

2

Open real estate, residence for expats, companies urge

3

Global index lists Kuwait as worst place for expats

9

Hunger pains on Slave Island as Sri Lanka's food prices rocket

16

History-making Fraser-Pryce bags fifth 100m title, US win 4 crowns



Visa waiver signifies firm Britain-Kuwait relations

Online travel permit will only take few minutes



United Kingdom Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis

KUWAIT: United Kingdom Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis stated on Monday that exempting Kuwaiti nationals from entrance visas and swapping it with an online travel permit next year highlights the firm relations tying the two countries and bolsters such ties. In an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Ambassador Lewis added that issuing the online travel permit will only take a few minutes and would be valid for a couple of years, and for multiple entries.

Commenting on the airport crisis in the UK, she advised Kuwaiti travelers to head over to airports outside of the capital London, as Heathrow airport strikes

are causing flight delays and cancellations. In relation to Kuwaiti students in the UK, Lewis commented that their number amounted to 8,400 students in the year 2021-2022, adding that cultural exchange between the two nations has been going on for generations and they are looking forward to extending it for even more generations to come.

She further commended the role of the two countries' cultural attaches in facilitating students' travel procedures. Lewis clarified that the online travel permit will not be made available to students looking to study in British universities or for travelers intending on staying in the United Kingdom for a prolonged period of time. On

the free trade deal being negotiated by Gulf countries and the UK, the British Ambassador affirmed that it holds great importance as all sides are set to reap numerous benefits.

She went on to explain that trade exchange between UK and the Gulf bloc is quite large as it amounts to GBP 30 billion (approximately \$35.5 billion) in the private sector alone, adding that Gulf countries are the seventh largest exporter to the UK. Ambassador Lewis affirmed that the deal could contribute to future visions of Gulf countries including Kuwait's 2035 vision, and it would also facilitate movement of workers in said countries. — KUNA

UK, France face heat apocalypse

LONDON: Britain and France went on heatwave alert on Monday facing record temperatures as southwest Europe wilted under a scorching sun and ferocious wildfires devoured more forests. Forecasters in Britain warned of havoc in a country unprepared for the onslaught of extreme heat that authorities said was putting lives at risk. The mercury was set to rise to 38 Celsius in London Monday - not far below Britain's all-time record of 38.7C - and could breach the 40C mark for the first time by Tuesday, meteorologists said.

Scientists blame climate change and predict more frequent and intense episodes of extreme weather. Across the Channel firefighters failed to contain two massive fires in France's southwest that have created apocalyptic scenes of destruction. For six days, armies of firefighters and a fleet of waterbombing aircraft have struggled against blazes that have mobilized much of France's entire firefighting capacity.

BREST: A pharmacy lighted sign shows the temperature off 44 degrees in Brest, western France, on July 18, 2022. The historical temperature record was beaten early on July 18, 2022 afternoon in Brest. — AFP

Forecasters have put 15 French departments on the highest state of alert for extreme temperatures, including in the western Brittany region where the Atlantic coastal city of Brest was expected to hit 40 Celsius Monday, nearly twice its usual July temperature average. By early afternoon, Brest had already beaten its all-time record of 35.2 C set in 1949. The European heatwave, spreading north, is the second to engulf parts of the southwest of the continent within only weeks.

Blazes burning in France, Greece, Portugal and Spain have destroyed thousands of hectares of land and forced thousands of residents and holidaymakers to flee. In France's Landes forest, in the southwest Aquitaine region, temperatures "will be above 42 degrees Celsius" on Monday, forecaster Olivier Proust said.

In the Gironde region, further north, firefighters on Monday continued their battle against forest blazes that have devoured nearly 14,000 hectares since Tuesday. An area of nine kilometers long and eight kilometers wide was still ablaze near the

Continued on Page 7

France, UAE leaders hold talks

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron hosted United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan for lunch in Paris on Monday, with increased diesel supplies on the menu for their official talks. The UAE has emerged as a key partner for Western countries as they scramble for energy supplies worldwide to replace imports from sanction-hit Russia.

Sheikh Mohamed, also known as MBZ, was on his first overseas state visit since taking office in May following the death of his half-brother. The visit is expected to conclude with "the announcement of guarantees given by the UAE on quantities of hydrocarbon supplies to France," Macron's office

announced before the visit. The deal will cover diesel in particular, which the UAE does not supply at present.

France is seeking "to diversify its sources of supply in the context of the conflict in Ukraine," the Elysee source added, referring to EU sanctions on Russian oil. Sheikh Mohamed's decision to make his first official visit to France "is a conscious one that acknowledges the historic ties between the two nations but also the potential for even greater cooperation and growth with France," his diplomatic advisor Anwar Gargash said on Friday.

"The UAE is determined to remain a reliable partner and source of energy," he added. "We have sold our oil to the far-east for 40 years and now we are directing it toward Europe in this time of crisis." The UAE president's visit to France came after Joe Biden's first Middle East tour as president, which included a visit to Saudi Arabia for energy talks.

Macron and Biden were overheard talking about energy supplies from the

extensive drills to be able to strike deep inside Zionist entity "if sensitive (Iranian) installations are targeted". He did not specify when the drills took place.

The 2015 nuclear deal offered Iran sanctions relief in exchange for imposing limits on its nuclear program and sought to guarantee Tehran could not develop a nuclear weapon, something it has always denied wanting to do. The United States withdrew from the agreement in 2018 under then president Donald Trump and reimposed biting sanctions, prompting Tehran to step away from many of its own commitments under the deal.

Iran has held direct talks with remaining parties to the accord - and indirect talks with the United States - in a bid to restore the deal, but negotiations have been at an impasse since March. The new security pact signed this week by Zionists and the United States commits Washington to "never to allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon", stating that the US "is prepared to use all elements of its national power to ensure that outcome".

cial court in the Iraqi capital annulled contracts between the Kurds and foreign firms, after the oil ministry in Baghdad filed a judicial complaint. Authorities in the Kurdistan capital Erbil have cried foul, accusing Baghdad of heaping "unjust pressure" on them and announcing their own legal action.

Iraq, the second largest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, sits on enormous oil reserves, and revenues from the sector feed 90 percent of the federal government budget. It exports an average of 3.3 million barrels of crude oil per day (bpd), while production in Kurdistan amounts to just over 450,000 bpd. The February ruling stated that a 2007 law adopted by Erbil to regulate oil and gas was unconstitutional.

Continued on Page 7

PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron welcome UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan for a working lunch at the Elysee presidential Palace in Paris, on July 18, 2022. — AFP

Middle East at a G7 summit at the end of June in Germany. Macron told Biden that he had spoken to Sheikh Mohammed who had said he was at his "maximum" in terms of oil production, but that the Saudis had some spare capacity. After his lunch with Macron, Sheikh Mohamed is set to be guest of honor at a dinner at the former royal palace in Versailles outside Paris. — AFP

Asked on Thursday how long the US was prepared to give efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, Biden said "we're not going to wait forever". Tehran earlier Sunday accused Washington of provoking tensions in the Middle East, after Biden vowed that the United States would not "tolerate efforts by any country to dominate another in the region through military buildups, incursions, and/or threats", in a transparent reference to Iran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said earlier this month that Tehran had started "feeding... a cascade of... centrifuges" at a fuel enrichment plant. The techniques facilitate the process and would make it easier for Iran to switch to a different level of enriching uranium. In January 2021, Iran said it was enriching uranium to 20 percent at that facility, a level well beyond the 3.67 percent agreed under the 2015 deal, before later saying it had enriched to 60 percent at another facility, still short of the 90 percent required for military grade uranium. — AFP

TAQTAQAH: A worker is seen at an oil refinery near the village of Taq Taq, in the autonomous Iraqi region of Kurdistan. — AFP

Local

Open residence, real estate for expats, companies urge

Some expats, Kuwaitis welcome the proposal

By Chidi Emmanuel

KUWAIT: In line with Kuwait's 2035 vision, which is aimed at transforming Kuwait into a financial and trade hub regionally and internationally, and becoming more attractive to investors, a recent report revealed that companies are asking the Kuwait government to allow foreigners to own and invest in real estate and in turn offer them permanent residency permits. The proposal called for granting long-term residency permits so as to lure rare talents and to prevent local businessmen from divesting or taking their businesses out of Kuwait.

Kuwait's 2035 vision also envisions a key role for the private sector which will lead the economic growth, creating competition and promoting production efficiency as well as providing an essential structure to cultivate a business-friendly environment.

Reacting to the report, some expats and Kuwaitis called the proposal a welcome development. "The proposal is great. If approved, it will open doors for more businesses and pave the way for healthy competition. We don't have many companies in Kuwait compared to other countries in the GCC. Kuwait really needs to open up a little. We need jobs and opportunities," Fahad Yousef, a Kuwait University student told Kuwait Times.

Other proposals include abolishing the sponsorship system for the investors, leniency in the rules and requirements for visit visas for investors, and reducing the percentage of the local partner or sponsor. Reacting to these proposals,

Shakira Aya, an American businesswoman in Arifjan camp applauded the proposal which she called a good step in the right direction. "Kuwait should borrow a leaf from its neighbors, like, UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. The world is becoming a global village and things have to change for good. Kuwait truly needs foreign investors. Investments will provide jobs and development. Kuwait should try to diversify the economy just like other petro-dollar economies," she advised.

Real estate ownership

In another development, a proposal that will allow foreigners living in the country to own real estate is expected to be presented to the new government. The study includes granting non-Kuwaitis the right to own a residential flat in an investment building, provided the applicant has a permanent residency permit and has not been convicted for any honor or trust crime during their entire stay in Kuwait.

More so, the flat must be used for private residence for the applicant or their family, and should not be more than 350 sq m. The person must not own another apartment in Kuwait. The current law allows an Arab expat to own only one flat in Kuwait following approval by the Cabinet and a decree in this regard. The new proposal aims at expanding this issue to include all expats, Arabs or otherwise. Title deeds will be issued by a decision from the justice minister, and not a decree by the Cabinet.

"If approved, this may open up new direct foreign investments in Kuwait. Most expats prefer to invest in their

Calls to abolish sponsorship for investors



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing a general view of Kuwait City and its suburbs.

home countries because of lots of restrictions. Recent report shows that remittances exceed \$20 billion annually. Just like other regional players, Kuwait needs to encourage and lure investments thus creating the much-needed employment opportunities", Hamzat Obo, a business owner explained.

"Thousands of flats are empty in Mahboula area alone. We hope things will change for good. I will be glad to own a flat and invest in Kuwait, if possible. I have lived here for over 20 years. Kuwait is like a home now," Indian expat, Aarush Aayush said as his friends voiced their support to the proposal.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister recalls former Japanese PM's efforts to boost ties

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Japanese embassy in Kuwait opened a book of condolence on Monday at its premises in Mishref for officials and the public to offer their condolences on the demise of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was assassinated on July 8, 2022, in Nara, Japan.

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah offered his

condolences on behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, government, and people of Kuwait to Japan's Emperor Naruhito, as well as the government and people of Japan.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad expressed heartfelt condolences. "Former Prime Minister of Japan was a key factor in developing the historic and solid bilateral relations with the State of Kuwait. He had a great role in cementing the brotherly Kuwait-Japan relations," he wrote in the book of condolence. He also recalled the "two important visits" Abe made to Kuwait and their results "which served the interest of the two countries and their peoples." The condolences book is open at the Japanese premises for two days, according to a statement from the embassy. The embassy receives the public to offer their condolences on Tuesday from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm, and from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah writes in the book of condolence. —KUNA photos



Paul Noonan, Charge d'Affaires, Australia Embassy in Kuwait, writes in the book of condolence.

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KUWAIT: A Kuwait Red Crescent Society delegation visited four Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, where they provided health care and food assistance. The tour was carried out in cooperation with the Qatar Red Crescent Society. — KUNA photos

Local

InterNations 2022 index lists Kuwait as worst place for expats

Kuwait ranks badly in quality of life, ease of settling in, working abroad

KUWAIT: A global index has listed Kuwait as the worst place for expats based on a survey it did for 2022 and covered only 52 countries around the world. Kuwait not only ranks last in the Expat Insider 2022 survey overall, but also in the bottom 10 of each index, reads the report published by InterNations.

Kuwait is rated worst in terms of Quality of Life and Ease of Settling In (52nd for each): for example, expats are unhappy with the natural environment (65 percent vs eight percent globally) and feel that they cannot openly express their opinions (57 percent vs 18 percent globally). They also perceive the local residents as unfriendly (44 percent vs 17 percent globally) and rate their social life negatively (50 percent vs 26 percent globally).

The Working Abroad Index (51st) does not look much better, the report reads. Expats are unhappy with their career opportunities (39 percent vs 22 percent globally) and their work-life balance (37 percent vs 19 percent globally). While Kuwait ranks 49th in the Expat Essentials Index, it performs best for Personal Finance (45th): 76 percent of expats feel that their disposable household income is enough or more than enough to lead a comfortable life (vs 72 percent globally). Overall, 37 percent of expats are happy with their life in Kuwait.

Aside from Kuwait, the bottom 10 expat destinations in the list include (in order) New Zealand, Hong Kong, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Japan, South Africa, Turkey, Italy, and Malta. The top 10 expat destinations include (in order) Mexico, Indonesia, Taiwan, Portugal, Spain, UAE, Vietnam, Thailand, Australia and Singapore.

Worst quality of life

Kuwait offers the worst quality of life, according to the survey which features 52 destinations with a minimum sample size of 50 respondents. It places

last for three out of five subcategories - Leisure Options, Travel and Transit, and Environment and Climate - and ends up in the bottom five for Health and Well-Being (51st) and Safety and Security (49th).

Expats feel mostly safe in Kuwait (79 percent vs 81 percent globally), but there's a "poor infrastructure" and the country is "not eco-friendly", according to a British expat. Not even a third (31 percent) rate the availability of green goods and services favorably, for example (vs 64 percent globally). And 22 percent give the availability of public transportation the worst possible rating (vs 5 percent globally). In comparison, India at least receives good results for Health and Well-Being (19th).

Kuwait also comes last in the Ease of Settling In Index (52nd). It is the very opposite of Mexico, placing last for each subcategory and rating factor.

Among other things, expats are unhappy with their social life (50 percent vs 26 percent globally). They perceive the local residents as unfriendly (44 percent vs 17 percent globally) and do not feel at home (56 percent vs 21 percent globally). "The locals here aren't as friendly as in other Middle Eastern countries," complains an expat from the UK.

Kuwait ranks 51st in the Working Abroad Index and last overall. Expats are especially unhappy with the business culture in Kuwait, landing it in last place in the Work Culture and Satisfaction Subcategory (52nd). The majority disagrees that the business culture encourages creativity (62 percent vs 26 percent globally), supports flexibility (53 percent vs 19 percent globally), or promotes independence (67 percent vs 28 percent globally). Only 65 percent of expats in Kuwait see a purpose in their work (vs 78 percent globally). Nearly twice the global average (37 percent vs 19 percent globally) are unhappy with their work-life balance, and 26 percent are dissatisfied with their working hours (vs 17 percent globally).



Expats rate their social life, job market negatively



'Negative' job market

While moving to Kuwait has improved some expats' career prospects (53 percent vs 60 percent globally), close to half (46 percent) rate the local job market negatively (vs 27 percent globally). And around two in five (39 percent) are unhappy with the personal career opportunities (vs 22 percent globally). "There aren't many business opportunities here," an expat from Egypt says.

What is more, a third of the expats in Kuwait (33 percent) rate the job security in the country negatively, and just 48 percent agree that they are paid fairly for their work (vs 20 percent and 62 percent globally). Despite all this, 65 percent are still happy with the state of the local economy,

about as much as the global average of 64 percent.

In the Expat Essentials Index, all Gulf States, except for Kuwait, make it into the top 10. Number Bahrain makes life abroad convenient regarding language and admin topics, while fellow Gulf State UAE (2nd) shows very similar strengths. Kuwait (49th) is one of the worst-rated countries in this index, largely due to Admin Topics (50th) and Digital Life (47th). Its best result is a 29th place for Language. Kuwait also falls in the bottom three in the Health and Well-Being Subcategory (51st) alongside the United States (50th) and Ireland (52nd). Meanwhile, the list ranks Kuwait last in the ability of expats to openly express themselves and their opinions; even worse than China which ranks 51st.

Psychologist warns mental illnesses lead to suicide more than drug abuse



Psychologist Ahmad Al-Mulla

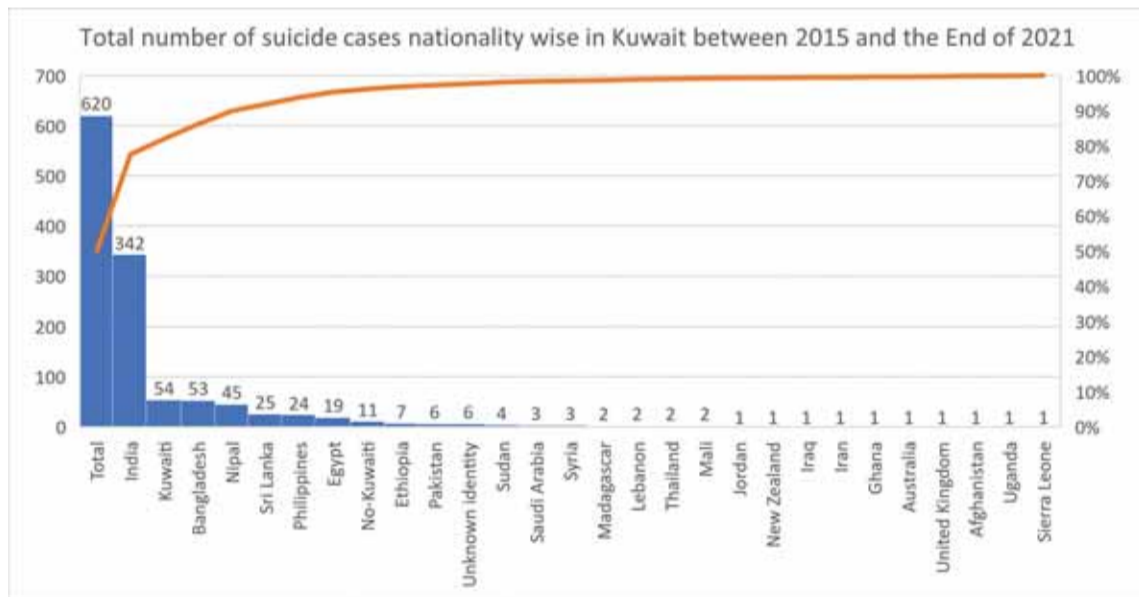
By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded an increase in suicide cases since the start of the pandemic, while most people who committed suicide were young people and Bedoons (stateless) as well as expatriates, according to official statistics. The statistics indicate that the total number of people who took their lives in Kuwait during the period between 2015 to the end of 2021 was about 620 suicides. While Indian residents ranked the highest with 342 cases, Kuwaitis came in second place with 54 suicide cases. Kuwait Times discussed with Psychologist Ahmad Al-Mulla the problems that may lead a person to commit suicide.

Regarding the causes of suicide, Mulla said that depression, schizophrenia, addiction, and personality disorders such as borderline personality disorder may lead to suicide. According to Mulla, a person first suffers from psychological problems that ultimately leads them to commit suicide. "The closure during the pandemic and difficult economic conditions in that period revealed many psychological diseases that many people suffered from. The pandemic enhanced the feeling of depression among people who are prone to depression, and thus, it led some of them to commit suicide to end their negative feelings," he said.

Mulla also mentioned cases of suicide among stock market speculators who declared bankruptcy. "Suffering from financial loss is not what led them to commit suicide, but their mental illness such as depression did," he said. Mulla explained that the victims were using speculation and making profit in the stock market as a way to 'treat' their depression. "But when they were exposed to financial loss, their depression escalated and led them to commit suicide," he argued. He added that people who suffer from depression cannot be distinguished from any normal person, except that they are in constant danger due to their willingness to commit suicide.

"Therefore, we should not look at the material causes of suicide, such as bullying or financial



bankruptcy. The real problem is that the suicide victim does not know how to deal with his own problems that had accumulated and leads to suicide," Mulla pointed out. "If people consider mental illness like any other physical illness, society's view of mental illness will change very dramatically, and we will understand more clearly the causes of suicide."

Drugs and suicide

Mulla emphasized the importance of clarifying the common belief about death from a drug overdose. "We must know that death from a drug overdose is not suicide," he said. "Many people believe that death from an overdose is a suicide, but this information is wrong. Death due to drugs can be compared to a person who drives a car fast for fun and had an accident that leads them to death."

"Suicide can be classified only when the person has a pre intention to end his life, so the death of an overdose, in particular, is not considered suicide," he further explained. "Most addicts love life and they take drugs because they want to feel life to the maximum by reaching ecstasy."

"Drugs do not lead to suicide, but drug abuse may lead to another disease called a double diagnosis, meaning that there are people who use certain types of drugs that lead them to schizophrenia or depression which leads to suicide," he noted. "So in this case, the cause of the suicide is the mental illness and not the drug use itself."

Solutions

Regarding the solutions, Mulla said that preventive solutions are only effective solution to protect people from mental illness that may lead to suicide. "People must be aware that mental illnesses are like normal diseases, which could be treated to avoid the aggravation of these psychological problems because if a person suffered from a mental illness, it cannot be predicted

whether these diseases may lead to suicide or not," he said.

Meanwhile, Mulla stressed the importance of raising awareness among patients, saying, "As for prevention of suicide itself, there must be awareness for patients that there are solutions to any psychological crisis that they may go through, because suicide will not solve the crisis." He added, "The problem of mental illnesses such as depression is that they deceive the sufferer that there are no solutions to their problem, and this is not true."

Mulla stressed that suicide cannot be considered a phenomenon in Kuwait. He stressed at the same time that the problem of suicide lies in the fact that it leads to the destruction of the victim's family, and leads them to live a disturbing psychological, social and emotional life.

Attract attention

Regarding the psychological traits that some people may have that led them to commit suicide, Mulla said, "Some people who suffer from personal disturbances tend to draw attention, so they pressure their families to pay attention to them by threatening to commit suicide. This is what we see in many cases of suicide threats by throwing oneself from a height, and most of the cases in which a person succeeds in committing suicide do not have the intention of committing suicide. The person just slips during the threat. These cases cannot be considered suicides."

"As a logical and not scientific analysis based on studies, it can be said that psychologically disturbed people are more likely to commit suicide than drug addicts, because the addict can, through drug use, treat depression temporarily, so he avoids the decision to commit suicide, while the normal person has nothing to relieve depression, and it leads to suicide," Mulla argued. "From my personal experience, suicide rates among troubled people are much higher than drug abusers."



Kuwait may allow helpers' transfer in case of dispute

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry and Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) are discussing a request from Domestic Help Offices Union (DHO) in Kuwait to allow helpers transfer from one employer to another in case of a labor dispute, and if the helper wishes to work for another employer.

The step would help protect the worker's right as guaranteed by law, and that deportation should not be the first step to be taken - rather there should be serious steps to re-deploy the worker, and in case that is not possible, the worker should receive their full rights before leaving. The two sides are also discussing the issue of employers keeping workers' documents such as Civil ID and passports, which is considered by the Union as illegal and in violation of law 68/2015 in regards to domestic help and contradicts international treaties on human rights.

Meanwhile, Commerce and Industry Ministry is reviewing its decision in regards to setting the cost of bringing domestic helpers at not more than KD 890, based on the needs of the local market and the difficulties of bringing them. The DHO claims that setting the cost at KD 890 is not suitable with the increase of airline ticket prices.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia may open its embassy in Funaitees area next month. Domestic help offices are getting ready for business following the agreement between Ethiopia and Kuwait which will be officially signed in the coming days. Domestic help offices may sign preliminary contracts to bring in workers. This might lower the recruitment cost, as this coincides with an official Filipino decision to raise the age of domestic helpers to 24 instead of 23 years.

Local

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News in brief

**Court rules Um Al-Haiman unsuitable for living**

KUWAIT: The Court of Cassation ruled that Um Al-Haiman is not suitable for living because of pollution from nearby factories. The court ruled that the government had made a mistake when it listed the area as habitable.

Kuwait condemns Somalia terror blast

KUWAIT: Kuwait categorically denounces a terrorist bombing that struck a hotel in south-central Somalia, which left a number of people dead and injured, the Foreign Ministry said on Sunday. The explosion in the Hirshabelle State town of Jowhar targeted a hotel located next to the presidential palace. In a statement, the ministry stressed Kuwait's "categorical and unwavering stance against violence and terrorism". It also reiterated its calls on the international community to intensify efforts to tackle this dangerous phenomenon, and rid humanity from its evils. Kuwait went on to convey its condolences to the government and people of Somalia, along with the families of the victims, and wished those injured a quick recovery.

**AIPU acclaims summit outcomes**

BEIRUT: The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) Monday extolled the output and outcomes of Jeddah Security and Development Summit held in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, chiefly including a precise diagnosis of international order equilibriums in the Arab region and the entire world. In a press statement, the union welcomed the participating leaders' renewed insistence on defending all Arab rights and reiterating common Arab action as the sole way to maintain the security, stability and territorial integrity of all Arab countries and to stand against any possible aggression on any Arab country. It also voiced confidence in the effectiveness of Gulf diplomacy in bringing views closer and addressing, in reality and transparency, all crises and challenges haunting the Arab region. The union underlined the need to back a strong united Arab order in order to tackle eastern and western countries in a wise way that would ensure the interests and hopes of Arab people for security, development, stability and prosperity.

OPEC crudes' basket up \$1.73 to \$104.39 pb

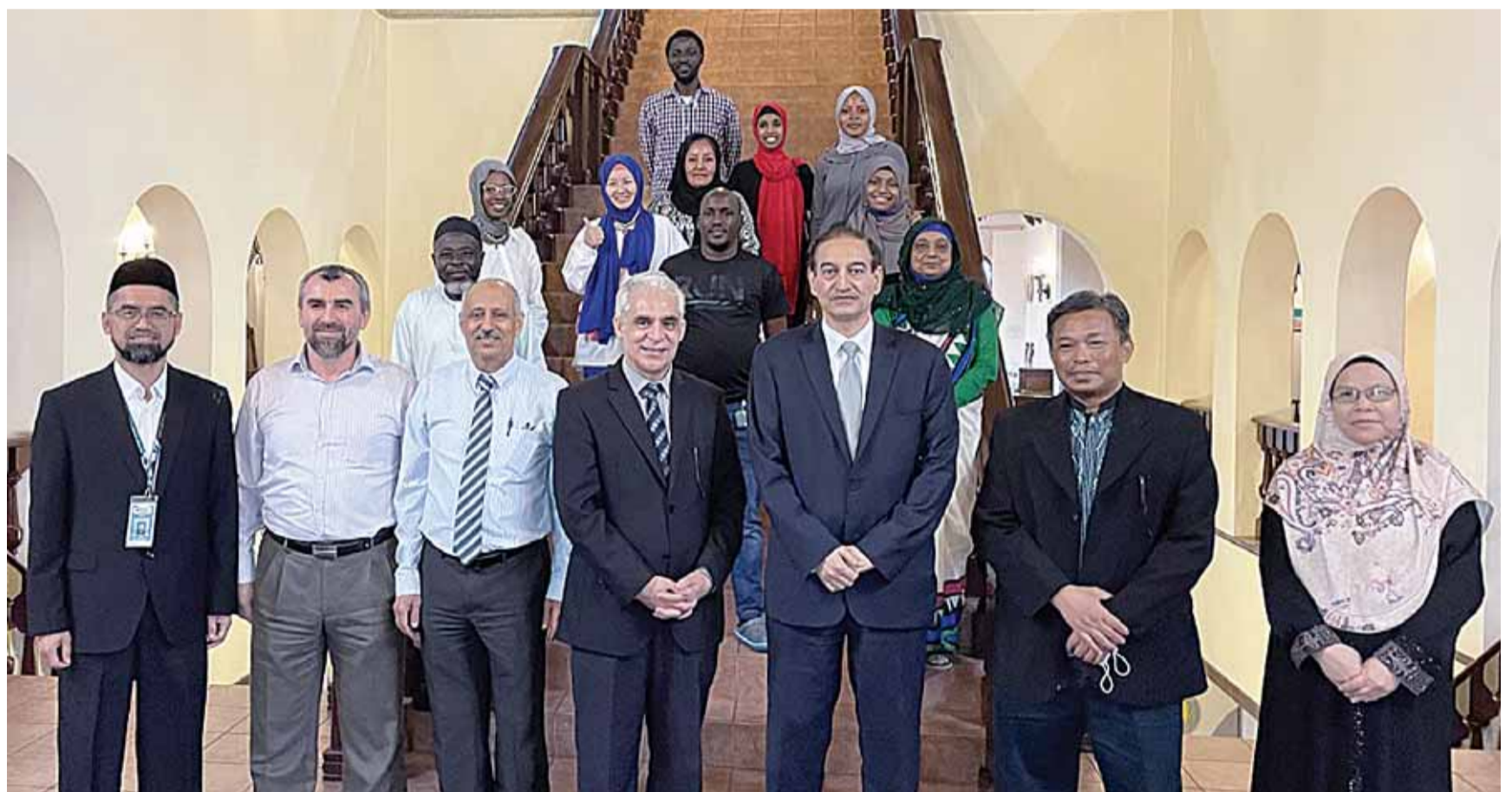
VIENNA: Price of OPEC's basket of oil rose by \$1.73 to \$104.39 per barrel on Friday against \$102.66 pb on Thursday, the organization reported Monday. Bulletin of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) added that the monthly rate reached \$117.72 pb last June whereas May recorded \$113.87 pb, indicating stability of basket price rate from the beginning of the year and until last week where it reached \$108.28 pb. The bulletin added that annual average rate of the crudes' basket, last year, reached \$69.89 pb. Energy ministers of the OPEC+ coalition agreed, on June 2, on increasing the oil production by 648,000 barrels per day for coming July and August. OPEC+ countries are set to hold a meeting on August 3, 2022, to follow up on market conditions.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: The Grand Mosque in Kuwait City. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Kuwait funded \$1.6 billion worth of global water security projects: Envoy



Kuwait's ambassador to Malaysia Dr Hamad Burahma with professors and students at the university. —KUNA photos

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait has contributed immensely towards the improvement of water security around the world, its ambassador to Malaysia said on Monday, citing \$1.6 billion worth of water-related projects his country had funded. A number of Kuwait-based institutions had financed some 100 development projects aiming to remedy the problem of water scarcity plaguing many impoverished countries, Dr Hamad Burahma told a university seminar in the

Malaysian capital.

The wider Gulf Arab region is not exempt from water shortages given the global depth of the dilemma, the Kuwaiti diplomat warned, saying the matter has legal and political dimensions as well. "Some countries are in dire need of proper funding to address water scarcity problems," he underlined, pointing out that Kuwait has emerged as a major guarantor of water security to these countries. —KUNA



KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait's ambassador to Malaysia Dr Hamad Burahma speaks at a university seminar in Malaysia.



Indian Ambassador Sibi George with INS TEG Captain Ravi Kumar.

Indian naval ship INS TEG visits Kuwait

KUWAIT: Indian naval ship INS TEG arrived at Shuwaikh Port, Kuwait on July 18 for operational turnaround. The ship was welcomed by senior officers of Kuwait Naval Force, port



KUWAIT: India naval ship INS TEG docked at Shuwaikh Port.

authorities, Indian embassy and Defense wing officials, according to an Indian embassy press release. The visit is scheduled till July 21, 2022.

INS TEG has been deployed extensively for numerous missions including anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, providing maritime security in the seas of India's maritime partner

nations and exercises with other regional navies.

INS TEG's visit to Kuwait will strengthen the deep-rooted, multi-faceted friendly ties and growing cooperation between the Republic of India and the State of Kuwait, the release added.

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International

Russian shelling kills 6 in Donbas as Zelensky replaces security chief

Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports threatening grain supplies

KYIV: Russian shelling in battle-scarred east Ukraine on Monday left six dead, Kyiv said, as the country was reeling from President Volodymyr Zelensky's decision to sack two senior law enforcement officials. EU foreign ministers were convening meanwhile to discuss toughening sanctions against Moscow and the bloc's foreign policy chief warned of the "life and death" consequences of Russia's blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea grain exports.

Rescue workers in blue helmets could be seen digging through debris and clearing rubble from the collapsed remains of a two-storey building in Toretsk in the industrial east that was struck by Russian artillery early Monday.

"Rescuers found and recovered the bodies of five dead people in total. Three people were rescued from the rubble and one of them died in hospital," the emergency services said, adding their rescue operations had concluded.

Toretsk, a town with of around 30,000 residents lies some 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Kramatorsk, a key target for Russian forces that were ordered into Ukraine in February. They initially failed to capture the capital Kyiv early in the invasion but have made gains in the eastern region of Donbas recently, capturing the sister cities of Lysychansk and Severodonetsk.

Zelensky said late Sunday that he was firing Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova and security chief Ivan Bakanov amid widespread cases of suspected treason by law enforcement officials. He cited "a great number of crimes against the foundations of national security and the connections established between Ukrainian law enforcement officials and Russian special services," making the announcement.



'Mykolaiv again under massive missile fire'

of Ukraine's ports.

Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in an address to the officials that "weapons to Ukraine, sanctions on Russia, and accountability for Russia are the three ways to restore peace, enhance security, and protect stability in Europe." A Ukrainian counter-offensive in the direction of those Black Sea ports has been gaining momentum and Kyiv said Monday that Russia was digging in along frontlines in the Kherson region where Kyiv's army are attacking.

'Massive missile fire'

Ukraine meanwhile accused Russia of again carrying out bombardments on civilian infrastruc-

'Life and death'

Deputy Head of the Presidency Andriy Smirnov told local media the two were suspended to prevent them "potentially influencing criminal proceedings against employees of the Security Service of Ukraine".

Zelensky on Monday appointed 39-year-old Vasyi Malyuk-first deputy head of the SBU security services since March-as acting security chief, according to a presidential decree. In Brussels, the EU's foreign policy chief warned that Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports was threatening grain supplies to tens of thousands of people vulnerable to starvation and said it must end.

"It's an issue of life and death for many human beings. And the question is that Russia has to de-block and allow Ukrainian grain to be exported," Borrell told reporters.

His comments came as Russian and Ukrainian negotiators are due to meet UN and Turkish diplomats in Istanbul on Wednesday to discuss a possible agreement to end the months-long blockade



KYIV, Ukraine: Ukrainian servicemen carry coffin of a fellow officer nicknamed Fanat during his funeral in Kyiv on July 18, 2022. —AFP

ture in nearby Mykolaiv, a battered city near the Black Sea coast, that has been targeted repeatedly in recent days.

"Mykolaiv again was under massive missile fire," the regional governor Vitaliy Kim announced on social media, specifying that premises showcasing agricultural machinery had been hit. Battlefield dynamics in the south-and in the east-have shifted, Kyiv and observers of the conflict say, with delivery of long-range precision artillery to Ukraine by its Western allies.

Those weapons are a key concern for Russia, and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu during a recent troop inspection said Moscow's forces must set about neutralising systems like the US-sup-

plied Himars. "Shoigu gave orders to prioritise the destruction-with high-precision weapons-enemy artillery and long-range missiles," the Russian defence ministry said.

In a BBC television interview broadcast Sunday, the head of Britain's armed forces, Admiral Tony Radakin, estimated that 50,000 Russian soldiers had been killed or wounded in the invasion with nearly 1,700 Russian tanks and some 4,000 armoured fighting vehicles destroyed.

Radakin suggested that Russia's land forces may pose less of a threat now, but more than 20 weeks since the invasion began, Moscow said Saturday it would step up its military operations. —AFP

News in brief

Two small planes collide

WASHINGTON: Four people were killed Sunday after two small planes collided in midair at an airport in Las Vegas, officials and local media reports said. A single-engine Piper PA-46 plane was preparing to land at North Las Vegas Airport in the US state of Nevada around noon local time, when it collided with a single-engine Cessna 172, the Federal Aviation Administration said in a statement to AFP. "The Piper crashed... in a field east of Runway 30-Right and the Cessna fell into a water retention pond," the agency said. "Two people were aboard each aircraft." Four people died in the crash, local media reported, citing city officials. An investigation is ongoing, the FAA said.

Russian journalist detained

MOSCOW: Russian police on Sunday detained journalist Marina Ovsyannikova, who in March interrupted a live TV broadcast to denounce the military action in Ukraine, her lawyer said. No official statement has been made, but her detention comes a few days after 44-year-old Ovsyannikova demonstrated alone near the Kremlin holding a placard criticising Russia's intervention in Ukraine and President Vladimir Putin. "Marina has been detained," her entourage said in a message posted on the journalist's Telegram account. "There is no information on where she is." The message included three photos of her being led by two police officers to a white van, after apparently having been stopped while cycling.

Three slain in US shooting

WASHINGTON: A man opened fire at a mall in the US state of Indiana on Sunday killing three and injuring two, officials said, the latest armed rampage in a country plagued by gun violence. The attack ended when a "good Samaritan" shot the gunman dead, police said. "We experienced a mass shooting this evening at the Greenwood Park Mall," Mark Myers, mayor of Greenwood, Indiana, said in a statement. The town is about 10 miles (16 kilometers) south of downtown Indianapolis, the state capital. The gunman, who has not been identified, entered the mall's food court at about 6 pm (2200 GMT) carrying a rifle along with several magazines of ammunition and opened fire, said Chief Jim Ison.

Malaysia seizes animal parts

PORT KLANG, Malaysia: Malaysian customs officials said Monday they seized a stash of rare animal parts worth \$18 million thought to have come from Africa, including elephant tusks, rhino horns and pangolin scales. The Southeast Asian nation is a hub for wildlife trafficking, with animal parts shipped through the country to lucrative regional markets. Authorities foiled a smuggling attempt on July 10 when they uncovered the illicit cargo in Port Klang, on Malaysia's west coast, hidden in a container along with timber. —From AFP

EU ministers insist Russia sanctions working

BRUSSELS: European foreign ministers insisted Monday that sanctions imposed on Russia to punish it for invading Ukraine are working—despite the threat to the EU's own energy supplies. Last week one EU leader, Hungary's nationalist premier Viktor Orban, denounced the policy and claimed that Brussels was doing more harm to Europe's own economy than it was to Moscow.

Arriving at EU headquarters for talks on how to close loopholes in the sanctions regime and increase pressure on Russia, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell rejected this. "Some European leaders have been saying that the sanctions were an error, were a mistake," he told reporters.

"Well, I do not think it was a mistake. It is what we had to do and we will continue doing." Luxembourg's foreign minister, Jean Asselborn, dismissed the idea of dropping the sanctions: "That would be fatal if we did that. It is our credibility that is at stake."

"Normally we would have to use diplomacy, the UN, to try to get this right. But we are not in a normal time. We are in a time where the laws of the jungle count." Since February, when Russia invaded its already partially occupied neighbour Ukraine, the EU has deployed an escalating series of six sanctions packages against Moscow.

Most oil imports have been banned since June, and diplomats are discussing a gold embargo, but many European countries remain dependent on Russian gas for their energy supplies. Borrell and most western leaders insist that the sanctions have damaged Russia's economy and will only get tighter if President Vladimir Putin fails to withdraw his forces from Ukraine.

But on Friday, Orban—the closest EU leader to the Kremlin and a frequent critic of Brussels—slammed the measures, arguing that Europe had

Fight for survival: Why Italy populists triggered crisis

ROME: Much of Italy was calling Monday for the blood of the Five Star Movement, accusing the populist party of torpedoing Prime Minister Mario Draghi's government in a bid to save itself from oblivion. The Movement claims it had no option but to opt out of a key confidence vote last week, fracturing Draghi's fragile coalition, because it could no longer stand fellow parties trampling over its policies. The vote was on an aid package to combat inflation, but included a provision for a garbage incinerator to be built in Rome — something Five Star has long opposed and a red line it said it could not cross.

Experts described it instead as a tactical attempt to win back grassroots backing by a party that won 33 percent of the vote at the last national election in 2018, but has since seen its popularity plummet. Five Star leader Giuseppe



BERLIN, Germany: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock greets German Chancellor Olaf Scholz as he arrives to attend the 13th Petersburg Climate Dialogue on July 18, 2022 at the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. —AFP

"shot itself in the lungs" by hurting energy supplies. "Brussels thought that the sanctions policy would hurt the Russians, but it hurts us more," he said.

Borrell and the EU ministers held talks over video link with Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, before discussing among themselves how to tighten sanctions. Kuleba, in remarks to the ministers shared with reporters, urged the EU not to give ground to Putin.

"Backing down and bowing to his demands will not work, it has never worked. This is a trap," he said. "I am sure that in the following weeks there will be more Kremlin-leaning voices nudging public opinion into giving Putin what he wants so that he leaves Europe alone."

Conte gambled that Draghi would carry on without them in the coalition, doing whatever necessary to keep Italy stable during a cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine, experts said.

'Disbelief'

The Movement seized the chance to try and become an opposition party "to 'wash' the government off themselves" ahead of the next election in May 2023, Daniela Preziosi, political journalist for the Domani daily, told AFP. It was a risky move. Draghi immediately handed in his resignation, only for it to be refused by President Sergio Mattarella. Several coalition parties and over 1,000 mayors have urged Draghi to stay on. The mayors expressed their "disbelief and concern" over the "irresponsible behavior" of the Five Star Movement.

Draghi's final decision, expected Wednesday, could prompt tricky snap elections in October — a period traditionally used to pass the government budget. Keeping the government alive may not be an option. Matteo Renzi, head of coalition member Italia Viva, said Monday that Five Star "lied, insulted and attacked opponents" and must take responsibility for "destroying everything". Ex-

"We should actively counter these narratives," he said. Borrell noted that EU officials are drawing up plans to ban imports of Russian gold, but added: "We do not say 'new package', but improving the implementation of the already existing sanctions."

In the meantime, Russia has begun to disrupt gas supplies to Europe, threatening the energy security of countries like EU industrial powerhouse Germany. "Russia is trying to demoralise us," Germany's minister of state for European affairs Anna Luehrmann said.

"We will continue to support Ukraine, both economically, politically, but also with military means," she said. "It is very important that the sanctions are maintained." —AFP

premier Silvio Berlusconi and far-right leader Matteo Salvini, both in Draghi's coalition, slammed the Movement's "incompetence and unreliability".

'Irrelevant'

It was Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio's split last month from the Movement — with around 60 lawmakers joining him in protest over Five Star's policy on Ukraine — that set this crisis in motion, Preziosi said. "It was no longer the biggest party in the (government) majority, and subsequently became irrelevant".

Giovanni Orsina, head of the Luiss School of Government in Rome, agreed that "the Five Star was provoked (by Di Maio), but it fell for it and must now accept responsibility". Founded in 2009 as an anti-establishment movement, the Five Star Movement began hemorrhaging votes after entering government, first in partnership with the far right and then with the centre-left. Lawver Conte was prime minister of both coalitions. His attempt to form a third cabinet failed in 2021, at which point former European Central Bank chief Draghi was asked to head a national unity government. —AFP

International

South Korean envoy visits Japan in bid to mend ties

Tokyo, Seoul locked in a bitter trade and diplomatic row

TOKYO: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin kicked off a three-day visit to Japan on Monday as the two nations explore ways to warm their icy ties, seen as the worst in decades. Relations between the two neighbours have long been overshadowed by bitter memories of Japan's brutal colonial rule of the Korean peninsula between 1910 and 1945.

Newly elected South Korean leader Yoon Suk-yeol has made active efforts to improve his ties with Japan, including sending a diplomatic mission to Tokyo before his inauguration in May. Shortly after arriving in Tokyo, Park met his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi.

Officials are also reportedly trying to arrange for Park to pay a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and express condolences for former Japanese leader Shinzo Abe, who was assassinated earlier this month. Park and Hayashi posed for photos but stayed silent in front of the cameras and there was no schedule

to address the media on Monday. Both Japan and South Korea are seen by the United States as linchpins in Washington's pushback against rising Chinese commercial and military power, as well as crucial partners in dealing with an unpredictable North Korea.

But Tokyo and Seoul have been locked in a bitter trade and diplomatic row as they remain suspicious of each other over how to address emotional issues including compensation for World War II sex slaves and forced labour.

South Korea says Japan hasn't atoned enough, while Tokyo argues that a 1965 bilateral treaty resolved claims between the two nations. As ties deteriorated under Abe and Yoon's predecessor, Moon Jae-in, Japan in 2019 toughened South Korea-bound export rules for materials necessary to produce semiconductors. South Korea also threatened to terminate a bilateral military agreement to share defence secrets. — AFP



TOKYO: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin (L) and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi (R) attend a meeting in Tokyo on July 18, 2022. — AFP

Pakistan's former premier calls for early election

LAHORE: Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan called again Monday for an early national election after his party seized control of the state assembly in Punjab, the country's most populous province.

Twenty seats were up for grabs in the Punjab by-election, which was seen as a popularity test for the former international cricket star dismissed by a no-confidence vote in April. His Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party won 15, with the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) of current Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif taking four, and one going to an independent.

Sunday's vote was also seen as a bellwether for national elections that must be held by October next year, although Khan has campaigned across the country for an earlier poll since being dismissed. "The only way forward from here is to hold free and transparent elections," Khan tweeted early Monday after the Punjab votes were tallied.

"Any other way will only lead to increased political uncertainty and further economic chaos," Khan has drawn thousands to rallies since being ousted, giving lengthy speeches claiming the government was imposed on Pakistan by a US-led conspiracy.

He also blames the current government for soaring inflation, although most analysts agree Sharif inherited the country's economic woes—which were given some relief last week by an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to resume a rescue package.

Pakistan newspapers suggested the Punjab result was a consequence of the economic hardships currently felt by the country, which is spending nearly half its income to service dire foreign debt. To meet IMF conditions for a resumption of a \$7.2 billion aid package, Sharif had to remove subsidies on fuel—effectively raising prices by more than 50 percent in less than two months.

"A bitter taste of unpopular decisions," read a headline in the influential Dawn newspaper over a front-page analysis. The Punjab assembly vote was called after the election commission disqualified 20 members of the PTI for switching party loyalties. The result means the likely end of a short reign as Punjab Chief Minister by Hamza Sharif, the prime minister's son. — AFP



LAHORE: Police help a man as he leaves after casting his ballot at a polling station during the by-election in Punjab province assembly seat in Lahore on July 17, 2022. — AFP

UK, France face heat apocalypse...

Continued from Page 1

Dune de Pilat, Europe's highest sand dune, turning picturesque landscapes, popular campsites and pristine beaches into a scorching mess.

Another 8,000 people were being evacuated near the dune Monday as changing winds blew thick smoke into residential areas, officials said. "The smoke is toxic," firefighter spokesman Arnaud Mendousse told AFP. "Protecting the population is a matter of public health." The evacuations added to the 16,000 tourists or residents already forced to decamp in France, many to emergency shelters. "In some southwestern areas, it will be a heat apocalypse," meteorologist Francois Gourand told AFP.

In Spain, fire burning in the northwestern province of Zamora claimed the life of a 69-year-old shepherd, regional authorities said, the second death after that of a fireman a day before in the same area. Authorities have reported around 20 wildfires still raging from the south to Galicia in the far northwest, where blazes have destroyed around 4,500 hectares of land. In Portugal, almost the entire country remained on high alert for wildfires despite a slight drop in temperatures which had hit 47C – a record for the month of July – last Thursday.

'Get on with it'

Fires have killed two, injured around 60 and destroyed between 12,000 and 15,000 hectares of

land in Portugal. In Britain, the government, already on the ropes after a series of scandals and Prime Minister Boris Johnson's resignation, drew fresh criticism for failing to take the situation seriously enough. "This is serious heat that could actually, ultimately, end in people's deaths because it is so ferocious," College of Paramedics chief executive Tracy Nicholls told Sky News.

The Sun tabloid headlined its coverage of the heat "British Bake Off", observing that the "scorching" was making the UK hotter than Ibiza where, indeed, temperatures were a comparatively paltry 30C on Monday. "It is a bit frightening," Karina Lawford, 56, told AFP as she took a stroll by the sea in Tankerton on the north Kent coast, saying the heat reminded her of Australia where she lives.

Britain's chief meteorologist Paul Davies said the heatwave was "entirely consistent with climate change", telling Sky News the "brutality" of the heatwave was "astounding" but could become a regular occurrence "by the end of the century". Network Rail, which is responsible for rail infrastructure, said the main east coast route out of London King's Cross to York and Leeds would be shut between 1100 GMT and 1900 GMT on Tuesday.

But some in Britain, like 64-year-old plumber Dave Williams, were dismissive of the wall-to-wall coverage of the heatwave. "Just get on with it," he told AFP TV. "The way they talk about it is as if we've never had a summer." Among people heading to the beaches for respite was Abu Bakr, a bank worker, who also put the British heatwave into perspective. "I come from Sudan," he said as he relaxed on Brighton beach. "Forty, forty-five degrees is just the norm. This is as good as it can be." — AFP



COLOMBO: People hold a candlelight vigil for the victims and injured demonstrators during anti-government protests, in Colombo. — AFP

Sri Lanka renews state of emergency ahead of key vote

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's acting president renewed the country's state of emergency Monday ahead of a parliamentary vote to pick a new head of state—a poll in which he is a leading candidate. Ranil Wickremesinghe automatically became acting president when Gotabaya Rajapaksa resigned last week after fleeing to Singapore.

A state of emergency allows troops to arrest and detain suspects, and the president to make regulations overriding existing laws to deal with any unrest. One was already in place but parliament had not met to ratify the declaration as required, and Wickremesinghe extended it from Monday "in the interests of public security", he said.

Police and the military, armed with emergency powers, stepped up security in the capital ahead of Wednesday's election of a new president. Wickremesinghe, a six-time former prime minister, is being backed for the position by Rajapaksa's party, which remains the largest in the legislature. In

what was seen as a possible appeal to 14 Catholic legislators for their support, Wickremesinghe said he had asked Britain's help to complete investigations into the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings that killed 279 people. Sri Lanka's small but influential Catholic minority believes the coordinated suicide attack against three churches and three hotels was a "political plot" to bring Rajapaksa to power, and has long sought an independent investigation. Wickremesinghe was "requesting the assistance of the UK government and their intelligence services", his office said. There was no immediate comment from the British High Commission. The bombings were blamed on local jihadists and 25 men were indicted in October over alleged involvement.

But the Church and opposition parties claim state intelligence officers loyal to Rajapaksa directly or indirectly supported the bombers.

Rajapaksa was forced to flee last week when tens of thousands of protesters stormed his official residence after months of demonstrations across the country demanding his resignation over Sri Lanka's economic crisis. The nation's 22 million people have been enduring severe shortages of essentials since late last year after the country ran out of foreign exchange to finance even the most vital imports. The country defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in mid-April and is in talks with the IMF for a possible bailout. — AFP

India parliament begins voting for new president

NEW DELHI: India's parliament began voting Monday for a new president, with a female politician from the country's marginalised tribal community the favourite for the post. Droupadi Murmu, from the Santhal tribe, has been nominated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party for the largely ceremonial position.

If elected, she would be India's first tribal president and second female president. The incumbent, Ram Nath Kovind, is the country's second president from the Dalit community, the bottom of the Hindu caste system.

Murmu, 64, began her career as a schoolteacher in the eastern state of Odisha before going into politics. She has held ministerial positions in the state government, and been governor of the neighbouring state of Jharkhand.

Murmu "has devoted her life to serving society and empowering the poor, downtrodden as well as the marginalised," Modi tweeted after her candidacy was announced. Her main opponent for the presidency is veteran politician Yashwant Sinha, an ex-BJP member and former finance and external affairs minister, who has been backed by opposition parties including Congress.

He is now a vocal critic of Modi's government and tweeted at the weekend: "This year the Presidential election is not a contest between two individuals but two ideologies. "Only one side wants to protect the provisions & values enshrined in our Constitution."

India's president is chosen by nearly 5,000 elected members of both houses of parliament and regional legislatures across the country. Each of their votes is weighted according to the size of their constituency, and they rank the candidates in order of preference.

If no-one has more than 50 percent support, the lowest-scoring candidate is eliminated and their votes redistributed until someone reaches the mark. The result will be announced later this week. India's prime minister wields executive power, but the president can send back a few parliamentary bills for reconsideration. The president also plays a guiding role in the process of forming governments. —AFP

Iraq oil dispute sharpens Kurd ...

Continued from Page 1

But analysts say politics play a major role in the dispute in Iraq, whose political barons have failed to reach agreement on choosing a president and a prime minister since October legislative elections. "When it comes to oil, each side uses their respective powers as carrots and sticks depending on the political atmosphere of the day," said Bilal Wahab of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "At times when there was political accord, the courts were rather quiet. When there was political discord, however, the reverse was true," he told AFP.

'Reputation damaged'

The nullification of oil contracts between the Kurds and four international oil companies (IOCs) from Canada, Britain, Norway and the United States at the start of July has inflamed the row. "For Baghdad to be chasing IOCs out of Iraqi Kurdistan does not serve to show Iraq as a major producer welcoming of foreign investment," cautioned Yesar Al-Maleki, an analyst at the Middle East Economic Survey.

In a fightback, the Kurdish regional authorities in June initiated judicial proceedings against the federal government. One lawsuit targets Oil Minister Ihsan Ismail, accused by the Kurds of trying to "intimidate" foreign firms operating in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. The Kurdish autonomous government has accused Baghdad of taking "illegal" and "politically motivated" actions.

For Wahab, Kurdish and federal government officials fail to appreciate "how much they are damaging the overall reputation of Iraq's energy industry". "Questioning the sanctity of contracts ... adds legal risk to a slew of other regulatory and governance risks that ail the Iraqi energy industry," he added. The dispute, he said, "repels much-needed foreign investment". Oil revenues are critical for Iraq, a country faced with widespread corruption but also mired in a financial crisis and in need of funds to rebuild infrastructure after decades of conflict.

Compromise?

Despite the legal actions, Kurdistan says it is open to a negotiated solution. It is working on setting up two companies specialized in oil exploration and marketing that would coordinate with Baghdad, a spokesperson for the Arbil government said. Baghdad's oil ministry, meanwhile, marked a small victory after oil giants Baker Hughes, Halliburton and Schlumberger committed not to initiate new projects in Kurdistan.

The ministry says the companies are also working to "liquidate and close" existing contracts. Baghdad has fought to regain control of output from lucrative oil fields in Kurdistan since the autonomous region began marketing oil independently more than a decade ago. But under a current deal, the Kurdish region delivers 250,000 barrels per day to Baghdad, in return for a share of federal funds to pay the salaries of Kurdish civil servants. In recent weeks, tensions have risen further after a series of unclaimed rocket attacks targeting oil and gas installations in Kurdistan. Experts say the assaults aim to put pressure on the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the largest in Kurdistan. The KDP is allied to Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr, whose bloc won 73 seats in the October polls, making it the largest faction in the 329-seat parliament. —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JULY 19, 2022



FARNBOROUGH, UK: Visitors look at a Boeing 737 rolling on the tarmac and preparing to take off during the airshow of the Farnborough Airshow on July 18, 2022.



FARNBOROUGH: The South Korean Black Eagles aerobatic team take part in a airshow of the Farnborough Airshow on July 18, 2022. — AFP photos

Boeing wins \$13.5bn MAX jets deal as Farnborough opens

Delta orders 100 Boeing MAX jets worth \$13.5 billion

FARNBOROUGH: US aerospace giant Boeing on Monday fired the first shot in an orders battle with European rival Airbus at Farnborough airshow, clinching a \$13.5-billion deal for 100 MAX planes from Delta Airlines in a huge vote of confidence for the crisis-hit jet. The deal marks a huge turnaround for the MAX jet which had suffered two deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019. Outgoing British Prime Minister Boris Johnson meanwhile opened the prestigious five-day event as the aviation sector plots its recovery from heavy COVID fallout. Boeing revealed also that Japanese airline ANA had agreed to purchase 20 of its smaller MAX 8 jets worth \$2.4 billion-plus two 777-8 freight planes.

'More sustainable future'

"The Boeing 737-10 will be an important addition to Delta's fleet as we shape a more sustainable future for air travel, with an elevated customer experience, improved fuel efficiency and best-in-class performance," said Delta chief executive Ed Bastian. The news comes as airlines worldwide seek to replace ageing fleets with fuel-efficient planes that emit less carbon dioxide.

The first visitors to Farnborough, southwest of London, were meanwhile hit by scorching temperatures amid Europe's ongoing heatwave. Defence aerospace companies are also expected to emerge as big winners,

with Russia's invasion of Ukraine boosting spending on nations' armed forces.

Russian companies have been banned from Farnborough due to the war. The event coincides with fast-moving political turmoil in Britain after Johnson's recent announcement that he is stepping down as Conservative party leader, sparking a fractious contest to replace him also as prime minister.

Meanwhile, US airline Delta agreed on Monday to buy 100 medium-haul Boeing MAX passenger aircraft worth a combined \$13.5 billion, in a vote of confidence for the crisis-hit jet. The gigantic deal, announced by embattled US planemaker Boeing on the first day of the Farnborough Airshow, includes options for 30 more of the planes.

The fuel-efficient 737 MAX 10 planes, the first ordered by Delta, are earmarked for delivery from 2025. Shortly afterwards, Boeing announced that Japanese airline ANA has also agreed to purchase 20 of its smaller MAX 8 jets-an order worth \$2.4 billion-plus two 777-8 freight planes.

The deals mark a huge turnaround for the MAX aircraft, which suffered two deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019. Boeing's blockbuster sale marks the first shot in a traditional multi-billion-dollar orders battle at Farnborough with its fierce European rival Airbus. "Boeing and Delta Air Lines today announced the US

carrier will modernize its single-aisle fleet with the highly efficient 737 MAX to meet demand as well as its long-term sustainability goals," the pair said in a statement.

Until now, Delta was the only US airline to not possess any MAX planes. "The Boeing 737-10 will be an important addition to Delta's fleet as we shape a more sustainable future for air travel, with an elevated customer experience, improved fuel efficiency and best-in-class performance," said Delta chief executive Ed Bastian. "These new aircraft provide superior operating economics and network flexibility, and the agreement reflects our prudent approach to deploying our capital."

The MAX-10 variant has yet to be certified by US aviation authorities. The news comes as airlines across the world seek to replace their ageing fleets with fuel-efficient planes that emit less carbon dioxide. Delta added that the new 737-10 jets would curb fuel use and emissions by between 20-30 percent compared with the aircraft they are replacing.

'Handing over controls'

"This government believes in aviation and its power to bring jobs and growth to the entire country," Johnson said Monday as the event opened. "After three years in the cockpit... I am now handing over the controls seam-

lessly to someone else. I don't know who," he added, sparking laughter from delegates. Johnson also said that the government was "investing massively in defense".

This year's event-one of the world's largest civilian and defense shows-is the first global aviation get-together since the Paris airshow in 2019, before COVID hit. Farnborough was cancelled in 2020 as the COVID health crisis grounded aircraft and ravaged the sector. Global air traffic is gradually recovering and in May reached more than two-thirds of its pre-pandemic level, according to the International Air Transport Association.

That recovery has however faced headwinds from rocketing inflation fuelled by historically high energy prices and higher wages, while staff shortages constrain airports and spark flight cancellations.

Air displays

Ahead of the event, Britain issued a historic red warning for extreme heat, with southern England temperatures potentially exceeding 40C on Monday or Tuesday for the first time. It comes as visitors to Farnborough will witness air displays by Britain's Red Arrows and South Korea's Black Eagles, as well as from the US-made F-35 stealth fighter. Airbus and Boeing are showcasing their latest twin-aisle passenger aircraft, the A350-900 and the 777X. —AFP

Dubai retains position as world's top destination for tourism FDI in 2021

DUBAI: Dubai retained its position as the world's top destination for foreign direct investment into the tourism sector in 2021, a report has found. New investments and projects in Dubai's tourism sector generated 5,545 new jobs last year.

The emirate attracted \$1.7 billion in FDI across 30 projects last year, claiming the top rank in FDI capital, projects and job creation in the tourism sector,

according to 'The Financial Times' FDI Markets data. The new investments and projects generated 5,545 new jobs during the year, according to the Dubai FDI Monitor report, published by the Dubai Investment Development Agency (Dubai FDI).

"Dubai's rank as the top FDI destination for tourism is a testament to the sector's resilience and stability. It reaffirms the sector's role as a key economic driver

that offers international investors confidence and an exceptional opportunity for stable and sustainable returns," Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, said on Twitter.

Dubai hosted 7.28 million international overnight visitors in 2021, a 32 percent increase on the previous year as the city pursues its goal to become the world's most visited destination. Business activity in Dubai's non-oil private sector economy maintained a robust speed of expansion in June, improving at the quickest pace in three years, as new orders rose sharply despite inflationary pressures. The headline seasonally adjusted S&P Global Dubai Purchasing Managers' Index rose to 56.1 in June from 55.7 in May to its highest reading since June 2019. The travel and tourism sector remained the key driver of growth in the emirate. Businesses reported a marked rise in tourism-related business activity in Dubai, the Middle East's commercial and tourism hub, as travel restrictions continued to ease around the world. Dubai has also stayed ahead of "leading international cities, including London, Paris and Shanghai" in attracting FDI into tourism during the last five years, the report said.

The emirate's tourism sector registered Dh 83.5 billion in FDI capital across 205 FDI projects between 2017-2021, generating 30,082 new jobs. "While consolidating its advantages as a well-connected hub with world-class infrastructure, attractions and lifestyle, Dubai also launched concerted efforts in key source markets to showcase its capabilities in enabling business growth and as a leading global tourism centre," Helal Al-Marri, director general of Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), said.

"Dubai's top rank reflects the effectiveness of the multi-geographic campaigns and its diversified offering across sectors." The value of total FDI capital flows into all sectors in Dubai exceeded Dh26 billion from 618 announced FDI projects in 2021, growing by 5.5 percent from 2020, the report said.

"The new policies and legislation being adopted to align the UAE economy with global developments and the long-term residency being offered to investors and entrepreneurs will see Dubai and its tourism sector sustaining the FDI momentum through to 2022 and beyond," Al-Marri said.

Dubai introduced a five-year multi-entry visa for multinational companies' employees in 2021, adding to previously launched initiatives such as Golden Visa initiative targeting investors, entrepreneurs and specialized talents. It also introduced the Virtual Working and Retire in Dubai programs.

"Dubai's top ranking in terms of jobs created by FDI into tourism proves that the exemplary investment environment developed by the city will continue to attract, retain, and grow financial as well as human capital," Fahad Al-Gergawi, chief executive of Dubai FDI, said. —Agencies

Dubai to create over 40,000 virtual jobs

DUBAI: Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Dubai Executive Council, took to Twitter on Monday to share the pillars and targets of the strategy. Calling the metaverse "the next revolution [that would] affect all aspects of life during the next two decades", Sheikh Hamdan noted that there are currently 1,000 companies in this sector in Dubai alone. "[They] contribute \$500 million to our national economy, and we expect it to rise strongly during the coming period," he stated.

The strategy aims to exponentially increase the number of blockchain and metaverse companies five times in five years, introducing 40,000 virtual jobs that would contribute \$4 billion to Dubai's economy.

ECB goes on offensive as inflation pressure mounts

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank will raise its interest rates on Thursday for the first time in over a decade, but the bank is already under pressure to do more amid record inflation. The ECB has for months been preparing the end of the era of cheap money that supported the economy through a series of crises in recent years.

To try and counteract a steep rise in prices the central bank has said it intends to raise its interest rates by a quarter point, the first such move since 2011. The ECB already stopped its bond-buying stimulus program at the beginning of July, as it laid the groundwork for the rise.

The lift-off in rates comes in response to an unprecedented surge in prices, driven higher by supply chain bottlenecks and the rising cost of energy following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Inflation in the eurozone sat at 8.6 percent in June, the highest ever recorded for the currency club and well above the ECB's two-percent target. —AFP



Business

Hunger pains on Slave Island as Sri Lanka's food prices rocket

Sri Lanka faces dire shortages of fuel, medicines and other essentials

COLOMBO: His hair is neatly combed but his cheeks are sunken and veins visible on his gaunt frame: like many Sri Lankans, Milton Pereira and his family cannot afford to buy enough food. During the country's worst-ever economic crisis, which has driven rampant inflation and spurred protests that last week brought down the president, Sri Lankans are buying less, eating less and working less. "It's very difficult to live, even a loaf of bread is expensive," Pereira told AFP outside his modest home in Slave Island, a poor enclave of the capital Colombo. "If we take one meal, we skip another."

With six children in the family, the 74-year-old said the best they had been able to afford in recent weeks was the occasional fish, cut into small pieces for everyone. "Because we don't have much money, sometimes we give the fish to the children," he said. The adults, he added, "only eat the gravy." Triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, the country's financial woes were exacerbated by government mismanagement, critics say.

Peirera's son, B G Rajitkumar, is an electrical laborer who has had no work for months. "Food prices go up every day," he said. "This exponential price rise is the most terrible thing I have ever faced." Food inflation in Sri Lanka reached 80.1 percent in the year to June, according to official figures.

At a nearby vegetable store, residents pay 1,000 rupees (\$2.80) for a kilo of gourd, twice as much as three months ago, and owner Mohamad Faizal said some of his customers were now buying as little as 100 grams a time. "The prices have gone up," he said. "The main reason is there is no way to transport those items because there is no fuel."

'No option'

With no foreign exchange reserves for imports and

having defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt, Sri Lanka is experiencing dire shortages of fuel, medicines and other essentials. According to the World Food Programme, nearly five million people — 22 percent of the population—need food aid. In its latest assessment, it said more than five out of every six families were either skipping meals, eating less or buying worse food.

While food is not in short supply, the issue is affordability. The city's New Manning main wholesale vegetable market was bustling on Sunday as buyers, sellers and porters jostled with sacks of produce. But traders say business has gone down by more than half since March. "Prices for everything have more than doubled," said trader M. M. Mufeed. "Some unsold vegetables go to waste and many poor people come to take away some of it every day after the market closes."

His sales are down 70 percent, he added. "Sometimes I sell to poor people for much less to avoid wasting food and make up somewhat."

But potatoes, onions and garlic continue to be imported from India, Pakistan and China, said import-export businessman Ashley Jennycloss. "Supply of food is not a problem, but because there is no fuel that makes it difficult and everything becomes expensive," said Jeeva, another trader, who gave only one name.

Some people travel long distances on foot to the New Manning market in the early morning to buy small amounts of vegetables for their kitchens at bulk rates.

"I have no option but to walk 10 kilometers to this market because food is cheaper here compared to retail stores near my home," said 50-year-old Howzy, who gave one name.

Pumpkin patch

The protest movement that brought down Rajapaksa has its headquarters outside his former office, where dozens of volunteers work in a patchwork

"We are forced to take steps that must clearly be described as emergency measures," CEO Klaus-Dieter Maubach said.

- Bailout talks -

The Duesseldorf-based group "cannot endure for long" under the current circumstances, Maubach said previously, with Uniper haemorrhaging tens of millions of euros a day. The group made a request for a bailout from the German government on July 8.

Negotiations over the rescue package have drawn in Uniper's Finnish parent, Fortum, which is majority owned by the government in Helsinki.

The Finnish minister responsible for the Uniper dossier, Tytti Tuppurainen, travelled to Berlin last week for talks. Options on the table include the German government taking a stake in Uniper, while the company has urged officials to activate legal provisions that would allow it to "pass on" surging costs to consumers. Fortum is proposing Uniper be restructured to bring together its system-critical services in a "supply company under the ownership of the German government". Fortum's operation of a nuclear power plant in Sweden and its interests in Russian coal projects have caused consternation among politicians in Berlin, in particular the Green party, according to local media.

Any bailout would have to ensure that German taxpayers' money is not "misused", senior Green MP Anton Hofreiter told the Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

A decision on the rescue package was expected before the end of the month, a German economy ministry spokesperson said last week. — AFP

Uniper draws on credit line as rescue talks drag on

FRANKFURT: German energy giant Uniper said Monday it had burnt through a multi-billion-euro public credit facility, as the group continued bailout talks with the German government amid a Russian gas squeeze. Uniper "drew down 2 billion euros (\$2 billion) under its existing credit facility" from public lender KfW, the group said in a statement.

The credit line, established at the turn of the year when tensions with Russia over Ukraine had already begun to drive up the price for natural gas, had been used "in full", with the group submitting an application to extend the facility Monday. The step was taken "in reaction to continuing supply disruptions of Russian gas", the group said. Moves by Moscow to curtail supplies to Germany since mid-June have forced Uniper to turn to the more expensive spot market for gas to supply its customers, leaving the energy group saddled with the extra cost. One of the biggest importers of Russian gas, Uniper is a key part of Germany's energy infrastructure and its biggest gas storage operator. While the German government has mandated stores to be filled ahead of the winter, the short supply meant Uniper had been "withdrawing gas from its own booked storage capacities" over the past week.



EU to double gas imports from Azerbaijan

BRUSSELS: The European Union and Azerbaijan on Monday signed an agreement to double gas imports from the energy-rich Caspian nation to Europe which seeks non-Russian suppliers after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Natural gas supplies have emerged as a weapon between Russia and Europe since President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine on February 24.

On a visit to Baku, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev a memorandum on "a strategic partnership in the field of energy."

In a few years, "we will double the supply of gas from Azerbaijan to the EU" to compensate for cuts in supplies of Russian gas, von der Leyen told a news conference alongside Aliyev. "From next year on, we should already reach 12 billion cubic meters" per year, she said. The agreement also provides for the expansion of the Southern Gas Corridor running through

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, and Greece—"to 20 billion cubic meters per year in a few years."

Last year, Azerbaijan sent to Europe 8.1 billion cubic meters of natural gas. Von der Leyen said Russian gas supplies to Europe were not "reliable" even before the start of Russia's war on Ukraine and the EU was turning to "more reliable suppliers". "I'm glad to count Azerbaijan among them."

Aliyev praised the deal as a "road map for the future," saying the EU-Azerbaijan energy cooperation has already "changed the energy map of Europe."

'Weaponization of energy supplies'

Ahead of von der Leyen's visit, the European Commission said: "Amid Russia's continued weaponisation of its energy supplies, diversification of our energy imports is a priority for the EU." In May, EU leaders agreed to stop most Russian oil imports by the end of the year, as part of unprecedented sanctions they slapped on Moscow over the military action in Ukraine. But the bloc put off an outright ban on Russian gas, which in 2021 amounted to 155 billion cubic meters—nearly 40 percent of EU's needs. Russia has already begun reducing its gas deliveries to prevent EU countries from replenishing reserves, prompting the European Commission to prepare "a gas demand reduction plan" to get through the next winter.—AFP



COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: This photo taken on July 17, 2022 shows an activist holding vegetables grown by Theodore Rajapakse (left) in his garden at the Galle Face protest site in Colombo, where he teaches others how to produce fast-growing vegetables in small patches of land near their homes. — AFP

of tents lining the seafront promenade. Among them, former government employee Theodore Rajapakse—no relation—is teaching people how to produce fast-growing vegetables in small patches of land near their homes.

"My country is in trouble," he said, adding that he has taught around 3,000 protesters since he joined the demonstrations. "You can grow 100 kilos of pumpkin in a three-foot-by-three-foot patch of land," he added. But the prospects of immediate improvement in Sri

Lankans' plight are limited, and the most likely successor as president, former prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, is reviled by the protesters as a Rajapaksa ally.

At Slave Island—an area named after a staging post the Portuguese used for slaves from Africa during the colonial period—Pereira had little hope. "Gota is gone, but there is no one candidate to lead us out of this terrible condition," he said. "Politicians are divided. So it will get worse, what else can happen?" — AFP

China urges banks to support property sector after boycott

BEIJING: China's banking regulator has urged lenders to extend more credit to real estate developers, as a growing number of homebuyers withhold mortgage payments on unfinished housing projects across 50 cities. Furious at postponed deliveries of pre-sold homes, unclear delivery times and halted construction, homebuyers were last week reported to have halted payments for already sold units in at least 100 residential projects, according to data from industry groups and analysts.

The boycott has worsened fears of financial contagion in the country's troubled real estate sector, which is estimated to account for 18-30 percent of GDP and is a key driver of growth in the world's second-largest economy. Analysts have called it a "vicious cycle" that would further dampen consumer confidence, following last week's dismal Q2 growth figures that were the worst since the pandemic.

China's Banking and Regulatory Insurance Commission urged banks to "effectively meet the reasonable financing needs of real estate companies, vigorously support rental housing construction" and support project mergers and acquisitions, a representative said in a state media interview published Sunday.

They were also asked to "do a good job in customer service... abide by contracts, fulfill commitments, and protect the legitimate rights and interests of financial consumers".

These measures were required to "maintain the stable and orderly operation of the real estate market", the unnamed official said. Authorities launched a crackdown on excessive debt in the property sector in 2020, leaving giants like Evergrande and Sunac struggling to make payments and forcing them to renegotiate with creditors as they teetered on the edge of bankruptcy.

'Vicious cycle'

"The recent mortgage boycott revealed the spillover in the property sector rout from the bond defaults to unfinished real estate projects," said Ken Cheung, chief Asian FX strategist at Japanese bank Mizuho. "This forms a vicious cycle in the property sector. With falling confidence on the property sector outlook, home buyers delay their purchases and property prices drop."



BEIJING: China's banking regulator has urged lenders to extend more credit to real estate developers, as a growing number of homebuyers withhold mortgage payments on unfinished housing projects across 50 cities.

Regulators met banks last week to discuss the growing consumer mortgage boycott, Bloomberg News reported, as more major Chinese developers teeter on the brink of default.

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

"Deposits and advance payments for real estate development enterprises fell by 37.9 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2022," Rajiv Biswas, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, told AFP. He warned that the weaker property sector outlook would "add to the downside risks facing China's economy". — AFP

Stocks climb, dollar slides as risk appetite returns

LONDON: Stock markets rallied and the dollar slid against the euro and pound on Monday on returning risk appetite as recession fears eased slightly. Oil prices jumped over around four percent, even though investors continued to fret over Russia's war in Ukraine, a COVID spike in China and central banks quickly raising interest rates. "After a volatile week which ended on a high note, the positive momentum has spilled over across the major global markets," noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor. "Investors will nonetheless remain on high alert this week, as further economic data provides further colour, while the need for caution against a further possible supply shock for oil and the likelihood of an interest rate hike from the ECB (European Central Bank) increases."

Both Asian and European stock markets enjoyed strong gains following a positive session Friday on Wall Street after June retail sales came in above forecasts and banking giant Citigroup's April-June results beat expectations. Wall Street continued to move higher at the opening bell on Monday, with investors cheered by investment bank Goldman Sachs posting a big jump in revenue even if profits slid like at its competitors. Earnings season continues and investors "will want to be comforted with reassuring earnings guidance" given the concerns about the risk of recession due to rising interest rates to tame inflation.—AFP

Inflation in New Zealand hits 32-year high

WELLINGTON: Inflation in New Zealand rose to a 32-year high of 7.3 percent on-year in the second quarter, according to official figures released Monday. The main drivers were rising fuel, food and housing costs, said Stats NZ, putting inflation at a level last seen in 1990. "Supply chain issues, labour costs, and higher demand have continued to push up the cost of building a new house," said Jason Attewell of Stats NZ.

Earlier this month, New Zealand's central bank raised its benchmark interest rate to its highest level in six years and warned further rises could follow. ANZ Bank chief economist Sharon Zollner told TVNZ that there was a risk prices could go even higher. She said that while inflation was making life hard for consumers, they were continuing to spend. The government could not alter the global factors behind rising prices, Transport Minister Michael Wood has said, but that it could take some of the edge off inflation. On Sunday, the government said relief measures for fuel and public transport would stay in place until January. With New Zealand set to re-open its borders to all foreign travel from midnight on July 31, Nicola Willis, deputy leader of the opposing National Party, said allowing in more immigrants would help stem rising inflation. — AFP

Business

KAMCO Oil Market Monthly Report

Oil falls below \$100 on demand worries despite tight markets

OPEC remains cautiously optimistic about growth in oil demand

KUWAIT: Crude oil witnessed consistent declines over the last two weeks as fears about demand recovery once again haunted the market. Brent crude oil futures closed below the \$100/b mark for the first time in three months on 12-July-2022 led by a stronger USD as well as fresh COVID-19 related curbs in China. An expected slowdown in global economic growth also influenced the direction of oil market. Fears of recession have forced hedge fund managers to sell oil-related derivatives to the tune of 201 million barrels over the last four weeks, according to position records published by ICE Futures and US CFTC.

On the production side, US oil output has remained flat over the last four weeks at 11.9 mb/d while rig count data showed a slowdown for the first time in weeks. Moreover, higher crude oil demand from refineries in the US resulted in a steep decline in the country's strategic crude reserve that reached the lowest level since March-1987, although commercial inventories showed an increase last week. OPEC production data from Bloomberg, on the other hand, showed a marginal increase of 130 tb/d during May-2022 mainly led by higher output from Nigeria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Algeria that were partially offset by a decline in output from Libya and Iraq, according to data from Bloomberg.

In addition, the inability of several oil producers to raise output further supported the gain in oil prices despite pessimism on the demand front. OPEC reported a marginal increase in production during the month with higher output from Iraq and Saudi Arabia partially offset by a steep decline in output in Libya. The overall compliance to OPEC+ quotas stood at 223 percent, according to IEA with OPEC compliance at 162 percent. Meanwhile, OPEC recently said that the sanctions on

Russia could affect supply of around 7mb/d of crude in the global oil market. The OPEC Secretary General said that this would be far beyond the group's capacity to replace while pointing out that the problem is more political than fundamental relating to supply and demand issues. OPEC secondary sources showed OPEC production showing marginal m-o-m growth of 57 tb/d during March-2022 to reach an average of 26.8 mb/d after growth in production in Saudi Arabia was partially offset by a decline reported by Libya and Nigeria.

Nevertheless, OPEC remained cautiously optimistic about growth in oil demand in the near term. In its latest monthly report, the agency said that although gas-to-oil switch would mean higher demand for crude oil, it could affect demand elsewhere, such as refining. While lowering 2021 demand growth expectation from 5.96 mb/d to 5.8 mb/d, OPEC advised producers to keep a close eye on oil fundamentals. According to the report, oil demand was lower-than-expected during 9M-2021 and that more than offset upward revision for demand in Q4-2021.

On the supply side, OPEC+ continued with its policy of gradually adding output by 0.4 mb/d until December-2021. OPEC production increased by 486 tb/d during September-2021, according to OPEC monthly report. Production in the US also increased marginally by 0.2 mb/d to 11.3 mb/d.

World oil demand

OPEC crude oil production increased by 234 tb/d during June-2022 to reach an average of 28.72 mb/d, the highest since April-2020, according to data from OPEC secondary sources. The increase, according to OPEC, was mainly led by higher production in Saudi

Arabia, UAE, Iran, Kuwait and Angola that was partially offset by a decline in production mainly in Libya and Venezuela. By contrast, production data from Bloomberg showed a decline in output during the month by 120 tb/d to average at 28.6 mb/d.

UAE, Kuwait and Iran also reported marginal m-o-m increase in production during March-2022 aggregating to around 50 tb/d increase. At its recent meeting, the OPEC+ maintained its policy of gradually increasing its output by 0.4 mb/d. However, the actual increase was much lower than the target. According to a Reuters survey, OPEC's 10 producer increased output by 90 tb/d during the month as against a target increase of 253 tb/d. The shortfall was mainly led by outages in some African members of OPEC partially offset by increase in production by Saudi Arabia and other top producers in the group. The shortfall also pushed compliance level to 151 percent by OPEC producers during March-2022 as against 136 percent in February-2022.

In its latest monthly meeting, OPEC+ members remained cautious of the steady rise in oil prices and maintained their policy of gradually restoring production with an announced increase of 400 tb/d in March-2022, in line with previous increases. However, data from Rystad Energy and S&P Platts showed the group's production falling short of its target by around 0.7 mb/d as 14 out of 18 members with quotas under-producing as compared to their targets. OPEC oil production was up for the 7th consecutive month during November-2021 with a monthly increase of 350 tb/d to an average of 28.0 mb/d, the highest since April-2020, according to data from Bloomberg. OPEC report also showed the second-biggest increase in production was in Iraq with a growth of 91 tb/d to an average of 4.24 mb/d followed by Nigeria and Kuwait with production

growth of 85 tb/d and 29 tb/d, respectively, during November-2021.

Kuwait to raise oil production to 3.5 mb/d

OPEC oil production was up for the fifth consecutive month in September-2021 after a broad-based production growth across most countries in the group. Bloomberg data showed OPEC production increased by 360 tb/d to reach a 17-month high average of 27.5 mb/d. Production growth as per OPEC secondary sources was higher at 486 tb/d to an average of 27.33 mb/d. Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Iraq reported the biggest monthly increases in production during the month while declines were only marginal. Bloomberg data showed that OPEC producers have added close 2.25 mb/d in additional crude oil production over the last five months. Meanwhile, in response to the increase in oil prices recently, Saudi Arabia's energy ministers dismissed calls to increase production. He said that OECD oil inventories are on track to normalize at the end of 2021. UAE, Iraq, Kuwait and Libya also reported marginally higher production during the month.

Iran raised production during the month to become the fourth biggest producer in OPEC overtaking Kuwait. The increase came as the country prepared for a lifting of sanctions as talks on the nuclear deal with the US continue in the positive direction. According to reports, Iran can reach pre-sanctions production levels of around 4 mb/d in three months, however, Iran's OPEC envoy said that buyer reluctance and removal of hurdles would mean a more gradual return of production. Nevertheless, in a recent report, IEA said that with the increasing pace of vaccinations globally, the resultant demand would be large enough to absorb the increase in supply from Iran.



KFH first bank in Kuwait to get GSAS gold level certificate

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) received the Global Sustainability Assessment System GSAS - Gold Level Certificate which is normally granted to projects compliant with strict environment sustainability standards determined by the Gulf Development and Research Organization. The certificate was received at KFH Auto showroom, thus rendering KFH as the first bank in Kuwait to receive this high rank certificate.

The certificate presentation ceremony was held at KFH Auto showroom in the presence of the Acting GCEO, AbdulWahab Essa AlRushood, Chairman - Gulf Organization for Research & Development, Dr. Yousuf Bin Mohammed Al-Horr, the representative of Enertech Holding Company, which is owned by National Technology Enterprises Company, a subsidiary of Kuwait Investment Authority in addition to members of KFH executive management.

Dr Yousuf Al-Horr

In his speech on the sidelines of the certificate delivery ceremony, Dr Yousuf Bin Mohammed Al-Horr, Chairman - Gulf Organization for Research & Development, affirmed that KFH Auto showroom has earned this award, which comprises 10 main important standards, following several assessments and inspections and reviews of the documents related to the organization's requirements as well as the field visits conducted for checking and inspection by a highly specialized team of experts from the organization to ensure documents' real time compliance.

He added saying "All signs of sustainability are clearly apparent in the showroom on the first visit including natural lighting, internal environment, ventilation and power consumption system. Undoubtedly, these factors create hope and inspiration for the existence of such environment friendly giant buildings".

Al-Horr praised KFH's interest, as one of the pillars of the financial and banking system in the Middle East, in sustainability and environment standards saying "It is utterly pleasant to see the financial sector taking part in matters which are of interest to environment and the world at present and in the future, especially that sustainability has become the core interest of countries, governments and the whole world considering its significance to the future of mankind. We urge all institutions to follow the tracks of KFH in the practical implementation of sustainability which is no longer an intellectual luxury or a marketing material but a pressing necessity.

Fahad Al-Falah

In his turn, Eng. Fahad Al-Falah - Senior Manager - Projects and Maintenance at KFH, reiterated that KFH Auto showroom is just an initial step and an integrated

and strategic starting point for environment sustainability. He indicated that KFH has started to apply several sustainability projects in its 60 branches all over Kuwait. He noted that this trend comes in compliance with the board instructions which has initially reiterated the significance of moving towards sustainability and environment through KFH Auto showroom in addition to several initiatives which were launched under the umbrella of sustainability and the inclusive sustainability strategy of the bank.

Al-Falah indicated that KFH Auto is the largest showroom in the Middle East providing all finance services under one roof with a total area of 38,000 square meters. The showroom enjoys several technical specifications rendering it as an environment friendly building having all sustainability standards including natural lighting and using latest glass technologies for the main facades which cover an area of 2,000 square meters with high external thermo insulation efficiency to benefit from natural light. A Sky Light is also provided to ceiling lighting covering an area of 350 square meters as well as LED system light and solar system glass boards to provide revolving energy through sun light as well as electric cars charging outlets. Al-Falah emphasized that KFH has always been precedent in this field and expressed his wish that all institutions would also contribute to the reservation of environment and sustainability for the best interest of the world.

Al-Falah expressed his pride that the team which has applied these systems and fulfilled the requirements comprises KFH employees without any interference from any outside parties.

Mohammed Al-Arbeed

From his side, KFH Executive Manager - Governance & Sustainability, said that the bank has an integrated 5-year sustainability strategy plan which was designed in 2020. This would be the starting point for further professional projects. He reiterated that these certificates and recognitions affirm KFH's leadership in sustainability and environment reservation and the launch of various initiatives under the umbrella "Keep It Green". He noted that this accomplishment is part of an integrated leadership at all levels considering continuous Board support.

Environment friendly KFH Auto

Environment friendly KFH Auto showroom is the largest and most modern showroom in the Middle East, covering a total area of 38,000 square meters. KFH Auto provides finance services for all products to fulfil customers' needs of Sharia-compliant consumer and residential finance services. KFH Auto accommodates more than 200 cars, 20 agencies and 30 trademarks including cars, motorbikes, jet skis, and boats. The showroom represents an integrated city comprising all that is related to the sale/purchase of new and used cars and other vehicles as well as leasing, trading, traffic, and insurance products. Also, it provides consumer finance services for furniture, appliances, kitchens, education, and medical products as well as residential finance services to cover construction works.

Nissan records positive sales performance in region during 2021

KUWAIT: Nissan has wrapped up another successful fiscal year, with strong sales results in the region, registering a 6 percent increase in the company's 2021 Fiscal Year (April 2021 - March 2022) as compared to the previous year. Represented in Kuwait through official local dealer - Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co W.L.L., Nissan sustained a steady performance fueled by sought-after offerings across SUV and sedan segments, reflecting brand affinity with customers in the region.

Building on its SUV dominance, Nissan witnessed a 10 percent increase in SUV sales across the Gulf region, comprising of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE, during the 2021 Fiscal Year (FY21). Contributing to this success were the launch of the 2022 Patrol 70th anniversary model and the all-new 2022 Nissan Pathfinder at Expo 2020 Dubai. With SUV's ranging from compact to full-size offerings, Nissan remains committed to catering to the needs of the region's customers with an extensive and exciting line-up.

Thierry Sabbagh, President of Nissan Saudi Arabia and Managing Director of Nissan Middle East, said: "Our successful performance in FY21 is a clear indicator of our resilience and agility during unprecedented times. In the past year, we've introduced a range of exciting products and services to the region and have been able to mirror the successes of Nissan globally. From the introduction of the region's first manufacturer-backed Certified Pre-Owned program to the launch of our all-inclusive Nissan Service, our customers have remained at the center of our strategy. Enhancing customers' journey across our partner network and on digital platforms, we also supported the implementation of the Nissan Retail Concept across more sales and service facilities in the region. In FY22, we look forward to building on the successes of the past year, with a sustained focus on innovation, quality, and customer experience."

In a region where large SUVs are of high interest

and demand, the rugged X-Terra witnessed a surge in popularity during FY21 as did the iconic Patrol Super Safari with a 26 percent increase in sales compared to the year before. Echoing the success of larger models, sales of the X-Trail and KICKS increased by 41 percent and 15 percent respectively in comparison to FY20, with the latter celebrating its position as the number one crossover with the highest market share in its segment in the UAE and Bahrain.

The popular Sunny, which continues to offer advanced mobility to value conscious buyers in the region, saw a 35 percent rise in sales during FY21 and retained its position with the highest market share in its segment across the region. The technologically advanced Altima, which debuted Nissan's advanced ProPILOT driver assist technology in the region earlier in the year, witnessed an 8 percent increase in sales compared to the previous year, reflecting customers' desire for intelligent and innovative mobility in the Middle East.

With a strong presence for nearly 70 years, the Middle East continues to serve as a region of opportunity and growth for Nissan. Key markets that contributed towards the sales growth in FY21 included Bahrain which witnessed an increase of 25 percent, the UAE with an increase of 17 percent, and Kuwait which registered a 4 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

The past year also saw Nissan solidify its presence in the region with the introduction of new models including the Patrol NISMO, Altima ProPILOT, KICKS, 2022 Patrol 70th Anniversary model, and all-new 2022 Pathfinder, in addition to conducting the regional showcase of its first all-electric crossover, Ariya. To cater to the varying needs of customers and offer greater choice, Nissan also introduced Nissan Service, its suite of aftersales services to offer customers greater value, convenience, and trust, and introduced the first manufacturer-backed Certified Pre-Owned Program in the region.



Netherlands fines crypto exchange Binance 3m euros

AMSTERDAM: The Dutch central bank said on Monday it had fined Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, more than three million euros for breaking Dutch law on registering its activities. "On April 25, the Dutch central bank imposed an administrative fine of 3,325,000 euros (\$3,376,000) on Binance Holdings Ltd," the DNB said.

"The fine was imposed because Binance offered crypto services in the Netherlands without registering them with the DNB as is legally required," it said. Binance has since lodged a request to be registered and appealed against the fine, the DNB said. Companies that offer cryptocurrency services in the Netherlands are obliged to register their activities

under a law designed to prevent money laundering and financing terrorism.

"If there wasn't this obligation to register, it would be more difficult to control the risk of criminal financial movements," the bank said. It described Binance's "infringements" of the law as "very serious".

In May, Binance obtained approval from the French financial markets authority AMF to operate in France. This is a European first for the company. The British authorities said last year its activities could not be supervised correctly and posed a risk to consumers.

Binance is the biggest exchange in the cryptocurrency market. It boasted \$32 trillion in transactions last year and 120 million customers. Cryptocurrencies operate in a largely unregulated corner of the economy and the value of the major ones tends to fluctuate wildly. After a boom during the COVID-19 pandemic, their value has plummeted in recent months. As much as two-thirds of the market value of the sector has been wiped out. Enthusiasts regard cryptocurrencies and the technology around them as the foundation of a decentralized alternative to the mainstream banking system and argue against any regulation. —AFP

Business

Sudan's gold rush wreaks havoc on health

Around 450,000 tons of mining waste dot the lush green landscape of River Nile

BANAT, Sudan: Sudanese mother Awadya Ahmed has long wondered why her youngest child Talab was born blind and unable to walk; now she suspects the piles of poisonous waste left by gold miners. In recent years, a growing number of traditional miners have flocked to her village hoping to strike it rich.

But they leave behind hazardous white-powdered waste laden with toxic chemicals including mercury used in the gold extraction process. The waste is dumped near farmland, water sources and residential areas. "His four brothers were born in good health, but Talab is the only one born after mining residues spread," Ahmed, 45, told AFP at her home in Banat village, in River Nile state north of Khartoum.

The four-year-old lay beside her, unable to move. Artisanal gold mining is widespread across much of Sudan, employing more than two million people and producing about 80 percent of the gold extracted nationwide, according to experts. Sudan is one of the world's poorest countries, and mining remains a source of fast profits attracting many.

The industry has flourished since oil-rich South Sudan broke away in 2011 during the rule of now-ousted president Omar Al-Bashir, a period marked by economic hardship, government mismanagement, corruption and international sanctions.

'Harmful to health'

But chemical contamination from artisanal gold extraction poses clear health dangers. Mercury damages the nervous, digestive and immune systems and can be fatal. It also threatens the development of children in the womb and early in life, according to the World Health Organization. Ahmed is not the only one of Banat's 8,000 residents to have observed birth defects and miscarriages.

In a nearby house, Awad Ali says his daughter was "a very normal child," until she turned two. "Then she became unable to move or walk, stand up or sit down," he said. Community leader Algaily Abdelaziz said the problems began five years ago. "Since we saw

these waste deposits appear, children have been born with deformities, and there have been still-births," Abdelaziz said, noting 22 children had been born in the village with deformities including blindness and brain damage.

Saleh Ali Saleh, from Khartoum's Neelain University's Faculty of Petroleum and Minerals, notes that it is well known "that mercury is harmful to health". A January report by Saleh and other Sudanese researchers found that around 450,000 tons of mining waste-rife with mercury-dot the lush green landscape of River Nile state. Samples of blood, urine, drinking water and soil from several parts of the state have shown high levels of mercury traces, according to the report.

"People, frankly, are not concerned with removing the waste," said Ali Mohammed Ali, head of the Sudanese Environment Conservation Society. The process "requires special treatment" and is "ideally carried out away from residential areas or water sources," he added.

Such safety measures are far from the minds of miners. Around 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Banat, Mohammed Issa mixed mercury with sand in a large metal bowl with his bare hands, hoping to separate gold from other minerals. "That's how people do it here," the 25-year-old said.

Issa said he abandoned a meager life of farming and herding in North Kordofan state to search for the precious metal.

Years to fix

In 2019, Sudan's now-deposed transitional government issued a decree banning the use of mercury and cyanide after protests against their use at gold mines. The decision has rarely been enforced and miners continue to use the chemicals in more secluded outlying areas, Saleh said.

Political and economic turmoil in Sudan has piled pressure on households already struggling to make ends meet. The country's economic crisis worsened



BANAT, Sudan: Gold mining residues are piled up near an agricultural field, in the village of Banat in River Nile state, north of the Sudanese capital Khartoum. —AFP

after an October military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. The coup triggered cuts to crucial international aid and fed into spiraling prices of basic commodities.

Sudan is one of Africa's top gold producers, generating 30.3 tons of gold in the first half of 2021 alone, according to official figures—which do not include the artisanal output. The Central Bank puts Sudan's gold revenues in the first quarter of this year at \$720 million, reflecting the official output.

The state-run company supervising mining activities declined multiple requests for comment by AFP. The lucrative business has long been controlled by shadowy companies with links to the security services which flourished under Bashir. Saleh warns there will be no quick fix. "The damage already done to the environment cannot be treated easily," said Saleh. "If we managed to stop today, it will still take us years and years to contain the impact of artisanal mining." For little Talab, it is already too late. —AFP

Panama govt and protesters strike deals to clear key highway

SANTIAGO: Panama's government and indigenous leaders reached a second deal Sunday to clear all remaining demonstrators from the Panamerican Highway in exchange for lower fuel prices, ending a two-week blockade that had stymied food deliveries. The government released footage from the signing of an initial agreement in far-west Chiriqui province, where most of the Central American country's food is produced, and of a blocked section of the highway being cleared.

Angered by high prices and corruption, protesters had clogged the highway linking Panama to the rest of Central America over the past two weeks. Large trucks and banner-waving demonstrators paralyzed the strategic route, making it hard for the country of 4.4 million to feed itself.

To avert the crisis, a second deal was signed later Sunday in Santiago de Veraguas, a city 250 kilometers (155 miles) northwest of Panama City, the epicenter of the negotiations and a protester stronghold.

"Many Panamanians have suffered from these stoppages," said Vice-President Jose Gabriel Carrizo after signing the agreement. "This is a huge government effort." The deal establishes the fixed price of fuel for 91 and 95 octane gasoline and diesel, and is effective from July 18.

"The traffic of cars and heavy equipment in Veraguas is free," Eduardo Cortes, who participated in the demonstrations on the highway, told AFP by phone. The proposal of 3.25 dollars per gallon (3.78 liters), was better than the 3.30 offered in the deal made earlier in the day with the indigenous community of the Ngabe-Bugle Comarca in Chiriqui.



SANTIAGO, Panama: In this aerial view trucks block the Pan-American highway in Santiago de Veraguas, Panama. —AFP

"This has not been easy, we have made progress with (reducing the cost of) the basic food basket," said Luis Sanchez, a spokesman for the organizations promoting the protests.

In Panama City, a hundred people gathered on the waterfront to demonstrate. They all wore black, in contrast with the white suits worn by lawmakers during official ceremonies. Food costs are "higher than what is earned. We have a big social problem," lawyer Jacqueline Hurtado told AFP. "People are fed up and have taken to the streets to demonstrate for things to change."

Retiree Iliana Arango said: "In my 68 years of life, I

percent, compared to 30.2 percent in Germany, 32.4 percent in France and 43.6 percent in Spain. Italy's gross domestic product increased 6.6 percent in 2021, after a 2020 slump due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Bank of Italy expects GDP to increase by 3.2 percent in 2022 — but that figure could drop to under 1.0 percent if Russian gas supplies are cut off over the war in Ukraine.

Enter the political crisis

Italy is counting on the European recovery plan to boost growth. It is the biggest beneficiary, set to receive 191.5 billion euros (\$193 billion) if it ticks off a series of EU-requested reforms. Draghi's departure, however, would put those reforms at risk. And with his grand coalition in disarray, the chances the country will head to snap elections after the summer are high.

After "Super Mario" became prime minister back in February 2021, the 10-year borrowing rate fell below 0.5 percent. It has now climbed to 3.4 percent.

"If the Draghi government falls tomorrow, I can't imagine what will happen to the spread," said Franco Pavoncello, professor of political science at John Cabot University in Rome. A far right or populist win at the polls would weigh significantly on the spread, just as it did in 2018, when Matteo Salvini's anti-immigrant League joined forces with the once anti-establishment Five Star Movement.

ECB to the rescue

Moec points out that "it was the pressure on Italy that convinced the ECB to bring in" a tool to limit differences in the borrowing costs faced by the most fragile members of

am tired of seeing governments that promise, go up, steal, go down, the next one follows and here we are lacking everything, medicine, education, food." Year-on-year inflation in Panama of 4.2 percent was recorded in May, along with an unemployment rate of about 10 percent and fuel price hikes of nearly 50 percent since January.

Despite its dollarized economy and high growth figures, the country has a high rate of social inequality. Economic woes have led to a shortage of fuel in some parts of the country, and stalls at food markets in the capital have run out of products to sell. —AFP



In this file photo taken on June 28, 2022 Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi holds a press conference at Elmau Castle, southern Germany, at the end of the G7 Summit. —AFP

the currency club.

The aim is to counter speculation and prevent a return of the debt crisis that shook the eurozone in 2012. Unicredit chief economist Erik Nielsen said the sudden rise in rates in June-when the ECB cut off monetary support-was pure speculation, "without reflecting a real insolvency problem". "Italy is seen as the most vulnerable country, so it is the one that is being speculated against".

But a far-right government in Italy would complicate matters: the so-called "frugal" countries in northern Europe in particular are not keen on ECB support being given to eurosceptic countries. —AFP

praising the bank's performance "in these challenging markets." Other bank executives last week alluded to similar worries amid rising inflation, the war in Ukraine and other factors, but said the US economy still appeared to be on solid footing for now.

In terms of operations, Goldman suffered a drop in revenues connected to mergers and acquisition advising and loan underwriting. The bank's own investments in equities reported a \$221 million loss in the period. But Goldman scored an increase in its consumer banking. Shares rose 3.8 percent to \$305.05 in pre-market trading. —AFP

Winners and losers of the ECB's rate hike

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is set to turn the page on years of easy money on Thursday when it begins to hike its interest rates to tame runaway inflation. Here's a look at who wins and who loses when borrowing costs go up.

Loans get more expensive

Commercial banks borrow money from the ECB that they in turn lend to households and businesses. For years borrowers have been able to take advantage of ultra-low interest rates designed to boost economic growth. When the ECB starts hiking rates, banks will pass those higher borrowing costs on to customers. Everything from buying a house to refinancing debt or getting a company loan will become more expensive.

Lenders will also be taking a closer look at loan applications to make sure they are not taking on too many risks. The impact is already being felt in the property market, where interest rates on mortgages have been creeping up in recent months.

But the outlook for future homeowners is not all bad, says Andreas Lipkow, an analyst at Comdirect.

"The costs of real estate financing are only partly dependent on the ECB's key interest rates and are also determined by supply and demand or the creditworthiness of the borrower," he tells AFP.

A boost for savers

The ECB's era of historically low interest rates has meant that savers saw little to no gain from squirreling away cash. The ECB has even charged banks a 0.5 percent fee for storing excess cash at the central bank, to incentivize lending.

Many retail banks passed those costs on to wealthy account holders whose deposits surpassed a certain amount. Those customers can look forward to seeing that charge scrapped when the ECB ditches its negative bank deposit rate.

As banks welcome the return of higher profit margins thanks to more lending income, interest rates on savings products should eventually go up too. But sky-high inflation means savings will still be eroded in real terms for a while to come, warns Elmar Voelker, an analyst at LBBW bank.

"The rise in key interest rates (and savings rates) won't be large enough to compensate for the current high inflation rates," he says.

Bad news for indebted governments

Eurozone governments too will have to wean themselves off a decade of easy money as sovereign debt becomes more expensive, and the fall-out for some of the currency club's more indebted members is already causing concern. The ECB has promised to come up with a crisis tool to prevent an unwarranted "fragmentation" in the bond markets, or a sharp divergence in borrowing costs between eurozone countries.

All eyes are on debt-saddled Italy, whose bond yields have already shot up against benchmark German bunds. An unfolding political crisis after Prime Minister Mario Draghi offered his resignation last week has further spooked markets.

The ECB's tightening, while deemed necessary to tame inflation, comes at a delicate time for governments that are seeing their borrowing power reduced just as they are spending vast sums to help citizens cope with surging energy prices.

Stock markets have long benefited from the ECB's ultra-loose monetary policy, which pushed investors towards riskier assets in the search for higher returns. But as the ECB joins other major central banks in stepping up the fight against inflation and with recession fears mounting, global markets are plunging. —AFP

Goldman Sachs profits tumble

NEW YORK: Goldman Sachs reported a 48 percent drop in quarterly earnings Monday after setting aside more funds in case of bad loans, but shares rose as it topped analyst estimates. The US investment bank became the latest financial heavyweight to suffer a decline in second-quarter results as the weakening macroeconomic environ-



‘WAR IS WAR’ BUT UKRAINE SUSHI BAR SERVES LUNCH ON TIME

Working in a sushi restaurant in eastern Ukraine, Igor Besukh turns up the music to drown out the sound of air raid sirens as he prepares the next order. But the music could not mask the deafening sound of a missile that struck central Kramatorsk on Friday, landing in the city's Peace Square near the town hall, culture centre and the sushi bar where Besukh works.

The restaurant is one of the few still open in the city, only some 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the frontline with Russian troops, in the industrial Donbas region that Russia is attempting to conquer. When they heard the blast, the employees of "Woka", a restaurant with red lacquered

walls and Asian designs, quickly moved to a shelter.

They re-emerged 20 minutes later to examine the damage. All the windows and doors were broken despite being boarded up with plywood panels. They cleaned up the debris and continued preparing the orders waiting to be delivered. There were no casualties following the strike that hit at around 8:00 pm but the impact shattered the windows of several buildings nearby. "It was a loud noise. We didn't expect it, of course. I was scared," says the 23-year-old chef with tattoo-covered arms. Coming back to work the next day was not easy, he admits, however "war is war, but lunch must be served on time," he says, quoting

a popular saying with a smile.

Open throughout war

Besukh has worked at the restaurant for several years. Now its main customers are soldiers stationed in Kramatorsk or those returning from the front. The city, with a pre-war population of around 150,000, now lives under the constant threat of shelling. A strike on a hotel on July 7 left one dead. A previous strike in April on a busy train station killed over 50 people. AFP interviewed the staff of the restaurant shortly before the Friday attack and then returned Saturday when everything had been cleared. The wooden protective panels had been reinstalled and

orders were piling up on the counter in front of a glass behind which Besukh was working.

He arranges, rolls and cuts up to a hundred pieces of sushi a day in the restaurant that has been open every day since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24. Open since 2016, the sushi bar today employs seven people, down from 28 employees before the war.

"It's normal to work, even in this situation," says Besukh, whose culinary career has taken him to the capital Kyiv, to the coast of the Sea of Azov and now back to his hometown Kramatorsk. Asked whether he considered joining the army, he says with a smile: "Why should I? I have no

experience, I would be of no use". "Here I help in a certain way," adds the young man, who dreams of one day opening his own restaurant. For now, the restaurant serves 10 to 30 dishes daily, all for take-away or delivery. Customers are not allowed to eat inside for safety reasons. "Imagine if a missile hit the restaurant, it's too big a responsibility for us," the restaurant's owner, Dmitry Pleskanov, said, just hours before the missile landed on Peace Square. —AFP



Ukrainian sushi chef Igor Bezuh, 23, poses with his creations at the Sushi Yakuza restaurant, in amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP photos

European bison reintroduced to roam freely in Britain

As the sun rose on Monday over southeast England, three bison emerged from a corral into a new woodland home as part of an ambitious project to transform the natural environment. The trio immediately began munching birch tree leaves in the ancient woods near Canterbury, to restore and manage the area with their behavior-and minimal human interference.

It marks the first time in millennia that European bison-the continent's largest land mammal and the closest living rela-

tive to ancient steppe bison that once roamed Britain-will live in wild conditions once again. "(It's a) really momentous occasion today," Mark Habben, of the Wildwood Trust which is leading the five-year conservation project, told AFP.

"It couldn't have gone any better... they took a glance back, looked at us and then disappeared into the woodlands," he added, moments after the release. The female bison-one matriarch and two younger cows-will now graze, eat bark, fell trees and take so-called dust baths, churning up the ground in the woods. This creates a multitude of benefits, helping other species forge habitats as the bison become the perfect "ecosystem engineers".

"We're doing this to restore the environment and restore a native English woodland and everything that thrives in and around that kind of habitat," explained Habben, saying it was "critically important". "We don't want to be using machinery... using native resources, ecosystem engineers as we like to call

them-in the form in this case of the European bison-is exactly the right thing to do."

'Model'

The female bison, which arrived after living on smaller enclosures in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, will be joined by a bull at the site, owned by the Kent Wildlife Trust charity, in the coming months. The bull's arrival from Germany was delayed due to Britain's post-Brexit bureaucracy for importing animals. The herd will initially have 55 hectares (136 acres) of fenced woodland to roam within, before their habitable space is eventually increased to 200 hectares. It is hoped the bull will breed with the females to increase the size of the herd, with the Kent site licensed to hold up to 20.

The bison will also soon be joined by other grazing animals including ponies from Exmoor, southwest England, Iron Age pigs and Longhorn cattle, which will aid the bid to create a variety of natural habitats. "This is a model for what we

would hope could be rolled out much (more) broadly across the UK, to similar landscapes, utilising bison," said Habben. "I like to think bison that we bred on this project by the time they reach maturity... there'll be other projects looking to do the same kind of thing. "And we can move bison around to continue this really amazing work that these animals are going to do."

'Endangered'

After roaming the continent for millennia, the last wild European bison became extinct on the continent in 1927, due to hunting and habitat loss. However, 50 animals remained in captive collections which have provided the basis for an extensive and intensive breeding program, according to the project's conservationists. The trio now calling the Kent woodland home are some of their descendants. "The bison that we've selected are part of the European endangered species breeding program," said Habben.

"We selected the animals based on their genetics... but also their location and source of origin was very important". Another central aim of the habitat restoration project-costing £1.1 million (\$1.3 million) and largely funded by donors-is to help British ecosystems cope with climate change and severe biodiversity loss. The bison's impact will gradually alter the forest away from a monoculture and create wetter areas that will store carbon, reducing emissions driving up temperatures, while also reducing flood risk.

In a sign of the stakes, their release Monday coincides with a heatwave sweeping parts of Europe that is set to break Britain's all-time temperature record early this week. Habben calls the coincidence "extremely relevant". "It's an incredible story, really, that we're releasing bison to help restore ecosystems, which help restore the environment and hopefully have some impact on climate change". — AFP



Bison are released from a corral at the Wildwood Trust nature reserve in Kent, the first time the animals have roamed freely in the UK in thousands of years. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features

J Lo and Ben Affleck tie the knot in Vegas

Celebrity couple Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck got married this weekend in Las Vegas, 18 years after their first romance failed, court records showed. The couple tied the knot Saturday, according to a marriage license they filed in Clark County, Nevada, that was seen by AFP. It lists the parties to the nuptials as Affleck, Benjamin Geza and Lopez, Jennifer and

gives the latter's "new name" as Affleck, Jennifer. The pair-he is 49 and she is 52 — first met on the set of the widely panned movie "Gigli" in 2002.

They became a media sensation as they dated but postponed their planned 2003 nuptials, then announced their relationship was over in early 2004. "Bennifer"—the couple's public nickname from their first highly publicized relation-

ship-set the internet alight last year when photos of them together again began circulating. Lopez and Affleck announced their engagement in April. Lopez posted a video of herself appearing emotional and admiring a green ring in her newsletter, "On The JLo." US media reported that the ring was an emerald-cut pale green diamond.

This is the fourth marriage for Lopez and the second for Affleck. Lopez discussed her renewed relationship with Affleck in an interview with People in February. "It's a beautiful love story that we got a second chance," she said. Lopez was previously married to actor Ojani Noa, dancer Cris Judd and singer Marc Anthony, with whom she shares 14-year-old twins Max and Emme.

Affleck was married to actress Jennifer Garner and they are the parents of Violet, 16, Seraphina, 13, and Samuel, 10. The gossip news outlet TMZ said the couple have been "seemingly inseparable" since they got back together, shopping together for a house and sometimes bringing their kids along. TMS said that last month Lopez's car was seen outside a huge mansion in Beverly Hills, with several moving trucks outside it and also at each of their current homes. Of the wedding, TMZ put it this way: "They did it like a couple of kids looking to elope, saying 'I do' out in the desert." —AFP



In this file photo US actress Jennifer Lopez and actor Ben Affleck arrive for a special screening of "Marry Me" at the Directors Guild of America (DGA) in Los Angeles. —AFP

Spanish customs seize Picasso sketch at Ibiza airport

Spanish customs agents seized a Picasso sketch worth over 450,000 euros from a passenger who arrived at Ibiza airport without declaring the artwork, Spain's customs office said Monday. Agents found the 1966 sketch, dubbed "Trois personages", on July 5 in the suitcase of a man who arrived in the holiday island on a flight from Zurich, the office said in a statement.

The passenger said the artwork was a simple copy and presented the agents with a handwritten receipt of 1,500 Swiss francs (1,515 euros) which he said he had paid for the sketch. But customs agents found another receipt in the bottom of his suitcase from a Zurich art gallery for 450,000 Swiss francs (454,000 euros) with a reference to a work by Pablo Picasso called "Trois personages".

According to a preliminary analysis carried out by art experts, the sketch is indeed a work by the Spanish painter and "the price charged by the gallery is in line with the market price," the statement said. This first assessment will have to be confirmed by a "more exhaustive" analysis using "advanced techniques", it added. — AFP

The passenger faces possible charges of smuggling for failing to declare an object of value when he entered Spain. The customs office said they had singled him out for questioning after receiving a tip from their Swiss counterparts that he was transporting a piece of art in "suspicious" conditions. Considered to be one of most famous artists of the 20th century, Picasso spent the bulk of his long life in France, dying there in 1973. — AFP



'Thor' rules again at North American box office

Marvel's latest superhero flick "Thor: Love and Thunder" pounded opponents for a second straight week to top the North American box office with an estimated \$46 million haul, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. The comedic follow-up to 2017's "Thor: Ragnarok" stars a muscle-clad, self-parodying Chris Hemsworth as the space viking who wields the mallet Mjolnir, but also finds himself pining for his ex-girlfriend Jane Foster (Natalie Portman), whose help he enlists to battle god butcher Gorr (Christian Bale).

The take was down sharply from its \$144 million debut last weekend, but Thor still easily beat out "Minions: The Rise of Gru," which scored second spot for the second straight week after a phenomenal opening weekend over the July 4th holiday. The latest goofy install-

ment in Universal's animated "Despicable Me" franchise about the reformed super-villain Gru and his yellow Minions took in \$26 million in the Friday-to-Sunday period.



Third place went to "Where the Crawdads Sing," the adaptation of Delia Owens' novel about an abandoned girl who grows up in marshland of 1950s and 60s North Carolina and, at a murder trial years later, looks back on that rough and violent upbringing. The take was \$17 million. "This is a very good opening for a movie that combines young adult romance and suspense crime drama. Where the Crawdads Sing's weekend number is above average, in spite of weak reviews," said analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment



Buckle up for climactic finale, says author of manga 'One Piece'

Secrets will be revealed as the mega-hit Japanese manga series "One Piece" enters its final chapter, its author said on Monday, telling fans to get ready for a wild ride. Eiichiro Oda posted an enigmatic online message promising a climactic crescendo to the 25-year saga, which has sold 490 million copies worldwide. He also assured those who hadn't been following along for the better part of three decades that they could jump in at the final chapter and still keep up. The manga, which follows the adventures of the swashbuckling pirate Monkey D Luffy, has captivated millions of fans worldwide as its characters hunt for One Piece, the treasure coveted by all pirates.

"I will start presenting all the secrets of this world that I have kept hidden," Oda

said in a hand-written message posted to Twitter. "It will be fun. Please fasten your seat belt." "One Piece" first appeared in manga form in Japan in 1997, with an animated TV series following two years later. Since then, the franchise has become a global cultural phenomenon, and Oda holds the Guinness World Record for "most copies published for the same comic book series by a single author".

Last year, the 1,000th episode of the TV series was released, with special screenings in the United States and France—the world's biggest manga and anime market after Japan. A live-action adaptation by Netflix is also in the works, with fans speculating it could catapult the franchise to global household name status, on par with "Star Wars" or "Harry Potter". In the online message, Oda said he was getting ready to resume the weekly publication of his work after taking a month-long break to prepare for the final chapter. "Well, I am coming close to ending my prep work... It has taken me 25 years," he wrote. "But it's OK to start reading from here. Because... ONE PIECE starts from here (LOL!!)." —AFP

From the debris of shattered Ukraine, the healing song of children

Music teacher Oksana Shevchenko sits near a small pile of twisted metal and cement, the only break in a flat expanse of desolate, empty terrain. It is all that is left of the music school where she worked for 30 years, pulverized when the Russian army took over her home town of Borodianka, an hour's drive northwest of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. "Look, just burned down wasteland," the 53-year-old says, visibly angry. "Soil and nothing else in this place of culture, where children used to study... This is the extermination of culture and Ukrainians by Russian occupiers."

Borodianka, a town of 14,000 before the February 24 invasion, is the most battered of the towns encircling Kyiv, bearing the profound scars of Moscow's failed attempt to take the Ukrainian capital. Its main street is a shocking testament to the devastation visited upon its people, with buildings reduced to rubble almost every step of the way.

According to town hall officials, 12 apartment blocks were leveled and 24 damaged. More than 400 houses were hit. With every administrative building destroyed by war, institutions like the police, prosecutor's office, post office and mayorality are now forced to share one building—a school that escaped the onslaught.

'Sense of oppression'

Shevchenko holds her music lessons here too, for the children who returned after Borodianka was wrested back from Russian occupation on April 1. "We find each other and create. And it was painful when it was taken from us," says Shevchenko, now in a small classroom crammed with musical instruments, chairs, benches and boxes. "It also adds up to the stress when you lose your favorite profession and children lose their favorite activities. It creates a sense of oppression."

The music school has benefited from donations from NGOs and people helping from home and abroad. A metal band recently donated musical instruments including a keyboard, drums and a guitar. "There are children that want to go back. They are returning, teachers too. So by ourselves, and with help from charities and kind people, we have started to renew our supplies," says Shevchenko.

Inside the cramped classroom, 15-year-old Diana Kovun hits all the right notes, her singing voice imbued with the confidence of a virtuoso. She left Borodianka the first day of the war but has since returned. "Before, I used to think whether I should go abroad to work or to study. Now I'm sure that I want to secure my future and get my education here in Ukraine. I want to live here," she says.

Guitar teacher Tetyana Kryvosheyenko is also back giving lessons. Lip trembling as she holds back tears, she recounts her escape from Borodianka. "We had to make it out on foot, in circles, so as not to encounter Russians." —AFP

Iran's UNESCO-listed Isfahan mosque damaged in restoration

A 400-year-old iconic mosque in Iran's central city of Isfahan listed as a UN World Heritage Site has been damaged during restoration work, officials said Monday. The 17th century Shah Mosque, also known as the Royal Mosque, was built during the "golden age" of Isfahan, the capital during Safavid dynasty. "Supervisors and restorers realized there was damage, especially in the upper part of the dome," said Alireza Izadi, head of the heritage for the city, according to state media.

The mosque forms one of four dramatic buildings in the vast Naghsh-e Jahan Square in the heart of the city, also known as Meidan Imam. The square complex was listed by the UN cultural organization UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1979.

UNESCO says the mosque is of "par-

ticular interest", and "remains the most celebrated example of the colorful architecture which reached its high point in Iran under the Safavid dynasty". Experts quoted in Iranian media said the designs of flowers on the restored tiles do not match each other, and the patterns on the dome are not aligned.

"We are going to replace the dome tiles, because the weight of the scaffolding has damaged their edge," Izadi told the official IRNA news agency. The restorer of the project, Mehdi Pakdel, told state television he had acknowledged "mistakes" had been made, while noting that his "work was not yet finished".

Pakdel said problems with the scaffolding used during restoration work, as well as the challenges of working high on the dome up to a height of 54 meters (177 feet) were "among the causes" of



In this file photo boys play with a ball in the garden at the historic Naqsh-e Jahan Square, as the Safavid-built Abbasi Great Mosque (Shah Mosque, completed in 1629) is seen in the background, in Iran's central city of Isfahan. — AFP

the mistakes. "The contractor of the project, who is one of the veterans of restoration in Isfahan, has said he is ready to take the necessary measures to repair the defects as soon as possible," Izadi

added. Isfahan, the third biggest city in Iran, is one of the key tourist destinations in the country. —AFP

Sports

Cameron Smith wins British Open after stunning surge

Smith overtakes favorite McIlroy to claim first major title

ST ANDREWS: Australia's Cameron Smith won the 150th British Open at St Andrews on Sunday after a stunning final round of 64 saw him overtake favorite Rory McIlroy on a dramatic day at the Old Course and claim his first major title with a 20-under-par total. Smith began the day four shots off the lead but his eight-under-par fourth round allowed him to finish a shot clear of Cameron Young of the United States, with a frustrated McIlroy ending another stroke back in third after a 70.

The world number six would have known something special was needed on Sunday for him to win the Claret Jug and he duly delivered with eight birdies - including five in a row from the 10th - and not a single dropped shot. McIlroy had been the favourite coming into the week and was two shots clear and in control at the turn in his final round, but then just in front Smith set off on his birdie surge and the pendulum swung definitively his way.

At the age of 28, Smith is the first Australian in almost three decades to win the British Open since Greg Norman claimed his second Claret Jug at Royal St George's in 1993. The Brisbane native with the trademark mullet is also the third Australian to win the Open at the home of golf, after Peter Thomson in 1955 and Kel Nagle, who won the Open in 1960. "To win an Open Championship in itself is going to be a golfer's highlight but to do it around St Andrews is unbelievable," he said. "This place is so cool. I love the golf course and the town."

Smith's 20-under-par total of 268 is the lowest winning score in an Open at St Andrews, bettering the performance of Tiger Woods, who won on 19-under in 2000. In stark contrast to Smith, McIlroy was left to rue a series of missed

birdie putts, while Viktor Hovland - who had shared the overnight lead on 16-under - faded badly to shoot a 74. That left the door open for one of the chasing pack and Smith took full advantage thanks to his incredible performance on the back nine.

As well as the birdies he showed nerves of steel to save par at the 17th, the legendary Road Hole. Yet he needed his final birdie on 18 as his playing partner Young produced an eagle to finish with a 65 and end on 19-under. A play-off was avoided and Smith could celebrate his first major after he finished tied third at this year's Masters, a tournament in which he also came second in 2020. Before this week his biggest win had come at the Players Championship in March.

McIlroy rues missed putts

If Young, the 25-year-old New Yorker who had been the leader after the first round, can be satisfied with his showing this week, the same ultimately cannot be said for McIlroy. "Just disappointment I guess. I had a great opportunity today to add to that major tally and I didn't quite get it done," McIlroy, who is still stuck on four major titles, told NBC. "I didn't feel like I did many things wrong, but the putter went cold on me throughout the round."

Now 33, few would have thought when he won the 2014 Open at Hoylake and followed it with victory in the PGA Championship a few weeks later that he would then embark on a major drought which will extend into a ninth year. "I got beaten by the better player this week. To shoot 64 to win an Open Championship at St Andrews is one hell of a showing, so hats off to Cam, he's had an unbe-



ST ANDREWS: Australia's Cameron Smith kisses the Claret Jug, the trophy for the Champion golfer of the year after winning the 150th British Open Golf Championship on The Old Course at St Andrews in Scotland on July 17, 2022. —AFP

lievable week," McIlroy added.

England's Tommy Fleetwood finished in a tie for fourth on 14 under par alongside Hovland, who had been hoping to become the first Norwegian winner of a men's major. Brian Harman of the United States came tied sixth on 13-under with Dustin Johnson, who was the

highest finisher among the 24 players from the breakaway Saudi-backed LIV series in St Andrews this week. The chief executive of the LIV series is Norman, the 67-year-old who was not invited to St Andrews by organizers the R&A as a result but who will surely be proud of his compatriot's performance. —AFP

Cressy beats Bublik to win ATP Hall of Fame Open title

NEWPORT: American Maxime Cressy won his first career ATP title on Sunday by rallying to defeat Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) in the Hall of Fame Open final. French-born Cressy, who competed for his homeland until becoming an American in 2018, reached his first two ATP finals earlier this year, losing to Rafael Nadal at Melbourne in January and Taylor Fritz at Eastbourne last month.

But the third time proved charmed as Cressy outlasted Bublik at the grass-court event to win after two hours and 23 minutes, firing 14 aces against 13 double faults and hoisting the trophy after falling behind by a set and a break. "It's an incredible feeling to win my first title," Cressy said. "I never thought I would win my first title this way. I stuck with it and I got lucky. I look forward to more titles. It's a very special feeling."

Bublik, who won his first ATP crown in February at Montpellier, failed to become the first Kazakh player to own multiple ATP titles. "I'm very upset with the outcome but I'd like to congratulate Max on his first title," Bublik said. "He had great luck." Russian-born Bublik, who began playing for Kazakhstan in 2016, lost his first four ATP finals—the first of those at Newport in 2019 to American John Isner—before his breakthrough title in France.

World number 42 Bublik and 41st-ranked Cressy, both 25, met for the first time in Sunday's final. In the tie-breaker, Cressy took the lead for good on 2-1 when Bublik double faulted. Cressy followed with a backhand winner and took the last three points for the victory. Bublik took a 2-0 lead after Cressy surrendered a break on an errant backhand and broke again with a backhand winner in the final game to capture the first set in 37 minutes. —AFP

Kiwi Dixon matches Mario win total with Indy Toronto title

TORONTO: New Zealand's Scott Dixon matched Mario Andretti for second on the all-time IndyCar win list by capturing Sunday's Indy Toronto title for his 52nd career victory in the series. The 41-year-old Kiwi racer trails only AJ Foyt's record 67 triumphs in IndyCar history after taking his fourth Toronto victory, edging American pole sitter Colton Herta by 0.8106 of a second. "It's amazing," Dixon said of matching Andretti's IndyCar win total. "It's huge. Feel so lucky to be a part of this group. Every time I get asked these questions I'm so thankful we still have A.J. and him in the pits. We get to see them. we get to talk to them. It's just fantastic."

Andretti, the 82-year-old racing legend who won the 1978 Formula One crown, the 1969 Indianapolis 500 and four IndyCar season titles, congratulated Dixon on Twitter. "Utmost respect for my friend @scottdixon9 and truly happy to congratulate him on 52 wins," Andretti posted. "Also congratulate his team because nobody does it alone. I hope this is just a step on your continuing journey. Well done." Dixon, a six-time IndyCar season points champion, extended his record to 18 consecutive campaigns with at least one race victory. —AFP

Reavie hangs on to win PGA Barracuda Championship

LOS ANGELES: Chez Reavie carded four birdies and two bogeys to earn six points and hold off hard-charging Alex Noren by one point to win the US PGA Tour Barracuda Championship in Truckee, California, on Sunday. Reavie, who started the day with a six-point lead, had Noren breathing down his neck on the back nine at Tahoe Mountain Club after the Swede's run of four straight birdies from the sixth through the ninth. But Reavie held on, matching Noren's birdies at the 12th and 16th to claim victory in the event, which uses a Modified Stableford scoring system that awards five points for an eagle, two for a birdie and deducts points for bogeys and worse.

Reavie finished the week with a total of 43 points while Noren piled up 14 on Sunday to finish with a total of 42. "I just stayed patient," said Reavie, who bogeyed the fourth hole before picking up his first birdies of the day at the eighth and ninth. "I knew I was going to have to. I knew some guys were going to make a lot of birdies early. I was hoping to be one of those guys, but the putter was kind of letting me down early."

"I just tried to keep it as close as I could to the hole and give myself some good looks," Reavie, 40, captured his third US PGA Tour title and his first since 2019. "I've been working hard," he said.

Hardik proud to fill Bumrah's shoes as India win series

MANCHESTER: Hardik Pandya was glad to help fill the "very big shoes" of Jasprit Bumrah after starring with both bat and ball during India's series-clinching win over England. Back spasms meant strike bowler Bumrah was ruled out of Sunday's third and deciding one-day international at Old Trafford. But after replacement Mohammed Siraj rocked England with a double-wicket maiden in his first over, medium-pacer Hardik took an ODI best 4-24 as the hosts were dismissed for 259.

Hardik, 28, followed up with a fine 71 and shared a decisive partnership of 133 in 19 overs with Rishabh Pant after India had collapsed to 72-4 in the face of another fine new-ball spell by Reece Topley. Victory, completed with more than seven overs to spare, gave India a 2-1 series success after they won the preceding Twenty20 campaign against 50-over world champions England by the same scoreline.

"It's always special to contribute in all departments," player of the series Hardik told reporters. While Hardik's excellent 55-ball innings, which included 10 fours, ended with India just shy of victory, Pant saw them home thanks to a superb 125 not out—the wicketkeeper's maiden ODI hundred. "You always aspire to play like this when your team is in trouble," said 24-year-old left-hander Pant, who already has five Test centuries to his credit.

'Fearless Rishabh'

Hardik added: "We all know what kind of talent he (Pant) has. When it comes out, it's very pleasing to the eye—your heartbeat also goes up but at the same time you are in awe of the kind of shots he plays." Turning to his bowling, Hardik said: "We knew Jasprit was not going to play this game. He was telling me that I might have to bowl a couple of overs at the death, I



TRUCKEE: Chez Reavie of the United States poses with the trophy after putting in to win on the 18th green during the final round of the Barracuda Championship on July 17, 2022. —AFP

"I've been hitting the ball and I knew I could do it. I just kept grinding, and here we are." Noren called it a "roller coaster" of a week, after he decided to depart St. Andrews before the start of the British Open, where he was first alternate, and try his luck in the California mountains.

As it turned out, he would have gained entry to the final major of the year after Justin Rose with-

drew with a back injury. But Noren, who turned 40 on Tuesday, said he didn't regret the decision. "I love this course," he said. "It was pretty tricky today with the wind. It's been a roller coaster of a week, obviously, but when you make the cut you think, well, this is a great week anyway. Then I played good on the weekend and had a blast today," Noren added. —AFP



MANCHESTER: India's Hardik Pandya (left) plays a shot during the final one-day international (ODI) cricket match between England and India at Old Trafford on July 17, 2022. —AFP

said they are "very big shoes to fill." "I had to step up, not at the death, but in making sure that in the middle overs I got the breakthroughs."

This was India's first international match at Old Trafford following an agonizing loss to New Zealand in the semi-finals of the 2019 World Cup. But with India staging next year's edition, and a Twenty20 World Cup in Australia in October before that, Hardik's focus was firmly on the future that, for him, starts with an upcoming series in the West Indies. "The past is the past, the Manchester semi-final has passed," he said. "You can't change anything and in cricket there is no revenge, it does not matter to be honest. For us it was important how we go forward from here."

"England have been fantastic throughout the last couple of years, everyone found England one of the

best teams in the world. To come here and perform and win is more important." England captain Jos Buttler, who top-scored for the hosts with 60, was left to rue missing a chance to stump Pant when his rival gloveman had made 18. "If you give good players a second chance there's a good chance they'll hurt you," Buttler said. "Rishabh is a fearless player, someone who is great to watch in all formats."

England begin a three-match ODI series against South Africa on Tuesday with Buttler, who only recently succeeded retired World Cup-winning skipper Eoin Morgan as captain, optimistic they will be better for their India experience. "We haven't played much ODI cricket recently and it's working out the rhythm again," he said. "Our ambition is to be the best team in the world and that means adapting quickly to what's in front of you." —AFP

Sports

Sweden, Netherlands book Euro 2022 quarter-finals

Sweden thrash Portugal 5-0; Netherlands beat Switzerland 4-1

SHEFFIELD: Sweden thrashed Portugal 5-0 to reach the quarter-finals of Euro 2022 on Sunday as holders the Netherlands needed a flurry of late goals to beat Switzerland 4-1 to ensure their place in the last eight. Silver medalists at last year's Olympics, Sweden are the highest ranked team in the tournament, but failed to hit top gear in drawing with the Dutch and squeezing past the Swiss 2-1 in their opening two games. Peter Gerhardsson's women clicked into gear in Leigh to claim top spot in Group C and were 3-0 up by half-time. Manchester City's Filippa Angeldal struck twice before Carole Costa headed into her own net in first half stoppage time.

Kosovare Asllani's penalty made it 4-0 before Arsenal striker Stina Blackstenius finally got on the scoresheet after having two earlier efforts ruled out. Sweden will face whoever finishes second in Group D with Belgium, Iceland and Italy all in with a chance to finishing behind France in Monday's matches. "We were really satisfied that we did enough to win the group. That was something we hoped for when we started," said Gerhardsson.

The Netherlands lie in wait for the French in

the last eight as they had enough to get through despite missing star striker Vivianne Miedema for the second consecutive game due to a positive case of coronavirus. "We're playing a big opponent and so are they. I don't think they want to play us," said Netherlands boss Mark Parsons, whose side lost 3-1 to France in February. "The result wasn't what we wanted (last time), but we said that the next time we played them, we were confident that we would be better. We saw opportunity."

In front of a new record crowd of 22,596 for a women's Euro group match not involving the hosts, Ana-Maria Crnogorčević's own goal put the Dutch in front in Sheffield. Switzerland responded almost immediately when Geraldine Reuteler coolly finished from Romana Bachmann's pull-back just three minutes later. A draw would have been enough for Mark Parsons' side to reach the knockout stages, but they made sure of the three points with three goals in the final six minutes. Substitute Romee Leuchter struck twice, either side of Victoria Pelova's effort, which survived a lengthy VAR check for offside. —AFP



LEIGH: Portugal's striker Diana Silva (center) shoots as she is challenged by Sweden's defender Amanda Ilestedt (right) and Sweden's defender Magdalena Eriksson during the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 Group C football match between Sweden and Portugal at Leigh Sports Village stadium on July 17, 2022. —AFP

Bale makes MLS debut in LAFC 2-1 win at Nashville

WASHINGTON: Wales captain Gareth Bale got his first taste of Major League Soccer action on Sunday in Los Angeles FC's 2-1 away victory over Nashville in Tennessee. Goals from Cristian Arango and Jose Cifuentes either side of a penalty by Nashville's Hany Mukhtar put LAFC 2-1 up before prized acquisition Bale, a five-time UEFA Champions League winner, came on in the 72nd minute.

Even though LAFC were on the road, the former Real Madrid and Tottenham superstar was cheered by a sell-out crowd at Geodis Park, which included a vocal contingent of LAFC fans. "I was itching, soon as I got on the bench I wanted to get off and help the team, play some minutes," Bale said. "Important also for me individually that I kind of get my fitness going."

"Good to get some minutes and more importantly got the three points-yeah we're all happy." It was Bale's first competitive club match since April 9.

Since then Bale has helped Wales earn their first World Cup berth since 1958 with a victory over Ukraine in the intercontinental playoff in June. He signed with LAFC on June 27, two weeks after veteran Italy and Juventus defender Giorgio Chiellini announced he was moving to the club. Chiellini also made his MLS debut on Sunday, playing the first 60 minutes. "It was really important for us to get him and Gareth a win in their first game," LAFC coach Steve Cherundolo said.

Both Bale and Chiellini said the heat and humidity in Nashville—a feature in many MLS venues in a regular season played in the summer months—was something they'll have to adjust to. "The humidity was very difficult even in the warm up," Bale said. "It's something I'm not used to. But these are the challenges that we all have to deal with and we have to push through and do what we have to for the team." Chiellini said he expected his first match in nearly a month to be a physical challenge. "But I felt better minute by minute," he said.

Switched on

The victory pushed LAFC ahead of Austin atop the Western Conference standings with 42 points with a game in hand over the Texas club on 41. Cifuentes grabbed the go-ahead goal in the first minute of the second half.

LAFC's Ryan Hollingshead hit the post with a header from a pass of Carlos Vela. Cifuentes fired home the rebound for what proved the game winner, his sixth goal of the season and his third in two matches.

Arango had scored his eighth of the season to put the visitors up 1-0 in the 27th minute. But Mukhtar converted from the spot in the 43rd after VAR determined Ilic Sanchez pulled down CJ Sapong in the box. With his first MLS action under his belt, Bale said, it's now a matter of gaining familiarity with his teammates and improving his own fitness. "It's going to take a little time to get used to everything but I'm quite switched on in terms of football so I'm able to get up to speed pretty quick. "Now it's just important to try and get some minutes, try and get as fit as possible as quick as possible." —AFP

Lewandowski vows to help Barcelona 'return to the top'

MADRID: Polish striker Robert Lewandowski said Monday he was raring to go at new club Barcelona and determined to help them "return to the top and win as many titles as possible". "I'm finally here. I'm delighted to be at Barca," the former Bayern Munich star told Barca TV after joining his new teammates in Miami where Barcelona are starting a four-match US tour this week.

"The last few days have been long, but finally an agreement has been reached. I'm ready to take on this new challenge," continued the 33-year-old. "I've always wanted to play in La Liga and in the big teams, so Barca is a great opportunity for me. "I'm here to help Barca get back to the top and win as many titles as possible."

Barcelona's last domestic title was in 2019 and their last Champions League trophy in 2015. On Saturday, Bayern Munich announced that they had reached an agreement with Barcelona for Lewandowski after two months of endless negotiations between the clubs. The two-time FIFA men's player of the year has reportedly agreed a four-year deal worth 50 million euros (\$50.4m), including five million in potential add-ons.

He is the club's fourth summer transfer after Ivory Coast midfielder Franck Kessie from AC Milan and Chelsea defender Andreas Christensen on a free transfer, and Brazil winger Raphinha, recruited for 70 million euro from Leeds. The club has also extended the contract of French winger Ousmane Dembele, who is committed until 2024. A very generous transfer window for a club which suffered from an abysmal debt, exceeding one billion euros in the long term, a few months ago.

De Ligt's deal

In another development, Bayern Munich have agreed a fee of 70 million euros to sign Dutch central defender Matthijs de Ligt from Juventus, according to reports in German media. Bild and Sport1 claimed the fee for the 22-year-old would be followed by an additional 10 million euros in bonuses. Bayern will use the proceeds from the transfer of Polish striker Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona, estimated at more than 45 million euros, to help finance the transfer. "It's true that we have had discussions. De Ligt is a very, very interesting player," Bayern executive director Olivier Kahn told Bild at the weekend. —AFP

Messi, Mbappe, PSG stars draw thousands at Tokyo training

TOKYO: Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe drew gasps from a crowd of thousands in Tokyo on Monday as Paris Saint-Germain held the first training session of their Japanese tour. About 13,000 fans turned up at Tokyo's Chichibunomiya rugby ground to watch an open session and were treated to an hour and a half of tricks and flicks from PSG's star attacking trio. The crowd erupted in cheers as the team trotted out to jog around the pitch and the players' every touch was greeted with loud squeals. Security guards were even called into action when several fans invaded the pitch once the session was over.

Masayuki Yoshizawa, a 38-year-old office worker who arrived at the stadium wearing a 1990s-era PSG shirt, told AFP he was looking forward to watching star striker Mbappe. "Ligue 1 teams don't usually come to Japan - they usually go to China," he said, adding that he had been a fan of PSG since Brazilian Leonardo joined them from Japanese club Kashima Antlers in 1996. "It's great that they have come here after the pandemic - I think it might be the first and last time," he said.

Nine-year-old Aoma Oura said he could not decide whether Messi or Mbappe was his favorite player. "My son plays football and we've been fans for a while," said his 36-year-old father Kazuya. PSG will play three local teams during their 10-day visit to Japan, starting with



TOKYO: France's football team Paris Saint-Germain players (top left to right) Sergio Ramos, Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe, Neymar Jr and Marquinhos pose for photos with young participants of a soccer clinic at a stadium in Tokyo on July 18, 2022, as a part of the team's pre-season summer tour of Japan. —AFP

Wednesday's game against J-League champions Kawasaki Frontale at Tokyo's National Stadium. They will also play Urawa Reds in Saitama on July 23 and Gamba Osaka in Osaka on July 25.

PSG held a football clinic for

children in Tokyo on Monday morning, with Sergio Ramos and Marquinhos joining Mbappe, Neymar and Messi on the pitch. Some of the children asked the players questions after the session had finished, with one asking Messi

what skills it was important to learn as a child. "First of all, the most important thing at that age is to enjoy yourself," said the Argentine. "Of course, it's good to practice and work hard to improve your skills, but it's important to have fun." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Adaliya	22517144
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Khalidiya	24848075
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Physiotherapy Hospital		Kaifan	24849807
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700		24874330/9	Shamiya	24848913
Chest Hospital	24849400			Shuwaikh	24814507
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010			Abdullah Salem	22549134
Adan Hospital	23940620			Nuzha	22526804
		Kaizen center	25716707	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
		Rawda	22517733		

Clinics

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Shuyoukh Block 3 street no. 170 house number 476. My civil ID number is 273051517134. I hereby declare that hereafter my name will be read as under Dalbir Singh. (C# 2017)

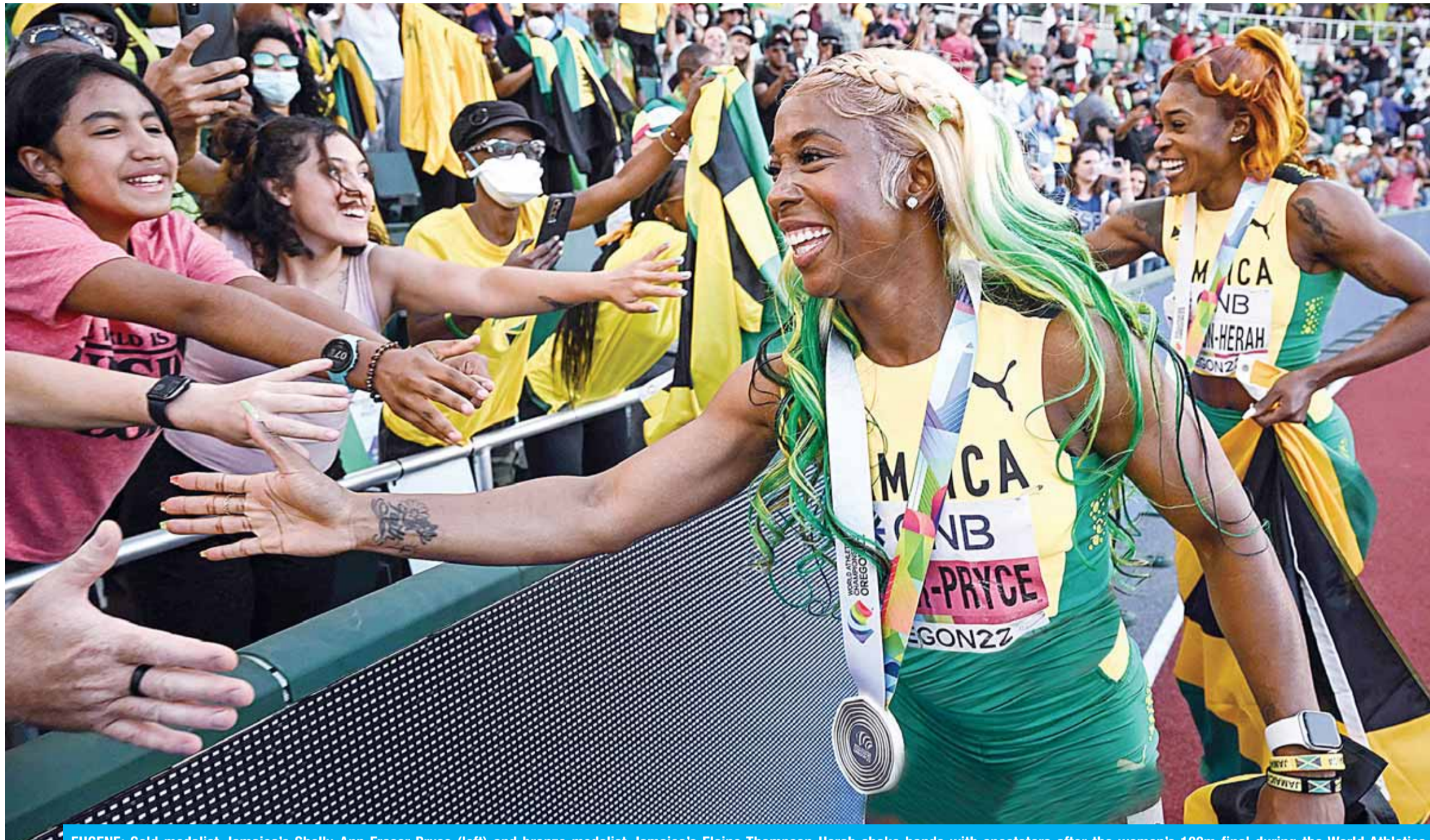
I, Boodevi, W.O late Ananda Kharvi, residing at Pithrachaya House, Bailurkar compound, Bunder road, Gangolli,

Kundapura Taluk, Udipi district have changed my name as Boodevi Kharvi for all purposes, vide affidavit dated 14.03.2022 sworn before notary H.Vasanth Kumar Shetty, Udipi, India. I have a Kuwait residency permit no. 266071903504 valid upto 10.05.2023. (C# 2018)

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EUGENE: Gold medalist Jamaica's Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce (left) and bronze medalist Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah shake hands with spectators after the women's 100m final during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene.—AFP

USA secure four crowns History-making Fraser-Pryce bags fifth 100m title

EUGENE: Jamaica's Shelley-Ann Fraser-Pryce made history Sunday as she bagged a fifth world 100m title on Sunday, as Team USA claimed four other crowns on offer in Eugene. Fraser-Pryce, a 35-year-old mother, led from gun to tape in a consummate display of sprinting that belied her age.

The Jamaican, who previously won the blue riband event in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2019, won in a championship record of 10.67 seconds. Shericka Jackson took silver in a personal best of 10.73sec, with four-time Olympic sprint champion Elaine Thompson-Herah claiming bronze (10.81). It was the first time a nation had swept the medals in the women's 100m at the worlds and came just a day after Fred Kerley led a US sweep of the men's 100m.

"It was definitely something on the cards," Fraser-Pryce said of the potential sweep. "I'm glad I was the one who finished first in the sweep and I'm glad the other ladies came through and we were able to celebrate the 1-2-3. "It's special, it's my fifth world title in the 100m, and doing it at 35, yes I said 35!" In a startling day of results for Team USA on home soil, Ryan Crouser led another American cleansweep, this time in the shot put

alongside Joe Kovacs and Josh Awotunde.

There were also 1-2 finishes in the women's pole vault thanks to Katie Nageotte and Sandi Morris, and the 110m hurdles as Grant Holloway retained his title ahead of teammate Trey Cunningham. Holloway's victory in the hurdles was marred by the withdrawal through injury of Jamaican Hansle Parchment while Devon Allen was dramatically ruled out after a heart-breaking false start on the same track where he starred as a college athlete. Parchment, who had stunned Holloway to win Olympic gold last year, clipped a hurdle during the warm-up and left clutching his thigh.

Holloway admitted that he had sympathy for Allen's marginal false start call. "I didn't think he false started at all," he said. "But technology says otherwise. It's one of those things. It's athletics. Anything can happen in track and field. It is what it is." Allen meanwhile described his false start as "frustrating". "You train a whole year for one competition that lasts 13 seconds and that's that," Allen said. "It happens and I'll learn from it - and I'll make sure I don't react as fast next time."

Feeling easy for Warholm

Elsewhere on the track, Norway's Karsten Warholm qualified smoothly for Tuesday's 400m hurdles final. The 26-year-old Olympic champion and world record holder has been out injured with a hamstring injury, but he vowed this week he was at 100% and looked comfortable as he coasted through his semi-final in his bid to bag a third consecutive world title. "It felt easy. I did my thing for the first turn to test my speed," said Warholm. "It felt good, nothing wrong. To be honest, it's not that often that I can run 48sec this easy so it's good." Joining him in the final will be his principal arch-rivals American Rai Benjamin and Brazil's Alison Dos Santos, the silver and bronze medalists in Tokyo. Belgium's Olympic champion Nafi Thiam was in control of the heptathlon after four events, having registered 13.21sec in the 100m hurdles, 1.95sec in the high jump, 15.03m in the shot put and 24.39sec in the 200m.

That left her with 4,071 points, 61 ahead of Anouk Vetter of the Netherlands, while reigning world champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson of Britain sat in sixth on 3,798pts. The gruelling multi-discipline event concludes on Monday with the long jump, javelin throw and 800m. —AFP

Bekh-Romanchuk jumping for all of Ukraine

EUGENE: Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk says she will be leaping for the compatriots of her war-torn homeland when she chases a medal in the women's triple jump final at the World Championships in Oregon on Monday. The 26-year-old is a realistic medal prospect at Hayward Field in Eugene, where she aims to post a top-three finish three years after claiming long jump silver at the 2019 Doha World Championships.

Bekh-Romanchuk hopes that a medal can bring a sliver of joy to her compatriots as Ukraine battles Russian forces who invaded the country in February. "I will jump for my people, for my country," Bekh-Romanchuk said. "Because Ukrainian soldiers, women, children need support, good news. They need victories. My country needs to win (the war)." Like many elite Ukrainian athletes, Bekh-Romanchuk has been forced to train outside her homeland since the invasion.

Bekh-Romanchuk has been based in Italy this season, leaving Ukraine in March just before the world indoor championships in Belgrade, where she won silver in the triple jump. That has meant an enforced separation from family including husband Mykhailo, a double Olympic swimming medalist who has been training in Germany. Bekh-Romanchuk says she is determined to return to Ukraine once the athletics season is over.

"After season I want to come back home, I didn't see my parents in six months," she said. "I didn't see my friends. I've seen my husband only once in months. "I stay in Italy, we have different seasons, it's not possible to see each other often, it's hard for me, I miss him." Bekh-Romanchuk keeps track of developments in Ukraine each day, and speaks regularly to her mother via phone. She says she checks less frequently just before competition, however, in order to keep a "fresh head."

"This morning I talked to my mum and I heard (air-raid) alarms, I asked her 'All good?', it was all good, but I feel worry," she said. "Alarms in my city two or three times every day. Sometimes we have one day without alarm-they are the best days." Bekh-Romanchuk longs for the day when she will be able to return home and train in her own country, but admits that her life has "changed forever, will never be the same." "I saw war," she says. "Before that I only saw war in movies. Now all Ukraine saw war, death. We are not free, but we all know about freedom."

"I want to see my parents, I want to go to my stadium, I like my stadium, I want to sleep in my bed. I'm really tired of changing training place, with all my bags. I just want to come back home." —AFP



EUGENE: Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk of Team Ukraine competes in the Women's Triple Jump qualification at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. —AFP

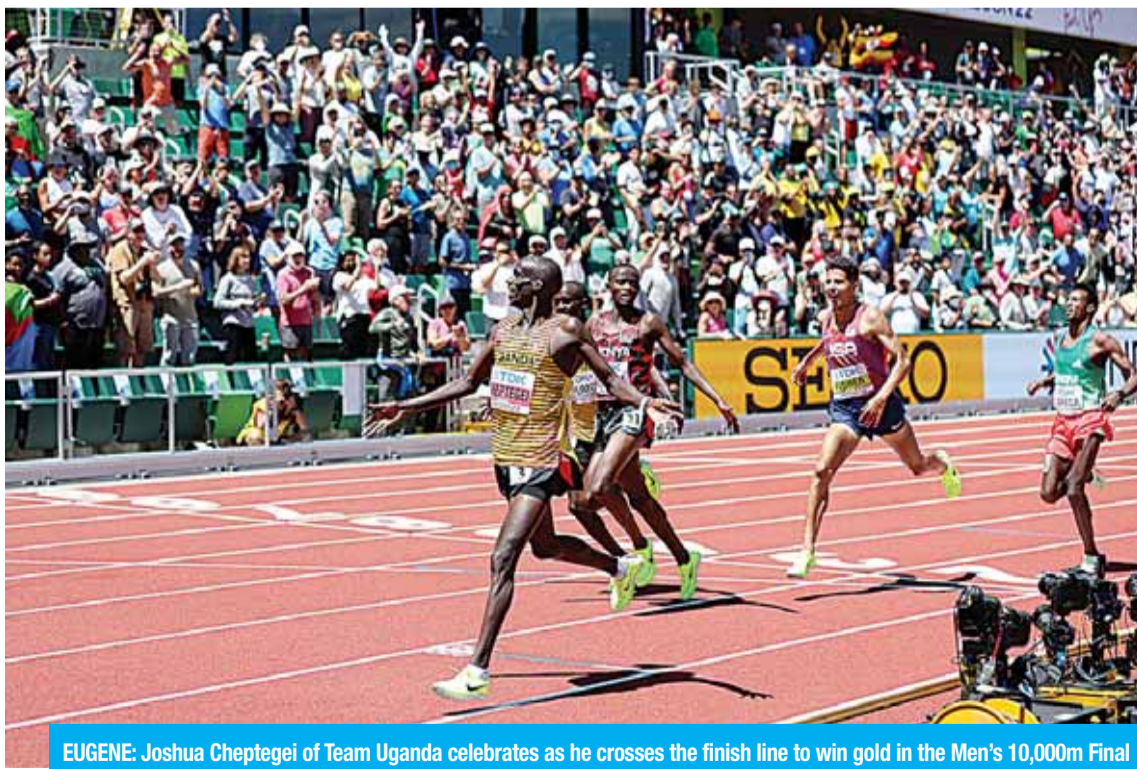
Uganda's Cheptegei delivers masterclass, retains 10,000m title

EUGENE: Uganda's Joshua Cheptegei delivered a masterclass of unpanicked front running to retain the men's world 10,000m title in Oregon, on Sunday. Cheptegei, also the world record holder, led for large periods of the race and held off all challengers on the final lap at Eugene's Hayward Field to clock a winning time of 27min 27.43sec.

Kenya's Stanley Waithaka Mburu claimed silver in 27:27.90, with another Ugandan, Jacob Kiplimo, taking bronze (27:27.97) in an unusually close finish. "I did not aim to run really fast because of the heat, the sun was very strong," Cheptegei said. "The conditions were kind of challenging. "You just have to enjoy the race and see how it is going. Then it was going good."

Cheptegei added: "I knew that if I got into the last fight, I can control it and I could speed it up. I was able to get stronger and keep it faster and faster." Spain's Carlo Mayo took up the early running, the leaden field quickly splitting into single file. Uganda's Stephen Kissa and Cheptegei then moved to the front at the 3km mark, reigning Olympic champion Selemon Barega briefly surging through the 5km mark in 14.01.

Kiplimo put in a shift up front, further splitting the pack to a lead group of 15, perhaps bigger than the east Africans might have liked. Heading into the final two laps, Barega and Mburu shot to the front, setting up a grandstand finish as a pack of eight went through the bell for the final 400 metres. Long-time leader Cheptegei was in no doubt about what his race plan



EUGENE: Joshua Cheptegei of Team Uganda celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win gold in the Men's 10,000m Final on day three of the World Athletics Championships Oregon22 on July 17, 2022. — AFP

was, kicking past the pair at 300 meters and easily holding off all-comers down the back stretch, around the final bend and towards the home straight in a consummate display of distance running.

Ethiopia's Barega finished fifth, beaten to fourth by American Grant Fisher. It was not the result Barega wanted and he didn't hold back. "I did not only expect to get a medal in Eugene but I was targeting the

gold," he said. "So you can see that the disappointment is very big. I did not control the race, did not watch the other runners and was trying to run my own pace. Maybe that was a big mistake in the end. "This definitely was a big lesson for me and I will try to not to repeat it in the future. I still plan to run 5000m here so I hope to bring some better result for my country." —AFP