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Kuwait seeks nuke-free Mideast, promotes security and stability

Crown Prince hails Jeddah Security Summit, outstanding achievements

- Deep-rooted relationship, strategic interests • A clear-cut vision for strengthening security • Promoting Arab initiative for peace initiative



JEDDAH: (Left to right) Asaad bin Tariq Al-Said, Omani Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and the Special Representative of the Sultan; UAE President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan; Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi; Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa; US President Joe Biden; Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman; Jordan's King Abdullah II; Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani; Kuwait's Crown Prince HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; and Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa Kadhemi pose for the family photo on July 16, 2022. — AFP



JEDDAH: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (right) bumps fists with US President Joe Biden at Al-Salam Palace in the Red Sea port of Jeddah. — AFP



JEDDAH: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (2nd right) receives his Kuwaiti counterpart HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (2nd left). — AFP

JEDDAH: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday delivered Kuwait's speech to the Jeddah Security and Development Summit, which gathered the leaders of the GCC states, United States, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq.

Welcoming the other leaders, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed to them the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He thanked Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman for their warm hospitality and "the special preparation" for the summit. "This is the fourth important summit meeting between the GCC member countries and the friendly United States, with which we have deep-rooted historic relationship and strategic interests," he noted.

"The summit gains additional significance as it coincides with accelerated exceptional challenges in the region, including the political, economic and security threats, which require more consultation and coordination. To address such challenges, we need to reach a clear-cut vision for strengthening security and stability in this critical part of the world through cooperation with our strategic partner - the United States and the sisterly Arab countries represented here today - the Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Iraq," His Highness the Crown Prince said.

"I'd like to welcome President Joe Biden, who is on his first trip to the region to take part in this strategic summit, recalling with pride the level of our relationship with the friendly United States and the outstanding achievements in various fields. "With gratitude, we, the leadership and people of Kuwait, recall the prominent role of the US and our brothers in the GCC, notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and other peace-loving countries, in the Kuwait Liberation Operation against the Iraqi invasion in 1990.

"Kuwait takes pride in belonging to this blessed grouping, the GCC, which make outstanding achievements over the past four decades. "The GCC pursues confidently commitment to the strategic partnership with the United States based on belief in its inevitability amidst the accelerated developments, which require more cooperation and integration. We in the GCC hope that this summit will be a new starting point for addressing all outstanding issues of the Middle East, on top of which is the Palestine question."

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Kuwait's credit ratings 'stable'

KUWAIT: S&P Global Ratings has placed Kuwait's currency sovereign credit ratings at A+, raising the Gulf country's future outlook from "negative" to "stable." In its report, the ratings agency expected the major oil exporter to benefit from favorable oil prices and production until the end of next year. It also forecasted a 2022-23 cumulative general government surplus of 18 percent of GDP based on \$75-80 oil price, saying this would allow authorities to "replenish liquidity in the previously depleted main treasury buffer."

The report expected Kuwaiti authorities over the next two years to adopt measures to diversify its income sources, "so that the previous fiscal funding impasse with the depletion of liquidity at the GRF (General Reserve Fund) does not recur, even if oil prices fall below current levels." The agency said it "could lower" Kuwait's rating if no sustainable comprehensive financing arrangements are made over the next three years. — KUNA (See Page 8)

UAE sees possible return of Iranian ambassador

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates is considering sending an ambassador to Iran, a senior official said Friday, six years after a downgrade in ties. UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash also called for regional economic cooperation as a means of easing political tensions. "We are now indeed considering sending an ambassador to Iran," Gargash said during a video call with journalists. "The next decade cannot be like the last decade. It's a decade where 'de-escalation' should be the key word."

With Middle East political alignments shifting, the UAE's talk of strengthening Iran ties comes alongside Iraqi efforts to mediate between the Emirates' neighbor Saudi Arabia and Iran. Riyadh and Tehran have had no diplomatic ties for six years, since Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran after the kingdom executed Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr.

Riyadh responded by cutting relations with Tehran, while the UAE reduced its ties to the Islamic republic, without severing relations. Iran and the Emirates have been on opposite sides of the war in Yemen, where the UAE supports and

trains forces as part of a Saudi-led coalition against Iran-backed Houthi rebels. A cross-border drone attack by the Yemeni rebels killed three oil workers in Abu Dhabi in January.

Another source of rivalry has been the UAE's claim to the Iran-controlled Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands in the Gulf. "The UAE is not part of any axis against Iran," Gargash said, urging "economic cooperation in various areas in order to create a greater political de-escalation." Oil-rich UAE has previously said that Arab Gulf states should take part in "collective diplomacy" to reach an agreement with Iran, whose talks with Western powers over a faltering 2015 nuclear agreement have been stalled since March.

The Zionist entity and the United States on Thursday signed a new security pact reinforcing their common front against Iran, during a visit to the Jewish state by US President Joe Biden. Biden vowed to use "all" American power to stop Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons, something Tehran denies seeking. In 2020 the Emirates established diplomatic relations with the Zionist entity, a move which Tehran condemned. Still, in July last year UAE Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan met Iranian charge d'affaires Sayed Mohammad Hosseini to look at ways of enhancing bilateral cooperation.

Meanwhile, Iran's navy has unveiled its first division of ships and submarines capable of carrying armed drones, as US President Joe Biden tours the

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US, GCC states to enhance security

JEDDAH: Leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and US have agreed on enhancing defense, security and intelligence cooperation to protect the Gulf region's security and stability as well as the freedom of maritime navigation. In a joint statement following their summit in Jeddah on Saturday, the leaders also voiced their support for all diplomatic efforts to reduce regional tensions.

"The GCC welcomes the US' reaffirmation that it will always work with the GCC to deter and confront all external threats against the [GCC's] security and against vital maritime routes particularly the straits of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb," reads the statement. They also voiced firm determination to cement cooperation and coordination to develop defense capabilities and to counter threats posed by growing use of drones and winged missiles and supplying terrorist militias and armed groups with weapons.

They reiterated support for efforts to guarantee that the Gulf region would remain free of mass destruction weapons and the diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from possessing a nuclear weapon, countering terrorism and all destabilizing activities in the region. "The leaders also welcomed establishing Combined Task Force 153 and Combined Task

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Local

Women in media, important part of Kuwait development vision

Academic calls for increased women's representation in media

KUWAIT: Women, in any society, play an important role in the overall development of their countries and such fact is very true when it came to Kuwaiti women. Women in media are considered as a great asset to Kuwait's 2035 Vision for development due to their role in reflecting women's contributions to the whole progress of the country. Journalism and media in Kuwait definitely saw women contributing extensively to all sorts of printed, visual and audible media, head of the women's research and studies center at the college of social science in Kuwait University (KU) Dr Lubna Al-Kazi said. Women provide a piercing and detailed outlook on matters and topics, which is very useful when it comes to media coverage, she affirmed, adding that it was important to bring this matter to the forefront of social discussions. She called for an increase of women's representation in the media scene to become true partners of their men counterpart and contribute to the development of the country.

Similarly, Fatimah Al-Salmen — an aspiring Kuwaiti journalist who is visually impaired — affirmed that journalism had increased her knowledge and skills in a variety of subjects despite the challenges she and her colleagues faced. Women are able to overcome obstacles and dangers present in media and journalism, she insisted, saying that they were capable of pursuing their careers and dreams alongside their social responsibilities as wives, sisters, and daughters. She stressed that there must be a hunger for any individual to pursue a career in journalism and media, affirming that women who were willing to go above and beyond would be rewarded with opportunities and achievements.

Political rights

Kuwaiti women had long struggled to earn their rights in society, but perhaps the turning point was earning their full political rights in 2005. Prior to

that, women were an integral part of Kuwaiti society even before the discovery of oil and that came through maintaining households and raising up generations of Kuwaitis who contributed back to society. Post-oil discovery, women had excelled in various aspects of life including academia and the job market. Their role was most evident during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, when Kuwaiti women stood face-to-face against the aggressors, which promoted the initial spark to allow them to gain their full political rights. Since 2005 and onward, women were included into the formations of the cabinet of ministers, a step that was followed by membership in the National Assembly and Municipal Council.

Whether heading a diplomatic mission abroad or becoming a superior member of the judicial system, women fulfilled their role as real partners to men in Kuwaiti society without fail. Enabling women is also a top priority of the leadership in Kuwait. During a

2015 speech to the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York, late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed that Kuwait was keen on empowering women as touted in the UN Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG) number five concerning gender equality. The 2010-established Kuwait Women's Research and Studies Center (WRSC), in cooperation with national and UN entities, had strived to achieve the UNSDG goal via preparing women to hold senior positions in public and private post, noted the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad in his speech.

Another milestone for Kuwaiti women was in 2021, when they were allowed by the Defense Ministry to provide medical and assistance services to the military, an unprecedented decision in the history of the country. It would not be a surprise for women to excel further in Kuwaiti society and history would surely tell of their extraordinary achievements in the past, present, and future. — KUNA

Skukuzations, an ongoing legal challenge

By Atyab Al-Shatti

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Sukuk are considered one of the most essential economic mechanisms for the country to regulate levels of liquidity in the banking market. The skukuzations is the sister mechanism for the Central Bank to monitor and supervise the work of Islamic banks, and therefore the law gave the Central Bank the legal authority to issue "finance skukuzations" methods that comply with the Islamic sharia according to article 95 sub-article 3 of the law 32 for the year 1968. Yet the legislator does not tackle or cure the vacuum within the legislative system, leaving such fundamental economic tool unresolved.

The law allows the relevant government agencies (specifically the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Investment Authority) to carry out the tasks of issuing, offering and managing these sukuk, as well as some of the administrative and accounting tasks required for sukuk issuance, in the context of facilitating the implementation process.

Law No 50 of the year 1987 amended by Decree-Law No 3 of 2009 authorizes the Ministry of Finance to issue Islamic bonds and sukuk to fulfill its obligations towards government agencies, institutions and bodies with attached and independent budgets.

A bill draft was once suggested to cure such vacuum which included a provision that the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait would be obtained for sukuk issuances inside the State of Kuwait, whether in Kuwaiti dinars or foreign currencies, in light of the responsibility of the Central Bank of Kuwait, and in accordance with its establishment law No. 32 of 1968 and its amendments, for organizing Liquidity levels in the local market in line with the developments of the economic, monetary and banking conditions in the country, and to maintain the stability of the exchange rate.

But since the bill draft has not come to finalization yet, then the legal sources are basically the contract that governs contractual obligations. With respect to skukuzations, the contract must be supervised by a sharia authority that shall confirm the compliance of this contract to the Islamic principles. If the Islamic principles do not tackle a certain subject that was stated within the contract, then the source of interpretation to the contract shall be the commercial law, unlike the securitizations agreements; the agreement does not need the revision and confirmation of a sharia authority and shall be interpreted immediately according to the commercial law.

Moreover, as in for the finance skukuzations issued by the public sector, the Central Bank can issue skukuzations according to article 95, sub article 3 of law 32 for the year 1968 which stated it is permissible for the bank to issue methods that comply with sharia principles for finance. Also sub article 2 from the same abovementioned article permitted the Central Bank to deal, purchase and sell skukuzations for the purpose of regulating banks liquidity.

As in for the skukuzations issued by private sector before issuing the new commercial companies' law 25 for the year 2012, minister of commerce issued ministerial resolution number 388 for the year 2007 regulating dealing with stock, and defined skukuzations as "a document of equal values issued by companies according to sharia jurisprudence such as partnership, Murabaha, Ijarah, investment and agency skukuzations according to sharia types after issuing the new commercial company's law: articles from 178 to 2007 have filled some of the legislation gaps that should tackle securitization.

Law number 2 for the year 2009 related to enhancing financial stability of the state defined sukuk in article one as a money tool issued by the ministry of finance on behalf of the state according to the sharia principles. But this definition lacks the differentiation between sukuk and debentures from my point of view. For Kuwait's economy to flourish and thrive, it is fundamental to issue a skukuzations law.

London grants Kuwaiti envoy's wife city award

LONDON: The city of London awarded Saturday wife of Kuwaiti ambassador to the United Kingdom, Dalal Yaqoub Al-Humaidhi, the Honorary Freedom of the City of London for her voluntary work in a number of British charitable societies. Lord Mayor of the financial district in London, Vincent Keaveny stated to the press that Humaidhi played an integral role in supporting the diplomatic career of her husband, Ambassador Khaled Al-Duwaisan for 30 years, adding that this is in recognition of Al-Duwaisan family's generous efforts across various fields. Lord Keaveny added that this highlights the nature of the special relations tying Kuwait and the United Kingdom, as the award goes back to the year 1237 and is granted to those with considerable achievements in their chosen fields. Among those awarded the Honorary Freedom of the City of London was late Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and South Africa's late President Nelson Mandela. On a related note, Children and Families Across Borders society granted Humaidhi a memorial shield in appreciation of her efforts in supporting the society. Society CEO Caroline Hausmann commented saying that Humaidhi was given honorary presidency of the society for her work in helping children all over the globe. She added that for 30 years Humaidhi, worked on the annual charity fundraiser held in the backyard of Kensington's Municipality, and was also a point of reference for new diplomats as she helped them adapt and assimilate to life in London. Furthermore, Humaidhi's work was not exclusive to one society but extended to International Red Cross, Alzheimer's Society, Royal Academy of Arts and many others. — KUNA



LONDON: Dalal Al-Humaidhi alongside Lord Mayor of London Vincent Keaveny. — KUNA photos



Dalal Yaqoub Al-Humaidhi writes down her name on Honorary Freedom record.

Kuwait envoy takes part in Desert Storm Memorial ceremony

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah participated on Thursday at the groundbreaking ceremony held for the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial at the National Mall that will stand as an everlasting symbol and token of gratitude to the soldiers who helped to liberate Kuwait. In remarks at the ceremony, Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah said, "today we come together to celebrate the launch of a long awaited and a very special memorial."

"This magnificent project carries a lot of significance and will mean different things to different people, but for us in Kuwait, it will reflect not only our gratitude, but the depths of the true friendship and alliance that exist between our two countries," he added. "It is a concrete testament to our ironclad partnership, forged and solidified 31 years ago by blood, sweat, and tears." He continued "as the Ambassador of Kuwait to the United States of America for the past 21 years, I have taken much pride in the part I have played to enhance and solidify this very strong alliance that exists between our two countries - It has been my life's work."

"This solemn memorial is a tribute to our shared beliefs in justice, courage, honor, sacrifice, friendship, and peace. Hence, it was to showcase the above that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah decided that Kuwait should fully finance the construction of this memorial," he remarked. He stressed that "while a monument can never fully encapsulate the depths of our indebtedness to this great nation, we nonetheless eagerly await its completion in this great capital in 2024, where it will rightfully stand among the other memorials to sacrifice, alliance, and peace." He noted "it will tell the story of the brave and righteous men and women who gave their lives to save others - it will remain a symbol of bravery and cooperation today and for decades to come."

"From the people of Kuwait to the people of the United States - thank you. Your deed will forever be engraved in the memories of our current and future generations," he remarked. Meanwhile, Vice Chairman of the Joins Chief of Staff Christopher Grady said that almost 700,000 US forces were "committed to the lib-



WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah at the groundbreaking ceremony for National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial. — KUNA photos

eration of Kuwait and the defense of regional security and stability in the face of Saddam Hussein's tyranny and aggression."

"As Americans, we came to the defense of Kuwait with the international rule of order and we did it and we'd do it now," he added. Grady, who represented the Pentagon at the ceremony, continued that "now after 30 years, the United States can look to Kuwait and see what we still have is a partner committed as ever to maintaining peace and security." He affirmed that "this memorial honors the sacrifice of those service members who made the ultimate price. Champions of our collective military and diplomatic victories in this conflict."

"This memorial reflects on our common dedication to defense of not only an American ideal but a truly global ideal," he continued. "National sovereignty should not just be an expectation, should be an ideal worth fighting for, to maintain and to hold dear."

"Peace and security should be an enduring expectation for all so I am grateful for the opportunity to honor the veterans and families of their achievement in Desert



Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah speaks at the ceremony.

Storm through today's dedication," he remarked. Counselor of the US Department of State, Derek Chollet said in his remarks that this groundbreaking is "an achievement for my friend the Ambassador (Sheikh Salem) who is realizing a dream of his own after two decades of service here in Washington. This monument is also a tribute to you and your profound legacy of strengthening the partnership between the United States and Kuwait." He noted that "when this memorial is complete, young Kuwaitis will come visit and reconnect with and reflect upon America, our partnership together, our people and our place in the world."

"Americans will come to learn about those who fought in the conflict and remember this Desert Shield and Desert Storm and our friendship with the country they fought to liberate," he added. "Veterans will come to remember and reflect on their proud, noble achievement and the sacrifices that they've made." He continued "they will all come together here in this special place to celebrate the moral and physical courage that united the world to stand together against tyranny and to stand together for freedom." — KUNA

Local

Jeddah Summit coincides with accelerated exceptional regional challenges: Crown Prince

Amir's Representative hails 'deep-rooted historic relationship' with US



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the Jeddah Security and Development Summit.



JEDDAH: Leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, the United States, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan attend the Jeddah Security and Development Summit. — KUNA photos

JEDDAH: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday delivered Kuwait's speech to the Jeddah Security and Development Summit, which gathered the leaders of the GCC states, the United States, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq. Welcoming the other leaders attending, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed to them the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He thanked Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman for their warm hospitality and "the special preparation" for the summit.

"This is fourth important summit meeting between the GCC member countries and the friendly United States, with which we have deep-rooted historic relationship and strategic interests," he noted. "The summit gains additional significance as it coincides with accelerated exceptional challenges in the region, including the political, economic and security threats, which require more consultation and coordination. To address such challenges, we need to reach a clear-cut vision for strengthening security and stability in this critical part of the world through cooperation with our strategic partner - the United States and the sisterly Arab countries represented here today - the Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Iraq," His Highness the Crown Prince said.

"I'd like to welcome President Joe Biden, who is on his first trip to the region to take part in this strategic summit, recalling with pride the level of our relationship with the friendly United States and the outstanding achievements in various fields," His Highness Sheikh Mishal said. "With gratitude, we, the leadership and people of Kuwait, recall the prominent role of the US and our brothers in the GCC, notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and other peace-loving countries, in the Kuwait Liberation Operation against the Iraqi invasion in 1990. The State of Kuwait takes pride in belonging to this blessed grouping, the GCC, which make outstanding achievements over the past four decades. The GCC pursues confidently commitment to the strategic partnership with the United States based on belief in its inevitability amidst the accelerated developments, which require more cooperation and integration."

"We in the GCC hope that this summit will be a new starting point for addressing all outstanding issues of the Middle East, on top of which is the Palestine question," he said. "We call for more action to advance the peace process based on the international legitimacy, the UN resolutions and the Arab peace initiative to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital."

- Political, economic and security threats require more consultation and coordination
- Kuwait recalls the prominent role of the US, GCC and friendly states in Liberation
- GCC hopes the summit would be a new starting point for addressing outstanding issues
- Kuwait stresses Palestinians' right for independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital
- Crown Prince calls for cooperation from Iran to rid the Middle East of nuclear weapons
- Crown Prince calls for reaching political solution for Ukraine crisis

ent state with East Jerusalem as its capital."

His Highness the Crown Prince called on Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the GCC states, and the international community to rid the Middle East of nuclear weapons. He also urged more action to prevent terrorist attacks on civilian targets and vital utilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and combat the threats to international shipping routes. On the Ukraine crisis, he called for reaching a political solution based on the rules of the international



Kuwait calls for action to advance peace process

law and the UN Charter that provide for respecting the sovereignty of states and their territorial safety and political independence.

Critical challenges

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman inaugurated earlier the Jeddah Security and Development Summit with leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, and the United States, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan attending. In his inaugural speech, the Crown Prince, the Chair of the Summit and the Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, said the region and the world face critical challenges that require intensified cooperation in the framework of the principles of the UN Charter, foremost among which are respect for sovereignty and

values of states, non-interference in domestic affairs of others, and respect for the independence and territorial safety of states. Crown Prince Mohammed expressed hope that the current summit would lay the groundwork for a new era of enhanced joint action and strategic partnership. "Profound cooperation between our countries and the United States will serve the common interests, and enhance security and development in this vital region and the entire world," he stressed.

The big challenges facing the world due to coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and the emerging geopolitical changes require concerted international effort to help the world economy recover, and insure food and health security, he pointed out. "The environmental challenges facing the world, notably the climate change, require strengthened resolve by the international community to keep the temperature of Earth within the limits specified by the Paris Agreement. These challenges need to be addressed through a practical and responsible approach with a view to ensuring sustainable development based on a balanced and sustainable use of energy resources and taking stock of the priorities and conditions of each state," Crown Prince Mohammed stressed. "To adopt impractical policies for reducing harmful emissions, including the execution of main energy resources without giving due consideration to the socioeconomic effects of such policies, could lead to unprecedented inflation rates in the coming years, send the energy prices and unemployment rates to new highs, and exacerbate the social, economic and security problems such as famine, crime, extremism and terrorism," he warned.

The world economic growth is closely related to making use of the available energy resources, including the hydrocarbons, provided setting controls on their emissions through clean energy technologies to reach the target of carbon-neutrality or net-zero by the year 2050, he noted. In its economic development plan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia follows a balanced approach to keeping the

energy supplies and realizing the carbon neutrality target based on carbon recycling economy. This plan aims to ensure economic diversification without affecting the economic growth or the supply chains. It also aims to address the carbon emissions through Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative in collaboration with regional and international actors, Crown Prince Mohammed went on. He stressed the need to continue pumping investment into the fossil energy and clean energy technologies over the coming couple of decades to meet the world demand, allay the concerns of investors regarding the new policies, and guard against any interruptions in energy supplies which could hamper economic growth.

"As part of its role in this regard, the Kingdom increased its oil output capacity to 13 million bpd, but beyond this level it would overstretch its resources," Crown Prince Mohammed made clear. He highlighted the need of a clear-cut vision for security, stability and prosperity based on mutual respect among the countries of the region, closer cultural and social relations and joint action to address the security, economic and political challenges.

Regarding the relations with neighboring Iran, Crown Prince Mohammed said there are religious and cultural ties between our countries and Iran, calling on the Islamic country to be part of that vision through commitment to international legitimacy and non-interference in the domestic affairs of others. He urged Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and meet its obligations in this regard. On Yemen, he said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia backed all efforts aiming to restore security and stability in the country and reach an intra-Yemeni political solution based on the three points of reference. The Kingdom continues effort to augment the current truce and offer humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people, he affirmed.

Regarding Palestine, he said stability and prosperity in the Middle East require speeding up effort to reach a fair and comprehensive solution based on international legitimacy and the Arab initiative for peace. Crown Prince Mohammed hailed the recent improvement of the security situation in Iraq, saying this improvement will impact positively on Iraq's relations with its Arab neighbors. He lauded the agreements on power grid hookup between Saudi Arabia and Iraq and among the GCC countries, noting that similar agreements are in the offing between Saudi Arabia, on one hand, and Egypt and Jordan, on the other. Crown Prince Mohammed expressed hope that the current Summit will send an upbeat message of a bright future for the youth of the region, realize their aspirations and shed light on "our noble values." — KUNA

Kuwait Amir's representative meets Arab leaders in Jeddah



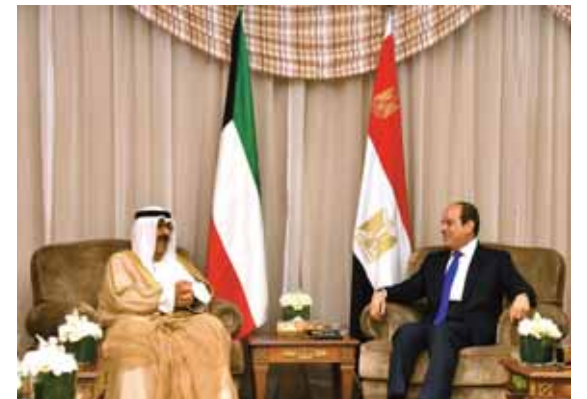
JEDDAH: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Egyptian President Abdulfattah Al-Sisi.

JEDDAH: Representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited, on Saturday, the President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in Jeddah. His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the UAE President. During the meeting, they discussed the strong relations between Kuwait and the UAE as well as various issues of common interest and ways to enhance the joint action among the GCC states. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahhab Al-Rasheed, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

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Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamin Bin Hamad Al-Thani in Jeddah. His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Qatari Amir. During the meeting, they discussed the bilateral relation and various topics of common interest as well as ways to enhance the joint action among the GCC states. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahhab Al-Rasheed, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

In the meantime, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called on Bahraini King

Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa at his residence in Jeddah. During the meeting, His Highness Sheikh Mishal conveyed to King Hamad the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Both sides discussed the sisterly relationship between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain and explored ways to strengthen cooperation and joint action among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries. They exchanged views on a range of issues of common concern. The meeting also gathered Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, and Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Affairs Abdulwahab Mohammad Al-Rashid as well as senior officials of the His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince called on Egyptian President Abdulfattah Al-Sisi at his residence in Jeddah. During the meeting, His Highness Sheikh Mishal conveyed to President Al-Sisi the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Both sides discussed the sisterly relationship between the State of Kuwait and the Arab Republic of Egypt and explored ways to strengthen cooperation and Arab joint action. They exchanged views on a range of issues of common concern. The meeting also gathered Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, and Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Abdulwahab Mohammad Al-Rashid as well as senior officials of the His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan. — KUNA

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in my view

YES! Reflection of Molly Bloom

By Ali Alhamadani



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A few blocks from Broadway street where theaters amaze spectators with advanced technologies, choreography, and colorful scenery using dopamine's cravings to attract modern audiences, the Irish Repertory Theatre (IRT) produced YES! Reflections of Molly Bloom with Aedin Moloney as a sole actor by adapting Molly's soliloquy from James Joyce's novel Ulysses. The play was wondrous by Moloney's capability of performing as a Greek orator.

In the basement of the IRT building, a round stage was set in the corner of the room surrounded by seats on its two sides available for 50 spectators. The set imitated Leopold and Molly's bedroom in an ancient Greek style with concrete walls, a window, and a bed. The sofa is the only piece of furniture that reflects a modern setting. The bluish light sneaked from the sets' outlines with a circular platform attached to the ceiling. Moloney grabbed the audience's attention without the need to use a microphone or any technical stage enhancements. Her mastery of her vocal colors and her flexibility with her body movements and facial expressions showed her deep understanding of Joyce's character.

I questioned the necessity of having a well-equipped theatre in Kuwait. Great theatre doesn't need large modern theaters or a massive capital. Individual talent, hard-work, and artistic quality is where we should invest our money and focus into. Moloney was capable of performing a 90-minute solitary performance by extensive energy, practice, and dedication that went into her work. We need a more inward attitude and a better-expressed responsibility when it comes to finding the change that we want to see.

Zubaidi price high on first day of reopening fishing in Kuwait

Fish market workers complain of shortages, lack of customers



KUWAIT: A vendor displays Zubaidi fish at a fish market in Kuwait City on July 16, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Union of Fishermen announced, on Saturday, the start of the fishing season for Zubaidi fish in Kuwaiti territorial waters, after the end of the fishing ban period that started 45 days before. The price of local Zubaidi on the first day has exceeded KD 13 to reach KD 15.5 per kilo, despite the lack of availability at fish markets.

President of the Kuwaiti Union of Fishermen, Dhafer Al-Sowian, announced earlier that the decision to prevent seasonal fishing was aimed to protect and develop the fish stock and give the opportunity and time for Zubaidi fish to breed. Sowian stressed the importance of adhering to the laws regulating fishing to preserve and protect fisheries from extinction, calling for a review of the support provided to the fishing sector to ensure food security and the sustainability of fish resources "as a strong pillar of the national economy."

Kuwait Times spoke with fish shop workers and discussed the reason for the price increase and the issue behind the lack of fish in the market. Mohammad

Nazir, a fish shop worker, said that the price of Kuwaiti Zubaidi starts from KD 14 per kilo, while Kuwaiti Hamour is sold for KD 5 and Balool fish for KD 7 per kilo. Nazir mentioned that the kilo of Kuwaiti Zubaidi was sold for KD 8 last week, saying that the low demand from individual customers and the decreasing number of fish is the reason behind this increase.

Mohammad Abu Hamza said the increasing number of fish restaurants and fish shops outside the fish market led to the price increase due to their increased demand, and that caused shortages in many types of fish such as Meed fish which is not available in the market and reaches KD 5 per kilo when available. Abu Hamza says this practice has caused a severe shortage in imported fish, not only local, and

that for many reasons, one of them is the competitive offers they provide to customers.

Abu Hamza pointed out that the fish market was receiving seven to eight tons of fish daily while recently the market does not receive more than four tons of fish and not on daily basis, and the price increased 70 percent for some types of fish like Nuwaibi fish.

"The fish market is no longer limited to fish workers. During the pandemic, the market has shifted to supply its products and divided it between small fish shops and merchants who dominated most of the available fish in the market," Abu Hamza said.

Rizq Ahmad, another fish shop worker, said meanwhile that after the pandemic, the fish market witnessed a severe weakness in the availability of fish which affected their business. He added that it is better for them to decrease the prices and sell more due to the weak income they suffer from.

Rizk pointed out that fish shops do not decide the prices, saying "I buy the Zubaidi from the fishermen for KD 14 per kilo, and due to increased price, I sell it for KD 14 and half, while if I increased the price more no one will buy it, and in both ways, I am losing."

Meanwhile, Mahdi Abu Jawad, a fish shop worker, said that the price of Iranian fresh Zubaidi has increased to reach KD 11 Saturday, while it was KD 8.5 per kilo one week before, due to the lack of availability.



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Govt to expand public private partnership projects

KUWAIT: The government prepared its plan to boost the role of the private sector to improve the national economy away from concentrating on public spending. According to sources, the plan includes achieving that goal through the increased projects that are financed from sources outside public funds and encourage financing them through local banks to create major partnerships between public and private sectors. This will help augment the local and foreign companies' partnerships and stop the budget deficit by having a ceiling that does not exceed five percent of current spending and use the surplus shares in projects that have operational returns, and distribute the returns on citizens annually or seasonally.

Companies in partnership between public and

private sectors will be formed in the targeted sectors, while their shares will be distributed to citizens through underwriting for a token value in addition to developing a legal umbrella regarding social protection for citizens, particularly in health and education, provided that there should be coupons or credit cards so only citizens receive free of charge services, similar to Afia card that is given to ensure retirees health wise.

The plan has more than 50 projects which are currently overlooked by the government, and it will give them up to the private sector within the plans to rationalize the government sector, and sell official sectors to the private sector in no more than three years, besides government support to increase the effect of small and medium size projects and companies, through financing and caring for them as well as expand their range, the sources said. The plan undertakes the support of direct foreign investment by making it easier to enter the national economy and provide equal opportunities for all through strengthening the frameworks of competition and transparency in addition to increasing the contribution of the private sector in the total local product.



KUWAIT: Firemen closed 35 stores for lack of safety and fire prevention conditions during tours in various locations around Kuwait, Kuwait Fire Force said.

Sri Lanka’s ousted leader says he did ‘utmost’ for bankrupt nation



GAZA: Fires are seen following Zionist airstrike in Gaza city on July 16, 2022. Warplanes struck a weapons manufacturing facility in the Gaza Strip, the military said, after rocket fire against Zionist territory. — AFP

Zionists strike Gaza Strip

Retaliatory strike hours after Biden visits Occupied West Bank

GAZA: Zionists hit the Gaza Strip before dawn on Saturday in what it said was a retaliatory strike for rocket fire from the Palestinian territory controlled by the Islamist movement Hamas. The exchange of fire came hours after US President Joe Biden visited Zionist entity and the Occupied West Bank. “A short while ago, IDF fighter jets struck a military site in the central Gaza Strip belonging to the Hamas terrorist organization,” a statement from the Zionist Defense Forces said.

“The military site consists of an underground complex containing raw materials used for the manufacturing of rockets,” it said, describing the facility as “one of the most significant” of its kind in the territory. “The strike on this site will significantly impede and undermine Hamas’ force-building capabilities,” it said, adding that Zionists were responding to “attacks from the Gaza Strip on Zionist territory”.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem denounced the strikes, which the official Palestinian news agency

Wafa said caused no injuries. Wafa said Zionist missiles were fired at two locations, one “near a tourist resort” where nearby houses were severely damaged. Balls of fire lit up the night sky over Gaza City after the



‘Two-state solution to end conflict’

strikes, which at one location left a hole in the earth beneath dislodged paving stones in front of a low-rise building. A man later swept up shattered glass in front of what appeared to be an office.

During the night there had been two separate launches, each of two rockets, towards Zionist territory,

the military said. Warning sirens alerting residents to the rocket fire had sounded during the night in the city of Ashkelon and elsewhere in the south. Zionist military said one of the rockets had been intercepted while the other three fell on empty land. Impoverished Gaza, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, has been under blockade since 2007 when Hamas seized power from the secular Fatah movement of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas.

Biden visit

Before flying to Saudi Arabia on Friday, Biden visited the occupied West Bank where he reiterated his administration’s commitment to a two-state solution to end the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. There “must be a political horizon that the Palestinian people can actually see”, Biden said. “I know that the goal of the two states seems so far away,” he said in Bethlehem, alongside the Palestinian leader Abbas. Abbas said “recognizing the state of Palestine” is the key to peace.

With Zionist-Palestinian peace negotiations moribund since 2014, the US delegation has been focusing on economic measures. Biden announced an additional \$200 million for the United Nations agency serving Palestinian refugees, which saw funding cut by the previous US president Donald Trump. During a visit earlier Friday to a hospital in Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem, Biden pledged a \$100 million aid package for medical institutions in the area.

He also announced plans to roll out infrastructure for 4G internet across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank by the end of next year, fulfilling a longstanding aspiration among Palestinians. Biden earlier held talks in Jerusalem with Zionist Prime Minister Yair Lapid, during which a focal point was Iran’s nuclear program and that country’s support for Hamas and other Islamist groups. Zionist entity occupied both the Gaza Strip and West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War. It withdrew from Gaza in 2005 but has maintained a blockade of the coastal territory since the Hamas takeover.— AFP



NUSA DUA, Indonesia: International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva (right) speaks with Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan (left) after their bilateral meeting at the G20 Finance Ministers Meeting in Nusa Dua on the Indonesian resort island of Bali on July 16, 2022. — AFP

G20 finance talks end without joint communique

NUSA DUA, Indonesia: A two-day meeting of finance ministers from the Group of 20 major economies ended Saturday in Indonesia without a joint communique after Russia’s war in Ukraine divided the global forum. During talks on the Indonesian resort island Bali, the finance chiefs looked for solutions to food and energy crises, while accusing Russian technocrats of exacerbating the problems. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers and Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland on Friday blamed the invasion of Ukraine for sending a shockwave through the global economy. In place of a formal communique would be a 14-paragraph statement issued by Indonesia, the G20 chair’s Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said in closing remarks. She said there was consensus on most of the document but two paragraphs would focus on members’ differences regarding the war’s impacts and how to respond. “I think this is the best result,” she said.

No place at talks

At the beginning of the second day of talks, Indonesian central bank governor Perry Warjiyo called on ministers and global finance leaders to concentrate on recovery in a world economy reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting took place after the International Monetary Fund slashed its global growth forecast, with another downgrade expected this month as US inflation stokes fears of a recession. But the talks have been overshadowed by the Ukraine war after it

roiled global markets, caused rising food prices and added to breakneck inflation. The Kremlin calls the war a “special military operation” and blames retaliatory Western sanctions for blocking food shipments and rising energy prices. Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Ukrainian Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko participated virtually in the meeting. Russian Deputy Finance Minister Timur Maksimov attended the talks in person a week after Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov walked out of a G20 meeting over Western criticism of the invasion. Maksimov was in the room as Western officials expressed their condemnation, according to a source present. Marchenko called for “more severe targeted sanctions” against Moscow.

‘Uncharted waters’

Indonesia has refrained from uninviting Russia from G20 meetings, including a leaders’ summit in November, even as Western nations repeated their calls for Moscow to be frozen out of the group. Both Yellen and Freeland, who has Ukrainian heritage, said representatives of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s government had no place at talks. Observers said the failure to agree on a joint communique would hinder coordinated efforts to solve rising inflation and food shortages.

“The lack of a G20 finance ministers’ communique means it will be more difficult for the G20 to forge a consensus on vital issues in the fall,” said Eric LeCompte, executive director of Jubilee USA Network, an NGO that lobbies for developing nation debt relief. “Internal divisions hinder the G20’s ability to act decisively and leaves the world in uncharted waters.” Yellen held bilateral meetings with counterparts from Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Australia, Singapore and Turkey, the Treasury said, lobbying their support for a price cap on Russian oil to cut off Putin’s war chest.—AFP

Ivana Trump dies of accidental ‘blunt impact’ to torso

NEW YORK: Ivana Trump, the first wife of the former US president, died of “blunt impact injuries” to the torso in an accident, New York’s chief medical examiner said on Friday. The statement did not specify the circumstances, but US media reported that police had been investigating whether the 73-year-old died falling down the stairs at her Manhattan home. A spokesperson for the New York Police Department told AFP in an emailed statement Thursday that officers responded to a call at Ivana Trump’s address on the Upper East Side, and found her “unconscious and unresponsive.”

She was pronounced dead at the scene, and the statement added that “there does not appear to be any criminality.” Donald Trump announced her death on Thursday, calling her a “wonderful, beautiful, and amazing woman, who led a great and inspirational life.” He said her “pride and joy” were the couple’s three children, Donald Jr, Ivanka and Eric Trump.

Ivana Trump, a model who grew up under communist rule in the former Czechoslovakia, married Donald Trump, then a budding real estate developer, in 1977. Their first child, Donald Jr., was born later that year. Ivanka was born in 1981 and Eric followed in 1984. Throughout the ‘80s, the Trumps were one of New York’s highest-profile couples, their extravagant lifestyle exemplifying the flashy excesses of the



CANNES, France: In this file photo taken on May 18, 2000, Ivana Trump arrives at the AMFAR (American Foundation for Aids Research) benefit party held at the Palm Beach Club during the 53rd Cannes Film Festival on the French Riviera. — AFP

decade. Their power and celebrity grew as Donald Trump’s property business soared, with Ivana Trump taking on number of key roles in the business. Their high-profile split, rumored to have been caused in part by Donald Trump’s affair with actress Marla Maples, provided juicy content for New York’s tabloids. Donald Trump and Ivana Trump divorced in the early ‘90s and in 1993 the future president married Maples.

Ivana Trump went on to enjoy a successful business career of her own, developing clothing, jewelry and beauty products and penning a number of books. She was married four times in her life, once before her marriage to Donald Trump and twice after. On Friday, a US justice official said depositions of Donald Trump, Donald Jr and Ivanka in New York’s civil probe into alleged fraud at his family business had been postponed following her death.— AFP

31 dead in Sudan tribal clashes near Ethiopia border

KHARTOUM: At least 31 people have been killed in clashes this week between two tribes in Sudan’s Blue Nile state bordering Ethiopia, the security services said on Saturday. They added that another 39 people had been wounded and 16 shops torched during the violence, which erupted on Monday over a land dispute between the Berti and Hawsa tribes. Soldiers were deployed and a night curfew was imposed on Saturday, a day after Blue Nile governor Ahmed al-Omda issued an order prohibiting any gatherings or

marches for one month. An urgent appeal for blood donations was launched by hospitals for the treatment of casualties from the unrest, according to medical sources. The violence broke out after the Berti tribe rejected a Hawsa request to create a “civil authority to supervise access to land”, a prominent Hawsa member told AFP on condition of anonymity. But a senior member of the Berti said the tribe was responding to a “violation” of its lands by the Hawsas.

The Qissan region and Blue Nile state more generally have long seen unrest, with southern guerrillas a thorn in the side of Sudan’s former strongman president Omar Al-Bashir, who was ousted by the army in 2019 following street pressure. Experts say the coup created a security vacuum that has fostered a resurgence in tribal violence, in a country where deadly clashes regularly erupt over land, livestock, access to water and grazing.— AFP

International

US won't 'walk away' from Mideast, Biden tells Arabs

We won't leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran

JEDDAH: President Joe Biden assured Arab leaders the United States would remain fully engaged in the Middle East on Saturday, as he wrapped up his first tour of the region since taking office. "We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran," Biden said during a summit in Jeddah, on the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia.

US ties to Gulf powers in particular have been roiled by multiple issues in recent years, notably Washington's push for a deal to curb Iran's suspect nuclear program and its tepid response to attacks on Saudi oil facilities in 2019 claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis rebels. The summit, the final stop of Biden's Middle East tour, brought together the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council as well as Egypt, Jordan and Iraq.

Biden had been looking to use the trip to discuss volatile oil prices and outline his vision for Washington's role in the region. On Friday he met Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. After a fist-bump with Prince Mohammed, Biden said he raised the Khashoggi case and warned against future attacks on dissidents.

Prince Mohammed, who chaired the opening of Saturday's summit, has denied any role in the death of Khashoggi, who was dismembered in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate and whose remains have never been found. Biden told the assembled Arab leaders that "the future will be won by countries that unleash the full potential of their populations... where citizens can question and criticize leaders without fear of reprisal". Air Force One took off from Jeddah at around 5:00 pm on Saturday, bringing Biden's four-day stay in the region to a close.

Ukraine tensions

Biden said the United States would commit \$1 billion in food aid to the Middle East and North Africa amid rising food insecurity induced by the war in Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exposed a once unthinkable divergence between Washington and key Middle East allies Saudi

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the oil giants that are increasingly independent on the international stage.

The wealthy Gulf nations, which host US forces and have dependably backed Washington for decades, have notably refrained from supporting the Biden administration as it tries to choke Moscow's lifelines, from energy to diplomacy. Analysts say the new position reveals a turning point in Gulf relations with the US, long the region's protector against neighbor Iran.

But Saturday brought some conciliatory gestures, with Biden inviting his Emirati counterpart, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, to visit the White House before the year is up. And in his remarks at the summit, Saudi Prince Mohammed said he hoped it would "establish a new era of joint cooperation to deepen the strategic partnership between our countries and the United States of America, to serve our common interests and enhance security and development in this vital region for the whole world."

Push for oil

Riyadh and Washington on Friday signed 18 agreements on areas including energy, space, health and investment, including developing 5G and 6G technology, said a Saudi statement. A separate joint statement said the two countries noted "the importance of their strategic economic and investment cooperation, especially in light of the current crisis in Ukraine and its repercussions, reiterating their commitment to the stability of global energy markets." Saudi Arabia agreed to link the electricity networks of the Gulf Cooperation Council to Iraq, which relies heavily on energy from Iran, "in order to provide Iraq and its people with new and diversified electricity sources," the White House said.

Washington wants Riyadh to open the oil floodgates to bring down soaring gasoline prices, which threaten Democratic chances in November mid-term elections. But Biden on Friday tried to tamp

talks in Jeddah, Biden said he had discussed steps Riyadh could take to ensure global energy security and adequate oil supplies, according to the Al-Arabia news network.

"I expect further steps from Saudi Arabia on global oil supply in the coming weeks," he said. The president went on to mention several deals, signed by both countries, which cover regional political, technological and travel-related matters. These include an agreement to connect the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council's electric

and conditions of each state," Crown Prince Mohammad stressed.

Regarding the relations with neighboring Iran, Crown Prince Mohammad said there are religious and cultural ties between our countries and Iran, calling on the Islamic country to be part of that vision through commitment to international legitimacy and non-interference in the domestic affairs of others.

He urged Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and meet its obligations in this regard. On Yemen, he said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia backed all efforts aiming to restore security and stability in the country and reach an intra-Yemeni political solution based on the three points of reference. The Kingdom continues effort to augment the current truce and offer humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people, he affirmed.

Regarding Palestine, he said stability and prosperity in the Middle East require speeding up effort to reach a fair and comprehensive solution based on international legitimacy and the Arab initiative for peace. Crown Prince Mohammad hailed the recent improvement of the security situation in Iraq, saying this improvement will impact positively on Iraq's relations with its Arab neighbors.

He lauded the agreements on power grid hookup between Saudi Arabia and Iraq and among the GCC countries, noting that similar agreements are in the offing between Saudi Arabia, on one hand, and Egypt and Jordan, on the other. Crown Prince Mohammad expressed hope that the current Summit will send an upbeat message of a bright future for the youth of the region, realize their aspirations and shed light on "our noble values."

In his address to the summit, US President Joe Biden President Biden said, "A great deal has changed since I visited this region when I served as Vice President of the United States, both on the world stage and in the Middle East." "Around the world, we're seeing efforts to undermine the rules-based order: with China's increasingly coercive actions in the Indo-Pacific and beyond; with Russia's brutal and unprovoked war against its neighboring Ukraine; and with Iran's destabilizing activities.

Here in the Middle East, we've also seen critical changes. "We're going to continue our counterterrorism efforts working with a broad coalition of countries, including everyone around this table." "And we will turn our attention and our resources to supporting our partners, strengthening our alliances, and building coalitions to solve the problems facing this region and the world - and the world today. "Let me state clearly that the United States is going to remain an active, engaged partner in the Middle East.

"As the world grows more competitive and the challenges we face more complex, it is only becoming clearer to me that - how closely interwoven America's interests are with the successes of the Middle East. "We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran," US president said. — KUNA



JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz receives US President Joe Biden as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman looks on behind, at Al-Salman Palace in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah. — AFP

down expectations that his trip would yield immediate gains. "I'm doing all I can to increase the supply for the United States of America," he said, adding concrete results would not be seen "for another couple weeks".

Zionist ties

White House officials have used the trip as a bid to promote integration between Zionist and Arab nations. The issue of the strategic Red Sea islands of Tiran and neighboring Sanafir was also expected to be on Saturday's agenda. Egypt ceded the

grid to Iraq through member states Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

On Yemen, he said Washington and Riyadh agreed to work together to strengthen and extend the ceasefire there, which has been holding since April. Another deal sees international peacekeepers, including US troops, leaving Tiran Island that lies between Saudi Arabia and Egypt by the end of the year. Biden also commended Saudi Arabia's decision to open its air space for all approved commercial flights as a step towards "a more inte-

Russia accused of shelling from captured plant

KYIV: Ukraine's atomic energy agency accused Russia of using Europe's largest nuclear power plant to store weapons and shell the surrounding regions of Nikopol and Dnipro that were hit on Saturday. Petro Kotin, president of Ukrainian nuclear agency Energoatom, called the situation at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant 'extremely tense' with up to 500 Russian soldiers controlling the plant.

The plant in southeast Ukraine has been under Russian control since the early weeks of

US, GCC states to enhance...

Continued from Page 1

Force 59 to strengthen defense coordination between GCC countries and the US Central Command to help detect naval threats and develop naval defenses through the employment of the state-of-art systems and technologies" added the statement said.

The US president and the GCC leaders agreed on buttressing coordination to support efforts aimed at helping with the recovery of the international economy and at addressing the negative economic repercussions which resulted from the COVID-19 pan-

UAE sees possible return of Iranian...

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Middle East. The United States and the Zionist entity, the sworn enemies of Iran, have previously accused the Islamic republic of using drones and missiles to attack US forces and Zionist-linked ships in the Gulf. "The first drone-carrier division of the Iranian navy consisting of ships and submarine units carrying all types of drone for combat, detection and destruction has been unveiled," state television said.

"All types of the latest advanced drones produced by the military and the defense ministry have flown over the Indian Ocean's waters to demonstrate their capabilities," it added, showing images of drones taking off from a naval vessel. The announcement comes

islands in 2016 to Saudi Arabia, but the deal requires Zionist green light - a move that could spur contacts between the Jewish state and Riyadh.

Biden said Friday that a decades-old multinational peacekeeping force, including US troops, would leave Tiran, with the White House adding they would depart by the end of the year. Saudi Arabia has refused to join the US-brokered Abraham Accords which in 2020 created ties between Zionist entity and two of the kingdom's neighbors, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. — AFP

grated, stable, and secure Middle East region."

On technology, Biden said both countries intend to expand their cooperation on "space exploration, including human spaceflight, earth observation, commercial and regulatory development, and responsible behavior in outer space." Saudi technology firms, based on an MoU, will now be able to adopt 5G technology from the US, through open, virtualized and cloudbased radio access networks locally, in addition to the development of 6G cell technology, said the president. — KUNA

Moscow's invasion, though it is still operated by Ukrainian staff. 'The occupiers bring their machinery there, including missile systems, from which they already shell the other side of the river Dnipro and the territory of Nikopol,' he said in a Ukrainian television interview broadcast on Friday.

On Saturday, Russian missiles struck residential buildings in the city of Nikopol, killing two people, Dnipro regional governor Valentin Reznichenko said. In the northeast region around Ukraine's second city of Kharkiv, governor Oleg Synegubov said an overnight Russian missile attack killed three people in the town of Chuhuiv.

In the central Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia, officials said the death toll rose to 24 from Russian strikes after a woman died of her injuries in hospital on Saturday. Ukraine says three children are among the dead. — AFP

demic and the war in Ukraine. "The US welcomed the Arab Coordination Group's decision to provide at least \$10 billion to help with the response to food security challenges regionally and internationally," the statement said, adding that GCC leaders also welcomed the US' decision to provide \$1 billion in near- and long-term food security assistance for the Middle East and North Africa region.

The leaders also praised the efforts of OPEC+ to achieve the stability of global oil markets in a manner that serves the interests of both producers and consumers and welcomed OPEC+ recent decision to increase production in July and August. The US commended the decision of some GCC countries who plan to invest \$3 billion in infrastructure projects in low- and middle-income countries. The US hailed the GCC donation of \$100 million for the Palestinian medical sector, particularly to overhaul East Jerusalem hospitals. — KUNA

as Biden undertakes his first presidential visit to Zionist entity, where he and the Jewish state's caretaker Prime Minister Yair Lapid on Thursday signed a security pact reinforcing their common front against Iran.

Biden's trip also included a presentation of the Zionist entity's "Iron Beam" air defense system, which uses lasers to intercept drones and missiles. "As we are aware of the aggressive attitude in the (United States') system of domination, it is necessary to increase our defensive capabilities day-by-day," Iranian army commander Abdolrahim Mousavi said on television.

"If the enemies make a mistake, (these drones) will present them with a regrettable response," he warned during the unveiling. In October 2021, the United States imposed sanctions targeting Iran's drone programme, accusing it of supplying the technology to its allies in the region, such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, the Huthis of Yemen and the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas in the Gaza Strip. — AFP

US, Saudi sign several deals

RIYADH: US President Joe Biden said he signed several agreements over a broad range of matters during talks with Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Friday. Speaking to reporters after the

Kuwait seeks nuke-free Mideast...

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"We call for more action to advance the peace process based on the international legitimacy, the UN resolutions and the Arab peace initiative to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital," he pointed out. His Highness the Crown Prince called on Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the GCC states, and the international community to rid the Middle East of nuclear weapons.

He also urged more action to prevent terrorist attacks on civilian targets and vital utilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and combat the threats to international shipping routes. On the Ukraine crisis, he called for reaching a political solution based on the rules of the international law and the UN Charter that provide for respecting the sovereignty of states and their territorial safety and political independence.

Meanwhile, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman on Saturday inaugurated Jeddah Security and Development Summit with leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, and the United States, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan attending.

In his inaugural speech, the Crown Prince, the Chair of the Summit and the Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, said the region and the world face critical challenges that require intensified cooperation in the framework of the principles of the UN Charter, foremost among which are respect for sovereignty and values of states, non-interference in domestic affairs of others, and respect for the independence and territorial safety of states.

Crown Prince Mohammad expressed hope that the current summit would lay the groundwork for a new era of enhanced joint action and strategic partnership. "Profound cooperation between our countries and the United States will serve the common interests, and enhance security and development in this vital region and the entire world," he stressed. The big challenges facing the world due to COVID-19 pandemic and the emerging geopolitical changes require concerted international effort to help the world economy recover, and insure food and health security, he pointed out.

"The environmental challenges facing the world, notably the climate change, require strengthened resolve by the international community to keep the temperature of Earth within the limits specified by the Paris Agreement. These challenges need to be addressed through a practical and responsible approach with a view to ensuring sustainable development based on a balanced and sustainable use of energy resources and taking stock of the priorities

International

Sri Lanka's ousted leader says he did 'utmost' for bankrupt nation

Rajapaksa blames COVID for financial meltdown

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's ousted president did his "utmost" to avoid an economic catastrophe but the coronavirus pandemic derailed his efforts, he said in his resignation letter read out to parliament Saturday. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's brief note, sent from the safety of a safe haven in Singapore, blamed COVID-19 for the financial meltdown that triggered months of protests, culminating in his humiliating escape abroad.

"I have contributed my utmost for the country and in the future too, I will contribute for the country," Rajapaksa said in the letter, read to MPs by parliament's Secretary-General Dhammika Dasanayake.

It was not clear whether he was signalling an intention to remain involved in politics from exile. "It is a matter of personal satisfaction for me that I was able to protect our people from the pandemic despite the economic crisis we were already facing," Rajapaksa insisted.

The virus claimed more than 16,500 lives and infected over 660,000 in the nation of 22 million, where Rajapaksa refused to institute a lockdown in the initial wave and told doctors: "Don't panic." One of his cabinet ministers said Sri Lanka did not require foreign vaccines and that local remedies from shamans were more than adequate.

Rajapaksa claimed Sri Lanka's reserves were already low when he took office in November 2019 and

the subsequent pandemic devastated the economy. But critics say the government's mismanagement was a crucial factor.

Official figures show Sri Lanka had \$7.5 billion in foreign exchange reserves when he took over, dropping to just \$1 million by the time he quit. The country is officially bankrupt.

Rajapaksa, 73, came to power in 2019 as a strongman leader but was forced out of his official residence a week ago when it was stormed by thousands of protesters. Parliament is due to elect his permanent successor on Wednesday, after Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe—also an object of the protesters' scorn—was sworn in as an interim replacement. There was no debate on Rajapaksa's letter and the formal session ended after just 13 minutes, but political sources say horse-trading is already underway with no candidate having a guaranteed power bloc.

Wickremesinghe, 73, is a key contender and has the backing of Rajapaksa's SLPP party, but some of its members have said they will not vote for him. Senior SLPP dissident and former media minister Dullas Alahapperuma, 63, said he was also staking a claim, while Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa announced his candidacy on Friday night. Former army chief Sarath Fonseka, 71, also wants to run. —AFP

Ousted president in Singapore



COLOMBO: Demonstrators rest in a makeshift tent at a protest arena near Sri Lankan presidential office in Colombo on July 16, 2022. —AFP

Voters head to the polls in southwest Nigerian state

OSOGBO, Nigeria: Voting began to elect a new governor for Nigeria's southwest Osun state on Saturday, in a final test for next year's presidential elections. The Osun election frontrunners are incumbent governor Gboyega Oyetola of the All Progressives Congress, the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) senator Ademola Adeleke, Akin Ogunbiyi of the Accord Party and Labour's Yusuf Lasun.

Analysts expect the contest to become a two-horse race between old political foes Oyetola, who is seeking re-election, and Adeleke—who lost by less than 500 votes after a re-run four years ago.

The ballot is seen as a battleground for the leading parties to test support for their presidential hopefuls ahead of the February 2023 election as President Muhammadu Buhari steps down following eight years in office. The APC has chosen former Lagos state governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu as its presidential flagbearer.

Tinubu, a Muslim from the southwest, faces a tough challenge from PDP candidate Atiku Abubakar, a northern Muslim. Another frontrunner is the Labour Party's Peter Obi, who has been enjoying growing support among the younger generation in a bid to break the dominance of the APC and PDP.

Oyetola, who enjoys the power of incumbency to boost his chances, has been leveraging on Tinubu's regional popularity to retain the seat for another four years.

Last month, the APC won a governorship vote in nearby Ekiti state with a landslide that confirmed and reinforced Tinubu's strength in the southwest. Osun is among eight of Nigeria's 36 states where governorship elections are not being held at the same time as the rest of the country because of legal challenges to previous results.

Voting was expected to start at 08:30 am (0730 GMT) and end at 2:00 pm on Saturday, but long lines were formed in many polling stations in Osogbo, the state capital, as early as 6:00 am.

According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 1.9 million voters have been registered to participate in the ballot. "Am in the race to win and by the grace of God, I will triumph," a smiling and waving Adeleke told a large crowd as he voted in



EDE, Nigeria: An official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (right) registers a voter at a polling station during the gubernatorial election at Ede in Osun State, southwest Nigeria, on July 16, 2022. —AFP

his hometown of Ede.

Adenike Adeyiola, a 32-year-old university undergraduate, had been queuing since 6:00 am.

"I left home very early so that I can use my vote to elect the governor that will improve the welfare of the people," the student told AFP. —AFP

'Forced adoption': A lifetime of trauma for British mothers

LONDON: Sue O'Callaghan knows the utter despair that thousands of British mothers felt when they were forced to give up their babies. "To go into labor knowing you're going to lose your child... is just absolutely terrifying and the grief never goes away," she told AFP.

O'Callaghan was pregnant with her fourth child around 20 years ago, having already lost access to her other three children after her husband told social services that she was mentally unfit to take care of them. "On my due date... there was a knock on the door. Social services arrived with the police... They took the (children) out of the bath into the police car," she recalled. She then faced the prospect of having her newborn removed at birth.

"I went in to deliver her in hospital under lock and key," she explained. "Social workers were at the door with a car seat ready to take her away."

O'Callaghan, now in her 50s, was able to keep the baby after the psychiatrist on site gave her a clean bill of health. But she said other mothers she now helps were not as lucky, and their babies have been taken from hospital at just five days old. Campaigners and parents warn "forced adoption" is rife today, with thousands of children taken away from their mothers, often because they suffer mental health issues or domestic violence.

'Horrible beyond belief'

"I've watched fathers scream and scream and scream so the whole hospital could hear it. One mother just went silent. She just didn't speak for about three months. "I wish people could see what happens because my experience is people say 'there's no smoke without fire'."

"But the trauma and the horror, even for the baby is unimaginable. You don't treat animals that way. You don't treat human beings like that. It's horrible beyond belief."

O'Callaghan eventually won her legal fight, but the



LONDON, UK: People protest against state forced family separations and adoptions outside Central Family Court and Court of Protection in London. —AFP

trauma of the experience left her and her children suffering panic attacks. She emigrated to New Zealand with her children, who are now in their late teens and early twenties. She now campaigns for an overhaul of the system, and has written a book, "Taken", which describes her story—and that of hundreds of other mothers in Britain every year.

O'Callaghan complained the decision to take her children away was made by social workers and psychiatrists who had little contact with the family. "The minute I walked in that door for a series of assessments over a three-month period, I knew the report about me had already been written," she said from her home in Auckland.

asked all districts to be on alert," she said.

The patient's primary contacts have also been isolated while passengers who came in contact with him on his flight have been told to monitor themselves for symptoms. Monkeypox is an infectious disease caused by a virus transmitted to humans by infected animals. Human-to-human transmission is possible but considered rare. A surge in monkeypox infections has been reported since early May outside the West and Central African countries where the disease has long been endemic.

So far, confirmed cases in non-endemic areas are generally mild and no deaths have been reported.

It is considered much less dangerous and contagious than smallpox, which was eradicated more than 40 years ago. The first symptoms of monkeypox are a fever above 38.5 degrees Celsius,

headaches, muscle pain and back pain during the course of five days.

Rashes subsequently appear on the face, the palms of hands and soles of feet, followed by lesions, spots and finally scabs. Transmission comes through close and prolonged contact between two people, principally via saliva or the pus of scabs formed during infection. Most monkeypox infections so far have been observed in men who have sex with men, of young age and chiefly in urban areas, according to the WHO. The disease has a fatality rate of between one and 10 percent depending on the variant—there are two in endemic countries.

But medical care significantly reduces the risk. Most people recover on their own and outbreaks usually die out on their own due to low transmissibility of the virus. —AFP

Lanka political crisis: What happens next?

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has been sworn in as acting president after his predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled to Singapore and resigned following months of protests over the country's financial meltdown. AFP looks at how cash-strapped Sri Lanka ended up in its worst-ever economic crisis, and what comes next in its complicated, corrupt and sometimes violent political system.

Why did Rajapaksa flee?

Sri Lanka's financial woes were triggered by the coronavirus pandemic but exacerbated by mismanagement under Rajapaksa's government. The country has been unable to finance even the most essential imports since late last year, and has since defaulted on its debt. Discontent had been mounting for months over severe food and fuel shortages, record inflation and lengthy power cuts. Even Rajapaksa's closest allies began abandoning him, and when protesters overran his official residence in Colombo last weekend, he was forced to flee to a navy base in fear for his life. He escaped first to the Maldives, then travelled on to Singapore.

Wasn't Rajapaksa popular?

Rajapaksa was dubbed "The Terminator" for ruthlessly crushing Tamil rebels as head of the defense ministry during his elder brother Mahinda's presidency between 2005 and 2015. He was loved by his Sinhala Buddhist majority, but loathed by Tamils and Muslims who saw him as a war criminal, a racist and an oppressor of minorities. When inflation crossed 50 percent, and with four out of five people forced to skip meals because of acute shortages, the ethnically divided nation united in its opposition to Rajapaksa.

Why an acting president?

Rajapaksa formally quit on July 14, just 32 months into his five-year term, with prime minister Wickremesinghe automatically elevated as the acting leader under the country's constitution. Wickremesinghe is serving as a stop-gap until the 225-seat parliament elects one of its members to lead the country for the balance of Rajapaksa's term. The legislature's Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana has scheduled the vote for Wednesday.

How does election work?

The 225 MPs will rank the candidates in order of preference in a secret ballot. Candidates need more than half the vote to be elected. If no-one crosses the threshold on first preferences, the candidate with the lowest support will be eliminated and their votes distributed according to second preferences, and so on until someone reaches the mark.

Who are likely candidates?

Acting President Wickremesinghe, the pro-Western six-time prime minister, is the front runner after he secured the support of the Rajapaksa's SLPP, which is still the largest single bloc in parliament. The SLPP has more than 100 seats and if party discipline holds, Wickremesinghe is almost certain to be elected. But the party is fractured so that unity is not guaranteed, and SLPP dissident Dullas Alahapperuma, 63, a former media minister, is a serious challenger.

Sajith Premadasa, 55, the main opposition leader, announced Friday that he would also enter the fray. A possible fourth contender is former army chief Sarath Fonseka, 71, a nemesis of the Rajapaksa family. The secret ballot gives MPs a freer hand than an open poll, and previous elections have seen allegations of bribes offered and accepted in exchange for votes. During a constitutional crisis in October 2018, some MPs said they had been offered \$3.5 million in cash and apartments abroad for their support.

What does this mean for IMF?

Despite their differences, Sri Lanka's political parties are united in their support for ongoing talks with the International Monetary Fund, with Wickremesinghe saying a bailout is urgently needed. Sri Lanka declared itself bankrupt in mid-April when the government defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt. But the political crisis has interrupted the negotiations, and the IMF said Thursday that it hoped the unrest would be resolved soon so they could resume. No political party in the current parliament has a clear majority, and even if the country could afford to hold a fresh election, Tamil legislator Dharmalingam Sithadthan pointed out that a strong mandate was not always a guarantee of stability or success. —AFP

India reports first case of monkeypox

NEW DELHI: India has reported its first confirmed case of monkeypox after a 35-year-old man with a history of travel to the Middle East showed symptoms, officials said. The federal government rushed a multi-disciplinary team to the southern state of Kerala in view of the confirmed case of monkeypox there, according to an official statement.

The man, who travelled from the United Arab Emirates to Kerala on Tuesday, was in stable condition and isolated at a hospital, the state's health minister Veena George told reporters Thursday. "He is stable and all his vital signs are normal. We have

SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2022

Business

S&P Global revises its Kuwait outlook to stable from negative

Kuwait's budget to be in surplus of 11.5% of GDP in 2022

KUWAIT: S&P Global Ratings revised its outlook on Kuwait to stable from negative and affirmed the 'A+/A-' long- and short-term foreign- and local-currency sovereign credit ratings. The transfer and convertibility assessment remains at 'AA-'.

Outlook

The stable outlook primarily reflects the favorable oil price and domestic production prospects over the next two years. It is also based on our expectations that Kuwait will implement additional fiscal financing mechanisms on top of withdrawals from the government's main treasury buffer, the General Reserve Fund (GRF). This could, for example, include unblocking longstanding constraints on borrowing, by introducing a new debt law, which would allow a wider range of financing options when fiscal deficits re-emerge at a future time.



Downside scenario

We could lower the rating if no sustainable comprehensive financing arrangements are agreed over the next two to three years. This could happen, for instance, because of ongoing tensions between the government and parliament rendering the government unable to implement fiscal reforms, pass the debt law, or authorize other necessary budget-financing mechanisms.

We could also lower the rating if we concluded that the government would not have full ready access to the Future Generations Fund (main portion of Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund: FGF) for budgetary and debt repayment needs, contrary to our current assumption.

Upside scenario

We could raise the rating if the government successfully implemented a comprehensive structural reform package aimed at improving fiscal financing mechanisms, diversifying the economy and reducing the non-oil deficit. We view this scenario as unlikely over the next two to three years.

Rationale

The outlook revision to stable primarily reflects a significant further increase in the price of oil (Kuwait's key export item) in recent months, which we expect to be sustained until at least the end of 2023. Although we still expect oil prices to average \$55 per barrel (/bbl) from 2024, we project an average oil price of just above

\$100/bbl for 2022 and \$85/bbl for 2023. We estimate that at current spending levels, an oil price of around \$75-\$80 balances Kuwait's fiscal books.

Additionally, OPEC+ production quotas are continuing to ease, with Kuwait increasing oil sector output, which also supports fiscal revenue and economic growth. We consider that these favorable terms of trade developments will allow Kuwait to overcome past fiscal financing pressures in place during 2020-2021. Kuwait has previously faced liquidity constraints since liquidity at the government's main treasury buffer, the GRF, had diminished substantially by the end of last year while alternative financing arrangements, such as the passage of debt law allowing the government to borrow or authorization to withdraw resources from the much larger FGF were not in place.

We estimate that the GRF is being replenished at the current oil prices and the cumulative fiscal surplus over 2022-2023 should allow Kuwait to cover the deficit we forecast for 2024 and part of 2025. Beyond the projected fiscal deficits over 2024-2025, Kuwait faces limited government financing needs over the forecast horizon through 2025.

Following the repayment of a \$3.5 billion Eurobond in March, Kuwait's general government debt now stands at just 3.5 percent of GDP. We expect Kuwait's interest expenditure to remain low over the next four years, amounting to under 1 percent of revenue on average. The outlook revision and affirmation are also based on our base-case scenario that Kuwait will adopt measures diversifying its sources of fiscal financing over the next two to three years. Without additional reforms, such as passage of the debt law, authorization to more readily access the FGF or optimizing public sector spending, fiscal deficits are set to return by 2024 with Kuwait potentially returning to GRF depletion once again.

We forecast Kuwait's economy will grow by 8 percent in 2022, followed by 5.5 percent in 2023, mostly on account of rising oil production as OPEC+ cuts are discontinued. Tensions between the government and parliament remain elevated, as in the past, resulting in policy paralysis and lack of structural reform implementation. Nevertheless, we expect that over the next two years the authorities will adopt measures diversifying Kuwait's sources of financing, such as the debt law, either via parliamentary vote or through a decree issued by HH the Amir.

Kuwait's economy depends heavily on oil, which makes up an estimated 90 percent of exports and government revenue. The oil sector directly constitutes nearly 50 percent of the country's GDP and even more if we take oil-related activities into account. Consequently, Kuwait is set to notably benefit from the currently favorable terms of its trade. We expect oil prices to average \$102/bbl this year, followed by \$85/bbl in 2023 and \$55/bbl from 2024. In parallel, Kuwait's oil output has been rising in line with OPEC+ production cuts being gradually phased out. Kuwait's oil production averaged 2.4 million bbl per day (mmbpd) in 2021 and we expect it will rise to 2.75 mmbpd in 2022 and 3 mmbpd in 2023,

remaining in compliance with OPEC+ agreements. Kuwait is also aiming to increase oil production to 3.5 mmbpd by 2025. This is based on additional investments to increase output at existing fields, as well as fuller use of the partially idle production within the Partitioned Neutral Zone with Saudi Arabia. It is not certain whether these targets will be successfully met as early as 2025, but we still expect production to increase further to 3.1 mmbpd in 2024 and 3.2 mmbpd in 2025 from the current levels.

We consider that domestic pandemic-related risks

settle these and, amid stronger fiscal performance, we expect this issue will be addressed by the end of 2022.

Mirroring its strong government asset position, Kuwait's balance-of-payments position is also solid and supports the sovereign rating. We estimate that at year-end 2021 its net external creditor position was equivalent to about 480 percent of GDP, which is among the strongest of all rated sovereigns. We estimate that Kuwait posted a current account surplus in 2021 of 21 percent of GDP, supported by recovering oil prices and production volumes, as well as primary income receipts from manag-

- As a major oil exporter, Kuwait is set to benefit from the favorable oil price and production outlook, which we expect will persist until at least the end of 2023.

- Kuwait will run a cumulative general government surplus of 18% of GDP over 2022-2023, given the estimate of the breakeven oil price of around \$75-\$80, which will allow the authorities to replenish liquidity in the previously depleted main treasury buffer, the General Reserve Fund (GRF).

- The authorities will adopt measures diversifying Kuwait's sources of financing over the next two years, so that the previous fiscal funding impasse with the depletion of liquidity at the GRF does not recur, even if oil prices fall below current levels, as we forecast they will in 2024-2025.

have effectively abated. Kuwait has vaccinated about 85 percent of the population and all previous internal restrictions have been lifted, which supports economic activity in the non-oil sector. Overall, we now project economic growth at 8 percent this year and 5.5 percent in 2023, mainly on account of rising oil output. We expect this to be followed by more modest growth rates of around 2 percent over 2024-2025.

Beyond the favorable economic environment for Kuwait in the near future, its structural reforms continue to persistently lag peers'. Apart from Qatar, Kuwait remains the only country in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that has still not implemented value-added tax (VAT), while cutting spending is difficult politically, given that most represents public sector wages and subsidies.

With currently favorable oil prices and rising oil production volumes, we estimate that the GRF is being replenished. We forecast Kuwait's general government budget will be in surplus of 11.5 percent of GDP in 2022, followed by a 6.3 percent of GDP surplus in 2023.

The additional liquidity accumulated over 2022-2023 should allow Kuwait to cover the fiscal deficit in 2024 and part of 2025. We forecast a general government deficit of about 14 percent of GDP annually in 2024-2025 against our expectations. Reports of late payments to public entities and suppliers emerged at the beginning of this year, indicating liquidity pressures at the GRF. We understand that the government is currently taking measures to

ing the sizable stock of KIA assets.

We forecast the current account surpluses will average 30 percent of GDP over 2022-2023 before gradually diminishing to 5 percent-7 percent of GDP over 2024-2025. We expect Kuwait's exchange rate will remain pegged to an undisclosed basket of currencies. This basket is dominated by the US dollar, the currency in which most of Kuwaiti exports are priced and transacted. Although this monetary regime has served Kuwait well in the past, we note that it constrains the country's ability to conduct an independent monetary policy to help cushion against fluctuations in the economic cycle. The local currency debt market is also less developed than that of similarly rated peers. Similar to trends in other countries, inflation has been rising in Kuwait and we project it will average 4 percent in 2022. This is still notably lower than in most developed and emerging markets.

The difference is primarily explained by sizable government subsidies, particularly for energy, which has been among the key factors driving inflation up elsewhere. Across the Kuwaiti banking sector, nonperforming loans (NPLs) were low entering the pandemic in 2020. Banks' high provisioning buffers allowed them to write off exposures with manageable adverse effects on earnings and asset quality. We now expect NPLs and cost of risk to gradually normalize on the back of a more supportive economic environment. We also expect that higher interest rates will support banks' profitability.



COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: People wait in a queue to refill their Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders at a gasoline distribution point in Colombo.— AFP

Sri Lankans queue at pumps for days with no promise of petrol

COLOMBO: Out of gas and stuck in line for days, a group of motorists kick off their shoes and settle on a sidewalk in Sri Lanka's capital for a round of cards. Emergency curfews, tear gas plumes and the sudden departure and resignation of the president have all failed to budge the long vehicle queues snaking out of Colombo's empty petrol stations. Chronic fuel shortages have been a source of frustration for months but are now worse than ever, with some people waiting in line for days without any guarantee of a refill.

"I have been here for four days," said Vipul Dissanayaka, the driver of one of the city's ubiquitous three-wheel motor taxis. The 56-year-old would normally be ferrying people around the city, but in recent months, the increasing time spent waiting for fuel has made his work all but impossible. "Innocent people are suffering," he told AFP. "Petrol is how we live. This is how we feed our children." Car drivers nearby wait listlessly behind the steering wheel in the city's tropical heat, while motorcyclists without the luxury of a reclining seat unfurl rattan mats to nap on the ground.

No one wants to yield their spot after waiting for so long, even as unrest sparked by Sri Lanka's painful financial crisis has convulsed nearby streets. They stayed in

place even as protesters-furious over the government's economic mismanagement-braved tear gas barrages to storm the home of the president, who later fled the country in an early-hours military flight before emailing his resignation Thursday from Singapore. And they shrugged off a curfew directing people to return home so that troops could restore order.

'Going backwards'

So far they have waited in vain, as Sri Lanka's depleted reserves of foreign currency have left the country struggling to pay for fresh imports. The resulting local shortages have been a huge source of public anger, with local media reporting sporadic clashes outside fuel stations and the deaths of more than a dozen people while waiting in line. Weeks ago, troops opened fire to disperse a mob that was protesting members of the military jumping the queue for refills. The government last month shut down non-essential public services to save fuel, ordered another hike in petrol costs, and then suspended petrol sales for two weeks.

Only a small fraction of vehicles remain on the road, including overcrowded commuter buses and motorists able to afford black market prices of up to 3000 rupees (\$8.30) per liter. Sri Lanka's energy minister said this week another maritime petrol delivery from India would arrive in the country by next Tuesday at the latest, provided weather allowed it to dock at port. But the resupply is unlikely to temper frustrations that have grown in tandem with the wait time between new shipments. "There is no fuel, children are not going to school, prices are very high," Gihan Martyn, a resident of Colombo, told AFP. "Day by day, the country is going backwards." — AFP

Rattled and uncertain of its future, Twitter stumbles on

SAN FRANCISCO: Anxious employees, wary advertisers and hamstrung management: Twitter is limping along as it waits to learn how the fight over Elon Musk's buyout bid will end. Just days before the first court hearing in Twitter's lawsuit seeking to force the Tesla boss to close the \$44 billion deal, the firm is stuck in limbo.

"The best conclusion for me would be that he leaves us alone, so that we can go on our merry way," an engineer at the key social media network told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The engineer spoke of employees departing and a "climate of uncertainty that does not leave one with a peaceful state of mind." "We're still trying to do our work normally, because the main reasons why we chose to work for Twitter still hold true," he added. But there's been nothing normal about Musk's unsolicited bid that he's now backed away from, saying Twitter has obfuscated on the number of fake accounts on the platform.

He has harangued the network, on its own platform no less, with mocking tweets about its management and direction. "Musk's repeated disparagement of Twitter and its personnel, create uncertainty... that harm Twitter and its stockholders," the firm's lawyers argued in their lawsuit lodged this week. The billionaire's comments "also expose Twitter to adverse effects on its business operations, employees, and stock price," the lawyers added. A judge has set the first hearing in the case for Tuesday in a court in the eastern state of Delaware.

Sluggish ad sales

"Twitter is facing a huge image crisis, and confidence in its leadership is wavering," eMarketer analyst Debra Williamson told AFP. "But whether the Musk situation has affected its revenues is unclear."

She said the most loyal advertisers have likely stuck around, but those less committed to Twitter may have scaled back their spending while waiting for the endgame. Angelo Carusone, president of watchdog group Media Matters, thinks the damage is already done

because Musk has been a frequent critic of content moderation. The fight against hate and disinformation is widely defended internally, but also by many advertisers, concerned that their brands are not associated with toxic messages. Carusone said that in early May, at an annual marketing event where companies negotiate large advertising deals, Twitter was "not able to give advertisers any clarity or confidence" that it would continue to be safe showcase for them. "They didn't go anywhere close to what they normally sell at that event. And it's obviously been sluggish since then," he added.

The San Francisco-based social network cannot afford to lose customers. Unlike big fish such as Google and Facebook parent Meta, which dominate online advertising and make billions in profits, Twitter lost hundreds of millions of dollars in 2020 and 2021.

The group will capture less than one percent of global ad revenue in 2022, according to eMarketer, compared to 12.5 percent for Facebook, 9 percent for Instagram and nearly two percent for booming upstart TikTok. On top of that, Twitter's user base is barely expected to grow and may even shrink in the United States, noted Williamson, the eMarketer analyst.

'Twitter can't meaningfully respond'

Musk once had potential Twitter investors salivating with his talk of growing revenue fivefold and aiming for a billion users by 2028. Instead, a court battle is building to "end either with Twitter being owned by an unhappy investor who decided he didn't want it after all, or with Twitter on its own and weaker than it was before this all started," Williamson added.

The battle is set to last for months, and at a time when economic headwinds are steady and firms need to be nimble to monetize new audio and video formats, diversify revenue sources and attract younger audiences. "At least Facebook can respond to current threats, even if they're responding poorly, they can respond," said Carusone, the Media Matters president.

"What Twitter cannot do right now is meaningfully respond to anything." The social network's lawyers have blamed Musk for withholding consent for two employee retention programs "designed to keep selected top talent during a period of intense uncertainty generated in large part by Musk's erratic conduct." Internally, some employees have also lost confidence in management, which they would have liked to be more combative in dealing with the world's richest person.—AFP

Business

KFH wins 'Best Bank in Kuwait & Best Islamic Finance Bank' awards for 2022

Outstanding appreciation for KFH by Euromoney Magazine

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) won "Best Bank in Kuwait" and "Best Islamic Finance Bank for 2022" awards by Euromoney Magazine, as part of Euromoney's annual prestigious awards.

The two awards are an outstanding appreciation for KFH's contributions and robust position in shaping the Islamic

financial indicators, sustainable profits, business growth and development, qualifying distinguished human talents, young national talents in particular, is a result of a clear and well-identified business strategy that is translated into designing plans closely monitored by the Board and its committees, and evaluated periodically by



Fahad Khaled Al-Mukhaizeem receives the awards.

finance and banking sector in Kuwait and the world. The selection relied on a set of criteria in choosing the best bank sector-wide in Kuwait, which includes key banking activities, diverse and comprehensive financing services, financial solvency, performance indicators, in addition to innovation, size and ability of the bank to achieve sustainable growth, coping with evolving market conditions, meeting customers' needs, as well as technological development and the success in moving forward in the digital transformation strategy.

KFH Group Chief Strategy Officer Fahad Khaled Al-Mukhaizeem said in a press statement during a ceremony held in Dubai in the presence of senior bankers, businessmen and media representatives that the success KFH attains in terms of positive

the Executive Management, in line with the recent local, regional and global market developments.

He noted that the two and the different awards KFH has recently received are an indicative that KFH has the infrastructure for achieving continuing success, offering innovative and novel solutions as per the latest global banking developments. KFH has succeeded in establishing an integrated system of technological, financial, and banking services and has been able to harmonize between adherence to Sharia rules and applications and the latest banking technology. Despite the increased competition in the Kuwaiti market between conventional banks from one side and between conventional and Islamic banks from another side, KFH has always topped the market

- **Al-Mukhaizeem: Awards reflect the solid performance, financial strength, and quality of financing portfolio diversification**
- **Our market share is increasing despite the competition, our financing abilities are inclusive and global**
- **Our strategy and infrastructure are major elements of further success**

share, ranked the biggest in market value and best in customer service.

Al-Mukhaizeem expressed his pride in choosing KFH as the best bank in Kuwait for the year 2022 and the best bank in Islamic Finance, underlining the evident contributions KFH has achieved in the Islamic Finance sector in every market and the underpinned basis for sustainable growth of Islamic finance in the future, which paved the way for making the Islamic finance industry an influential sector in global economy. This allowed the Bank to be a major participant in mega development projects and provide the needed financing to institutions and individuals, while arranging deals for infrastructure plans. Thanks to the diversification of its financing portfolio, KFH expertise covers many vital sectors such as oil and gas, large facilities in addition to offering credit to major companies in the retail, construction, transport, industrial and telecommunication sectors taking into consideration the focus on financing SMEs for its role in diversifying sources of national income, offering job opportunities and strengthening the role of the private sector.

Euromoney is one of the most prominent financial magazines involved in covering and recognizing the banking and financial activities in the world's banking sector in both conventional and Islamic banks. Its awards are reliable and credible worldwide. Today, Euromoney is the primary magazine of the wholesale financial world, its institutions and its users, and has been for more than 50 years.

The magazine brings authoritative coverage of banking, capital markets, investment, foreign exchange, treasury and payments, fintech and sustainable finance across the world. In addition to news and opinion, its in-depth feature articles provide unrivalled insight into the forces and people driving the global financial markets

today. The awards are granted to the reputable institutions based on an evaluation carried out by a team of editors, journalists, and researchers, after which the evaluation is compared to Euromoney research and the available data on the market before decisions are made by its editorial committee on the winning banks.



بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House



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KUWAIT
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AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE
KUWAIT
BEST BANK FOR
ISLAMIC FINANCE
2022

**Best Bank for
Islamic Finance in
Kuwait**

Business

A quiet telework revolution in Japan's rigid business culture

Firms working to digitize operations and offer more flexibility to staff

TOKYO: Posted far from home for his job at Japanese conglomerate Hitachi, father of two Tsutomu Kojima was "really lonely" until he began working remotely during the pandemic for the first time. COVID-19 has upended office routines worldwide, but in Japan—where punishing hours and reliance on paper files, ink stamps and fax machines has long been the norm—some say the shake-up was sorely needed. Pre-pandemic, just nine percent of the Japanese workforce had ever teleworked, compared with 32 percent in the United States and 22 percent in Germany, according to Tokyo-based consultancy firm Nomura Research Institute.

But a quiet revolution in the country's rigid business culture is underway, with firms working to digitize operations and offer more flexibility to staff who were once expected to stay late, go drinking with the boss and accept far-flung transfers. Kojima used to live alone in accommodation provided by Hitachi near Tokyo, an hour and a half by bullet train from his family in Nagoya.

Back then he would return only twice a month, but now the 44-year-old works exclusively from home, and says he is more productive and closer to his teenage daughters.

"I have more time to help them with their studies. My youngest told me she hopes things stay like this," he told AFP. "I used to feel really lonely" in Tokyo, Kojima said, but he has since realized that "true balance means not giving up on family".

Old habits

Nearly a third of jobs in Japan were done remotely during the first COVID wave in spring 2020, the Japan Productivity Center says, even though the government never imposed strict stay-at-home orders. The rate has since fallen to 20 per-

cent, but that is still far higher than before the pandemic, according to quarterly surveys by the non-profit organization.

To encourage telework, the government and some companies made efforts to phase out personalized ink stamps used to certify documents, as well as the ubiquitous fax machine. Often in Japan, "business has to be done in person, on paper", habits dating back to the 1970s and 80s, when the Japanese economy was booming, said Hiroshi Ono, a professor at Hitotsubashi University specializing in human resources.

"One of the things COVID has done is bring those barriers down: work doesn't have to be done at the office, men can work at home," he told AFP. Companies are realizing that new ways of working can be more efficient, he added.

"Before COVID, it was so important for employees to show that they're working hard, instead of actually producing results."

'New balance'

Reflecting trends elsewhere, people are also fleeing the big city. A record number of company headquarters moved out of Tokyo last year, according to Teikoku Databank, while the capital's population decreased for the first time in 26 years.

Among those who have upped sticks are Kazuki and Shizuka Kimura, who left their cramped Tokyo apartment for a custom-built house near the sea. The couple now mostly do their jobs in communication and marketing remotely from Fujisawa, southwest of the capital, having struggled to both work from home in Tokyo. "It was really COVID that made us take this decision," said Kazuki Kimura, who used to seek out other places to do meetings—at his parents' home or in cafes, remote-work boxes set up



FUJISAWA, Japan: In this picture taken on June 30, 2022 Kazuki Kimura works in his house in Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture. —AFP

in train stations, and even karaoke booths.

"Sometimes you could hear singing from the booth next door," which made it difficult to concentrate, recalls the 33-year-old, who is now learning to surf. Shizuka Kimura, 29, thinks "more and more people are now prioritizing their wellbeing, rather than their job", but questions how quickly things will change on a wider scale.

This is a concern shared by Hiromi Murata, an

expert at Recruit Works Institute, who says smaller companies may be slower to adapt to new work styles than big firms like Hitachi, Panasonic or telecoms giant NTT. Remote work can also pose a problem for training new recruits, because "you learn on the job", Murata said.

"Before, it was so important to meet in the office... each business must find a new balance, in their own way and time." —AFP

European car sales slump 14% in H1

BRUSSELS: EU auto sales slumped by 14 percent in the first half of this year, data showed Friday, as supply shortages continued to plague manufacturers. With the lack of computer chips still hobbling production, new auto sales slumped to 4.6 million in the European Union, data from the European Automobile Manufacturers Association showed.

Sales in Italy tumbled by 22.7 percent, by 16.3 percent in France, 11 percent in Germany and 10.7 percent in Spain. Sales in non-EU Britain fell by 11.9 percent.

Sales also fell by 15.4 percent in June compared to the same month last year, the eleventh consecutive monthly drop. For the past year the automobile industry has been plagued by a lack of computer chips that control many automotive systems, as chipmakers were unable to keep up with demand as the world economy rebounded from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the situation with computer chips is improving, European car manufacturers were hit by the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a number of component manufacturers were located there. Economic uncertainty triggered by the war, the spike in prices it has caused, and rising interest rates may hinder a recovery in sales going forward as consumers cut back on spending on big-ticket items.

Volkswagen retained its place at the top of rankings, but the German group's market share slipped from 25.8 to 24.1 percent during the first half of the year. Sales fell by 19.4 percent to 1.35 million vehicles. Stellantis also saw its market share fall, sliding from 21.3 to 19.4 percent as sales by the European-American automaker plunged by 21.1 percent to 1.09 million vehicles.

Hyundai-Kia meanwhile saw its sales jump 12.6 percent to 556,369 vehicles, helping the Korean manufacturer expand its market share from 7.6 to 9.9 percent. Renault saw its sales slide by seven percent to 522,315 vehicles. But the French group nevertheless saw its market share climb from 8.7 to 9.3 percent. The only manufacturer to register an increase in sales in Europe in the first half of the year was Honda, but it sold just 37,113 vehicles and held less than one percent market share. —AFP

China growth falls to two-year low on COVID, property woes

BEIJING: China logged its slowest economic growth since the initial COVID outbreak Friday, expanding just 0.4 percent in the second quarter with lockdowns and property market weakness pushing the government's target further out of reach.

Beijing has dug its heels in on a zero-COVID policy of stamping out virus clusters with snap lockdowns and long quarantines, but this has battered businesses and kept consumers jittery. The slowdown comes after China's biggest city Shanghai was sealed off for two months as it battled a virus resurgence, tangling supply chains and forcing factories to halt operations.

"Domestically, the impact of the epidemic is linger-

ing," National Bureau of Statistics spokesman Fu Linghui said Friday, noting shrinking demand and disrupted supplies. "The risk of stagflation in the world economy is rising" also, he told reporters, adding that external uncertainties were growing.

Economic expansion for the April-June period in the world's second-largest economy was also down 2.6 percent from the previous quarter, the NBS said. China has only logged a GDP contraction once in recent decades, and analysts expect the latest reading will drag further on full-year growth.

Still, industrial production rose 3.9 percent on-year in June, up from 0.7 percent in May as Covid controls eased, while retail sales picked up 3.1 percent after plummeting 6.7 percent the month before, in what analysts called an encouraging sign. The economy is "on track for a slow recovery", said Zhiwei Zhang of Pinpoint Asset Management. "Nonetheless, economic growth is still much lower than its potential, as the fear of COVID outbreaks continues to hurt consumer and corporate sentiment," he added in a note. The urban

US retail sales zoom higher in June despite high prices

WASHINGTON: US retail sales shot up in June amid the ongoing surge in prices, according to new data Friday that spelled more bad news for the Federal Reserve as it struggles to rein in rampant inflation. The data showed that after pausing in May, American consumers last month were still eating out and buying furniture and cars, even amid the fastest inflation in more than four decades.

That poses a challenge for the US central bank, which has been hoping to see more decisive signs that its aggressive interest rate hikes were starting to take the economy off the boil and tamp down high prices. Increased costs for gas, food and housing have squeezed American families and heaped pressure on President Joe Biden, whose approval ratings have taken a battering from the relentless rise in prices and fears of recession.

While inflation was already picking up speed last year as the world's largest economy emerged from the pandemic and demand outstripped supply, the price surge worsened in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine that has led to increased costs for energy and food.

Meanwhile, the US manufacturing sector, which has struggled with global pandemic supply constraints, saw output drop again in June, according to new Fed data Friday. But consumers appear to be feeling a bit better about the current state of the economy, according to a new survey, defying expectations of a continued slump.

Back with a vengeance

After total retail sales dipped 0.1 percent in May, they recovered with a vengeance last month, climbing one percent to \$680.6 billion, the Commerce Department said. Record gas prices at the pump in June were a major fac-

tor, boosting sales at gasoline stations 3.6 percent in the month, and an eye-watering 49.1 percent over the past year, the report said. But the data showed increases were widespread, and sales were still up 0.7 percent even when gasoline is removed from the calculation.

As inflation picked up speed, the Fed started raising the benchmark borrowing rate in March, and last month increased it by 0.75 percentage point, the biggest hike in nearly 30 years. But talk has now shifted to the possibility of a massive, full-point increase later this month, and



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo, sign outside a souvenir shop advertises items on sale for five dollars as tourists walk along Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles. —AFP

Federal Reserve's decision later this month on interest rates, with the solid growth giving policymakers license to hike rates more aggressively.

Markets had taken a major knock this week from news that annual US inflation zoomed to a new 40-year high of 9.1 percent in June on energy costs. After rate increases by several countries, investors now expect the Fed to hike by 75 basis points later this month, as officials battle to cool soaring prices, though some observers suggest a one-percentage-point move could even be on the cards. While experts warn that raising US rates risks hammering the economy, the Fed has made it clear the number-one priority is bringing down inflation.

Meanwhile, Citigroup's net profits fell by 27

percent to \$4.5 billion, yet earnings per share easily beat expectations. The banking group took in more revenue and benefited from rising interest rates.

Citigroup shares jumped more than 13 percent. The blue-chip Dow Jones Industrial Average led the major US indices, climbing 2.2 percent to 31,288.26, snapping a five-day losing streak. European stocks also finished the day sharply higher. In Asia, Hong Kong and mainland Chinese equity markets led losses after data showed China's economy grew just 0.4 percent in the second quarter, battered by COVID lockdowns in major cities including Shanghai and Beijing. The reading was well off the 1.6-percent growth predicted by analysts in an AFP survey. —AFP

Stocks jump as US consumers keep spending

NEW YORK: Stocks soared Friday after retail sales data showed that US consumers continue to spend more in the latest signal of the economy's resilience despite high inflation and rising interest rates. Better-than-expected results from Citigroup also helped temper concerns about what lies ahead for investors as more companies report second-quarter results.

The euro held above \$1.00, having sunk

below parity this week on fears Russia would cut off Europe's gas supplies in retaliation for Ukraine war sanctions. Oil prices rebounded, after slumping Thursday on recession fears.

Wall Street pushed higher on a better-than-expected 1.0 percent rise in retail sales in June. While not adjusted for inflation, sales were still up 0.7 percent even when gasoline was removed from the calculation, according to the Commerce Department data.

"This could be good news for US GDP which suggests that the economy may well avoid a contraction in (the second quarter), and ergo a technical recession," said analyst Michael Hewson at CMC Markets.

The figure was also looked at through the prism of how it might affect the US



Tree climber Jose Raimundo Ferreira, 42, known as 'Zelao', carries his equipment during a scientific field expedition along the Manicore river in the Amazon rainforest, municipality of Manicore, Amazonas State, Brazil.



Tree climber Jose Raimundo Ferreira, known as 'Zelao', prepares his equipment to climb a tree during a scientific field expedition.



Tree climber Jose Raimundo Ferreira, known as 'Zelao', collects botanical samples from tree tops during a scientific field expedition. — AFP photos

THE RISKY BUSINESS OF AMAZONIAN TREE CLIMBERS

A botanist looks up at a man dangling 20 meters (yards) above ground in a tree that belongs to an endangered species in Brazil's Amazon. "Cut another branch, Zelao," she cries out. Brandishing telescopic pruning clippers, 42-year-old Jose Raimundo Ferreira, known as Zelao, expertly manipulates the tool and a branch of the itauba, whose wood is prized for use in making boats, falls at the scientist's feet.

Zelao is one of the few people able to climb these Amazonian trees in a matter of seconds. Botanist Marta Pereira, who is delighted to have secured his services, says there are only about 20 people who can do what he does. "For us, they're vital... without them we wouldn't have any samples," said Pereira, a researcher at the Amazon state university. These tree climbers are even more important in an area where scientists believe they know only about 30 percent of the biodiversity.

Dressed in just a T-shirt and Bermuda



Tree climber Jose Raimundo Ferreira, known as 'Zelao', collects botanical samples from tree tops during a scientific field expedition.

shorts, Zelao climbs five or six times a day up trees that can reach 50 meters (some 164 feet) in height. He collects fruit, leaves or cuts branches. He also installs cameras on tree tops to film birds and monkeys. For security he has a harness, a rope and thick rubber-soled

boots. Sometimes he clammers from one tree to another. "It is very risky and requires a lot of technique, a lot of physical preparation," said Zelao, adding that he has already undergone surgery four times on damaged ligaments.

Even so, he has no intention of slow-



ing down. "It's very difficult to find a climber. My schedule is booked until December 20," he said. Even though his profession is highly sought after, these tree climbers have no job security. They are paid by the day, with no contracts and no social security. "Their work

should be regularized as field technicians and they should get training," said Pereira. Despite the risks, Zelao intends on passing on the baton to his 19- and 21-year-old sons once his body says stop.—AFP



Butterflies are seen in the bank of Manicore river at the Amazonia rainforest, Amazonas state, Brazil. — AFP photos



An ichthyofauna scientist from the National Institute for Amazonian Research (INPA) looks for specimens in a stream, during a scientific field expedition at the Amazonia rainforest, in the banks of Manicore river, Amazonas state, Brazil.



Scientist Lucia Rapp Py-Daniel, of the ichthyofauna team of the National Institute for Amazonian Research (INPA) collects specimens during a scientific field expedition at the Amazonia rainforest, in the banks of Manicore river.

Race to find Brazil Amazon species before they disappear

In a remote part of the Brazilian Amazon, a scientific expedition is cataloguing species. Time is of the essence. "The rate of destruction is faster than the rate of discovery," says botanist Francisco Farronay, of the National Institute of Amazonian Research (INPA), as he cuts into the bark of an enormous tree and smells its insides. "It is a race against time." The largest rainforest on Earth, still largely unexplored by science, is assailed by deforestation for farming, mining and illegal timber extraction.

According to a MapBiomass study last year, the Amazon lost some 74.6 million hectares of native vegetation—an area equivalent to the entire territory of Chile—between 1985 and 2020. The destruction accelerated under the government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, accused by environmentalists of actively encouraging deforestation for economic gain.

The rainforest is considered vital to curbing climate change for its absorption of Earth-warming CO2. Since 2019, when Bolsonaro took power, average annual deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon increased by 75 percent compared to the previous decade, according to official figures.

'Science denialism'

"Most plant species in the Amazon are to be found in encroached areas," said Alberto Vicentini, another member



An ichthyofauna scientist from the National Institute for Amazonian Research (INPA) looks for specimens in a stream, during a scientific field expedition at the Amazonia rainforest, in the banks of Manicore river, Amazonas state, Brazil.

of the expedition launched by Greenpeace. It is estimated that "we do not know 60 percent of the tree species, and every time an area is deforested, it destroys a part of the biodiversity that we will never know," said the INPA scientist. For their research in this remote part of the northern Brazilian state of Amazonas, the team of took a plane from Manaus, flying over hundreds of kilometers of green forest cut by meandering rivers, to Manicore.

From there, a five-hour boat trip by river for a weeks-long expedition to collect plant samples and observe animal behavior, for which they installed cameras and microphones. The group includes experts in mammals, birds,

amphibians, reptiles and fish, trees and flowers. But it is a tough time to be a scientist in Brazil, they say. "We are living in a moment of science denialism, as we saw with the pandemic in Brazil," with Bolsonaro railing against masks and vaccines, said Vicentini.

"Research institutions in Brazil are under attack by the policies of this government, universities are suffering many cuts," he added. A sheet of newspaper used by one of the botanists in the group to press a flower has the headline: "Increase in wood extraction in Amazonas" with a photo of two trucks leaving the rainforest loaded with logs. "There are places where no one has ever been, we have no idea what is there," said INPA biologist Lucia Rapp Py-Daniel.

"Without the resources to investigate, we do not have the necessary information to even explain why we have to conserve" the area, she said. Resources have been dwindling for a decade—another phenomenon that has sped up under Bolsonaro, according to critics. In May, Brazil's two main scientific societies, the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (ABC) and the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (SBPC) warned that funding for scientific research in the country would be cut by almost 3.0 billion reais (about \$560 million) this year. — AFP



Aerial view showing a deforested area of the Amazon rainforest seen during a flight between Manaus and Manicore, in Amazonas State, Brazil.



Elephants gather to drink water at a water point in Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area running by a private company, in Amboseli, Kenya. — AFP photos



Elephants stroll inside the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Pinnawala.

SOCIAL LIFE HELPS ORPHANED ELEPHANTS OVERCOME LOSS: STUDY

Orphaned elephants manage to overcome the loss of their mother by living in a herd, highlighting the importance of a social life for the species, according to a study. Scientists investigated the consequences of a mother elephant's death on her child by examining the level of stress hormones in the excrement of 37 young elephants in Kenya between 2015 and 2016. Among the young elephants, 25 had lost their mother between one and 19 years before from poaching or drought.

Of the 25 orphans, 20 stayed within the same family unit after the mother's death, while five joined an unrelated group. The researchers found that stress hormones were at similar levels in the long term among orphans and the other elephants, even though the former were expected to show more stress symptoms in the absence of maternal care. Any stress among the orphans did not last long,



Elephants drink water at a water point in Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area running by a private company, in Amboseli, Kenya.

showing their "resilience" and the effect of social support from the other elephants, said Jenna Parker, the main author of the

study published this week in the journal Communications Biology.

The importance of family links was

obvious when observing elephant herds, Parker told AFP.

The young rarely stray more than 10 meters (33 feet) away from their mother and "incredible" reunions involving the entire group were seen after a few hours of separation, said the researcher at Colorado State University in the United States. When poachers or hunters kill an elephant, that social cohesion disintegrates and threatens the group's wellbeing, particularly the young ones left orphaned, she said. The bond between a baby elephant and its mother is believed to be strong even after weaning.

'Playmates'

Parker and her colleagues investigated how orphaned elephants felt by measuring the quantity of hormones they release when faced with stress. The hormones can be found in blood, saliva, urine and faeces. The last option was chosen as the

most reliable and widespread way to measure stress in wild animals because it is non-invasive, Parker said. Only the excrement of young females aged between two and 20 in the Samburu and Buffalo Springs reserves in northern Kenya was used, with males less easy to track because they are less attached to their original herd.

Scientists also found lower stress levels among young elephants growing up in groups with more animals of a similar age, suggesting that "playmates" are essential for them. The results could guide orphanages to provide companions of the same age to help orphaned elephants. The study also concluded that releasing groups of orphaned elephants together after they were linked during captivity could facilitate their transition to living in the wild. —AFP



In this file photo Colombian designer Nancy Gonzalez attends a special screening of "Scatter My Ashes at Bergdorf's" in celebration of Bergdorf Goodman's 111th anniversary in New York City. — AFP

From catwalk to perp walk: Colombian designer awaits fate on smuggling charges

Colombian celebrity designer Nancy Gonzalez's fall from grace was sudden and spectacular: taken in handcuffs from her luxury home in Cali last week to a Bogota jail cell, accused of smuggling protected animal skin purses into the United States. The 77-year-old is now awaiting a ruling by a Colombian judge on whether she should be extradited to the United States, where she risks a 25-year jail sentence. Gonzalez's purses, clutches and wallets sell for thousands of US dollars apiece, have appeared on catwalks and TV shows and grace the shelves of high-end shops around the globe. But according to an indictment from prosecutors in the Southern District of Florida, dated April 26, more than 200 of the caiman- and python-skin products sold in the United States were imported illegally.

Gonzalez and two employees of her Gzuniga company, the charge sheet states, conspired to smuggle bags made of protected animal skins between February 2016 and April 2019 without the permit required under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The goods were brought to the Gzuniga showroom in New York City by the accused for the purpose of "enriching themselves upon the sale of the contraband products in the United States," said the indictment.

Individuals were allegedly paid to bring the bags from Colombia to New York on commercial flights, and coached to lie about the provenance of the goods if asked. Gonzalez and her co-accused face one charge of conspiracy and two counts of smuggling. According to her website, Gonzalez's bags are handcrafted in her native Cali by a team of artisans. The site says her bags are sold at over 300 luxury retailers, including Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Harrod's and Tsum. Her designs were also featured in an exhibition by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. —AFP



In this file photo Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof shows his green scarf during a photocall after the screening of his film "The White Meadows", during the second day of the 57th San Sebastian International Film Festival in San Sebastian. — AFP

Faroe Islands to limit dolphin hunt quota to 500

The Faroe Islands said Sunday it would provisionally limit its controversial dolphin hunt to 500, following public outcry over the practice. "An annual catch limit of 500 white-sided dolphins has now been proposed by the Ministry of Fisheries on a provisional basis for 2022 and 2023," the government of the Danish autonomous territory said. The quota was set after the "unusually large catch" of 1,423 white-sided dolphins in September last year, it said in a statement.

"Aspects of that catch were not satisfactory, in particular the unusually large number of dolphins killed," it added. "This made procedures difficult to manage and is unlikely to be a sustainable level of catch on a long-term annual basis." A review of the practice was launched in February, after a petition with almost 1.3

million signatures calling for a ban on the traditional hunt was submitted to the Faroese government. In the Faroese tradition known as "grindadráp", or "grind" for short, hunters surround dolphins or pilot whales with a wide semi-circle of fishing boats and drive them into a shallow bay where they are beached.

Fishermen on shore slaughter them with knives. Every summer, images of the bloody hunt make headlines around the world and spark outrage among animal rights activists who consider the practice barbaric. But the hunt still enjoys broad backing in the Faroes, where supporters point out that the animals have fed the local population for centuries. On Sunday, the government stressed that the catches serve as an "important supplement to the livelihoods of Faroe Islanders". —AFP



France 'concerned' at 'arbitrary' Iranian filmmakers' arrest

France on Friday expressed deep concern at the "arbitrary" arrests of three Iranian filmmakers, including international prize-winners Jafar Panahi and Mohammad Rasoulof. Panahi and Rasoulof were "arbitrarily arrested" earlier this month along with Mostafa Aleahmad, the French foreign ministry said.

France is "very concerned by these arrests and those of other Iranian person-

alities engaged in the defence of freedom of expression in their country," the ministry added, citing a "worrying deterioration in the situation of artists in Iran". Paris demanded their immediate release and called on Tehran to respect international commitments to "guarantee the full exercise of freedom of expression and creation".

Panahi, 62, has won a slew of awards

at international festivals for films that have critiqued modern Iran, including the top prize in Berlin for "Taxi" in 2015, and best screenplay at Cannes for his film "Three Faces" in 2018. Rasoulof, 50, won the Golden Bear in Berlin in 2020 with his film "There Is No Evil".

Their arrests come after Panahi and Rasoulof denounced in May the arrests of several colleagues in their homeland in an

open letter. They notably highlighted the cases of internationally renowned female documentary producers Mina Keshavarz and Firoozeh Khosrovani, who were arrested but later freed under caution. Despite the political pressures, Iran has a thriving film industry and the country's output regularly wins awards at major international festivals. — AFP



In this file photo German actress Anke Engelke (left) speaks near a giant portrait of Iranian dissident director Jafar Panahi as the President of the Berlinale International Jury Darren Aronofsky (center) holds the Golden Bear for Best Film going to Panahi for his film Taxi during the closing ceremony of the 65th International Film Festival Berlinale in Berlin. — AFP photos

Julianne Moore to preside over jury at Venice Film Festival

US actor Julianna Moore will be jury president for the 2022 Venice Film Festival in September, organizers said Friday. Moore, who won a best actress Oscar for 2014's "Still Alice", will preside over a six-person jury at the 11-day festival on Venice's glamorous Lido.

Directors will dominate the jury at this year's festival, which includes Argentina's Mariano Cohn, Italy's Leonardo Di Costanzo, Spain's Rodrigo Sorogoyen and France's Audrey Diwan. Diwan won Venice's Golden Lion last year for her film dealing with back-alley abortion, "The Event". The jury also includes Iranian actress Leila Hatami and the Japanese and British screenwriter Kazuo Ishiguro. The Venice Film Festival is the world's oldest, and one of the most prestigious, rivaling with Cannes and Berlin. Its 79th

edition is scheduled for August 31 through September 10. — AFP



Julianne Moore

Lifestyle | Features



Children receive a piano class at the Yamaha Music Centre in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh.



Wejdan Hajji, a 28-year-old employee at a firm selling medical supplies, attends a guitar class at the Yamaha Music Centre in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh.



Wejdan Hajji attends a guitar class at the Yamaha Music Centre in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh.

Students embrace new rhythms at Saudi music schools

Saudi businessman Ahmed Abdullah watches intently as his seven-year-old daughter Yasmine practices keyboard scales at a Riyadh music school, an opportunity he could only dream about when he was young. Saudi Arabia's rulers have relaxed some social restrictions after decades of adhering to a rigid interpretation of Islam, enforced by the kingdom's religious police, that placed severe limits on social activities including group music lessons.

"Now we are thinking about the next generation and investing in it," Abdullah said. Previously those who could afford it hired music tutors to come to their homes, while the rest struggled to find any instruction at all. But as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country's de facto ruler, seeks to expand entertainment options for citizens, music has become a bigger part of daily life, and music schools are popping up in major cities. At least five such schools have opened over the past few years in the capital Riyadh and Jeddah, the king-

dom's second city on the Red Sea coast, serving an enthusiastic clientele of children and some adults.

Yasmine's class, at the Yamaha Music Centre, meets every Saturday for half an hour, with their Egyptian instructor running students through keyboard drills under a sign reading "Music for All". The session is bittersweet for her father, Abdullah, who thrills at his daughter's enthusiasm even as it reminds him of "things I had no chance of achieving in my childhood".

Notes of change

Music has been a feature of the dramatic social reforms ushered in by Prince Mohammed, who became first in line to the throne five years ago. For decades the country was decidedly off the beaten path of most touring artists but in recent years some of the world's biggest stars, including Justin Bieber and K-pop juggernaut BTS, have performed in the kingdom.

These marquee events have spurred

allegations of complicity in a transparent bid to whitewash the kingdom's grim human rights record. But there is little question that many young, entertainment-starved Saudis are grateful for the shows. Last December more than 700,000 revelers flocked to the MDLBeast Soundstorm music festival in Riyadh, officials said, for four days of performances including a set by superstar French DJ David Guetta.

Daily life, too, has become more melodious, with restaurants and cafes staging live acts or blasting recordings through speakers-some even during prayer time, when in the past they would have been forced to close. Several Saudis who are now trying to develop their own musical chops described the transformation as a boon to their mental health.

Wejdan Hajji, a 28-year-old employee at a firm selling medical supplies, said she once struggled to teach herself guitar by watching YouTube videos, lamenting that "if I made a mistake, there was no one to correct me". Now she pays 940 Saudi riyals (around \$250) each month

for classes with a Ukrainian teacher at the Yamaha Music Centre. "I didn't know anything, but now I've learned the basics," she said. "The one-hour session clears my mind... My personality has changed, and I'm calmer."

A growing market

Such benefits could soon extend to many more young Saudis. In 2020 the kingdom established a "Music Authority" under its culture ministry which grants licenses to music schools and provides backing to young talents eager to pursue careers in the music industry. Some 100 private schools nationwide have included a music component in their curricula during the current academic year, according to an official tally. In May, the authority launched a "Music Culture Program" to develop the skills of public school students as well.

As those initiatives get off the ground, the specialized music schools continue to do brisk business. One recent afternoon at the "House of Music" school in north-

ern Riyadh, an instructor supervised five toddlers as they swayed to the sound of lullabies playing on a speaker. The school opened in 2019 and has 300 students of all ages who come for lessons in rooms adorned with posters of performers like Bob Marley and Lebanese singer Fairuz. "There is a good acceptance of the services we provide so far," said the school's Venezuelan director, Cesar Mora, adding that the school has a second branch in the works.

"There is a growing music-loving community and market," Walid Mahmoud, a 37-year-old Sudanese resident of Riyadh, began coming to the school so his young daughters could take lessons on the oud, a stringed instrument popular in the region. Before long, he signed up for lessons himself. "Saudi Arabia has changed a lot," he said with a laugh as his daughters, aged five and three, looked on. "Maybe we will form a band one day. Why not?" — AFP

After sensational trial, Johnny Depp releases an album

Fresh off his highly publicized, controversial defamation suit, actor Johnny Depp sought to show his creative career was back on track Friday, releasing an album with English rocker Jeff Beck. The 13-track album "18" on which Depp sings and plays guitar features mainly covers, and so far it has been critically panned.



This file photograph shows British guitarist Jeff Beck performing on stage during the 43rd edition of the Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux.

It's a record unlikely to figure prominently in the repertoire of Beck, the 78-year-old former member of The Yardbirds. The album includes renditions of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" and John Lennon's "Isolation," as well as the Velvet Underground classic "Venus In Furs."

The choice to include a song focused on sado-masochism might seem bizarre to some, given the ultra-mediatized trial centered on alleged domestic abuse between Depp and his ex-wife Amber Heard, the actor best known for her role in "Aquaman." The album also includes two songs the 59-year-old "Pirates of the Caribbean" star



In this file photo Johnny Depp performs on stage with Jeff Beck during the Helsinki Blues Festival in Helsinki. — AFP photos

penned himself: "This is a Song for Miss Hedy Lamarr," and "Sad Motherfuckin' Parade." "Erased by the same world that made her a star / Spun out of beauty, trapped by its web," Depp sings of Lamarr, who secluded herself in the final years of her life.

Bad Boys, Hollywood Vampires

Depp and Beck met in 2016, bonding "over cars and guitars" before the latter said he began to appreciate "Depp's serious songwriting skills and ear for music." They began working on this LP in 2019. It's far from Depp's first foray into music: the actor for more than a decade has recorded and toured with the Hollywood Vampires, a supergroup he started with Alice Cooper and Joe Perry. Beck is currently on tour in Europe with Depp as a special guest.

This spring Depp won \$15 million in the defamation suit against Heard, who was awarded \$2 million. The jury found that Heard, 36, defamed Depp in describing herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse" in a 2018 op-ed published in The Washington Post, although she did not identify the actor by name. Depp held he suffered reputational damage following its publication.

Heard received \$2 million in damages because the jury found that one of Depp's lawyers had defamed her. The six-week trial gained widespread attention not least because it was televised and livestreamed, with clips making their way to social media as Heard became a target of online vitriol and mockery. In its aftermath Depp is embarking on a return to acting, set to star in the forthcoming French movie "La Favorite." He will play King Louis XV, with filming locations including Versailles. — AFP

David Cameron, Theresa May and Boris Johnson have served under him. He arrived in 2011 aged four, after being adopted from a London animal shelter and chosen for his mousing skills.

Given the title Chief Mouser, he also has his own unofficial Twitter account — @Number10cat-with more than 635,000 followers. Earlier this month, as the scandal-tarred Johnson announced he would resign once a successor is selected, Larry took to social media to "clarify a few things". "1. I'm not 'Boris Johnson's cat' 2. Like all prime ministers, he's only a temporary resident of Downing Street 3. I live here permanently. When he finally goes, I stay 4. Yes, it's all very embarrassing but it will be over soon," @Number10cat tweeted. — AFP



Downing Street cat drawn into political fight for his residence

Larry, the treasured tabby-and-white cat who lives in Downing Street, was dragged into Britain's political fray Friday after a leading candidate to be prime minister mused about moving in with her four felines. Penny Mordaunt, the bookmaker's favorite to replace Boris Johnson in the famous residence, revealed in an online forum that she has a quartet of Burmese cats, which she cited when asked for her biggest weakness.



US singer Lizzo performs on NBC's "Today" at Rockefeller Plaza in New York. — AFP photos

'Booked, blessed and busy': Lizzo returns

Lizzo's summer turned up a notch Friday, with the poster child of self-love dropping her long-awaited album "Special" fresh off an Emmy nomination and ahead of a forthcoming tour. The 12-track record brings back the soulful pop-rap blends that made the effervescent performer a household name with her messages of body positivity, feminist empowerment and sexual freedom.

The hitmaker, whose 2017 song "Truth Hurts" became a viral sleeper smash and boosted her to global fame two years later, promoted the release of her fourth album with a "Today" show performance in Manhattan outside of NBC's studios. "I'm so proud of this album," she told the show Friday. "It was three years in the making. It's literally a classic, no-skips album. It's the best thing I've ever done."

Lizzo's week had already kicked off to a



Lizzo visits SiriusXM at SiriusXM Studios in New York City.

banner start after she scored an Emmy Awards nomination for her show "Watch Out for the Big Grrrls," a reality show where she searches for her tour's back-up dancers. "We didn't do this for awards, we did this for ourselves. For the lives we touched making this... To shake up the industry... and show the world how BEAUTIFUL AND TALENTED WE AREEEEE!" she posted on Instagram after learning of the nomination. "BIG GRRRLS ARE BOOKED, BLESSED AND BUSY."

The 34-year-old artist born Melissa Viviane Jefferson debuted in 2013 but did not achieve mainstream success until the release of her third album "Cuz I Love You," which found runaway success and earned the Detroit-born, Houston-raised performer eight Grammy nominations with three wins. She's set to kick off a North American tour in September, with stops including New York's Madison Square Garden and Los Angeles' Kia Forum. "It takes 10 years to become an overnight success," she told Today. "I needed to discover my self-love," she continued, elated fans cheering her along. "The music that's connecting to people is about my self-love." — AFP



Lizzo and the Big Grrrls perform onstage at the Lizzo "Lizzaverse" album Playback Performance at Cipriani 25 Broadway.

Sports

Yamanishi retains 20km race walk title in a Japanese 1-2

‘Fighter’ dominates 20km race walk for Peru’s first ever world gold

EUGENE: Japan’s Toshikazu Yamanishi produced a brutal final kick to defend his world men’s 20km race walk title in Eugene, Oregon, on Friday. Yamanishi timed 1hr 19min 07sec in a Japanese 1-2 as compatriot Koki Ikeda took silver, seven seconds off the winning pace. It was a repeat of the result at March’s World Race Walking Team Championships in Muscat.

Perseus Karlstrom of Sweden, 2019 world bronze medalist and Muscat 35km champion, claimed a second bronze just ahead of Kenya’s Samuel Gathimba. Yamanishi said the win in hot, sunny conditions with little shade had left him “gratified”. “It took tremendous skill and I was happy to be strong enough,” he said. “It was very strong sunlight and a very tough race. It is very hot. It was much hotter in Doha even at midnight. “But today was lower humidity so it was easier. Today was my day.”

A 13-strong leading pack streaked through the halfway mark in 40:33 on the one-kilometer looped course starting and finishing on Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard in front of Autzen Stadium, a short hop over the river from Hayward Field. At the 12km mark, Yamanishi started to employ surging patterns whereby he accelerated and slowed at will in a bid to thin the peloton.

His aggressive style saw four drop almost immediately off the pace. With 6km to go, Yamanishi upped his pace, tracked by Ikeda, Gathimba and Karlstrom. Four doesn’t go into three, however, and Yamanishi and Ikeda upped their cadence, leaving Gathimba and the Swede in their trail. The defending champion edged ahead of his teammate and held his nerve for a hard-fought victory. A battle royale for bronze saw

Karlstrom overtake his Kenyan rival in the final 300 metres.

‘Fighter’ dominates

Kimberly Garcia Leon won Peru’s first-ever gold medal on Friday after dominating the women’s 20km race walk, the opening event of the World Athletics Championships in Eugene, Oregon. Garcia Leon, who is also listed to take part in next week’s 35km race walk, clocked 1hr 26min 58sec to smash her country’s national record as she mastered the race in hot, sunny conditions. It was the first ever world championships medal of any kind for Peru. Poland’s Katarzyna Zdziebło took silver in 1:27.31, with China’s Qieyang Shijie claiming bronze, a further 25sec adrift.

“I have dreamed of this medal since I was little,” said Garcia Leon. “I want to dedicate it to all Peruvians. They will be very proud. This is the first medal for us at the world championships and I hope it won’t be the last one. “I stayed focused on my goal to achieve a medal. I thought of that during the entire race and things worked out. “I am very happy and proud of myself,” she added. “I have worked hard, hoping to be in a good placing. It’s not been easy, but I am a fighter.” Qieyang and Garcia Leon set the early pace, going through the 10km mark in 43:31, 20sec ahead of Zdziebło.

Garcia Leon then kicked away at the 16km mark, quickly building up a 6sec lead on Qieyang, that increasing to 18sec within the next kilometer as she turned on the gas. “At the 15km mark, my coach instructed me to up the pace,” the Peruvian acknowledged. “I told myself it would be now or never. In the last kilometer, I gave it all to break my national record.” Qieyang, the 2012 Olympic



EUGENE: Bronze medalist Perseus Karlstrom of Team Sweden and gold medalist Toshikazu Yamanishi of Team Japan celebrate following the Men’s 20 Kilometers Race Walk on day one of the World Athletics Championships Oregon 22 at Hayward Field on July 15, 2022. —AFP

champion, was then overtaken by Zdziebło, but held off Australian Jemima Montag for bronze.

Defending champion Liu Hong of China was fifth, falling just short in her bid to become the first four-time world champion in a race walking event. Spain’s European record holder Maria

Perez, ranked second in the world, racked up three red cards for loss of contact between running shoes and ground within 7km, meaning an enforced pitstop of two minutes that effectively put an end to her hopes. She was eventually disqualified at the 13km mark.—AFP

LIV rebel Gooch calls for an end to conflict over breakaway series

ST ANDREWS: LIV Golf rebel Talor Gooch hopes this week’s British Open at St Andrews does not turn out to be the last major for members of the breakaway Saudi-backed series as he called for an end to the “continued butting of heads” between rival tours. Speaking after a second-round of 69 left him high up the leaderboard on seven-under for the championship at halfway, the 30-year-old American admitted it would be “a cool one to go out on” if the home of golf was to be the scene of his last major.

However he was optimistic golf’s ruling bodies would not prevent those players who have defected from the PGA Tour or DP World Tour to join LIV from returning in future. “I’d like to think that the majors would like to have the best players in the world playing in their events in spite of everything that’s going on, but obviously that’s not up to me,” he said. “Hopefully this won’t be my last one.”

British Open organisers the R&A have ruled out banning players who defect to the breakaway series but hinted they could make it harder to qualify in future. R&A chief executive Martin Slumbers said a ban was “not on our agenda, but we will review our exemptions and qualifications criteria for the Open”. One way in which the chances of rebel players appearing in majors could be compromised is if the LIV series does not get formal recognition in the official world rankings, although it has applied for inclusion.

Gooch said he intended to only play one LIV event before deciding to sign on full time when he was suspended from the PGA Tour, a move that caught him by surprise. “Historically the Tour has not done that,” he pointed out. Gooch is one of 24 players at this week’s Open who have joined the breakaway series, which offers prize money of \$25 million for each 54-hole event. With several LIV series members impressing this week, he said the rebels had been galvanized by criticism sent their way from Open organizers and rival players.

“Everybody, it feels like, is against us, and that’s okay. It’s kind of banded us together, I think,” he said. “We’ve caught a lot of flak for what we’ve done here recently but I think one thing that cannot be questioned is the quality of players that are there.” Hoping for a resolution between the existing tours and the new series, Gooch believes they can “co-exist”. “I don’t think the golf world benefits from this continued butting of heads. I think there’s a way to resolve this,” he said. —AFP

Smith leads Open at halfway stage; Woods bows out

ST ANDREWS: Australia’s Cameron Smith leads the 150th British Open at the halfway stage after a superb second round of 64 on Friday left him on 13 under par for the tournament, while Cameron Young and Rory McIlroy lurk just behind but an emotional Tiger Woods failed to make the weekend. Smith, the world number six with the trademark mullet, followed an opening 67 with an eight-under-par second round to lead by two strokes from

Reavie seizes lead in PGA Barracuda Championship

LOS ANGELES: Chez Reavie fired an eagle and seven birdies to rack up 19 points and take the 36-hole lead on Friday in the US PGA Tour Barracuda Championship in Truckee, California. Reavie’s bogey-free round gave him a two-round total of 28 points under the Modified Stableford scoring system used for the tournament, which awards points for birdies and better and deducts them for bogeys and worse. He was three points clear of overnight co-leader Mark Hubbard and Sweden’s Henrik Norlander.

Norlander had seven birdies without a bogey for 14 points and a 25-point total, joining Hubbard who had seven birdies and two bogeys for 12 points. Kevin Tway was alone in fourth on 21 points, garnering 15 for a round that included nine birdies and three bogeys. Reavie’s eagle at the par-five sixth on the par-71

Greenwood Course at Tahoe Mountain Club was worth a valuable five points and helped push him clear of the chasing pack.

“Oh, it’s huge,” he said. “It’s actually two and a half birdies, so if you can make an eagle you can kind of leapfrog guys on the leaderboard. “I hit an OK tee shot, kind of up the right side,” Reavie said of the sixth. “Had to hit a five-wood so I kind of favored toward the right bunker side, and I just missed the bunker and had to chip across the green and was fortunate to knock it in.” But if a little luck was involved, Reavie—who claimed the most recent of his two PGA Tour titles at the 2019 Travelers—wasn’t surprised with his solid effort.

“I’ve been driving the ball in the fairway, giving myself some good looks with the irons and hitting good iron shots and making a few putts,” he said. “It’s been a good two days.”



CALIFORNIA: Chez Reavie of the United States lines up a putt on the seventh green during the second round of the Barracuda Championship at Tahoe Mountain Club on July 15, 2022 in Truckee, California. —AFP

Reavie said his approach didn’t change much despite the unusual scoring system, which awards eight points for an albatross, five for an eagle and two for a birdie, but

deducts one for a bogey and three for a double-bogey or worse. “It’s kind of the same game plan for me,” he said, “try to make no bogeys and as many birdies as possible.” —AFP

Americans Kupcho and Salas grab lead in LPGA pairs event

WASHINGTON: Americans Jennifer Kupcho and Lizette Salas combined to shoot a six-under par 64 and seize a four-stroke lead after Friday’s third round of the LPGA Great Lakes Bay Invitational. The US duo delivered the lowest score of the tournament in the alternate-short format to stand on 17-under 193 entering Saturday’s final round at Midland (Michigan) Country Club.

“We made some really great shots and clutch putts,” Salas said. “We really stayed patient and knew we were going to perform. We came down the stretch really strong and we’re going to use that momentum tomorrow.” After playing alternate-shot format in the first and third rounds, the last round, like the second, will feature a four-ball (best ball) format.

“It’s just being patient and knowing we’ll be there for each other,” said Kupcho of her final-day strategy. “There are going to be a lot of low scores for sure. No one is going to be out of it.” Malaysia’s Kelly Tan and Finland’s Matilda Castren fired a 67 to stand second on 197. France’s Pauline Roussin and Dutch teammate Dewi Weber, an LPGA rookie duo who led by three strokes after 36 holes, shot 73 and fell to a share of third on 199 with South Korean Kang Hae-ji and Hong Kong’s Tiffany Chan.

Kupcho and Salas turned a three-stroke deficit

Young, the 25-year-old New Yorker. Brisbane-native Smith’s round on Friday featured six birdies—including at each of the first three holes—an eagle at the par-five 14th, and no dropped shots.

His halfway total of 131 is the lowest ever 36-hole score in an Open at St Andrews. “It’s obviously a really good spot to be in. I feel like I’ve been in this spot a lot over the past couple of years, and things just haven’t quite gone my way yet,” said Smith, who won the Players Championship in March. “I’ve just got to be really patient over the weekend. I think the golf course is going to get a lot harder and a lot faster. So just be patient and make good putts.”

Young had led by two overnight after opening with a 64 of his own and followed that with a 69 to sit at 11-under, ensuring he will go out in the final pairing on Saturday. But there is a sense in St Andrews that the main



MIDLAND: Jennifer Kupcho of the United States plays her shot from the 18th tee during the third round of the Dow Great Lakes Bay Invitational at Midland Country Club on July 15, 2022. —AFP

into a four-stroke lead with a bogey-free round. They birdied the sixth, seventh and eighth then closed on a hot streak with birdies at the 14th, 15th and 17th holes. Kupcho and Salas took a win and tie in four-ball and a foursomes victory together in last year’s Solheim Cup loss to Europe. “We create something really special out on the golf course,” Salas said. “We don’t have to think about it much.”

Kupcho, 25, won her first major title in April at the

Chevron Championship and took her second LPGA victory last month at the Meijer Classic. Salas, 32, won her only LPGA title in 2014 at the Kingsmill Championship. She’s a three-time major runner-up, including last year at the Women’s British Open and Women’s PGA Championship. Tan, 28, has never won an LPGA title while 27-year-old Castren’s only LPGA crown came at last year’s Mediheal Championship. —AFP

threat to Smith may come from McIlroy, who built on his opening round of 66 with a 68 and is on 10-under. The favorite coming into the week, McIlroy produced six birdies after going out in fine conditions on Friday afternoon, with three in successive holes at the start of his inward nine.

He will feel he now has a platform to go on and claim a second Claret Jug following his 2014 victory at Hoylake. “I know I’ve got the game. That’s all I need. I just need to go out and play my game and play my golf over the next two days and that’s all I can do,” McIlroy said. Norway’s Viktor Hovland also sits at 10-under, while former world number one Dustin Johnson shot a 67 and is nine-under. Johnson, the two-time major winner who quit the PGA Tour last month to join the controversial Saudi-backed LIV series, will be hoping to avoid any repeat of the last Open at St Andrews in 2015. —AFP



US golfer Tiger Woods

Sports

Norway suffer shock exit from Euro 2022

England crush Northern Ireland 5-0

LONDON: Norway suffered a shock exit from Euro 2022 as the pre-tournament title contenders crashed to a 1-0 defeat against Austria on Friday. Despite the presence of Lyon star Ada Hegerberg in their line-up, former European champions Norway paid the price for another lacklustre display in Brighton. Norway failed to advance from Group A after a second successive loss, while Austria progressed to the quarter-finals as runners-up behind England.

England, already assured of topping the group, crushed Northern Ireland 5-0 in their last game to move into the last eight with three successive wins and without conceding a single goal. Needing a victory to move above Austria in their final group match, Norway were pushed towards elimination after 37 minutes when Nicole Billa headed in Verena Hanshaw's cross.

The Norwegians were unable to muster a comeback and it was Austria who could have won by a bigger margin with more clinical finishing. Norway goalkeeper Guro Pettersen made several fine saves to give her side a chance, but Austria's Manuela Zinsberger thwarted Celin Bizet and Hegerberg in the closing stages. Thrashed 8-0 by England in their previous game, Norway's tournament had quickly turned sour after the initial optimism fuelled by a 4-1 victory over Northern Ireland in their first group match.

"We had higher belief in ourselves than to be out of the tournament this soon. So of course, I feel totally empty," Norway manager Martin Sjogren said. Former Women's Ballon d'Or winner Hegerberg added: "Everyone has a responsibility in this, myself included. "There has to be a brutal honesty in evaluating everything that's happened in the last few weeks in order to actually bounce back from this. "It's almost that I want to apologize because of all the support we've got."

Rampant England

As Norway head home, Austria can look forward to playing eight-time European champions Germany in the quarter-finals at Brentford on Thursday. Alessia Russo struck twice as England maintained their flawless run against hapless Northern Ireland in



MANCHESTER: Norway's striker Ada Hegerberg (left) heads the ball as she fights for it against Austria's defender Carina Wenninger during the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 Group A football match between Austria and Norway at Brighton and Hove Community Stadium in Brighton, Southern England on July 15, 2022. —AFP

Southampton. England were without boss Sarina Wiegman after she tested positive for the coronavirus on Friday.

But Wiegman's absence couldn't halt in-form England's momentum as Fran Kirby's curler put the hosts ahead in the 40th minute. Beth Mead doubled England's advantage with her fourth goal of the tournament just before half-time. Russo, having replaced Ellen White at half-time, found the net twice in quick succession soon after the restart. England's fifth goal came when Northern Ireland's Kelsie Burrows sliced the ball

over goalkeeper Jacqueline Burns into her own net.

England assistant coach Arjan Veurink admitted Wiegman was not certain to return in time for the last eight. "We have to see. We have to manage it day by day, hopefully she is back in business as soon as possible," Veurink said. "We plan for scenarios and the world we are living in it could happen. We spoke about it and we're well prepared. She's managing the staff and players brilliantly." England will face the runners-up from Group B, either Spain or Denmark, in the quarter-finals. —AFP

Atlanta president Eales to become Newcastle's CEO

NEW YORK: Darren Eales, president of Major League Soccer's Atlanta United and a former executive director at Tottenham Hotspur, will become the new chief executive officer at Newcastle United, clubs announced Friday. Eales, a 49-year-old Englishman, was hired by the US side in 2014. He will remain with Atlanta through August 8 and return to the English Premier League on August 22.

Newcastle went 13-15 with 10 drawn last season to finish 11th in the Premier League. "Newcastle United is both a giant of a club, and the heartbeat of its community," Eales said in a statement. "Every time I have visited St. James' Park, I've been overwhelmed by the passion of the fans."

"This is a club with an amazingly rich heritage, and I am delighted to be joining for this new chapter in its long history. "I am grateful for the opportunity, and look forward to working with the rest of the team to help this storied club fulfill its potential." Eales, who also worked in the front office for West Bromwich Albion alongside Magpies' sporting director Dan Ashworth from 2006-2010, oversaw formation of Atlanta since its 2017 debut as an MLS expansion side.

"It has been the adventure and honor of a lifetime to help build Atlanta United," Eales said in a statement. "I've been privileged to work with an amazing team of people who rolled up their sleeves and made a vision into reality." Eales, who also worked in the front office for West Bromwich Albion alongside Magpies' sporting director Dan Ashworth from 2006-2010, oversaw formation of Atlanta since its 2017 debut as an MLS expansion side.

The club won the 2018 MLS Cup and the 2019 US Open Cup and ranks among the attendance leaders in the North American league. "Darren Eales is one of the best hires I've made in my career and the strength

and success of Atlanta United to date is a credit to him not only as a leader, but as a passionate footballer," Atlanta United owner Arthur Blank said in a statement.

"I'm thrilled for Darren to have this new opportunity to lead Newcastle and I see it as a very positive reflection of Atlanta United and what our club has achieved in such a short time. "Darren is more than ready to lead Newcastle and I know he'll be an outstanding leader of that club." Atlanta signed MLS's three most expensive incoming players in Argentine midfielders Thiago Almada, Ezequiel Barco and Pity Martinez, whose transfer fees reportedly were a combined \$46.5 million.

A statement from the club's investment group-PIF, PCP Capital Partners and RB Sports & Media-praised Eales, calling him an exceptional leader in a statement. "He has a deep understanding of the football industry and what it takes to achieve growth and success," the statement said. "And he will be a key member of the club's leadership team as we look to deliver on the club's potential on and off the pitch." —AFP



Jim Thorpe

IOC declares Thorpe gold medalist in 1912 decathlon, pentathlon

LAUSANNE: American athlete Jim Thorpe is to be given sole credit for his 1912 gold medals, more than a century after he was stripped of them, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced on Friday. The IOC said it "will henceforth display the name of Jim Thorpe as the sole gold medalist in pentathlon and decathlon at the Olympic Games Stockholm 1912. This change comes on the very day of the 110th anniversary of Thorpe's medal in decathlon."

Thorpe was stripped of the medals in 1913 after American newspapers reported that he had previously played both American football and baseball professionally. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), the predecessor of the United States Olympic Committee, decided that Thorpe, a native American and member of the Sac and Fox nation, had broken the rules on amateurism.

Swede Hugo K. Wieslander was declared decathlon champion and Norwegian Ferdinand Bie the pentathlon gold medalist. In 1983, 30 years after Thorpe's death, the IOC presented replica gold medals to his family after reinstating him as an amateur and accepting that, under their rules, disqualification should have been within 30 days. A lobby group, Bright Path Strong, named after Thorpe, whose Native American name Wa-Tho-Huk means Bright Path, sought a full reversal.

They contacted the Swedish and Norwegian Olympic associations, who both responded that Thorpe should be declared sole gold medalist. Wieslander's surviving family members also confirmed that the Swede "had never accepted the Olympic gold medal allocated to him, and had always been of the opinion that Thorpe was the sole legitimate Olympic gold medalist," said the IOC statement.

Murray ousted by Bublik at ATP Hall of Fame Open

NEWPORT: Britain's former world number one Andy Murray was knocked out of the ATP Hall of Fame Open, falling to Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik 7-5, 6-4 in a Friday quarter-final. World number 42 Bublik fired 12 aces against five double faults and won 80% of his first serve points to eliminate the 35-year-old Scotsman in the grass-court event

and line up a semi-final clash with Australian Jason Kubler.

"It's great to be in the semi-finals again," Bublik said. "I don't have any tournaments the next two or three weeks so I'm engaged. I want to get as many matches as I can." Kubler, ranked 102nd in the world, beat fellow Australian James Duckworth 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) to reach his first ATP semi-final. The victory ended Kubler's four-match losing streak to Duckworth, a day after Kubler notched his first win over a top-10 player with an upset of top-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Americans John Isner and Maxime Cressy meet in Saturday's other semi-final. Former world number one Murray is a three-time Grand Slam champion, winning the 2012 US Open and 2013 and 2016 Wimbledon titles as well as Olympic gold in 2012 and 2016. Murray, ranked 52nd, was chasing a

47th career ATP crown while Bublik, 25, won his first ATP title at Montpellier in February. Injury-nagged Murray has not won a title since the 2019 European Open but was runner-up in January at Sydney and last month in Stuttgart.

Bublik improved to 2-3 against Murray and has split their four meetings this year. Murray's first double fault gave Bublik the match's first break point and he took advantage with a backhand winner to seize a 6-5 lead, then held on a service winner to claim the first set after 57 minutes. Murray double faulted to surrender a break to open the second set, but Murray broke back level at 1-1 on a successful challenge when a Bublik shot was ruled out. After a foot fault call that irked Bublik, he broke again for a 4-3 lead and held twice to take the victory after one hour and 47 minutes. —AFP

News in brief

Wigan crush Hull FC 60-0 as French breaks record

LONDON: Australian winger Bevan French broke the Super League record for most tries in a single game when he scored seven times as Wigan crushed Hull FC 60-0 on Friday. French scored four tries in the first half before grabbing three more to break Lesley Vainikolo's record set in September 2005. "He (French) has been great for a while for us. He has done some special things, and tonight was a night he could showcase the talent he has got," said Wigan coach Matt Peet. "That's what we love about him. He has got so much ability, he does a lot of selfless stuff and his team-mates love him. He's a pleasure to work with on a daily basis. He got everything he deserved tonight."

Oh baby: Maria Sharapova welcomes son Theodore

NEW YORK: Maria Sharapova, a five-time Grand Slam champion and former world number one, announced Friday she has given birth to a baby boy named Theodore. He is the first child for the 35-year-old Russian tennis star and British businessman Alexander Gilkes, 42, who announced their engagement in December 2020. "The most beautiful, challenging, and rewarding gift our little family could ask for," Sharapova posted Friday on Instagram, indicating in Roman numerals that Theodore was born on July 1. Sharapova, who had revealed in April that she was pregnant, is among only 10 women to complete the career Grand Slam by capturing all four major singles crowns at least once. In 2004, Sharapova won her first major title at Wimbledon at age 17 and followed by capturing the 2006 US Open, 2008 Australian Open and the 2012 and 2014 French Open crowns.

Bayern's Lewandowski poised for Barca move

BERLIN: Bayern Munich star Robert Lewandowski is set to move to Barcelona in a deal worth 50 million euros (\$50.4m), according to multiple reports on Saturday. Both clubs reached agreement overnight Friday, according to Bild and Kicker newspapers and the Sky Germany channel, ending a standoff with the Polish forward who has said he wants to leave the Bavarian giants. At the end of May, Lewandowski said "it is certain that my story with Bayern has come to an end." Lewandowski, twice voted FIFA men's player of the year, is reported to be set to sign a four-year contract with Barcelona. "The striker has planned to arrive today (Saturday) in Barcelona to undergo his medical examination and sign for four seasons," Catalan newspaper Sport reported. "The Polish player will not be at the presentation of the Bavarian team today," said Catalan daily Mundo Deportivo, adding that the 33-year-old will join the Spanish team for their tour of the United States from July 18-31.

Chelsea sign Napoli defender Koulibaly on a four-year deal

LONDON: Senegal international defender Kalidou Koulibaly has signed a four-year deal with Chelsea from Serie A club Napoli, the Premier League club said on Saturday. The 31-year-old Senegal captain becomes the second signing after Manchester City striker Raheem Sterling since Todd Boehly's consortium bought the club. "I'm very happy to be here with this team at Chelsea," said Koulibaly. "It's a big team in the world and my dream was always to play in the Premier League. Chelsea came first to get me in 2016 but we didn't make it. Now when they came to me I accepted it because they really wanted me to come to the Premier League to play for them. "When I spoke to my good friends Edou (Mendy) and Jorginho they made my choice easier." Koulibaly, who led Senegal to the African Cup of Nations title earlier this year, joined Napoli from Genk in 2014 and made 317 appearances for the Italian side. He won the Italian Cup title in 2020. His arrival at Stamford Bridge follows the departures of defenders Antonio Rudiger to Real Madrid and Andreas Christensen to Barcelona, both on free transfers. —From AFP



Great Britain's Andy Murray



EUGENE: Bronze medalist Perseus Karlstrom of Team Sweden and gold medalist Toshikazu Yamanishi of Team Japan celebrate following the Men's 20 Kilometers Race Walk on day one of the World Athletics Championships Oregon 22 at Hayward Field on July 15, 2022. —AFP

Felix wins 19th world medal

Kerley fires warning shot to rivals in world 100m

EUGENE: American veteran Allyson Felix will hang up her spikes having sealed a remarkable 19th world medal on Friday, while Fred Kerley laid down an impressive marker in the heats for the 100m in Oregon. Was it the perfect swansong for Felix? Not quite, as she and Kennedy Simon were both reeled in on their respective legs, leaving the Dominican Republic to take victory in the 4x400m mixed relay, the Dutch quartet edging the US for silver.

Her bronze is Felix's 19th at world champs in a career that started almost two decades ago and also included 11 Olympic medals. "It was very special to be able to run in front of a home crowd for my last race," said Felix. "It was so cool. My daughter was in the stands. It was a night I will cherish."

Felix added: "I've had such good memories. I know it is time and these guys will carry it on into the future. "I am at peace stepping into this next stage and have tremendous gratitude for this sport." Two-time Olympic shot put champion Ryan Crouser had high praise for his US team co-captain. "She's done so much for the sport and especially for women athletes, attracting attention to some really important issues we have in the sport," Crouser said of Felix.

"She's a fantastic athlete, but also a fantastic person. She does stuff the right way, she is just a class act, and kind of the definition of integrity." In-form Kerley ran a sensational heat-winning 9.79 seconds in a warning to potential rivals for the 100m crown. He advanced to Saturday's semi-finals along with

teammates Marvin Bracey, Trayvon Bromell and defending champion Christian Coleman, who missed the Tokyo Olympics after missing three doping tests.

"It's going to take something fast to win," predicted Canada's reigning Olympic 200m champion Andre de Grasse, also twice a 100m bronze medalist. Reigning Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs, a shock winner in Tokyo who has struggled with injury this season, acknowledged that he had struggled in his heat. "I am not at my 100%," the Italian said. "Running 10.04 at half capacity of what I can run, I can say my physical shape is fine. I just need to get my legs ready."

History for Peru

There was a historic first ever world medal for Peru as Kimberly Garcia Leon won the women's 20km race walk, the first medal event at the Eugene worlds. "This is the first medal for us at the world championships and I hope it won't be the last one," said the Peruvian, also entered into the 35km race walk.

The second medal event of the champs saw Toshikazu Yamanishi produce a brutal final kick to defend his world men's 20km race walk title. In a Japanese 1-2, compatriot Koki Ikeda took silver, seven seconds off the winning pace, in a repeat of the result at March's World Race Walking Team Championships in Muscat. Home hopes of gold in the men's shot put were kept alive as world record holder Crouser qualified for Sunday's final with a 22.28m effort.



EUGENE: USA's Allyson Felix gestures after competing in the mixed 4x400m relay final during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene. - AFP

Dutch distance sensation Sifan Hassan is defending champion in the women's 1500m, but she has opted out of defending her title in Eugene. She will instead concentrate on the 5,000-10,000m double, which she pulled off at last year's Tokyo Olympics. Hassan also won bronze in the 1500m in the Japanese capital, a race won by Kenya's Faith Kipyegon ahead of Briton Laura Muir. Both Kipyegon and Muir qualified smoothly for Saturday's semi-final, with the final scheduled for Monday. —AFP

England thump Australia to win third Test, series

SYDNEY: Tries from Freddie Steward and Marcus Smith powered England to a come-from-behind 21-17 victory in the deciding third Test on Saturday to seal a bruising series at a sold-out Sydney Cricket Ground. Eddie Jones's men slumped 10-3 behind, but bounced back with 18 unanswered points to take control and hold off a frantic late charge from the Wallabies.

England's defense, marked by fierce tackling, thwarted the shorthanded Wallabies to claim the newly-minted Ella-Mobbs Cup with a 2-1 series victory. Jones's team became only the second England side to win a series in Australia after a historic whitewash in 2016. The triumph is a much-needed tonic for Jones, who has been under increasing pressure ahead of next year's World Cup in France after an indifferent start to the year for England.

But it was a bitter result for the Wallabies, who have been trying to usher a new era after a period in the wilderness. Dave Rennie's men were hit hard through this brutal series by injury and suspension, which tested their depth and resolve as they fell agonizingly short. Prior to their tense series opening win in Perth, Australia had lost eight straight games to England since the 2015 World Cup and were desperate to wrap up a series against their old rival.

After a dire first-half proved costly in game two in Brisbane, the Wallabies lived up to their vow of starting aggressively only for Noah Lolesio to botch a penalty in the opening minutes. The pumped-up Wallabies dominated territory but butchered opportunities and failed to capitalize on their early dominance. England made them pay and drew first blood in the 18th minute when former skipper Owen Farrell nailed a penalty.

But Australia hit back superbly with a long range try set up by a brilliant pass from Marika Koroibete and finished off by a dashing Nic White, who crossed over in the right corner. England, however, remained unperturbed and were rewarded on the cusp of half-time for their bold decision to go for touch from a penalty instead of taking the points when Steward dived over in the corner to give the visitors a narrow 11-10 lead. —AFP



England's Freddie Steward

Ireland create history by stunning All Blacks 32-22 to win series

WELLINGTON: Ireland made history on Saturday as they held off the fast-finishing All Blacks to win the deciding third Test 32-22, becoming the first touring team in the professional era to win a series on New Zealand soil. Ireland scored three tries before half-time in Wellington to lead 22-3 and held their nerve as New Zealand stormed back with three of their own after the interval to clinch the series 2-1. It completed just the sixth series win by a visiting team in New Zealand and the first since France prevailed 2-0 in 1994.

The victory-Ireland's fifth in their last eight meetings with the All Blacks-establishes Andy Farrell's team as among the leading contenders to win next year's World Cup in France. "Our fans turned out tonight, but also four million people back at home for breakfast, probably having a couple of pints watching us," said Ireland captain Johnny Sexton.

"We wanted to do them proud and we certainly did that. The effort was incredible and it's a very special day because we're playing against the best in the world, the very best, and to come down here and do it is very special." It leaves New Zealand coach Ian Foster under enormous pressure, with his side having lost four of their last five Tests.

The All Blacks have rarely been so outplayed as they were in the first half, failing to respond to a merciless Ireland side who took their chances ruthlessly.

Having looked muddled in attack and clueless on defence for 40 minutes, New Zealand mounted a rearguard after half-time, storming back to trail 25-22 entering the final quarter of the match. But they couldn't push on against a visiting side who created breathing room when Rob Herring crossed for their fourth try and held firm to complete one of the great series rebounds. Ireland lost the first Test 42-19 at Eden Park two weeks ago before rebounding to win the second Test 23-12 in Dunedin.

'We're bloody sorry'

"It hasn't quite sunk in," said Ireland wing James Lowe. "We knew after the first Test that wasn't our best performance, but we tidied things up and tried to stop New Zealand. "Results like that, on the bounce, in New Zealand, who'd have thought?" All Blacks captain Sam Cane said he was "gutted" with the outcome. "We're extremely disappointed, gutted in fact. We didn't put on the performance that we so desperately wanted to," he said.

"But we can't take anything away from Ireland, they've been outstanding this last couple of weeks. They were too



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's Brodie Retallick (left) tackles Ireland's Caelan Doris during the third rugby Test match between New Zealand and Ireland at Sky Stadium in Wellington on July 16, 2022. —AFP

good for us tonight and we've got some work to do. "We're bloody sorry that we couldn't put the performances out there that you (the fans) deserve." For the third time in the series, Ireland dominated the opening exchanges and were able to create a try inside the first five minutes, when Josh van der Flier was driven over from a lineout.

The tourists took control in the 15 minutes before the interval, fashioning two superbly-executed tries to fullback Hugo Keenan and outside centre Robbie Henshaw. Ireland's manipulation of New Zealand's defense to put Henshaw over encapsulated the first-half gulf between the teams, with quick ruck speed and

accurate passing leaving the home side grasping at thin air. New Zealand's fightback began when their best player, back-row forward Ardie Savea, reached out to score after the ball went through 23 phases.

The game's most contentious moment followed, when Ireland prop Andrew Porter was shown a yellow card following a head clash as he tried to tackle Brodie Retallick, who suffered a head injury and was replaced. Cane asked English referee Wayne Barnes why Porter wasn't red carded, as New Zealand prop Angus Ta'avao had been for a similar incident in the second Test loss in Dunedin. —AFP