaaba, the large black cubic structure at the center of the Grand Mosque towards which all Muslims pray.

But these projects were starved for clients during the pandemic, meaning their owners were cheered by scenes already unfolding in Makkah on Monday, two days before the hajj officially begins. White-robed worshippers were flocking to souvenir and barbershops across the city of two million. And the main shopping center near the Grand Mosque, where many hotels are located, was buzzing with pilgrims again, a far cry from a year ago when the area looked nearly abandoned.

Amin, a perfume shop owner, was bullish about his prospects, telling AFP his losses could be recovered this year. "There is a huge difference between this year and past ones. This year we can see a lot of pilgrims who are bringing back the glory to the Grand Mosque," he said. "The losses were big, but now things are better."

The changes in Makkah track the recent economic fortunes of Saudi Arabia. During the pandemic, the kingdom faced a sharp downturn in oil prices due to a collapse in global demand, which triggered austerity measures including the tripling of a value added tax and cuts to civil servants' allowances. Particularly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, things seem to have changed.

"The impact of the losses during the last two years was significant, but we are starting to see a recovery on the business level, and this year's (hajj) is good news," said Salem Ali Shahrani, operations manager at the biggest hotel chain in Makkah. "The current numbers have reached 40 percent of their 2019 levels. We hope for bigger numbers in the coming years."

Saudi Arabia's GDP is expected to grow by 7.6 percent in 2022, the International Monetary Fund said in April. The world's biggest oil exporter is trying to diversify its economy, a main pillar of the Vision 2030 reform agenda pushed by Crown Prince Mohammed. Tourism is a crucial component of that plan, making a booming hajj all the more important. — AFP

Kuwait, Iran sign agreement to...

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State news agency IRNA reported that state offices continued to function in at least three other provinces that were also hit by the heavy pollution.

International

Sudan anti-coup protests hold firm, sceptical of army promises

Bloc refuses to take part in talks with military leaders

KHARTOUM, Sudan: Sudanese protesters held firm on barricades Tuesday, saying they were deeply sceptical of promises by coup leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan a day earlier that the army would make way for civilian rule. Defying the security forces, crowds stayed on the streets of the capital Khartoum, maintaining their months-long protests against the military power grab.

"We don't have confidence in Burhan," said protester Muhammad Othman, perched on a barricade of bricks built across a street. "We just want him to leave once and for all." A day after Burhan's announcement, many protesters were awaiting a response from the main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), which was ousted from power by the October coup.

The bloc has so far refused to take part in talks with military leaders, launched under international auspices in an effort to restore the transition to civilian rule. Burhan said late Monday the military would no longer participate in the talks facilitated by the United Nations, African Union and the regional IGAD bloc, wanting instead "to make room for political and revolutionary forces and other national factions" to form a civilian government.

The announcement came eight months after the October coup ousted civilians from a transitional administration, sparking widespread international condemnation and aid cuts to the north-east African nation.

Security forces—as they have done repeatedly to the long-running protests—

sought to break up the crowds by firing barrages of stun grenades and tear gas, according to pro-democracy medics.

'Core grievances remain'

Kholood Khair, of the Khartoum think-tank Insight Strategy Partners, said many protesters believed the military's withdrawal was "a ruse". Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries, has seen only rare interludes of civilian rule.

The coup not only worsened a political crisis but has pushed Sudan deeper into a dire economic slump. International actors have been pushing for civilian and military leaders to negotiate a return to the democratic transition they had started after the 2019 ouster of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

Hours after his surprise announcement, Burhan on Tuesday flew to Kenya for an IGAD emergency summit of East African leaders, which with the United Nations and AU has been urging for talks between the army and civilians.

Khair said he believed Burhan's announcement was made to put "the pressure on the civilians" but warned that it might change little on the ground. "There's no talk of accountability," Khair said, noting that "core grievances remain."

Burhan's televised address came as hundreds of anti-coup demonstrators continued protests. Pro-democracy medics said nine demonstrators lost their lives on Thursday, the deadliest violence so far this year, bringing to 114 the number killed in the crackdown against anti-coup protesters.

On Monday, speaking shortly after



KHARTOUM: People gather by a make-shift barrier made of bricks at a protest sit-in outside the "Royal Care Hospital" in the Barari area of Sudan's capital Khartoum. —AFP

Burhan's announcement, protester Oumeima Hussein vowed the army chief must be "judged for all those killed since the coup", and vowed to "topple him like we did to Bashir".

Khair warned that protesters feared Burhan was putting "the Islamists back in government", who were dominant under the three-decade rule of Bashir, with mili-

tary and allied armed groups to "retain economic privileges."

Sudan's military dominates lucrative companies in sectors from agriculture to infrastructure. Burhan said that "the formation of the executive government" will be followed by "the dissolution of the Sovereign Council"—the ruling authority formed under a fragile power-sharing

agreement between the army and civilians in 2019.

Also created will be a "Supreme Council of Armed Forces", to be in charge of defence and security. It will combine the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, a much feared and powerful unit commanded by Burhan's deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. —AFP

Rescuers gather body parts after Italy glacier collapse

CANAZEI, Italy: Emergency services at the scene of a deadly avalanche in the Italian Dolomites recovered what body parts they could on Tuesday, with the dangers of venturing under the partially collapsed glacier slowing the search.

Rescue teams sent helicopters and drones up for a second day after Sunday's disaster, which saw at least seven hikers killed when a section of the country's largest Alpine glacier gave way, sending ice and rock hurtling down the mountain.

Italy has blamed the collapse on climate change and fears more of the glacier could come crashing down have prevented access to much of the area where hikers, some roped together, are believed to be buried.

Authorities have declared 14 missing but stressed the exact number of climbers at the scene when the avalanche hit was unknown. "Operations on the ground will only be carried out to recover any remains discovered by the drones, to ensure rescuers' safety," the Trentino Alpine Rescue Service said Tuesday.

Experts were surveying the area

to determine how best to enable teams with sniffer dogs to get out onto the site safely on Wednesday or Thursday, the Service's national chief Maurizio Dellantonio told AGI news agency. Relatives of people reported missing gathered at the town of Canazei, where recovered remains were placed in a make-shift morgue at a gymnasium.

"The important finds, not just bones, are first photographed, then recovered and put onto a helicopter" and flown to Canazei to be "catalogued and placed in cold storage", Dellantonio said. Such finds were "bones that have not been flayed, a piece of hand with a ring, tattoos, anything that can enable a person to be identified", including shoes, backpacks and ice-picks.

The disaster struck one day after a record-high temperature of 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees Fahrenheit) was recorded at the summit of Marmolada, the highest mountain in the Italian Dolomites. Prime Minister Mario Draghi said Monday the collapse was certainly "linked to the deterioration of the environment and the climate situation".



CANAZEI, Italy: This aerial view taken near Canazei on July 5, 2022 from a rescue helicopter shows a destroyed refuge near the Punta Rocca glacier that collapsed on the mountain of Marmolada. —AFP

One of the bodies recovered belonged to a Czech who was travelling with a friend now registered as missing, the Czech foreign ministry told AFP. Also missing, according to Italian media reports, was Filippo Bari, 27, who had snapped a grinning selfie on the mountain earlier Sunday and sent it to family and friends saying "look

where I am!"

Bari, who has a four-year old son, has not responded to repeated attempts to contact him, nor have the five friends he was believed to be hiking with, the Corriere della Sera said. The Trento public prosecutor's office has opened an investigation to determine the causes of the tragedy. —AFP

Ethiopia PM meets Sudan's Burhan

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia: Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said he met Sudan's coup leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Nairobi on Tuesday and that both committed to "dialogue" to resolve any differences. Their talks follow a clash in a volatile border region last month in which Khartoum said that Ethiopian forces had captured and killed Sudanese troops—claims denied by Addis Ababa.

"We have both agreed that our two countries have plenty of collaborative elements to work on peacefully," Abiy said in a Twitter post, accompanied by a picture of the two men. "Our common bonds surpass any divisions. We both made a

commitment for dialogue & peaceful resolution to outstanding issues," he said.

Both leaders were in the Kenyan capital for a summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) regional body. Sudan's ruling sovereign council said only that there had been a "closed-door meeting" between Burhan and Abiy.

IGAD and the African Union had both voiced alarm last week over the escalating tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan following the incident in the disputed Al-Fashaqa border area. Khartoum said the Ethiopian army had executed seven Sudanese soldiers and a civilian in a clash on June 22 in Al-Fashaqa, and announced it was recalling its ambassador.

But Addis Ababa claimed that Sudanese forces had crossed into Ethiopian territory and that the casualties resulted from a skirmish with a local militia, denying its soldiers were in the

in Hanoi "for making, hoarding, disseminating and spreading propaganda against the state of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam under article 117 of the 2015 Penal Code", the capital's police said in an official statement.

Officers did not provide any other details, stating that the case was currently under investigation. Vietnam is notorious for its harsh treatment of those holding viewpoints diverging from the official pro-government line.

Thang has endured short spells in detention, as well as harassment from officers, in the past. "I'm a focal point for police," Thang previously told the Committee for Protecting Journalists. Human Rights Watch on Tuesday called for his

area at the time.

Al-Fashaqa is a fertile strip of land that has long been a source of friction between Addis Ababa and Khartoum. The region, which lies close to Ethiopia's war-torn northern region of Tigray, has long been cultivated by Ethiopian farmers but is claimed by Sudan.

The dispute has sparked sporadic clashes between the two sides, some fatal. The rift also feeds into wider tensions over land and water between the neighbours, particularly stoked by Ethiopia's mega-dam on the Blue Nile.

Sudan and Egypt, both downstream countries, have been opposed to the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and pushed for an agreement on the filling of its reservoir and the dam's operations. Tensions were heightened further after fighting erupted in Tigray in November 2020, sending tens of thousands of refugees fleeing into Sudan. —AFP

"immediate and unconditional release".

"Vietnam's outrageous and unacceptable crackdown on freedom of expression has just snared another victim who will invariably face a kangaroo court trial and years in prison for speaking his mind," said deputy Asia director Phil Robertson.

He added: "Thang's peaceful advocacy for democratic reforms and justice should be respected and listened to rather than face this kind of unjustified repression." Social media reports claimed that authorities had also confiscated digital devices, as well as human rights-related books, from Thang's home during the arrest. His family could not be reached for comment. —AFP

French troops in Sahel to play 'support' role

N'DJAMENA, Chad: French anti-jihadist forces in the Sahel will switch operating mode after they leave Mali, acting more "in support" of local forces rather than substituting for them, their commander says. After nearly a decade fighting jihadists in Mali, France is pulling its troops out of the country after falling out with its military junta.

President Emmanuel Macron announced the withdrawal in February, saying Operation Barkhane would continue elsewhere in the Sahel but in a smaller and reconfigured form. In an interview with AFP and Radio France Internationale (RFI), Barkhane commander General Laurent Michon said the force now had less than 2,000 men left in Mali.

The pullout was on track for completion "by the end of summer, as the president has requested," he said. "Around 2,500 French troops" will remain in the Sahel when the operation is over, "but this depends above all on the wishes of the African states," said Michon.

"France and the Europeans are moving towards more cooperative operations," he said. These operations will be "determined more strictly by requests from the African countries, and will take the form of 'in support of' and not 'in replacement for'" the local military, he said.

Michon gave Mali as an example of the tactics of the past. "Sometimes we acted in the place" of the local armed forces in mounting operations against the jihadists, he said. Illustrating the closer cooperation, Michon said that last year a French unit on the Mali-Niger border was placed under the command of a Nigerien general in charge of the area.

And in March, France set up a "partnership HQ" in the Niger capital Niamey, "with the goal of working with African officers embedded" with Barkhane, he said. As for the pullout, France has already left its bases in Gossi and Menaka in central Mali and is currently disengaging from a camp in Gao, the general said.

"In all, 4,000 containers and just under a thousand vehicles are to leave Mali," he said. The equipment and parting forces are heading to neighbouring Niger for logistical reasons, but will not stay there, he said.

'Not a failure'

France intervened in Mali in 2013 to stem a jihadist-backed revolt in the north of the country. The following year it launched the broader Barkhane operation among five Sahel allies, all former French colonies—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

At its peak, the mission had 5,100 troops across the region, providing key support in air power, troop transport and reconnaissance. Fifty-eight French troops have died in Barkhane and its predecessor mission, Serval.

"From my point, the disengagement (from Mali) is not a failure," Michon said. With Barkhane's help, the Malian army had been able to increase in numbers from 7,000 to 40,000 men, "and we made the terrorist groups keep their heads down," preventing army bases from being overrun, said Michon. —AFP

Vietnam arrests prominent activist over 'propaganda'

HANOI: Vietnam arrested a prominent human rights activist on Tuesday, accusing him of distributing anti-state propaganda. Nguyen Lan Thang is well known in the communist country for his social activism as well as his online criticism of the government, which has become increasingly intolerant of any dissent.

The 46-year-old was arrested at his home

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Business

Tunisia struggles to grow more wheat

Ukraine war has sent global cereal prices soaring

CEBALET BEN AMMAR, Tunisia: Tunisian farmer Mondher Mathali surveys a sea of swaying golden wheat and revs his combine harvester, a rumbling beast from 1976 which he fears could break down at any moment. Since the Ukraine war sent global cereal prices soaring, import-dependent Tunisia has announced a push to grow all its own durum wheat, the basis for local staples like couscous and pasta.

The small North African country, like its neighbors, is desperate to prevent food shortages and social unrest - but for farmers on the sunbaked plains north of Tunis, even the basics are problematic. "I'd love to buy a new combine harvester, but I could only do it with help from the government," said Mathali, 65. He reckons his outdated machine wastes almost a third of the crop. With spare parts hard to find, he fears a breakdown could cost him his entire harvest.

But even a second-hand replacement would cost him an unimaginable sum: \$150,000. "Our production and even the quality would go up by maybe 50 percent, even 90 percent" with government help, he said. "But our situation is getting worse and the state isn't helping us."

'No continuity'

Tunisia's wheat production has suffered from years of drought and a decade of political instability, with 10 governments since the country's 2011 revolution. That has exacerbated its reliance on imports. Last year, it bought almost two-thirds of its cereal from overseas, much of it from the Black Sea region. Those supply chains have been rocked first by the coronavirus pandemic and then by the war in Ukraine, which last year provided around half of Tunisia's imports of the soft wheat used in bread.

While it still plans to import soft wheat, the country is pushing for self-sufficiency in durum wheat by the 2023 harvest. That would be a valuable contribution to the national diet: The average Tunisian eats 17 kg of pasta per year, second only to Italians. In April, the government unveiled a program to help farmers access better seeds, technical assistance and state-backed loans.

It also plans to devote 30 percent more farmland to wheat, and has dramatically boosted the prices it pays growers. But the agriculture ministry's chief of staff acknowledged Mathali's problems. "Tunisia has about 3,000 combine harvesters, 80 percent of which are old and very wasteful, which represents a major loss," said Faten Khamassi. She said the state plans to fund farmers' collectives to buy shared equipment.



CEBALET BEN AMMAR, Tunisia: Wheat is transported after harvesting in this region north of the capital Tunis on June 16, 2022. — AFP

'Need to choose'

Agricultural technician Saida Beldi, who has worked with farmers in the northern Ariana governorate for three decades, says political instability has gutted the sector. With each new minister, "the policy changes", she said. "There's no continuity." She said many farmers struggled to obtain state-subsidized fertilizers, which trade on the black market at inflated prices. Khamassi said it was "certainly possible to reach self-sufficiency in durum wheat".

But she said Tunisia faces another dilemma: "Develop cereal production to reach self-sufficiency, or develop other crops like strawberries and tomatoes for export? We need to choose." International organizations have long pushed poorer countries to focus on specific cash crops for export, rather than growing essentials. A 2014 World Bank report argued that Tunisia "does not have a strong comparative advantage in cereals" and should instead focus on "labor intensive" crops because of cheap labor.

But in June, announcing a \$130 million loan for emergency cereal imports, the lender said it was providing "incentives to sustainably increase domestic

grain production" and cut import dependency. Today, Khamassi said, comparative advantage is "no longer relevant". "We need to return to much more self-sufficient policies, local production," she said.

Changing times

The ministry also said in June that it would allow foreign investors to own agricultural firms outright, instead of requiring at least one-third Tunisian ownership. Khamassi said this would attract investment and create jobs. But economist Fadhel Kaboub said this strategy would make Tunisia even more vulnerable. "Small-scale Tunisian farmers operating on small plots of land will not be able to compete with big foreign investors with access to cheap loans from European banks," he said.

"These companies' business model is to push for cash crops for export, to earn dollars and euros - not to produce wheat to sell for dinars in the local market." For farmer Mathali, who hopes to pass his business on to his son, the stakes couldn't be higher. "Tunisia was the Roman Empire's main supplier of wheat," he said, squinting under the summer sun. "Why can't we revive that?" — AFP

Ivory Coast eyeing cassava for bread as wheat prices surge

ABIDJAN: As wheat prices are driven upwards by the war in Ukraine, bakers in the West African state of Ivory Coast are starting to use locally produced cassava flour to bake bread. The baguette, the stick of bread that is much loved in the former French colony, is commonly seen as a benchmark of the cost of living. But Ivory Coast does not produce wheat domestically, instead importing up to a million tons of the grain per year, mainly from France.

Surging wheat prices have stoked concern about the impact in a country of 25 million where the average wage is less than 250,000 CFA francs (\$400) per month, and which was shaken by a wave of violence less than two years ago. Both Ukraine and Russia are large wheat producers, and lost harvests and other uncertainties have driven up prices of the global staple.

In response, Ivorian authorities have pegged the price of a baguette at between 150 and 200 CFA francs (\$0.25 and \$0.30) depending on weight, channeling subsidies worth 6.4 billion CFA francs (about \$10 million) to the country's 2,500 bakeries. Bakers, with the government's support, are also starting to substitute a small portion of wheat flour with flour from cassava, a root vegetable. Cassava, also called manioc, is Ivory Coast's second largest crop after yam, with 6.4 million tons produced each year.

'New flavors'

The cassava substitution plan ticks the boxes for economy and sustainability. But what do Ivorians think? "Everything has become expensive in the market," said



ABIDJAN: An employee of a bakery sells bread made from wheat and cassava flour to customers in Yopougon, a popular district in the capital, on June 26, 2022. — AFP

Honorine Kouamee, a food vendor in Abidjan's Blockhaus district who was cooking pancakes made of wheat mixed with coconut flour. "If we can make bread with local cassava flour it will be better. People are willing to eat local products."

The national consumers' confederation has thrown its support behind the cassava substitute. "It will provide a stimulus for manioc producers and maintain the price of bread," said its president, Jean-Baptiste Koffi. But image and taste are important and some bakers are cautious. "It's not a done deal," said Rene Diby, a baker. "For Ivorians, bread made with cassava is associated

with poor-quality bread. Consumers will have to be made aware of these new flavors." The authorities will have to run a promotional campaign, he said.

Cassava is high in starch and is a good source of dietary fiber. But high proportions of cassava flour lower the mineral and protein content in bread, compared with traditional wheat, a 2014 study in Nigeria found. Financially, even using just a small portion of cassava flour would provide the government with some relief. Last year, 10 percent of the national budget of around \$16 billion was spent on food imports, despite the country's fertile soil.

Ranie-Didice Bah Kone, executive secretary of the state-run National Council for the Fight against the High Cost of Living (CNLCV), says it is time to unlock Ivory Coast's rich agricultural potential. "It's a question of thinking long term, about our food security, it's a question of thinking about how Ivory Coast will ensure it is less dependent on world prices," she said. During a visit to a cassava flour processing plant in Abidjan, she called for immediate measures to increase the supply of local flours, in addition to subsidies for the wheat sector.

'Africanize baking'

Concerns in West Africa about dependence on imported wheat are not confined to Ivory Coast. On July 19, bakers from across West Africa will meet in Senegal's capital Dakar to launch an association to lobby for setting a regional benchmark of up to 15 percent of local content in bread products. Using local products in bread could "solve food crises," said Marius Abe Ake, who leads a bakers' association. "We need to Africanize baking to help lower manufacturing costs, fight poverty and avoid damaging unrest."

Ivory Coast has a history of turbulence. In 2020 scores died in pre-election violence - an episode that revived traumatic memories of a brief civil conflict in 2011 in which several thousand people were killed. In 2008 riots broke out when the cost of rice, milk and meat soared. — AFP

Wheat war: Conflict raises hunger fears

PARIS: Russia's invasion of agricultural power Ukraine has severely disrupted the global wheat market, prompting warnings that the conflict could lead to hunger in some countries.

Why is wheat irreplaceable?

Wheat is milled into flour to make a huge range of foods, from bread to pasta to desserts. "Everyone eats wheat, but not everyone is capable of producing it," says Bruno Parmentier, an economist and author of the book "Feeding Humanity". Only around a dozen countries produce enough wheat to be able to export it, too. China is the world's top producer but is also a major importer of the commodity to feed its 1.4 billion people. Russia, the United States, Australia, Canada and Ukraine are the world's top exporters. Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey are among the top importers.

Why are wheat prices high?

Grain prices were already high before Russia began its invasion of Ukraine in February. There were several factors behind the increases: Energy prices soared as economies bounced back from Covid lockdowns, sending costs for nitrogen-based fertilizers higher. The end of COVID restrictions also led to major disruptions to global supply chains as demand surged for all sorts of products. In addition, a heatwave in Canada led to a dismal harvest in the country last year.

Why did the war worsen things?

Wheat prices surged even higher after Russian troops stormed Ukraine, exceeding €400 (\$418) per tonne in May on the European market, double its level last summer. The higher costs are dramatic for developing countries. More than 30 nations depend on Russia and Ukraine for 30 percent of their wheat import needs, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. The two countries, considered the breadbaskets of Europe, accounted for 30 percent of global grain exports before the war. Their production has increased in recent years, with Russia becoming the top exporter and Ukraine closing in on third place.

What are the consequences for Ukraine?

A Russian naval blockade has prevented Ukraine from shipping out 25 million tons of grain that are now stuck in farms or silos at ports. While some quantities have been transported via rail and road, exports are still six times smaller than by sea. Ukrainian farmers faced a dangerous planting season, with some having to work with flak jackets and rely on specialists to remove mines and other ordnance from fields. Ukraine's wheat harvest is expected to fall by 40 percent this year, the country's grain association says.

Has wheat become a war weapon?

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has branded Russia's blockade as "blackmail", saying it was a deliberate strategy by Russian President Vladimir Putin to force the rest of the world "to give in to him" and drop sanctions on Moscow. "In times of war, big producing countries literally hold the fate of others in their hands," Parmentier said. Turkey has spearheaded efforts aimed at resuming grain deliveries across the Black Sea and said on June 22 that four-way talks with Russia, Ukraine and the United Nations could be held in the coming weeks.

What's the future?

China is not expected to release wheat stocks while India has imposed a temporary ban on its exports after a heatwave hit harvests. Global wheat production is forecast to reach almost 775 million tons in 2022-2023, 4.5 million lower than the previous year, according to the US Department of Agriculture. Reduced production in Ukraine, Australia and Morocco will "only partly" be offset by increases in Canada, Russia and the United States, the department said. — AFP

Signing Ceremony of the Partnership Agreement between QatarEnergy and Shell for the North Field East

Qatar
2022

DOHA: Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs and President and CEO of QatarEnergy Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi and Shell's CEO Ben van Beurden hold a signing ceremony at QatarEnergy headquarters on July 5, 2022. — AFP

Shell joins Qatar's giant gas project

DOHA: Shell joined Qatar Energy's \$29 billion project to expand production at the world's biggest natural gas field on Tuesday, becoming the fifth and final international partner. The British-based company took a 6.25 percent stake for an undisclosed sum, joining TotalEnergies, Eni, ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil in the North Field East project. The North Field expansion is the biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) project ever seen, Qatar Energy said. It comes at a time of intense geopolitical tensions over energy supplies.

The \$28.75 billion development is predicted to increase Qatar's production from the current 77 million tons a year to 110 million tons by 2027. "As one of

the largest players in the LNG business, (Shell) have a lot to bring to help meet global energy demand and security," said Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi, who is also the Qatar Energy president and CEO.

Qatar Energy estimates that the North Field, which extends under the Gulf sea into Iranian territory, holds about 10 percent of the world's known gas reserves. The project's LNG - the cooled form of gas that makes it easier to transport - is expected to come on line in 2026. The project has taken on growing international importance after Europe's energy supplies took a hit following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

South Korea, Japan and China have been the main markets for Qatar's LNG. But since an energy crisis hit Europe last year, the Gulf state has helped Britain with extra supplies, and also announced a cooperation deal with Germany. Europe has in the past rejected the long-term deals that Qatar seeks for its energy, but the Ukraine war has forced a change in attitude.

Business

Russian cargo ship remains stranded off Turkish coast

Ukraine says grain is being illegally seized and used to fund Russia's war effort

KARASU, Turkey: A Russian-flagged cargo ship at the center of a fight over grain between Kyiv and Moscow remained anchored Tuesday off Turkey's Black Sea coast four days after its unexpected arrival. Ukraine alleges that the Zhibek Zholy had set off from its Kremlin-occupied port of Berdyansk after picking up illegally seized wheat. Moscow concedes that the 7,000-tonne vessel was sailing under the Russian flag but denies any wrongdoing.

And NATO-member Turkey has said nothing official in public as it tries to maintain its open relations with both Moscow and Kyiv while facing Ukrainian pressure to seize the ship. The saga started when a Kremlin-installed leader in southeastern Ukraine last Thursday announced the launch of the first official grain shipments across the Black Sea since Russia invaded its neighbor in February. Russia claims to have "nationalized" Ukrainian state infrastructure and to be buying crops from local farmers. Ukraine says the grain is being illegally seized and used to fund Russia's war effort. "Seven thousand tons of grain are heading toward friendly countries," local Russian-backed administration head Evgeny Balitsky said on Telegram.

Marine traffic websites then showed the vessel reaching Turkey's Black Sea port of Karasu and stopping about a kilometer off the coast. The ship's arrival was announced by Ukraine's ambassador to Turkey - one of the most vocal officials in the entire dispute. He asked Turkey on Twitter to take "corresponding measures" and then told Ukrainian state television that the ship had been

impounded by local coastguards.

Turkish officials still said nothing even though the 140-m vessel was now clearly visible by holidaymakers lounging on Karasu's sandy beach. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov conceded to reporters on Monday that the Zhibek Zholy had not reached its intended destination. But he also played down Moscow's role or the ship's importance to Russia's efforts to resume marine traffic from parts of Ukraine now under its control. "We have to look into this situation," said Lavrov. "The ship really does appear to be Russian, sailing under the Russian flag. I think it belongs to Kazakhstan, while the cargo was being shipped under contract between Estonia and Turkey."

'It never moved'

Beachgoers in Karasu - a town of 30,000 that swells during the summer tourism season - say little has happened on the ship since its arrival. "It never moved," said local pensioner Salise Aktan. "On Sunday, a boat approached the ship and then left," added fellow beachgoer Gulay Erol. "I don't know why," the 33-year-old said.

Turkey's four-day silence underscores the difficulty of its position in the war. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has had a tumultuous but close working relationship with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. He has tried to use that access to thrust Turkey into the middle of diplomatic negotiations and talks on resuming grain shipments from Ukrainian ports.



SAKARYA, Turkey: The Russian-flagged cargo ship "Zhibek Zholy" is anchored on July 5, 2022 on the Black Sea coast of Karasu district. — AFP

But his Russian relationship is complicated by Turkey's international commitments as a member of NATO defense bloc. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said month week that Ankara was investigating reports of Russian-seized Ukrainian grain reaching its Black Sea shores. But he added that Turkey had been unable to find any

stolen Ukrainian grain shipments to date. Ankara also supplies combat drones to Ukraine that have proved effective in helping slow Russia's advance across the Donbas war zone.

Turkey has further been trying to arrange UN-led talks between Russia and Ukraine about ways to resume grain ship-

ments across the Black Sea. Erdogan told a NATO summit in Madrid last week that his country was trying to pursue "a balanced policy" because of its heavy reliance on Russian energy. Turkish defense officials met with a Ukrainian delegation on Monday. No details from those talks were announced. — AFP

Ukraine, allies map out road to reconstruction

LUGANO, Switzerland: Ukraine and its allies agreed Tuesday to a set of principles for rebuilding the war-torn country, including the need for broad reforms to boost transparency and root out corruption. Wrapping up a two-day conference in the southern Swiss city of Lugano, leaders from some 40 countries signed the Lugano Declaration committing to support Ukraine through a likely long and expensive recovery.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned from Kyiv that the work ahead was "colossal", and the duty of the "whole democratic world". His prime minister, Denys Shmyhal, who led a large delegation to Lugano, cautioned that recovery from the massive destruction wrought since Russia's full-scale invasion just four months ago would

cost at least \$750 billion.

He said the adoption of the declaration and of a set of seven founding principles for Ukraine's reconstruction "gives great hope". "We shall be victorious, we will renew our country," he told reporters. "We have to make everything that was destroyed better than it was."

Swiss President Ignazio Cassis, who co-hosted the conference, hailed the declaration as a "key first step on the long road of Ukraine's recovery". "Our work prepares for the time after the war even as the war is still raging," he told the closing ceremony following a minute of silence for that war's many victims.

'Make corruption impossible'

Among the principles agreed upon Tuesday was that Ukraine itself must be in the driving seat on how to rebuild, and also that the recovery process must go hand-in-hand with far-reaching reforms. "The rule of law must be systematically strengthened and corruption eradicated," the document said. With billions of dollars in aid and assistance flowing into Ukraine, lingering concerns about widespread corruption have driven calls Kyiv to do more

to ensure transparency and accountability.

The former Soviet state has long been ranked among the world's most corrupt countries by Transparency International. In Europe, only Russia and Azerbaijan ranked worse. Shmyhal insisted Tuesday that Ukraine had already taken great strides to fix the problem, including by broad digitalization of public services and the awarding of contracts in sectors like construction, to reduce "human interaction" and the possibilities for corrupt transactions. The goal, he said, is "not to fight corruption, but make corruption impossible."

As for who will pay for the towering costs, Shmyhal suggested much of this amount could be covered using seized Russian assets. He pointed out that such assets frozen by Ukraine's partners so far amounted to \$300-500 billion. "Unprovoked aggression should be paid by the aggressor," he said. "Russia should pay for this." At his side, the Swiss president, whose country has long been a choice destination for Russian oligarchs to invest and stash away their fortunes, stressed the importance of respecting property rights and the rule of law.

Shmyhal on Monday laid out the government's three-

phase reconstruction plan, focused on the immediate needs of those affected by the war, followed by the financing of thousands of longer-term reconstruction projects, and ultimately on transforming Ukraine into a European, green and digital country. To push the message, a number of ministers, as well as First Lady Olena Zelenska, also spoke Monday to lay out the massive reconstruction needs, as well as their vision for a new Ukraine.

The Ukrainians have proposed that allied countries "adopt" specific regions of Ukraine, and lead the recovery there to render it more efficient. Britain has proposed taking on the Kyiv region, while France would concentrate on the heavily-hit Chernihiv region. Australia and Denmark are also among countries that have voiced interest in leading specific reconstruction efforts. "We understand that this is for the long-haul, and we are ready," high-level French diplomat Francois Delattre told AFP. Lugano was seen as a first step towards the rebuilding of Ukraine, and there are already several follow-up conferences planned, with one led by the EU in a few months. London has agreed to host a Ukraine Recovery Conference next year, while Germany has said it can host the 2024 edition. — AFP

EP ratifies 'new era' tech laws

STRASBOURG, France: The European Parliament on Tuesday ratified landmark laws that will more closely regulate Big Tech and curb illegal content online, as the EU seeks to bring order to the internet "Wild West". MEPs approved the final versions of the Digital Markets Act, focused on ending monopolistic practices of tech giants, and the Digital Services Act, which toughens scrutiny and the consequences for platforms when they host banned content. "With the legislative package, the European Parliament has ushered in a new era of tech regulation," said German MEP Andreas Schwab, a key backer of the laws. The DMA will have major consequences for Google, Meta and Apple, and a handful of online "gate-keepers" that must now do business according to a list of do's and don'ts intended to ensure that smaller rivals can thrive.

This should do away with the complicated court battles needed to enforce the EU's competition laws that drag on for decades and fall short in challenging the giants. The DMA passed with 588 votes in favor and only 11 against in a sign of the acute apprehension towards tech giants across the political spectrum. The DSA will target a wider range of internet actors and aims to ensure real consequences for companies that fail to control hate speech, disinformation and child sexual abuse images.

The digital world "has developed a bit like a western movie, there were no real rules of the game, but now there is a new sheriff in town", said Danish MEP Christel Schaldemose. "We have now taken back control of tech. We now have democratically determined rules for tech," she added. The DSA also passed easily with 539 votes in favor, 54 against and 30 abstentions.

Both laws now require the final approval by the EU's 27 member states, which should be a formality. The legislation had faced lobbying from the tech companies and intense debate over the extent of freedom of speech. Now the big question is over enforcement with worries that the European Commission, the EU's executive arm in Brussels, lacks the means to give sharp teeth to its new powers.

The EU has struggled to enforce its pioneering data protection law, known as the GDPR, with regulators facing criticism for going too slowly. "The essential challenge now is enforcement and the actual impact of these pieces of law," said Markus J Beyrer, head of Business Europe. The "competitiveness of our digital players is at stake," he added. EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton downplayed the problem, insisting that teams dedicated to enforcement, in conjunction with national regulators, would be up to the task. "There will be a before and an after DSA and DMA," he said. — AFP

'Guerrilla' sales: Japan's game console crunch

TOKYO: It's still dark when the line starts forming outside an electronics store in Tokyo, as desperate gamers try to snag the latest PlayStation or Xbox despite chronic shortages in Japan. The consoles made by Sony and Microsoft have been hard to buy since their November 2020 release, as has Nintendo's Switch, with supply chain issues exacerbated by lockdowns in China.

Shortages have struck worldwide but are particularly acute in Japan because Sony and Microsoft have prioritized other markets. That has left consumers and stores in a game of cat-and-mouse as customers hunt coveted consoles and sellers battle chaos that has sometimes required police interven-

Mega drought spells trouble at Hoover Dam

LAKE MEAD: Millions of gallons of Colorado River water hurtle through the Hoover Dam every day, generating electricity for hundreds of thousands of homes. But the mega drought affecting the western United States is sending reservoir levels plummeting towards deadpool - the point at which the dam can no longer produce power.

"We are 23rd year of drought here in the Colorado River Basin and Lake Mead has dropped down to 28 percent," explains Patti Aaron of the US Bureau of Reclamation, which operates the dam. She was referring to the vast lake created by the building of the dam. "There isn't as much head so there isn't as much pressure pushing the water into the turbines, so there's less efficiency and we aren't able to produce as much power."

Hoover Dam was a feat of American hope and engineering. Construction began in 1931 as the country was withering under the Great Depression. Thousands of workers toiled 24 hours a day to build what was then the largest hydroelectricity facility in the world. The dam stopped the Colorado River, creating Lake Mead, the biggest reservoir in the United States.

At its height, the lake surface sits over 1,200 feet (365 meters) above sea level. But after more than two decades of drought it is now less than 1,050 feet - the lowest since the lake was filled, and falling about a foot a week. If it drops to 950 feet, the intakes for the dam will no longer be under water and the turbines will stop. "We're working very hard for that not to happen," said Aaron. "It's just not an option to not produce power or not deliver water."

tion. Tetsuya, 50, has been trying to get a console since February and lined up before 6:30 am with dozens of other people outside a store in the electronics district of Akihabara.

But around 8 am, an employee emerged to announce the store had not received either PS5s or Xboxes and the crowd quickly dispersed. "It's a shame, but I'll keep trying my chances if I can," said Tetsuya, who declined to give his second name. Hoping to discourage crowding, many stores have moved sales online, using lottery systems, while others have shifted to low-profile sales that take place without prior warning, with consoles arriving on a random schedule.

The phenomenon is known as "guerrilla sales" in Japan, a term that first emerged with the Nintendo DS console, which was a victim of its own success during the 2000s. Some gamers are fighting back with their own tactics, including one who has set up a website gathering crowdsourced information. "Last summer, I spent three months trying to buy a PlayStation 5, but every time I went to a store, they



KAWASAKI, Japan: This file photo taken on Nov 12, 2020 shows an employee handling a newly-purchased Sony PlayStation 5 gaming console for a customer on the first day of its launch at an electronics shop. — AFP

were sold out," said the 40-year-old Japanese man, a researcher in artificial intelligence who asked to remain anonymous. — AFP



HOVER DAM: An aerial view shows the "bathtub ring", a white band of mineral deposits showing previous water levels, of Lake Mead on June 28, 2022 at the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River at the Nevada and Arizona state border. — AFP

The Colorado River rises in the Rocky Mountains and snakes its way through Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, California and northern Mexico, where it empties into the Gulf of California. It is fed chiefly by the huge snowpack that gets dumped at high altitudes, melting slowly throughout the warmer months. But reduced precipitation and the higher temperatures caused by humanity's unchecked burning of fossil fuels means less snow is falling, and what snow there is, is melting faster. As a consequence, there is not as much in a river that supplies water to tens of millions of people and countless acres of farmland. Boaters on Lake Mead, many of whom come from Las Vegas and its surrounding towns, say they are doing their part to protect supplies. They point to the drought-tolerant landscapes

they have installed instead of lawns, and the high percentage of indoor water that is recycled in desert towns. "But you've got farmers in California growing almonds for export," said Kameron Wells, who lives in nearby Henderson, Nevada.

Householders in southern California have grumbled about the fate of their luscious lawns since being ordered to limit their outdoor watering to one or two days a week at the start of the summer. But there, like in the desert periphery of Las Vegas, there is plenty of new construction, with huge houses being put up in the resort settlement of Lake Las Vegas. And from the air, the vibrant green of dozens of golf courses mark an otherwise dust bowl landscape. — AFP

Business

Struggling SAS files Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings in US

Carrier says operations and flight schedule unaffected by filing as pilots strike

STOCKHOLM: Faced with financial difficulties and a massive pilot strike, Scandinavian airline SAS said Tuesday it has filed for so-called Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings in the United States, as a part of restructuring plan. "We simply need to do much more and do it much faster," SAS chairman Carsten Dilling told a press conference where he defended what he called "a well thought-through decision".

In the US, Chapter 11 is a mechanism allowing a company to restructure its debts under court supervision while continuing to operate. The move was made in order "to proceed with the implementation of key elements" of its business transformation plan, the troubled carrier, which employs nearly 7,000 people, said in a statement.

Asked why the company chose initiate the proceedings in the US, rather than Sweden where it is headquartered, Dilling said they had considered several countries where they could file, but "ended up concluding that the US framework is the right one for the company." Chief executive Anko van der

Werff said they expected "to complete the Chapter 11 process in nine to 12 months."

SAS said its "operations and flight schedule are unaffected by the Chapter 11 filing, and SAS will continue to serve its customers as normal," while noting that the ongoing strike by Scandinavian pilot unions would continue to impact operations.

'Last thing SAS needs'

"A strike is the last thing the company needs right now," van der Werff told reporters. Pilots walked out on Monday after negotiations between the unions and the company broke down. The pilots are protesting against salary cuts demanded by management as part of a restructuring plan aimed at ensuring the survival of the company, which has suffered a string of losses since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020.

On Monday, SAS said that the strike "is estimated to lead to the cancellation of approximately 50 percent of all scheduled SAS flights," impacting

around 30,000 passengers a day. SAS management announced in February the savings plan to cut costs by 7.5 billion Swedish kronor (\$700 million), dubbed "SAS Forward", which was supplemented in June by a plan to increase capital by nearly one billion euros (\$1.04 billion).

Denmark and Sweden are the biggest shareholders with 21.8 percent each. Denmark said in June it was ready to increase its stake to 30 percent. Sweden has refused to provide fresh funds, but is willing to turn debt into capital. Norway, which left SAS in 2018, has said it is ready to return to the airline, but only by converting debt into equity.

Suffering, like the rest of the sector, from the impact of COVID-19, SAS cut 5,000 jobs, or 40 percent of its workforce, in 2020. The carrier now had around 6,900 employees at the end of May, a number which fell below 5,000 at the height of the pandemic. Shares in SAS, already at all-time lows, fell by more than 11 percent in the early hours of trading on the Stockholm Stock Exchange.



STOCKHOLM: President and CEO of SAS Anko van der Werff and Chairman of the Board of SAS Carsten Dilling address a press conference announcing that they will apply for bankruptcy protection in the US on July 5, 2022. —AFP

SAS's troubles comes as the summer is shaping up to be difficult for European airlines and airports, faced with staff shortages affecting traffic.

After widespread job losses linked to COVID-19, airlines and airports are struggling to recruit new staff in many countries. —AFP

Supply issues weigh on German car sales in June

FRANKFURT: German car sales fell sharply in June, official figures showed on Wednesday, as the sector remained grip by supply issues. New car registrations in Europe's top economy fell by 18.1 percent year-on-year to 224,558 units in June, the federal transport authority KBA said in a statement. New car sales had already fallen by 10.2 percent in May and by 21.5 percent in April.

Just over 1.2 million cars were registered in Germany in the first half of 2022, 11 percent fewer than in the same period last year. Auto manufacturers were already battling with supply issues in 2021, which led to intermittent production stops and a slump in sales. Those problems have persisted in recent months as lockdowns in China and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine have added to the difficulties in sourcing key components.

There was "no sign" that the market would turn around in the second half of the year, said EY analyst, Peter Fuss. In addition to supply issues, soaring inflation was limiting consumers' "willingness to buy" and companies' investment appetite, he said. The added concern caused by the possibility of a gas shortage in Germany this winter meant the conditions for a recovery in the car market were "extremely unfavorable", Fuss said. Electric vehicle sales performed better than the overall car market, but nonetheless saw new registrations drop by 3.2 percent year-on-year in June. —AFP

Sri Lanka admits bankruptcy, warns crisis will linger

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka is bankrupt and the acute pain of its unprecedented economic crisis will linger until at least the end of next year, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told parliament Tuesday. The island nation's 22 million people have endured months of galloping inflation and lengthy power cuts after the government ran out of foreign currency to import vital goods.

Wickremesinghe said the once-prosperous country will go into deep recession this year and acute shortages of food, fuel and medicine will continue. "We will have to face difficulties in 2023 as well," the premier said. "This is the truth. This is the reality." He said Sri Lanka's ongoing bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund depended on finalizing a debt restructuring plan with creditors by August.

"We are now participating in the negotiations as a bankrupt country," Wickremesinghe said. "Due to the state of bankruptcy our country is in, we have to submit a plan on our debt sustainability to them separately. Only when (the IMF) are satisfied with that plan can we reach an agreement." —AFP

Deliveroo adds KNET payment option

KUWAIT: Deliveroo Kuwait has announced the addition of KNET to its delivery platform, offering customers the option of paying with one of the most popular payment gateways in the country. Through an exclusive partnership with the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), all Deliveroo customers in Kuwait will now be able to pay for their favorite meals via the KNET payment gateway.

Deliveroo's partnership with NBK was finalized during a ceremony held at NBK headquarters in the presence of Deliveroo's General Manager, Seham AlHusaini, and the General Manager of the Consumer Banking Group at the National Bank of

FICCI delegation visits LuLu Hypermarket

KUWAIT: A delegation from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), on their recent trip to Kuwait, visited the regional office of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait on 4 July in the presence of officials from Indian Embassy.

The visit by members of India's apex business organization to LuLu Hypermarket, the Indian-owned, largest retailer in the region, was to strengthen existing venues of trade between India and Kuwait, and seek potential new channels and opportunities for exporting more Indian products to Kuwait's lucrative market.

During the visit, the delegation met with top management members of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, who appraised them of the brand's successful operations over the years and expansion plans in Kuwait.

LuLu management also pointed out that they currently stock items from more than 500 Indian brands, and feature over 10,000 Indian products on their shelves. They noted that among the products available at the different departments of the mega-retailer are Indian fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen foods, fish, grocery, fashionwear, household items, as well as a host of other miscellaneous items.

The hypermarket added that the Indian products were sourced from various states of the country, including from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana,

Nissan Al Babtain launches new genuine spare parts outlet

KUWAIT: Driven by its ambitious growth strategy, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Company (AABC), the authorized dealer of Nissan vehicles in Kuwait, were delighted to unveil their new genuine spare parts outlet. Located in Shuwaikh Industrial Area, the new Nissan outlet offers a suite of Nissan genuine parts and accessories, including spare parts, oil filter, brake pads, timing belts, spark plugs and air filters, which provide Nissan vehicles with long-term reliability, safety and quality.

To better serve its customer base in Kuwait through comprehensive service solutions, the new outlet joins the AABC network of Nissan service centers and genuine spare parts outlets across Kuwait, offering a seamless aftersales experience including customer access to genuine parts.

The inauguration ceremony of the new branch was attended by key executives from Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Company (AABC), including Jihan Bou Hamdan, Chief Transformation Officer and Manikandan Venkada, Aftersales Director; and from Nissan Middle East including Bilal Jabak, After Sales Director and Fayiz Al Alim, General Manager - Aftersales. Embodying the new brand identity, the new outlet boasts the principles of Nissan Retail Concept (NRC) - Nissan's globally consistent brand experience that offers enhanced customer services across multiple touchpoints.

Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Othman, in addition to several members from both Deliveroo's and NBK's executive leadership teams.

With the addition of KNET, customers now have the option of paying for their favorite meals using either their KNET-enabled debit cards, prepaid cards, credit cards, or cash on delivery. "We are excited to provide our customers the option of paying with one of the most popular payment methods in Kuwait," said Seham AlHusaini, General Manager of Deliveroo Kuwait. "As part of our ongoing commitment to ensure great food is only ever just a tap away, the addition of KNET facilities will provide our customers with other payment options to order their favorite foods," she added.

The General Manager of the Consumer Banking Group at the National Bank of Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Othman, also commented: "We are pleased to be



Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Kashmir. As part of the visit, the FICCI delegation also toured LuLu Hypermarket's Al-Rai outlet, where a large number of Indian products displayed in an attractive manner highlighted the popularity that Indian products enjoy among customers in Kuwait.

During the discussions with top LuLu Hypermarket management, the Indian delegation stressed that the focus of their visit was to assess the potential for enhancing imports of Indian products to

the Kuwaiti market. The delegation also underlined the existing strong bilateral relations between India and Kuwait in all sectors, and added that they plan to further cement these ties, even as they seek new areas of trade and cooperation.

For its part, LuLu Hypermarket pointed out that every year the brand conducts major promotions for Indian products, such as the Incredible Indian Fest, Mango Fest, India Utsav, and Indian Handloom Week among others.



Jihane Bou Hamdan, CTO of Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Company (AABC), Kuwait said, "As our operations and offerings continue to accelerate, the new branch launched today will accommodate our growing customer base and ensure consistent performance across the board. Further deepening AABC's commitment to customer satisfaction, this suite of aftersales products and services aims to offer greater value and conven-

ience and solidify Nissan's reputation as a trusted brand among customers in Kuwait."

Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Company (AABC), continues to maintain high customer satisfaction ratings, a standard that the company has been committed to for over seven decades, supported by the advanced flexible management style, long-term planning and leading visionary marketers.

signing an exclusive partnership with Deliveroo as part of NBK's active commitment to partnering with the most prominent leading brands in order to meet our customers' needs and enrich their banking experience."

KNET payments is one of the most widely used payment gateways in Kuwait, providing a secure and convenient payment environment for customers. Deliveroo recently celebrated its third year of business in the Kuwaiti market, delivering hundreds of thousands of meals to hungry customers around the country. Since its launch, Deliveroo has set itself apart with its unbeatable customer service, and was recently named the "Best Delivery App" by Service Hero, which provides the region's only consumer-powered customer satisfaction index. With exclusive restaurant partners, special offers and meal deals, Deliveroo Kuwait is always here to deliver.



Lifestyle | Features



Egyptian embroiderer Ahmed Othman El-Kassabgy (right), whose family was traditionally responsible for the task of producing the Kiswa, the cloth used to cover the Kaaba at the Grand Mosque in the Muslim holy city of Makkah, supervises as another employee. — AFP photos



Egyptian embroiderer Ahmed Othman El-Kassabgy sews with gold thread a verse from the Holy Quran onto a replica drape to be sold as a souvenir to tourists.

EGYPT FAMILY KEEPS TRADITION ALIVE BEHIND HAJJ CENTERPIECE

Under the steady hum of a ceiling fan, Ahmed Othman weaves golden threads through black fabric, creating Quranic verses, a century after his grandfather's work adorned the Kaaba in Makkah's Grand Mosque. A ceremonial hanging of the kiswa, huge pieces of black silk embroidered with gold patterns, over the cubic structure that is the centrepiece of the Grand Mosque symbolizes the launch of the hajj annual pilgrimage, which starts this week.

Othman's family used to be honored with the task of producing the kiswa. His family's creations would be dispatched in a camel caravan to Islam's holiest site in western Saudi Arabia towards which Muslims across the world turn to pray. Now, Othman keeps the tradition alive in a small workshop, tucked above the labyrinthine Khan Al-Khalili bazaar in central Cairo, where mass-produced souvenirs line the alleys.

The area is historically home to Egypt's traditional handicrafts, but artisans face growing challenges. Materials, mostly imported, have become expensive, particularly as Egypt faces economic woes and a devalued currency. Plummeting purchasing power makes high quality hand-crafted goods inaccessible to the average Egyptian, while master craftspeople find it hard to hand down

their skills as young people turn to more lucrative jobs.

This wouldn't be the case "if there was good money in the craft", Othman sighed, hunched over one of the many tapestries that fill his workshop. Sheets of black and brown felt are covered in verses and prayers, delicately embroidered in silver and gold. Every stitch echoes the "sacred ritual" Othman's grandfather was entrusted with in 1924. "For a whole year, 10 craftsmen" would work on the kiswa that covers the Kaaba which pilgrims circumambulate, using silver thread in a lengthy labor of love.

Sprinkled rosewater

From the 13th century, Egyptian artisans made the giant cloth in sections, which authorities transported to Makkah with great ceremony. Celebrations would mark the processions through cities, flanked by guards and clergymen as Egyptians sprinkled rosewater from balconies above.

Othman's grandfather, Othman Abdelhamid, was the last to supervise a fully Egyptian-made kiswa in 1926. From 1927, manufacturing began to move to Makkah in the nascent Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which would fully take over production of the kiswa in 1962. The family went on to embroider military regalia for



An embroiderer sews with gold thread - a verse from the Holy Quran onto a replica of the Kiswa, the cloth used to cover the Kaaba at the Grand Mosque in the Muslim holy city of Makkah, to be sold as a souvenir for tourists visiting the historic district of Al-Hussein in Egypt's capital.

Egyptian and foreign dignitaries, including former presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat.

"In addition to our work with military rank embroideries, my father started embroidering Quranic verses on tapestries," and then reproducing whole sections of the kiswa. Clients began flooding in for "exact replicas of the kiswa, down to the last detail". Though today they offer small tableaus for as little as 100 Egyptian pounds (about \$5), massive customized orders go for several thousand dollars, such as replicas of the Kaaba door, which Othman proudly

claims are indistinguishable from the originals in Makkah.

Back-breaking

But the family has not been immune to the economic turbulence that began with the coronavirus pandemic, which decimated small businesses and craftsmanship in Egypt. Since early 2020, they have sold around "two pieces per month", whereas before they would sell at least one tapestry a day. Othman worries that a sense of "worldwide austerity" makes business unlikely to bounce back. Today, there might only be a dozen or so craftsmen whose work he considers authentic, with many artisans leaving the craft for quicker cash flows.

"They can make 200 to 300 pounds a day," (\$10-\$16) driving a tuktuk motorized rickshaw, or a minibus, Othman said. "They're not going to sit on a loom breaking their backs all day." But still, a century and a half after his great grandfather left his native Turkey and brought the craft with him to Egypt, Othman says he has stayed loyal to techniques learnt as a child when he would duck out of school to watch his father work. "It's on us to uphold the craft the same way we learned it, so it's authentic to the legacy we inherited," he said. — AFP



Photo shows a fragment of the Kiswa - the cloth used to cover the Kaaba at the Grand Mosque in the Muslim holy city of Makkah.



Images created using typewriters by artist James Cook, are pictured in his studio in south-east London.



'Always a challenge'

Cook can produce art anywhere including in the shadow of the London Eye or across the river from the UK parliament, the Palace of Westminster. As the sun shines bright in a clear blue sky, he delicately produces his images using the "@" symbol, numbers and letters including "W" and "P". For a portrait, he

neer at a hospital. "For him to be able to turn it into a work of art, it's amazing."

Cook says it was "really satisfying" to use a "limited" medium. Smaller drawings can take up to four to five days but portraits can take longer. Panoramic drawings-pieced together at the end-can take between two weeks to a month. He will host an exhibition from July until August

For UK artist, the key to good art is a typewriter

James Cook sits calmly at his desk, with the only sound the clickety clack of his typewriter. As he works, a portrait of a boy takes shape. From Hollywood star Tom Hanks to the London Eye observation wheel, the artist can turn symbols and letters into art, earning him increasing attention.

Cook, 25, produces his work in a studio in London, surrounded by typewriters and artwork, with the white dome of the O2 arena visible outside. He began producing typewriter art in 2014 when he was in college studying art and came across an artist from the 1920s who produced similar work. Initially, he thought the idea was "impossible"-until he tried it himself. "It was simply out of curiosity that I decided to go out and get my own typewriter," he told AFP. "Since 2014, I've just been slowly learning how to make drawings."

Cook first thought depicting buildings would be easier because of the straight lines and the ease of moving from left to right on a typewriter. "I couldn't draw people's faces before doing typewriter art," he said. "In fact, I probably draw people better on a typewriter than I can draw free hand in pen or pencil." Cook never set out to make it a career and went to university to study architecture but interest online encouraged him to pursue typewriter art. People donate typewriters to Cook as he gives the machines a "second life".



Artist James Cook poses for a photograph using a typewriter he uses to create pieces of art, in his studio in south-east London. — AFP photos

uses the bracket symbol to recreate the curvature of the eyes' pupils or to illustrate the skin's complexion he will use the "@" symbol because "it has a large surface area".

Methodically typing outside, he soon grabs attention. "Before the invention of Microsoft Word and the rest of it, this is what we used to type letters with," said David Asante, who works as an IT engi-

where people can make their own typewriter art, and see his work including the signed portrait of Hanks. He also hopes to set a Guinness World Record for the largest typewriter drawing. But while it appears seamless to the viewer, Cook says it "never gets any easier." "It's always a challenge." — AFP

Ukrainians seek to heal war trauma at mental health clinic

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Yuriy Makeyev found himself homeless and jobless: a combination of circumstances that brought him to the brink of a nervous breakdown. Now the 48-year-old, who has fled his home in the war-torn east, believes he can return to normal life thanks to a special course of psychological rehabilitation he is undergoing at a Kyiv clinic.

At least 5,000 civilians have been killed and as many wounded since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine on February 24, according to the latest United Nations figures. But many more have survived devastating shelling across the country, causing mental scars and psychological trauma.

Psychologists say that weeks spent in bomb shelters as well as losing employment and being forced from home can lead to stress and frustration that may become impossible to cope with on one's own. "After the war erupted, I was left without housing and without work simultaneously," said Makeyev, who worked as an editor at a Kyiv-based magazine. His ordeal began back in 2014, when he was forced to leave his home city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine after it was seized by Russian-backed separatists.

"What is happening in Kyiv and around, I have already seen in Donetsk. I did not want to experience it again, but I did," he said. A Russian missile strike on a residential building in Kyiv last month left one person dead. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Makeyev's news outlet shut down and he lost his job. The hostel where he was living also closed, and financial difficulties meant he could not afford to rent elsewhere. "Several factors developed into one continuous stress and something urgently needed to be done to address it," he said

'Demand from society'

Makeyev told AFP his story, sitting on a bench in the quiet courtyard of the psychological rehabilitation clinic called Socioterapy. "There are a huge number of people with post-traumatic, stress disorder, or PTSD," says Denys Starkov, a psychologist at the crisis centre, which opened last month. "There is demand (for the clinic) from society. Psychologists are over-

loaded with such clients, so this idea came up," Starkov said of the facility. He offers a special three-week course, focusing mainly on group sessions for people who are suffering from anxiety, panic attacks or painful memories.

Some, like Makeyev, come directly to the clinic, others call a helpline and speak to specialists, who determine whether they are suitable for therapy. Treatment is free. The course includes 15 thematic sessions aimed at comprehending one's experience of trauma and learning ways of coping with it. The course is currently available only to civilians. Neither soldiers nor children are inpatients at the moment.



A patient, Yuriy Makeyev, stands in the courtyard of the psychological rehabilitation clinic called Socioterapy during an interview in Kyiv. — AFP

"If it (PTSD) is not treated on time, then it takes on more severe forms," Starkov said, sitting in a spacious, bright group study-room, with rows of chairs and a flipchart with multi-colored markers in front of them. The three-story building on the outskirts of the city served as a hospital for alcohol and drug addicts before Russia invaded. Now a team of seven psychologists conduct sessions with patients several times a day, both in groups and individually says Oleg Olishkevsky, head of the therapy program.

He adds that currently ten patients are undergoing the course, but the centre plans to increase this number to 30 people. "For the next 10-15 years, this will be the main area of work, because every inhabitant of our country is experiencing this traumatic situation," he told AFP. Nevertheless, Olishkevsky and his team are optimistic. "We are already seeing results. People can feel that they are safe here, that they are being taken care of," he says. Patient Makeyev seems ready to agree-even after just four days in the clinic. "I have been inspired here. I was given hope that I had already lost," he said, wearing bright blue trousers and a white T-shirt, his voice sounding confident. The first thing he intends to do after finishing therapy is to look for a job, Makeyev says. — AFP



School founder Abu Kahfi (right) teaches students at an Islamic boarding school for deaf children in Sleman.



A student recites the Quran using sign language at an Islamic boarding school for deaf children in Sleman.



Students study at an Islamic boarding school for deaf children in Sleman.

INSIDE INDONESIA'S ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL FOR DEAF KIDS

At an Islamic boarding school in a sleepy neighborhood on the outskirts of the Indonesian city Yogyakarta, the sound of Quranic recitation is nowhere to be heard. This is a religious school for deaf children, and here the students gesture rapidly with their hands, learning to recite the Koran in Arabic sign language. Islamic boarding schools are an integral part of life in Indonesia, with about four million students residing in 27,000 institutions across the country, according to the religious affairs ministry. But this Islamic boarding school is one of a handful that offer religious education for deaf students in the world's largest Muslim-majority country.

"It all came from my restlessness when I found out deaf children in Indonesia did not know their religion," school founder Abu Kahfi told AFP. The 48-year-old set up the school in late 2019 after befriending

several deaf people and realizing they had no access to Islamic education. It now hosts 115 deaf boys and girls from across the archipelago who share the dream of becoming a hafiz, a person who can memorize the Koran by heart.

The children sit cross-legged on the floor, moving their hands expressively while looking down at their textbooks. The air is only punctured by yelps and high-fives after they recite a passage correctly to Kahfi when he calls them to the front of the class. It is a daunting religious education for children who have never learned about religion or the Koran, and whose mother tongue is Indonesian. "The difficulty is enormous," Kahfi said.

'No longer ashamed'

In a room 100 meters (330 feet) from the boys, a group of girls in conservative Islamic dress sit separated from their male

counterparts, carrying out the same practice in rows. For 20-year-old student Laela Dhiya Ulhaq, studying at the school has brought joy and pride to her parents. "I want to go to heaven with my mother and father... I also don't want to leave this place. I want to become a teacher here," the school's oldest student told AFP.

While others can memorize syllables to recite the text out loud, the hearing-impaired must painstakingly memorize every single character of the holy book's 30 sections of verses. Muhammad Rafa, a 13-year-old student who has been enrolled at the school for two years, rolls his thumbs and fingers into different signs, laser-focused on learning the verse in front of him.

"I'm very happy here. It's very quiet at home, there is nobody to talk to because nobody is deaf, everyone is normal," Rafa, who has memorized nine Quranic sec-

tions, told AFP through an interpreter. Both Kahfi and donors provide funding for the school, and children from poor families who cannot afford the 1 million rupiah (\$68) enrollment fee that pays for books, uniforms and toiletries are allowed to study for free.

The children also study Islamic law, mathematics, science and foreign languages so they can continue their education at a higher level. But another impact of the school is boosting the children's confidence as hearing-impaired members of society. "My son used to have very low self-esteem, he knew he was different," Zainal Arifin, whose 11-year-old son Arfi studies at the school, told AFP. "Since he came (here) he's no longer ashamed of signing in public. He told me God made him this way, and he has fully embraced who he is." — AFP



Students learn to recite the Quran using sign language at an Islamic boarding school for deaf children in Sleman. At an Islamic boarding school in a sleepy neighborhood on the outskirts of Indonesian city Yogyakarta, the evocative sound of Quranic recitation is nowhere to be heard.



Students study at an Islamic boarding school for deaf children in Sleman. — AFP photos

Hot dog eating champion wins again in July 4 contest

A man with the playful name Joey Chestnut wolfed down 63 hot dogs in 10 minutes Monday to win the annual July 4 competitive eating contest featuring America's quintessential cookout food on Coney Island in New York. Chestnut has now won 15 times but on Monday he fell way short of the record he set in 2020 when he downed 76 hotdogs, buns included, also in just 10 minutes. So he apologized to the crowd and said he

would do better next year.

Chestnut told AFP he trains by eating hot dogs often and taking part in eating contests featuring them about once a week. After Monday's virtuoso performance, he said he will not touch food again for a day. Chestnut was the undisputed winner of the Nathan's Famous Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest, finishing far ahead of the field. Second place went to one Geoffrey Esper with 47.5 franks and

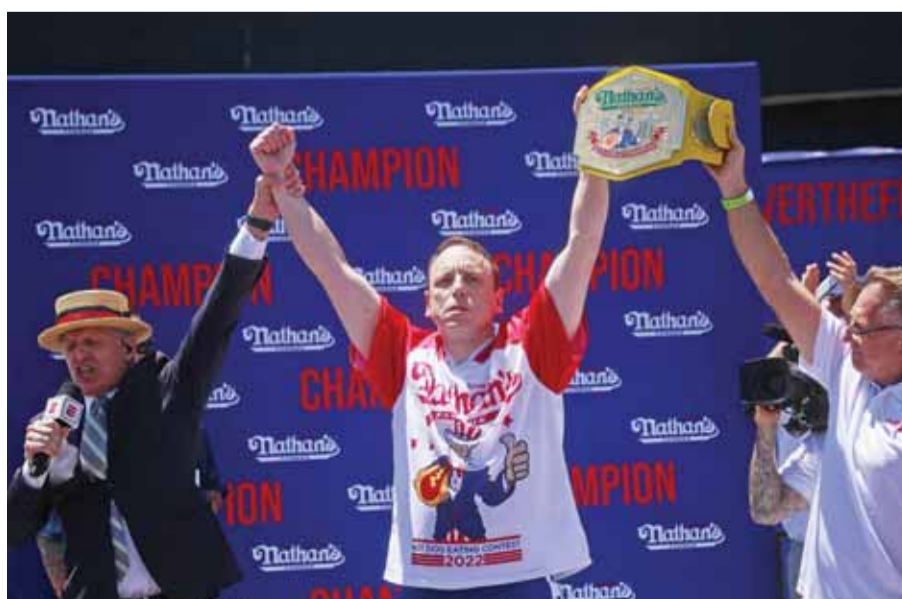
buns, and third to James Webb at 41. "Joey Chestnut is a force from beyond who defies the laws of physics," said contest host George Shea.

In the women's category, Miki Sudo triumphed with 40 hot dogs in 10 minutes. Sudo returned after sitting out last year because she was pregnant. This time she showed off her new baby. She fell short of her record of 48 franks. Competitors from all over America and

as far away as Australia tend to dunk their hotdogs in water or soda to make them easier to swallow in such rapid succession without gagging. "The Nathan's Famous Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest is arguably the most iconic sporting event in American history," Shea said. "The event is a crucible through which greatness is forged." — AFP



Joey Chestnut (left) and Miki Sudo hold 63 and 40 hot dogs respectively after winning the Nathan's Famous 4th of July 2022 hot dog eating contest.



Joey Chestnut reacts after winning first place - eating 63 hot dogs in 10 minutes, during the 2022 Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog Eating Contest on July 4, 2022 at Coney Island in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. — AFP photos

Paul Anka: Pop's oldest teen keeps doing it his way

Paul Anka-the silky-voice crooner who wrote such evergreen classics as "She's a Lady" and the lyrics to "My Way"-has been around the block since he scored his first global number one in 1957. But it has taken the Canadian 80 years to headline one of the world's top jazz festivals alongside legends like George Benson, Gilberto Gil and Van Morrison.

"It's gonna be a thrill for me" to play the Juan Jazz Festival on the French Riviera-which starts Wednesday-Anka told AFP from his home in Los Angeles. Indeed, the line-up is a gathering of pure jazz royalty, from Herbie Hancock to Diana Krall, Stacey Kent and the genius Armenian pianist Tigran Hamasyan. But Anka's roots are pure pop, going straight to the top of the hit parade-as it was then called-with his debut smash, "Diana", when he was only



In this file photo, Canadian-born singer and songwriter Paul Anka gestures during a concert in Basel. — AFP

16. The song ushered in the era of teeny bopper stars, with Anka the first teenager ever to score a number one hit in Britain.

'My Way'

The song told of Anka's unrequited love for an older woman who was "out of my league"-Diana Ayoub was 19 at the time-and he used to pine for her after spotting her at his Orthodox church in Ottawa. The son of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants, Anka grew up speaking French, which is how he came to write the English version of one of the 20th century's most sung songs, "My Way".

His take on the standard, which was originally recorded by the French singer Claude Francois as "Comme d'habitude", became Frank Sinatra's signature standard, as well as a hit for Elvis and the Sex Pistols' Sid Vicious. "I have a great history with France, with French people and the music," said Anka. "I have to do some of the original hits that first took me to France when I was a young boy-'Diana', 'You Are My Destiny' and 'My Way' of course," he added.

Sorry Trump

Anka was slated to sing "My Way" at Donald Trump's inauguration as US president in 2017 before pulling out, although he avoided saying whether he supported him. "You've got a better chance of getting a sunrise past a rooster on that one," he said. While his full-on romantic standards such as "(You're) Having My Baby" may be slightly cheesy to some, his songs and celebrity have endured. "Put Your Head on My Shoulder" inspired a viral TikTok challenge last year, and "She's a Lady"-which he also wrote-is one of Welsh singer Tom Jones's biggest crowd-pleasers.

Anka also popped up on stage next to Lisa in a 1995 episode of "The Simpsons" called "Treehouse of Horror VI" in which he co-starred. The singer was and is still friends with some of France's musical greats, and hinted that he would pay homage to some of them during his show in Juan-les-Pins. "You'll see when I do my show... I was connected to all the French singers from (Charles) Aznavour, to Johnny Hallyday ("the French Elvis"), Gilbert Becaud and Mireille Mathieu, whom I wrote an album for.

"One of my favorites was Michel Colombier," a prolific Hollywood film composer who "wrote a couple of albums with me". Anka said he wanted to "get the sense of the audience" before deciding what to play, although there would be a tribute to Sammy Davis Jr. "I can't be selfish and do what I want for myself. I want to be eclectic... I don't know if I will have time to sing anything from the new album, and I don't know if anyone will be interested," quipped the singer, who has just recorded a new television special. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Ukraine's Viazovska becomes 2nd woman to win Fields math medal

Ukraine's Maryna Viazovska paid tribute to those suffering in her war-torn country on Tuesday as she became the second woman to be awarded the Fields medal, known as the Nobel prize for mathematics. Viazovska, a 37-year-old Kyiv-born math professor, received the prestigious award alongside three other winners at a ceremony in Helsinki.

"My life changed forever" when Moscow invaded Ukraine in February, she said in a video displayed at the ceremony, adding that her sisters had been evacuated from Kyiv. "Right now Ukrainians are really paying the highest price for our beliefs and our freedom," she said. The International Congress of Mathematicians, where the prize is awarded, was initially scheduled to be held in Russia's second city Saint Petersburg and opened by President Vladimir Putin.

Earlier in the year hundreds of mathematicians signed an open letter protesting the choice of the host city, and after Moscow invaded Ukraine in late February the event was moved to the Finnish capital. The other Fields winners were France's Hugo Duminil-Copin of the University of Geneva, Britain's James Maynard of Oxford University and June Huh of Princeton in the United States. The medal, along with \$15,000 Canadian dollars (\$11,600), is awarded every four years to between two to four candidates under

France's Duminil-Copin, Fields-winning mathematician with 'aesthetic vision'

Hugo Duminil-Copin, a French mathematician whose visual approach helped him win the world's most prestigious mathematics prize the Fields Medal on Tuesday, said he "doesn't really fit into the clichés of a genius". The 36-year-old, who has a messy head of hair and bright eyes beaming from behind glasses, told AFP that he is a "very, very normal person" who loves sport, his family and quiet moments of reflection.

But for Duminil-Copin, who specialises in probability theory, those quiet moments can lead to discoveries that won him the Fields Medal, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for mathematics. He accepted the prize, which is awarded every four years to mathematicians under 40, at a ceremony in Finland's capital Helsinki.

The other winners were Britain's James Maynard of Oxford University, June Huh of Princeton in the United States and Ukraine's Maryna Viazovska, who is only the second ever woman laureate. Duminil-Copin described with unabashed enthusiasm the happiness he finds in working with others in the search for answers—whether or not they find one. "It's the best, especially since it's a collective process, where all the beauty is in interacting with others," he said in an interview a few days before the prize was announced.

A visual mind

Born on August 26, 1985, Duminil-Copin has collected a raft of mathematics awards over the last decade. At the age of 31, he was appointed professor at France's Institute of Advanced Scientific Studies in 2016. "It's a place that seems made for me, for my creative part," he said of the green campus outside Paris. It gives the mathematician that most precious resource for deep thinkers: time. "This slowness in everyday life is very fruitful because I need



The laureates of the 2022 Fields Prize for Mathematics (left to right) Ukrainian Maryna Viazovska, Britain's James Maynard, US-based June Huh and France's Hugo Duminil-Copin attend the award ceremony during the International Congress of Mathematicians 2022 (ICM 2022) in Helsinki, Finland, on July 5, 2022. — AFP

French music streamer Deezer flops on stock market debut

French music streaming service Deezer's shares failed to strike the right note with investors at its Tuesday launch on the Paris stock market, plunging in morning trading by over 35 percent. The steep fall—as low as 5.52 euros (\$5.70) before a slight rebound—was a blow for the Spotify competitor, whose 9.6 million subscribers account for around two percent of the global streaming market, according to Mdia Research. That makes it a minnow



Ukraine's Maryna Viazovska presents her medal after receiving the 2022 Fields Prize for Mathematics during the International Congress of Mathematicians 2022 (ICM 2022) in Helsinki, Finland, on July 5, 2022. — AFP

the age of 40 for "outstanding mathematical achievement".

'Tour de force'

Viazovska was born in 1984 in Ukraine, then still part of the Soviet Union, and has been a professor at the Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne in Switzerland since 2017. At the ceremony she paid tribute to Yulia Zdanovska, a young mathematician who studied under the same teachers she had in Kyiv, who

was killed by a Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv in March. "Yulia was a person filled with light, and her big dream was teaching mathematics to kids in Ukraine," Viazovska said. "When someone like her dies, it's like the future dies."

In a decision made before the war in Ukraine began, Viazovska was awarded for her work in sphere packing—a problem first posed by German astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler nearly 400 years ago. In what is called the Kepler conjecture, he proposed that the most compact way to pack spheres was in a pyramid, like oranges at a supermarket.

But it was such a complex problem that it was not considered proved correct until 1998 via intense computer number-crunching. Then in 2016, Viazovska solved the problem in the eighth dimension, using what is called an E8 lattice. Marcus du Sautoy, a British mathematics professor at Oxford University, told AFP it was a surprise when Viazovska came up with such "slick proof" compared to the "tortuous proof needed in three dimensions".

Renaud Coulangeon of Bordeaux University told AFP the solution was a "tour de force". The only previous female laureate in the prize's more than 80-year history was Iranian mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani, who died of breast cancer in 2017 just three years after winning the award. Du Sautoy said he hopes Viazovska's win "will contribute to inspiring more women to choose mathematics as a career."

Express the inexpressible
Duminil-Copin, born in France in 1985, is a professor at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques, focusing on the mathematical branch of statistical physics. He was honored for solving "long-standing

time for ideas to come, for them to settle quietly, for them to take shape," he said. At the campus, which is not far from where he grew up, Duminil-Copin uses his "very visual intuition" to take on the most complicated mathematical problems.

"There are very few formulas and many drawings" in his mind when he thinks about such problems, he said. That "aesthetic vision" allows him to view mathematics with a "certain elegance", he added. The Paris institute allows researchers to free themselves of all other obligations, including teaching. But Duminil-Copin teaches anyway, retaining a professorship at the University of Geneva, saying that "in the end it is perhaps the most important aspect of this profession".

He may have inherited this passion from his father, a sports teacher, and mother, a dancer who became a teacher later in life. When he was younger, Duminil-Copin envisioned becoming a teacher himself—of maths, of course—but his talent propelled him towards research. Collaboration is at the heart of his outlook. If he provides mathematical tools to physicists, their work in turn may allow someone else in the future to find new applications for them. "It's the whole community that really produces scientific progress," he said.

Mental balance
Duminil-Copin hailed the importance of two university professors to his career, Jean-Francois Le Gall, who also worked on probability theory, and fellow Fields Medal winner Wendelin Werner. He said he fell in "love at first sight" with percolation theory during a class Werner taught on the subject, which falls under the branch of statistical physics. It was in that class that Duminil-Copin first encountered Nienhuis's conjecture—a "beautiful, elegant and completely mysterious" problem, he said. "I solved it a few years later, almost without doing it on purpose." As a child, Duminil-Copin preferred astronomy to mathematics. He said he was "not pushed at all" by his parents to focus solely on his studies—instead they were keen to "confront him with a variety of things" such as sport, music and friends. —AFP

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People walk along the Nevsky Prospect Avenue in central Saint Petersburg during the 'Scarlet Sails,' a romantic holiday with laser show to honor high schools graduates. — AFP

Star wars: Russians turn to astrologers amid Ukraine conflict

Will there be nuclear war? Will Russia win the Ukraine offensive? Will my son survive? As the Kremlin presses ahead with its military intervention in the pro-Western country, more and more Russians are turning to astrologers. In Russia's second city of Saint Petersburg, bespectacled Elena Korolyova receives clients in her apartment, where two cats prowl between piles of books.

"People want to know what will become of Russia, cut off from the rest of world," the 63-year-old told AFP. Astrologers, psychics and mediums have for years been popular in Russia, and particularly turbulent years have seen demand for their services increase.

As the country reels from a barrage of unprecedented sanctions over Ukraine, more and more Russians are turning to astrology as they peer into the future. Korolyova, a grey-haired philologist by training who rose to fame in the former imperial capital through word of mouth, seeks to reassure her clients. She predicts that Moscow will not only survive the economic storm, but also emerge victorious. "The global cataclysm will intensify in September, but Russia will come out of it stable and prosperous," she said.

Korolyova charges 5,000 rubles (\$90) per consultation and says—without wanting to reveal any numbers—that since President

well as broadcaster RTL in Germany, will help it reach more listeners in a global streaming market growing at more than 25 percent per year by users. "With the right distribution, we know we can win market share and become rivals to the major players," CEO Folgueira told AFP ahead of the stock market launch.

Compared with 2015, when a first attempt to float the company had to be postponed because of hostile market conditions, "the business has changed, the market has changed: it's the right moment to take this step," he added. "Music streaming is really established, it makes up almost two-thirds of revenue for recorded music, which wasn't true back then." Deezer's top investor before its arrival on the market was British-American billionaire Len Blavatnik, with 43 percent, while French businesspeople including billionaire Francois Pinault have also bet on the firm. — AFP

400 years ago. In what is called the Kepler conjecture, he proposed that the most compact way to pack spheres was in a pyramid, like oranges at a supermarket.

But it was such a complex problem that it was not considered proved correct until 1998 via intense computer number-crunching. Then in 2016, Viazovska solved the problem in the eighth dimension, using what is called an E8 lattice. Marcus du Sautoy, a British mathematics professor at Oxford University, told AFP it was a surprise when Viazovska came up with such "slick proof" compared to the "tortuous proof needed in three dimensions".

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Express the inexpressible

Duminil-Copin, born in France in 1985, is a professor at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques, focusing on the mathematical branch of statistical physics. He was honored for solving "long-standing

problems in the probabilistic theory of phase transitions", which, according to the jury, has opened up several new research directions.

Maynard, 35, received the medal "for contributions to analytic number theory, which have led to major advances in the understanding in the structure of prime numbers," Kenig said. "His work is highly ingenious, often leading to surprising breakthroughs on important problems that seemed to be inaccessible by current techniques," the International Mathematical Union said in a statement. June Huh, 39, was given the award for "transforming" the field of geometric combinatorics, "using methods of Hodge theory, tropical geometry and singularity theory", the jury said.

He is a rare Fields winner who did not focus on mathematics in his teen years, after a bad elementary school test score convinced him he didn't have a talent for it, he told Quanta Magazine. "When I was young, math was like a faraway land, surrounded by giant walls that I could not climb," Huh said in his video. "I grew up in Korea and I dreamed of becoming a poet, to express the inexpressible. I eventually learned that mathematics is a way of doing that." — AFP

Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24 requests from clients have increased. In the first week of the conflict, the number of searches for "astrologer" more than doubled on Russia's main search engine Yandex—from 42,900 on February 19 to 95,000 on March 5, according to the company's keyword statistics.

Political astrology

In Moscow, another prominent astrologer, Konstantin Daragan, who made a name for himself by claiming to have predicted the coronavirus pandemic, also says Russia will win on the ground in Ukraine and in its clash with the West. "Russia will become the centre of the world after the conflict," he said on social media recently.

Originally from Ukraine's eastern region of Donbas that the Russian army has been seeking to conquer, the aeronautical engineer turned astrologer claims to have advised ministers, bankers and even members of Ukraine's secret services in the past. Having left for Moscow after pro-Western authorities came to power in Kyiv in 2014, he supports the Russian military intervention, even if his hometown of Lysychansk has been ravaged by fighting. For him, too, business is booming. His "School of Classical Astrology" doubled its student numbers since Putin launched the Ukraine intervention, now counting around 200 in Moscow.

Star wars

Sociologist Alexei Levinson of the independent Levada research centre said that an attempt to read the stars is a way of making sense of reality for many "confused" Russians. "Faced with a universe that has collapsed, some prefer to take stars as guides rather than their leaders,"

he said. "Astrology today is a kind of psychotherapy or new religion."

Anna Markus, one of Daragan's students in her 50s, said she looks to the stars for "logic in events on Earth". "Russia is designated as the only culprit of the conflict, but it is obvious that a third country is the real culprit," she told AFP. She has a star chart that she claims proves the United States is guilty. Over the border in battered Ukraine, the stars, predictably, show the opposite. Astrologer Vlad Ross, who is popular in Ukrainian media, says that Putin is "gravely ill" and "will not survive past March 2023".

"Saturn is the sign of Russia against Uranus, the sign of Ukraine. Our victory is imminent," assured another star Ukrainian astrologer, Angela Pearl, in a video viewed more than a million times since mid-May. Desperate Ukrainians are turning to astrologers for a sign that their loved ones on the front will survive or if they will have to flee advancing Russian troops. Ukrainians want to know "if nuclear war will happen, if they should leave their country, if their loved ones are in danger", astrologer Olena Umanets told AFP.

"Russia will explode in March 2023," predicted the 38-year-old former musician, who fled Ukraine for Switzerland. Her \$100 online consultation reassured one client, a 46-year-old television producer in Kyiv named Kristina, worried about her husband who is fighting on the frontline. "My husband just called me. He thanks God for having survived the night," she wrote to her astrologer in June. "Thank you for having encouraged me to pray for him, it relieved me to share this responsibility with the stars." — AFP



French Economy and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire (center) attends the Deezer's listing ring the ball ceremony on the Pan-European stock exchange Euronext at Euronext headquarters in La Defense business district near Paris on July 5, 2022. — AFP

Sports

Dismantling shut ski resorts an uphill battle in Swiss Alps

Bankruptcy filed amid shortages of snow, money

News in brief

Man City promote Borrell

LONDON: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has promoted Rodolfo Borrell to work as his assistant manager after the departure of Juanma Lillo. Borrell has been at City since 2014 after spells with Barcelona and Liverpool. The 51-year-old Spaniard joined Guardiola's coaching staff following his compatriot's arrival at the Etihad Stadium in 2016. Guardiola's previous assistant Lillo left the Premier League champions last month to take charge of Qatar Stars League club Al Sadd. City also revealed Enzo Maresca has rejoined the club's backroom team. Maresca, formerly head coach of City's elite development squad, joins Guardiola's staff a year after leaving City for a short spell as Parma manager. "Manchester City are delighted to announce that Enzo Maresca has returned to the club as part of Pep Guardiola's backroom staff," a City statement said on Tuesday. "Rodolfo Borrell, who has been at City since 2014, will step up to the role of assistant coach in place of the recently-departed Juanma Lillo."

US, Jamaica women win

MONTERREY: Two-time defending champion United States blanked Haiti 3-0 on Monday in the opening match of the CONCACAF W tournament, a regional qualifier for the 2023 Women's World Cup and 2024 Olympics. The two-time reigning Women's World Cup champion United States seized a 2-0 half-time lead through goals by Alex Morgan in the 16th and 23rd minutes. Midge Purce added the third in the 84th minute for the Americans. In the day's other match, Jamaican captain Khadija Shaw scored in the eighth minute to give her team a 1-0 victory over host Mexico. The eight-team tournament at Monterrey serves as the North American qualifier for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, and the 2024 Paris Olympics. Group A features the USA, Jamaica, Mexico and Haiti while Group B comprises Canada, Costa Rica, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago. The two top teams in each group will advance to the semi-finals and next year's Women's World Cup with third-place group teams advancing to next February's global playoff for three final Women's World Cup spots.

Police probe racism claims

BIRMINGHAM: Police have launched an investigation after India fans claimed they were racially abused during England's fifth Test victory in Birmingham. The Bharat Army, the official India supporters' club, said "many" of its members at the Edgbaston ground had been targeted by "a very small minority" in Monday's fourth day of play. A post on the group's Twitter account read: "Sad to say many of our members experienced racist abuse from a very small minority of individuals. We will work with @Edgbaston to share all your feedback. Thank you to those England fans who stood by us." West Midlands Police on Tuesday said they were liaising with officials at Edgbaston to understand what happened. Inquiries are being made to identify an alleged offender whose image was circulated on social media. The England and Wales Cricket Board said: "We are very concerned to hear reports of racist abuse at today's Test match. We are in contact with colleagues at Edgbaston, who will investigate. There is no place for racism in cricket."

Santo named Al-Ittihad coach

RIYADH: Former Tottenham Hotspur manager Nuno Espirito Santo has been named coach of Saudi league runners-up Al-Ittihad replacing Romanian Cosmin Contra. The club announced the two-year deal on Twitter on Monday, sharing a video in which Santo said: "It's an honor for me to join the greatest club in Saudi Arabia: Al-Ittihad." Santo, 48, has coached several top-tier European clubs, including Spain's Valencia and Portugal's Porto, as well as Premier league side Wolverhampton Wanderers. Al-Ittihad announced the end of Contra's tenure after he failed to guide the club to the Saudi Pro League championship title. Al-Ittihad led throughout the season before the crown was snatched from them by 18-time champions Al-Hilal. Nuno was not the first choice to succeed Jose Mourinho at Spurs but his term in charge began brightly.

World half marathon cancelled

PARIS: The World Athletics Half Marathon Championships due to take place in Yangzhou in China this November have been cancelled "as a consequence of the (COVID-19) pandemic" the sport's governing body said on Tuesday. The World Athletics Council has, though, "resolved to grant the World Athletics Road Running Championships to Yangzhou in March 2027." World Athletics took the decision following discussions with the local organizing committee and the Chinese Athletics Association. The world half marathon will now be incorporated along with a new world 5km championships into the World Athletics Road Running Championships, which will make their debut in Riga, Latvia, on September 30 to October 1, 2023. "Unfortunately, the championships can't be held this year, through no fault of the LOC, but our endurance athletes will have the opportunity to compete in Riga next year," said World Athletics President Sebastian Coe.



BOURG-SAINT-PIERRE: A picture taken above Bourg-Saint-Pierre shows a rusty gondola lift mast above the departure station of Super Saint-Bernard ski resort. —AFP photos

BOURG-SAINT-PIERRE: In a remote, secluded valley in the Swiss Alps, a line of rusty ski lift masts scar the grassy hillside where cows lazily graze. The lifts at the once bustling Super Saint Bernard ski resort in Switzerland's southern Wallis canton, near the Italian border, stopped running in 2010. Since the local company that ran the small station folded, the infrastructure and facilities have been left as a disintegrating blemish on the Alpine landscape. "Frankly, I would like to see them destroy it, raze it," former resort director Claude Lattion acknowledged to AFP.

"You arrive from Italy over the Great Saint Bernard Pass and see this," he said, nodding towards the graffiti-covered ruins and piles of broken glass that once housed the restaurant and ski lift departure station. With its spectacular mountain landscapes and pristine slopes, Switzerland draws winter sports fans and tourists from around the world. But in recent years, shortages of snow and especially of money have seen many of its smaller, local stations struggle to keep their ski lifts running. At least 14 out of 2,433 are currently out of order, according to the Federal Office of Transport.

Ireland's Sexton cleared for 2nd Test; All Blacks lose Whitelock

DUNEDIN: Ireland captain Johnny Sexton has been cleared to play in the second Test against the New Zealand, according to assistant coach Mike Catt after confusion about the fly-half's head injury assessment (HIA) in the first Test. But the All Blacks were dealt a blow when delayed concussion ruled veteran lock Sam Whitelock out of the Dunedin rematch on Saturday. Sexton left the field after taking a blow to the head 30 minutes into the first Test, won by the All Blacks 42-19, and when the playmaker did not return it was assumed he had failed his HIA.

A World Rugby crackdown on head injuries requires players with concussion symptoms to be rested for a compulsory 12 days. But Catt told reporters on Tuesday that Sexton had passed two subsequent tests and was available to play. "Johnny is fit, Johnny passed every test that he needed to pass, so from my point of view he's good to go," he said. Catt also had a word of sympathy for the All Blacks saying it was a "big blow" to lose Whitelock, one of the stars of their first Test victory in Auckland.

"Sam has played some amazing games and is a brilliant rugby player

but we're under no illusions - the next person stepping in is not that far behind Sam," he said. Whitelock's absence will force a reshuffle of the New Zealand pack with Scott Barrett likely to move from blindside flanker to his more familiar role as a lock. Seasoned second-row forward Patrick Tuipulotu, who only recently returned from playing in Japan, had been rushed into the New Zealand squad.

All Blacks reserve lock Tupou Vaa'i is also out after becoming the latest member of the New Zealand entourage to test positive for COVID-19. "Sammy was awesome at the weekend and became the second most capped All Black of all time, which is hugely impressive," said captain Sam Cane. "We'll no doubt miss his leadership and what he brings, and then Tupou had been playing well all Super Rugby and was hanging out for his opportunity, so it's a tough pill for him to swallow." Backs David Havili, Jack Goodhue and Will Jordan have been cleared to resume full training with the squad after all testing positive for COVID last week. The third and final Test is in Wellington on July 16. —AFP

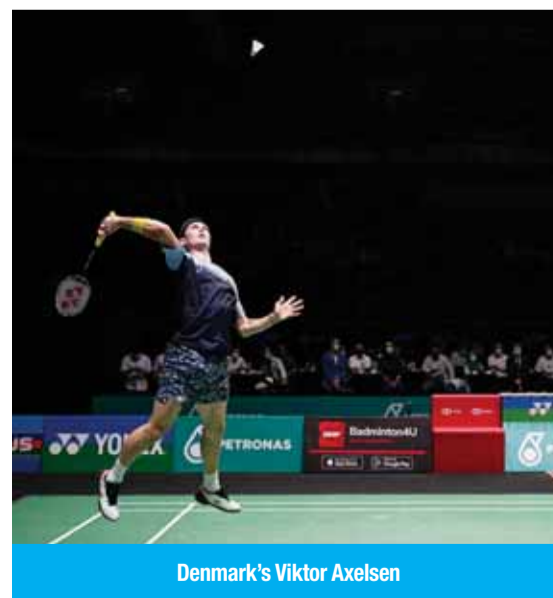


Johnny Sexton

World number one Axelsen out of badminton Masters

KUALA LUMPUR: Dominant world number one Viktor Axelsen withdrew from badminton's Malaysia Masters starting Tuesday, saying he needed to "rest and recharge" after winning the Malaysia Open, Indonesia Open and Indonesia Masters in the past month. "I would have loved to compete again here in Kuala Lumpur this week, and then (next week's) Singapore Open," Axelsen posted on social media late on Monday. "However when I woke up this morning, my body and head were telling me that it's time to rest and recharge before I step on the court again."

"I need some days off to rest, celebrate my recent wins with my family and then build up towards new goals," added the Dane, who is on a remarkable 32-match unbeaten run that has seen him sweep to three consecutive titles on the Badminton World Federation tour. Olympic champion Axelsen outplayed Japan's former number one Kento Momota to win the Malaysia Open on Sunday, needing only 34 minutes to sweep to a 21-4, 21-7 victory. It was Axelsen's fifth title of the season after already claiming the All England Open, European Championships and Indonesia Open and Masters titles.



Denmark's Viktor Axelsen

Malaysian fifth seed Lee Zii Jia also pulled out of the men's singles on the eve of the tournament in Kuala Lumpur, as did former Olympic champion Carolina Marin of Spain in the women's singles. Ireland's world number 40 Nhat Nguyen replaces Axelsen at the top of the men's singles draw. Second seed Momota's scheduled first-round opponent, world number 12 Rasmus Gemke of Denmark, also withdrew and has been replaced by Japan's 46th-ranked Koki Watanabe. —AFP

Aussie MLB pitcher Hendriks seeks US gun reform

CHICAGO: Pitcher Liam Hendriks of the Chicago White Sox made an impassioned plea for American leaders to work harder to solve gun violence after a mass shooting Monday at a suburban parade. The 33-year-old Australian right-hander, Major League Baseball's American League 2020 and 2021 Reliever of the Year, spoke after the White Sox called off post-game fireworks for the Independence Day holiday following a gunman's shooting six people dead and injuring more than 20 others at a July 4 parade in nearby Highland Park. "I think the access to the weaponry that is being used in these things—something needs to change," said Hendriks. "Something needs to be done. Something needs to happen because it's way too many people losing their lives." The White Sox, after consulting with MLB about a possible postponement of the contest, held a moment of silence before playing their home game Monday against Minnesota. "Our hearts are with the Highland Park community," the club said in a statement. "The entire Chicago White Sox organization expresses our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the innocent victims of today's horrific shooting and all of those who have been affected by this tragedy." Hendriks said gun violence harms not only shooting victims but families, communities and society, saying change is required to settle the political differences between sides in the US gun debate. —AFP



BOURG-SAINT-PIERRE: Photo shows the ruins of a building, that once housed a restaurant, a ski-rental shop and the gondola lift departure station at the Super Saint-Bernard ski resort.

Sports

Man Utd, Feyenoord defender Malacia seal \$15.4 million deal

Ten Hag makes first signing since taking charge

LONDON: Manchester United completed their swoop for Feyenoord defender Tyrell Malacia on Tuesday as Erik ten Hag made his first signing since taking charge at Old Trafford. United landed Malacia in a reported £12.95 million (\$15.4 million) deal after making a late move for the Netherlands full-back, who had been close to joining French club Lyon.

The 22-year-old has agreed a four-year contract with the option of a further 12 months. It is a landmark deal for Ten Hag, who had been linked with a host of potential signings before finally making Malacia the first acquisition of his United reign. Ten Hag arrived at United in May after finishing his successful spell at Ajax, where he had plenty of opportunities to see Malacia's quality with Dutch rivals Feyenoord.

Malacia, who made 136 appearances for Feyenoord, said: "It's an incredible feeling to have joined Manchester United. This is a new chapter for me, a new league with new team-mates and a tremendous manager leading us. "I know from playing against his teams in the Eredivisie, the qualities that he has and what he demands of his players. "Whilst I know that I am still young and will continue to develop, I can promise the United fans that I will leave everything on the pitch every time I pull on the red shirt."

Malacia, who plays largely at left-back, is expected to be part of the United squad that leaves for the pre-season tour of Thailand and Australia on Friday. "I'll always be thankful to Feyenoord for all they have given to

me and my family. None of this would be possible if it wasn't for them," Malacia said. "Now I'm ready to focus on the future with United, and help my new club achieve success." Capped five times by the Netherlands, Malacia is likely to compete with England left-back Luke Shaw for a place in United's starting line-up.

"Tyrell is an exciting, dynamic young footballer with excellent experience for his age, including five seasons in the Eredivisie, a European final and full international honors for the Netherlands," United football director John Murtough said. "We look forward to seeing him continue to develop under the guidance of Erik ten Hag and his coaching team in the years ahead." Ten Hag's recruitment drive is starting to gather pace, with Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen reportedly agreeing to join United on a free transfer after his impressive loan spell at Brentford last season.

Barcelona midfielder Frenkie De Jong and Ajax defender Lisandro Martinez have also been linked with moves to Old Trafford. As well as overhauling a squad that finished a disappointing sixth in the Premier League last season, Ten Hag must resolve the future of Cristiano Ronaldo. Ronaldo missed training for "family reasons" on Monday after reportedly asking for a transfer following United's failure to qualify for the Champions League. United are said to be determined to hold onto the Portugal striker, who finished as their top scorer last season. —AFP



Dutch defender Tyrell Malacia

Pollard to lead Springbok team showing 14 changes against Wales

JOHANNESBURG: Recalled fly-half Handre Pollard will captain a South Africa team showing 14 changes to the starting line-up for the second Test against Wales in Bloemfontein on Saturday. Only veteran lock Eben Etzebeth survives from the side that kicked off the 2022 Springboks season with a dramatic 32-29 over the Dragons in Pretoria last Saturday. Among the starters this Saturday will be two uncapped players-Bulls winger Kurt-Lee Arendse and Stormers' No 8 Evan Roos.

The elevation of Roos will be warmly welcomed by South African supporters as he was voted Player of the Season and Players' Player of the Season in the recently completed United Rugby Championship. There are four other uncapped players-scrum-half Grant Williams, prop Ntuthuko Mchunu, lock Ruan Nortje and flanker Deon Fourie-among the replacements. The return of Pollard was anticipated after a disastrous first-half performance by Elton Jantjies in Pretoria led to him being replaced at half-time.

Damian Willemse switched from full-back to fly-half for the second half and capped a good performance by kicking the match-winning penalty in the third minute of added time. Willemse, who can operate at full-back, inside centre and fly-half, is one of two backs who will sit on the bench in Bloemfontein. Star flanker Pieter-Steph du Toit will wear the green and gold for the first time since injuring his shoulder early in the second Test against the British and Irish Lions in Cape Town last year.

'Strike a balance'

A recurrence of the injury prevented the 2019 World Rugby Player of the Year being considered for the first Test. "We said from the outset that we needed to strike a balance between giving talented young players an opportunity at international level, and winning," said Springboks coach Jacques Nienaber. "If one looks at the balance between players who have played at this level and those who have performed consistently well for their franchises and clubs, I think we have a nice balance in this squad. "Wales showed last week that they are fighters and can go for the full 80 minutes and we are expecting nothing different from them this week."

"This will certainly be a good test for the younger players in the group to measure themselves against some of the best players in Wales. "Some of them toured South Africa last year with the British and Irish Lions, so everyone knows they will be in for a proper Test on Saturday." Wales coach Wayne Pivac will announce his team on Thursday for the second Test with the tourists seeking a first win in South Africa after 11 defeats since first visiting in the republic 58 years ago. —AFP

PSG appoint 'proud' Galtier as Pochettino departs

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain have parted company with coach Mauricio Pochettino, the French champions confirmed on Tuesday, and replaced him with Christophe Galtier who pipped the Argentine and PSG to the 2021 Ligue 1 title when in charge of Lille. Galtier is PSG's seventh coach since the Qataris bought the club 11 years ago and will be expected to finally lift the Champions League trophy.

"Yes, I am emotional, yes I am proud," said Galtier at a press conference on Tuesday. "I am fully aware of the responsibility placed on me, that PSG had a huge season. "I have prepared myself for this. "If I have accepted these responsibilities, it is because I feel I am capable." The club had earlier issued a short statement confirming what had been widely-touted for weeks-the departure of Pochettino with a year remaining on his contract.

"Paris Saint-Germain confirm that Mauricio Pochettino has ended his role at the club," said a club statement as the former Tottenham Hotspur coach left the Parc des Princes after 18 months in charge. Pochettino and his backroom staff depart having won the Ligue 1 title last season but the campaign was better remembered for a disappointing exit from the Champions League in the last 16 at the hands of Real Madrid. "The club would like to thank Mauricio Pochettino and his staff for their work and wish them the best for the future," added PSG's statement.

Galtier, who left Nice last month, has devel-



PARIS: French coach Christophe Galtier (left) and PSG's President Nasser Al-Khelaifi holds a jersey as they pose at the end of a press conference after Galtier was appointed as French L1 football club Paris Saint-Germain's (PSG) head coach on July 5, 2022. —AFP

oped a reputation as the leading coach in the French club game over the last decade. He enjoyed eight successful years at Saint-Etienne, where he won the League Cup in 2013, before a four-year stint at Lille was crowned with the Ligue 1 title in 2021, when they pipped PSG.

The former Portsmouth assistant manager previously worked with Luis Campos, the Portuguese super scout who was recently named as PSG's football advisor and who built the Lille team that won the league under Galtier. —AFP

Marseille name Croat Igor Tudor as new coach

MARSEILLE: French Ligue 1 giants Marseille have named ex-Croatia international Igor Tudor as their new coach on a two-year deal to replace Jorge Sampaoli. Tudor coached Verona in Serie A last season, leading the club to ninth in Italy's top flight. He stepped down after failing to come to an agreement on how to build on that impressive finish. "I think we have found what we need in Igor Tudor, and I am happy to welcome him to our club," Marseille's American owner Frank McCourt said in a statement. "Igor is a fighting man, as he has demonstrated throughout his career, both as a coach and as a player."

"As he recently proved at Hellas Verona, Igor is an authentic leader who offers a bold vision of soccer, who does not shy away from any challenge and who is determined to pursue excellence." Argentina's Sampaoli quit Marseille earlier this month because of what he said were differences with the club's hierarchy after guiding them back to the Champions League. Tudor spent the majority of his playing career at Juventus and won 55 caps for Croatia, featuring in the 1998 and 2006 World Cups as well as the 2004 Euros.

The 44-year-old kicked off his coaching career



MARSEILLE: French L1 football club Marseille's newly appointed coach, Croatian Igor Tudor, poses at the Velodrome stadium on July 5, 2022. —AFP

with home club Hajduk Split in 2013, before bouncing from PAOK in Greece to Karabukspor and Galatasaray in Turkey and then on to Udinese in Italy before taking in a second stint in Split followed by an assistant role with Juventus and finally taking the reins of Verona last season. "Trained in Split, I am convinced that he will feel at home in Marseille," owner McCourt added. "Moreover, his experience as a coach at Galatasaray and PAOK, as well as at Juventus as a player, have prepared him for the level of passion that defines and unites our club and this city." —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



Mr. Agnelo Quadros, Indian national, son of Mr. Alex Cajetan Quadros, resident of H No. 959, Castle Waddo, Aldona Bardez, Goa 403523 and Ms. Anfloramae Hernaez Salaga, Philippines national, daughter of Mr. Mario Salaga, resident of Mahayag, Pres. Roxas, North Cotabato 9405 both presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

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



BIRMINGHAM: England's Joe Root on Day 5 of the fifth cricket Test match between England and India at Edgbaston, Birmingham on July 5, 2022. —AFP

England level series in record chase, beat India by 7 wickets

Root and Bairstow shine, hit hundreds

BIRMINGHAM: Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow both hit hundreds as England continued their resurgence with a record fourth-innings chase to beat India by seven wickets in the COVID-delayed fifth Test at Edgbaston on Tuesday. Set 378 to win, England finished on 378-3, with former captain Root 142 not out and Bairstow 114 not out—his second hundred of the match after he made 106 in the hosts' first-innings 284. Victory saw England level this five-match series at 2-2.

No England side had previously made more to win in the fourth innings of a Test than 359, when now captain Ben Stokes' brilliant century led them to a thrilling victory over Australia at Headingley three years ago. But that record was overhauled with ease after England's first series under a new leadership duo of Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum had seen them chase down seemingly stiff targets of 277, 299 and 296 during a 3-0 whitewash of Test world champions New Zealand.

England resumed on 259-3, needing just 119 more runs to win. Root was 76 not out overnight and Bairstow unbeaten on 72 after the Yorkshire duo had come together at 109-3, with England having lost three wickets in quick succession either side of tea. But their unbroken stand, built on largely orthodox if hard-hit strokeplay, was eventually worth 269, with England averaging nearly five an over as they reached their target inside 77 overs.

Bairstow hits out

Bairstow was quickly into his stride Tuesday, cover-driving a four off Mohammed Shami before striking another resounding boundary down to long-on off Jasprit Bumrah, captaining India in place of the COVID-hit Rohit Sharma. Both strokes were cheered on their way to the rope by a crowd who, as was the case on the last day of England's wins over New Zealand at Headingley and Trent Bridge, had been let in for free.

And there were more roars of appreciation as Root, the world's top-ranked Test batsman, cover-drove Shami for four in typically stylish fashion. As England sped towards their target, it was hard to believe that they had won just one of their preceding 17 Tests prior to the New Zealand series. Root got to his hundred first when he late cut Mohammed Siraj for a 14th four in 136 balls for his third Test century of the season after two tons against New Zealand.

And while Bairstow was briefly becalmed, Root drove and then "ramped" medium-pacer Shardul Thakur for a four and a six off successive deliveries. Bairstow's scampering single off Ravindra Jadeja saw him to a 138-ball century, including 12 fours and a six. His fourth Test hundred in five innings also saw Bairstow become the first England player to hit two centuries in the same Test since Andrew Strauss against India at Chennai in 2008.

It was Bairstow's sixth century in eight Tests in 2022. India could have put England under greater pressure after starting the penultimate day three wickets down and scoring another 120 runs. But they lost their way as the last six wickets fell for just 55 as a succession of batsmen succumbed to the short ball. Even so, there had previously been only two successful fourth-innings chases above 200 in a Test at Edgbaston, with South Africa making 283-5 in 2008 and England 211-3 against New Zealand in 1999.

But England's newly aggressive 'Bazball' approach, named in honour of McCullum's nickname, was evident from the start of their latest chase, with Alex Lees and Zak Crawley sharing a century opening stand in 19.5 overs—the fastest in England Test history. This decider should have been played in Manchester last September only to be postponed just hours before the start because of coronavirus concerns within the India camp.—AFP

Qatar's 'majlis' gamers target eSports leagues

DOHA: World Cup host Qatar doesn't just have its sights set on football—it also hopes to harness its people's gaming skills as it launches into the burgeoning eSports sector. A digital army is at the ready in the gas-rich emirate, where many "majlis" rooms—communal gathering places attached to homes—have long doubled as video game hubs for groups of friends, mostly young men. "Our majlis have a lot of equipment," enthused Ibrahim Samha, who said the spaces are often kitted out with consoles for five or six players who lounge on cushions while engaging in virtual worlds and battles.

Samha is head of eSports projects at Virtuocity, Qatar's first dedicated gaming complex which was set up in 2019 and, after a Covid pandemic break, hosted its first major tournament in March. "I guess that is where it all starts," Samha said. "When you play in these majlis, you play in a very casual and fun way. But if you want to take it to the professional level and play competitively against other teams and other players, you would want to participate in eSports events, and I guess this is where Virtuocity comes in."

Virtuocity, part of Qatar's broad push to diversify its economy away from energy by 2030, aims for a slice of the fast-growing global eSports market whose annual revenues are estimated at more than \$1 billion. Three months ago it hosted the opening round of the Smash World Tour, the championship of Nintendo's

crossover fighting game Super Smash Bros, with 5,000 Qatari rials (\$1,300) in prize money for the winner. An eSports federation was created in late 2021 and gaming has even been integrated into the curriculum of Qatar's International School of London to steel students as they venture forth into the 21st century's digital realms.

'A serious thing'

Ahmed Al Meghessib, at age 24, is already an eSports veteran. He first represented Qatar in 2017 in the football game FIFA and took the national team to 10th place in the world rankings early last year. "Basically they didn't have a big interest at first," he recalls about Qatar's society's take on eSports in years past, before leaders awoke to the huge viewership and potential revenues on offer. "It's not as hard as before. People understand now that eSports is a serious thing." Khalifa Al Haroon—a businessman and influencer who goes by "Mr Q" on social media—is another early eSports supporter in Qatar who dares to dream big.

He argued Qatar needs to build more clubs and eLeagues, host more tournaments and attract investment and studios that will create original content. "My goal is to see Qatar be a leader in the Middle East, of course a world leader too, when it comes to gaming," he told AFP. "I want to see the biggest tournaments happen here and I want people to want to come in and build their companies and their teams out of Qatar too."



DOHA: Esport athletes compete during Virtuocity Smash Open 2022 at the Doha Festival City. —AFP

'Soft power'

Haroon's hopes are shared by Jack AlBlushi, 35, who organizes tournaments of PUBG: Battlegrounds, a combat survival game set on an island. "We have built a base already," he said. "It's online and everything. But I need companies to realize that we people are working hard, making sure that things are going in the perfect direction." A major supporter has been cellphone company Ooredoo, which sponsored a FIFA game tournament in May with \$25,000 in prize money and has launched a talent scouting program to build a professional team. Its first two recruits are Ahmed Al Meghessib, who

plays FIFA, and Yousef Al Defaa, who competes in Fortnite, the battle royale hit made by Epic Games.

Qatar is not the only country striving to make its mark in eSports, which is traditionally dominated by South Korean and Chinese players but has teams from around the world in various games. Gaming is popular around the oil-rich Gulf and there is a "very strong push from Qatar and Saudi Arabia" said Nicolas Besombes, a sociologist who studies eSports. He said its rise is a "fairly recent phenomenon that began a little before the pandemic". "It's 'soft power'... to improve their image and attractiveness." —AFP



WIMBLEDON: Germany's Tatjana Maria returns the ball to Germany's Jule Niemeier during their women's singles quarter final tennis match on the ninth day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships on July 5, 2022. —AFP

Maria wins all-German clash, books semi-finals

LONDON: Germany's Tatjana Maria came from behind to beat compatriot Jule Niemeier 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 on Tuesday and reach her first Grand Slam semi-final. The 34-year-old mother of two will play either third seed Ons Jabeur or unseeded Marie Bouzkova for a place in the final. "I have goosebumps everywhere," said Maria, who returned from maternity leave just under a year ago.

"My two little girls, it's a dream to live this with my family, to live this with my two girls. Almost one year ago I gave birth, it's crazy." She said would like to face world number two Jabeur in the semi-finals. "It would be really nice to play her," she said. "She is part of my family, she loves my kids, she is playing with them every day." In only the third all-German Grand Slam quarter-final in the Open Era, Niemeier took control from the start of the match, breaking at her first opportunity and going on to win the set.

The 22-year-old then broke again at the start of the second set to take an iron grip on the match but Maria stormed back, breaking three times to level the match. World number 97 Niemeier again drew first blood in the deciding set, breaking in the fifth game and holding serve to lead 4-2. But Maria hit back to level at 4-4 and broke again in the 12th game to seal the victory. The German veteran, who saved two match points in the previous round, made her Grand Slam debut in 2007 and had never progressed beyond the third round at a major before this year's Wimbledon.

Rafael Nadal swept into the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Monday, staying on course for a crunch meeting with Nick Kyrgios, who was on his best behaviour in a battling five-set win. In the women's competition, 2019 champion Simona Halep demolished Spanish fourth seed Paula Badosa in just 60 minutes to set up a meeting with Amanda Anisimova. —AFP