



NOTICE

Eid Mubarak to all our readers! Kuwait Times will not publish its print edition from July 10-15, 2022. The PDF version of the newspaper will be sent to our subscribers and published on our website from July 13-15, 2022. Readers can stay informed with breaking news and information via KuwaitTimes.net and our digital media channels on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @KuwaitTimes.



Attorney general resigns after apparent demotion

Justice minister accepts resignation 'with immediate effect'

Amir sends Eid congratulations

KUWAIT: The Amiri Diwan said it is pleased to convey to citizens and residents the congratulations of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Eid Al-Adha, wishing them amity, security and safety. The Amiri Diwan added it seizes this blessed occasion to convey to HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister the highest congratulations and blessings on this occasion. HH the Amir also wished all Arab and Islamic nations a happy Eid, security and safety. — KUNA



HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Justice Minister Jamal Al-Jalawi has accepted Attorney General Dherar Al-Asousi's resignation, which he had submitted earlier in protest after he was nominated as deputy chief of the appeals court. Asousi had described the nomination in his resignation letter as a step that "goes against judicial tradition" in Kuwait.

"I was informed on Tuesday July 5, 2022 - during my annual leave - that the Supreme Judicial Council has received a letter from [the justice minister] to nominate me as deputy chairman of the court of appeals," Asousi wrote in his resignation letter, saying that the step was "unprecedented in the history of Kuwait's judicial authority". He argued that not only does the nomination go "against established judicial tradition," but is also not on the

same level or suitable for someone who has served as Kuwait's attorney general for years.

"I have worked in the judiciary for over 40 years, during which I have been promoted to various positions at the Public Prosecution until the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah eventually bestowed the honor of assuming the position of Attorney General upon me," he wrote, adding that he has served as "a faithful guardian" of the law and constitution during his career.

"Throughout my judicial career, I have made every effort to advance the public prosecutor's mission to establish justice among people, adhering to the long-standing traditions of the judiciary," he added.

Minister Jalawi reportedly requested



Dherar Al-Asousi

to change Asousi's resignation date to July 7, 2022 instead of October 1, 2022, which is the date Asousi had included in his resignation letter for his resignation and start of retirement.

News in brief

Worst Palestinian displacement

KHALLET AL-DABAA: An EU envoy warned Thursday over the possible mass displacement of Palestinians from a West Bank area at the center of a protracted legal battle, after a controversial Zionist court ruling. The EU ambassador to the Palestinian territories, Sven Kuehn von Burgsdorff, issued the warning as he toured Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank, where evictions of Palestinians have increased after they lost a land rights case in the Zionist entity's top court on May 4. — AFP

India tightens flour exports

NEW DELHI: India will impose restrictions on the export of flour in a fresh move to insulate domestic markets from a global wheat crisis. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade has said flour exporters will need to seek prior government approval to maintain quality and stabilize domestic prices. India banned all exports of wheat grain without government approval in May, sparking a record surge in global prices and condemnation from other countries. — AFP

'Yu-Gi-Oh!' creator found dead

TOKYO: Kazuki Takahashi, author of the popular "Yu-Gi-Oh!" manga series, has been found dead after an apparent snorkeling trip, a coast-guard official said. The 60-year-old was found off the coast of Okinawa on Wednesday. "Yu-Gi-Oh!" ran in the Japanese weekly comic magazine Shonen Jump between 1996 and 2004. The manga gave rise to a media franchise including a trading card game as well as anime series and films. It was later published as a series of 38 books. — AFP

Metro ban for women without hijab

TEHRAN: Women in Iran's second-largest city will be banned from taking the Mashhad metro if they are not wearing a head covering, local media reported on Wednesday. Mashhad's deputy prosecutor wrote to the city's governor "demanding he ban women not wearing an Islamic head covering from accessing the metro", said the Young Journalists Club (YJC). On Tuesday, local media said authorities had closed three coffee shops in Qom due to female customers not wearing head coverings. — AFP

Johnson quits after cabinet bloodbath

LONDON: Boris Johnson resigned on Thursday as leader of Britain's Conservative party, paving the way for the selection of a new prime minister after dozens of ministers quit his government over 48 hours of frenzied political drama. "It is clearly the will of the parliamentary Conservative party that there should be a new leader of that party, and therefore a new prime minister," Johnson said outside 10 Downing Street.

The timetable for a Tory leadership race will be announced next week, he said, after three tumultuous years in office defined by Brexit, the COVID pandemic and non-stop controversy over his reputation for mendacity. Johnson, 58, said he would stay on as prime minister until a replacement is

found. He had fought hard against a cabinet revolt and said he was "sad... to be giving up the best job in the world", justifying fighting on in the final hours to deliver the mandate he won in a Brexit-dominated general election in December 2019.

"And let me say now, to the people of Ukraine, that I know that we in the UK will continue to back your fight for freedom for as long as it takes," he added in his six-minute address. Ukraine's presidency thanked Johnson for his support in "the hardest times". Johnson's few remaining allies in the Tory party stood adjacent alongside wife Carrie, carrying their baby daughter Romy.

The Conservative leadership election will take place over the summer and the victor will replace Johnson by the party's annual conference in early October, the BBC and others reported. Defense minister Ben Wallace and Rishi Sunak, whose departure as finance minister on Tuesday sparked the cabinet exodus, were among the early

Continued on Page 6



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a statement in front of 10 Downing Street on July 7, 2022. — AFP

Pilgrims move to Mina as hajj pinnacle nears

MINA, Saudi Arabia: Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims journeyed from Saudi Arabia's Makkah to a white-tented city in Mina on Thursday as they neared the highlight of the biggest hajj ritual since the coronavirus pandemic began. Worshipers took buses or walked to Mina, seven kilometers from Makkah's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site, where they circled the imposing black Kaaba

at the start of the rituals on Wednesday.

Dressed in simple white robes, the pilgrims will spend the night in the air-conditioned white tents of Mina, which sits in a narrow valley surrounded by rocky mountains and is transformed each year into a vast encampment. "I feel great. This is all to be closer to God," Tunisian pilgrim Khaled Bin Jomaa, 44, said as he entered the camp on foot, carrying an umbrella and a prayer mat.

The pilgrims are positioning themselves for the highlight of the hajj on Friday: Ascending Mount Arafat, where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) delivered his final sermon.

Continued on Page 6



MINA: Pilgrims arrive at their tents near the holy city of Makkah on July 7, 2022 during the annual hajj pilgrimage. — AFP

Tunis vendor serves success despite red tape

TUNIS: Tunisian street vendors often complain of official harassment, but one sandwich maker-turned-social-media-star hopes his struggles against bureaucracy will motivate young entrepreneurs. Habib Hlila, 27, first set up a food van in the working-class Bab El Khadra district of Tunis in early April, selling sandwiches at the end of each day's fast during the

holy month of Ramadan.

He quickly became a star of Tunisian street food, gaining a social media following as he used banter and theatrics to prepare his signature "El-Bey" sandwiches and grills, accompanied by his own special sauce. As videos on social media helped his name spread, Hlila started drawing ever bigger crowds. But in late April, police detained Hlila and seized his truck on the basis that he had no license to operate.

The operation was caught on camera and widely shared online, sparking anger among Tunisians who often complain of the obstacles authorities place in front of small businesses and everyday life. — AFP (See Page 8)



TUNIS: Tunisian street food vendor Habib Hlila prepares food in his van parked along Habib Bourguiba Avenue on July 2, 2022. — AFP

Local

Tura initiative strives to preserve Kuwait's oral history

Turning mere objects into stories and tales people interact with



KUWAIT: Pictures showing several activities held as part of the Tura initiative.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Documentation brings history to life and gives laypeople a deeper understanding of it. Historical documents enable the world to get as close as possible to the past to be able to see the roots of their societies.

Kuwait Times spoke with Dalal Al-Dayel, Founder of Tura initiative, to relive the history documented by her team. Dayel and her team have collected hundreds of documents, interviewed personalities that made Kuwait what it is today. They also organize tours of historical buildings, and create a living archive to tell the story of the past.



Kuwait Times: What is Tura?

Dalal Al-Dayel: Tura is an initiative that aims to preserve the oral history of Kuwait and build a spatial memory for the humanization of the settlement. Oral history is a method of conducting historical research through recorded interviews to add to the historical record. Oral history tells the story of people and their narratives of personal and national history. It is more related to the human aspect. By humanizing history, the streets and buildings will not be mere objects, but stories and tales people interact with, and the relationship becomes reciprocal between the individual and the place.

KT: When did the initiative start? Why did you start it?

Dayel: The initiative started three years ago. I love to read a lot and found that there is a lack of information about what happened in the fifties. I once read the phrase "Who guards the guards?!" and

wondered who preserved the memories of those who lived in the past. Years ago, there were great efforts to protect oral heritage, but the documenter who preserved the memory of those who preceded them did not document their memory, so we have a kind of so-called interruption of time.

I was walking in the city and I had a lot of questions about the buildings and surroundings. I was trying to link information in books with the actual place in real life. This thirst for knowledge turned into an initiative. In the beginning, I worked alone with a lot of support from family and friends, but this year the transformation was great, as I founded my first team (Muneera Al-Ghanim, Afnan Al-Othman, Bedour Al-Mashan, Hessa Al-Muzaini, Abeer Al-Mohammad, Noura Al-Zaid and Faisal Althahab).

KT: Who inspired you to establish this initiative?

Dayel: I asked once for an appointment to meet Abdulaziz Al-

Mufarrej. He spoke for hours, telling me great stories. At that time, Dr Yousef Al-Sari asked me if I had recorded this meeting, and I said no! He replied: I am a friend of his for 20 years and this is the first time I heard such stories. Here I realized that memorizing these stories is essential.

KT: What are the most important achievements of Tura initiative?

Dayel: Humanizing many sites and linking generations to each other, while making heritage an easy and palatable material to be loved.

KT: Do you have the needed experience in the field of historical documentation?

Dayel: Oral history documentation is a great field, and it was a great challenge for us to establish an individual initiative on practical foundations. Before I started the initiative, I tried to teach myself documentation tools to be an expert and do it properly. I asked a lot and read more, and I am still reviewing my

methods and consulting experts.

KT: Tell us more about the tours and seminars organized by the initiative.

Dayel: We organized a lot of tours to explore the city. Our work is divided between documentation, tours and meetings that are highly demanded by people, aimed at honoring some of the pioneers.

KT: Who is the most important figure you have met and who left an impression?

Dayel: Every interview is a special experience - there is no ordinary interview. It is kind of diving into the memory and soul. I once read a comment by Al-Shamlan, saying, "I am filled with history." This is true - after I started documentation, I have felt the weight and impact the experience has left on my soul. You live the experiences of others intensely at once.

KT: How do you choose the people to be interviewed?

Dayel: Each person has a special story. Sometimes there are names associated with our memory, so we search for them. Sometimes many of our guests suggest some names to us, as well as followers who are always having opinions and demands.

KT: Will historical documents be publicly available?



Dayel: My first goal is to have an online encyclopedia for our stories and documented memories. Until then, I will post on Instagram and YouTube, and soon we will have several published books and documentaries.

KT: What are the most important events or information documented by Tura initiative?

Dayel: Our documentation of Shuwaikh High School. The material took three years to be documented, and we are still collecting the first database of its kind.

KT: What are the most important historical monuments documented?

Dayel: History of Al-Soor, old Kuwait City, Shuwaikh High School, Mirqab, Jahra and Fahaheel.

KT: What is the mechanism used in documentation?

Dayel: Our work mechanism depends on filming interviews with the guest, then editing and publishing them on social media platforms, in addition to arranging a general meeting for the public to link them to the experience of our guest directly, and save this experience to be available to the public.

After that, we translate the knowledge and experience inherited between generations into projects on the ground. We did our part in researching and striving according to scientific frameworks to build the oral library, and we succeeded in building a social network that qualifies us to communicate with all components of society to listen to their stories.

Japanese Ambassador sends Eid greetings

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait Morino Yasunari sent greetings on Eid Al-Adha. "On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Government and people of the State of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha," Ambassador Yasunari said. "I am very happy to be part of the celebration in Kuwait, such a great friend-

ly country. I would also like to recall the enormous generosity that Kuwait showed by helping Japan, following the massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011. Japan will always look forward to strengthening our traditional friendship that has been built upon mutual support and excellent cooperation. May Kuwait and the world be blessed with peace and prosperity."



Japan's Ambassador Morino Yasunari

Bangladesh's Ambassador sends Eid greetings

KUWAIT: Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Kuwait Major General Md Ashikuzzaman released a statement sending greetings on Eid Al-Adha holiday. "On behalf of the Bangladesh Community and my own behalf, let me have the honor and privilege to extend our heartfelt Eid greetings to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Government and brotherly people of the State of Kuwait on the holy occasion of Eid Al-Adha," he said. "I wish and pray that His Highness be blessed with continued good health and peace. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish the friendly and welcoming residents of the State of Kuwait and its further prosperi-



Bangladesh's Ambassador Md Ashikuzzaman

ty, good fortune, peace and happiness under His Highness's leadership and for the solidity and stability for the State of Kuwait. I look forward to continually working with the Government of the State of Kuwait to carry forward the traditional friendships and relationships that exists between Bangladesh and the State of Kuwait. We pray to Almighty Allah for His continues blessing and mercy upon all of us. May this joyous Eid Al-Adha brings peace, happiness and prosperity to all of us. May Allah bless us all."

Zain hosts Kuwait Fire Force at HQ

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, hosted a number of officials from the Kuwait Fire Force at its main headquarters in Shuwaikh to conduct an awareness seminar on safety measures and guidelines during the summer season.

The step came under the umbrella of Zain's internal strategy that caters to its employees' various personal and professional life aspects. The company is keen on enriching communications with its own staff in and out of the workplace, especially when it comes to ensuring their health and safety, which the company puts at the forefront of its priorities. Zain considers its employees the main element behind its success as the leader in the Kuwaiti telecom sector.

The seminar discussed many of the most essential guidelines and measures certified by the Kuwait Fire Force to ensure the safety of homes, workplaces, and other buildings. The seminar introduced the different types of fires and how to effectively combat each one, while also stressing on the importance of installing smoke detectors and how to handle gas leaks. The Fire Force also executed a live exercise to demonstrate how to correctly use fire extinguishers and how to behave during fires and other emergencies.

Zain is keen on partnering with various government

institutions, including the ministries of Interior and Health, and the Kuwait Fire Force, to implement the official policies and procedures that ensure the safety and security of its employees at all times. The company also regularly hosts representatives from ministries to hold informative seminars, engage employees in awareness campaigns, conduct vaccination programs, blood donation drives, and more.

Zain also ensures the readiness of all safety equipment including alarm systems, internal speaker systems, fire hoses, and smoke alarm systems, while specifying emergency gathering points and conducting evacuation drills and first aid training programs on a regular basis.

Zain recently conducted an emergency evacuation drill at its main headquarters in Shuwaikh in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior's General Department for Civil Defense. The drill witnessed the participation of all Zain employees operating in the company's three main buildings and was held under the supervision of Civil Defense officials, who carefully reviewed the evacuation plan and ensured all official guidelines and regulations set by the authorities were followed and implemented to guarantee the safety of all employees during emergencies.

This step came in line with Zain's Enterprise Risk Management strategy, which carefully looks to implement all guidelines and regulations outlined by the Department for Civil Defense, including the appointment of employee marshals in each floor of its three main buildings to supervise evacuations during emergencies, as well as maintain signboards in all of the company's entrances and exits.



Kuwait Fire Force officials with Zain employees.

Local

Kuwait's new premier to be named in first week after holiday

Health Minister requests KD 260 million budget for medicines



KUWAIT: HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting on July 4, 2022. —KUNA

KUWAIT: An announcement naming Kuwait's new prime minister will be made during the first week after the Eid Al-Adha break, most likely on Tuesday, July 19, sources told Kuwait Times. The prime minister-designate will have a few days to form his Cabinet, then take the oath of office before HH the Amir. This process will not go beyond the end of this month or the start of August.

The Cabinet's formation will not take more than a month, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The new Cabinet will be short-lived, as it will deal with the new National Assembly elections after the current parliament is dissolved in September or October. Elections will take place within two months from the dissolution decree. The government will then resign, leading to consultations for the formation of a new government. Sources said the new Cabinet will attend a National Assembly session to approve the budgets and closing accounts and the state's financial status, then parliamentary sessions will end and will not discuss any proposed laws or any other issues.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah had 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 had been accepted by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and the cabinet were asked to continue as a care-taker 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 issuing the Amiri decree dissolving the assembly.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held talks Wednesday with current and former national assembly speakers and prime ministers as part of the customary consultations before naming a new

premier. HH the Crown Prince could rename HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled to form a new cabinet or may name a new personality to form the cabinet.

Medicines' budget

In other news, Health Minister Dr Khalid Al-Saeed asked the Cabinet for a KD 260 million budget for medicines and medical supplies for the strategic reserves to boost health security in the country, sources told Kuwait Times. He also asked for warehouses of an area of at least 35 sq m with international specifications to be approved by the engineering and projects affairs department in coordination with the medicines and medical supplies department in the ministry.

Saeed justified his request in an official letter by saying that the COVID-19 pandemic caused problems internationally, with difficulties in supplying medicines due to insufficient financial allocations for medicines and medical supplies, in addition to many companies declining to meet orders due to a rise in raw material prices and lack of storage spaces.

Kuwait welcomes Yemen ceasefire extension: Ministry

KUWAIT: Kuwait welcomes the extension of the ceasefire agreement in Yemen, and the renewed commitment shown by Yemeni parties to halt all military operations, the Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday. Kuwait praises the efforts made by the United Nations special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg to strengthen this commitment, which comes in the context of the initiative announced by Saudi Arabia in March 2021, to end the Yemeni crisis, said the ministry in a statement. The ministry also hopes that the extension of the truce would contribute to reaching a "comprehensive political solution to the Yemeni crisis based on the three references (Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and

Security Council Resolution 2216)... in a manner that preserves the security and stability of Yemen and its territorial integrity and achieves the aspirations of the Yemeni people."

Meanwhile, the Saudi Foreign Ministry welcomed the inter-Yemeni agreement to bolster up the UN-sponsored truce, stressing the need to open humanitarian corridors to Taiz. The Ministry appreciated in a statement the efforts of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Yemen to enhance commitment to truce in keeping with the Saudi initiative of March 2021 to settle the crisis in Yemen through political means. The statement stressed the Kingdom's firm support for everything that could guarantee security and stability in Yemen and achieve the aspirations of the brotherly Yemeni people. It highlighted the importance of the Houthis' commitment to the provisions of the truce, the speedy opening of humanitarian corridors to Taiz, and depositing revenues in the Central Bank of Yemen to pay the salaries of civilians. On Wednesday, Grundberg said that Yemeni government and Houthis agreed to consolidate the truce in the run-up to Eid Al-Adha, due on Saturday. — KUNA



HAYS: Yemenis displaced by the conflict receive food aid and supplies to meet their basic needs, at a camp in Hays district in the war-ravaged western province of Hodeida, on July 6, 2022. — AFP



KUWAIT: Acting Director General of Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) Dr Mubarak Al-Azmi meets India's Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George.

Manpower authority chief, Indian envoy discuss labor issues

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) Dr Mubarak Al-Azmi, and representative of authority departments met with India's Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George and his delegation on Thursday. Azmi welcomed the Ambassador and lauded the historic relations between the two countries, adding that he is keen on strengthening mutual ties. The two sides discussed bringing in and

employ Indian labor, as well as providing protection for workers in Kuwait, PAM said in a statement.

Azmi said the marketplace in Kuwait attracts labor according to its need of experienced specialties. He said PAM exerts its efforts to improve the process of bringing in labor in a way that serves the developmental interests of Kuwait, while at the same time care for the laborers' situation and rights as stated by the labor law and decisions issued by PAM in this regard.

Azmi emphasized the basic role of the authority in providing legal protection and guaranteeing a suitable work environment that ensures the rights of all laborers, including those in the private sector or domestic helpers. Meanwhile, Ambassador Sibi George thanked the State of Kuwait for its efforts and development that deserve to be commended.



Camels prepared for Eid Al-Adha sacrifice



KUWAIT: Camels are pictured at the camels' market in the Erhaiya desert area, 45 km South of Kuwait City on July 7, 2022, ahead of the Eid Al-Adha holiday. The prices range between KD 400 and KD 550, according to vendors at the market, who say that up to seven people can share a camel for sacrifice during the holiday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

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News in brief



Deputy FM meets French official

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhafiri met France's Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness Olivier Becht during strategic dialogue talks in Paris on Wednesday. The talks discussed bilateral "friendly relations" alongside developments on the regional and international fronts, and their repercussions. Both officials saw eye-to-eye on these matters, and agreed on "joint action," according to the foreign ministry.

Kuwait pardons soldiers on Eid

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Army's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Sabah on Thursday granted amnesty to soldiers penalized for disciplinary offenses, as a gesture of goodwill to mark the Eid Al-Adha holiday. The decision was made as per instructions given by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Sabah to allow the soldiers the chance to celebrate the joyous occasion with their families, read a statement by the Ministry of Defense. The Minister of Defense went on to extend Eid greetings to the people of Kuwait, wishing the country security and stability.



Lt Gen Khaled Al-Sabah



Kuwait oil price sheds \$9.25

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti crude oil on Wednesday plunged by \$9.25 to \$107.91 pb, compared with \$117.16 a day earlier, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Thursday. At the global oil market, the price of the Brent crude plummeted by \$2.08 to \$100.69 per barrel, the same with the West Texas Intermediate, which fell by 97 cents to \$98.53 pb.

Kuwait condemns attack in Mali

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait strongly denounces the deadly attack that targeted a logistic convoy of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press release on Wednesday. The abhorrent act of terrorism led to the martyrdom and injury of several Egyptian peacekeepers, according to the statement. The Ministry expressed Kuwait's full solidarity with sisterly Egypt, appreciating the contributions of the Egyptian Armed Forces to the UN peacekeeping missions and their role in protecting the world security and peace. It extended condolences to the Egyptian government and people as well as the families of the victims, wishing the sounded a quick recovery.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti artist Mariam Al-Salem paints in her gallery.



'The last Morning' painting.



'Glory Days' painting.

Kuwaiti artist expresses passion for culture, life through paintings

Mariam Al-Salem says growing up in multicultural Ahmadi gives her inspiration



Mariam Al-Salem poses in front of one of her works.



'Save Me' painting.

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Eighteen years of honing her skills in the field of graphic design and illustration has given Mariam Al-Salem, a Kuwaiti artist, the opportunity to display her creativity in the world of fine art and reach special moments in her artistic life. The painting "The Last Morning" highlighted Mariam's name in the world of fine art after the piece reached a price of KD 2,800 in an auction. The theme of the drawing was her last meeting with the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Kuwait Times spoke to Mariam to discuss her journey in fine art.

"Before I became an artist in 2013, I spent almost 18 years honing my skills in the field of graphic design, illustrations and graphical work for various publications, political and commercial campaigns, applications, products and much more," she said.

On what inspires her, Mariam said: "I believe growing up in Ahmadi with its cultural diversity affected my views of life, which is reflected in some of my paintings, where you can find originality and heritage some times, and modernity and development at other times. That's why I consider my paintings an act of understanding, as a search for fulfillment and finding balance in emotions, life and anxieties, as well as pleasures. As the artist Joseph Beuys said, 'Every human being is an artist'. This is reflected in my paintings, which have many messages that represent my experiences, attitudes and feelings."

"I am passionate about mixing styles and experimenting. My work reflects the passion I have for our culture, people's behaviors, politics and life in its various manifestations. Experimentation is part of my painting process that motivates me to create new things and develop a new style and new ways to express myself through my paintings," Mariam said. "I try to evoke the feelings and emotions of every human being in this mundane life. This is what helps my paintings to be simplistic and connected with topics that we encounter daily."

Digital art

Mariam pointed out that she keeps experimenting with different forms and applications of art on canvas and paper, illustrations and digital art such as



'Reach' painting.



'Moving On' painting.

creating NFTs that have become part of her art routine, saying dealing with different forms of art is an art itself. "Since the outbreak of COVID-19, many people have been creating art as a way of expressing themselves and staying socially connected while maintaining a physical distance. So, my cousin, the artist Mariam Al-Qattan, and I decided to create ROA (Roof of Art), a free art platform that allows anyone to participate, show or sell their artworks and express their opinions and feelings," she said.

"During the pandemic, it was easy for people to browse the art gallery online due to the restrictive conditions at that time. We are looking forward to growing and expanding this platform in the coming years to cover every aspect of creating art in Kuwait and the region, including galleries, workshops, NFTs, auctions and more."

Mariam said that she likes to learn from every-

one, and sharing a work of art at the right time can give her a clear picture of people's reactions. "To me, people are emotional and predictable, and this life is on repeat. We live in circles where events occur in a very similar pattern for all of us - similar joys and sorrows, same stories, hopes, loves and betrayals. I use my art sometimes as a social experiment, where I can see people's feedback after sharing my work publicly on social media platforms or ROA's website and observe how each piece reflects on each person differently," she added.



Taliban excavate ex-leader Mullah Omar's 'getaway car'

Disputed grain ship returns to Russia from Turkey

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TEHRAN, Iran: File photo shows, an Iranian woman walking past the then closed British embassy in the capital Tehran. Iran's Revolutionary Guards arrested several foreign diplomats including a Briton, accusing them of "spying", the Fars news agency and state television said. — AFP

Poland confirms scientist held by Iran

All employees and their relatives in Tehran are doing well

TEHRAN: Iranian media reports that the Revolutionary Guards had arrested several foreign diplomats for espionage sowed confusion Thursday, after two of the countries concerned denied that their nationals had been detained. While Poland on Thursday confirmed a scientist was in Iranian custody, Austria strongly rejected reports that any of its diplomats had been held, mirroring an announcement by Britain late Wednesday. The developments coincide with heightening tensions between Tehran and world powers over stalled attempts to revive a 2015 nuclear deal and a recent uptick in confirmed detentions of Western nationals in Iran. On Wednesday, Iran's Fars news agency and state television had reported that the Revolutionary Guards arrested-on an unspecified date—several foreign diplomats.

"The Revolutionary Guards' intelligence service identified and arrested diplomats from foreign embassies who were spying in Iran," Fars said, adding that a British diplomat named by state television as deputy head of mission Giles Whitaker was subsequently expelled.

London swiftly denied its deputy ambassador had been arrested, and on Thursday, Britain's ambassador to Iran said the envoy had left the country last year. "These reports that our Deputy Ambassador is currently detained are very interesting... He actually left

Iran last December, at the end of his posting," British ambassador Simon Shercliff wrote on Twitter. Iranian state television accused him of "carrying out intelligence operations" in military areas.



Austria, UK deny arrests

Pole held for 10 months

A state TV journalist said the diplomat "was among those who went to the Shahdad desert with his family as tourists", referring to an area in Kerman province. The Shahdad desert, a rocky and mountainous district with ancient ruins some 810 kilometres (500 miles) southeast of Tehran, is a popular place for foreigners to visit.

While Fars said the Briton was expelled from Iran, state television said he was only expelled from "the

area" the diplomats were arrested in. Before Shercliff's comment, Britain's foreign ministry had already categorically denied its deputy ambassador had been detained, calling the reports "completely false".

Vienna also denied reports in Iranian media claiming that Ronald Geschir, who it called "the spouse of the Austrian embassy's cultural adviser", was among those arrested. "Regarding the media reports: All employees and their relatives in Tehran are doing well, nobody was arrested," an Austrian foreign ministry spokeswoman told AFP. But Poland's foreign ministry spokesman Lukasz Jasina confirmed Thursday that "a Polish citizen was deprived of liberty in Iran in September 2021", identifying the detainee only as a "recognised scientist", without naming him.

"Consular and diplomatic actions are being taken to allow our citizen to return to Poland as soon as possible", Jasina added, noting Warsaw was in contact "with allied countries", without providing details, but asking that the family's privacy be respected. Iran's state television showed images of a man it identified as "Maciej Walczak, head of the microbiology department" at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun in Poland.

Tense nuclear talks

"This university is linked to the Zionist regime," it said, referring to arch-enemy Israel, which is staunchly

opposed to the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers, perceiving it as a threat to its security. Walczak "entered Iran with three other people in the context of scientific exchanges but he went to the desert region of Shahdad as a tourist while missile tests were being carried out", state television said. It said he took rock and soil samples.

But Marcin Czyniewski, a spokesman for the university where Walczak is reported to be an expert in environmental microbiology, said it was "an old story". "Iran cites the names of three people, two of whom have returned to Torun for months," Czyniewski said.

Tensions between Iran and Western powers have lately increased as talks in Vienna to revive the 2015 nuclear deal have been stalled since March. The US walked out of the deal in 2018 under then president Donald Trump, who proceeded to reimpose biting sanctions on Tehran, prompting the latter to step away from many of the nuclear commitments it made under the accord.

Qatar last week hosted indirect talks in Doha in a bid to get the Vienna process back on track, but those discussions broke up after two days without any breakthrough. Over a dozen Western nationals are held in Iran, including a French couple detained in May, in what activists argue is a policy of hostage-taking aimed at extracting concessions from the West. — AFP

Italy bridge trial starts four years after tragedy

GENOA, Italy: Nearly 60 defendants went on trial in Genoa on Thursday, accused of manslaughter and undermining transport safety over the collapse of a bridge in the Italian city that killed 43 people four years ago. The Morandi bridge, part of a key highway connecting France and Italy, gave way in torrential rain on August 14, 2018, sending dozens of vehicles and their passengers tumbling into the abyss. The tragedy highlighted the state of Italy's transport infrastructure. Autostrade per l'Italia (ASPI), which runs almost half of the country's motorway network, is accused of failing to maintain the bridge that was inaugurated in 1967.

The findings of the magistrates' investigation are damning: "Between the inauguration in 1967 and the collapse, i.e. 51 years later, not even minimal maintenance work was carried out to reinforce the stays of pillar number 9", which collapsed on the day of the disaster. "It's a very important day for families of the victims, but also for the entire country," said Egle Possetti, who heads a committee of relatives of the victims. "We are confident in the fact that the trial will uncover the whole truth of this tragedy to avoid our loved ones dying in vain," she told AFP outside the court in Genoa. The opening hearing was over by noon on Thursday. The proceedings, suspended during the summer, will resume on September 12. Given the scale of the case, the trial is expected to last between two to three years.

'Time bomb'

One of the prosecutors, Walter Cotugno, has said "the Morandi bridge was a time bomb". "You could hear the ticking, but you didn't know when it was going to explode," he said in February. Cotugno is convinced that the directors of Autostrade and the engineering company Spea, in charge of maintenance, "were aware of the risk of collapse", but remained reluctant to finance work in order to "preserve the dividends" of shareholders.

Most of the 59 defendants summoned by the Genoa court are executives and technicians of the two companies. They include the general manager of Autostrade at the time, Giovanni Castellucci, the former head of Spea,



GENOA, Italy: Family members of victims react after the first hearing of the Morandi bridge collapse trial, outside the courthouse of Genoa on 7 July, 2022. — AFP

Antonino Galata, and officials of the infrastructure ministry. The defendants, who were absent from Thursday's first purely formal hearing, are being prosecuted for manslaughter, undermining transport safety and forgery. While Castellucci's lawyers believe that the indictment "will fall like an autumn leaf", the prosecution counts on its key witness, Roberto Tomasi, Castellucci's successor and a high-ranking Autostrade executive since 2015. At the time of the tragedy, Autostrade belonged to the Atlantia group, controlled by the wealthy Benetton family. Put under pressure by the political class and popular indignation, the family gave up its stake to the state last May. "The bridge collapsed because of a hidden building defect, that's why 40 people died. Mr Castellucci has no criminal responsibility," said one of his lawyers, Giovanni Paolo Accinni.

'My son's life is priceless'

Even though their former directors are on trial, Autostrade and Spea will escape the courts, thanks to an out-of-court settlement with the public prosecutor's office, which provides for a payment of 29 million euros (\$30 million) to the state. Only two families of the victims have refused to accept compensation offered by Autostrade, which has paid out more than 60 million euros. Roberto Battiloro—who lost his son Giovanni, a 29-year-old videographer, in the tragedy—is one of those to turn down the compensation. He was offered a million euros but said "my son's life is priceless, I want a real trial". For Raffaele Caruso, lawyer for the committee of relatives of the Morandi bridge's victims, this agreement "constitutes a first recognition of responsibility" on the part of the two companies. — AFP

Women don colourful robes at guardian free hajj

MAKKAH: With her husband back at home in Tunisia and draped in a national flag, Laila al-Qarni urges all Muslim women to attend Saudi Arabia's hajj without a male guardian, after the requirement was shelved last year. The Saudi authorities' move has brought a whole new dimension to the annual pilgrimage.

"Why do women have to be accompanied by a male anyway? Why?" she said, speaking near the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Islam's holiest city, in western Saudi Arabia. "Women are capable of handling themselves. I encourage every woman to come here without a male guardian," the 60-year-old added.

This year's hajj, the first large-scale edition since the guardian requirement was dropped in 2021 amid COVID, has taken on a different hue with thousands of unaccompanied women joining the rituals. Many of them have abandoned the black robes traditionally preferred by hajj organisers, adding a dash of colour with reds, greens, oranges and blues dotted around the crowds.

Arab women should be "courageous and able to adapt" to different circumstances, said Al-Qarni's sister, Hayat Abdul Malek. "A woman is worth 100 men," said the mother of three, who managed 1,400 employees at the company where she worked before retiring.

Last year, the Saudi hajj ministry allowed women of all ages to make the pilgrimage without a male relative, known as a "mehrem", on the condition that they go in a group. Authorities previously stipulated a male guardian for any female pilgrim under the age of 45, preventing many women around the world from performing one of the five pillars of Islam.

Al-Qarni's husband could not attend because he is over the maximum age of 65. The new ruling has also encouraged women over 45 who had been hesitant to attend without their brothers, sons, fathers or husbands.

'Don't be scared'

One million people, including 850,000 from abroad, are allowed at this year's hajj after just tens of thousands could attend over the last two years, due to pandemic restrictions. On Saturday, the local women of Mecca are expected to celebrate the first day of Eid al-Adha, which

marks the end of the hajj, in traditional, colourful Saudi dresses that were abandoned for decades before recent moves to modernise the conservative country. The decision to drop the "mehrem" is part of the social reforms rolled out by de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is trying to shake off the kingdom's austere image and open up its oil-reliant economy.

Since his rise to power in 2017, women have been allowed to drive and to travel abroad without a male guardian. Counter-balancing the new freedoms, critics of Prince Mohammed's rule have also suffered a harsh crackdown. Suhail Mohammed, an Egyptian pilgrim and mother of three, has worked as a manager in a department of the ministry of defence for more than three decades. "Come and don't be scared," she said, encouraging other women to make the trip without male relatives. "It gave me confidence... It empowered me and made me stronger," she said of tackling the five-day pilgrimage. "Women who stay at home are the ones who can feel afraid" of performing rituals such as the hajj, which requires mental and physical resilience, she added.

Women in the Arab region have long faced a combination of "patriarchal structures, prolonged insecurities, and protracted crises", a Middle East Institute study said in October. "The Arab region's diverse collection of 22 countries has one thing in common: Women continue to experience a backlash against their own long-overdue rights and fundamental freedoms," it added. — AFP



MAKKAH: A Muslim worshipper wearing a scarf showing the flag of Turkey waves at the Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Makkah. This year's hajj, the first large-scale edition since the guardian requirement was dropped in 2021 amid COVID, has taken on a different hue with thousands of unaccompanied women joining the rituals. — AFP

International

After Boris Johnson resignation, who could take over as UK prime minister?

'We are no longer trusted by the electorate' and 'we are set to lose the next general election'

LONDON: Britain's Boris Johnson will reportedly announce his resignation as Conservative leader, paving the way for an internal party contest to replace him and become prime minister.

While several possible successors have been suggested, there is no clear favourite.

Rishi Sunak

The UK's first Hindu chancellor of the exchequer, who quit on Tuesday, was until recently the book-makers' favourite. But his prospects were dented by

outspokenness and willingness to go on the political attack. But that has also stoked questions about her judgement, for instance when in February she encouraged Britons to fight in Ukraine. Critics say her leadership posturing is too overt. When she headed the Department for International Trade, some MPs dubbed it the "Department for Instagramming Truss" because of her prolific output on the social media site. Away this week at a G20 meeting, she has reportedly cut her trip short to return to Westminster and make a statement later Thursday.

Sajid Javid

Javid, who also quit as health secretary on Tuesday, had previously resigned as finance minister in 2020. The 52-year-old is the son of a Pakistani immigrant bus driver who went on to become a high-flying banker. Like Sunak, he also faces questions about his personal wealth and tax affairs.

Ben Wallace

The defence secretary, 52, has narrowly topped some recent polls of Tory grassroots' preferred next leader due to his role in the Ukraine crisis. The former army officer and Johnson ally has downplayed wanting to lead the party but is seen as a straight-talking and competent.

Nadhim Zahawi

Newly appointed as finance minister, Nadhim Zahawi, 55, was praised for overseeing Britain's pandemic vaccines rollout, before helming the education department. Zahawi is a former refugee from Iraq who came to Britain as a child speaking no English. Before entering politics, he co-founded the prominent polling company YouGov. But his private wealth has also drawn adverse attention, including when he claimed parliamentary expenses for heating his horse stables.

Tom Tugendhat

The former army officer, 49, is a prominent backbencher who chairs parliament's influential Foreign Affairs Committee. Tugendhat has indicated he will stand in any leadership contest but there is no love lost between him and Johnson loyalists. A hawk on



LONDON: Carrie Johnson, wife of Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, carries their daughter Romy next to Britain's Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries (R) ahead of a statement by the premier in front of 10 Downing Street in central London on July 7, 2022. — AFP

China, he has been critical of the government's handling of the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Penny Mordaunt

Mordaunt, 49, is the first woman to have been UK defence secretary and is currently a junior trade minister. The Royal navy reservist is seen as likely to run but considered a long shot. A strong Brexit supporter and key figure in the 2016 "Leave" campaign, she has been tipped as a potential unity candidate who could draw support from the Conservative party's warring factions.

Dominic Raab

Deputy prime minister and justice secretary Dominic Raab, 48, led the country when Johnson was in intensive care in hospital with COVID-19 in

2020. The former lawyer and karate black belt is seen as a reliable ally. But his move to justice from the post of foreign secretary was seen as a demotion after he initially failed to cut short a holiday as the Afghan capital Kabul fell to the Taliban.

Suella Braverman

Attorney General Suella Braverman has revealed she intends to stand in a party leadership contest during media interviews since Wednesday in which she urged Johnson to go. The arch-Brexititeer, 42, is another long-shot candidate, popular within the party for her Euroscepticism. She is one of 28 so-called "Spartan" Tory MPs, who refused to back ex-Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal on all three occasions it was voted on in parliament. — AFP



Former lawyer is seen as a reliable ally

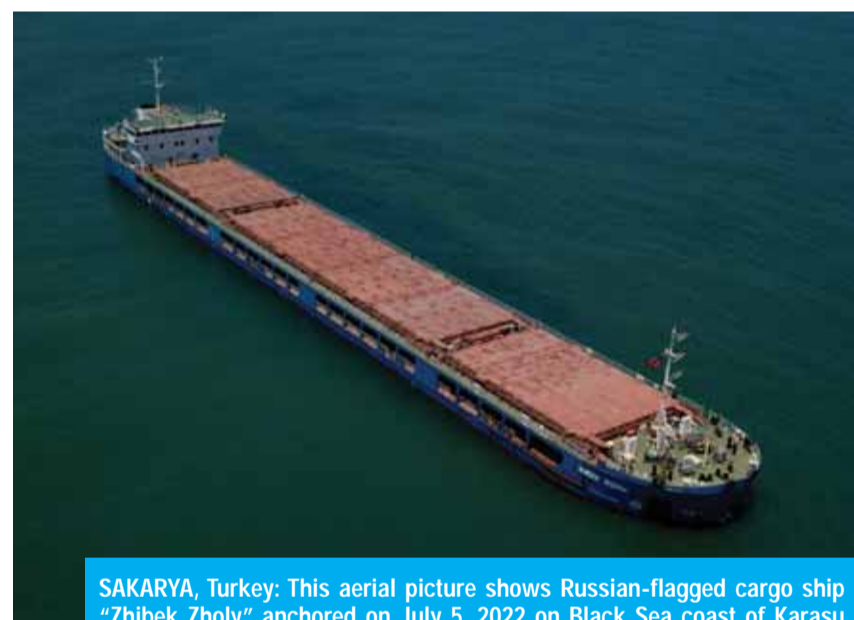
questions over his private wealth and family's tax arrangements. His resignation has seen him return as one of the bookies' frontrunners for the top job. Sunak, 42, has a high profile on social media, and won plaudits for shoring up the economy during the pandemic. But his refusal initially to authorise more support over a surging cost-of-living crisis has hurt his popularity.

Jeremy Hunt

Former foreign and health secretary Jeremy Hunt, 55, lost to Johnson in the 2019 leadership contest, when he branded himself as the "serious" alternative. Hunt sent a thinly veiled campaign message for a new leadership bid last month, arguing that under Johnson "we are no longer trusted by the electorate" and "we are set to lose the next general election". But the fluent Japanese speaker lacks Johnson's charisma. His pre-pandemic record as health secretary was recently savaged by a Johnson ally.

Liz Truss

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, 46, is popular among Conservative party members, liked for her



SAKARYA, Turkey: This aerial picture shows Russian-flagged cargo ship "Zhibek Zholy" anchored on July 5, 2022 on Black Sea coast of Karasu district. — AFP

Disputed grain ship returns to Russia from Turkey

ISTANBUL: A disputed cargo ship carrying allegedly stolen grain from Ukraine has returned to Russian territorial waters, Turkish sources told AFP on Thursday, drawing angry condemnation from Kyiv.

The marinetraffic.com website showed Zhibek Zholy moving at least 20 kilometres (12 miles) away from Turkey's Black Sea port of Karasu before apparently switching off its transponder and disappearing from view.

Two Turkish sources said the ship was heading to Russia's Port Kavkaz on the edge of a strait splitting the mainland from Ukraine's Kremlin-annexed peninsula of Crimea. Kyiv alleges that the Russian-flagged vessel had set off from Ukraine's

occupied port of Bertdyansk after picking up confiscated wheat.

Ukraine has demanded that Turkey impound the vessel and return the allegedly stolen grain. But Russia claims to have "nationalised" Ukrainian state assets and to be buying crops from local farmers.

NATO member Turkey has been trying to negotiate a solution that could preserve its good relations with both Moscow and Kyiv. It was not immediately clear what had happened to the wheat.

An unnamed crew member of the Zhibek Zholy told Russia's TASS news agency that the ship intended to offload the grain to another vessel so as "not to lose money". But one of the Turkish sources said the ship still appeared to be carrying the grain. "As far as we know, it is waiting (at the Russian port) loaded," the Turkish source said.

'Deeply disappointed'

Ankara has not issued an official statement about the Zhibek Zholy since its arrival

at Karasu last Friday. But the Ukrainian foreign ministry on Thursday summoned Turkey's ambassador to demand an explanation for the ship's return to Russia.

"Ignoring an appeal from Ukraine, the ship was released on the evening of July 6," the Ukrainian foreign ministry said in a statement. It said it was "deeply disappointed" that Turkey had not acted on its request to seize the ship.

"We regret that Russia's ship Zhibek Zholy which was full of stolen Ukrainian grain, was allowed to leave Karasu port despite criminal evidence presented to the Turkish authorities," Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said on Twitter.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said last month 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. — AFP

Johnson quits after cabinet...

Continued from Page 1

frontrunners to succeed Johnson, according to a YouGov survey of Conservative party members.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, another potential contender, said Johnson had "made the right decision" as she cut short a trip to Indonesia for a G20 meeting. "We need calmness and unity now and to keep governing while a new leader is found," she tweeted. But in the highly charged hours building up to Johnson's announcement, opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer had said the country cannot wait. Starmer said "a proper change of government" was needed and demanded a no-confidence vote in parliament, potentially triggering a general election, rather than Johnson "clinging on for months and months".

Even while eyeing the exit, Johnson had earlier Thursday sought to steady the ship with several appointments to replace the departed cabinet members. They included Greg Clark, an arch "remainer" opposed to Britain's divorce from the European Union, which Johnson had championed. Shailesh Vara, who has never served in the cabinet, was put in charge of Northern Ireland, with the government locked in battle with Brussels over post-Brexit trading rules for the tense territory.

Johnson had been clinging on to power despite a wave of more than 50 government resignations, expressing defiance late Wednesday. But Thursday's departure of education minister Michelle Donelan and a plea to quit from finance minister Nadhim Zahawi, only in their jobs for two days, appeared to tip the balance along with warnings of a new no-confidence vote by Tory MPs. Johnson triumphed in 2019 with a vow to "get Brexit done" following Britain's shock referendum decision three years prior. But for many, the populist, convention-defying leader had overstayed his welcome.

The Conservative infighting erupted at a time

when millions of Britons are battling the worst slump in living standards since the 1950s, fueling by rocketing energy prices on back of the war in Ukraine. Before the economic crisis, Johnson's popularity had already slumped over a series of lockdown-breaking parties in Downing Street, which saw him become the first prime minister to receive a police fine.

"About time, isn't it? Seriously, I mean have you ever known anyone be so arrogant, ignorant, delusional?" Helen Dewdney, 53, who works in consumer rights, told AFP. Referring to the departed cabinet ministers, she said: "Where was their integrity months ago?" While Johnson oversaw a successful vaccine campaign against the coronavirus pandemic, the former journalist also oversaw one of Europe's worst death tolls, and nearly died himself from Covid in April 2020.

"Boris Johnson's legacy is the deaths of nearly 200,000 British people on his watch," said Lobby Akinnola, from the campaign group COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice. "Whilst Johnson will move on to a life of writing newspaper columns and being paid eye-watering amounts to give after-dinner speeches, there will be no moving on for the families like mine that have been ripped apart by his actions," he said.

Northern Ireland minister Brandon Lewis on Thursday became the fourth cabinet minister to resign and wrote that Johnson was "past the point of no return". Johnson late on Wednesday had sacked minister Michael Gove, with a Downing Street source describing his former Brexit right-hand-man as a "snake" in the media. Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid quit late Tuesday after Johnson apologized for his February appointment of senior Conservative MP Chris Pincher as deputy chief whip.

Pincher was forced to step down following accusations he drunkenly groped two men. Days of shifting explanations followed the resignation, before Downing Street finally conceded that Johnson had known about Pincher's behavior as far back as 2019. Tory critics said the Pincher affair had tipped many over the edge, angry at having to defend what they saw as more lies by Johnson over his appointment of what Starmer called a "sexual predator". — AFP



A pilgrim walks with an umbrella in Mina on July 7, 2022. — AFP

Pilgrims move to Mina as hajj...

Continued from Page 1

Worshippers will pray and recite the Holy Quran for several hours at the mountain and sleep nearby. On Saturday, they will gather pebbles and perform the symbolic "stoning of the devil".

The hajj, one of the world's biggest religious gatherings, has not gone smoothly for everyone. Saudi Arabia's hajj ministry demanded the sacking of two top officials at a company that organizes pilgrimages, over their failure to provide decent services, the official Saudi Press Agency said on Thursday.

State-run Al-Ekhabriya TV said the company handled pilgrimages from overseas and was responsible for "problems with food and accommodation" including a lack of air conditioning at the Mina camp. Fridges packed with yoghurt, juice and water were

waiting at the temporary accommodation in Mina, along with a food buffet and fruit baskets.

The crowds, capped at one million including 850,000 from abroad chosen by lottery, are the biggest since 2019 after two COVID-hit years when only tens of thousands were allowed. All worshippers are fully vaccinated and submitted negative PCR tests, but the rituals are taking place against the backdrop of a resurgence of COVID-19 in the region.

Some Gulf countries have tightened restrictions to keep outbreaks in check. The hajj ministry has said it is working on the highest levels of health precautions in light of the pandemic and the emergence of new variants. At Mina, the pilgrims were handed small bags containing masks and sanitizer, and ambulances were parked at the camp's entrances.

However, a requirement to wear masks has been largely ignored. Temperatures of 42 degrees Celsius are another challenge. Four hospitals and 26 health centers have been prepared at Mina to treat pilgrims who might fall ill. "We have taken all precautions. We have doctors here ready to intervene in case needed," said Ahmad Al-Zinani, a camp manager. — AFP

International

Fresh clashes in DR Congo as rebels dash ceasefire hopes

M23 announce that it is not bound by the ceasefire

GOMA, DR Congo: Fresh clashes between M23 rebels and soldiers erupted in eastern DR Congo on Thursday, officials said, as the militia declared that it was not bound by a ceasefire agreement. M23 spokesman Willy Ngoma told AFP that the deal brokered between the Congolese and Rwandan presidents in Angola on Wednesday was irrelevant. "We are Congolese, not Rwandan," he said. "If there's a ceasefire, it can only be between us and the Congolese government".

Talks between the Democratic Republic of Congo's leader Felix Tshisekedi and Rwanda's Paul Kagame in Angola on Wednesday initially raised the prospect of a ceasefire between the M23 and the Congolese government.

Violence between the mostly Congolese Tutsi rebels and the DRC's army has flared in recent weeks. The DRC has repeatedly accused neighbouring Rwanda of backing the M23, a charge the small central African country has always denied.

The M23's announcement on Thursday that it is not bound by the ceasefire, came after clashes between its fighters and Congolese troops broke out in Rutshuru territory in Congo's eastern North Kivu province in the morning.

A Congolese army commander accused the rebels of attacking military positions in the area in violation of the ceasefire. However, the M23 denied

the claim and accused the army of starting hostilities. The M23 — or "March 23 Movement" — first leapt to prominence when it briefly captured the eastern Congolese city of Goma in 2012 before it was driven out in a joint UN-Congolese offensive.

After lying mostly dormant for years, the group resumed fighting last November after accusing the Congolese government of failing to honour an agreement to incorporate its fighters into the army, among other issues.

Fierce fighting has seen the rebels make significant advances in eastern Congo. Last month, M23 fighters captured the strategic town of Bunagana on the Congolese-Ugandan border.

'We are Congolese, not Rwandan'



Ceasefire

M23 clashes have plagued relations between the DRC and Rwanda to its lowest point in years. The relationship between the two countries had already

long been strained since the mass arrival in the eastern DRC of Rwandan Hutus accused of slaughtering Tutsis during the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

Both countries have in recent weeks accused the other of carrying out cross-border shelling, triggering international appeals for calm. On Wednesday, Congo's leader Tshisekedi met Rwanda's Kagame in the Angolan capital Luanda for talks mediated by Angolan President Joao Lourenco at the request of the African Union.



GOMA: File photo shows a Congolese army pick up carrying troops heads towards the front line near Kibumba in the area surrounding the North Kivu city of Goma during clashes between the Congolese army and M23 rebels. —AFP

"We have agreed on a ceasefire, among other measures," Lourenco said at the end of the mini-summit. The DRC and Rwanda agreed among other things to a "roadmap" towards normalising diplomatic ties, including through ending hostilities involving the M23 and the Democratic Forces for

the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) — a mostly ethnic Rwandan Hutu group active in eastern DRC.

The vast mineral-rich DRC is struggling to contain dozens of armed groups in its volatile east, many of which are a legacy of two regional wars a quarter of a century ago. —AFP

Singapore executes two drug traffickers despite outcry

SINGAPORE: Singapore hanged two drug traffickers Thursday in what campaigners condemned as a "shameful and inhuman punishment", taking to four the number of executions in the city-state since March. The latest executions come after the hanging of a mentally disabled man in April sparked international outrage, with the European Union and United Nations among those speaking out against it.

Singapore has some of the world's toughest anti-drugs laws, and insists that capital punishment remains an effective deterrent against trafficking despite growing pressure to abolish it. Those executed Thursday were Kalwant Singh, a 31-year-old from neighbouring Malaysia, and Singaporean Norasharee Gous, 48, the prisons department said.

Kalwant's remains were taken back to Malaysia by his family on Thursday afternoon, prominent Singaporean rights campaigner Kirsten Han said. Amnesty International said Singapore's use of the death penalty was "a blatant violation of human rights".

"We urge the Singaporean authorities to immediately stop this latest wave of hangings and impose a moratorium on executions as a step towards ending this shameful and inhuman punishment," said the group's Emerlynn Gil.

Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, added that Singapore was flouting international norms on rights that prohibit "cruel" punishments. Recent drug busts in the city-state "show just how hollow Singapore's claims are about the supposed 'deterrent' effect of these cruel executions", he said. Kalwant and Norasharee were convicted in 2016 of trafficking heroin in the same case. The Malaysian lodged a last-ditch appeal Wednesday, with his lawyers arguing he provided information that helped authorities arrest a key suspected drug trafficker.

But a three-judge panel dismissed the appeal, saying drug enforcement officials did not use any information he provided to arrest the suspect. After a hiatus of over two years, the city-state resumed executions in March with the hanging of a Singaporean drug trafficker, and activists fear more will be conducted in the coming months. In a recent BBC interview, Home Affairs and Law Minister K Shanmugam defended Singapore's position on the death penalty, saying there is "clear evidence that it is a serious deterrent for would-be drug traffickers". —AFP

Taliban excavate ex-leader Mullah Omar's 'getaway car'

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan: The car used by Taliban founder Mullah Omar to escape being targeted by US forces after the 9/11 attacks has been excavated in eastern Afghanistan, where it lay buried for more than two decades, officials said.

The white Toyota Corolla was buried in a village garden in Zabul province by former Taliban official Abdul Jabbar Omari, who ordered it to be dug up this week. "It is still in good condition, only its front is a bit damaged," Rahmatullah Hammad, the director of information and culture of Zabul province, told AFP.

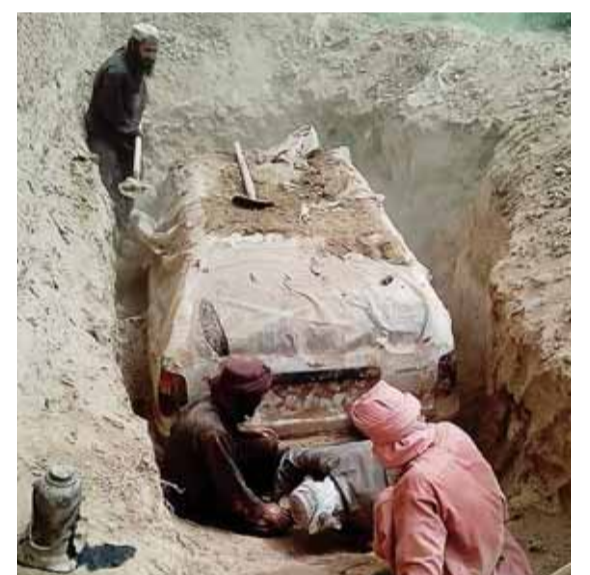
"This vehicle was buried by the mujahideen as a memorial to Omar in 2001 to avoid it being lost," he said. Taliban media officials published pictures of the car being dug from its vehicular grave by

men using hand shovels.

The Taliban want the car to be displayed in the capital's national museum as a "great historical monument", Hammad added. The Taliban were formed in Kandahar by Mullah Omar, who led the hardline Islamist movement to power in 1996 after a bloody civil war, and imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic law on the country.

Afghanistan then became a sanctuary for jihadist groups, including Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, the architects of the September 11 attacks. When the Taliban refused to hand over bin Laden, the US and its allies launched air strikes on Afghanistan, before invading, removing the Taliban from power and installing a new government.

Taliban officials said this week that Mullah Omar made his getaway from Kandahar in the Toyota Corolla. He died in hiding in 2013, although officials kept his death secret for several years. After two decades of attempting to hold back a bloody insurgency, Washington withdrew the last of its troops last year as the Taliban swept across the country, seized Kabul and returned to power. —AFP



ZABUL, Afghanistan: Taliban members dig up a Toyota Corolla, used by Taliban founder Mullah Omar to escape being targeted by US forces after 9/11, in Omrazai village in the Seyora district. —AFP

Hong Kong suspends 'not effective' COVID flight ban

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's new government on Thursday suspended a longstanding flight route ban that penalised airlines for bringing in coronavirus cases and severely impeded travel into the city, saying it was "not very effective".

The financial hub has become increasingly isolated under harsh pandemic restrictions as it mirrors a lighter version of China's strict zero-COVID policy, with the once busy Hong Kong airport now a relative aviation graveyard. On Thursday, new city leader John Lee's government said the "circuit breaker" rule was being suspended to "achieve the most in fighting the pandemic with the minimum cost on the society". "At the current stage, continued implementation of the 'circuit breaker' mechanism is not very effective in preventing imported cases," the government said.

"Large number of passengers will have their itineraries disrupted due to

the mechanism, and as the supply of seats on planes and quarantine hotel rooms fall short, the social costs generated will be remarkably high."

Travelling to Hong Kong will still pose a challenge as the city holds on to its mandatory seven-day hotel quarantine for all arrivals. Rooms at the designated hotels are booked up for months in advance.

Previous city leader Carrie Lam introduced the rule last April which banned airlines bringing in more than a handful of infected passengers from flying the designated route for a fixed period. The penalty was reduced from two weeks to a shorter five-day suspension during its one-year imposition.

It was heavily criticised by industry representatives who said Hong Kong was in danger of losing its position as a global aviation hub. So far in 2022 there had been more than 100 flight route bans, even though the coronavirus had become endemic



HONG KONG: Photo shows a health worker taking a swab sample from a child to be tested for the COVID-19 coronavirus. —AFP

within Hong Kong after a mass outbreak at the start of the year.

Reopening Hong Kong's border both with mainland China and the rest of the world was one of former top-cop John Lee's main campaign objectives before being selected to run the city by a small committee of Beijing loyalists in May. But it is

unclear how his administration can achieve both objectives at the same time. Lee told the city's legislature on Wednesday that Hong Kong was not ready to abandon its zero-COVID policy. Hong Kong is currently facing an uptick of COVID-19 cases with numbers at their highest level since April. —AFP

Spain police seize record six tonnes of marijuana

BARCELONA: Spanish police said Thursday they had seized a record six tonnes of marijuana after dismantling a plantation near Barcelona in their biggest-ever seizure of the substance. The operation saw police confiscating "just over six tonnes of marijuana, among which were 3.5 tonnes of buds in vacuum-packed thermal bags," the National Police and Guardia Civil police said in a joint statement.

They described the haul as "the biggest quantity of marijuana ever seized in Spain". The investigation began in March 2021 when investigators discovered a 32-hectare (80-acre) plot in Vilassar de Mar, some 30 kilometres (18 miles) up the coast from Barcelona

which was being used for growing hemp, or cannabis plants, on an industrial scale.

But the signs put up around the site suggesting it had a legal purpose were false, with police quickly realising it was being used for the large-scale cultivation of marijuana. Thousands of plants were being grown in different warehouses and greenhouses, all carefully monitored by more than 100 cameras, police said.

The site, which was also illegally tapping into the power grid, had been operational since at least 2018. During the operation, police arrested five people, who were charged with crimes against public health and electricity fraud.

They also found 17 kilos of hashish resin, which the gang were starting to produce. After decades as the gateway for Moroccan hashish to enter Europe, Spain is now seeing illegal plantations multiply as the country morphs into a cannabis production hub, attracting criminal gangs from across the continent. —AFP

Parliamentary hearings worldwide used to spread anti-vaccine conspiracies

PARIS: Standing on the podium of the Ohio Statehouse in the United States last year, a nurse pressed a key against her neck aiming to prove that COVID vaccines make people magnetic. The key-like theory-didn't stick, instead tumbling down her neck and leading to the video of her testimony going viral.

While the nurse's failure mainly prompted derision, it was just one example of how parliamentary hearings worldwide have been weaponised to spread vaccine misinformation since the start of the pandemic. Parliaments have hosted known conspiracy theorists, who quickly posted edited videos of their testimony on social media where the prestigious platform gives them the veneer of legitimacy, experts warn.

The nurse at the Ohio Statehouse was following the

lead of anti-vaxxer Sherri Tenpenny, who had earlier testified at the invitation of Republican lawmakers, and has promoted the thoroughly debunked theory that coronavirus vaccines make people magnetic.

Known spreaders of COVID-19 misinformation have addressed hearings across the United States, such as Peter McCullough, who has testified to a Texas Senate committee as well as the US Senate in Washington DC. Such parliamentary hearings "are part of an arsenal of disinformation," said Sebastian Dieguez, a neuroscientist specialising in conspiracy theories at Switzerland's University of Fribourg.

These figures paradoxically "need the seal of legitimacy imparted by the 'system'," such as mainstream politicians and media, that they spend so much time and rejecting, he told AFP.

"I do think having the opportunity to participate in hearings gives those perspectives a legitimate platform," Molly Reynolds of the US think tank Brookings Institution told AFP. She said she suspected that in some cases Republicans invited anti-vaccine witnesses to hearings to support their own views. —AFP

Business

FRIDAY, JULY 8, 2022



TUNIS: Tunisian street food vendor Habib El-Bey prepares street food using his own recipes for customers in his van parked along the capital Tunis' Habib Bourguiba Avenue.— AFP photos



TUNIS: A woman looks while her son eats one of the sandwiches prepared by Tunisian street food vendor Habib El-Bey along the capital Tunis' Habib Bourguiba Avenue.

Tunisian street vendor serves success despite bureaucracy

Vendors complain of official harassment

TUNIS: Tunisian street vendors often complain of official harassment, but one sandwich maker-turned-social-media-star hopes his struggles against bureaucracy will motivate young entrepreneurs. Habib Hmila, 27, first set up a food van in the working-class Bab El Khadra district of Tunis in early April, selling sandwiches at the end of each day's fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. He quickly became a star of Tunisian street food, gaining a social media following as he used banter and theatrics to prepare his signature "El-Bey" sandwiches and grills, accompanied by his own special sauce.

As videos on social media helped his name spread, Hmila started drawing ever bigger crowds. But in late April, police detained Hmila and seized his truck on the basis that he had no licence to operate. The operation was caught on camera and widely shared online, sparking anger among Tunisians who often complain of the obstacles authorities place in front of small businesses

and everyday life. Hmila rode a wave of public sympathy and started appearing on television to talk about his experience.

The story drew comparisons to Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire following police harassment in 2010, triggering a nationwide revolt that toppled dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and sparked the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. Hmila rejects the comparison, despite his own experience coming at a time that Tunisia faces crippling economic conditions and a political crisis that some have warned could return the country to dictatorship.

Inspire unemployed youth

"I'm not Bouazizi and I would never resort to acts of desperation in response to crises," he told AFP. "I've decided to succeed and to be a source of motivation for the young." He says he wants to turn his experience into

a positive story to inspire young Tunisians who often find it impossible to create a successful business in the face of suffocating bureaucracy.

After a long struggle, he finally managed to procure a license to organize cooking shows across Tunisia - then retrieved his van and started up his sandwich business again. Last Saturday, at an entrance to the Old City of Tunis, he held a show in a brand-new food truck worth more than \$20,000, which he is paying off in installments. Wearing a black outfit dotted with small Tunisian flags, he held court for more than five hours in his first meeting with customers since his arrest.

'Success story'

"Bravo to this young man who kept going despite the obstacles," Nazih Bahloul, 51, told AFP as she queued to buy a sandwich. "He's a good example to young people who only think of leaving the country. It's a beautiful

success story." But not everyone is inspired. Bilel, an unemployed 31-year-old who, like many young Tunisians, wants to leave in search of a better life in Europe, said that Hmila "was able to go back to work because his case got media attention - it's not the case for other young people." But Hmila said he wants "to prove to the young that you can reach your goals if you are determined. I want to tell them that you should never give up, despite the difficulties."

Hmila's interest in street food began in 2021 after helping a friend make sandwiches and he has succeeded despite not completing high school. Handcarts and vans selling fast food are common in the Tunisian capital, but Hmila says the sector needs to be brought into the regular economy - something that could both create jobs and contribute to tourism. "I have a lot of ideas to develop a project that could inspire unemployed youth," he said.—AFP

British Airways cuts 10,300 more flights

LONDON: British Airways has axed another 10,300 short-haul flights up to the end of October, with the aviation sector battling staff shortages and booming demand as the pandemic recedes. The carrier, which is owned by conglomerate International Airlines Group (IAG), added in a statement that it had now cancelled 13 percent of its total summer schedule. BA has been among the worst affected by sector-wide turmoil, as carriers race to meet soaring demand after the lifting of COVID travel restrictions.

"The whole aviation industry continues to face into significant challenges and we're completely focused on building resilience into our operation to give customers the certainty they deserve," the airline said in a statement, having already announced hundreds of flight cancellations this summer. The latest move meanwhile comes less than two weeks after BA staff at London Heathrow airport voted to strike over pay this summer as surging inflation erodes wages and sparks growing UK industrial unrest. The carrier's Heathrow ground staff voted by more than 90 percent in favor of walkouts.

Wednesday's news also comes after the British gov-

ernment recently offered "slot alleviation measures" which allow carriers to temporarily reduce schedules while retaining valuable take-off and landing slots. "While taking further action is not where we wanted to be, it's the right thing to do for our customers and our colleagues," BA added on Wednesday. "This new flexibility means that we can further reduce our schedule and consolidate some of our quieter services so that we can protect as many of our holiday flights as possible."

The group sought to reassure customers but conceded it would have a considerable impact on travel plans. "While most of our flights are unaffected and the majority of customers will get away as planned, we don't underestimate the impact this will have and we're doing everything we can to get their travel plans back on track," BA added. "We're in touch to apologize and offer rebooking options for new flights with us or another airline as soon as possible or issue a full refund."

In a vote of confidence in the aviation sector's long-term recovery, IAG last week ordered 11 Airbus A320neo aircraft and three A321XLRs worth \$1.7 billion. The London-listed conglomerate recently forecast a return to annual profit after narrowing COVID-induced losses as travel curbs were eased. The group collapsed into annual losses in 2020 and 2021 as COVID ravaged global demand for international air travel, forcing BA and its peers to slash thousands of jobs. IAG owns various airlines that also include Ireland's Aer Lingus and Spain's Iberia.—AFP

Price spikes push 71 million into poverty

UNITED NATIONS: Soaring global food and energy prices have forced 71 million people into poverty in the world's poorest countries, according to a United Nations Development Program report published Thursday. The rise in the developing world's poverty rates over the past three months "is drastically faster than the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic," said the UNDP in a press release, blaming the price surges in part on the war in Ukraine.

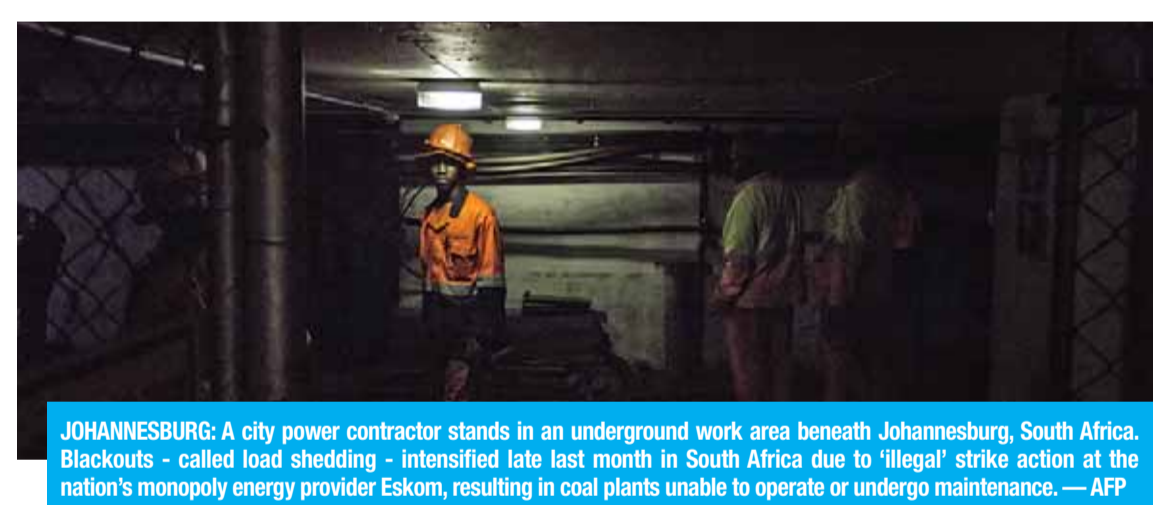
To address the growing issue, the UNDP said "targeted cash transfers to households are more equitable and more cost-effective than blanket energy subsidies," but the UN agency added that governments will "need support from the multilateral system to make ends meet." The UNDP also warned in its report that as central banks raise interest rates to tackle inflation, "there is a risk of triggering further recession-induced poverty that will exacerbate the crisis even more, accelerating and deepening poverty worldwide."

The report examined 159 countries, and found the situation to be most critical in the Balkans, the Caspian Sea region and sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in the Sahel. "Unprecedented price surges mean that for many people across the world, the food that they could afford yesterday is no longer attainable today," said UNDP head



HAYS, Yemen: Yemenis displaced by the conflict, receive food aid and supplies to meet their basic needs, at a camp in Hays district in the war-ravaged western province of Hodeida.— AFP

Achim Steiner. "This cost-of-living crisis is tipping millions of people into poverty and even starvation at breathtaking speed and with that, the threat of increased social unrest grows by the day," he warned. Among the countries facing the most severe consequences of surging prices, according to the report, are Armenia, Uzbekistan, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Haiti, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Yemen.—AFP



JOHANNESBURG: A city power contractor stands in an underground work area beneath Johannesburg, South Africa. Blackouts - called load shedding - intensified late last month in South Africa due to 'illegal' strike action at the nation's monopoly energy provider Eskom, resulting in coal plants unable to operate or undergo maintenance.— AFP

A long winter: South Africans struggle with rolling blackouts

JOHANNESBURG: Unable to switch on lights or heaters, cook dinner or charge their phones, South Africans are spending their mid-winter evenings plunged in darkness and low-tech living. Power outages, known here as load shedding, intensified late last month after strikes erupted at the nation's monopoly energy provider Eskom, leaving coal plants unable to operate or undergo maintenance.

Electricity cuts in South Africa are a notorious, years-old problem. But the frequency of power losses—two to three times per day and lasting up to four hours at a time—is the worst since a bleak episode in December 2019, and many people are livid. "It's like we're back to apartheid life, whereby we're back to candles, paraffin stoves," said Rebecca Bheki-Mogotho, a Johannesburg city employee. Her comparison was with life under South Africa's former segregationist regime, which deprived the black majority of basic infrastructure and services.

The leading economy on the continent, South Africa relies on coal to generate more than 80 percent of its electricity. The country has plenty of coal, but most of its plants are ageing, need repair or are scheduled to be decommissioned in the coming decades. "We didn't do what we should have done in the past five to 10 years," energy analyst Clyde Mallinson told AFP. "We've got ourselves caught in a situation where we are desperately trying to plug what's broken rather than get ahead of it."

101 days of blackouts

The wage dispute that compounded the crisis concluded Tuesday with Eskom employees accepting a

seven percent increase, which the electricity provider said in a statement "will be a struggle for Eskom to afford." But even with workers back on the job, Eskom warned it would "still take some time" for the system to recover due to the backlog of maintenance.

The public entity is already laden with debt and struggling to recover from years of alleged mismanagement and corruption, which made it a key entity investigated during a four-year public inquiry into state graft. To bridge the severe gap in supply, Eskom is relying on back-up gas turbines that blast through 14 litres of diesel (3.7 gallons) per second. Seven of these turbines were in operation Friday.

The cost of using diesel as a substitute fuel has been stratospheric. Eskom CEO Andre de Ruyter said the company spent 1.54 billion rand (\$93.8 million) in June alone—more than double its original budget. It has also spent more than double its annual budget for diesel only halfway into the year. The big splurge is still not enough to avoid outages that can cause havoc, from delays at intersections with downed traffic lights to faults at substations prolonging blackouts. In April, the company warned the country could see as many as 101 days of load shedding this year due to breakdowns.

At least 10,000 MW of renewable wind and solar energy should have been brought online since 2015 to keep pace with demand, Mallinson said. An intensive building strategy to make that up in the next two years would relieve the issue. "We have to build rapidly, like our lives depend on it," Mallinson said. The mining industry, the country's economic backbone, has begun investing in self-generation with renewables. Henk Langenhoven, chief economist at the trade grouping Minerals Council South Africa, told AFP. "As the problems... with the core energy supply from Eskom are rising and the shortfalls are increasing, the pressure and the inclination to actually move that way is actually getting stronger," Langenhoven said. Eskom's senior officials have similarly made repeated calls for the swift development of new energy sources.—AFP

Business

Stocks climb on recession watch; pound gains before Johnson exit

Oil slides below \$100 as euro sags further

LONDON: Stock markets recovered further Thursday as investors weighed recession risks, while the pound rallied as Britain's scandal-hit Prime Minister Boris Johnson prepared to quit as leader of the Conservative party. Elsewhere, oil prices climbed and the euro remained around 20-year lows versus the dollar. "Stocks bounce as pressure points ease," noted independent markets analyst Stephen Innes.

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday stressed its readiness to continue hiking US interest rates to tackle soaring inflation. Minutes of their last meeting made clear that officials did not plan to let up in efforts this year to try and cool prices. Inflation stands at the highest levels since the early 1980s both in the United States and Britain, where attention Thursday was firmly on political upheaval gripping the nation.

The pound rallied against the dollar and euro, with Johnson set to resign later in the day as Conservative party leader, according to local media—paving the way for a successor to replace him as prime minister. Dozens of ministers have quit his scandal-hit government since Tuesday, including former finance chief Rishi Sunak. "The pound is pushing higher, hitting session highs inching closer back up to... \$1.20, a critical support level

it broke below this week amid the political and economic uncertainty," said Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor.

"The currency market is relieved that Johnson is finally resigning, removing some of the political uncertainty that was priced into the pound and paving the way for a new prime minister," she added. The euro meanwhile remained under \$1.02 – a level it slumped under this week on its way to hitting a 20-year low. The European single currency is being hammered by growing fears of a recession for the eurozone and the likelihood of more aggressive US interest-rate hikes.

Oil slides

Meanwhile, recession worries pushed the price of Brent oil briefly back under \$100 on Wednesday, and the euro moved closer to parity with the dollar. European stocks rebounded thanks to lower bond yields and bargain hunting, while US stocks also advanced, climbing after Federal Reserve minutes maintained a tough line on inflation.

Europe's benchmark crude oil contract, Brent North Sea, fell briefly under \$100 per barrel in afternoon deals, following its US counterpart WTI, which slumped

below the symbolic level on Tuesday. Citi analysts have forecast that Brent could strike \$65 later this year in the event of a prolonged worldwide economic downturn. Meanwhile, the euro hit a fresh 20-year low point under \$1.02 – the European single currency fast closing in on parity with the dollar as traders eye recession for the eurozone and the ECB's slower moves to raise interest rates than the US Fed.

"A dip in government bond yields has paved the way for bargain hunters to swoop in and snap up European equities," said market analyst David Madden at Equiti Capital. Paris stocks rose 2.0 percent, while Frankfurt climbed 1.6 percent. Nevertheless, "the mood remains febrile," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG. "The drop in the euro and weakness in yields shows that investors remain very nervous about the economic prospects of the global economy, and the opportunistic bargain hunting in stocks may not have much staying power," he warned.

London's benchmark FTSE 100 index managed to gain 1.2 percent despite the political turmoil after UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was rocked by dozens of resignations from his scandal-hit government. But two staunchly pro-government outlets, the Daily Mail and

The Sun, as well as other media said Johnson had refused to bow to their calls for him to go. "Political risks do not seem to be having a major impact on UK assets," noted Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson.

"There are far too many bigger things on our minds right now—inflation, the economy slowing down, strikes." Britain is in the midst of nationwide strikes—affecting in particular the transport sector—as wages are eroded by rocketing inflation. Later, Wall Street stocks also pushed higher as Fed policy makers reiterated their willingness to continue raising interest rates to tamp down price pressures in minutes recounting the central bank's big interest rate hike in June. Market watchers said investors were pleased to see the tough line on inflation, although Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare noted the Fed's stance was a restatement of its posture in recent statements. "It's more because it had been such a terrible first half of the year," O'Hare said of Wednesday's gains. "We got so oversold in the month of June. The market is just looking for a ray of hope." Elsewhere Wednesday, Asian equity markets closed mostly lower amid a fresh flare-up of coronavirus cases in parts of China, which has seen some cities locked down as part of officials' zero-COVID policy.—AFP

Fuel prices soar in Ethiopia as subsidies cut

ADDIS ABABA: Fuel prices soared in Ethiopia on Wednesday after the government reduced subsidies, adding to economic hardship for people already struggling with high inflation. There were long queues at petrol stations in the capital Addis Ababa, with drivers reporting shortages as they tried to fill up their tanks. The price of petrol at the pump jumped almost 30 percent to 48.83 birr (about 94 US cents) while diesel went up almost 40 percent to 49.02 birr under the new price regime that will run to August 6, the trade ministry said.

The federal government – which had already hiked prices in May – plans to lift fuel subsidies progressively, according to the Addis Fortune business newspaper. Prices of fuel, food and other basic goods have rocketed globally because of the Ukraine war, hitting vulner-



ADDIS ABABA: Cars wait in queue at a fuel station in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on July 6, 2022. — AFP

able countries in Africa and elsewhere. The trade ministry said the cost of fuel for Ethiopian consumers should be almost double if it was calculated on current global prices. "But considering the state the country is in, the government is covering 75 percent of the (price) difference while it was decided that the remain-

ing 25 percent would be transferred to consumers," it said. Henok Girma, 26, said he had been waiting in line at a petrol station in Addis Ababa for an hour and a half. "At most of the gas stations, there is a long queue. I don't know what the problem but there is a shortage," he said.—AFP

Chinese ice cream brand under fire

BEIJING: A Chinese brand once dubbed the "Hermes of ice cream" has come under fire after internet users said some of its products do not melt – even when baked with a blowtorch. Videos showing Chicecream's ice creams staying solid when lighters were held to them went viral, revealing they did not fully melt when left in a 31 degree Celsius (88 degree Fahrenheit) room for an hour or under a very hot flame.

The footage sparked consternation online, prompting users to question the company's high prices and whether the products were overloaded with additives. The most expensive offering of Chicecream – called "Zhong Xue Gao" in Chinese – costs 66 yuan (\$10). The company said Wednesday that its products were in line with national food safety regulations. "We believe that it is not scientific to judge the quality of ice cream by baking, drying or heating ice cream," the brand said in a Weibo post that scooped up over 168,000 likes.—AFP



شركة الصفاء للاستثمار
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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 7 JULY 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,059	1,061	1,068	1,045	23	13,594,900	18	1.73%	11.74%	1,055	1,080	21.7	2.08	2.7%	1.00
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	319	321	326	319	7	20,497,738	2	0.63%	20.81%	316	321	22.5	1.54	2.1%	1.14
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	206	211	216	206	10	14,251,803	5	2.43%	0.66%	209	212	31.0	0.64	1.8%	1.15
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	243	233	247	232	15	8,440,471	-8	-3.32%	-2.53%	233	242	16.5	0.86	2.0%	1.34
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	881	845	890	841	49	59,557,403	-26	-2.99%	11.72%	840	861	30.1	3.81	1.3%	1.21
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	780	779	789	767	22	4,360,251	6	0.78%	9.35%	773	781	61.7	3.82	0.6%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	304	288	306	285	21	3,154,374	-12	-4.00%	31.51%	283	289	6.4	0.92	15.5%	1.74
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	147	143	147	138	9	8,770,701	-4	-2.72%	0.70%	140	145	25.3	0.73	3.6%	0.94
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	91	90.5	92	89.2	2.8	4,948,290	-2.0	-2.16%	-23.31%	90	95	89.1	0.52	10.0%	1.18
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	139	136	142	133	9	11,023,720	-4	-2.86%	-21.74%	132	137	19.7	0.97	2.2%	1.02
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	763	774	775	752	23	2,394,698	21	2.79%	3.46%	765	787	16.8	1.81	1.7%	1.13
501	National Industries	Financial Services	254	255	266	252	14	38,839,335	2	0.79%	5.83%	235	259	3.8	1.12	4.4%	1.40
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,365	1,249	1,365	1,235	130	547,704	-90	-6.72%	43.40%	1,226	1,260	12.4	1.01	4.8%	0.87
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	919	911	928	905	23	344,013	-12	-1.30%	6.92%	900	915	12.3	1.72	6.6%	0.95
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	320	315	324	309	15	2,810,588	0	0.00%	-9.22%	313	323	14.4	0.75	5.8%	1.04
603	Agility	Industrials	813	774	815	761	54	39,717,563	-39	-4.80%	-1.71%	769	791	53.9	0.89	2.2%	1.42
605	Zain	Telecommunications	598	591	600	588	12	15,393,845	-3	-0.51%	-0.67%	589	595	14.7	2.26	5.6%	0.87
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,100	3,086	3,132	3,072	60	942,529	-9	-0.29%	-4.28%	3,065	3,100	6.5	3.84	12.9%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	194	192	195	189	6	1,687,720	0	0.00%	-11.93%	184	195	NULL	0.67	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,910	1,894	1,940	1,865	75	1,543,574	4	0.21%	46.82%	1,880	1,939	25.3	15.52	1.7%	1.39
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	276	283	293	273	20	225,922,899	16	5.99%	11.98%	280	287	17.7	1.85	3.0%	1.73
821	Warba Bank	Banking	244	243	245	240	5	12,729,506	0	0.00%	-11.31%	243	249	28.4	1.32	0.0%	1.06
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	424	413	427	407	20	3,265,166	-10	-2.36%	-28.48%	405	432	19.8	1.12	3.8%	0.42
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	399	397	400	390	10	2,550,810	-2	-0.50%	2.30%	391	398	34.1	1.59	2.5%	0.74
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	204	205	207	203	4	832,788	-2	-0.97%	-10.09%	205	213	15.8	2.58	8.8%	0.55
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,393	2,280	2,393	2,280	113	80,288	-113	-4.72%	12.87%	2,180	2,300	25.6	8.68	2.8%	0.78
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	840	850	854	828	26	7,173,446	14	1.67%	-	830	860	6.3	1.87	-	-

* As of end of week closing

Business

Apple devices getting beefed-up defense against spyware, spies

Lockdown mode added to iPhones, iPads, Mac computers

News in brief

Shell reverses write-offs

LONDON: Shell will reverse write-offs totalling up to \$4.5 billion thanks to elevated gas and oil prices, the British energy giant announced Thursday. It expects to reverse impairments of between \$3.5 billion and \$4.5 billion, the company said in a statement. Shell revised its outlooks for energy prices, as well as supply and demand. "This resulted in a review of" impaired Shell gas assets, the oil company said. Shell in 2020 booked a charge of \$2.2 billion as oil prices collapsed in the wake of COVID lockdowns that crushed demand for energy worldwide. The group has also taken a hit totalling \$3.9 billion on its exit from Russia after the country's invasion of Ukraine. Oil and gas prices have surged this year owing to the Ukraine war and after countries lifted COVID lockdowns. Crude futures have fallen back sharply this week, however, on expectations of weaker demand should major economies slide into recession as inflation soars. By Thursday, world oil prices traded around \$100 per barrel.

Free Grubhub delivery

NEW YORK: Amazon Prime customers in the United States will be able to receive a year of free restaurant delivery through Grubhub+ under a deal announced Wednesday by Just Eat Takeaway.com. Prime members will have access to hundreds of thousands of restaurants on Grubhub, the American affiliate of Anglo-Dutch company Just Eat Takeaway. The deal should expand Grubhub+ membership while having a neutral effect on 2022 earnings, Just Eat Takeaway said in a news release. In exchange, Amazon will receive warrants for two percent of Grubhub's common equity, with the potential for up to 13 percent more of Grubhub equity, depending on the number of new customers added through the venture. The Amazon venture "will help Grubhub continue to deliver on our long-standing mission to connect more diners with local restaurants," said Grubhub Chief Executive Adam DeWitt.

Sri Lanka hikes interest rates

COLOMBO: Cash-strapped Sri Lanka raised interest rates one percentage point Friday, the second sharp hike in three months, as the central bank warned of 80 percent inflation and a painful recession. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka ramped up its benchmark deposit and lending rates to 14.5 percent and 15.5 percent respectively, after data showed inflation soared to a record 54.6 percent last month. Officials said the hike was aimed at containing runaway prices, which were forecast to rise 80 percent by year's end, and reduce any build-up of demand pressures in the shattered economy. Acute shortages of food and fuel, alongside lengthy electricity blackouts, have led to months of widespread anti-government demonstrations calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation. The central bank said the economy could go into a recession this year, having grown 3.7 percent last year and contracted 3.6 percent in 2020.

App Delivery Hero hit

BRUSSELS: EU antitrust investigators on Wednesday raided the offices of German online app Delivery Hero, a company spokesman said, over suspicions the company was part of a price-fixing cartel. "Delivery Hero confirms that the European Commission conducted an inspection at its offices in Berlin," the company said in a short statement. The revelation followed a statement by the European Commission that said raids had taken place against companies in two EU countries, but Brussels declined to name the countries and the companies involved. The commission said the companies concerned were suspected of breaking an EU antitrust law that bans cartels, without adding further detail. The commission added that such inspections did not mean that the companies were guilty of anti-competitive behavior "nor does it prejudice the outcome of the investigation itself". Delivery Hero said it "is committed to cooperating fully with the commission".

Virgin Galactic picks Boeing

WASHINGTON: Space travel company Virgin Galactic on Wednesday said it had reached an agreement with Boeing subsidiary Aurora Flight Sciences to build two new air launch carrier aircraft for its spaceships. These new "motherships" will replace Virgin Galactic's existing carrier plane-the VMS Eve built by Scaled Composites-with the first of the new aircraft due to enter service by 2025. The company also plans to launch new "Delta-class" spaceships the same year. The value of the contract was not disclosed. Virgin Galactic CEO Michael Colglazier said in a statement the next generation motherships "will be faster to produce, easier to maintain and will allow us to fly substantially more missions each year." He added the goal was 400 flights per year from the company's base in New Mexico, called Spaceport America. Todd Citron, Boeing's Chief Technology Officer added: "Boeing is excited to contribute our culture of safety, our operational excellence, and our expertise in aircraft design and manufacturing to help advance human space travel." —From AFP

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple has unveiled a new way for activists, journalists and other targets of state-sponsored espionage to protect themselves from spyware. A Lockdown Mode being added to iPhones, iPads, and Mac computers is intended to counter threats from a thriving industry that provides sophisticated espionage tools to governments. "While the vast majority of users will never be the victims of highly targeted cyberattacks, we will work tirelessly to protect the small number of users who are," Apple head of security engineering Ivan Krstic said in a blog post.

The tech giant is upping the bounty it pays researchers for uncovering vulnerabilities in its software when it comes to Lockdown Mode, raising the maximum reward to \$2 million. Concerns over digital snooping have been fueled by media outlets reporting that Pegasus spyware made by NSO Group in Zionist entity was being used by governments to surveil opponents, activists and journalists.

Apple is suing NSO Group in US federal court, saying the Zionist entity firm's spyware was used to attack a small number of iPhone users worldwide. "State-sponsored actors like the NSO Group spend millions of dollars on sophisticated surveillance technologies without effective accountability," Apple senior vice president of software engineering Craig Federighi said when the suit was filed late last year.

"That needs to change." Pegasus infiltrates mobile phones to extract data or activate a camera or microphone to spy on their owners. NSO Group says the software is only sold to government agencies to target criminals and terrorists with the green light of Zionist entity's authorities. A Spanish court last month said a judge wants to visit Zionist entity to quiz the NSO Group's top executive over a top-level hacking scandal involving the Spanish premier's phone.

Meanwhile, Google last month said that an Italy-



MARYLAND: Customers shop at The Apple Store at the Towson Town Center mall, the first of the company's retail locations in the US where workers voted to unionize. —AFP

based firm's hacking tools were used to spy on Apple and Android smartphones in Italy and Kazakhstan, casting a light on a "flourishing" spyware industry. Google's threat analysis team said spyware made by RCS Lab targeted the phones using a combination of tactics including unusual "drive-by downloads" that happen without victims being aware. Google said it warned Android users targeted by the spyware and ramped up software defenses.

The Google threat team is tracking more than 30 companies that sell surveillance capabilities to gov-

ernments, according to the Alphabet-owned tech titan. "The commercial spyware industry is thriving and growing at a significant rate," Google said. Apple's Lockdown Mode is designed to block or disable some features and capabilities to prevent them being taken advantage of by spyware. The extreme, optional mode "hardens device defenses and strictly limits certain functionalities, sharply reducing the attack surface that potentially could be exploited by highly targeted mercenary spyware," Apple said. —AFP

KFH offers 24/7 eservices during holiday

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to provide its banking services around the clock through a group of various technological and digital tools during the holiday. Most of the banking services are available in several channels around the clock, whether through the bank's website, KFH.com, or via the KFHOnline mobile application, or through the KFHGo electronic branches that are spread in many important locations, in addition to the KFH accounts on social media and many E-service channels as per the latest financial technology and digital platforms.

KFH Go branch is considered a new electronic channel that helps transfer normal customer transactions to an innovative automated branch, that provides capabilities that allow customers to benefit from highly efficient banking services. It includes more than 80% of the services and business provided by the branches in their traditional sense, which makes KFH Go branches the preferred choice to many segments of customers, especially the youth. KFH GO branches include the XTM device that allows direct video call with service personnel, as well as automatic teller machines and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines receive 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, customers can perform a variety of interactive banking services through KFH Go's 10 branches located in various places in Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport, such as: establishing "Murabaha" financing transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The electronic banking services at KFH are also characterized by their high efficiency in addition to ease and safety. This was evident in the number of electronic banking operations that KFH customers carried out via KFHonline, on the website or through the mobile application.

The e-banking transactions includes: opening a bank account online for citizens and residents to join become a KFH customer without having to visit the branch, local and telex financial transfers, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, cheque book request, requesting financing, opening an account, requesting Al-Kheir Card, and checking the PINs for credit and debit cards, activating new bank cards, reporting a lost credit/debit cards, checking the financing obligations and the number of installments, perusal of investment plans, receiving account balances and deposits summary, along with other wide range of digital services.



KFH has recently launched digital signature service in personal financing products through KFH mobile app or desktop from anywhere without having to visit the branch, instant card issuance within 3 minutes, Live FX Pricing, instant cross-border payments service at KFH-Turkey using Ripple's technology and digital Wallet service through smart mobiles and watches which provides advanced and smart digital payment methods according to highly developed security standards in cooperation with Samsung, Fitbit and Garmin.

Meanwhile, the call center continues to provide services around the clock to receive customer calls, listen to their enquiries and respond to them through a qualified and technically advanced staff. KFH provides the automated telephone service that works with the same efficiency and speed, to respond to transfers between accounts, inquire about financial operations, pay bills, and recharge Mobile phone cards, along with other services.

Kalyan Jewelers launch 'Back Home' Campaign

KUWAIT: Kalyan Jewelers, one of the most trusted and leading jewelry brands, has announced the launch of its special seasonal offer with their 'Back Home' campaign for its patrons. As part of this promotion, Kalyan Jewelers has announced a one-of-its-kind offer for its patrons across Kuwait. Customers purchasing jewelry worth KD 150 and

above from Kalyan Jewelers stand a chance to win free flight tickets back home.

On every KD 150 spent, customers will be eligible to receive one free raffle coupon from Kalyan Jewelers. The jewelry brand will be selecting 25 lucky winners at the end of this campaign. The 'Back Home' campaign offers can be availed by customers until 21st August 2022 at all Kalyan Jewelers' showrooms across Kuwait. The brand offers 100% exchange value on old gold and has also tied up with several leading banks to assist their customers with easy monthly installment plans.

Talking about the announcement, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director - Kalyan Jewelers said, "As a customer-first brand, Kalyan Jewelers has

been successful in carving a distinctive brand identity among customers in the region. The newly announced 'Back Home' campaign is a testament to our commitment to provide maximum benefits to patrons on their jewelry purchases at Kalyan Jewelers. We are confident that patrons will continue to shower us with the love and support as we introduce more such exciting offers." The jewelry retailer at Kalyan Jewelers goes through multiple purity tests and patrons also receive the Kalyan Jewelers 4-Level Assurance Certificate which guarantees purity, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments, detailed product information and transparent exchange and buy-back policies. The certification is part of the brand's commitment to offering the very best to its loyalists.

Kazakhstan diversifying oil exports

NUR-SULTAN: Kazakhstan's president Thursday ordered officials to find oil export routes bypassing Russia in a move that risks deepening tensions that have emerged between the two countries over Ukraine. Kazakhstan has already seen two notable interruptions to its crude exports via a pipeline that unloads at the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk in the months since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February. The route accounts for around three quarters of Kazakhstan's total oil exports and the stoppages have triggered speculation that the Kremlin might be punishing its Central Asian ally for its neutral stance on Ukraine.

A third interruption looked imminent earlier this week after a Russian

court ordered a 30-day ban on unloading from the 1,500-kilometre (930-mile) pipeline from Kazakh oil fields to the Novorossiysk terminal, citing environmental violations. An appeal lodged by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium that operates the pipeline has prevented the suspension taking effect for the moment, Kazakhstan's energy ministry said Thursday.

At a government meeting, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said that a new route crossing the Caspian Sea was "a priority direction" and asked officials to "take measures to increase capacity" of sections of a pipeline taking crude to China, his office said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was "unlikely" the court's decision was politically motivated. "More contact with our Kazakhstan colleagues is needed," Peskov said. Tokayev earlier this week risked the Kremlin's wrath by pledging deeper energy cooperation with the European Union in a phone call with EU Council President Charles Michel as Brussels seeks



YEKATERINBURG: Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin (center) and his Kazakh counterpart Alikhan Smailov (3rd right) tour the 2022 Innoprom International Industrial Trade Fair in Yekaterinburg on July 4, 2022. —AFP

alternatives to Russian oil.

Speaking at last month's economic forum in Saint Petersburg where he was sharing the stage with Putin, Tokayev raised eyebrows by calling Russia-backed separatist entities in eastern Ukraine "quasi-states" and

saying that Kazakhstan would not recognize them. Restrictions on deliveries via the pipeline in March and June were blamed by the CPC on damage from storms and the threat of sea mines dating back to World War II respectively. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



High-octane thrills as Spain's Pamplona bull run returns

Participants run ahead of bulls.

Half-tonne fighting bulls knocked over thrill-seekers on Thursday in the first bull run since 2019 at Spain's San Fermin festival in Pamplona, with five people taken to hospital. No one was gored but several people were trampled or knocked to the cobblestone pavement of the mediaeval northern city in the first of the festival's eight early-morning bull runs.

One suffered a leg injury, while another hit his head while falling and a teenager hurt his arm, a Red Cross spokesman said. Six bulls guided by six tame steers that keep the herd together cleared a path through a sea of several thousand runners, most of them dressed in white with red neck scarves.

After the starting gun, the holding pen gate was opened and the bulls charged onto the street, prompting a first group of runners to race off, many diving out of the way or falling as the pack barrelled through.

More and more runners joined at different points along the carefully boarded-up route, turning to see how close they



Participants wave their red scarves during the "Chupinazo" (start rocket) opening ceremony to mark the kick-off of the San Fermin Festival outside the Town Hall of Pamplona in northern Spain. — AFP Photos

were to the animals' horns as they raced along the 850-metre (2,790 feet) course to the city's bull ring.

"The bulls kept themselves in a tight

pack, they steamrolled right through, so it was over very quickly," said Gordon MacDonald, a 46-year-old IT worker from Glasgow who took part in the run.

"It was a long time since we ran here so everybody was kind of nervous, we couldn't remember exactly how it was going to go," he told AFP. The bulls finished the course in two minutes and 35 seconds, bursting into the ring where they will later be killed in bullfights.

'Happy to be alive'

Just after the race, many were still reeling from the excitement. "It gave me such a thrill, a real adrenaline rush... it was great," said Nico Falcon, a student from Andalusia who joined the runners.

"We saw the crowd running this way and we just took off. As soon as we turned the corner, the bulls were right there. It was one hell of an experience," said 30-year-old American businessman Roger Sandhu.

People from around the world flock to Pamplona to test their bravery, and also enjoy the festival's mix of round-the-clock parties, religious processions and concerts. "I turned around and saw the biggest bull I've ever seen in my life," Arsh Brah, a 29-year-old lawyer from

California told AFP saying he ran until he saw the first exit and quickly got out.

"I'm happy I'm still alive!" Many runners spend time preparing for the race and try to avoid the traditional round-the-clock drinking before joining the race, which starts at 8:00 am, organisers said.

But others throw caution to the wind. "You see people (running) in flip-flops, and if security sees them, they pull them out, and people who are totally drunk and if they see them, they take them out too," said Nestor Molinet, a 28-year-old runner from Pamplona.

"But there are a lot of people who manage to do it." The annual festival, made famous by Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel "The Sun Also Rises", was last held in 2019. Officials called off the hugely popular event in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID pandemic, the first time the festival had been cancelled since Spain's 1936-1939 civil war. Sixteen people have died in the bull runs since 1910. The last death occurred in 2009. — AFP



Participants celebrate during the "Chupinazo" (start rocket) opening ceremony.



A musician plays drum during the "Chupinazo".

South Korean auteur behind 'Oldboy' returns with 'pure' love story

Filmmaker Park Chan-wook, known for his ultra-violent thrillers that helped catapult South Korean cinema onto the global stage, is back with an altogether different work—a restrained yet deeply emotional love story. "Decision to Leave" arrives after the world-smashing success of South Korean entertainment, including Bong Joon-ho's "Parasite" and Netflix's "Squid Game", and has been the top-grossing domestic film in South Korea since opening last week.

It stars Chinese star Tang Wei and Korean actor Park Hae-il, who plays a detective investigating a man's fatal plunge from a mountain. He falls for the victim's mysterious wife, whom he suspects of being behind her husband's death. The film has already won Park the Best Director prize at this year's Cannes Film Festival, which had previously awarded him the Grand Prix for his 2003 cult-classic revenge thriller "Oldboy".

However, unlike many of his previous works, "Decision to Leave" contains almost no adult or graphically violent scenes. IndieWire has called it "the most romantic movie of the year (so far)", while early reviews praised it as a gorgeously

rendered love story marked by elegance and restraint.

"I agree that it's a romantic film, and I wanted to make such a movie," Park said in an interview with reporters in Seoul last month. The 58-year-old said he started thinking about the project while working on the BBC's English-language miniseries "The Little Drummer Girl". Set against the backdrop of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, Park found himself yearning to do something different-away from politics and disputes.

"I wanted to make a film that's pure in the sense that it is faithful to the basics of cinema as an art form while no elements other than the theme of love get in the way," he said. The result is a poetic exploration of time, loss and longing, combining Park's signature lush cinematography with the audience-arresting sexual tension simmering between the well-mannered detective and beguiling murder suspect.



The two characters are a departure from Park's previous, more extreme characters—like the repressed Catholic priest-turned-vampire in the horror flick "Thirst" and a man held captive for 15 years in "Oldboy". The director has said before that love stories, just like his blood-lust tales of revenge, reveal how "human beings essentially are". Even so, none of the characters in his movies have much common ground with him.

"I'm not at all a person who goes after such romantic ideals or lives my life that way. I tend to be very realistic and pragmatic," said the soft-spoken auteur. "I'm the kind of filmmaker who has a big gap between my life and the movies I've made."

'Arthouse' barrier

Park has long been credited for inspiring a generation of filmmakers behind the "Korean noir" genre—movies about bloody crimes, brutal revenge or the criminal underworld, presented with sumptuous cinematography.

One such director, Bong Joon-ho, became the first South Korean to win the top Palme d'Or prize at Cannes for his dark comedy "Parasite" in 2019. It was also the first non-English-language film to win the Oscar's Best Picture.

While Park believes he has always directed his movies for the general public, he recognises that "South Korean films, Asian films and foreign films are still being consumed as arthouse cinema" outside the region. "No matter how they are made, that's how they are being categorised as," he said. "I don't think that's

ideal. But 'Parasite' has broken that barrier." Critics say his "Oldboy" paved the crucial way for South Korean cinema's global triumph, but Park has been making conscious efforts to also work on non-Korean projects.

Aside from "The Little Drummer Girl", he produced Bong's first English-language film, 2013's "Snowpiercer", and made his own Hollywood debut that year with "Stoker" starring Nicole Kidman and Mia Wasikowska. His next project is with HBO—an espionage drama series based on Viet Thanh Nguyen's Pulitzer Prize-

winning novel "The Sympathizer", which will feature Robert Downey Jr. Park said the global entertainment industry needs more international collaborations.

"It's important how your movies are being perceived right now, but you also wonder whether your films will survive and be remembered," he said. "There is no way for me to know what viewers 50 or 100 years from now would think. Yet the slightest hint you can still get is by responses from today's foreign viewers," he added. — AFP



South Korean director, producer and screenwriter Park Chan-wook (R) hugs Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn after he won the Best Director prize for the film "Decision to Leave" (Heojil Kyolshim) — AFP photos



Ukrainian couple Anna Perebynos (L) and Vladyslav Khyzyk, both 22, wear Kolosova brand sweaters with the colors of the Ukrainian flag and reading "Place of Happy People", in Kyiv. — AFP photos

WAR-THEMED FASHION IS HIT WITH PATRIOTIC UKRAINIANS

In a large fashion store in central Kyiv, a mother and her young daughter flick through T-shirts depicting a cartoon dog in a flak jacket and sunglasses. "We have several like this," says Tatiana, adding that they may pick up something new.

"We love clothes like this so we shop here often." The T-shirts by Kyiv-based label J.Cook depict Patron, a Jack Russell dog skilled at finding landmines, who was awarded a medal by President Volodymyr Zelensky in May.

"I like little Patron," Tatiana's daughter Valeriya says, as her mother nods. A trend for patriotic clothing in Ukraine sees T-shirt designs and slogans swiftly pick up on the latest weaponry and war developments.

J.Cook's founder, Serhii Fiut, says the Patron T-shirt is "currently the most popular" for the brand, named after British explorer James Cook, which sews garments in western Ukraine. "In 90 percent of cases, people choose military-themed T-shirts," the 34-year-old businessman says, sitting in a Georgian cafe in Kyiv.

"It's like a means of expression. People want to show that 'this is close to me'." Sales of T-shirts are growing, Fiut said. "I have a niche where people are ready to buy." Many who buy online are women getting T-shirts for partners and relatives fighting in the war, he adds.

At the large store Vsi Svoi (All Ours) on Kyiv's main shopping street—which show-



cases Ukraine designers—there is a wide choice of war-themed clothing. A mannequin near the entrance wears a T-shirt showing a US Javelin anti-tank missile on a background of stylised flowers, designed by another Kyiv-based label, SIL' wear.

Mariya Iakunias, 31, the brand's co-owner says the design, known as "Talisman", is one of the brand's most popular. It is inspired by the Ukrainian peasant tradition of hanging up towels embroidered with bright flowers to ward off bad luck, she said.

"Today, the Javelin in the hands of our warriors is the talisman of every

Ukrainian," she says, hence the idea to surround it with flowers. She insists that the popularity of such designs "is not a trend, it's our voice... This is our unity. To be Ukrainians and to win this war."

While SIL' wear saw its sales drop in the first month of the war, they are now "recovering powerfully," she says. Both J. Cook and SIL' wear donate part of their proceeds to the armed forces.

'People get it'

Several T-shirt designs mock Russia's wider propaganda claims—such as reports of genetically modified geese and pigeons being used as biological weapons. One by J.Cook shows aggressive-looking pigeons wearing tank helmets and a cartridge belt, while a gaggle of geese tout rifles and peer through binoculars in another design from the label.

"They (Russians) themselves give us ideas for drawings," says Fiut. "Where are these pigeons and biological laboratories? What are they talking about? We are trying to show this irony, to mock it. People get it."

Customers are eager to wear their support for the war on their chests. "There's a lot of beautiful T-shirts," says 14-year-old Mykola, shopping at Vsi Svoi, saying he and his friends wear them. They send "a certain message and that's why it's important to wear them", he says.

'So patriotic'

At a pop-up event at a trendy Kyiv showroom called Kapsula, or capsule, T-shirts, sweaters, hoodies and jewellery by Ukrainian designers feature the national flag colours, blue and yellow. "Everything is so patriotic now," says administrator Anna Perebynos, 22.

"We hold such events so people know more about our Ukrainian designers who are working now, who are putting out new collections despite what is happening now in our country." On display is a soft hoodie by MY x MY featuring an embroidered map of Ukraine with the slogan: "Places for happy people".

A T-shirt by Balcony Garment shows a Russian rocket with nuclear symbols juxtaposed on doves and flowers with the slogan: "Here and now." Perebynos shows clothes to be shipped online including folk-embroidered blouses and linen items in blue and yellow.

"We get a lot of international orders: it's people who may have been born here in Ukraine and it's their home but for some reason, they've gone abroad." Patriotism in Kyiv even extends to makeup, with some women wearing yellow and blue flicks of eyeliner, she says, laughing. "Now it's a very large global trend. It shows that people are really supporting us." — AFP

'Run out of time'

Chemicals such as nitrous oxide settle on the art, the campaign says, rendering it vulnerable to degradation when rain falls. Woodside said in a statement that "peer-reviewed research has not demonstrated any impacts on Burrup rock art from emissions associated with Woodside's operations".

But Save Our Songlines points to a 2021 study from the University of Western Australia, which concluded that "with the currently recorded acidity levels, the rock patina and associated art will degrade and disappear over time".



Raelene Cooper, First Nations advocate, poses for a picture in Karratha, Western Australia. Two Indigenous Australian activists are fighting to save 40,000-year-old sacred rock art in Western Australia from pollution and plans for a major gas project. — AFP

Woodside dismissed that study as not including "any original research and consequently (it) does not enhance or expand the existing science". But Alec and Cooper say they can see Murujuga, the land they have sworn to protect and care for, changing before their eyes—from the rock art to the disappearance of plants and animals.

"There's something critically wrong," Alec said. "And there's only one explanation for that, and that is the chemicals, the mining, the gas, the oil... they are creating destruction." The pair hope that speaking to the UN's Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which provides expertise to the Human Rights Council, will see industry and government in Australia held to account.

They want First Nations custodians to be better consulted about new industry on their land—noting that women have been sidelined in the approvals process. They have also called for Murujuga to receive World Heritage listing next year, an acknowledgement that would grant more leverage to argue for the region's protection. "The time is now, we've already run out of time," Alec said. — AFP

Indigenous Australian activists fight for ancient rock art

Two Indigenous Australian activists are fighting to save 40,000-year-old sacred rock art in Western Australia from pollution and plans for a major gas project. Destruction in 2020 of Aboriginal rock shelters at Juukan Gorge by mining company Rio Tinto shocked the world, sparking condemnation, resignations, inquiries and promised reforms.

Now, First Nations women Raelene Cooper and Josie Alec warn the same could happen "in slow motion" at Murujuga, which lies about 1,300 kilometres north of Perth. Alec and Cooper hope to garner global support by travelling this week from Australia's remote Pilbara region to Geneva to address the United Nations about their concerns—particularly if gas giant Woodside's Scarborough project goes ahead.

Cooper told AFP that decay was already visible in the Murujuga rock art, which is sacred to the Indigenous custodians of the land and contains their traditional lore. Alec said that due to industrial pollution "the rock art will disappear. We will have no rock art to show the world."

Woodside's Aus\$16 billion (US\$11 billion) Scarborough gas project would see 13 wells drilled off the coast of Western Australia to tap into a huge underwater reserve. The company predicts that at full capacity, Scarborough will produce eight million tonnes of liquefied natural gas annually—prompting a backlash from green groups over its carbon emissions potential.

Last month the Australian Conservation Fund launched a legal challenge against the Scarborough project, claiming it would create emissions extensive enough to harm the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef.

Cooper and Alec point out that Murujuga has also been nominated for a World Heritage listing, in part because of the cultural value of its estimated one million petroglyphs, or rock carvings. Destruction of the rock art, Alec said, "will kill our stories. And it kills a very part of who we are."

"We already visibly see the decay... the patina on the rock art itself flaking away, and the images are starting to wear," Cooper said. Save Our Songlines, a campaign launched by both women, links the degradation of the art to pollution from industrial production on the resource-rich Burrup Peninsula.



Ukrainian shoe repairer Sergiy Kurchigin (also written Serguio Kourtchiguine) speaks on the phone outside his workshop in the town of Kramatorsk. — AFP photos

In eastern Ukraine, frontline cobbler fixes soldiers' boots for free

Sitting at his old sewing machine, Ukrainian cobbler Sergiy Kurchigin waits for customers in one of just a few businesses still open this close to the frontline. After Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, many shops shut down as thousands of residents fled the eastern city of Kramatorsk, including his wife and daughter who now live in Germany.



Ukrainian shoe repairer Sergiy Kurchigin poses at his workshop.

But even as the sound of shelling grows nearer and Russian forces creep deeper into the Donbas region, the shoemaker in his sixties says he will not leave. Kurchigin says he cannot imagine life without his trade, which he learnt back in the 1970s from Armenians in his home city.

"No work, no play, no satisfaction," says the repairman who refuses to give his exact age, as he operates his 19th-century

foot-powered sewing machine. "A man has to earn money to support his family," he adds.

By staying behind to work in his neon-lit workshop, he can also do his bit to help the war effort. "When soldiers or volunteers drop by to get their shoes repaired, I don't charge them anything," he says, as a few members of the defence forces chat on the opposite pavement.

'Until I die'

A war between two countries as culturally close as Ukraine and Russia is "absurd", says the cobbler, standing in front of his "shoe repair" sign in blue and yellow, the colours of the Ukrainian flag. Kurchigin opened his first shoe-making business back in 1976, when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union.

It was so successful that he decided to open a second shop in the same city. But because of the war, "there's no one left there now," he says of the second venture. Business is by no means as good as it used to be in his first workshop either.

But "as everyone knows me here, I always have one or two people a day", he says. Even without new orders, there's always something to do, he says, picking up an old pair of trainers from a shelf. For the time being, he only repairs shoes as war has made new leather unaffordable. Between customers, he works out.

He picks up a small weight from the floor and lifts it a few times, then grabs his wooden-handled chest expander for some more exercises. When asked when he plans to retire, Kurchigin says he has no idea. "I'll continue to work until I die because without work it's very hard to live," he says. — AFP

Russia's plastic surgery sector feels pinch from sanctions

When it comes to looking good, Russian women are happy to splash out, even on a bit of nip-and-tuck plastic surgery. But Western sanctions in the wake of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine mean that supplies of products such as botox and breast implants—largely imported from countries such as the United States and Germany—could become increasingly hard to get hold of. Anastasia Yermakova, 37, is worried: She had her last injection of botox (botulinum toxin) in February to reduce facial wrinkles. "My beautician assures us that she still has stocks of botox," she told AFP. "But I worry," she said, arguing that local botox replacements are of inferior quality.

Russia ranks ninth globally in the number of aesthetic procedures carried out annually — 621,600 in 2020, according to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. And the Russian aesthetic medicines sector was worth \$969 million in 2021, up two percent from the year before, according to the Russian consultancy Amiko.

Soon after President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, US drugmaker AbbVie, which is behind the wrinkle treatment Botox, withdrew from the flourishing Russian market over what it called "tragic events" in Ukraine. As a result, Botox stocks are "melting", Yuliya Frangulova, co-founder of the National Association of Aesthetic Medicine Clinics, told AFP. Frangulova said it is "causing concern of clinic managers accustomed to using this reference product".

'Say goodbye to fillers'

"In March, we saw a panic among patients, doctors and suppliers," said Oksana Vlasova, director of development at the Grandmed beauty clinic in Russia's second city Saint Petersburg. "The demand exploded, the stocks of botox were emptying."

In April and May, there were no botox imports at all, said Nikolay Bespalov of RNC Pharma which analyses the Russian pharmaceutical market. He hopes supplies could resume "towards the end of the summer."

Russians are also running out of some Western-made face fillers, in particular injections of hyaluronic acid to plump up lips—a very popular procedure in the country. "We are also forced to say goodbye" to fillers from AbbVie, Vlasova said, hoping that European producers can fill in the gap. It is also getting harder to get breast implants—due to a lack of Russian producers. All breast implants in Russia are imported, with 60 percent coming from the United States and 13 percent from Germany, according to industry estimates.

The sanctions do not target the supply of implants, but the disrupted logistics and other factors affected both breast reconstruction and aesthetic operations. In March, prices of implants rose threefold, before stabilising at a level 20 percent higher than before the start of Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine, plastic surgeon Evgeny Dobreikin told AFP.

Patriotic breasts

Alexander Saversky, president of the League of Patient Advocates, fears that cheap but potentially dangerous products could soon start arriving in clinics, recalling the scandal of the French firm PIP's poor quality breast implants. Saversky predicted that the problems will soon apply to the rest of the health industry. "In a few months, the shortages of medical equipment in Russia, 80 percent of which is imported from abroad, will be critical," he said. Soaring inflation and uncertain future also create problems for beauty professionals, as Russians have begun to tighten their belts. In Saint Petersburg, Vlasova has already seen a drop in her clientele. "The population's income has gone down," she said. "People are reducing their expenses." But in the midst of dark times, plastic surgeon Dobreikin sees an opportunity. He wants to win new clients with patriotic themes.

In late May, he floated the idea of "RosGrud" (Russian Breasts) implants, which instead of being translucent are in the colours of the Russian flag or military fatigues. One of his clients, Nastella Sokolova, a 28-year-old designer, is enthusiastic.

"It's my way of defending my homeland," she said. The surgeon is now looking to find a supplier abroad who is willing to create such implants for him. Dobreikin warns wits against mocking his project, alluding to harsh penalties introduced in the country for anyone criticising the army. "Perhaps those who are against our patriotic implants are also against our country?" — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Picture shows children holding cardboard puppets and a poster that reads 'Save Indonesia's forest' during a show about animal conservation by former teacher Samsudin at Cemara Kulon village, in Indramayu.



Former teacher Samsudin poses along with children with cardboard puppets.



Former teacher Samsudin teaching children about animal conservation with cardboard puppets.

Indonesian uses puppets to teach threat to world's rarest rhinos

In a small Indonesian fishing village, a man with a fake rhino head perched atop his own puts on a puppet show for a group of eager children. Former teacher Samsudin is educating the kids about the plight of the critically endangered Javan rhino—the world's rarest—using cardboard figures, comical expressions and exaggerated voices to spread his message of conservation one story at a time. The 50-year-old asks the children in the West Javan village of Indramayu to mimic the animals, and teaches them the importance of guarding the forest and the wildlife unique to it. "I want them to know rhinos need pristine forest and that human beings are not the only creatures on earth," he told AFP.

"I want children to love nature and grow up into people who are aware and

care about our natural resources." Javan rhinos—one-horned mammals that can weigh up to two tonnes and have folds of loose skin that resemble armour plating—once numbered in the thousands across Southeast Asia.

But they are now barely clinging to existence, having been hit hard by rampant poaching and human encroachment on their habitats. After years of population decline, there are believed to be just 75 of the mammals left at the Ujung Kulon sanctuary—their last remaining wild habitat—on the westernmost tip of Java island.

'Before it's too late'

Samsudin, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, decided to dedicate his time to the conservation of Javan rhinos and other endangered species in

2014 after learning about their precarious situation. Since then, he has travelled across the archipelago on an old bicycle, performing free puppet shows at stops along the way to teach children about the animals. "I want them to know about rhinos before it's too late. I don't want them to only see rhinos from textbooks or cartoon movies," Samsudin said.

Samsudin makes his puppets out of cardboard because it's readily available, and because he opposes the use of leather—which is used in traditional Javanese puppet theatre shows—for conservation reasons. The use of visual storytelling makes the message easier for children to digest and creates a stronger bond between him and his young audience, he said. "Children have a short attention span; I have to be creative to

distract them from their gadgets," he said.

Rhino conservation is especially difficult because of the animals' long gestation period and their tendency to roam, which often leaves males and females separated during the mating period. Samsudin is also determined to challenge cartoon depictions of rhinos as being lazy and dumb.

"Rhinos are very shy and they have an unusual appearance, but there are only a few of them left in the world, so I want to lift their image and make them special and wise creatures," he said.

'Follow in my footsteps'

After coronavirus temporarily brought the curtain down on his act, Samsudin is now back on the road performing for children. His show casts the Javan rhino as

the main character, with a macaque and a Sumatran tiger for sidekicks, and a hunter as the villain.

One happy audience member was Gelar Dwi Titar Syahputro, a primary school student who watched the puppet show with his friends. "It was fun and hilarious. I learned something new. The story told me not to litter and to promise to guard nature," Syahputro said.

Samsudin wants his young audience members to emulate him one day, joining his mission to spread awareness about the environment through folklore. "I hope among hundreds of children I've met, one or two will follow in my footsteps and join me to spread messages about conservation," he said. —AFP



Fathi Mohamed Ahmed, deputy chief at Bilan Media.

Women-only media start-up wants to fight stigma in Somalia

Armed with mobile phones, tripods and laptops, the crew at Bilan Media, a Somali start-up staffed entirely by women, is on a mission to break the silence around gender violence in the troubled Horn of Africa nation.

A rarity in the conservative predominantly Muslim country, Bilan (meaning "beauty" in Somali) is funded by the United Nations Development Programme and operates out of the offices of Dalsan, a popular television and radio station based in the capital Mogadishu.



Its team of six journalists aims to challenge patriarchal norms by producing shows that focus on women. This includes profiles of prominent Somali women and coverage of issues often considered too sensitive for public broadcast in Somalia, including subjects such as domestic violence and rape.

"About 80 percent of the programme will focus on stories which people may find shameful. Society must be informed about these stories," said Bilan editor-in-chief Nasrin Mohamed Ibrahim.

The young journalists—all aged under 28—worked in local media outlets before joining Ibrahim's team. It's a wholly hands-on affair. "Normally you have male involvement in the production of programmes in other conventional media but for us, we write the script, do interviews, edit the videos, and present the programme," 21-year-old Ibrahim said in an interview with AFP. Their shows are aired on Dalsan and on Bilan Media's social networks, where Ibrahim hopes to gradually build an audience.

'Feel the same pain'

The biggest challenge lies in persuading Somali citizens to share their stories, Ibrahim said, pointing out that having an all-female team has proved to be an unexpected advantage in this regard. "The information I can manage to get from a mother whose daughter was raped may not be available to male journalists because that mother will trust female journalists more," she said.

"As a woman, we are the same and feel the same pain." Speaking up about gender violence carries huge risks in Somalia, where rape remains a rampant problem. The country has yet to pass its first sexual offences bill, which has been in the works since 2014.

Perpetrators have rarely been prosecuted or punished, while victims often face a backlash when they step forward. But change is coming to this traditional society, according to Ibrahim.

"Many women wish to tell their stories to seek justice," she said, recalling a case she covered in 2020 involving the alleged gang rape and murder of a young woman in a Mogadishu neighbourhood.

"Her parents decided to talk about it—I myself interviewed her father and as of today her case is in court," she said, rattling off other examples where families refused to let the stigma surrounding sexual violence stifle their voices. "If these parents had not decided to talk about it publicly, the victims would have been buried with no justice served," said Ibrahim.

'Do it better'

The youngest member of the team, Shukri Mohamed Abdi, 19, told AFP that the audience response was encouraging.

"As female Somali journalists, we encourage and advocate for the rights of the voiceless women," she said. "We have recently done a story about a 16-year-old single mother... she returned to school to continue with her education after a gap and we have presented the challenges she has and ambitions for the future. "People are pleased with stories like this because it discourages child marriage." Hafsa Abdulaziz, a mother-of-two who lives in Mogadishu, told AFP she had watched some reports on Bilan's Facebook page following its launch in April.

"There are so many harrowing stories about the lives of shattered families which you don't see normally or hear conventional media covering, so this is something special," she said. Not everyone is a fan though. —AFP

'In the mouth of dragons': Melting glaciers threaten Pakistan's north

As dawn broke over Javed Rahi's Pakistani mountain village, a loud boom shattered the silence and a torrent of water came cascading down from the melting glacier nearby, followed by a thick cloud of smoke. Rahi, a retired maths teacher, had been due to attend his nephew's wedding the day the flood rushed through the village of Hassanabad. "I expected women and children to sing and dance... Instead I heard them screaming in terror," the 67-year-old said. "It was like doomsday." The flood—which occurred as a heatwave was gripping South Asia in May—swept away nine homes in the village and damaged half a dozen more.

The water also washed away two small hydro plants and a bridge that connected the remote community to the outside world. Pakistan is home to more than 7,000 glaciers, more than anywhere else on Earth outside the poles.

Rising global temperatures linked to climate change are causing the glaciers to rapidly melt, creating thousands of glacial lakes. The government has warned that 33 of these lakes—all located in the spectacular Himalaya, Hindu Kush and Karakoram mountain ranges that intersect in Pakistan—are at risk of bursting and releasing millions of cubic metres of water and debris in just a few hours, like in Hassanabad. At least 16 such glacial lake outburst floods linked to heatwaves have occurred this year already, compared with an average of five or six per year, the Pakistani government said earlier this week. The devastation caused by such floods makes recovery for impacted communities an arduous task.

After disaster struck Hassanabad, Rahi and fellow villagers who lost their homes had to move to a nearby camp for displaced people. Inside their makeshift tents are the few belongings they managed to salvage and mattresses to sleep on. "We never thought we would fall from riches to rags," Rahi said.

No resources to move

Pakistan is the world's eighth most vulnerable country to extreme weather caused by climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index compiled by the environmental NGO Germanwatch.

The country is experiencing earlier, hotter and more frequent heatwaves, with temperatures already hitting 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) this year. Floods and droughts in recent years have killed and displaced thousands of people, destroyed livelihoods, and damaged infrastructure. According to the UN Development Programme, a lack of information on glacial changes in Pakistan makes it difficult to predict hazards originating from them. Although Hassanabad had an early warning system in place—including cameras that monitor water flow in glacial lakes—the villagers believed they were living high enough above the water to avoid any impact, according to local



Local resident Javed Rahi shows damages in his home caused by a lake outburst because of a melting glacier, in Hassanabad village of Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region.

officials. Zahida Sher, who lost her home in the Hassanabad flood, said the power of the water took out buildings that had previously been considered safe. The mountain communities depend on their livestock, orchards, farms and tourism for survival, but climate change threatens all of it.

"Our economy is agrarian and people don't have enough resources to move from here," said Sher, a researcher for a local development NGO. Siddique Ullah Baig, a disaster risk reduction analyst in the northern region, said around seven million people are vulnerable to such events, but many are not aware of the gravity of the threat. "People are still constructing homes in areas declared as a red zone for flooding. Our people are not aware and prepared to deal with any possible disaster," he told AFP.

'Horror night'

Further north of Hassanabad lies Passu, another precarious hamlet that has already lost around 70 percent of its population and area after being hit by floods and natural river erosion. The village is sandwiched between White glacier in the south, Batura glacier in the north and the Hunza River in the east—three

forces given the respectful title of "dragons" because of their destructive power.

"Passu village lies in the mouths of these three dragons," said local scholar Ali Qurban Mughani, pointing to the centuries-old bodies of dense ice towering over the village. As he spoke, labourers worked on a protective concrete wall on a riverbank—a bid to shield the village from further erosion. Kamran Iqbal invested 500,000 rupees (around \$2,400) that he borrowed from a local NGO to open a picnic spot for visitors with a breathtaking view. The beauty of the glaciers has made the region one of the country's top tourist destinations. Business was flourishing until a "horror night" last year when a flash flood washed away Iqbal's investment.

Even the most ambitious international climate targets of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees by the end of the century could lead to the melting of one third of Pakistan's glaciers, the Nepal-based scientific organisation the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development said in a 2019 study.

"In 2040 we could start facing problems of (water) scarcity that could lead to drought and desertification—and before that we may have to cope with frequent and intense riverine flooding, and of course flash floods," said Aisha Khan, head of the Mountain and Glacier Protection Organization, which researches glaciers in Pakistan.

Home to more than 220 million people, Pakistan says it is responsible for less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Yet it remains highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, dependent on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and natural resources.

"There are no factories or industries here that can cause pollution... We have a clean environment," said Amanullah Khan, a 60-year village elder in Passu. "But when it comes to the threats posed by climate change, we are at the forefront." —AFP



In this picture taken on June 9, 2022, locals and tourists drive through a temporary bridge after the main bridge was swept away by a lake outburst because of a melting glacier, in Hassanabad village of Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region.

Sports

Reigning champs, record holders and Felix headline World Athletics team

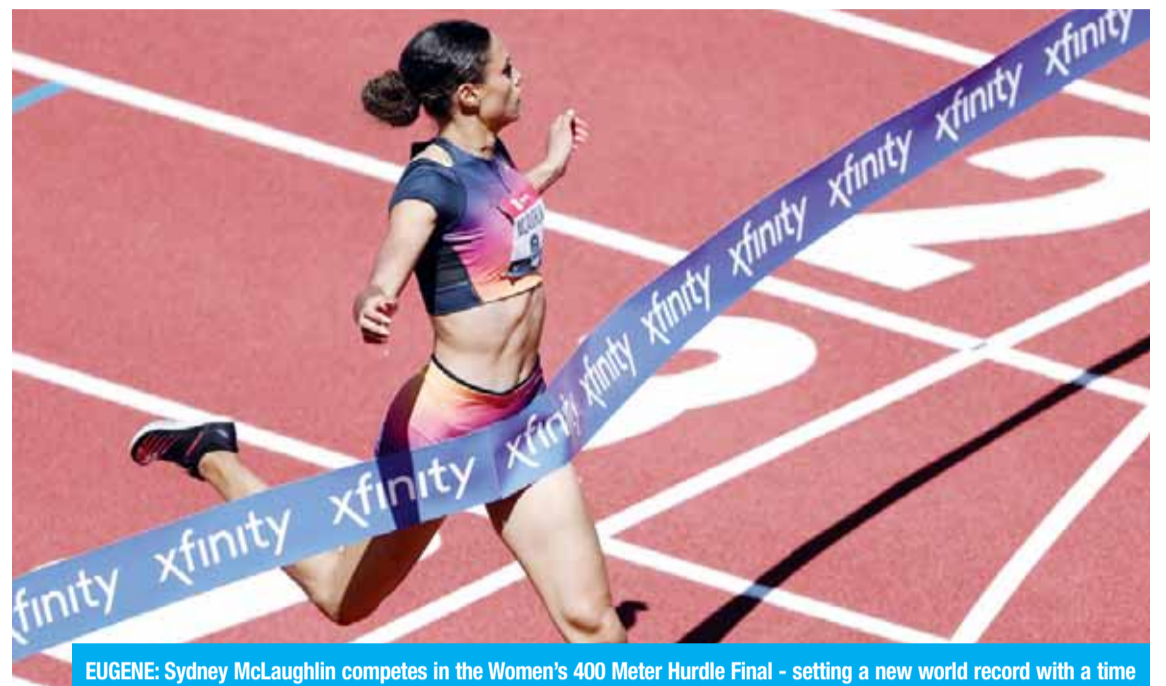
Oregon to host the first outdoor World Championships ever

LOS ANGELES: The United States' 151-strong roster for the World Athletics Championships features defending champions, world record-holders and, for a 10th and final time superstar Allyson Felix. Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon, will host the first outdoor World Championships ever on US soil, and the host nation will field a team that features nine defending world champions and 20 medalists from last year's Tokyo Olympics. Olympic champion Sydney McLaughlin, who lowered her own world record in winning the 400m hurdles at the US trials in June, is set to duel with reigning world champion Dalilah Muhammad in an event the hosts will look to dominate.

World record holder and Olympic champion Ryan Crouser will go after the one shot put title that so far has eluded him but will do so against reigning world champion and compatriot Joe Kovacs. Other Americans set to defend the titles they won in Doha are Nia Ali in the 100m hurdles, Donovan Brazier in the men's 800m, Christian Coleman in the men's 100m, Grant Holloway in the 110m hurdles, Noah Lyles in the men's 200m, DeAnna Price in the women's hammer and Christian Taylor in the men's triple jump.

Three other Americans earned byes into the World Championships with 2021 Diamond League titles: Valarie Allman (women's discus), Michael Cherry (men's 400m) and Maggie Ewen (women's shot put). Missing from the roster is rising sprint star Sha'Carri Richardson, who failed to qualify in either the 100m or 200m at the US trials. Melissa Jefferson was the surprise winner of the women's 100m at the US trials in a career-best 10.69sec and will line up with teammates Aleia Hobbs and Twanisha Terry in the event.

Coleman will be joined in the 100m by Fred Kerley—who clocked 9.76 and 9.77 on the way to victory at the US trials—along with Marvin Bracy Williams and Trayvon Bell. Felix, 36, is included in the mixed 4x400m relay pool. That's where the US great indicated she would like to land as she competes in a 10th and final World Championships before retiring in August. Felix, whose 18 World Championships medals include 13 gold, finished sixth in the 400m at the US trials. She was part of the United States' gold medal-winning team in Doha when the mixed relay made its World Championships debut. —AFP



EUGENE: Sydney McLaughlin competes in the Women's 400 Meter Hurdle Final - setting a new world record with a time of 51.41 during the USATF Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. —AFP

Mo Farah set for a make-or-break London Marathon

LONDON: Quadruple Olympic champion Mo Farah says his stellar track career is over but he is going to run in October's London Marathon to see if he can still be competitive on the road. The 39-year-old Briton compared himself to former tennis world number one Andy Murray, saying the Scotsman still had the "fight" in him.

However, his body might be telling him the game is up. Farah moved up in distance to the marathon - winning in Chicago and finishing third in London in 2018 - after he had won double Olympic gold in 2012 and 2016 at 5,000 and 10,000 metres. He moved back to the track in 2020 as he aimed for an Olympic finale but was a shadow of his former self and failed to qualify for the Tokyo Games.

Things did not get better this year as he was beaten by a club runner on his return to action at the London 10,000m in May. However, the Somalia-born track legend is unwilling to hang up his spikes yet and is going to test himself in the London Marathon on October 2, and the tune-up London Big Half event a month earlier. "Do I still have the hunger, am I willing to put in the work and the miles? Yes," he told the Daily Mirror.

"I still have that fight in me and until you lose it I don't think I should think about retiring. "But being realistic, can my body do this? "I've watched tennis and Andy Murray, the guy still has that fight in him but his body doesn't allow him. "I'm still doing sessions normal people can't do. You still feel you've got it but you have to be realistic." Farah - who also won six world outdoor titles - says his mind might tell you to go on but sometimes a period of reflection is required.

"You think you've still got it because that's our mind at this level," said Farah. "You don't think anything other than you still got it. But sometimes you've got to take a step back, be realistic. "The truth is I am getting on a bit and sometimes your body doesn't allow you to do things. "But that's also the reason I'm not going to the World Champs or Europeans this summer." Farah, though, is adamant when it comes to retiring it will only be him who makes the call. "That decision can only come from me, not my manager, not my wife or my kids," he said. "There will be a time, but I don't even know it myself." —AFP

WNBA star Griner pleads guilty to drug charges in Russia

MOSCOW: US basketball star Brittney Griner pleaded guilty Thursday to drug smuggling charges in a Russian court but denied intending to break the law in a case that has further inflamed tensions between Moscow and Washington. Griner, detained in February days before Russia sent troops to Ukraine, faces up to a decade behind bars for bringing vape cartridges into the country. The WNBA star told a court in the town of Khimki outside Moscow that she "would like to plead guilty" to all the charges and stressed she had "no intention" of breaking any Russian law. "I was in a rush packing. And the cartridges accidentally ended up in my bag."

Her lawyer Alexander Boykov called for "as soft a sentence as possible." He said Griner had "appreciated"

Badminton world No 2 Momota out of Malaysia Masters

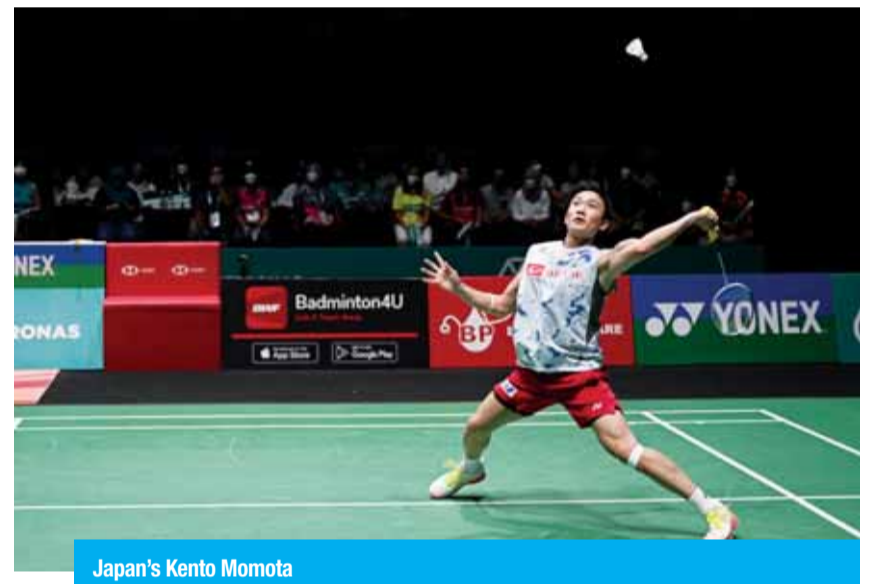
KUALA LUMPUR: Badminton world number two Kento Momota crashed out of the Malaysia Masters in straight sets against Japanese compatriot Kanta Tsuneyama in the second round Thursday. The tournament is the second time Momota has played in Malaysia since he was involved in a car crash in the country two years ago that sent his career into free fall. Tsuneyama, ranked 14th in the world, beat Momota 21-15, 21-16 in an encounter lasting 50 minutes. An energetic Tsuneyama outclassed his star opponent with accurate drop shots that left Momota reeling.

Momota later admitted he was exhausted from back-to-back tournaments after competing in the Malaysia Open last week. "I have no injury, but I am really tired from the last two weeks of tournaments. At the moment, I do not have enough reserve in my

tank," he told reporters. "I cannot play at the highest level in 10 straight matches like I used to. I have no endurance and am not in the best condition right now," he added.

Momota was thrashed by world number one Viktor Axelsen in the final of the Malaysia Open on Sunday. Denmark's Axelsen, the reigning Olympic champion, outplayed the Japanese star from start to finish, taking only 34 minutes to win 21-4, 21-7. But Axelsen withdrew from the Masters which started Tuesday, saying he needed to "rest and recharge" after wins in Malaysia, the Indonesia Open and Indonesia Masters over the past month.

Momota was involved in a car crash that killed his driver on the way to the airport after winning the Malaysia Masters in January 2020. It left Momota with a fractured eye



Japan's Kento Momota

socket and double vision. When he returned after a year out of action, the Japanese ace was a shadow of his former self. But Momota has now set his sights on doing well at the World Championships on home soil in

August. "I tried my best, but it was really tough against Tsuneyama," he said. "But after the two tournaments in Malaysia, I have found some feeling and need to maintain it until the world meet." —AFP

Cobble king Clarke wins Tour de France stage 5

ARENBERG: Simon Clarke of Premier Tech won stage five of the Tour de France on Wednesday in a photo finish after a 157km run from Lille to Arenberg featuring 20km of cobbled mining roads. Belgium's Wout van Aert of Jumbo retained his overall leader's yellow jersey despite a nasty fall, but his teammate Primoz Roglic lost around two minutes to defending champion and fellow Slovenian Tadej Pogacar.

The 35-year-old Australian Clarke used a bike throw on the line in a razor thin victory over Taco van der Hoorn after Native American Neilson Powless launched a sprint in a bid for the yellow jersey but fell just short. "What a year," said Clarke, who got a last-minute contract with the IPT team in December after leaving EF. "I'm ever the optimist."

"I just told myself not to panic even when the sprint started almost 1km out," he said about the finale. "I sat back in the slipstream, waited and waited and went for the line at the last second," he said. Van Aert fell early and hurt a shoulder and was almost run over by his own team car, but rallied to cling on to his overall lead by 13sec from Powless of EF. The race goes to his native Belgium on Thursday where he can parade through 60km of roads there in the yellow jersey. "That's part of why I dug so deep," he said. "But this wasn't what we had planned this morning."

Pogacar likes the cobbles

Defending champion Pogacar did the best of the pretenders to the 2022 title when he finished seventh, 51sec off the lead, putting a little time into all his rivals after threatening to pulverise them before fading in the final kilometers. "I like the cobbles," smiled the 23-year-old UAE leader.

receiving a letter from US President Joe Biden, who said on Wednesday that he would make bringing her home a "priority." Moscow hit back, saying that US "hype" over Griner would not help her case. "The hype and working on the public, with all the love for this genre among modern politicians, currently only disturbs (the court process)," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said.

"It does not just distract from the case but creates interference in the core sense of the word. Silence is needed here." In a call with Griner's wife, Biden said the star was "wrongfully detained under intolerable circumstances". The US leader said he had written to the WNBA star, after she had sent him a hand-written letter presented to the White House on July 4. US Independence Day. "I realize you are dealing with so much, but please don't forget about me and the other American Detainees," Griner wrote.

'Bring us home'

"Please do all you can to bring us home." But Ryabkov said letters between the two would not help the star's fate. "It is not it is not correspondence of this



LILLE: Australian rider Simon Clarke (left) cycles in a breakaway to win the 5th stage of the 109th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 153,7 km between Lille and Arenberg Porte du Hainaut, in northern France, on July 6, 2022. —AFP

"I had no bad luck, felt good and played it intelligently at the end when I knew I wouldn't catch the leaders," he said. Pogacar retains the best placed under-26's white jersey. Ineos trio Adam Yates, Tom Pidcock and Geraint Thomas all hung in and trail Pogacar by 28, 29 and 30sec respectively. The treacherous stage raced over cobbles was doubly dangerous due to dust billowing from the bone dry surface amongst the corn, wheat and potato fields making it tough to breathe and easy to slip.

Eleven cobbled sections totaling almost 20km of bone shaking mining roads caused much of the chaos but not all of it. Roglic, runner-up in 2020, was brought down after Caleb Ewan collided with a stray hay bale, the Jumbo man then hitting him and

struggling thereafter. He finished 44th on the day, 2min 36sec off the lead. Embarking from the chic northern city of Lille, good humored crowds along the roadside thickened as the race hit the cobbles in the finale.

But a grim-faced Mathieu van der Poel, a pre-race favorite, was dropped by the lead group 30km out. Visible for his polka-dot jersey and handle-bar moustache, Magnus Cort-Nielsen was once again in the thick of the action finishing fifth and retaining the King of the Mountains shirt he took in his native Denmark on stage two. Thursday's sixth stage starts in the Belgian town of Binche and returns to France in the Ardennes forest for what should be a splintered finale with two short steep climbs. —AFP



KHIMKI: US WNBA basketball superstar Brittney Griner arrives to a hearing at the Khimki Court, outside Moscow on July 7, 2022. —AFP

kind that can help, but a serious perception by the American side of the signals they received from Moscow, through specialized channels," he said. The 31-year-old basketball star was detained in the days before Russia sent troops to Ukraine, after which the United States and its allies imposed unprecedented economic sanctions on Moscow.

Her case has become one of many sticking points in relations between the United States and Russia, with Washington putting its special envoy in charge of hostages on the case. She came to Russia in February to play club basketball during the US off-season—a common path for American stars seeking additional income. She was detained at a Moscow airport after she was found carrying vape cartridges with cannabis oil in her luggage. US authorities initially kept a low profile on the case, which was not made known to the general public until March 5 but has since upped the ante.

Russian law is strict in such cases and other foreigners have recently been handed heavy sentences on drug-related charges. Last month, a Moscow court sentenced a former US diplomat, Marc Fogel, to 14 years in prison for "large-scale" cannabis

smuggling. Russia and the United States regularly clash over the detention of each other's citizens and sometimes exchange them in scenes reminiscent of the Cold War. The next hearing in the case will be held on July 14. —AFP

Sports

Haiti's women football players dream of international success

Hardships prompt waves of exodus

MONTERREY: They may be considered international minnows, but women footballers from Haiti hope to finally make their mark on the world stage, helped by their experience playing professionally in Europe. The move across the Atlantic has been challenging for members of the national team, said Nerilia Mondesir, who has played in France since 2017. "It's not easy for Haitian women to play football. Opportunities are rare. We have to make sacrifices like leaving our country and family," said the 23-year-old forward who plays for Montpellier HSC, Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, was devastated by earthquakes in 2010 and 2021.

It has also been rocked by political turmoil-including the assassination of president Jovenel Moise a year ago-and a crippling economic crisis. The hardships have prompted waves of Haitians to leave, many of them heading for the United States in search of the American dream. Haiti's football scene has also been shaken by scandal. In 2020, the country's football federation president Yves Jean-Bart was banned for life by world body FIFA over allegations that he had sexually harassed and abused various female players, including minors.

'Big leagues'

Fourteen members of the Haiti women's national football team play in Europe, and a handful for universities in the United States, their coach Nicolas Delepine said after their debut at the CONCACAF Women's Championship in Mexico. "The first thing we do is to send our players to the big leagues," the Frenchman

said. The national team hope to break new ground by qualifying in Mexico for the 2023 Women's World Cup and 2024 Olympics.

They will face Mexico on Thursday after losing 3-0 to two-time reigning World Cup champions the United States in their first match of the eight-team tournament in Monterrey. Despite the thrashing, US captain Megan Rapinoe credited the Haitians with "a lot of individual talent." While Rapinoe appeared before the press to hail a recent landmark equal pay deal in her country after the game, the Haitians left the stadium quietly.

Only Mondesir, somewhat surprised, shyly accepted a couple of questions from the press. Playing in Europe had not been easy for Haitians who lack experience, she said. "In professional teams, you have to work more than players from other countries," she said. Losing to the United States in Monterrey will help the Haitians to grow stronger, Mondesir said, adding: "We learned a lot."

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. The CONCACAF champion will advance to the Paris Olympics while the runner-up and third-place teams will meet in a playoff next year to determine another 2024 berth in France. The Haitians' coach is confident that the minnows will one day achieve their dream of competing in a World Cup. "Haiti is a small country, but it's a big country when it comes to football," Delepine said. —AFP



MONTERREY: US' Sophia Smith (center) vies for the ball with Haiti's Roselord Borgella during their 2022 Concacaf Women's Championship football match at the Universitario stadium in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon State, Mexico on July 4, 2022. —AFP

Scotland's Watson back from injury to win 50th cap

SALTA: Hamish Watson will return from injury to win his 50th Scotland cap in Saturday's second Test away to Argentina. The flanker replaced Edinburgh team-mate Luke Crosbie in a team announced Thursday by Scotland coach Gregor Townsend ahead of this weekend's clash in Salta. Townsend has made five changes from the team that lost last weekend's first Test 26-18 in San Salvador de Jujuy to give Michael Cheika a win on debut as coach of the Pumas. Ben White will make his first Test start at scrum-half after replacing Ali Price.

White, who plays his club rugby in England for London Irish, made a try-scoring debut against England earlier

this year and won his fifth cap off the bench in the first Test against Argentina. The other changes are all in the pack where Rory Darge, Sam Skinner and Dave Cherry have joined Watson, a British and Irish Lion. Darge returned from injury off the bench in the first Test and will make his fourth start for Scotland, with the 22-year-old replacing Magnus Bradbury in the back row.

New Edinburgh signing Skinner has come in for Jonny Gray and will partner Scotland captain Grant Gilchrist at lock. Edinburgh hooker Cherry has been recalled for the first time since playing in all five of Scotland's Six Nations games in 2021, as a straight swap for George Turner, who drops to the bench. Bradbury, Crosbie and Gray have all dropped out of the 23-strong matchday squad, while London Irish wing Kyle Rowe could make his debut off the bench. Scotland team to play Argentina in the 2nd Test at Salta on Saturday (15-1, kick-off 1910 GMT). —AFP



British and Irish Lions' flanker Hamish Watson

Sexton to face All Blacks after concussion scare

DUNEDIN: Ireland forward Peter O'Mahony expressed relief on Thursday that Johnny Sexton had been named to face New Zealand in the second Test, despite the "hugely important" fly-half failing a concussion assessment during last week's defeat in Auckland. Sexton will captain a team in Dunedin on Saturday that features just one change from the fifteen that started in the 42-19 first Test loss, with right wing Mack Hansen having shaken off Covid to replace Keith Earls.

The All Blacks also announced one starting change, with Dalton Papalii recalled at blindside flanker, pushing Scott Barrett into lock in place of Sam Whitelock, who suffered delayed symptoms of concussion. Sexton, 36, did not return to the field at Eden Park after he suffered a blow to the head on the half-hour mark and failed an initial pitch-side head injury assessment (HIA).

However, he passed a second HIA later that night and then a third on Monday, clearing him to play under World Rugby protocols. O'Mahony, who took over as skipper last week, said 106-Test veteran Sexton has appeared physically and mentally sharp this week. "I'm far from a medical practitioner but he seems to be in good form," O'Mahony said.

"There's no secret, obviously Johnny is one of the best players in the world so you want to be dealing from the full deck. He's hugely important for us, obviously our captain." There are two changes on the bench, with hooker Rob Herring back after a calf problem to replace Dave Heffernan and prop Finlay Bealham returning from COVID in place of Tom O'Toole. O'Mahony was happy virtually the same players had been handed a chance to square the three-Test series. "We showed some patches of how we can perform. The challenge for us is putting it together across a bigger period of the game," he said. "There's no beating around the bush. Ireland



Ireland's fly-half Johnny Sexton

have never won over here. There's history to be made, it's all on the line for us this weekend." New Zealand coach Ian Foster admitted his team's set-piece play could be compromised by fielding a smaller, more mobile, forward pack, although he praised the dynamic attributes of Auckland Blues captain Papalii. "It just gives us a different dynamic but clearly set piece will be a little bit affected," Foster said. "Dalton's a tough rugby player. He's physical in the tackle and he's quick. Remember, it's a hard ground under a roof so expect the game to be fast." Foster said his preference would have been to retain Barrett in the back row after the experimental selection worked well last week.

However, his hand was forced when another lock, Tupou Vaa'i, dropped from contention after testing positive for Covid-19, meaning Barrett has to revert to a more familiar role in the second row. It means

the back row, also featuring captain Sam Cane and the outstanding player of the first Test, Ardie Savea, comprises three players who have spent most of their careers as openside flankers. Foster has made four changes to his replacements, bringing in the uncapped pair of scrum-half Folau Fakatava and prop Aidan Ross.

Outside back Will Jordan returns to the bench after missing the first Test with COVID with lock Patrick Tuipulotu included after being recalled to the squad last week, fresh from a stint in Japan. Foster said he was eager to see how the bench newcomers would perform but was reluctant to change his starting side, given their efforts in Auckland off the back of a build-up disrupted by seven COVID cases in the All Blacks camp. "It felt like making too many changes right now might take us back a cog," he said. —AFP

continues as captain. Japan made life difficult for France in the first half in steamy Toyota, where the heat soared to 33 degrees Celsius (91 Fahrenheit) at kick-off. Cooler temperatures are forecast for Saturday at Tokyo's National Stadium and Galthie is wary of a different Japanese approach.

"In the end our strategy was a good one and we succeeded in winning the match but we imagine that Jamie Joseph and his staff will reconsider their tactics," he said. Japan head coach Joseph said his team would have to play "smarter" after he made three changes to the side that collapsed in the second half last week. New Zealander Joseph said his team would not abandon their dynamic passing game but called for his players to find the "control" that escaped them in Toyota. —AFP

England revamp back line for must-win clash against Wallabies

BRISBANE: Coach Eddie Jones said Thursday three new faces in England's back line would give his team more attacking options for their must-win second Test against an Australian side that has been forced into five changes. The visitors crashed 30-28 against a 14-man Wallabies in the first match of the three-Test series at Perth last weekend and with the pressure mounting, Jones rolled the dice for their clash in Brisbane on Saturday.

Leicester Tigers' Jack van Poortvliet will make his first start at scrum-half, replacing veteran Danny Care, after scoring a try off the bench last weekend. Jones also handed debuts to Northampton Saints' Tommy Freeman (left wing) and the Tigers' Guy Porter (outside centre), in place of the under-performing Joe Cokanasiga and Joe Marchant.

Owen Farrell starts at inside centre with Marcus Smith at fly-half. Jack Nowell is on the right wing and Freddie Steward stays at full-back. There was speculation that teenager Henry Arundell could also start after he scored a try with his first touch as a substitute in Perth, but he will play the same role again. "We have decided to make changes in our back line, they were tough calls but we feel they will strengthen the team," said Jones. "There are opportunities to attack against Australia which we can take."

Bath flanker Sam Underhill, meanwhile, was brought in for Tom Curry, who went off after a head knock in Perth and has returned home. It is the only change to the forwards pack, with captain Courtney Lawes the other flanker and Billy Vunipola at No 8. In the front row, props Ellis Genge and Will Stuart join hooker Jamie George with Maro Itoje and Jonny Hill the locks. "We have had solid preparation this week and looking forward to an important game in Brisbane," added Jones.

'Opportunity'

Wallabies coach Dave Rennie made five changes, with his hand forced by injuries and suspensions after the brutal Perth battle which snapped an eight-match losing streak against Jones's men. Fullback Tom Banks broke his arm during that Test with right wing Andrew Kellaway expected to replace him in Brisbane. But the Melbourne Rebels player has been ruled out for the series after injuring a hamstring in training this week. That opened the door to Jordan Petaia, usually a wing, to start in the number 15 jersey for the first time at international level, with Tom Wright taking Kellaway's place.

"We don't think Kells will be back for the series. We will reassess whether we can get him back in time for Argentina (in August)," said Rennie. "But exciting for Jordy. He's talked about wanting to play his footy at 15, he has played really well there for the (Queensland) Reds." The Wallabies also made changes to their tight five, with powerhouse prop Taniela Tupou back from injury to replace Allan Alaalatoa, who suffered a concussion in Perth but should be fit for the final Test in Sydney.

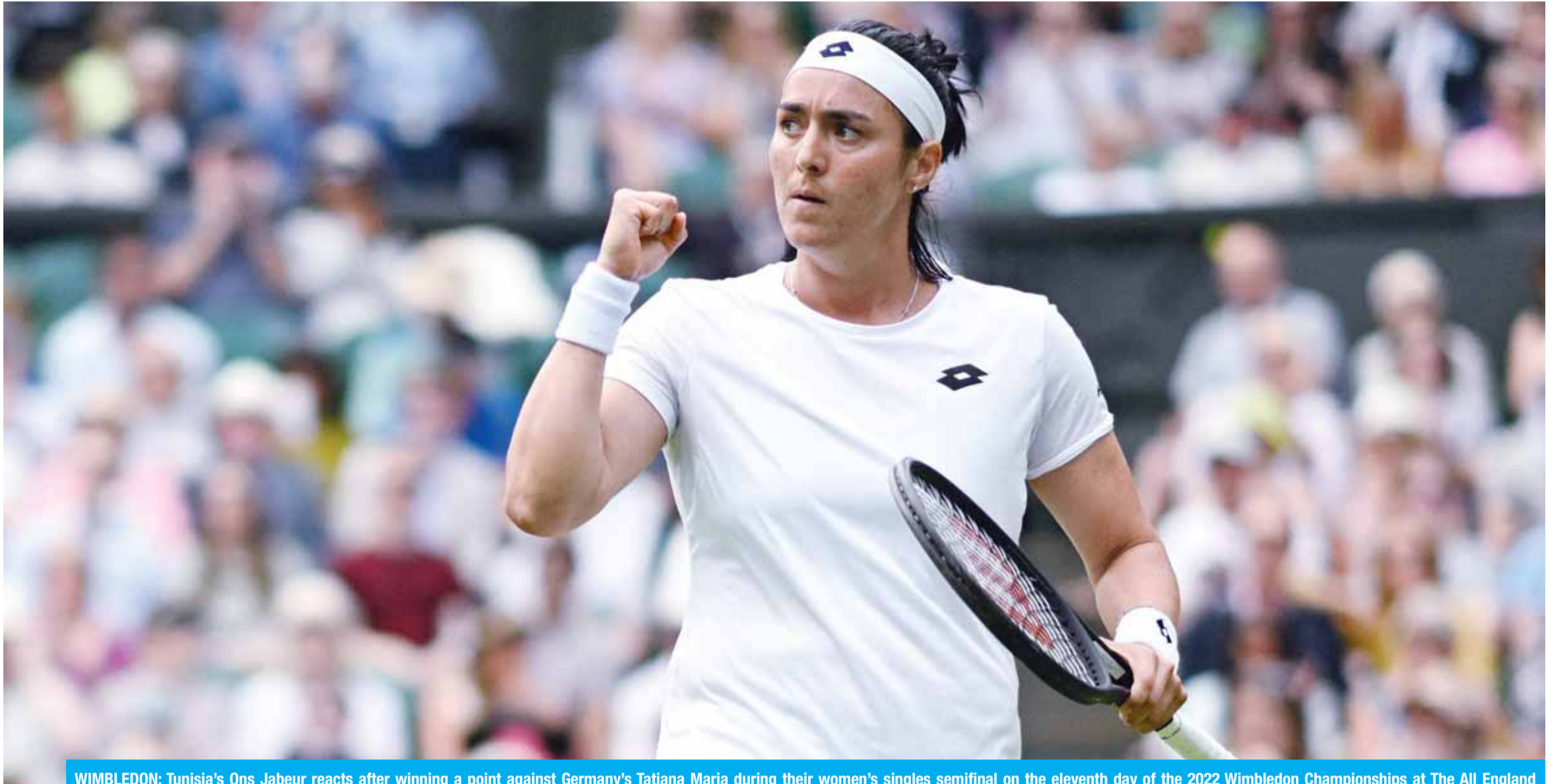
With lock Darcy Swain serving a two-match ban after being sent off for headbutting Jonny Hill, Matt Philip returns to the starting side as the chief lineout caller. The other change sees hard-charging Hunter Paisami at outside centre in place of Len Ikitau, who has calf soreness. Rennie insisted the injury toll and Swain's suspension hadn't been too disruptive. "I wouldn't say it has been massively disruptive ... we have talked about the fact that we have a lot more depth than a couple of years ago and this is an opportunity to highlight that," he said. —AFP

Spring handed France debut against Japan

TOKYO: France head coach Fabien Galthie on Thursday handed full-back Max Spring his debut for Saturday's second rugby Test against Japan in Tokyo in an otherwise unchanged side. Six Nations champions France beat Japan 42-23 in Toyota last week, scoring four tries in the second half to stretch away after being held 13-13 at the break. Racing 92 full-back Spring replaces Melvyn Jaminet in the starting line-up to win his first cap at the age of 21.

Spring started and scored a try for the Barbarians in their 52-21 drubbing of England last month and Galthie said his performances had "shown his hunger for the shirt". "At Racing 92 he has put together a string of impressive performances," said the coach. "He was selected by the Barbarians, where he started at full-back and put in a very impressive performance." Galthie added that Spring had "maintained that level in training" with France, even though he had missed the first week after contracting Covid-19.

Galthie retained lock Thomas Jolmes and number eight Yoan Tanga in the starting line-up after both made their debuts last weekend. Charles Ollivon, who returned to the side last week after missing the Six Nations through injury,



WIMBLEDON: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur reacts after winning a point against Germany's Tatjana Maria during their women's singles semifinal on the eleventh day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club on July 7, 2022. —AFP

Jabeur makes African history with Wimbledon final spot

Tunisian beats close friend Tatjana Maria in semi-finals

LONDON: Ons Jabeur became the first African woman in the Open era to reach a Grand Slam singles final on Thursday when she defeated close friend Tatjana Maria in the Wimbledon semi-finals. The 27-year-old world number two from Tunisia triumphed 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 and will face either 2019 champion Simona Halep or Elena Rybakina in Saturday's championship match. "I'm a proud Tunisian woman standing here," said Jabeur, who was the first Arab player to make a Slam semi-final.

Before Thursday, South Africans Irene Bowder Peacock, at the 1927 French Open, and Renee Schuurman, in the 1959 Australian Open, were the only African women to have reached a Slam singles final. "It's a dream come true from years of work and sacrifice. I'm happy that's paid off and I'll continue for one more match," said Jabeur.

"Physically, Tatjana is a beast, she doesn't give up - I thought she would give up - her touch, her serve and everything on the court is impressive. I hope she continues this way. Let's not play again, I'm good for now. "I know in Tunisia they are going crazy right now. I want to see more Arab and African players on the tour. I love the game and I want to share the experi-

ence with them." Jabeur coasted through the first set against mother-of-two Maria with breaks in the third and seventh games.

The Tunisian fired 15 winners to her opponent's six in the first set while not facing a single break point. However, Maria, described by Jabeur as her "barbecue buddy", did manage to finally break through for 3-1 in the second set off the back of a series of delicate slices. Jabeur's 17 unforced errors in the second set compared to the six of the more accurate German, who levelled the contest. But there was to be no upset win as the 103rd-ranked Maria's challenge was quashed. Jabeur secured a double break for a 5-0 advantage before securing her place in history on a second match point.

'I feel for Russians'

Moscow-born Rybakina will attempt to reach a first Wimbledon final, counting her blessings that she escaped the tournament ban handed out to her Russian compatriots. Rybakina switched her nationality to Kazakhstan in 2018 to take advantage of greater financial help. She now finds herself in the semi-finals at the same tournament from which Russian and

Belarusian players were banned following the invasion of Ukraine. "Everybody wants to compete," said the 23-year-old Rybakina, the first player representing Kazakhstan to make the last four of a Slam. "They were not choosing where they born. Of course, I feel for them."

She admitted she was fortunate to have switched to representing Kazakhstan. "I think it was very good timing because Kazakhstan were looking for players. I was looking for some help. They believed in me. So I think it was very good combination." Standing at 6 feet (1.84 metres), world number 23 Rybakina is the big-hitting star of the women's tournament, firing an event-leading 44 aces over five rounds so far. On Thursday, she faces Halep, who hopes to recreate the "perfect match" that delivered the 2019 Wimbledon title.

The former world number one from Romania collected her second Grand Slam crown at the All England Club three years ago. Her first was at the French Open in 2018. However, a calf injury last year forced a three-month lay-off, ruling her out of Wimbledon. "That was the perfect match of my life," said 30-year-old Halep as she reflected on the 2019



WIMBLEDON: Germany's Tatjana Maria returns the ball against Tunisia's Ons Jabeur during their women's singles semi final tennis match on the eleventh day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club on July 7, 2022. —AFP

Wimbledon final, when she defeated Serena Williams for the loss of just four games. "Now I'm playing really well. I'm feeling confident that I feel the game the way I felt back then. Yeah, only positive things, good memories." —AFP

Nadal battles for semis as Djokovic targets 8th final

LONDON: Rafael Nadal is facing a race against time to be fit for Friday's mouthwatering Wimbledon semi-final against Nick Kyrgios but can either man stop Novak Djokovic in his relentless push for a fourth straight crown? A meeting between 22-time Grand Slam champion Nadal and the mercurial Australian has been on the cards since Kyrgios defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas in an ill-tempered third-round meeting.

Kyrgios cruised through his last-eight match against unseeded Chilean Cristian Garin on Wednesday in straight sets to reach his first Grand Slam semi-final. But it was a different story for Nadal, who had to battle an abdominal injury in a grueling five-set win against 11th-seeded American Taylor Fritz. The second seed, visibly in pain, looked unlikely to finish the match when he was forced to take a medical time-out in the second set.

But he returned to the court and twice recovered from a set down to win in four hours and 21 minutes. The extra time on court for Nadal - two hours longer than Kyrgios - is a factor in itself but the Spaniard's injury raises the prospect that he may not even be fit enough to play.

Nadal, the 2008 and 2010 champion, said he was unsure over his ongoing participation in the tournament as he targets the third leg of a rare calendar Grand Slam.

"I can't give you a clear answer because if I gave you a clear answer and tomorrow another thing happens, I will be a liar," the 36-year-old said after his quarter-final win. If the two do meet on Centre Court, it would be the standout tie of the tournament so far in a year when many of the top seeds have fallen by the wayside early. Kyrgios's tournament has been defined by breathtaking shot-making but also his familiar rants on court - including a demand that Tsitsipas be thrown out of the championships for hitting a ball into the crowd.

The 40th-ranked player has been fined a total of \$14,000 and he now has the added distraction of a looming court appearance in Australia, related to an allegation of assault. Nadal has six wins against Kyrgios in nine meetings between the pair. The Australian famously beat Nadal - then world number one - on his way to the Wimbledon quarter-finals on his debut in 2014 but the Spaniard took his revenge in 2019.

Kyrgios, 27, said he believed the



WIMBLEDON: Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates winning against US player Taylor Fritz during their men's singles quarter final tennis match on July 6, 2022. —AFP

match against Nadal would be the "most-watched of all time". "We've had some absolute battles on that Centre Court," he said. "He's won one against me and I've won one against him. "Obviously, we know, two completely different personalities. I feel like we respect the hell out of each other, though. I feel like that would be a mouth-watering kind of encounter for everyone around the world."

Djokovic history bid

Djokovic had to come back from two sets down against Italian 10th seed Jannik Sinner in his quarter-finals on Tuesday. But the 35-year-old finished the match looking fresh, even pulling off an outrageous winner while doing the splits. The

Serbian top seed is on a 26-match winning streak at Wimbledon as he seeks to draw level with Pete Sampras on seven titles at the All England Club - just one behind Roger Federer's men's record.

British ninth seed Cameron Norrie has vowed to "take it" to Djokovic and will hope to ride a wave of home support but he has a tough task on his hands to unseat the champion. Djokovic, who beat the 26-year-old in their only previous meeting, is braced for a partisan crowd. "For him, not much to lose," he said. "Every victory from now onwards is a big deal for him. "I know that. But, you know, I practiced a few times. I know his game well. He's been around. Of course I will do my homework and get ready." —AFP

Big-spenders Leeds add Sinisterra to list of new recruits

LONDON: Leeds have completed their sixth pre-season signing, with the Premier League club announcing Thursday that Colombia winger Luis Sinisterra had joined from Dutch club Feyenoord for an undisclosed fee. According to British media reports, Leeds have paid a reported £21.4 million (\$25.6 million, 25.1 million euros) for Sinisterra, taking their spending ahead of the new English top-flight campaign to over £90 million (\$108 million, 106 million euros). "Leeds United are delighted to announce the signing of Colombia international Luis Sinisterra from Eredivisie outfit, Feyenoord," said a club statement. "The 23-year-old arrives at Elland Road for an undisclosed fee and has penned a five-year deal, running until the summer of 2027."

Leeds have previously signed Brenden Aaronson, Rasmus Kristensen, Marc Roca, Darko Gyabi and Tyler Adams since narrowly avoiding relegation in May. But they recouped £45 million of their spending earlier this week when midfielder Calvin Phillips was signed by Premier League champions Manchester City. Sinisterra scored 23 goals, as well as providing 14 assists, in 49 appearances for Feyenoord last season. He could be a replacement at Elland Road for Raphinha, amid reports the Brazil winger wants to join Spanish giants Barcelona. Sinisterra has spent the last four seasons at Feyenoord after joining from Colombian club Once Caldas in July 2018. Capped five times by Colombia, he impressed for Feyenoord last season, helping them reach the Europa Conference League final where they lost 1-0 to Roma in May and a third-placed finish in the domestic Eredivisie. —AFP