



3 Kuwait's total workforce down by 100,000 in a year



5 Former CIA programmer convicted of massive leak



5 Russian missile strikes hit central Ukraine, killing 20



14 Raheem Sterling becomes first signing of Chelsea's new era



Report on expatriates and effects on public services

Technical teams' recommendations submitted; Employers to provide insurance

KUWAIT: Kuwait authorities have received an economic report about the issue of expat labor and its effect on public services and the state's infrastructure. It contained a brief report on what the country spends on expats and what it gets from them. The state must not go ahead with the current situation as it is solely bearing the financial cost. Foreigners do not bear the actual costs of their medical services

and medications, residences, and general services even though they form the majority of the population. Sources said that "recommendations include solutions to population structure; current drawbacks in bringing in foreign workers; increase of marginal labor in specialized workforce; review of the current fees on expats' residency permits; health assurance and more."

Officials debated how to regulate subsidized products and services such as fuel, hospital fees, power, general cleanliness, beaches and parks, and so on. The state, for example, spends millions of Kuwaiti dinars on the beaches and parks without charging any fees. This brings back ideas and proposals to impose fees, which will be used for maintenance. Meanwhile, sources said the Health Ministry is

waiting for the completion of health assurance hospitals for expats. Also, there is a proposal to impose additional health insurance fees similar to that of the expats who are over 60 years old and without a university degree. The report asked the government to force employers to provide adequate medical insurance for the expats and urged the state not to bear expats' medical costs.

Outage hits Twitter service in US, Europe



WASHINGTON: A phone screen displays the Twitter logo in Washington, DC. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Twitter experienced a widespread but seemingly brief outage in the United States and parts of Europe on Thursday-fresh turbulence for the firm locked in a buyout battle with Elon Musk. The Downdetector website showed that outage reports spiked in the United States around 8:00 am (1200 GMT), while users reported service interruptions in France and elsewhere.

However, by around 1245 GMT reports of outages to Downdetector were dropping off and users were back on the social media platform joking about the disruption. "I've just had my most productive 30 minutes for years. In unrelated news, it seems Twitter went down for 30 minutes," tweeted @joelyagar. Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Service disruptions on social media platforms happen periodically, but major and long-term service outages are not common. The service problems on Twitter come as the company has embarked on a legal fight with Musk over his moves to walk away from his \$44 billion buyout bid that has roiled the company. — AFP

In first, Pope names women to Dicastery

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis named two nuns and a laywoman to the Vatican department that helps choose new bishops, the Holy See said Wednesday, the first time women have been allowed to serve on the body. The appointment of the three women to the Dicastery for Bishops - nuns Raffaella Petrini and Yvonne Reungoat and lay woman Maria Lia Zervino - comes as Francis seeks to usher in more gender equality within the Church's positions of government and responsibility.

The 85-year-old pope has repeatedly

said that women should play greater roles within the Vatican's hierarchy and has broken centuries of precedent to place women in some key spots previously held by men.

Last year, he issued a decree to allow women to serve as readers at liturgies, altar servers and distributors of communion - but stopped short of saying the change could one day open the door to female priests.

The Roman Curia's new constitution that came into effect last month - Francis' years-long effort to restructure the Vatican's powerful governing body - allows female Catholics to head up Vatican departments. Petrini, a Franciscan nun from Italy, has since November served as the secretary general of the governorate of the Vatican, the first women to ever hold the post. Reungoat, who is French, is

Continued on Page 6



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis greets Sister Raffaella Petrini during an audience with the Vatican employees at the Vatican. — AFP

Libyans at boiling point amid outages

TRIPOLI: Mahmud Aguil has a comfortable house in Libya's capital Tripoli, but chronic power outages in the war-battered country and roasting summer heat now force him to sleep in his air-conditioned van. "This is my bedroom," the 48-year-old said pointing to the cramped vehicle, its back seats removed to make space for him and his two young children. "In the morning I wake up with a terrible backache. "That's our life these days."

The people of Libya are enduring electricity cuts of up to 18 hours a day, despite their country sitting atop Africa's largest proven oil reserves. After a decade of violence, rising poverty and fragmenting government, many have reached the limits of their tolerance. Public anger spilled into the streets earlier this month, when protesters drew thousands chanting "we want the lights to work" in the capital and in Benghazi, the country's second largest city.

Demonstrators torched and ransacked the House of Representatives, based in the eastern city of Tobruk, along with other official buildings, while masked protesters burned tyres and blocked roads in Tripoli.

Continued on Page 6



TRIPOLI: Mahmud Aguil sits with his children in the back of his air-conditioned van, parked at his home in Libya's capital Tripoli. — AFP

'Smile or risk fine', Philippine mayor orders employees

MANILA: A Philippine mayor has ordered public servants to smile, or risk a fine, as he seeks to improve the level of service provided by the local government. Aristotle Aguirre introduced the "smile policy" this month after being sworn into office in Mulanay town in Quezon province, on the main island of Luzon.

The policy must be adopted "while serving the people to give sincerity by showing a feeling of calmness and friendly atmosphere", the executive order said. Aguirre said the measure was in response to complaints from locals, mostly coconut growers and fishermen, about the unfriendly treatment they received from town hall staff when they went to pay their taxes or seek aid.

Continued on Page 6

Call to prayer merges Turkish politics with art

EDIRNE: Cupping his hands to his ears, one of the contestants in an annual competition for Turkey's most melodious religious voice leans closer to the microphone to intone a tender call to prayer. "Allahu akbar" ("God is greatest"), he sings in a slow, cascading voice, elbows sticking out at right angles, his words echoing off the golden-tinged stones of the majestic Eski Camii mosque in the city of Edirne.

Adorned with striking Arabic calligraphy and completed in 1414, when the northwestern city was the capital of the Ottoman Empire, the mosque is hosting the latest round of the competition, in which five muezzins-the clerics who issue the ezan (adhan in Arabic) call to prayer from minarets five times a day-are competing for a place in the final on August 17. — AFP (See Page 12)



EDIRNE: A Turkish muezzin performs the Ezan call to prayer in front of a jury, in Old mosque (Eski Camii) in Edirne. — AFP

Local

Climate change affecting global food security, Kuwaiti meteorologist warns

Ibrahim stresses need for Kuwait to shift towards clean energy

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Climate change has affected global food security as rising temperatures, water scarcity, extreme events such as droughts and floods, and increased atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations are affecting staple crops around the world. Global maize and wheat production declined in recent years due to extreme weather events and a general increase in water scarcity. Kuwait Times spoke with Jamal Ibrahim, Kuwaiti meteorologist and environmental expert, to explain the reasons for climate change and its effect on food security. "Climate change and hot temperatures have affected the world at all levels," he said. "As for us in Kuwait, we notice it in the winter that is not cold today as it was 20 years ago, and in the summer with the extremely hot temperature."

"The main reason for the climate change is the global warming resulting from the environmental destruction that is caused by humans, like using energy sources that are not environmentally friendly and building huge electricity generators which produce greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and ammonia," Ibrahim explained. "This creates a layer of radiation that cannot penetrate the atmosphere, leading to trapping the heat of the sun inside the globe's atmosphere, which leads to the rise in temperatures."

Ibrahim pointed out that hundreds of



Jamal Ibrahim



years ago, the Earth's atmosphere was clean because there were no external and harmful influences on it, such as electricity, cars, planes, and electricity generators, which are the main means of human environmental destruction. "Therefore, we in Kuwait must shift towards using more environmentally friendly energy," he said. "Climate change has led Kuwait's weather to be hot in the fall and spring, extremely hot in summer, and moderate in the short

winter," he mentioned.

Food security

Regarding the effect of climate change on food security, Ibrahim said, "Climate change and food security are strongly related. Global warming leads to the destruction of crops.

For example, some agricultural crops need a certain period and temperature to grow during the winter, and with the rise in temperatures and the shortness of

Kuwait faces serious challenges in adopting alternative energy



the winter season, many crops have been destroyed."

"Food security today is not only affected by climate change," he added. "The increase in global population numbers is also one of the most important causes of food shortages and concerns. The Earth has less than three percent of potable water, and this is also an important factor in global food security."

"Global warming is a serious issue that is speeding up with the increased emissions of harmful gases, and for that the whole world began to work on the transition towards the production of environmentally friendly energy such as solar, wood and recently the magnetic energy," he pointed out.

"Despite that, Kuwait is facing a serious challenge in implementing alterna-

tive energy resources, while the world is moving towards reducing the production of carbon dioxide by relying on alternatives and more environmentally friendly energy sources," he went on. "It is hard for Kuwait to apply some alternative energy sources such as diesel energy because it requires large areas of land, in addition to the nature of the atmosphere in Kuwait which is full of dust, which means that the state will need a large budget to clean it on an ongoing basis."

Ibrahim said that European countries are shifting towards using electric cars that do not lead to harmful emissions to the environment, unlike cars that depend on gasoline. "This is one of the reasons that may force Kuwait to find alternative energy sources to use," he noted.



NEW YORK: Kuwait's envoy at the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi meets with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. — KUNA

Kuwaiti outgoing envoy hails 'special relationship' with UN

NEW YORK: Kuwait's envoy at the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi praised the "special relationship" between his country and the global body, saying it has resulted in great developments on peace, security and humanitarian endeavors. The Kuwaiti outgoing permanent representative's remarks were made during an encounter with the UN

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at a meeting to mark the end of his tenure in New York. Speaking to the press, Otaibi said he was honored to have worked to represent and defend the interests of his country at the UN. He reiterated Kuwait's strong advocacy for the UN's principles and international multilateralism along with the Secretary-General's road map for UN action over the coming years. Kuwait will continue to engage positively with member states to implement the initiatives contained in that plan on the ground, he emphasized. The UN chief commended the work done by the ambassador during his years of diplomatic service in New York, mentioning his prominent role in strengthening relations between the Gulf Arab country and the UN.— KUNA



KUWAIT: Health Ministry Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha inspected the project of the new Kuwait Cancer Fighting Center in Sabah Specialized Medical zone. The project covers 65,000 square meters. The new building will be 22,4762 square meters with a 618-bed capacity.

'July 15 critical milestone for Turkish democracy'

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Turkey in Kuwait released a statement on the occasion of the July 15 coup attempt's anniversary. The following is the full transcript of the statement:

Few events can influence the history and trajectory of a nation as profoundly as the July 15 coup attempt. On the night of July 15, 2016, under the direct order of Fetullah Gulen (terrorist mastermind), a clandestine faction within Turkish army attempted to overthrow democratically elected government of Turkiye led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Although Turkish democracy was no stranger to occasional interruptions by military interventions, the July 15 was the most unprecedented in terms of its conduct, reaction it generated from public and its consequences. Before delving into why this coup attempt is like no other, terrorist structure behind this coup attempt as well as the events leading up to July 15, 2016 should be fully comprehended.

For decades under the guise of benign education movement The Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) had tried to infiltrate the military and civil Turkish bureaucracy by using every tool available. F Gulen, ringleader of this clandestine, criminal and terrorist organization called FETO, issued "fatwa" upon "fatwa", greenlighting their followers hiding within the bureaucracy to resort to every

possible mean to fortify their positions in public institutions. By employing illegal methods, FETO-linked undercover operatives had "worked" their ways up through the ranks in the army, judiciary and other critical institutions.

They cheated in university, military school and police academy entrance exams, arrested and persecuted figures opposing them, eavesdropped and blackmailed their rivals, leaked confidential state documents, conspired against government officials.

July 15th was a desperate final move of Fetullah Gulen and his followers to keep their control and capture the state.

July 15th armed coup attempt demonstrated FETO's determination to unwaveringly use terror, alongside other crimes, to achieve its ultimate aim. Through this act, FETO has clearly shown itself to the world as one of the most dangerous terrorist groups.

The conduct of the attempt resembles more of a full-scale invasion than a conventional military coup d'etat. July 15 was an attempt to invade Turkiye, leaving no room for doubt. The use of terrorists in our own army for this has added a vile betrayal to the invasion attempt.

Turkish fighter jets dropped bombs on their own parliament during an extraordinary session, they raided TV channel studios and tried to assassinate President Erdogan. That was the blood-

iest coup attempt Turkiye had ever witnessed, in which 251 people lost their lives defending their country, 2,500 wounded. Most of them were unarmed civilians, with nothing in their hands but Turkish flags. They were recklessly shot by assault rifles, bombed by fighter jets, crushed by armored vehicles, run over by tanks, the very military equipment the putschists are supposed to use to protect Turkish citizens they were massacring.

The second peculiarity of this coup attempt was the stiff popular resistance of Turkish people and strong determination of President Erdogan not to capitulate to FETO's demands. Drawing on the experience of previous coups, the putschists were over-confident that Turkish people would go to their homes once they saw tanks in the streets and that President Erdogan would either surrender or flee. Both calculations proved to be misjudgment.

In the decade prior to the July 15, Turkiye had witnessed a period of transformation through years of political, institutional, and social reforms, ushering in stronger democratic culture, unprecedented economic prosperity and more vocal public opinion. These reforms strengthened both society and government and created a strong trust between them. This connection between the people and their government is the ultimate measure of our democracy's resilience, and the strongest guarantee of its survival.

Turkish people who love Turkiye have stood against this horrific threat have fervently and courageously

demonstrated to the world that they did not recognize any power over their will and stood ready to sacrifice their lives to protect their state and the democratic system. It was one of the most significant turning points in Turkiye's contemporary history. Millions of Turkish citizens set aside their political, cultural and ethnic differences to form a united front against the plotters. They refused to allow an armed group to rob them of democracy, liberty and their way of life.

Heroic resistance of Turkish people also became source of inspirations for people around the world. They sacrificed their lives to save their democracy. However, it should be noted that, it was not only Turkish democracy that was at stake that night. The coup plotters also aimed to alter independent course of foreign policy Turkiye had adopted. For Turkish people who are already familiar with FETO's non-national political agenda, their struggle against coup attempt was key to independence of the nation. That is why many Turkish people view this struggle as the nation's second independence war.

Thirdly, July 15 marked a monumental turning point in Turkiye's political history and its future in many aspects. As mentioned above, although the main objective of the coup attempt was to eradicate Turkish democracy and independence, it had quite the opposite consequences. The night of July 15 was about one of the darkest in Turkish history but ended in one of its brightest dawns.

In many ways we emerged stronger, freer, and more independent from the

July 15 coup attempt. Over the course of 6 years, fight against FETO and other terrorist groups both inside and outside of Turkiye has constituted one of the main priorities of our country.

Just one and a half months after the coup attempt, our armed forces carried out the Operation Euphrates Shield against DAESH, clearing 4,000 square kilometers (1,544 square miles) area of the terrorist organization. Turkish military is the only army which could fight hand-to-hand combat against DAESH on the ground. Furthermore, PKK's presence inside Turkiye has virtually come to an end thanks to a sequence of successful operations and vigilance of our armed forces.

Turkiye cleared its bureaucracy from terrorist elements with proven ties to FETO without deviating from fundamental rights and rule of law. Thanks to our efforts in international front, FETO affiliated schools and education centers in 45 countries were closed down or taken over by the relevant countries. Through series of institutional reforms, we modernized and democratized our institutions. Turkiye also has consolidated its political stability and strengthened its regional standing.

That is why July 15, 2016, is a date that will never be erased from Turkiye's collective memory. July 15, the "Day of Democracy and National Unity", is a symbol for the love of Turkiye for keeping our collective memory alive, strengthening our democracy, and remembering our martyrs and veterans against the coup attempt. — Turkish Embassy in Kuwait

Local

Kuwait's total workforce down by 100,000 in one year, statistics show

Around 43% pay disparity in public sector in favor of men

KUWAIT: The latest labor force statistics in Kuwait issued by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) as of the end of the Q1 2022 indicate that the size of labor force in Kuwait is 1.885 million employees excluding the number of household workers (1.947 million workers as of end of Q1 2021). If we add the household labor (family) sector which is about 613,000 workers, the total will be 2.498 million workers (2.599 million workers as of end of Q1 2021). This means an estimated 100,000-worker drop within one year. Household

workers constitute nearly 24.5 percent of total labor force in Kuwait as of the end of Q1 of 2022 (25.1 percent of the total labor force as of end of Q1 2021).

Private sector wages
The monthly average wage of Kuwaiti males in the private sector is KD 1,567 (KD 1,497 in end of Q1 2021), which is 17 percent less than that of males in the public sector. The average for Kuwaiti females in the private sector is KD 994 (KD 946 in end of Q1 2021), which is 24.6 percent less than that of their female colleagues in the public sector. Undoubtedly, the government support leads to reduce the gap between the private and the public sector. The monthly average wage of non-Kuwaiti males in the private sector is KD 309 (KD 294 in end of Q1 2021). This equals 39.4 percent of the average salaries of their non-Kuwaiti colleagues in the public sector. The average monthly wage for non-Kuwaiti females in the private sector is KD 435 (KD 407 in end of Q1 2021), which is higher than the average salary of non-Kuwaiti males in the private sector by 40.8 percent, but lower than the average rate of non-Kuwaiti females in the public sector by 37.8 percent.

In case of the overall wage average in both the public and private sectors, the monthly average wage of Kuwaiti males is KD 1,823 (KD 1,791 in end of Q1 2021) and KD 1,272 for Kuwaiti females (KD 1,251 in end of Q1 2021), with a 43.3 percent difference in favor of males. The monthly average wage for non-Kuwaiti males is KD 322 (KD 306 in end of Q1 2021) and KD 493 for non-Kuwaiti females (KD 468 in end of Q1 2021), a 53 percent difference in favor of females. The monthly average wage for male and female Kuwaitis in the two sectors is KD 1,504 (KD 1,479 in end of Q1 2021) and KD 342 for non-Kuwaitis (KD 324 in end of Q1 2021). Note that the figures above do not include household

labor that would have a significant downward impact on the non-Kuwaiti wage rates if taken into consideration, nor do they include the governmental support allocations to Kuwaiti workers in the private sector.

The number of Kuwaiti employees in the government sector according to the CSB is 362,100 workers (338,500 workers by end of Q1 2021). The number of Kuwaiti employees in the private sector is 72,700 workers (72,900 workers by end of Q1 2021). This indicates that the Kuwaiti workforce is distributed between 83.3 percent in the public sector and 16.7 percent in the private sector. About 45.1 percent of Kuwaitis working in the public sector are university graduates, 4.5 percent have postgraduate degrees, 13.9 percent have diplomas above high school but below university degrees, and 21 percent are holders of high school certificates or equivalent. This shows that about 84.5 percent of government employees are holders of high school certificates and above. That being said, the ongoing low productivity of the public sector is due to crowded and unorganized work environment, incompatible educational and labor market requirements, poor education quality, or even the spread of fake degrees.

Household workers

Approximately a quarter of total expatriate workers in Kuwait are household workers, totaling at 613,000 (according to the Central Statistical Bureau) at the end of Q1 2022 (651,000 workers in end of Q1 2021). The figure is divided almost equally between males 306,000 and females 307,000. Indian male workers take the lead with 205,000 workers (215,000 at end of Q1 2021), while Filipinos represent the largest female non-national workers of 140,000 (139,000 workers in end of Q1 2021). India has the highest share of non-national household workers of both genders constituting 47.5 percent of the total



KUWAIT: This file photo shows a construction worker working at a construction site in Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

household workers, followed by the Philippines by 23 percent. Four nationalities namely India, Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka capture 95.2 percent of total household workers out of 10 nationalities. The six other nationalities form the rest, 1.9 percent for the highest and 0.2 percent as the lowest contributions. Three African countries are among the countries exporting household labor, led by Ethiopia at 1.7 percent then Benin and Sudan at 0.3 percent and 0.2 percent respectively.

If we merge the numbers of household workers with other expats categories, according to nationalities, Indians make up 726,000 workers (787,000 workers in the end of Q1 2021) or 29.1 percent of total labor force including Kuwaiti employees and 35.2 percent of total foreign labor force, taking the lead in both cases. The Egyptian labor force follows by a total of 450,000 workers (471,000 workers in the end of Q1 2021), forming 18 percent of total labor force and 21.8 percent of total expat labor force. The Kuwaiti workforce comes third at 435,000 (411,000 workers in the

end of Q1 2021) forming 17.4 percent of the total labor force. That percentage might rise if the numbers include the military. Bangladesh comes fourth with a total of 235,000 workers (246,000 workers in the end of Q1 2021). Making up 9.4 percent of total labor force and 11.4 percent of total expat workers. The Philippines occupies the fifth position in total employment by 204,000 workers (209,000 workers at the end of the year 2020), about 8.2 percent of total labor force and 9.9 percent of total expat work force. — Al-Shall Report

Top five labor force communities in Kuwait per nationality:

- 1- India (726,000)
- 2- Egypt (450,000)
- 3- Kuwait (435,000)
- 4- Bangladesh (235,000)
- 5- Philippines (204,000)



Household workers nearly 25% of labor force

workers constitute nearly 24.5 percent of total labor force in Kuwait as of the end of Q1 of 2022 (25.1 percent of the total labor force as of end of Q1 2021).

The average monthly wage of Kuwaiti male workers in the public sector is KD 1,888 (KD 1,869 at end of Q1 2021). The Kuwaiti female wage average is KD 1,318 (KD 1,306 in end of Q1 2021), a difference of 43.2 percent in favor of men's wages. The monthly salary average of non-Kuwaiti males in the public sector scored KD 784 (KD 759 in end of Q1 2021). For non-Kuwaiti females, the average wage is KD 698 (KD 685 in end of Q1 2021) with a 12.3 percent difference in favor of males. The gender gap is more equitable in the case of non-Kuwaitis. The average monthly wage for Kuwaitis of both genders in the public sector is KD 1,548 (KD 1,534 in end of Q1 2021). The same average for non-Kuwaitis is KD 741 (KD 722 in end of

CAIT trained 4,000 state employees in one year

KUWAIT: The Deputy Director-General of the Central Agency for Information Technology, Dr Ammar Hassan Al-Husseini, participated in a panel discussion organized by "UDACITY", the leading global educational organization in professional qualification for computer science and advanced technological software, through its digital platform, for a number of government and private agencies and agencies at the level of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the Middle East. The Middle East Center to discuss ways to enhance digital transformation strategies by 2025, which must be associated with the development of digital skills for youth as an essential component of its Vision 2030 plans to achieve sustainable environmental development.



Dr Ammar Al-Husseini

In the same context, Deputy Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology, Dr Ammar Al-Husseini, said: Most of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, including Kuwait, suffer from a shortage of skilled workers in the field of information technology, which negatively affected the development process and caused delays in the completion of large and vital projects. One of the main challenges that prevent creating a suitable environment for the digital economy, referring to the most important technological scientific disciplines required in the Middle East, including cloud computing, advanced programming for cybersecurity, data science, artificial intelligence and augmented reality, digital marketing, and building and developing programs and applications for mobile phones.

Husseini added in a press statement: In the semi-

nar, we focused on activating plans and solutions to bridge the supply and demand gap for talent, competencies and digital skills facing the Middle East, and ways to improve the competitiveness of the information technology sector, noting that upgrading the skills of workers in the sector depends on the concerted efforts of the government sector, and the involvement of other relevant entities to support, for example, in Kuwait, the Civil Service Bureau, as the authority concerned with mapping jobs and specializations that the country needs in various scientific fields, the most important of which is the field of information technology, the cornerstone in building the digital future of Kuwait.

Husseini revealed that the Central Agency was able to train more than 4,000 government employees in the fields of information technology from 2020 to 2021, in addition to organizing workshops and leadership programs for digital transformation, in which more than 75 government leaders participated through a number of successful regional initiatives launched by Kuwait. In cooperation with a number of international companies, including Huawei, Microsoft, Palo Alto, Fortinet and others, which aimed to enhance the technological capabilities of young people and develop their skills and abilities.

Husseini pointed to a number of measures that support the rehabilitation and development of digital talent capabilities, including allocating a sufficient budget to build skills in the government sector, coupled with effective plans to raise awareness among employees and supervisors of the importance of continuing education, and to provide new mechanisms and work models that are compatible with global changes that rely heavily on flexibility. And adopting all mechanisms of digital transformation, in addition to agreeing to develop a unified job description for skills in information technology to provide the necessary jobs in its framework for the public and private sectors.

Husseini concluded by emphasizing the role of the Central Agency for Information Technology, as the government's representative, in improving the skills of employees in specialized technical and digital fields and qualifying them with the appropriate training courses to achieve the New Kuwait Vision 2035.

heading towards the south-east.

About the weather during the day, he said that it will be very hot, and winds at 14 kilometers in open areas. The wave's height will be between one and four feet, he said, adding that the weather on Friday will be relatively hot and humid on the coastal regions. The wind is to the northeast, with a fluctuating direction of light-to-moderate speed between 8 to 35 kilometers per hour.

The anticipated temperatures will be between 44 and 46 degrees Celsius. The sea will be light-to-moderate, and the wave's height will be between one and four feet. He explained that the weather tomorrow night will be hot with relatively humid on the coastal regions, and the wind will swing to a light southeast direction, to mild speed between eight and 28 kilometers per hour. — KUNA

Meteorologist predicts hot and dusty weather

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Meteorological Department predicted that the country would be affected by extremely hot air with northwesterly winds with moderate speed during daylight hours, which are sometimes dusty especially on the exposed areas. The head of the Department Yasser Al-Balushi, said that this is due to the low-seasonal Indian sprawl that extends the region with very hot air, but that the atmosphere changes in the evening as the country is affected by a relatively damp air mass, especially on the coastal areas, and the winds are light -

On the occasion of the



**Subscribe or renew your subscription
KD 20 instead of KD 30 for 1 year**

For individuals only

Tel: 24833199 ext: 353-355-356



kuwaittimes.net

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 353/3561
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com



Kuwait oil price down \$3.52 to \$104.85 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwait oil fell by \$3.52 to \$104.85 per barrel on Wednesday in contrast to \$108.37 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday. Globally, the Brent crude went up eight cents to \$99.57 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by 46 cents to \$96.30 pb.

The price of OPEC's basket of oils went down by \$2.45 to reach \$104.41 per barrel on Wednesday against \$106.86 pb the day before, the organization announced Thursday. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries said in its bulletin that the annual average rate of the crudes basket, last year reached \$69.89 pb. The OPEC+ alliance countries agreed on their 30th ministerial meeting to increase their production by 648,000 barrels for July and August. The current additional quantities are exceeding the previously agreed monthly increases of 432,000 barrel per day, a statement issued by OPEC+ alliance countries said. —KUNA

Chewing tobacco busted at Shuaiba Port

KUWAIT: Customs officers at Shuaiba Port foiled an attempt to smuggle in around two million chewing tobacco pieces hidden in a home glassware container that arrived from a Gulf country. The operation came after officers received a tip about the container's contents, the General Administration of the Customs said in a statement. Laws in Kuwait ban the import of chewing tobacco as instructed by the health and commerce and industry ministries.



Photo of the day



KUWAIT: The full 'Buck' super moon rises behind Liberation Tower in Kuwait City, on July 13, 2022. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Draft law to impose KD 500 fine for hanging clothes on balconies

Up to KD 5,000 for barbecuing in banned places

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council proposed a draft law on public cleanliness and waste transport, which includes imposing a fine of up to KD 500 on violators who clean carpets, furniture, or dry clothes by hanging on balconies overlooking the streets.

The proposed draft law, which was referred by the Acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality Nadia Al-Shraideh, also prohibited barbecue on sidewalks, streets, public spaces, parks, seaside, and state-owned lands according to the seventh article of the regulation. The draft law mentioned that the Director General of Kuwait Municipality must issue a decision specifying the allowed places to barbecue, and violators shall be



Efforts to preserve city's overall look

fined KD 2,000 to KD 5,000.

The law came due to barbecue charcoals' bad impact on the environment. In addition to accelerating biodiversity loss, disposing of coal by burying it directly under the sand has severe environmental damage to the marine environment and public hygiene. It harms the system of the environment and cause deterioration, pollutes wild areas, negatively impacts the health security of individuals and society, in addition to its effect in eroding and destroying the soil.

Meanwhile, article four of the draft law prohibits cleaning carpets and furniture, or drying clothes by hanging on balconies located on roads and public spaces. Violators are to be fined KD 100 to KD



500, while the current law bans drying clothes by hanging in a bid to maintain the city's overall look, and the imposed fine is from KD 100 to KD 300.

Neglected and damaged vehicles, boats, and motorhomes are not allowed to be left in the streets, sidewalks, and public spaces. Owners must

be warned to remove their vehicles within 48 hours. In the event of a violation, the municipality has the right to seize the vehicle, and after three months have passed from the date of seizure with no one claiming it, then it will be sold to cover the violation's expenses.



KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Ministry inspectors cited a shop in Salmiya for selling counterfeit items carrying logos of famous brands. The items included clothes, shoes, purses and sunglasses 'in large quantities,' the ministry said in a statement, noting that the items were seized and legal action was taken.



Defiant Philippine Nobel laureate Ressa fights for her freedom

89 die in Haiti gang violence, as country slides into chaos

Page 6

Page 7



MYKOLAIV, Ukraine: Handout picture released by Ukrainian Emergency Service on July 14, 2022 shows rescuers working on a hotel and business centre partially destroyed by missile strike in the city of Mykolaiv amid the Russian invasion of the country. — AFP

Russian missile strikes kill 20

Zelensky urges 'special tribunal' for Moscow

KYIV, Ukraine: Russian missiles struck Vinnytsia in central Ukraine Thursday, killing at least 20 people including three children, in what President Volodymyr Zelensky called "an open act of terrorism". The midday attack on the city hundreds of kilometres from the frontlines and invading Russian troops came as EU officials convened in The Hague to discuss war crimes in Ukraine.

The charred remains of upturned cars surround by burnt debris were seen in images distributed by officials next to a business gutted by a fire with brown smoke billowing nearby. "There were eight rockets, two of which hit the centre of the city. Twenty people have died, including three children. There a large, large number of wounded," Zelensky said during an address European official at The Hague.

The Ukrainian leader led a moment of silence before urging European and International Criminal Court officials during an address to open a "special tribunal" into Russia's invasion. "I believe it is inevitable that International Criminal Court will bring accountability to those guilty of crimes under its jurisdiction: war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide."

War crimes tribunal

The ICC in The Hague opened an investigation into possible war crimes in Ukraine just days after Moscow's forces invaded and it dispatched dozens of investigators to the country to gather evidence. Russia invaded on February 24 and the conflict has seen thou-



'An open act of terrorism'

sands of people killed, destroyed cities and forced millions to flee their homes. "Every day, Russia kills civilians, kills Ukrainian children, carries out missile attacks on the civilian facilities where there is no military target. What is this, if not an open act of terrorism?" Zelensky said after the Vinnytsia attack.

A Ukraine military spokesman said its forces had

managed to knock out two from a barrage of cruise missiles that were launched from a Russian submarine in the Black Sea and caused widespread damage in Vinnytsia. Deadly strikes in central Ukraine have become relatively rare, but the war has raged around cities like Mykolaiv in the south which the presidency said was hit by a "massive missile strike". "Two schools, transport infrastructure and a hotel were damaged," the presidency said in its morning military update early Thursday.

The skeletal insides of one building gutted by the strikes were visible in images distributed by local officials, with municipal workers clearing bricks and rubble strewn after the attack. The heaviest fighting in Ukraine, however, has focused recently on the industrial Donbas region in the east. Moscow-backed troops there said Thursday they were closing in on their next target, after wresting control of sister cities Lysychansk and Severodonetsk two weeks ago. "Siversk is under our operational control, which means that the enemy can be hit by our aimed fire all over the area," a pro-Moscow rebel official, Daniil Bezsonov, was cited as saying by Russian state-run news agency TASS.—AFP

Character not wealth

But the wealthy Sunak faces questions about his family's tax affairs and his prior decision to retain US residency. And he is opposed to immediate tax cuts to confront a post-pandemic cost-of-living crisis, stressing the need instead for fiscal responsibility.

"I don't judge people by their bank accounts, I judge them by their character," Sunak told BBC radio. "And I think people can judge me by my actions over the past couple of years," he said, pointing to the economic support he designed as chancellor during the pandemic.

Truss, who campaigned against Brexit in Britain's 2016 referendum before becoming a zealous supporter, formally launched her campaign with vows of tax cuts and a smaller state. Vowing "an aspiration nation", the foreign secretary said she would be ready "from day one" to fix the economy and take on Russian President Vladimir Putin over the war in Ukraine.

Mordaunt, a junior trade minister who is relatively untainted by the scandals of Johnson's premiership, has come up the middle between Truss and Sunak with a campaign strong on patriotic themes.

But the Daily Mail took aim at her stance on transgender people, one of Britain's "culture war" debates that has energised the party's right-wing. Mordaunt was "telling lies" after previously supporting transgender people in the role of equalities minister, only to take a harder line at her campaign launch this week, the newspaper quoted a Truss ally as saying.—AFP

Former CIA coder convicted of leak

NEW YORK: A former CIA programmer was found guilty in New York federal court Wednesday of the 2017 leak of the US spy agency's most valuable hacking tools to WikiLeaks, two years after his initial prosecution ended in mistrial. Joshua Schulte, 33, worked for the CIA's elite hacking unit when he quietly took the "Vault 7" tools it uses to break into target computer and technology systems and, after quitting his job, sent them to the anti-secrecy group.

Vault 7 was a collection of malware, viruses, trojans, and "zero day" exploits that, once leaked out, were available for use by foreign intelligence groups, hackers and cyber extortionists around the world. Prosecutors said Schulte was a resentful employee and leaked the 8,761 documents to harm the agency.

"Schulte was aware that the collateral damage of his retribution could pose an extraordinary threat to this nation if made public, rendering them essentially useless," US Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement after the conviction. The leak had "a devastating effect on our intelligence community by providing critical intelligence to those who wish to do us harm," said Williams. Schulte was an early suspect after WikiLeaks began publishing the secrets, but was quietly charged in September 2017 only with having a large cache of child pornography on his computer.

Later the charges related to the theft and transmission of national defense information, under the Espionage Act, were added. In 2020 a jury convicted him on two lesser charges of lying and contempt of court, but it was hung on the other charges. On Wednesday a new jury convicted Schulte on eight counts under the Espionage Act and one count of obstruction. Each of the espionage-related counts can bring up to 10 years in prison.

The leak, which stunned the CIA in March 2017, was called one of the most damaging losses of classified material ever experienced by the Central Intelligence Agency. It spurred the government to consider tough action against WikiLeaks, which then-CIA director Mike Pompeo called a "hostile intelligence service." The US government then moved to indict WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on espionage charges. Assange is currently in Britain fighting extradition to the United States.—AFP

New Tory favourite Penny accused of lethargy and 'lies'

LONDON: British Conservative leadership contender Penny Mordaunt came under blistering attack Thursday after she surged in the race to succeed Prime Minister Boris Johnson, as another candidate faced elimination.

The little-known Mordaunt, a committed Brexiteer who was briefly Britain's first woman defence secretary before she was demoted to less senior roles, has emerged as the darling of Tory grassroots members.

In the first round of voting by Conservative MPs on Wednesday, she came a strong second behind former finance minister Rishi Sunak and ahead of Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, and was installed as the new favourite by bookmakers.

Polls point to the Royal Navy reservist beating Sunak, Truss and the other three remaining candidates comfortably, once the members decide between the final two. But Mordaunt was savaged by her former boss in the Brexit ministry, David Frost, who called her unfit for office. And she is barely known nationally.

A poll of more than 2,200 adults by Savanta ComRes said only 11 percent could identify Mordaunt from her



LONDON: Britain's Foreign Secretary Liz Truss makes her way out after delivering a speech at the launch of her campaign to become the next leader of the Conservative party in London on July 14, 2022. — AFP

photograph, and only 16 percent of Conservative voters. Two respondents thought she was the singer Adele.

Two of the Tory candidates were knocked out Wednesday, and the bottom ranking contender was to be eliminated in a second vote by MPs that began Thursday morning. Former foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt, one of those eliminated, threw his support behind Sunak, whose resignation from the cabinet last week helped spark a ministerial revolt against Johnson after months of scandal. Drawing a pointed contrast to Johnson, Hunt said the former chancellor of the exchequer was "one of the most decent, straight people with the highest standards of integrity" in politics.

city-state for some time, according to Sri Lankan security sources, before potentially moving to the United Arab Emirates.

As president, Rajapaksa enjoys immunity from arrest, and he is believed to have wanted to go abroad before stepping down to avoid the possibility of being detained. Hundreds of thousands of people have visited his compound since it was opened to the public after he fled and his security guards backed down.

At the site, business owner Gihan Martyn, 49, accused him of "playing for time". "He's a coward," he said. "He ruined our country along with the Rajapaksa family. So we don't trust him at all. We need a new government." Security sources in Colombo said Rajapaksa's resignation letter had already been prepared. "No sooner he gives the green light, the Speaker will issue it," a source told AFP. But Wickremesinghe, whom Rajapaksa named as acting president in his absence, demanded the evacuation of occupied state buildings and instructed security forces to do "what is necessary to restore order", as a nationwide state of emergency and curfew were declared.—AFP

S Lanka protesters to end occupation of official buildings

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's anti-government demonstrators said Thursday they were ending their occupation of official buildings, as they vowed to press on with their bid to bring down the president and prime minister in the face of a dire economic crisis. Protesters overran President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's palace at the weekend, forcing him to flee to the Maldives on Wednesday, when activists also stormed the office of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Rajapaksa, 73, flew onwards Thursday to Singapore from Male, but there was still no announcement of his resignation, despite his earlier promise to step down on Wednesday. He is expected to look to stay in the



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka army soldiers stands guard near the parliament building in Colombo on July 14, 2022, a day after thousands of anti-government protesters stormed into Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's office after he was named acting president. — AFP

International

89 die in Haiti gang violence as country slides into chaos

Soaring prices, fuel shortages accelerate a brutal downward spiral

PORT-AU-PRINCE: A week of gang violence in Haiti's capital has left at least 89 people dead, a rights group said Wednesday, as soaring prices, fuel shortages and gang warfare accelerate a brutal downward spiral in the security situation in Port-au-Prince. The unrest erupted on July 7 between two rival factions in Cite Soleil, an impoverished and densely populated neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. As gunfire crackled in the slums for nearly a week, police, short-staffed and ill-equipped, did not intervene, while international humanitarian organizations struggled to deliver crucial food supplies and provide medical care to the victims.

Thousands of families living in the slums that have sprung up here over the past four decades had no choice but to hide inside their homes, unable to fetch food or water — and, with many houses made of sheet metal, dozens of residents fell victim to stray bullets. “At least 89 people were killed and 16 others are missing” in the past week’s violence, the National Human Rights Defense Network said in a statement, adding that another 74 people sustained gunshot or knife wounds.

Mumuza Muhindo, head of the local mission of Doctors Without Borders, on Wednesday urged all combatants to allow medics to safely access Brooklyn, an area of Cite Soleil most affected by the violence. Despite the danger, Muhindo said his group

has operated on an average of 15 patients a day since last Friday. He said his colleagues have seen burned and rotting corpses along a road leading to the Brooklyn neighborhood, possibly either gang members killed in the clashes or people trying to flee. “It’s a real battlefield,” Muhindo said. “It’s impossible to estimate how many people have been killed.”



“It’s a real battlefield”

Fuel crisis

Cite Soleil is home to an oil terminal that supplies the capital and all of northern Haiti, so the clashes have had a devastating effect on the region’s economy and people’s daily lives. Gas stations in Port-au-Prince don’t have any gas to sell, causing prices on the black market to skyrocket. Outraged, motorcycle cab drivers built barricades on some of the city’s main roads on Wednesday, and

residents were only able to make short trips by motorcycle within their neighborhoods, according to AFP journalists on the scene.

That further complicates their already dangerous situation: for the past several years, Haiti has seen a wave of mass kidnappings, as gangs snatch people of all walks of life, including foreigners, off the streets. Emboldened by police inaction, gangs have become increasingly brazen in recent weeks. At least 155 kidnappings took place in the month of June, compared to 118 in May, according to a report released by the Center for Analysis and Research in Human Rights released Wednesday.

‘Increase in hunger’

The crushing poverty and widespread violence is causing many Haitians to flee to the Dominican Republic, with which Haiti shares a border, or to the United States. With no money and no visas, many of them risk their lives by boarding makeshift boats in the hopes of reaching Florida.

Many end up in Cuba or the Bahamas, or are stopped at sea by American authorities and returned home. More than 1,200 undocumented migrants were sent back to Haiti in the month of June alone, according to government figures. When they return, they have to face the poverty they tried to escape and annual inflation of 20 percent,



Gang violence displaces thousands in Haiti.

with economists warning that that it could spike further to 30 percent because of the global reverberations of Russia’s war in Ukraine.

“We are seeing a significant increase in hunger in the capital and in the south of the country, with Port-au-Prince hit the hardest,” Jean-Martin Bauer, director of the World Food Program, said on Tuesday.

Nearly half Haiti’s 11 million residents already face food shortages, including 1.3 million who are facing a humanitarian emergency, which precedes famine, according to UN calculations. But the violence interferes with efforts to help them also: already the WFP, trying to bypass areas of Port-au-Prince, seeks to deliver aid to the south and north of the country by air and sea. — AFP

Flood ‘versary prompts sadness, soul-searching in Germany

ALTENAHR: Germany on Thursday paid tribute to more than 180 people killed in severe floods a year ago, as concerns mount over climate change and the country looks to overhaul its planning for future disasters. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier embarked on a tour of the stricken Ahr valley, while Chancellor Olaf Scholz was to attend a memorial ceremony in the hard-hit town of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler.

A series of events are also planned in neighbouring Belgium, where 39 people were killed in the deluge. “I came here again on this anniversary of the flood’s horror to show that we haven’t forgotten the people of the Ahr valley,” Steinmeier said. “We know how many are still struggling to rebuild their homes.”

Severe floods pummeled parts of the German Rhineland over two days in July last year, ripping through entire towns and villages and destroying bridges, roads, railways and swathes of housing. Between 100 and 150 millimeters (four and six inches) of rain fell between July 14 and 15, according to the German weather service — an amount that would normally be seen over two months.

Forecasters had issued warnings, yet many residents were simply unaware of the risks of such violent flooding, with dozens found dead in their cellars. The disaster prompted criti-

cism of Germany’s flood warning system and a criminal inquiry was opened into local officials for “negligent homicide”. The government has since pledged to introduce phone alerts in the form of “cell broadcasting” and to reinstall sirens, many of which have been taken down in recent years.

Introducing a new disaster management plan on Wednesday, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser admitted there had been “major failures over the past years and decades”. The government is planning a new annual civil protection day from 2023 to raise awareness of how to respond in a disaster and “make our country more crisis-proof”, Faeser said. The disaster also raised concerns about climate change, with one international study showing that man-made global warming had made the floods up to nine times more likely. — AFP



AHRWEILER: German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (3rd left) and Rhineland-Palatinate’s State Premier Malu Dreyer (5th left) are pictured during a visit at the rebuilt wine tavern, Weineck Altenahr, in Altenahr on July 14, 2022. — AFP

‘A heart of love’: Kinshasa locals reward honest cops

KINSHASA: At dawn in a working-class district of Kinshasa, a driver slows to a halt and hands a fistful of small bills to a traffic cop. The sight is common in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s bustling capital, where ill-paid officers are notorious for shaking down commuters. But unlike some of her less scrupulous colleagues, police officer Cecile Bakindo had solicited no money. The driver had simply stopped to give her a tip for doing her job.

“People like me a lot,” said Bakindo, wearing a beret, white gloves and a fluorescent orange vest over her navy-blue uniform. “They give me lots of presents.” Traffic cops in the megacity of 15 million have an entrenched image for corruption. It’s not uncommon for them to leap inside a car to accuse the driver of an imaginary infraction and snatch the key in the hope of extracting payment. Police are even known to rip off license plates during traffic stops.

Public disillusionment with the force is deep enough that a practice has developed

that, elsewhere in the world, may seem paradoxical: people give money to police who are straight. In Kinshasa, honest traffic cops are city institutions — word of their integrity swiftly spreads through conversations or on social media, and many reap rewards in tips as a result. After Bakindo mounts a platform in the middle of her busy intersection, she smiles as she directs swarms of motorbikes and decrepit collective taxis to their destinations.

Another motorist slows down to offer her money in the space of a few minutes. Locals, long accustomed to police harassment, said they appreciate her commitment to work and her honesty. “She is really super,” said Patient Kanuf, a 32-year-old motorbike-taxi driver refueling near Bakindo’s intersection. “She has a heart of love.”

At another intersection in the city centre, a tall and soft-spoken police captain with heavy black spectacles has also become a local celebrity for incorruptibility. Jean-Pierre Beya, 64, has stood under the sun at the same junction for about 15 years, smiling genially at commuters as they crawl past in late-afternoon traffic. Drivers who surge dangerously across the intersection earn a finger-wag and a stern talking-to.

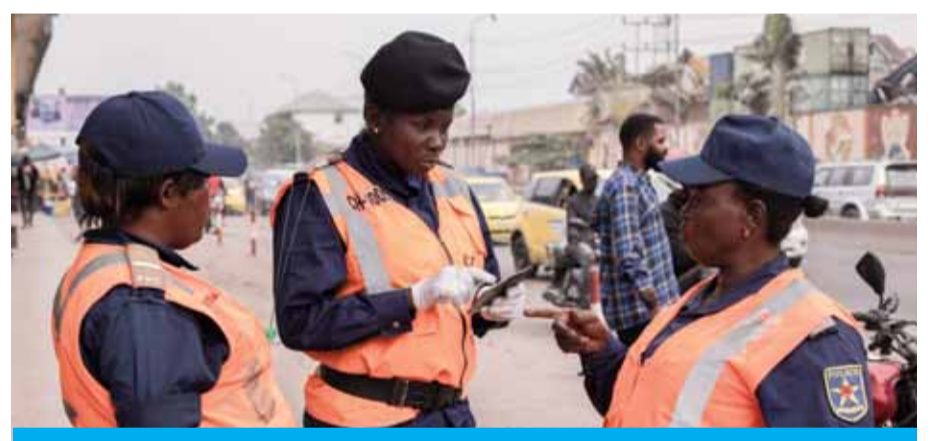
Isaac Woto, a nearby taxi driver, said that both Beya and Bakindo are known across Kinshasa. “They’re serious” about

their jobs, said the 45-year-old. “The others, they’re just looking for money.” Corruption is an engrained problem in the DRC. A vast country the size of continental western Europe, it ranks a lowly 169th out of 180 nations in the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index by the NGO Transparency International.

Researchers from the University of Chicago, Antwerp University, the Universite Catholique du Congo and Congolese organization Marakuja Kivu Research delved into the issue of Kinshasa’s traffic cops.

Around 80 percent of their income came from bribes, the team say in a study due to be published next week by the US-based National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

Looking at more than 15,000 interactions between drivers and police, the researchers concluded that the bribery was codified into a system — cops had to achieve a quota of kickbacks. In 2015, according to their calculation, bribes raised an average of \$12,120 per month per police station. A traffic officer, who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity, denied that soliciting bribes was routine, but admitted that there was impunity for senior police officers and politicians who drove dangerously. A spokesman for the Congolese national police did not respond to requests for comment.



KINSHASA: Cecile Bakindo (center), a traffic police officer, discusses with her colleagues about a piece of car license plate left behind by a car driver while evading document control in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. — AFP

The unsolicited tips that AFP saw changing hands appeared to range from the equivalent of 50 US cents to a few dollars. Such sums can be significant in a country where nearly three-quarters of the population of 90 million lives on under \$1.9 a day, according to World Bank figures. Official police salaries are very low, with the lowest-ranked traffic cop earning about \$100 a month, said Beya. But he dismissed the notion that poverty was what prompted some of his colleagues to

shake drivers down. “We’re all on the same salary,” the captain said, as he took a break in the shade. “The problem is mentality,” he said. “I work for the republic.” Locals seemed to cherish Beya, offering him tips and saluting or bowing as they passed by. Beya, like Bakindo, said accepting tips was within the rules. “It’s not corruption,” Beya said, explaining that gifts do not affect his impartiality. “If you do things with respect and courtesy, you’ll get something in return.” — AFP

‘Smile or risk fine’, Philippine mayor...

Continued from Page 1

Some constituents would walk for an hour from their remote villages to reach the town hall. “When they arrive, they’re dismayed at the attitude of people they transact with,” Aguirre said. Aguirre, who was an occupational therapist before running for office in the May 9 elections, wants to “change the

attitude of our government workers.” “We need to be a business friendly municipality,” said Aguirre, the son of a former justice secretary in ex-president Rodrigo Duterte’s administration.

Employees who do not comply with the order could be fined the equivalent of six month’s salary or be suspended from their jobs. Asked how the rule would be enforced when Filipinos are still required to wear a face mask in public, Aguirre said people can sense if someone is sincerely helping them. “I don’t think we’ll reach that point,” Aguirre said of the possible punishments. “It’s just to send good vibes to our employees and constituents.” — AFP

of Apostolic Life, which is responsible for religious orders and congregations of both sexes. Members had previously included only men — cardinals, bishops and priests. Laywoman Zervino from Argentina is the president of the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations. Members of the Dicastery for Bishops weigh in on potential candidates for bishops and provide recommendations for the pope.

In a statement, the Women’s Ordination Conference (WOC) said it welcomed Francis’ move, while cautioning that appointing more women to Vatican posts “cannot alone address the injustices women face in the church”, citing “a culture of clericalism and sexism”. — AFP

In first, Pope names women...

Continued from Page 1

the Mother General Emeritus of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a missionary congregation.

In another first, in 2019, Francis appointed Reungoat and another six women to the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies

Libyans at boiling point...

Continued from Page 1

“Even when we have electricity, it’s very weak — just enough to keep the lights on,” said Aguil, who works for a group clearing unexploded ordnance. The electricity crisis is just the latest trial for Libyans after a decade of insecurity, fuel shortages, crumbling infrastructure and economic woes since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

One of the walls of Aguil’s house is riddled with bullet holes, bearing witness to the violence that has repeatedly ravaged the North African country. “We have trouble with everything: the health sector, education, the roads are terrible,” he said. “We have nothing.” Under Gaddafi, Libya boasted a generous welfare state financed by oil revenues. But that too has fallen victim to the country’s conflict and division, with fuel squandered, infrastructure damaged or dilapidated, and crippling oil-facility blockades.

Many of Libya’s seven million people have turned to unreliable, gas-guzzling and polluting generators for electricity. More dependable models

cost those who can afford them around \$5,000. “Thanks to our government,” Aguil said bitterly. The Tripoli-based authorities have sought to quell public anger over the power outages, admitting they had underestimated the problem. Interim prime minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah said three power stations were to open this month, two in the west and one in the east.

Dbeibah leads a western-based administration, while former interior minister Fathi Bashagha draws support from the eastern Tobruk-based parliament and military strongman Khalifa Haftar. Supporters of the eastern camp have restricted production at key oil facilities in recent months to pressure Dbeibah to transfer power to Bashagha. The blockade has also reduced the amount of fuel available for power stations, exacerbating electricity shortages.

Sitting with his severely disabled son in Benghazi, the cradle of Libya’s 2011 uprising against Gaddafi’s 42-year rule, Ahmed Hejjaji said he feels helpless. His four-year-old’s medical equipment needs electricity, and the power cuts are wreaking havoc with his treatment. The authorities “must guarantee us access to electricity” the 42-year-old father said. Hejjaji said the daily challenges are never-ending. Before the Muslim Eid Al-Ahda celebration, he said, “I went to the bank early to take out money, but I waited in the queue until 3 pm. ‘Why? Because the state is absent.’ — AFP

International

Defiant Philippine Nobel laureate Ressa fights for her freedom

Vocal critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte and his deadly drug war

MANILA : Less than a year after winning the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to protect free speech, Philippine journalist Maria Ressa is fighting to stay out of jail while her news site Rappler faces possible closure. But the spirited veteran reporter—a vocal critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte and his deadly drug war—refuses to be cowed into silence.

“This is a newsroom that’s been under attack for six years and we’ve prepared ourselves,” Ressa, 58, told AFP this week at Rappler’s office in suburban Manila. “We will not voluntarily give up our rights.” Rappler, which Ressa co-founded a decade ago, had to battle for survival under Duterte as his government accused it of violating a constitutional ban on foreign ownership, as well as tax evasion.

Days before Duterte’s term ended on June 30, the company received a shutdown order from the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Less than two weeks later, Ressa lost an appeal against a 2020 conviction for cyber libel, putting her one step closer to serving up to nearly seven years behind bars.

Drawing on decades of experience working as a journalist across Asia, including in conflict zones, Ressa said she had to be “ready for anything”. “This is something I do as a person, whatever it is I’m most afraid of, I think about the worst-case scenario and then I plan it out,” said the former CNN correspondent, who is on bail. Ressa is facing seven court cases, including the cyber libel conviction, while Rappler faces eight.

Their lawyers describe the cases as “state-sponsored legal harassment”. Trouble for Ressa and Rappler started in 2016 when Duterte came to power and launched a drug war in which more than 6,200 people died in police anti-narcotics operations, official data show. Rights groups estimate tens of thousands were killed. Rappler was among

the domestic and foreign media outlets that published shocking images of the killings and questioned the crackdown’s legal basis.

Local broadcaster ABS-CBN—also critical of Duterte—lost its free-to-air licence, while Ressa and Rappler endured what press freedom advocates say was a grinding series of criminal charges, probes and online attacks. Duterte’s government said previously it had nothing to do with any of the cases against Ressa. After the SEC shutdown order, Ressa said the online harassment increased “exponentially” and has continued since the son and namesake of former Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos succeeded Duterte. “This was the largest spike for sure. It hasn’t stopped, it’s been pretty much non-stop,” said Ressa. “The attacks are always connected to a defence of the Marcos administration.”

‘Make or break’

Ressa became a journalist in 1986, the same year that the elder Marcos was ousted in a popular revolt and his family chased into exile in the United States. Ferdinand Marcos Jr won the May 9 presidential polls by a landslide, completing a remarkable comeback for the clan, helped by relentless online white-washing of their past and powerful alliances with rival elite families.

Ressa said she was hopeful Marcos Jr would rule differently to his father, who presided over human rights abuses, corruption and the shuttering of independent media. But the pattern in the past three weeks, including the social media attacks, “bodes ill for press freedom and for Filipino journalists”, she said. “It hasn’t been magnanimity in victory,” said Ressa. “This is not one or two people not being nice—these are concerted information operations.” Some of her colleagues at Rappler, where the average age of staff, including reporters, is about 25, have also been targeted.

of this, we will hold a state funeral for former prime minister Abe in the autumn.”

The 67-year-old Abe held office for nearly nine years in total until resigning in 2020 for health reasons. His long time in power, support of reconstruction after the 2011 tsunami and nuclear disaster, and “efforts towards diplomacy led by strong Japan-US relations” will be honored at the event, Kishida said. According to local media, it will be the second state funeral held in post-war Japan for a former prime minister, following the public memorial for Shigeru Yoshida in 1967.

The murder suspect, 41-year-old Tetsuya Yamagami, is in custody and has told police he targeted Abe because he believed the politician was linked to an organization he resented. Yamagami reportedly told investigators that his mother’s large donations to the group had caused hardship to his family. The Unification Church, a religious movement founded in Korea, has said that Yamagami’s mother was a member, without commenting on any donations she may have made.

On Thursday, Kishida also advised vigilance as Covid-19 cases rise in Japan, but did not announce any fresh restrictions. He said he had instructed up to



MANILA: Philippines: In this photo taken on July 12, 2022, Maria Ressa speaks during an interview with AFP at Rappler’s office in Pasig, Metro Manila. —AFP

As Ressa and the company fight to have the SEC and cyber libel decisions overturned, their future is uncertain. She had hoped that winning the Nobel Peace Prize in October, which she shared with Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov, would shield her and other journalists in the Philippines.

While Marcos Jr has given few clues about his views on Rappler and the broader issue of freedom of speech, activists fear he could make the situation worse. Ressa said the outcome of the cases against her and Rappler could have broader implications for Filipinos and their rights.

She points to the controversial cyber libel law, which she has been accused of violating. It was introduced in 2012 and applied to an article published by Rappler months before the law took effect. “This is make or break,” Ressa said. “What’s at stake goes beyond my freedom or Rappler. It really will determine where this country will go.” —AFP



TOKYO: Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks during a press conference in Tokyo on July 14, 2022. —AFP

nine nuclear plants to resume operations to help counter energy shortages this winter, fuelled by the war in Ukraine. But such a move remains controversial after the 2011 Fukushima disaster, and the government cannot force the facilities to restart. Kishida pledged Thursday that authorities would put “safety first” and “listen to local residents”. —AFP

Japan to hold state funeral for ex-PM Abe this year

TOKYO: Japan will hold a state funeral for assassinated former premier Shinzo Abe this autumn, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Thursday, following an outpouring of shocked condolences from world leaders. Abe, Japan’s best-known politician and longest-serving prime minister, was shot dead in broad daylight while campaigning on Friday ahead of upper house elections.

A private funeral was held for family and close associates this week at a Tokyo temple, but a state funeral will also take place to show that “Japan will not give in to violence and is determined to protect democracy”, Kishida said. Abe “was held in very high esteem by the international community, including foreign leaders,” he told reporters, and “mourning messages have poured in from home and abroad.” “In light

Swedish court gives Iran ex-official life in jail over 1988 purge

STOCKHOLM: A Swedish court on Thursday handed a life sentence to former Iranian prison official Hamid Noury for crimes committed during a 1988 purge of dissidents, in the first trial related to the mass executions. Noury, 61, was convicted of a “serious crime against international law” and “murder”, the Stockholm district court said in a statement. “The sentence is life imprisonment.”

According to the court, Noury was an assistant prosecutor in a prison near Tehran at the time of the events. “The investigation has shown that the accused, jointly and in collusion with others, participated in the commission of the criminal acts,” the court said. “He has, under an alias and in the role of assistant to the deputy prosecutor, retrieved prisoners, brought them to the committee and escorted them to the execution site.”

The proceedings, which have been running since August 2021, have strained relations between Sweden and Iran, raising concerns about reprisals against Western prisoners held by the Islamic regime. Two Swedish-Iranian citizens are on death row. The case related to the killing of at least 5,000 prisoners across Iran, allegedly ordered by supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini. The killings were revenge for attacks carried out by exiled opposition group the People’s Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) at the end of the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88.

‘Death committees’

Throughout the nine months of hearings, Noury, often theatrical and smiling, rejected the testimony of former detainees. He argued that he was on leave during the period in question, and said he worked in another



STOCKHOLM: People react outside Stockholm District Court in Stockholm, Sweden, on July 14, 2022, after the life sentence of the war crime trial against Hamid Noury. —AFP

prison. Noury denounced the accusations as a plot by the MEK to discredit the regime in Tehran.

“I hope these hands will be cleared... with the help of God,” Noury told the court on the last day of hearings on May 4, his palms raised to the sky and holding a Quran. Among the dozens called to the stand, several witnesses said they had recognized him instantly. “When I was in the death corridor... I had the chance to see him and I witnessed that whenever they read some people’s names he followed them towards the death

chamber,” one of the plaintiffs, Reza Falahi, told AFP.

Noury was arrested at a Stockholm airport in November 2019 after Iranian dissidents in Sweden filed police complaints against him. During the trial, which briefly relocated to Albania to hear some testimony at the end of 2021, MEK supporters have protested loudly outside the Stockholm courthouse, and as the verdict was announced on Thursday a few hundred had gathered outside. “We swear on the memory of those massacred, we will stay until the end,” protesters chanted. —AFP

assaulting police but skipped bail in late 2020 and vanished. He resurfaced in police custody on Thursday with Beijing-aligned media reporting that officers swooped on Tsang and three others as they attempted to flee to Taiwan by speedboat. Hong Kong’s national security police declined to comment on whether the group planned to flee to Taiwan.

But at a briefing on Thursday they detailed how the four-aged between 16 and 24 — had previously tried and failed to claim asylum at the United States consulate and then spent more than a year in hiding at the whim of a smuggling network. Senior superintendent Steve Li said Tsang and his companions were desperate, near broke, “skinny and dejected” when officers detained them on Wednesday. Li said members of a social media channel had promised to aid

Tsang and the others in exchange for money, initially pushing the failed US consulate asylum but the group was turned away. The channel members then allegedly hid Tsang and the others in a windowless industrial building with “very poor conditions” and when they switched hiding places they put the fugitives into sealed cardboard boxes during transport. “Psychologically it was very bad, they felt like they were sold into indentured servitude,” Li said.

Tsang and the others paid up to a total of HK\$400,000 (\$51,000) in smuggling fees and they were told to shoot fundraising videos — all for nothing in return, according to police. Police said they arrested a 34-year-old warehouse worker who assisted the smugglers and are tracking around 10 other suspects who have fled overseas, including to the United Kingdom. —AFP

‘Terrorism has no nationality, ethnicity nor religion’

By **Mevlut Cavusoglu**,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Türkiye



On the evening of July 15, 2016, the “Fethullahist Terrorist Organization” (FETO) launched a bloody coup attempt against the people and the government of my country. Their aim was to establish a radical, fundamentalist regime, loyal only to their ringleader Fetullah Gulen.

As FETO affiliated army units left their barracks to occupy key locations, such as the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul and fighter jets and attack helicopters bombed strategic targets including the Parliament, Presidential compound, army and police headquarters; thousands of civilians took to the streets to stop this unprecedented heinous coup attempt. The plotters killed 251 innocent civilians and left thousands injured. On that night the Turkish people defended democracy with their lives. This heroic response was something the conspirators did not foresee.

To understand what transpired, one has to understand the true nature of FETO. FETO was established in the late 1960s as a so-called “religious movement”. In the guise of promoting education and inter-religious dialogue, it managed to cover its malign intentions.

The well-planned and wide-spread infiltration by FETO members and converts into the army, law enforcement, judiciary and numerous government institutions, including my Ministry, was carried out for decades clandestinely for an overarching plan, of which the final phase was unleashed on July 15, 2016.

Had the coup attempt succeeded, there would have been a very different Türkiye today. Democracy would not have existed and fundamental rights and freedoms would have been suspended indefinitely. The nation would have fallen in the hands of an extremist government.

FETO not only controlled a significant portion of educational institutions, but also owned numerous financial institutions. Their bank accounts were fed by prominent FETO members in industry and commerce, as well as by officials and members of the public. Many innocent civilians were also lured into contributing to FETO’s finances as their piety was manipulated. The enormous income driven from their schools around the globe was channeled into these accounts clandestinely waiting for their ultimate move.

Following the bloody coup attempt of July 15, 2016, a resolute cleansing of the public sector, including government institutions and the military, as well as of the private sector from all FETO affiliated persons and companies was initiated. Some prominent conspirators have been apprehended. Others escaped justice and found refuge in foreign countries. The head of the FETO terrorist organization, Fetullah Gulen, still resides in the United States. Our government has been requesting the extradition of Gulen to Türkiye from the United States as well as that of FETO members from European countries for years. Unfortunately, these requests have not been fulfilled yet.

On the other hand, elsewhere in the world, an increasing number of governments understand the danger this terrorist organization also poses to them and are taking the necessary steps. FETO is also engaged in illegal activities such as visa fraud, money laundering and arms trafficking. Consequently, FETO members are being cleared from public and private sectors in many countries. Many schools affiliated with this terrorist organization abroad have been transferred to the Turkish Maarif Foundation after 2016. Today, Maarif Schools are functioning in many countries and are providing excellent education worldwide.

The nature and scope of Türkiye’s fight against FETO is no different than that exercised by other countries against organizations which had terrorized officials and civilians alike, and endangered democratic values, fundamental rights and freedoms. Türkiye is doing what the respective countries in their fight against terrorism have done in the past. All procedures are in compliance with law.

Terrorism does not have a nationality, ethnicity or religion. This menace threatens humanity as a whole. Therefore, the response to this threat must be united and determined. No state has the luxury to differentiate between terrorists and no terrorist organization can be classified as “useful” according to preferences. FETO is responsible for the loss of hundreds of lives as well as other grave crimes against the Turkish people. Six years after July 15, 2016, Türkiye continues its resolute fight against FETO, just as it continues its fight against other terrorist organizations such as the PKK, PYD-YPG, DHKP-C and DAESH. We expect the international community to stand in solidarity with Türkiye in the fight against terrorism.

Fugitive Hong Kong protester captured

HONG KONG: A young man shot by Hong Kong police during democracy protests appeared in court on Thursday after spending more than a year in hiding, often in grim conditions controlled by people smugglers, police announced. Tsang Chi-kin, 21, was shot in the chest as he and a group of protesters attacked police officers in October 2019, the first person struck with a live round during the months of huge and sometimes violent protests that rocked the city. He survived his injuries and was later charged with rioting and

Business

FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2022



NUSA DUA, Indonesia: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks during a press conference before attending the G20 Finance Ministers Meeting in Nusa Dua on the Indonesian resort island of Bali on July 14, 2022. — AFP

Russia's war in Ukraine 'greatest challenge' to global economy: Yellen

China will work with Sri Lanka to restructure the debt

BALI: Russia's war in Ukraine poses the greatest threat to the global economy, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday as G20 ministers prepare to start talks in Indonesia. Moscow's invasion has sent inflation soaring at a time when the world is struggling to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, endangering the gains of the past two years and threatening widespread hunger and poverty. "Our greatest challenge today comes from Russia's illegal and unprovoked war against Ukraine," she said on the resort island of Bali ahead of a meeting between finance ministers from the world's top economies and central bank governors on Friday and Saturday.

"We are seeing negative spillover effects from that war in every corner of the world, particularly with respect to higher energy prices, and rising food insecurity," she added. "Representatives of Putin's regime have no place at this forum." Yellen said she will continue to press G20 allies at the meeting for a price cap on Russian oil to choke off Putin's war chest and pressure Moscow to end its invasion while bringing down energy costs. "A price cap... is one of our most powerful tools to

address the pain that Americans and families across the world are feeling at the gas pump and the grocery store," she said. "A limit on the price of Russian oil would deny Putin revenue his war machine needs." She expressed hope that India and China would join such a cap, saying it "would serve their own interests" to put downward pressure on prices for consumers globally.

Silent on walkout

But she refused to be drawn on whether Western officials will stage a multi-nation walkout when Russian officials speak, as they did at a G20 meeting in Washington in April. "It cannot be business as usual," she said. "I can tell you that I can certainly expect to express in the strongest possible terms my views on Russia's invasion."

"I expect that many of my colleagues will do the same." Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov will only attend the talks virtually, a week after Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov found himself outnumbered by G20 counterparts in their criticism of Moscow's military assault.

Ukraine is a vital exporter of wheat, grains and sun-

flower oil, but shipments have been disrupted since Russia invaded in February, creating a policy headache for world leaders as well as the risk of a humanitarian crisis. The Treasury chief, who arrived in Indonesia after meeting her Japanese counterpart in Tokyo, said it was "troubling" to see the impacts of the war, contributing to higher energy prices, food insecurity and the rising prospect of hunger globally.

She said she will press G20 countries to do more for developing countries "given the deteriorating global economic conditions" since Moscow's invasion. "A key objective of this trip is to push G20 creditors including China to finalise debt restructuring for developing countries now facing debt distress," she said.

Turning to Sri Lanka, whose leader fled the country this week after mass protests over the country's dire economic crisis, Yellen said she hoped Beijing—a major creditor of the South Asian island—would step in to help. "Sri Lanka is clearly unable to repay that debt and it's my hope that China will work with Sri Lanka to restructure the debt," she said.

Global outlook 'darkened'

Yellen's comments echo the head of the International Monetary Fund, who said Wednesday that the global economic outlook had "darkened significantly" because of Moscow's invasion, just months after it revised down its global growth forecast for 2022 and 2023.

The IMF is "projecting a further downgrade to global growth" in 2022 and 2023, Kristalina Georgieva said in a blog post published ahead of this weekend's meeting. The risk of "social instability" was also increasing because of rising food and energy prices, she wrote.

But there was substantive progress made in attempts to break the impasse on Wednesday after Russia and Ukraine met in Turkey for their first direct talks since March on a deal to relieve the food crisis caused by blocked Black Sea grain exports.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called it a "ray of hope to ease human suffering and alleviate hunger around the world" ahead of another planned round of talks next week. — AFP

EU cuts growth forecasts as inflation surges

BRUSSELS: The European Commission on Thursday slashed growth forecasts for the eurozone, saying the consequences from the war in Ukraine were continuing to destabilise the economy because of record high inflation. The EU executive, which tracks the economy for the 27 countries in the European Union, said GDP growth in the eurozone would reach 2.6 percent in 2022 and a sharply lowered 1.4 percent in 2023.

Inflation would end the year at 7.6 percent, much higher than previously forecast, and 4.0 percent in 2023. This is still well above the EU's target level of 2.0 percent and up from a previous prediction of 2.7 percent. "The evolution of the war and the reliability of gas supplies are unknown, so this forecast is subject to a high degree of uncertainty and downside risks," EU Economy Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni told a press conference.

In its forecast, the commission said the Russian invasion of Ukraine had put "additional upward pressure" on energy and food prices, which were eroding the purchasing power of households.



BRUSSELS, Belgium: EU commissioner for Economy Paolo Gentiloni arrives for a press conference at the EU headquarters in Brussels on July 14, 2022. — AFP

Other factors negatively affecting growth include the "faster than expected" tightening of monetary policy by the European Central Bank, which it says is needed to curb inflation. Added to this is the "continued deceleration of growth in the US" and the impact of Beijing's anti-COVID lockdowns, which have led to factory closures and depressed demand. On the inflation front, the commission estimates the peak should be reached in the third quarter of this year and will then fall gradually to below 3.0 percent by the end of 2023. Consumer price inflation hit a new record high in the eurozone in June, at 8.6 percent year-on-year. — AFP

JPMorgan Chase reports lower profits

NEW YORK: JPMorgan Chase reported a drop in second-quarter profits on Thursday as it warned of a weakening global economic outlook that prompted it to set aside additional funds to cover potential bad loans. Executives sketched out a complex economic picture, with US households still relatively well off in terms of savings, a strong job market and robust consumer spending.

But headwinds—including high inflation, geopolitical uncertainty and fast-changing Federal Reserve policy to sharply curtail liquidity—"are very likely to have negative consequences on the global economy sometime down the road," said Chief Executive Jamie Dimon in an earnings press release.

While consumers are "in very good shape," there are "a serious set of issues" that threaten the outlook, Dimon told reporters on a conference call.

These include the worry that Russia will cut off Germany's natural gas supply and the possibility that the Federal Reserve's aggressive plan may not be sufficient to rein in inflation. "The markets will be volatile," Dimon predicted. "You can't have all these kind of things going on and not have volatile markets."

The big US bank's earnings came in at \$8.6 billion for the second quarter, down 28 percent from the year-ago period in results that missed analyst expectations. Revenues were \$30.7 billion, up one percent. The bank said it added \$428 million in credit reserves due to a "modest deterioration in the economic outlook." In the year-ago period, JPMorgan's profits were boosted by a \$3 billion release in reserves.

The bank experienced \$657 million in charge-offs for bad loans, up only modestly from the level in the previous quarter. JPMorgan enjoyed a boost from higher net interest income following Fed interest rate increases. But the bank also incurred higher expenses on salaries, technology and marketing.

In corporate and investment banking, JPMorgan posted higher revenues in its trading businesses, but lower investment banking fees. JPMorgan temporarily suspended share buybacks to meet new federal stress test requirements for managing risk assets, Dimon said.

Consumers still spending

The results came as the Labor Department reported another large spike in wholesale prices, one day after US consumer prices jumped the most in more than four decades. Rising prices are the heart of investor fears about the consumer-driven US economy. But JPMorgan Chief Financial Officer Jeremy Barnum said "there's essentially no evidence" at this point of a

EU court rules Volkswagen emissions software illegal

VIENNA: The European Court of Justice (CJEU) on Thursday ruled illegal software fitted to Volkswagen diesel vehicles which deactivates the filtering of polluting emissions at certain temperatures, paving the way for compensation for affected customers.

"Software in diesel vehicles which reduces the effectiveness of the emission control system at normal temperatures during most of the year constitutes a prohibited defeat device," the EU's court ruled.

The software reduces or even completely deactivates the filtering when temperatures are below 15 and higher than 33 degrees Celsius (59 degrees Fahrenheit). "Emission limits laid down at EU level must be observed even where those temperatures are significantly below 15 degrees Celsius," the court said in its rulings.

Austria's Supreme Court and two regional courts brought the case to the CJEU following complaints of buyers, who bought Volkswagen vehicles between 2011 and 2013. In a reaction to the ruling, the German automaker insisted it meant the thermal windows used in its vehicles "remain permissible".

"They protect against immediate risks to the engine in the form of damage or accident," the company said.

"The exhaust gas recirculation of the EA189 vehicles affected by the proceedings is 100 percent active up to an outside temperature of 10 degrees Celsius and thus for most of the year," it added.

Volkswagen said it expected the ruling's impact to be "minor". "National authorities and courts must still decide on a case-by-case basis whether a specific thermal window is permissible," it said.

"Civil law actions that base an alleged claim for damages on the existence of a thermal window will continue to be unsuccessful." Several million vehicle owners could take action against the Wolfsburg-based group, said German lawyer Claus Goldenstein, who represents more than 45,000 complainants in the separate so-called "dieselgate" scandal involving Volkswagen. "With today's decision, Volkswagen is once again caught up in the exhaust gas scandal," he said in a statement. In the "dieselgate" scandal that broke out in 2015, Volkswagen has admitted tampering with millions of diesel vehicles to dupe emissions tests.

The scandal has since ensnared several top European carmakers and car part suppliers over their alleged roles in the development of the cheating software. — AFP



VERSAILLES, France: JP Morgan CEO Jamie Dimon (L) reacts next to France's President Emmanuel Macron in a meeting during the 5th edition of the "Choose France" Business Summit, in Versailles, southwest of Paris. — AFP

The bank's credit card data confirms that consumers are spending more on food and gasoline, but that they are still also spending on travel and dining. "That indicates to us that consumers still don't feel so pinched by inflation that they're cutting back on discretionary spending, and that's a relatively positive sign," Barnum said. Persistently high inflation has also raised fears that the Fed will adopt an even tougher line on monetary policy after the central bank announced a 0.75-percentage-point hike, its biggest since 1994.

The latest inflation readings have prompted talk of a potential one percent increase at the Fed meeting later this month—one that Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller said Thursday he would support.

Dimon said the 20 percent drop in the stock market in 2022 and the anemic state of initial public offerings and other corners of the financial system are evidence of the hit from the Fed shift. But the impacts could worsen if the US central bank is unable to slow the economy with a "soft landing," Dimon said. Shares fell 4.6 percent to \$106.78 in morning trading. — AFP

Business

EU to seek cuts in heating and cooling of buildings to save gas

Drastic fall in Russian gas supplies

PRAGUE: The European Commission is expected next week to ask EU countries to reduce heating and cooling of public buildings and offices to cut demand for gas, according to a document seen by AFP. In order to better withstand the drastic fall in Russian gas supplies, which could be cut off altogether, the commission is expected to urge governments across the 27-nation bloc to set limits on the amount of energy used by public buildings, offices, commercial properties and outdoor terraces.

For optimal energy use, it will recommend the rules require that public buildings be heated to no more than 19 degrees Celsius (66 degrees Fahrenheit) and cooled by air conditioning units set no lower than 25°C (77°F). "Energy saved during the summer is energy that can be used in winter," the commission points out in the document. Energy experts say lowering the thermostat by one degree could cut a building's heating bill by about 10 percent. Air conditioning units generally struggle and fail to cool a room below 20°C so they waste energy trying.

The recommendation is part of a series of measures Brussels is investigating to cut the EU's gas consumption by 25 to 60 billion cubic meters (880 to 2,120 billion cubic feet) per year. The EU imported around 140 bcm of gas by pipeline from Russia last year, according to the International Energy Agency. "Acting now could reduce the impact of a sudden supply disruption by one third," says the document, which is due to be published on July 20 and could be modified in the interim.

It calculates that 11 billion cubic metres of gas could be directly saved from reducing excessive heating and

cooling, and between four and 40 bcm via reduced electricity demand. Another 10-11 bcm could be saved from use by industries, which have already slowed production due to soaring prices. The document urges EU governments, where this is "technically feasible and enforceable" to introduce binding limits on heating and cooling in "public buildings, offices, commercial buildings (in particular large buildings) ... and open spaces like outdoor terraces".

"The role of public authorities in leading by example and as an important gas consumer - 30 percent of the energy consumption-is key in this regard," the document states. The commission says that during the "gas winter"-October to March-"large savings can be achieved by deploying alternative heat sources for district heating, heat pumps in households" and energy saving campaigns urging the public to turn their thermostats down by one degree Celsius this winter.

But such "protected" energy customers-under EU legislation that means households, district heating that cannot switch to other fuels and certain essential social services-represent just 37 percent of total EU gas consumption. And simulations show these customers would be the last to be seriously affected by large-scale Russian gas disruptions, the commission says. It is therefore concentrating most of its efforts on power stations and industry, which use huge amounts of gas.

"Abrupt cuts could damage specific branches of those industries which have little room to switch to other fuels-because gas is being used as feedstock for industrial processes-or to reduce production without heavy damage," the commission warns. "It would be

democratic restrictions. Emirates described as "highly regrettable" the airport's short-notice order "to comply with capacity cuts, of a figure that appears to be plucked from thin air".

"Their communications not only dictated the specific flights on which we should throw out paying passengers, but also threatened legal action for non-compliance," the airline added. Emirates operates six daily return flights between Dubai and Heathrow, which Thursday said it would be "disappointing if... any airline would want to put profit ahead (of) a safe and reliable passenger journey".

British airline Virgin Atlantic meanwhile said it supported Heathrow's policy "as long as action proposed does not disproportionately impact home carriers at the airport". British Airways, which has already axed tens of thousands of summer flights due to staff shortages, will remove a further six daily short-haul journeys in response to the cap.

Airports and airlines are struggling to recruit staff having slashed thousands of posts at the start of the pandemic. — AFP

Emirates rejects Heathrow demand to cut passengers

LONDON: Emirates on Thursday rejected an order from London Heathrow for airlines to reduce passenger numbers to ease summer travel chaos sparked by staff shortages. The airport had decided to cap the total number of departing passengers at 100,000 per day for two months through to September 11 — and requested that carriers stop selling summer tickets.

"This is entirely unreasonable and unacceptable, and we reject these demands," Emirates said in a statement. The cap compares with the planned peak-season daily average of 104,000 passengers.

Heathrow's move comes as it seeks to ease congestion with demand booming after the removal of pan-



ENGLAND: A picture taken on February 18, 2019 shows an aircraft of the Scandinavian airline (SAS) parked on the tarmac at the airport of Manchester in England. — AFP

SAS says pilot strike threatens survival of airline

STOCKHOLM: The pilots' strike at Scandinavian airline SAS is costing between \$9.0 and \$12 million a day and threatens the survival of the already financially troubled company, SAS said on Thursday.

The stoppage, which is now in its tenth day, has already cost roughly 1.0 to 1.3 billion Swedish kronor (\$94 million to \$123 million), the company said. Negotiations between unions and management have so far failed to produce a solution.

The airline said more than 2,500 flights have had to be cancelled already, affecting 270,000 passengers. SAS announced it was filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the United States on July 5, the day after nearly 1,000 of its pilots walked off the job.

"The strike is putting the success of the Chapter 11 process and, ultimately, the survival of the company at stake," SAS chief executive Anko van der Werff said. The CEO said the strike also "has a severe impact on our possibilities to succeed with SAS Forward", the cost-saving programme launched by the ailing company in February.

SAS, which employs nearly 7,000 people, mainly in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, is seeking to raise about 9.5 billion kronor in fresh capital. The airline said it "had sufficient liquidity to meet its business obligations in the near term without accessing new forms of capital" but warned cash reserves "will erode very quickly in the face of a continuing pilot strike".

The pilots walked out last week after negotiations broke down. They are protesting against salary cuts demanded by management as part of a restructuring plan aimed at ensuring the survival of the company, and the firm's decision not to re-hire pilots laid off during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The summer is shaping up to be difficult overall for European airlines and airports, who are faced with

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

Kazakh president hits out over sugar crisis

NUR-SULTAN: Kazakhstan's president on Thursday blasted his government for its handling of a sugar crisis as shortages and price spikes contributed to chaotic scenes in supermarkets. Rising living costs since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic have helped fuel unrest in Central Asia, including in the region's richest country, Kazakhstan, where bloody turmoil in January left 238 people dead. Ex-Soviet Kazakhstan has also suffered the sharp end of export flow disruptions resulting from Russia's offensive in Ukraine, with key trade partner Moscow in March banning exports of sugar and grains. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called rushes for sugar in supermarkets "a disgrace" during a government meeting on Thursday and criticised authorities for "a serious miscalculation".

"The government urgently needs to develop a separate project for the development of the sugar industry," he said. "The goal is a significant reduction in import dependence, a gradual transition to self-sufficiency." Tokayev also noted that the area sown for sugar beet cultivation had fallen by a third in the last four years. Sugar prices in the supermarkets of Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty have almost doubled since the beginning of the year, reaching the equivalent of a dollar for a kilo (2.2-pound) bag.—AFP



NEURATH: Wind turbines operated by Germany energy supplier RWE are pictured near Neurath, western Germany. In response to a squeeze of Russian gas supplies, Germany has reactivated mothballed coal power plants to take the burden off gas. — AFP

significantly less costly to moderately reduce natural gas demand for a longer period of time, starting earlier, than having to drastically curtail demand suddenly and without proper preparation," it explains.

By way of encouragement, Brussels urges EU governments to set up "auction systems", perhaps involving several countries, to compensate industrial consumers who agree to reduce their gas consumption. If

there is a total cut in Russian gas supply from July onwards, EU states might only be able to replenish 65-71 percent of their gas reserves percent before winter, the commission said, quoting forecasts by European gas transmission system operators (ENTSO). The commission's energy saving proposals are due to be discussed by EU energy ministers at a meeting in Brussels on July 26.—AFP

New chief at Libya's key oil firm, US warns against confrontation

TRIPOLI: A new chief took office at Libya's National Oil Corporation on Thursday in place of veteran technocrat Mustafa Sanalla, prompting the United States to warn against any "armed confrontation" over the vital sector. Oil is often at the heart of political rivalries in Libya, which has two governments, one in Tripoli led by Abdulhamid Dbeibah, appointed last year as part of a United Nations-backed peace process aimed to end more than a decade of violence in the North African country.

Dbeibah appointed former central banker Farhat Bengdara to replace Sanalla as NOC head, in a decree made public on Wednesday. In a defiant video message, Sanalla told Dbeibah that "this institution belongs to the Libyan people, not to you or the Dbeibah family" adding that "the mandate of your government has expired". On Thursday morning, Bengdara took up office.

"It's vitally important under the current conditions that Libya regains its oil and gas export capacity as quickly as possible," Bengdara told reporters in Tripoli. "The oil sector has fallen prey to political struggles, but we will work to prevent political interference in the sector," he added.

'Vital' to stability

The dispute comes three months into a blockade of key eastern oil facilities which has slashed Libya's output, even as global oil markets are rattled by the war in Ukraine. That has put pressure on consumer nations' governments including the US administration of President Joe Biden to persuade other producers to ramp up output. Libya is sitting on Africa's biggest proven crude reserves.

The US embassy said it was following the developments "with deep concern", saying the NOC was "vital" to Libya's "stability and prosperity". It also praised Sanalla, who has led the body since 2014 and has survived several attempts by Dbeibah's oil minister Mohammed Aoun to oust him.

US Ambassador Richard Norland, who has been working on a mechanism to manage the highly disputed revenues from Libya's crude sales, said the NOC had "remained politically independent and technically competent" under Sanalla.

"The reported replacement of the NOC board may be contested in court but must not become the subject of armed confrontation," Norland added. Unlike many other Libyan state bodies, the NOC

Macron: France to do without Russian gas

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday that France aims to manage without Russian gas as soon as possible with no early end to the war in Ukraine in sight. Accusing Moscow of using energy deliveries to the West as "a weapon of war", Macron said in a TV interview that France was already diversifying the sources of its energy supplies, and building stocks ahead of next winter.

"Russia has already started to cut off gas supplies" by closing the Nordstream 1 pipeline, he told the TF1 channel, referring to Russia's interruption of supplies which it said was for maintenance reasons.

"That's a very clear message: It will use gas as a weapon of war," he said. "We will need to do without Russian gas completely." France is estimated to receive less than 20 percent of its total gas imports from Russia.

Transitioning away from Russian energy meant that "the summer and the start of the autumn will

has largely managed to remain neutral despite violence since the 2011 toppling of dictator Moamer Kadafi in a NATO-backed rebellion.

But control of oil production and revenues has often fuelled political tensions, which have ticked up in recent months after the country's eastern-based parliament appointed a rival administration, led by former interior minister Fathi Bashgha, and backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar. Dbeibah has refused to cede power before elections, and Bashgha has so far failed to take office in Tripoli. However, Dbeibah's move to replace Sanalla with Bengdara, a Kadafi-era central banker rumoured to have close links to Haftar and the United Arab Emirates, has triggered speculation of a deal with the military strongman that would allow Dbeibah to stay in power.



TRIPOLI: Farhat Bengdara, the new chief of Libya's National Oil Corporation who was appointed by the Tripoli-based Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, gives a press conference outside the corporation's headquarters in the capital Tripoli on July 14, 2022. — AFP

Bengdara insisted Thursday that he had been picked for the job "because I'm a non-partisan man and not linked to any one side, and because I can travel anywhere in Libya." But Sanalla, who has skillfully mediated disputes to keep Libya's crude flowing and positioned himself as an interlocutor with foreign powers and oil firms, accused the UAE of involvement in his sacking. War-battered Libya suffers chronic power outages and rising poverty. This has fuelled public anger that has piled pressure on political elites in both east and west. On Wednesday the NOC said it was lifting a force majeure at two eastern export terminals. They had been blockaded for three months by groups demanding Dbeibah's departure. — AFP

probably be very tough", Macron warned. Even in the event of prolonged conflict in Ukraine, Macron said that France would continue to help Kyiv defend itself against Moscow while also sticking with sanctions against Russia.

"We want to stop this war without going to war ourselves," he said. France was boosting gas supplies from Norway, Qatar, Algeria and the United States, Macron said, and building up gas reserves which will be "be near 100 percent by the autumn".

Noting that France's energy use had already "diminished a little" compared to a year earlier, Macron called on authorities, consumers and industry to save energy and eliminate sources of energy waste.

"We need to enter a collective logic of restraint," Macron said. The government would serve as an example for private-sector actors "by making sure that we consume less energy". He said "this restraint will require solidarity from our fellow citizens".

Using less energy was a good thing both "for the climate and also for our energy independence". Macron also confirmed that France would invest more in the nuclear energy sector, which currently provides around 70 percent of the country's electricity needs. "Nuclear energy is a sustainable solution," he said, "both for France and for other countries". — AFP

Business

Stock markets drop on fresh global inflation spikes

European Commission slash growth forecasts for eurozone

LONDON: Stock markets mostly retreated Thursday as fresh evidence of runaway global inflation ramped up expectations of more aggressive interest-rate hikes by central banks.

Eurozone inflation will end the year at 7.6 percent, much higher than previously forecast, the EU said Thursday. The prediction comes one day after US inflation came in at a blistering 9.1 percent last month, the highest level for more than 40 years, as the Ukraine war fuelled energy prices.

Market watchers are now wondering whether the Federal Reserve could hike US borrowing costs by a full percentage point at a scheduled policy meeting this month.

The central bank in June unveiled its first 75 basis-point rise in three decades and is one of dozens to hike rates. Singapore and the Philippines became the latest to tighten policy Thursday, a day after Canada, New Zealand, Chile and South Korea announced hikes.

The US inflation reading followed last week's news of a surprise spike in jobs creation, which suggested the world's top economy was withstanding the rate hikes, giving the Fed more room for further increases.

"Stubbornly high inflation increases the risk that the (Fed) continues to hike aggressively and triggers a recession," said Kristina Clifton at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, adding that that belief was pick-

ing up momentum on trading floors.

The European Commission on Thursday slashed growth forecasts for the eurozone, saying the consequences from the war in Ukraine were continuing to destabilise the economy.

Growing fears of a global recession sent oil prices tumbling around 2.5 percent. Federated Hermes senior economist Silvia Dall'Angelo said that while commodity prices were off their recent peaks, they remained elevated amid risks of further supply shocks.

The Fed's drive to tighten monetary policy continues to send the dollar higher, and on Wednesday it finally broke parity with the euro. The European single currency hovered just above \$1 in Thursday trading.

On the corporate front, JPMorgan Chase reported a drop in second-quarter profits, reflecting the impact of a weakening macroeconomic outlook that led it to set aside funds in case of bad loans.

The big US bank's earnings came in at \$8.6 billion for the quarter, down 28 percent from the year-ago period in results that missed analyst expectations.

Chief Executive Jamie Dimon said key elements in the US economy remained healthy, but that macroeconomic headwinds including inflation "are very likely to have negative consequences on the global economy sometime down the road". —AFP



TOKYO: Electronic quotation boards display the yen's rate of 138 against the US dollar at a foreign exchange brokerage in Tokyo on July 14, 2022. —AFP

IMF to resume Pakistan loan after tax hikes

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said Thursday it had agreed with Pakistan to resume a suspended loan programme that will inject \$1.17 billion into the struggling economy.

A statement from the IMF said a "staff level agreement"—which is still subject to board approval—will bring to \$4.2 billion the amount dispersed under an extended fund facility (EFF) that could increase to \$7 billion and stretch until June next year.

An original \$6 billion bailout package was signed by former prime minister Imran Khan in 2019, but repeatedly stalled when his government reneged on subsidy agreements and failed to significantly improve tax collection.

The new agreement follows months of deeply unpopular belt-tightening by the government of Shehbaz Sharif, which took power in April and has effectively eliminated fuel subsidies and introduced new measures to broaden the tax base.

"Pakistan is at a challenging economic juncture," Nathan Porter, who headed the IMF team, said in a statement, adding external factors and domestic policies were to blame. Pakistan is desperate for international support for its economy, which suffers from poor revenue collection and dwindling foreign reserves to pay its crippling debt.

The new government has slashed a raft of subsidies to meet the demands of global financial institutions but risks the wrath of an electorate already struggling under the weight of double-digit inflation.

A new coalition government—which came to power after Khan was ousted by a parliamentary no-confidence vote—has said it will make the tough decisions needed to turn the economy around. Successive administrations blame their predecessors for the country's economic woes, but analysts say the malaise stems from decades of poor management and a failure to tackle endemic corruption and widespread tax avoidance.

In a bid to secure the IMF loan, Prime Minister Sharif has imposed three fuel price hikes—cumulatively totalling 50 percent—and raised the cost of electricity to effectively end the subsidies introduced by Khan.

Islamabad has so far received \$3 billion from the programme, but with the facility due to end later this year, officials sought an extension until June 2023. "It became essential to resume the IMF programme to save the country from default," finance minister Miftah Ismail told the national assembly last month. "We knew it would damage our political reputation, but still we did it."

The latest budget has earmarked 3.95 trillion rupees (\$18.8 billion) just to service the country's whopping debt of \$128 billion. Agreed policy priorities included steadfast implementation of the budget, the IMF's Porter said in the statement.

Pakistan also agreed to continue power sector reforms, introduce a proactive monetary policy to tackle inflation, strengthen governance, combat corruption, and improve the social security net.

"The authorities should nonetheless stand ready to take any additional measures necessary to meet program objectives, given the elevated uncertainty in the global economy and financial markets," the statement added. —AFP

Crypto platform Celsius files for US bankruptcy

SAN FRANCISCO: Cryptocurrency investment platform Celsius announced on Wednesday that it had filed for bankruptcy in the US, a month after it froze withdrawals from its platform, in the latest sign of an industry in turmoil.

In its statement, Celsius, which suspended withdrawals in mid-June, said it was seeking to restructure in a way that would maximize value for all stakeholders.

Chinese homebuyers halt mortgage payments on unfinished projects

BEIJING: Chinese homebuyers in dozens of cities have stopped making mortgage payments for unfinished projects, according to data from industry groups, worsening fears of financial contagion in the country's troubled real estate sector.

Authorities launched a crackdown on excessive debt in the property sector in 2020, and giants such as Evergrande and Sunac have since struggled to make payments and renegotiate with creditors, leaving them teetering on the edge of bankruptcy.

In the latest blow, a growing number of homebuyers have refused to pay mortgages if developers do not resume construction on units already sold. As of Wednesday, homebuyers had halted payments for units in at least 100 residential property projects in 50 cities, according to data from research firm China Real Estate Information Corporation (CRIC).

This was up from 28 projects on Monday and 58 on Tuesday, according to a report by analysts at financial firm Jefferies. "The names on the list doubled every day in the past three days," they said.

These include projects that have experienced significant delays and others that have yet to reach their delivery date, the report said, adding that the incident will dampen buyer sentiment and weigh on a recovery in sales.

The housing ministry held emergency meetings with financial regulators and major Chinese banks this week to discuss the mortgage strikes. Bloomberg News reported Thursday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The regulators requested that local authorities and banks notify them of affected developments in their

and said it had \$167 million of cash available to meet urgent needs in the meantime.

Without the freeze on withdrawals, "the acceleration ... would have allowed certain customers—those who were first to act—to be paid in full while leaving others behind to wait," the special committee of the Celsius board of directors was quoted in the statement as saying.

In the United States, Chapter 11 allows a company that is unable to pay its debts to restructure away from its creditors, while continuing its current operations. "This is the right decision for our community and company," said Alex Mashinsky, co-founder and CEO of Celsius.

"I am confident that when we look back at the history of Celsius, we will see this as a defining moment, where acting with resolve and confidence served the community and strengthened the future of the company." Last week, cryptocurrency lending specialist Voyager Digital

also filed for bankruptcy.

Other companies have suspended withdrawals, such as CoinFlex and Babel Finance, due to a lack of cash. Singaporean investment firm Three Arrows Capital is in liquidation. Such companies were attempting to muscle in on banks by lending money and earning interest on deposits, but they are suffering from the sharp decline in cryptocurrencies in a market that is not keen on risky bets.

Before suspending withdrawals, Celsius Network offered interest rates of over 18 percent for savers, but 0.1 percent for borrowers. Celsius was one of the largest players in the sector. It reported having 1.7 million customers in June. Cryptocurrency bitcoin has lost more than half its value since the beginning of the year and is currently trading at just over \$20,000. It was worth nearly \$69,000 at its peak in November 2021. —AFP



Chinese homebuyers pass by next to new residential buildings in Shanghai.

jurisdictions over fears that more buyers may jump on the bandwagon, the report said. If every homebuyer defaulted, non-performing loans will increase by 388 billion yuan (\$58 billion), Jefferies said.

The buyers' actions came after postponed deliveries of pre-sold homes, unclear delivery times and halted construction, Nomura analysts said in a report Thursday. "Pre-sales are the most common way of selling homes in China, so the stakes there are high," it said.

"We are especially concerned about the financial impact of the homebuyers' 'stopping mortgage repayments' movement, as China's property downturn may finally adversely affect onshore financial institutions."

The developments come at a time of slowing growth for China and weak property sales, adding to the risk to stability ahead of the Communist Party's 20th Congress this fall, when President Xi Jinping is expected to be given a third term. —AFP

Philippine central bank hikes rates

MANILA: The Philippine central bank announced a surprise interest rate hike Thursday, raising borrowing costs for the third straight month and warning more could follow as officials try to rein in surging energy and food prices.

The move follows similar increases around the world as war in Ukraine and supply disruptions fan inflation and increase the financial strain on households and businesses. Bank governor Felipe Medalla, who was appointed recently by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, said the monetary board had agreed to raise its key rate by 75 basis points to 3.25 percent, effective immediately.

Overnight deposit and lending facilities were increased by the same amount to 2.75 percent and 3.75 percent respectively. "By taking urgent action, the monetary board aims to anchor inflation expectations further and temper mounting risks to the

inflation outlook," Medalla said.

"In particular, policy action is intended to help manage spillovers from other countries that could potentially disanchor inflation expectations." The central bank, which had been due to review its monetary policy in August, has now raised rates by 125 basis points since May.

Before then, it had held them at historic lows since November 2020 to prop up the economy during the pandemic. But Medalla said a strong rebound in growth this year suggested the economy could withstand tighter monetary policy.

He warned the bank was ready to "take further necessary actions" to curb inflation. Bank of the Philippine Islands lead economist Emilio Neri said he expected another hike next month as US interest rates continued to rise. "This won't necessarily be a drag on growth," Neri said.

"Our economy managed to grow seven percent or more even with a policy rate of four percent." Inflation hit 6.1 percent in June, the highest level in nearly four years as steep oil price hikes pushed up food prices and transport costs. The central bank's target range is 2-4 percent. —AFP

Taiwan's TSMC second-quarter revenue rise 44%

TAIPEI: Taiwanese tech giant TSMC said Thursday its second quarter revenue rose more than 40 percent on continued strong demand for high-performance computing and auto chips. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company operates the world's largest silicon wafer factories and produces some of the most advanced microchips used in everything from smartphones and cars to missiles.

The vast majority of the world's most advanced microchips are made by just two companies—TSMC and Samsung—both of which are running at full capacity to alleviate a global shortage.

The Taiwanese firm dominates more than half of the global foundry market, with clients including Apple and Qualcomm. Revenue in the April-June period rose 43.5 percent

on-year to Tw\$534.14 billion (US\$17.9 billion), it said in a statement, beating forecasts.

TSMC also posted a profit of Tw\$237 billion period, a rise of 76.4 percent on-year. Revenue from high-performance computing (HPC) and automotive rose 13 percent and 14 percent, respectively, while sales from smartphones were up three percent on-quarter.

For the current quarter, officials estimated revenue of US\$19.8-\$20.6 billion, chief financial officer Wendell Huang told an investor conference. Chief executive C.C. Wei added the company expected a few quarters of inventory adjustment likely through the first half of 2023, because of softening demand for some products such as smartphones and personal computers.

"After two years of pandemic-driven stay-home demand, this type of adjustment is reasonable in our view," he said. "Despite ongoing inventory correction, our customers' demand continues to exceed our ability to supply. We expect our capacity to remain tight throughout 2022". —AFP



This handout photo shows an adult elephant being lifted away from a hole, during a rescue operation to recover an infant elephant that had fallen into the hole, in Nakhon Nayok province in central Thailand. — AFP photos

Baby elephant pulled from Thailand manhole in dramatic rescue

A baby elephant was dramatically rescued from a manhole in central Thailand after his mother was sedated to allow the operation to proceed, wildlife officials said. The calf fell into the drainage trough on the outskirts of the Royal Hills golf course in Nakhon Nayok province in the early hours of Wednesday morning. Its distressed mother, believed to belong to an elephant herd travelling through the nearby jungle, stayed with the infant as it was unable to climb out of the steep pit.

The pair were discovered by a passing resident, who quickly alerted wildlife officials and Khao Yai National Park authorities to the pachyderm's plight. Would-be rescuers were initially unable to help the baby elephant due to the presence of its

worried mother, and were forced to tranquilize the older creature.

Unfortunately, the mother elephant then tumbled partially into the hole before being pulled out with the help of a digger and later revived, according to the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plants Conservation. The calf was eventually rescued from the pit and reunited with its mother, with park authorities confirming the pair had safely returned to the jungle. — AFP

This handout photo shows an adult and infant elephant walking together, following a rescue operation to recover the younger elephant after it fell into a hole, in Nakhon Nayok province in central Thailand.



This handout photo shows an infant elephant scrambling to get out of a hole it had fallen into in Nakhon Nayok province in central Thailand.



This handout photo shows an adult elephant with its head in a hole, during a rescue operation to recover an infant elephant that had fallen into the hole, in Nakhon Nayok province in central Thailand.

UK gallery unearths hidden Van Gogh self-portrait

"When we saw the X-ray for the first time of course we were hugely excited," she said. "This is a significant discovery because it adds to what we already know about Van Gogh's life. There is lots to think about with regards to the next steps, but for us it is another little nugget to get us a little bit closer to an incredible artist."

A gallery in Scotland said Thursday it was "thrilled" to announce the discovery of a previously unknown self-portrait of Vincent Van Gogh, with his ear intact, hidden behind another painting. The portrait was found on the back of the canvas of "Head of a Peasant Woman", an 1885 work by the Dutch post-Impressionist, covered by layers of glue and cardboard.

It shows a bearded sitter in a brimmed hat with a neckerchief tied loosely at the neck. It was completed before Van Gogh cut off his left ear in 1888. Visitors to the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh will be able to see it at a forthcoming exhibition, as an X-ray image through a specially designed lightbox.

Longer term, curators are working on safely extracting it from the overlying canvas without damaging the paintings. Lesley Stevenson, senior paintings conservator at the National Galleries, said they were "thrilled to bits" at the find.



A handout picture released by the National Galleries of Scotland shows senior conservator Lesley Stevenson viewing "Head of a Peasant Woman" alongside an X-ray image of a hidden self-portrait of Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh in Edinburgh. — AFP

Cardboard stuck on it

Curators believe the painting, which was only sold after his 1890 death by suicide, is one of a series of experimental self-portraits. Five similar works are displayed at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, painted before he moved to Paris in 1886. Van Gogh, who was unknown and penniless when he died,

often painted on both sides of a canvas in order to save money.

The main painting was gifted to the gallery in 1960 by Edinburgh lawyer Alexander Maitland, and depicts a local woman from a town in the southern Netherlands where the artist lived from 1883 to 1885. The self-portrait is believed to have disappeared from public view in around 1905, when it was deemed the less finished of the two pieces and had cardboard stuck on it before being framed.

The uncovered work is believed to date from the period when Van Gogh first encountered the work of the French impressionists. He later adopted the expressive, colorful style that has made his works among the most famous in the world. The artist suffered from depression, and cut off his ear with a razor shortly before Christmas 1888 after suffering from what the hospital called "acute mania with generalized delirium".

After spending time in an asylum, the 37-year-old Van Gogh shot himself in the chest on July 27, 1890. He was able to walk and find medical help, but nobody could remove the bullet and he died two days later from an untreated infection. According to his brother Theo, his last words were: "The sadness will last forever." — AFP

Tough nut to crack: UK mulls contraceptives for grey squirrels

They have been the scourge of trees and the native red squirrel in Britain since their introduction from the United States in the 1870s. But government scientists are now planning drastic action to cut the number of grey squirrels by lacing their food with an oral contraceptive. Before going that far, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has been conducting trials of special feeding boxes in woodlands of northern England and Wales.

Some 70 percent of the grey squirrel population have used the boxes, which have a weighted gate and keep most other animals out. The chief scientific adviser at the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Gideon Henderson, said the trials had great potential for the non-lethal management of grey squirrel numbers. "It will help red squirrels... expand back into their natural habitats as well as protecting UK woodland and increasing biodiversity," he added. Vanessa Fawcett, of the Red Squirrel Survival Trust, said research into developing an oral contraceptive for grey squirrels was advanced.

"Without effective conservation management, red squirrels could face further local extinctions across the UK." No contraceptive has been used yet in the trials, but APHA researchers said it would be effective on both male and female grey squirrels. There are now 2.7 million grey squirrels in Britain and numbers are increasing compared to just 140,000 of the smaller red squirrels. Greys compete with reds for food and also carry the squirrelpox virus. They are immune but reds are not, and contracting it is almost always fatal. High densities of grey squirrels also threaten the health and survival of young trees, as they strip bark, weakening and killing them. Traditional culls of grey squirrels have proved ineffective as they breed rapidly and their numbers can recover quickly. — AFP

Big CAT scan: London Zoo treats lion with earache

How do you treat an endangered 12-year-old lion with persistent earache? Normally, the answer is: with difficulty. But London Zoo on Monday said they made the process easier by hiring a CAT scanner for Bhanu the lion to find out the cause of his repeated ear infections. The equipment was brought in to prevent the 180-kilogram (28-stone) Asiatic lion having to be sedated and transported off-site for tests.

Senior veterinary officer Taina Strike said the zoo hit upon the intervention as part of a long-term treatment plan for the animal. "We first had to find out what was causing the problem and urgently rule out any worst-case scenarios, such as a tumor or a deep-seated infection, which would show up on a CAT scan immediately," she said. "Bhanu is an important member of the European-wide breeding program for endangered Asiatic lions and deserves the very best care, so we arranged the full VIP treatment; bringing a CAT scanner to a big cat for the first time, so we could see deeper into his ear without him needing to travel."

Bhanu was sedated in his den then taken to the scanner on the back of a flatbed truck. Six members of staff then maneuvered him into position on the scanner. Specialists from around the world dialled in to diagnose the problem, which was found to be a very narrow left ear canal prone to blockages and infections. "Just like your pet cat at home, big cats can naturally get ear infections too, which are normally treated with ear drops," said Strike. While he was under anesthetic, vets gave the big cat's ear a thorough clean before he was deposited back in his den. — AFP



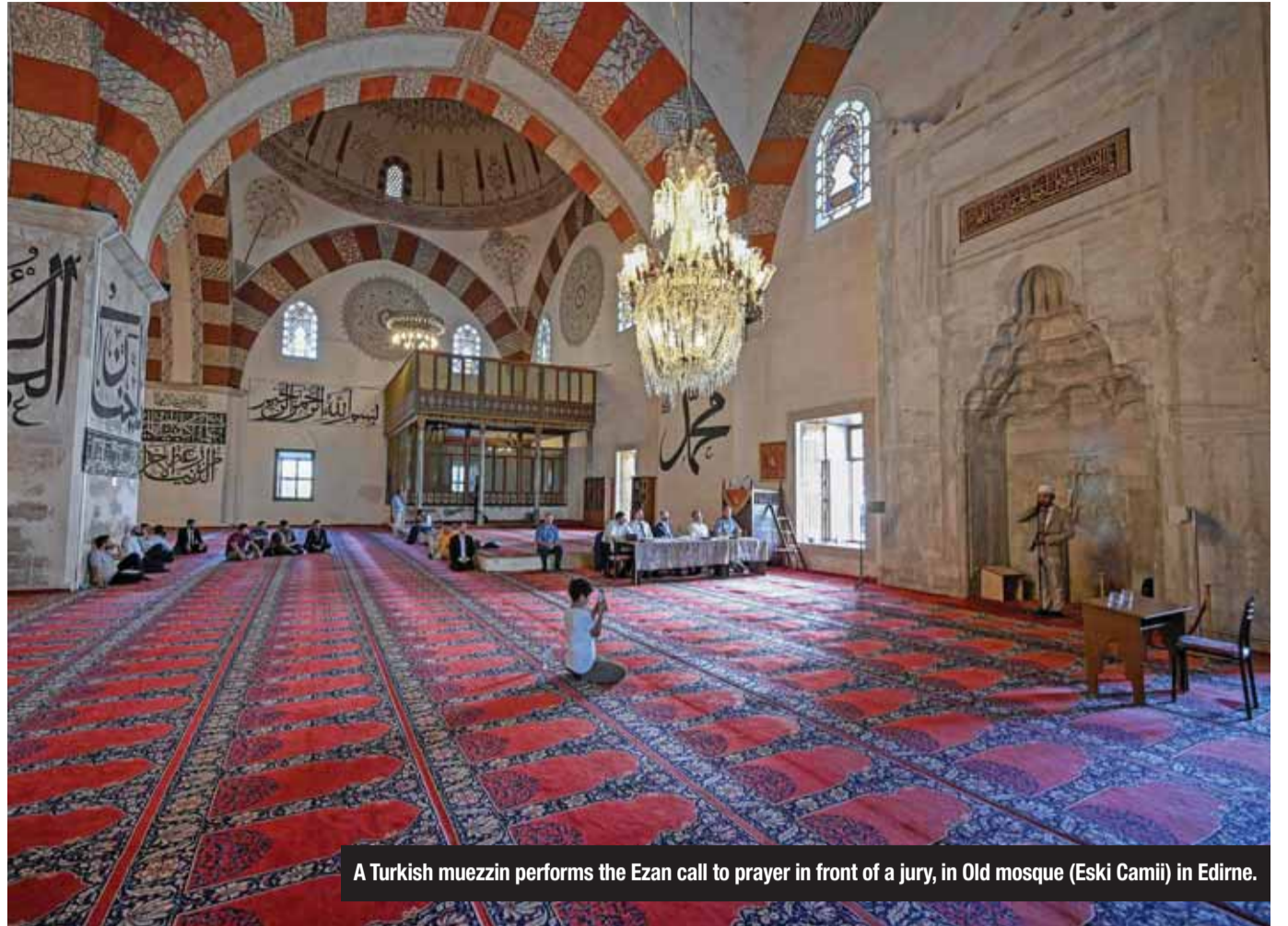
Lifestyle | Features



Participating muezzins wait to perform the Ezan call to prayer in front of a jury, in Old mosque (Eski Camii) in Edirne.— AFP photos



A Turkish muezzin performs the Ezan call to prayer in front of a jury, in Old mosque (Eski Camii) in Edirne.



A Turkish muezzin performs the Ezan call to prayer in front of a jury, in Old mosque (Eski Camii) in Edirne.

Call to prayer merges Turkish politics with art

Cupping his hands to his ears, one of the contestants in an annual competition for Turkey's most melodious religious voice leans closer to the microphone to intone a tender call to prayer. "Allahu akbar" ("God is greatest"), he sings in a slow, cascading voice, elbows sticking out at right angles, his words echoing off the golden-tinged stones of the majestic Eski Camii mosque in the city of Edirne. Adorned with striking Arabic calligraphy and completed in 1414, when the northwestern city was the capital of the Ottoman Empire, the mosque is hosting the latest round of the competition, in which five muezzins—the clerics who issue the ezan (adhan in Arabic) call to prayer from minarets five times a day—are competing for a place in the final on August 17.

Facing the contestants, a panel of five judges take studious notes. "I started at the age of 10, during summer school at the mosque," said the eventual winner, Abdullah Omer Erdogan. Sporting an impeccable beard, the 25-year-old takes extraordinary precautions to protect his voice. He shuns the cold, drinks only lukewarm water, and even avoids certain positions in his sleep so as not to strain his vocal cords. His efforts could translate into national fame.

Turkish muezzins—one of whom recited the ezan over Edirne's old town—swept the top two spots in a televised competition organised in Saudi Arabia in April. Turkish



A Turkish muezzin performs the Ezan call to prayer in front of a jury, inside Old mosque (Eski Camii) in Edirne.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is devoutly religious and is facing a difficult election next year, recorded a congratulatory message for the winners the next day. "May Allah be with you," said Erdogan, whose two-decade rule has seen Turkey build nearly 15,000 mosques. One appeared opposite a statue of the secular Turkish state's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on Istanbul's Taksim Square, the crucible of the polarised and occasionally restless country's politics.

'We saved the country'

The Taksim mosque's construction crushed the spirits of Erdogan's liberal

opponents. The vast square, long a symbol of struggle between Turkey's secular and religious forces, gave birth to protests in 2013, the violent suppression of which is seen by some as the genesis of Erdogan's more authoritarian streak. His rise to power as prime minister in 2003 was built on his defence of Turkey's religious Muslims, whose rights had been squeezed in the constitutionally secular state.

The Turkish leader has repaid that trust by building the country's largest mosque on a hill overlooking the Bosphorus Strait and converting the former Hagia Sophia church from a muse-



Turkish muezzin Abdullah Omer Erdogan, winner of the Ezan call to prayer contest, poses inside Old mosque (Eski Camii).

um into a mosque in 2020. In turn, clerics from nearly 90,000 mosques responded to Erdogan's appeals—delivered via FaceTime on a mobile phone—and called on the faithful to block a military coup attempt in July 2016.

Erdogan's supporters thronged the streets and stared down the coup leaders, who were jailed during a wave of political repression that followed in which thousands were put behind bars for life. "We called the people out on the streets and saved the country," said Edirne mufti Alettin Bozkurt. "That night, we saw the power of the ezan."

'Just like church bells'

Erdogan is making religion a recurring theme of his speeches as he nears an election that polls show he might lose because of Turkey's mounting economic problems. He has accused his secular opponents of trying to "silence the ezan"—a charge that resonates with Islamic conservatives who form the base of his political support.

There is no call to suppress religion on the platform of any political party. But Erol Koymen, a post-doctoral fellow who studies Turkish and Ottoman social theory and music at the University of Chicago, said secular voters are growing increasingly anxious.

"I think there is a widespread sense among secularists that the volume of the ezan has increased as part of the ruling regime's efforts to transform the Turkish public sphere since the coup attempt," said Koymen. "This, in turn, has produced an increasing distaste for the ezan among secularists." Citing health concerns, Turkey's increasingly powerful directorate of religious affairs asked mosques in 2017 to limit their ezans to 80 decibels—roughly the equivalent of an alarm clock. At the Old Mosque in Edirne, mufti Bozkurt was offended that some want to dial down the ezan. "The ezan is a legal right!" he exclaimed. "Just as Christians can easily hear church bells, all Muslims should be able to hear the call to prayer."—AFP



In this file photo the Netflix logo is seen on top of their office building in Hollywood, California.—AFP

Netflix partners with Microsoft to offer cheaper streaming plan

Netflix will work with Microsoft to launch a cheaper subscription plan that includes advertisements, the firms said Wednesday, as the streaming giant fights to attract customers. Netflix opted to develop the lower-cost offering after a disappointing first quarter in which it lost subscribers for the first time in a decade, and after years of resistance against the very idea of running ads.

The ad-supported subscription will be in addition to the three options already available, the cheapest being \$10 per month in the United States. Microsoft will be responsible for designing and managing the platform for advertisers who want to serve ads to Netflix users. "It's very early days and we have much to work through," Greg Peters, Netflix's chief operating officer, said in a statement.

Microsoft added that advertisers "will have access to the Netflix audience and premium connected TV inventory." Adding advertising means Netflix will expose itself to some thorny issues, including debates around consumers' personal data being harvested on a massive scale to target them with more lucrative, personalized pitches.—AFP

Kevin Spacey pleads not guilty to sexual assault in UK

Hollywood star Kevin Spacey on Thursday pleaded not guilty at London's Old Bailey court to four charges of sexual assault against three men. The 62-year-old star was wearing a blue suit and blue tie as he stood in the dock at the UK's top criminal court. He spoke to confirm his name and age before pleading not guilty to four charges of sexual assault and one count of causing a person to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent.

The Crown Prosecution Service, which is responsible for bringing prosecutions in England and Wales, said in May that it had authorized charges against Spacey. A two-time Oscar winner for "The Usual Suspects" and "American Beauty", he was formally charged by police in the British capital the following month and voluntarily appeared in court within days.

At a hearing last month, Spacey's lawyer Patrick Gibbs told the court his client "strenuously denies any and all criminality in this case". "He needs to answer these charges if he is to proceed with his life," Gibbs added at the time. The deputy chief magistrate at the initial hearing was told that the actor lives in the United States, where he has family and a nine-year-old dog.

The magistrate formally withdrew an arrest warrant that had been issued two weeks prior after learning Spacey had travelled to London to appear in person. Reporting restrictions prevent the media going into detail about the charges to avoid prejudicing a jury at any trial.

'Prove my innocence'

The first two charges of sexual assault date from March 2005 in London and concern the same man, who is now in his 40s. The third is alleged to have happened in London in August 2008 against a man who is now in his 30s. Spacey has also

been charged "with causing a person to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent" against the man in his 30s.

The fourth sexual assault is alleged to have occurred in Gloucestershire, western England, in April 2013 against a third man, who is also now in his 30s. None of the alleged victims can be identified under English law. After the prosecutors' May announcement, Spacey said he was "disappointed" with the decision. "I will voluntarily appear in the UK as soon as can be arranged and defend myself against these charges, which I am confident will prove my innocence."

Spacey was artistic director of The Old Vic theatre in London between 2004 and 2015. Allegations against him emerged in the wake of the #MeToo movement that saw numerous claims of sexual assault and harassment in the movie industry.

That prompted an investigation by London's Metropolitan Police and a review by The Old Vic of his time in charge there. Claims against Spacey in 2017 led to the end of his involvement in the filming of the final season of the Netflix drama "House of Cards". He was also dropped from a Gore Vidal biopic on the TV streaming network and as the industrialist J. Paul Getty in "All the Money in the World".—AFP



US actor Kevin Spacey arrives to the Old Bailey in London to appear in court over four counts of sexual assault.—AFP



(From left) Rob Minkoff, Cathy Shim, Kylie Kuioka, George Takei and Mark Koetsier attend the 'Paws of Fury' Family Day at Paramount Pictures Studios in Los Angeles, California.—AFP

Pet hate: Dogs and cats confront division in 'Paws of Fury'

Dogs and cats must put their rivalry aside to save a village—and offer audiences a lesson in inclusion and diversity—in the new animated film "Paws of Fury: The Legend of Hank." The film, out in US theaters on Friday, features a stellar voice cast including Samuel L Jackson, Ricky Gervais, Michael Cera, George Takei, Mel Brooks and Michelle Yeoh. It tells the story of Hank (Cera), an underestimated beagle who dreams of becoming a samurai, but ends up in a small village dominated by cats.

The lonely dog—who makes up for a lack of martial arts training with his sheer persistence—must learn to win the hearts of the cats of Kakamucho, who distrust him for being different. The film draws inspiration from Brooks' 1974 race satire "Blazing Saddles," using humor to address social prejudice. "I think that's a message that is always, always relevant and always needed," Cera told AFP.

"Art is a way to bring those messages across in a way that you feel, and not just telling people what to think.... going on this journey with this character, and seeing what he goes through and experiencing the emotions." "Especially for little children who can really digest that and extend their

empathy," he added. Ika Chu, voiced by Gervais, is the story's villain—a Somali cat seeking to destroy the village for his own greed, and trying to sow prejudice to further his evil plan. "What kind of a world do we live in, where good and upright citizens can't be counted on to kill someone just because they look different?" he purrs.

'Divided'

Takei, who voices Ohga—the villain's right-hand cat—said the film teaches that "differences might be an asset... filling out the weakness in your society." The 85-year-old actor, known for his political and social activism, told AFP the film's "good message" comes at a key time. "We live in a fractured society today. Every headline in the paper or every breaking news on TV, it is a divided society that we live in," he said.

For Takei, the project's timing is also significant because family audiences have not had many chances to laugh together in movie theaters since Covid-19 arrived. Family animation, more than any other genre, has suffered in theaters during the pandemic, although the recent success of "Minions: The Rise of Gru" could signal a change.

"I think it's so exciting and I can't wait to go see a movie in the theater myself," added Cera, who said he has recently recovered from COVID-19. "I missed that experience. And I think I think everybody does. "I'm excited that on the other side of that now, we can we can get that back again."—AFP



Picture shows Poul Egedes House (right), housing the KOKS restaurant of double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef Poul Andrias Ziska in Ilimanaq, Greenland.— AFP photos

REMOTE REPAST: DINING AT THE WORLD'S NORTHERNMOST MICHELIN RESTAURANT

You can only get there by boat or helicopter, but Michelin-starred chef Poul Andrias Ziska hopes his restaurant in remote Greenland, far above the Arctic Circle, is worth the journey. The 30-year-old chef relocated his restaurant KOKS from the Faroe Islands in mid-June, leaving behind his relatively accessible address for Ilimanaq, a hamlet of 50 inhabitants hidden behind icebergs

second in 2019, and the title of the world's most isolated Michelin restaurant. He plans to return there for a permanent installation, but explains he had always wanted to stretch his gastronomical legs in another territory in the far north, like Iceland, Greenland or even Svalbard. He finally chose Ilimanaq, located an hour's boat trip from Ilulissat, the third-largest town in Greenland and famous for its

curated desserts, everything is bursting with flavour." While whale meat is a staple food in Greenland and Ziska's native Faroe Islands, whaling is banned in most of the world and activists have called for an end to the practice.

An unlikely locale for a gourmet restaurant, Ilimanaq-Greenlandic for "place of hope"-is home to a small community living in picturesque wooden houses, next to hiking trails and more fittingly a luxury hotel, making it an ideal stopover for wealthy tourists seeking to explore new frontiers. For Ziska, the customers in Greenland are different.

"There are a lot of people for which the number one priority is to visit Greenland and then they come to our restaurant," he says. "In the Faroe Islands we had mainly people interested in coming and eating at our restaurant and then obviously also



Greenlandic halibut with a horseradish and dill sauce, a creation by double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef Poul Andrias Ziska, is pictured at the KOKS restaurant in Ilimanaq, Greenland.



Muskox broth, a creation by double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef Poul Andrias Ziska, is pictured.



Picture taken shows Poul Egedes House, housing the KOKS restaurant of double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef Poul Andrias Ziska in Ilimanaq, Greenland.

on the 69th parallel north.

Housed in a narrow black wooden house, one of the oldest in Greenland, the restaurant can only accommodate about 20 people per service, and experiments with local produce, including whale and seaweed, with fresh produce almost impossible to find in the harsh climate. "We try to focus on as much Greenlandic products as possible, so everything from Greenland halibut to snow crabs to musk ox to Ptarmigan, different herbs and different berries," the tousled-haired, bearded chef tells AFP.

The young chef previously ran KOKS at home in the remote Faroe Islands, where he won his first star in 2017, his

hugue glacier.

Local products

"We just found it more suitable, more fun to do something completely different before we move back in our permanent restaurant," he tells AFP from his kitchen, set up in a trailer outside the house with the dining area. With 20 courses, the extensive tasting menu will delight the taste buds for some 2,100 kroner (\$280), excluding wine and drinks.

"The menu is exquisite and sends you to the far north and back," Devid Gualandris, a charmed visitor, tells AFP. "From the whale bites to the wines, from the freshly caught fish and shellfish to the



Scallops and caviar, a creation by double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef Poul Andrias Ziska, is pictured.



Bog Labrador tea with milk and lovage parfait, a creation by double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef Poul Andrias Ziska, is pictured.

visiting the Faroe Islands," the chef explains.

In addition to the adventurers who have already been lured by the Arctic landscape, the Greenlandic Tourist Board hopes the restaurant will also help attract gourmet travelers. "The unique combination of high-level gastronomy, the inherent sustainability of the North Atlantic cuisine and the characteristic nature and resources of the Disko Bay, speaks to all our senses," Visit Greenland's director, Hjortur Smarason, said when announcing the arrival of KOKS.

A long-overlooked destination, Greenland-an Arctic island territory nine times the size of the UK-welcomed more

than 100,000 tourists in 2019, nearly double its population, before Covid cut the momentum. Smarason said the presence of KOKS "is exactly what we strive for in our effort to reach a certain distinguished kind of guests".—AFP



Double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef of KOKS restaurant Poul Andrias Ziska prepares food at the kitchen of the restaurant housed in the Poul Egedes House in Ilimanaq, Greenland.



KOKS chefs prepare food at the kitchen of the restaurant housed in the Poul Egedes House in Ilimanaq, Greenland.



Double-Michelin-starred Faroese chef of KOKS restaurant Poul Andrias Ziska is photographed outside the restaurant housed in the Poul Egedes House in Ilimanaq, Greenland.



Accommodations at the Ilimanaq Lodge, the current home of the KOKS restaurant, are seen in Ilimanaq, Greenland, where guests can watch whales and floating icebergs in the Disko Bay.

Sports

Djokovic inaugurates courts at controversial Bosnia 'pyramids'

A message of peace, sport, future and health

VISOKO: Recently-crowned Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic on Wednesday inaugurated tennis courts at a 'pyramid park' in Bosnia that he regularly visits to recharge his batteries. The tennis star, known for his new-age spiritual interests, is fond of the hill town of Visoko, where thousands flock every year to what some believe are an ancient man-made pyramid complex with healing powers—a claim rejected by scientists.

The 35-year-old Serb, who claimed his 21st Grand Slam title on Sunday, visited the site for the first time in 2020 and called it a "paradise on earth". He has returned to the "Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun" complex at least four times, either alone or with his family, always to be warmly welcomed by the unusual site's founder Semir Osmanagic.

According to Osmanagic, a Bosnian businessman and a self-styled archaeologist, the idea of building a "regional training centre" with two courts was born during Djokovic's last visit in March. "This is a special day for Visoko, for Bosnia, for the whole region, for tennis, for sport", Djokovic said after arriving at the new courts. "The message of this day is peace, sport, future and health", he added while several hundred fans seated near a dense forest welcomed him with a big applause.

Unusual show

The Serbian star played exhibition matches with Croatian Ivan Dodig, Aljaz Bedene of Slovenia and

Bosnian tennis player Aldin Setkic. Looking very relaxed, Djokovic staged an unusual show, making the audience laugh by pretending to argue with the referees or trying to "bribe" them.

Ancient civilisation aficionado Osmanagic has claimed for the past 20 years that he has discovered not one, but several pyramids built by a mysterious civilization near Visoko. For the past few years his teams have been also clearing underground tunnels near the "Pyramid of the Sun" and he boasts of its beneficial effects on the health of visitors. On arrival, Djokovic visited the new courts and went for a walk into a pine forest, which is a part of the park, with his host.

Djokovic has meditated at the site and during each visit walked kilometers of "energy" tunnels, which are, according to archaeologists, an ancient gold mine. "Here, we simply feel the energy, each in its own way. For me, this is one of the most energetically powerful places on the planet, of which I have seen many," Djokovic told reporters after the exhibition matches. "I simply feel that every moment spent here fills me with energy and gives me strength for future challenges in tennis and in life," he added. Ever since Djokovic became a regular, the number of visitors from all over former Yugoslavia has multiplied.

Both Djokovic and his unusual host do not miss the opportunity to underline values of peace, sharply contrasting the constant combative and nationalist narrative pushed by political leaders of



VISOKO: Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic (left), Aljaz Bedene from Slovenia (2nd left), Ivan Dodig from Croatia (2nd right) and Bosnian player Aldin Setkic pose with their gifts after an exhibition match, organized to mark the opening of a tennis court at the 'Archaeological park of the Bosnian pyramid'. —AFP

the region devastated in the 1990s wars. And Djokovic's faith in Visoko has given the locals a reciprocal faith in him. "This man who is so rich that he can spend a vacation on Mars comes here,"

a souvenir seller near the entrance to the tunnels told AFP. "He chose Visoko which nobody knew. That is proof enough that there is something there. He cannot be bought." —AFP

Ireland to keep it clean, avoid cards in Test

WELLINGTON: Ireland coach Andy Farrell said Thursday his team will play by the rules in their series-deciding Test against New Zealand to avoid the red and yellow cards that mark modern rugby. Debate has raged over Test referees' use of cards to improve player safety under a World Rugby framework designed to protect the head.

In New Zealand's 23-12 defeat to Ireland in Dunedin last Saturday, the hosts lost two players to yellow cards and replacement prop Angus Ta'avao to a red for a head clash with Garry Ringrose. The first-half incident appeared accidental but contravened new expectations for defenders to lower their body position. All Blacks coach Ian Foster said Sunday that international rugby risked becoming a "card festival" — echoing the views of his England counterpart Eddie Jones, who said more common sense was needed from match officials.

Farrell did not comment when asked Thursday if New Zealand was struggling to grasp what is required, technique-wise, to keep 15 players on the field — but said Ireland had made it a key focus. Ranked second in the world, Ireland are among the least-carded international teams and are on the way to winning 13 of their last 15 Tests. "It's up to me to make sure our guys understand what the rules are and whether you agree with them or not, you've got to adhere by them," Farrell said.

"I think we can debate after this series is over... but the rules are, for us now, clear. "We're not a side that really plays on the edge. Some people love playing on the edge, and putting the referees under pressure. We tend to be a side that likes to have a low penalty count, so therefore we can try and dominate territory in that way." Foster remained adamant Thursday that World Rugby needs to address its instructions to match officials, saying rugby's spectacle is being impacted negatively.

"It's well documented that (cards) are dominating the game," Foster said. "It's getting that balance. You've got the player welfare side of it, and that argument's strong. And then you get the fan-centric side of it, and that argument's strong. "Then you get the people who are actually playing the game, who prepare all week and then suddenly that gets disrupted. "There's got to be a wider discuss on on where the game is going and do we want to keep seeing contests that are a little bit lopsided in numbers?" —AFP

Arab Tennis Federation Board of Directors meet

By Abellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait will host the meetings of the Arab Tennis Federation Board of Directors and General Assembly on Saturday and Sunday. The General Assembly will be held on Sunday. Representatives from 18 Arab Tennis Federations — Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Palestine and Kuwait will attend the meeting.

KTF Secretary General Faleh Al-Otaibi said the general assembly will include the election of new board of directors for the next term. He said that all efforts were exerted to ensure the success of the ATF activities at the headquarters in Kuwait. Al-Otaibi thanked the Public Authority for Sports for its continued support.

Hurdles king Warholm going into worlds at 100% after injury

EUGENE: Norwegian hurdles king Karsten Warholm insisted Wednesday he was going to bring everything he could to the table as he battles back from injury in his quest for a third world championship gold. Warholm laid down a performance that is widely considered one of the greatest Olympic track performances of all time when he smashed the 29-year-old world record to win the 400m hurdles at the Tokyo Games in a time of 45.94sec.

But the 26-year-old pulled up injured at the Diamond League meet in Rabat in early June with a "muscle fibre tear" in a hamstring, something he dubbed a "personal disaster" when talking to reporters Wednesday ahead of the world championships in Eugene, Oregon. "The last five to six weeks have been close to hell," said Warholm, who has been receiving treatment in Germany, combining work in the swimming pool with physiotherapy in his hope of being fit for Eugene.

Netherlands, Sweden survive scares to close on Euro 2022 quarters

SHEFFIELD: Holders the Netherlands held off a stirring fightback by Portugal to close in on a place in the Euro 2022 quarter-finals with a 3-2 win over Portugal, while Sweden struck late to beat Switzerland 2-1 on Wednesday. The Dutch were without star striker Vivianne Miedema due to a positive case for coronavirus, but got off to a flying start in Leigh as Damaris Egurrola and Stefanie van der Gragt struck inside the first 16 minutes.

Portugal would not even be at the tournament had it not been for Russia's expulsion due to the invasion of Ukraine, but for the second time in as many games they bounced back from a 2-0 deficit. Carole Costa's penalty reduced the arrears before half-time and Diana Silva's thumping header leveled two minutes into the second half. The Netherlands thought they had immediately struck back when Jill Roord's goal was ruled out by a VAR check for offside.

But Mark Parsons' side did dig themselves out of trouble just after the hour mark when Danielle Van de Donk's stunning strike from outside the box arrowed into the top corner. Victory takes the Netherlands top of Group C, level on four points with the Swedes, with both sides just needing a point from their final group game to progress. Ranked second in the world, Sweden were among the pre-tournament favorites but have so far struggled to hit top gear in England.

After a 1-1 draw to open their campaign against the Netherlands, the Olympic silver medalists were expected to roll over a Swiss side ranked 20th in the world. Switzerland's preparations had also been

Sterling becomes first signing of Chelsea's new era

LONDON: Raheem Sterling became Chelsea's first signing since Todd Boehly's consortium bought the club on Wednesday, ending his successful seven-year spell at Manchester City. The 27-year-old forward signed a five year contract for a fee reported to be £50 million (\$59 million). "England star Raheem Sterling has joined Chelsea from Manchester City on a five-year contract," said Chelsea in a statement. Sterling had pre-empted his move earlier on Wednesday by posting a good-

"It's been really challenging, you get this thing and you don't know how each day will go." But his hopes remain high, however, the Norwegian saying: "We did some testing coming into this. "I feel pretty safe to say that now we're going in there, we're going in at 100%. "There's no such thing as going into a championships and feeling just OK. I feel good to go and when I say good to go, that always means 100%."

A lack of competitive outings was neither here nor there, Warholm said, reiterating that his first competitive outing in 2021 had seen him bag gold in a world record in Tokyo. "Of course, you want to run some races to get some confidence, but on the other hand confidence is not my problem," he said. "It's going to be challenging in the sense of I don't know what I can bring to the table, but I know for sure that all training until the injury happened was very good. "It's not the ideal way to go into a championships obviously."

Warholm added that his event, a lung-busting effort to clear 10 hurdles over one lap that demands technical mastery and physical prowess, was not for the faint-hearted. "This is probably the hardest task I'll ever take on in this part of my career," he acknowledged. "When you run you can't compen-



Norway's Karsten Warholm

sate with anything, the 400m hurdles is 100%, there's no compensating. I need to feel 100% here and I think I am, but time will show, I guess."

Warholm will face stiff competition from the likes of American Rai Benjamin and Brazilian Alison dos Santos. "They're not going to give me any slack," he said with a wry smile. "The level is very high at the moment, they're running really fast times now. "Hopefully I can come back in the mix and I'm really looking forward to it. This is what I love to do, I'm a very competitive person. "If I'm on the line I want to be in the competition and be in the fight." —AFP



SHEFFIELD: Switzerland's defender Rachel Rinast (left) vies with Sweden's defender Hanna Glas during the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 Group C football match between Sweden and Switzerland at Bramall Lane in Sheffield, northern England on July 13, 2022. —AFP

rocked by a sickness bug in the camp that forced them to cancel training on Monday. But they frustrated Peter Gerhardtsson's women for 53 minutes at Bramall Lane before Barcelona's Fridolina Rolfo finished off an excellent team move. Switzerland hit back within two minutes through a fine finish by Paris Saint-Germain's Ramona Bachmann.

Gerhardtsson was forced to turn to his bench for inspiration and it was one of his subs, Hanna

Bennison, who scored the winner, with her first international goal 11 minutes from time. "There are many things we can do better but right now I'm just very happy that we won the match and are in a good position to take us beyond the group stage," said Gerhardtsson. Switzerland and Portugal now need to win in the final games of Group C on Sunday to have any chance of progressing to the last eight. —AFP

bye message on social media saying he left City as a "man" having arrived from Liverpool as a 20-year-old.

However, once the signing became official Sterling—who is with Chelsea on their pre-season tour of the United States—turned his attention to what he hopes to achieve under Thomas Tuchel. "I've obviously achieved a lot in my career so far, but there is still so much more to achieve and I'm really looking forward to doing that in a Chelsea shirt, under Thomas's management," said Sterling.

"London is my home and where it all started for me, and it's amazing I now have the opportunity to play in front of friends and family week in, week out at Stamford Bridge." Sterling, capped 77 times by England, won four Premier League titles among nine major trophies since joining City from

Liverpool in 2015. A key player in the early years of Pep Guardiola's reign at City, Sterling scored 131 goals in 337 appearances for the English champions.

However, his regular place in the starting line-up at City came increasingly under threat from the signing of Jack Grealish for a Premier League record £100 million last year, plus the emergence of Phil Foden from the club's academy. Sterling will reportedly be joined at Stamford Bridge for the new season by Napoli defender Kalidou Koulibaly. The Telegraph reported a £34 million deal has been agreed between the clubs for the 31-year-old centre-back. Chelsea were in need of defensive reinforcements after Antonio Rudiger and Andreas Christensen left as free agents to join Real Madrid and Barcelona respectively. —AFP

Sports

Bangladesh sweep to ODI series win; West Indies batting 'didn't show up'

Tourists extend ODI dominance of their present foes

PROVIDENCE: Bangladesh's array of spin bowling talent again proved too much for the West Indies batting line-up to handle with the visitors completing a comprehensive series-clinching nine-wicket victory in the second One-Day International of a three-match series at the Guyana National Stadium on Wednesday.

Beaten by six wickets in the first match at the same venue on Sunday, the home batsmen were even more inept in being dismissed for 108 off 35 overs. Having been swept 2-0 in both the preceding Test and T20 International series, the tourists extended the ODI dominance of their present foes in reaching the modest target with almost 30 overs to spare.

It was their 10th consecutive ODI victory over the West Indies and also ensures they remain unbeaten in ODI series against the Caribbean side since they lost the corresponding duel in the region in 2014. Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz led the rout with figures of four for 29 while left-arm slow bowler Nasum Ahmed claimed three for 19 and the 'Man of the Match' award as the home side's batsmen once again appeared all at sea on a pitch which again offered considerable assistance to the spinners.

Tamim Iqbal then led the comfortable pursuit of such a modest target, sealing victory and reaching a 53rd ODI half-century with his seventh boundary.

"We really wanted to win this series very badly after losing in the Tests and T20 Internationals," said Tamim in reflecting on a performance which gave Bangladesh at fifth straight ODI series win. "We know this is the format we are strongest in and it was important to show that confidence after the earlier disappointments."

Following their struggles in the rain-affected first match, West Indies tried to build a more stable platform after predictably being put in to bat. However the dismissal of Kyle Mayers by the spin of Mosaddek Hossain after an opening stand of 27 in the 11th over triggered the slide which saw them crashing to 86 for nine in the 31st over. An unbeaten 25 by all-rounder Keemo Paul and a last-wicket stand of 22 with fellow-Guyanese Gudakesh Motie at least took the West Indies past the 100-run mark.

Motie was the lone-wicket taker in the Bangladesh reply, dismissing Najmul Hossain Shanto for 20 to end an opening stand of 48 with Tamim. Liton Das' unbeaten 32 alongside his skipper ensured the romp to victory was completed in double-quick time. "We didn't show up as a batting unit today," was the frank assessment of West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran, who fell to Nasum for a first-ball 'duck'. "It is quite frustrating our batting efforts of late in ODI cricket and we need to come together quickly to fix this situation." —AFP



PROVIDENCE: Akeal Hosein (left) of West Indies is run out by Quazi Nurul Hasan Sohan of Bangladesh during the 2nd ODI match between West Indies and Bangladesh at Guyana National Stadium in Providence, Guyana, on July 13, 2022. —AFP

Spin vs spin as Lanka take on Pakistan in Test opener

GALLE: Dimuth Karunaratne's Sri Lanka will be looking to build on their winning momentum at Galle as the hosts take on Pakistan in a likely spin battle in the opening Test starting Saturday. Cricket has remained a welcome distraction for Sri Lankans around the island nation's political unrest and unprecedented economic crisis with the sport providing some smiles.

Sri Lanka head into the Pakistan series after two contrasting results in Galle where they first lost to Australia on a vicious turner and then bounced back to hammer the tourists on Monday. Former Pakistan captain Aamir Sohail said the touring batsmen will have to overcome their weakness against left-arm spin to succeed in the two-match series.

"Both the teams have grown up on spin wickets and have a hang of these types of pitches," Sohail, a left-hand batsman who played a key part in Pakistan's 1992 World Cup triumph, told AFP. "But I believe Pakistan will have to work hard if they have to make an impact and win this series. "We historically know that Pakistani players have a weakness against left-arm spinners, so they have to tackle it. So they should prepare well and

batsmen should take responsibility."

Sohail's analysis comes after debutant left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya returned a match haul of 12 wickets to hand Australia a thumping defeat by an innings and 39 runs in the final match. Jayasuriya, 30, was one of the three Sri Lankan players including mystery spinner Maheesh Theekshana and all-rounder Kamindu Mendis to get a first Test cap in the previous match after the team suffered a Covid outbreak. Kamindu also made a mark in the series-leveling win with his gritty 61 in a 133-run stand with Dinesh Chandimal, who hit his maiden Test double century - 206 not out.

Advantage Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka named an 18-member squad for the two matches Thursday with Pathum Nissanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Jeffrey Vandersay and Asitha Fernando back in the team after recovering from COVID. The visitors, led by Babar Azam, have bolstered their spin attack by giving veteran leg-spinner Yasir Shah a comeback into the Test team. Babar himself has been in roaring form with the bat and recently hit 196 against Australia in the team's home series, which they ended up losing 1-0 in March.

Openers Abdullah Shafique and Imam-ul-Haq have also been among the runs and Sohail insists the batting is not a one-man army. "Last series Imam-ul-Haq was very consistent, Abdullah Shafique showed his ability. There is Rizwan and he has responded well and there is Azhar Ali," said Sohail. "So I will not say there is over reliance (on Babar), but because Babar has become such a big name,



GALLE: Sri Lanka's captain Dimuth Karunaratne takes a selfie with fans after winning the second cricket Test match against Australia at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle. —AFP

the expectations have grown bigger that he does something special in every match."

Karunaratne admitted Pakistan will be tougher opposition than Australia in the two Tests but believes playing in Galle for the third straight time will be an advantage for the hosts. "Pakistan is a strong side. (But) playing three games in Galle is good for a team. We know how conditions are in the last few games," said Karunaratne. "Pakistan don't have that opportunity. Big advantage for us. We need to turn that in our favor." —AFP

United manager urges team to 'use initiative'

MELBOURNE: Manchester United captain Harry Maguire should be available to face Melbourne Victory after missing their 4-0 thumping of Liverpool, manager Erik ten Hag said Thursday while urging his team to use their initiative. The England defender was a conspicuous absence in the first game of the Red Devils' pre-season tour in Bangkok on Tuesday, watching from the sidelines after a knock in training. In his place, Raphael Varane, Victor Lindelof, Eric Bailly and Alex Telles all got time in central defense instead.

But Ten Hag, who took over in May after finishing a successful spell at Ajax, said Maguire should play at least 45 minutes in front of expected bumper crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. "He is tomorrow available," said Ten Hag, whose side also face Crystal Palace and Aston Villa in Australia. "We will see (how long for). I think he can play half a game." United head into Friday's match with no fresh injury concerns reported.

While victory against Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool got the Dutchman off to a winning start, Ten Hag faces a huge challenge to rebuild the Old Trafford club, who have not won a trophy since 2017. Whether Cristiano Ronaldo will be part of those plans remains to be seen. The Portuguese superstar has skipped the trip to Australia, disappointing fans, with reports that he wants to leave after United's failure to qualify for the Champions League. Ten Hag insisted this week he was "not for sale" and said on Thursday "nothing has changed".

So far, Feyenoord full-back Tyrell Malacia is his only signing, although United have been heavily linked to former Tottenham midfielder Christian Eriksen, Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong and Ajax defender



BANGKOK: Manchester United's English defender Harry Maguire (top) rests with a refreshment during a training session at Rajamangala National Stadium in Bangkok. —AFP

Lisandro Martinez. Ten Hag had no news on them, but pointed to a crop of youngsters, like Ethan Laird, Hannibal and Alejandro Garnacho, "with huge potential". "Now it's about getting the potential out of them," he said, with all three no doubt eager to get an opportunity on Friday.

Take the initiative

Despite missing Ronaldo, United showed encouraging signs in Thailand, with a positive mentality clinical finishing. Ten Hag said that's the way he wants his team to play. "From every area of the team, I want productivity. That's the most important thing, that players take the initiative on and off the ball, in offense and

defense," he said. "We want to press, play proactive football, that has to be the intention."

(Melbourne Victory) are a different opposition (to Liverpool), so we need a different approach," he added. "I think they play at a good level so we're looking forward to this game. It will be a good test." His team could come face-to-face with former Portugal and United winger Nani, who signed for Victory this week in one of the A-League's biggest coups in years. The 35-year-old, who spent eight years at Old Trafford, may make his debut against his old club. "I would like to, I don't know," he said. "I just arrived in the country, and it's a long flight, so there are lots of things to do." —AFP

Pakistan's Sohail says big bucks 'good for cricket'

GALLE: Former Pakistan captain and match-fixing witness Aamir Sohail welcomes the deluge of legitimate money into cricket that has seen players make millions in tournaments, saying it reduces temptation for corruption. Sohail's playing heyday came between 1990 and 2000, far too early to benefit from the T20 revolution begun by the Indian Premier League. But the 55-year-old, who was a whistleblower-a term he dislikes-in Pakistan's 1990s match-fixing controversy, told AFP the big bucks are good for the sport. "It's

good that players are getting good money nowadays," said Sohail, who played 47 Tests and 156 one-day internationals.

"Temptations are there but of late we haven't had any news of wrongdoing. "So if things are under control and cricketers are getting legitimate money, I think that's very good for the game." Former Pakistan captain Salim Malik was banned for life for match-fixing and pace bowler Ata-ur-Rehman for perjury after the country's cricket board set up a judicial commission to investigate revelations by several players, including Sohail, of match-fixing.

Sohail, who is in Sri Lanka as a TV commentator and will call the two Tests starting Saturday involving Pakistan, added current players should not be complaining about too much cricket. "The contemporary cricketer, if he is aspiring to play top level of the game then he should be prepared for its demands," said Sohail, a left-handed opener who was key in Pakistan's

1992 50-over World Cup triumph. "Your level of fitness and the hunger should match up to the level of playing for your country."

He lauded Pakistan skipper Babar Azam for showing the way to the countries new generation with his work ethic and prolific run-scoring. "Babar has proved himself with his performance," said Sohail. "Now he has to live up to those expectations that he has set from his batting and keep on improving." The 27-year-old Babar has an average of over 45 in 40 Tests and recently hit 196 in the second Australia Test, which ended in a draw. Pakistan lost the series 1-0.

Sohail rates the current Pakistan Test team as full of talent but said the fast bowlers need to develop new methods to make the old ball more effective when reverse swing is not available. "There is definitely room for improvement in Test cricket. We used to rattle opposition batting with our reverse swing in the middle overs," Sohail said. —AFP

St Andrews hosts British Open amid ongoing LIV fallout

ST ANDREWS: The 150th British Open teed off on the Old Course in St Andrews on Thursday with organizers keen for the focus to remain on a historic championship despite the ongoing fallout caused by the breakaway LIV Golf series. A clutch of players who joined the Saudi-backed tour are taking part in this week's Open after organizers the R&A opted not to ban the rebels, in contrast to moves made by the PGA Tour and the DP World Tour.

Former Open champion Phil Mickelson, Brooks Koepka, Dustin Johnson and Sergio Garcia are among the LIV series members who are in St Andrews, and a victory for one of them this weekend might not do much to ease tensions in the sport.

"Whoever wins on Sunday is going to have their name carved in history, and I'll welcome them onto the 18th green," insisted Martin Slumbers, chief executive of the R&A. "This is a golf tournament. The Open is about having the best players in the world playing, and I want to see who shoots the lowest score come Sunday night."

Yet Slumbers also attacked the Saudi-backed series, which offers prize money of \$25 million for each 54-hole event, compared to a \$14 million prize pot for this week's Open. The LIV model, he said, "is not in the best long-term interests of the sport as a whole and is entirely driven by money".

"It undermines the merit-based culture and the spirit of open competition that makes golf so special," he added. Rory McIlroy is among the players who have voiced opposition to the new series and the Northern Irishman would prefer not to see one of the rebels triumph in St Andrews. "Selfishly, for me, yes, I think it would be better for the game," he said.

Whether affiliated to the new series or not, there is a long list of contenders looking to succeed Collin Morikawa, winner last year at Royal St George's.

McIlroy, Scheffler lead the contenders

McIlroy, who won the 2014 Open at Hoylake, appears best-placed among the European candidates during a season in which he has also come second in the Masters and fifth at the US Open, although US Open champion Matt Fitzpatrick of England may disagree.

A long list of American contenders is led by Scottie Scheffler, the Masters champion and world number one, yet he insists he feels no extra pressure despite his status. "Being the home of golf and the Open Championship definitely amplifies things a bit, but that's across the board," the 26-year-old said on Wednesday.

"I don't think it matters if I'm number one in the world or number 50 in the world, I want to win this tournament as bad or more than anybody out here."

Scheffler tees off at 1:26 pm (12:26 GMT) in Thursday's first round in a group with Joaquin Niemann and Tyrrell Hatton. McIlroy, meanwhile, goes out at 9:58 am with Morikawa and Xander Schauffele, the Olympic champion who won last week's Scottish Open.

The Open is expecting record attendances for the week of 290,000, meaning galleries will be packed for the first championship since the end of pandemic-related restrictions.

'Stands the test of time'

The course is hosting the championship for the 30th time, the first since Zach Johnson won here in 2015 after foul weather delayed the finish until the Monday.

There seems little prospect of the weather causing such havoc this time, with conditions expected to be largely fine, even if winds have picked up over the last two days and rain seemed to appear from nowhere on Wednesday.

Stiff breezes may put paid to any prospect of a record low score being posted, with the current best round at a major Branden Grace's 62 at Birkdale in 2017.

"Even with the advancements in technology, this golf course still stands the test of time. It's still very difficult, and it's obviously weather dependent," said Tiger Woods, twice an Open champion at St Andrews. —AFP



EUGENE: Shelby McEwen back flips after winning the men's high jump during the 2022 USATF Outdoor Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. —AFP

Maiden world champs offers spotlight for 'unknown' stars

Athletics dwarfed by big money sports in US

EUGENE: Track and field stars are hoping a maiden world championships on US soil will shine the light on athletes in a country where athletics is dwarfed by the big money sports of American football, basketball and baseball. The irony for many American athletes is that they are generally far better known in Europe, where many spend large chunks of their season travelling on a circuit that takes in some of the most iconic track stadiums in front of some of the sport's most avid fans.

But hope burns that the July 15-23 world champs in Eugene, Oregon, the birthplace of US sporting goods giant Nike, will shift the spotlight. "Most of the time walking around (in the US) nobody knows who track athletes are," lamented Sandi Morris, an American pole vaulter who has won multiple medals on the global stage. "You can walk up to a random stranger in the street and ask them who Allyson Felix is and no, they would have no idea."

Morris, speaking to reporters in Eugene on Wednesday, was referring to her US teammate who

has a record world haul of 18 career medals and 11 Olympic podium finishes, including seven gold. Armand "Mondo" Duplantis might compete for Sweden, but the world pole vault record holder was born and raised in the United States. "The whole of the United States probably I can be a little bit more anonymous," he said from his US base in Indianapolis where he admitted to being well known. "Being in Sweden and in the United States and seeing the difference in the the way I live in both is quite different."

Just reality

Wider anonymity, Duplantis added, was "just the reality of the situation". "They have so many big sports here in baseball, football and basketball and that doesn't leave so much room for that many more and I guess track and field is more perceived as an Olympic sport. "The Olympics are very huge in the United States and if you're able to win the Olympics or even go to the Olympics, it's a very big deal, the biggest thing you can do as a track and field athlete in the United States."

Morris admitted that athletics "for some reason had taken a back seat", but was in her opinion slowly changing.

"Part because of social media and our own ability to broadcast our experience and educate Americans about the fact there's a professional track circuit, you can make a living doing this," the two-time world indoor champion said. "I mean you'd just laugh at the questions, 'You make a living pole-vaulting? No! What do you do for a living?!'" Duplantis argued that "having the world championships in the United States this year to try and bring them and not just Olympics into the mainstream can be a really good thing for track and field."

Morris echoed his sentiments, saying it was a "huge opportunity". "We just have to keep the positivity and keep sharing our sport to as many Americans as possible. "Most Americans only know one thing about track and field and it's the Olympics. "It's about educating them and bringing the world championships into the forefront and putting it on television and just getting it in front of the American crowd in general... we're introducing new fans to the sport." —AFP

Omanyala gets last minute visa reprieve for Worlds Athletics

NAIROBI: Africa's fastest man Ferdinand Omanyala on Thursday said he would compete in the World Athletics Championships in Oregon after being granted a last-minute visa to travel to the United States. Omanyala—the third-quickest man in the world this season—will have just a few hours rest after his flight before the 100 metre heats start Friday in Eugene, Oregon.

But the 26-year-old Kenyan sprinter said he would be on the next plane and was "positive" of competing at the fixture after securing permission to travel. "Visa challenges are faced by all Kenyans and people daily, in this case I was no different," Omanyala said in a statement posted on his Twitter account headlined "Oregon Here I Come".

He had earlier given up hope of competing after failing to receive a visa, saying there wasn't enough time to fly to Oregon—a journey of 24 hours or more—before the race. But he will make the trip and arrive on Friday morning after being presented with his visa at the sports ministry, Omanyala's coach Duncan Ayiomba told AFP. "He will have a few hours to rest before he competes in the 100m heats, and hopefully qualify for the semi-finals and the finals," he said.

The Kenyan team had been due to leave for the United States in two batches on

Monday and Tuesday, but several members including Omanyala did not receive visas. There was no immediate comment from Athletics Kenya, and the reasons for the visa hitch are not known. Reports have emerged of athletes from other countries facing issues obtaining US visas, although Omanyala is the highest-profile.

Championship organizers Oregon22 and World Athletics had said on Wednesday that they were working to follow up on visa applications "the majority of which have been successfully resolved". "We continue to follow up with those outstanding visa issues," they said in a statement, noting that international travel had become more challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Omanyala is the third-quickest man in the world this season behind Americans Fred Kerley and Trayvon Bromell, setting a time of 9.85 seconds in May.

In September last year, he set a new African record of 9.77sec, making him the ninth-fastest man ever, behind four Americans and three Jamaicans. He told AFP in a recent interview he had set his sights on at least reaching the final of the 100m in Oregon, targeting a time of 9.6sec. If he had made the podium there, it would have been an historic first for an African runner. Namibia's Frankie Fredericks twice won Olympic silver in



NAIROBI: Kenya's sprinter Ferdinand Omanyala takes a rest during a training session at the Kasarani stadium in Nairobi. —AFP

the 100m in the 1990s, but his one gold and three silvers in the World Championships were all over 200m.

'Want to leave a legacy'

The young athlete and his coach have been mapping out ways to make sprinting more popular in Kenya, the East African country where the long-distance runner is king. Omanyala became the first Kenyan sprinter to reach an Olympic semi-final at the Tokyo Games last year. He was able to represent Kenya in Tokyo after Athletics Kenya relaxed a decision to prohibit any banned athletes from taking part in international competitions. He had been suspended for 14 months in 2017 by the Anti-Doping Agency of

Kenya after testing positive for a banned substance. "It was a hard 14 months but life has to move on," Omanyala said in the AFP interview.

Hailing from western Kenya, Omanyala said he hoped to be a role model for other aspiring sprinters both at home and across Africa. "I believe I opened the way for so many people coming behind me," he said. "One of the things that I wanted to do is to leave a legacy. I want to leave an industry of sprint in Kenya." Omanyala is also competing at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham later this month, he said in a statement Thursday. "Looking forward to making all Kenyans proud," he said. —AFP



EUGENE: Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh competes in the women's high jump final during The World Athletics Indoor Championships 2022 at the Stark Arena, in Belgrade. —AFP

No place for Russia 'killers' in athletics

EUGENE: Yaroslava Mahuchikh used to be not just fierce rivals with Russia's Mariya Lasitskene, but also friends in the tight-knit world of elite women's high jumping. But that all changed, according to the Ukrainian, when Russia invaded her country in an ongoing conflict that shows no sign of letting up. Mahuchikh offered no solace for the absent Lasitskene at the World Athletics championships in Eugene, Oregon, saying there was no place for Russian "killers". The Ukrainian came to wider global prominence when she won gold at the World Indoor Championships in Belgrade in March.

To get there, the 20-year-old fled her eastern Ukrainian home city of Dnipro by car, overcoming what she said was "total panic" and her very own front line. "Three days by car, the longest three days for me," Mahuchikh told reporters in Eugene on Wednesday. The stunning performance for gold in the Serb capital was enough for World Athletics president Sebastian Coe to hand Mahuchikh a hand-written letter, signed off "with thanks and admiration", when presenting her with the gold medal.

Mahuchikh is reigning European indoor high jump champion, but had to settle for Olympic bronze in Tokyo last summer and world outdoor silver in Doha in 2019 in competitions claimed by arch-rival Lasitskene. Despite being reigning world and Olympic champion, Lasitskene is banned from the worlds in Eugene, something the Russian protested at the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Following the invasion of Ukraine in February, the IOC had recommended a ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes, a request followed by most federations.

Lasitskene accused IOC president Thomas Bach of having created a "new war" by recommending Russian athletes be banned from international competition. "In high jump, my main competitors are Ukrainians," Lasitskene said. "I wouldn't know how to look them in the eye, or what to say to them." —AFP