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Special team recommends steps to reduce number of expatriates

Government to address demographic imbalance

KUWAIT: As a result of the delay in addressing the demographic imbalance and population structure, the Council of Ministers asked many concerned sectors to prepare their proposals and visions in this regard as a prelude to forming a specialized technical team. This specialized technical team will be tasked with putting forth recommendations and practical steps in order to take immediate measures to reduce the number of expats in the country and review the procedures of bringing in labor in addition to other steps with regards to fees and services extended to them.

Sources said the Civil Service Commission, Central

Statistics Department, Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Public Authority for Manpower were informed about official circulars from the Council of Ministers as well as government departments who were asked to bring down the number of expat employees to a minimum with warnings against appointments on the rewards system.

The sources said the government is convinced that many issues kept it from fulfilling its promises to deal with the population structure, especially the circumstances that accompanied COVID-19 pandemic. Several issues got muddled during the period, creating obsta-

cles and negatives in the labor sector. Many expat workers got stranded in their home countries for a long period, creating a labor crisis in the country and the issue of residency violators also got compounded, demanding immediate remedial measures.

The new government's working program will directly include these remedial measures to address the issue of population imbalance and insist on reducing the number of expats to 30 percent within 15 years. The program will make sure that a certain percentage of expats will be reduced every year until the target number is achieved, focusing on stamping out the excess marginal

labor, the sources said. The sources said the openness to bringing in foreign labor to meet the market needs will not be expanded as some are demanding because the government and concerned authorities said that the Kuwait population is nearly five million - 1.5 million are Kuwaitis and the rest are expats. Two million of them are in the Manpower department alone which is a very large number exceeding Kuwait market needs - suggesting that the issue is not that of lack of labor but of bad distribution. The authorities are of the firm view now that many sectors have excess labor and they must be gotten rid of them.

Biden tested positive for COVID-19

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, with his doctors saying the 79-year-old leader was experiencing mild fatigue and would isolate at the White House while carrying out his full duties. Biden had been due to travel to Pennsylvania during the day, the latest in a series of trips around the country as he seeks to revive waning Democratic Party fortunes ahead of midterm elections.



US President Joe Biden

"He is fully vaccinated and twice boosted and experiencing very mild symptoms," the White House said in a statement, adding that Biden had begun taking Pfizer's Paxlovid pill, an antiviral used to minimize the severity of COVID-19. "Consistent with CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines, he will isolate at the White House and will continue to carry out all of his duties fully during that time."

Biden's doctor Kevin O'Connor said in an official note to the White House press secretary that the president was suffering from fatigue, runny nose and a dry cough, starting on Wednesday evening. O'Connor added that Biden had tested positive in a rapid antigen test on Thursday morning before the result was confirmed by a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test. "I talked to him just a few minutes ago. He's doing fine, he's feeling good," First Lady Jill Biden, who tested negative, told reporters on a visit to a school in Michigan.

Joe Biden is reported to be in good general health, but his advanced age will heighten concern over the impact of COVID. Politically he is in a tough phrase of his presidency, facing November midterm elections that are forecast to be painful, as well as declining personal approval ratings. His approval ratings have hit a new low, with only 31 percent of Americans satisfied with the way he is running the country, according to the latest polls.

Disrupted schedule

Biden had planned to spend more time on the ground in the United States in the coming weeks after a period of intense overseas travel, including a NATO summit in Spain and a controversial trip

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Russian rockets pummel Kharkiv

KYIV: Russian artillery strikes pounded Ukraine's second largest city Kharkiv on Thursday after Moscow announced it was expanding its war aims, even as Russian gas flows to Europe resumed through the Nord Stream pipeline. The attacks on the eastern city - scarred by weeks of Russian shelling - came after 10 days of scheduled work ended on the Nord Stream gas pipeline that had spurred fears of a permanent cut-off.

Kharkiv's regional governor said two people were killed and 19 injured, four of whom were in a serious condition. Three people were killed by strikes a day earlier in Kharkiv, where some semblance of normal life had returned in recent weeks after Ukrainian forces pushed back Russian troops from the city limits. "We are asking Kharkiv resi-

dents to be extremely careful. The enemy is firing chaotically and brutally at the city. Stay in shelters!" the governor, Oleg Synegebov, wrote on social media.

Presidential adviser Mykhaylo Podolyak said there was also some damage on a mosque in Kharkiv, accusing Russia of "contempt" after Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Iran this week. In Kramatorsk in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, which has seen some of fiercest fighting, a school that Ukrainian officials said was being used as a food aid storage point was also struck. The school's deputy director Olena Shmadchenko, 56, looked at the destroyed building in despair. "I have been working at this school for 16 years. It was my home!" she told AFP.

25 percent devaluation

Russian troops invaded Ukraine on February 24 and the war has left thousands dead, forced millions to flee their homes and wrought havoc with the

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KHARKIV: Relatives react next to the body of a man who died in a Russian rocket strike in one of the districts of the second largest Ukrainian city of Kharkiv on July 21, 2022. — AFP

Fed-up Sri Lankans rush for passports

COLOMBO: One of the longest queues in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo is for the exit, as thousands of people line up outside the immigration office seeking passports to escape the country's economic crisis. Every day, about 3,000 people submit their papers and 15,000 rupees (\$42) to obtain travel documents. The office is running 24 hours a day, six days a week to try to cope with demand.

Many applicants still have to wait overnight, like Madushini, 35, whose guesthouse business in the western province of Udawalawa fell victim first to coronavirus and then to the financial turmoil. Now, she wants to find work in the US, where her cousin lives. "Bookings

from foreign tourists have dried up, so I need to find a way to earn and secure my son's life," she told AFP, giving only one name. "The whole country is closed, and we don't have money."

Overseas numbers swell

Some of those waiting in the queue go without food and water for fear of losing their place, sweating in the humid tropical weather. Unemployed chef Samantha, 34, has secured an offer from a hotel in Cyprus and had been in line for 18 hours when she spoke to AFP. "I want to leave Sri Lanka as soon as possible," he said. "I have no work here now and no money. I will wait in this queue until I get a passport."

The pandemic caused a foreign exchange crisis that critics say was exacerbated by government mismanagement. The situation left tourism-dependent Sri Lanka unable to import enough fuel, medicines and other essentials. Inflation

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COLOMBO: Sri Lankan women walk past slogans painted on a wall against the newly elected Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickramasinghe, near the president's office residence in Colombo on July 21, 2022. — AFP

Smoke without fire? Experts question tobacco products

PARIS: Heated tobacco products have soared in popularity as a "smoke free" alternative to cigarettes in recent years, but a peer-reviewed report has suggested their emissions could be considered smoke - a claim strongly rejected by the tobacco industry. Heated tobacco products, or HTPs, are often confused with e-cigarettes, which heat liquid that can contain nicotine but do not involve tobacco leaf.

HTPs instead use a high heat to decompose tobacco, via a process called pyrolysis, which does not set it

on fire or burn it, therefore avoiding creating smoke. The most popular and widely available HTP, Philip Morris International's IQOS, is an electronic device that heats a tobacco-filled, paper-wrapped, cigarette-like stick at a temperature of up to 350 degrees Celsius.

Last month a review of the available research by experts in pyrolysis from Britain's Nottingham University found "chemical evidence that IQOS emissions fit the definition of both an aerosol and smoke." The paper, published in the American Chemical Society's Omega journal, was funded by the STOP anti-tobacco initiative.

Its lead author Clement Uguna said that IQOS emissions contain chemical compounds that are "in normal tobacco smoke, bush burning and wood smoke". "Hence smoke arises simply by heating organic substances and does not necessarily involve fire," he told

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WASHINGTON: In this file photo, a man exhales smoke from an electronic cigarette in Washington, DC. — AFP

Local

Law of Access to Information — Kuwaiti pledge to transparency

Law improved Kuwait's ranking on Corruption Perceptions Index: Al-Hamar

KUWAIT: Law of Access to Information reflects Kuwait's commitment to undertaking necessary measures in combating corruption and bolstering principles of transparency, as it grants individuals the right to obtain information held by public entities.

The law, approved by the National Assembly back in August 2020 and commenced implementation in March 2021, is a crucial step towards achiev-

ing administrative transparency and boosting governmental accountability. Article (2) of the law stipulates that every person has the right to access and obtain information held by public entities .. the person has the right to access administrative decisions that affect his rights and familiarize himself with information contained in any document that relates to him.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Head of Investigations division in the anti-corruption authority (Nazaha), Abdulhameed Al-Hamar stated that approval of such law stems from Kuwait's efforts in supporting democracy, and cementing political and civil rights. He mentioned that this improved Kuwait's ranking on Corruption Perceptions Index, adding that the improvement seen in (2019-2021), by three grades, is higher than the average rating of Middle Eastern and North African nations.

Al-Hamar added that the law instructs entities to facilitate person's access to information and ensure its disclosure in the time and manner stipulated in the law, penalties of unjustified withholding of information or providing false data includes incarceration for period of no more than two years and/or fine of no more than KD 3,000 (approx \$9,700). He further noted that it is too much soon to evaluate entities' adherence to law stipulations, as it is fairly new and the monitoring and evaluating process takes time, adding that it is part of Kuwait (2019-2024) strategy to boost integrity and face corruption.

On her part, Assistant Professor of Law at Kuwait University, Dr Muneera Al-Nemash, clarified that the law aims to increase transparency via entities commitment to obligatory disclosure of information, as well as enable individuals to access information and obtain documents. However, Dr Al-Nemash pointed out a deficiency in legislation that could hinder achieving objectives of law, including clearly identifying the information and administrative decisions that could be disclosed, lack of awareness in regards to why an individual would want to obtain such data, and vague instructions to designated employee, leaving large area for exemptions. Head of Kuwait's Transparency Society, Majed Al-Mutairi, considered this law the most prominent application of boosting principles of transparency in Kuwait, hoping for even more development in that regard.

He added that the law encouraged public entities to adopt voluntary disclosure of information, adding that the society, organized a campaign aimed at entity employees to raise their awareness and instruct them in regards to application of law stipulations and fully comprehending its dimensions. He called on gov-

Amir, Crown Prince, PM congratulate Belgium on national day

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Thursday sent a congratulatory cable to King Philippe of Belgium, on the occasion of his country's national day, wishing him well, and progress and prosperity to his country and people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar congratulatory cable to the King on the occasion. — KUNA

ernment bodies for more voluntary disclosure and to continue posting guidebook on their website, highlighting importance of raising awareness via media campaigns, and support hotlines to answer queries. The law specifies that each entity shall designate one or more competent employee to consider requests of information, who must have sufficient experience and knowledge with the necessary authority to search and access the requested information.

It also adds that entities shall be committed to publish on their websites within three years from the effective date of this law a manual that contains lists of the information available for disclosure. Moreover, data compromising public interest including infringement on private lives, or the pursuit of justice, is protected by the law as it also guarantees right of individuals to submit grievances in case their request for information was denied. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ships sail past the Kuwait towers in Kuwait. — File photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Gulf Railways council discusses work program

RIYADH: The Council of Gulf Railways discussed the proposal for the framework of the rail network work program. This came during the first meeting of the council via video call, according to a state-

ment by the General Secretariat of GCC on Thursday, with the attendance of all council members, as well as the participation of the head of economic affairs sector in the Secretariat Abdul-Malik Al Al-Sheikh.

During the meeting, several important topics were discussed, including selecting the chairman of the Gulf Railways Council and the internal system of the Gulf Railways committee, stated the Secretariat. They also discussed the logo proposal for of the Gulf Railways Committee and the Council was briefed on the progress of work on the railway project in the member states. — KUNA



The Council of Gulf Railways discussed the proposal for the framework of the rail network work program.—KUNA

Kuwait needs a young and efficient government: Al-Shall

KUWAIT: Standard & Poor's Credit Rating Agency issued its report on Kuwait on July 15, 2022. The report changed the future outlook from negative to stable and maintained the sovereign rating at (A+). But the justifications provided for this change were not reasonable. They were all factors irrelevant to the local financial or economic policy, such as the doubling of oil prices, increase in production share, and consequently the growth in revenues that bridged the fiscal deficit and turned it into surplus, and strengthened the financial reserves. The justifications for the boom in the oil market were the bottlenecks of supply chains and the war on Ukraine.

The report addresses dealers with Kuwait commercially and financially; therefore, it covers the medium-term at the latest. Its summary for those dealers with Kuwait is the reduced risks of Kuwait's inability to meet its obligations within that term. Suppose the government achieves what the rating agencies demand, which is to allow it to borrow from the global market or withdraw from future generations' reserves. In that case, there is an opportunity to raise the rating in the future. As for what happens after that, it is an economic issue whose consequences are borne by the people at home. Such a

scenario, if it materializes, is a repetition of what happened in Kuwait between 2015-2021, during which the general reserve liquidity was depleted.

The government resorted to borrowing from the global market after firm promises of financial and economic reform through precisely achieving the opposite. We all remember what happened to the financial situation at the end of that era.

The only variable that can be bet on in the future is the intentions of the upcoming political and administrative change in Kuwait. If a change comes away from the genetic and quota sharing, specifically in the executive part of the public administration, we may witness a different and much better Kuwait. As tragic as it was between the COVID-19 pandemic, war, and an unprecedented inflationary threat, what happened in the world, had positive financial results in the agency's report. And if the next administration is aware of the danger of waiting for conditions to change for the worse to act, and if it considers what the exceptional circumstances have provided as a temporary power factor and uses it to bring about a fundamental change in the administration's approach with measures that ensure the sustainability of the economy, its public finances, and the balance of its labor, Kuwait will receive better and sustained classifications resulting from internal factors.

What Kuwait needs is a young government whose choice of efficiency and performance precedes the purchase of loyalties and is aware of the fundamental changes taking place in the world, which earns the people's trust and respect in its ability and integrity. Apart from such management, all other requirements are available in Kuwait.

Al-Nemesh: Kuwait for bolstering of Arab cooperation

CAIRO: The State of Kuwait is keen on bolstering Arab cooperation within the economic and social domains, matters, which would be addressed further during in the upcoming Arab summit, said an official Thursday. Speaking to KUNA at the conclusion of the regular ministerial session of the Arab economic and social council. Acting Undersecretary at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Nemesh said that the meeting had touched on various topics to be included in the upcoming 31st Arab summit in Algeria scheduled next November.

Achieving Arab economic integration was a goal that the countries in the region were seeking, said the Kuwaiti official, who indicated that the concluded ministerial-level meeting had touched on various important topics including food security, agricultural development, and the Arab digitized economic vision amongst others.

Resolutions from the 30th Arab summit and the outcomes of the fourth Arab social and economic development summit were also touched upon during the two-day meeting, he indicated. He noted that the findings of the meeting would be forwarded to the Arab summit in Algeria.

Meanwhile, the Arab League affirmed on Thursday its support for Joint Arabian economic and social work that aims to improve the lives of Arab people. This came in a speech by Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh in the extraordinary session of the economic and social board on the ministerial level, headed by Egypt. She pointed out to the suggested topics presented by ministerial councils and specialized Arab organizations in order to shed the light on them in the next summit, to show the priorities of the Arab economic and social development. She stressed on the importance of strengthening the efforts of Member States to recover from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic outcomes, in a way that also enables the continuation of the Arab development process and to achieve the plan of (Sustainable Development Plan 2030).

The UN Environment Program (UNEP), the Arab League, and the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (Cedare) launched on Thursday the Arabic version of the sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6).

The launch came during a celebration held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. The event focused on the basic tenets of the GEO-6 and touched on the preparation for the upcoming seventh edition. Arab League's Director of Environment and Meteorology Dr Mahmoud Fathallah addressed the event and said that

the translation of the report into the Arabic language was an important step to inform the region of future shifts in the environment and ways to prepare for them. Fathallah affirmed that there was an increasing interest in environmental matters on a global scale, noting that the Arab region had reflected similar interest via Egypt taking on hosting duties of the Sharm El-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in November 2022 and the UAE subsequent host of the conference in 2023. Policies and decisions on the environment should be linked to verified scientific facts, said the official who also called for managing natural resources to prevent environmental deterioration and boost sustainability. On her part, Dr Yasmine Fouad-Egypt's Minister of Environment—said that the launch of the GEO-6 was important as an impartial document on the status of



CAIRO: Acting Undersecretary at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Nemesh speaks. — KUNA

environment. The report's publishing is a step to address environmental challenges globally, said the minister who asked the world to cooperate to build a better future for the world's environment. About the GEO-6, the UNEP said the 2019-published report called on decision makers to take immediate action to address pressing environmental issues to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as well as other Internationally Agreed Environment Goals, such as the Paris Agreement. — KUNA

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit on Thursday condemned the "heinous Turkish attack" on the Iraqi city of Dohuk, and utterly rejected any assault on Iraq's sovereignty as unequivocal breach of international law. In a press statement, the league said it stands side by side with Iraq in rejecting and denouncing Turkish attacks on Iraq, and deploring any violation of the sovereignty of any Arab country. The Arab bloc called on Turkey to reconsider its behavior and maintain the good-neighborliness principle in its relations with the region's country, and not to launch any military operations in Arab territories anymore. Eight people were killed and 23 others wounded in an attack on a tourist resort in the Iraqi province of Dohuk. —KUNA

Kuwait deplors Dohuk attack

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry condemned Thursday the attack on the Iraqi city of Dohuk, which resulted in the death of several people, and utterly rejected any assault on Iraq's sovereignty as an unequivocal breach of international law. In a statement, the foreign ministry also expressed condolences to the people and government of Iraq and to the families of the victims, wishing those injured a swift recovery.

Local

Greening Kuwait: Citizen goes viral on TikTok with his innovative vision

Al-Mowail's designs show how urban greening can transform Kuwait into a beautiful country

'My designs are the vision and wishes of a citizen who is tired of waiting to see his country, Kuwait, in a more beautiful way. I would love to see the streets of Kuwait in this way, and I am sure that we change that scene into a better one.'



A Kuwait street before greening



The street before greening



The street after greening



The street after greening

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Adequately planned urban greening can improve living conditions for citizens and residents of Kuwait and help it meet its broader climate goals. Desert greening has the potential to help solve global water, energy and food crises.

The aims of urban greening are numerous; they improve the lives of the people and wildlife in the area, as well as make cities eco-friendlier and pleasing to the eye. Citizen Adnan Adel Al-Mowail went viral on TikTok for publishing his



Adnan Adel Al-Mowail

vision of greening Kuwait.

Al-Mowail used his experience in designing to draw his vision for developing urban greening in his country; Kuwait Times spoke with him to learn more about his vision.

Kuwait Times: Tell us more about your designs published on the social media platform.

Mowail: My designs are the vision and wishes of a citizen who is tired of waiting to see his country, Kuwait, in a more beautiful way. I would love to see the streets of Kuwait in this way, and I am sure that we change that scene into a better one. I always say that young Kuwaitis are creative in all fields, but they need the opportunity to release that creativity to the public and I do not know why not to give them the chance to be the change for Kuwait.

KT: What inspired you?

Mowail: The love of Kuwait and my wishes for beautiful streets pushed me to check the latest designs in order to develop mine and design new images that suits Kuwait.

KT: Do you have enough experience that makes you qualified to develop a complete greening design in Kuwait?

Mowail: My main specialty is designing theatrical and television decoration and what motivated me to design roads is the imprisoned wishes despite the creative capabilities of the Kuwaiti youth. I have no clue what prevents us from greening Kuwait with pretty designs and applying what we all need to see.

KT: You mentioned in a video on TikTok, that there are certain types of plants that make them last longer in the Kuwaiti climate, what are those types?

Mowail: There are many types, including Plumeria, Albizzia lebbek, Delonix regia, Racosperma, Jacaranda, and Bougainvillea.

KT: Have you contacted anyone of the officials to develop the perception of your proposal?

Mowail: I sent it to some, but they did not respond

although the message was delivered and they saw it.

KT: What is the goal of your designs?

Mowail: Some of my designs have artificial rivers that we use for energy, create a better climate, irrigation with salt water for some trees, and promote tourism.

KT: Why did you decide to post it on social media platforms? How do people react?

Mowail: I was surprised by the great response on TikTok. Unfortunately, I noticed that most young people are broken and desperate that they do not believe that these designs may become true one day; this despair was understandable.

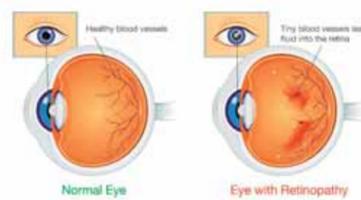
There were more than 300 desperate comments. Most TikTok followers are born in 2000 and above and they are the next generation, their desperation makes me sad. It is hard to see the desperation in such a young generation. One of the comments on TikTok said: "My great-grandchildren will hopefully see this design in reality."

Diabetic eye-screening in Kuwait: Why does it matter?

By Dr Mohammad Karam
Al-Bahar Ophthalmology Center

KUWAIT: Diabetic eye screening is essential because it aids in the prevention of sight loss. In individuals with diabetes, the eyes are at risk of damage from diabetic retinopathy. This condition can be detected early through screening before any changes in the vision. It occurs when the small blood vessels are affected by diabetes, damaging the retina - the back part of the eye. Untreated diabetic retinopathy can lead to leakage or blockage of the blood vessels in the retina, which ultimately affect eyesight. If the condition is detected early, treatment is effective at reducing or preventing damage to your sight. Screening is offered five years after the initial diagnosis of type 1 diabetes or to anyone with diabetes over the age of 12 every year.

It can detect early signs of retinopathy, if you need to start treatment or if you need more frequent checks. A few practical tips for the day of screening include bringing all your glasses or contact lenses along with a lens solution for contacts, bringing sunglasses as your eyes may be sensitive after the eye drops, and bringing someone to drive you home as your vision may be affected for a few hours. During the screening visit, we temporarily enlarge your pupils by putting drops in your eyes, which may sting. Photographs of the back of the eye will be



taken through a camera device without directly touching the eyes. The photographs will be sent to an expert to review.

Overall, the appointment should last no longer than 30 minutes. Follow up visit will be scheduled for the results. Prevention is better than cure. There are several precautions that you could take to reduce your risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. First and foremost, control your blood sugar levels as effectively as possible through diet, exercise, and your prescribed medications. Take medications as prescribed by your diabetes doctor. Secondly, visit your doctor regularly to check if your blood is raised. Finally, seek advice from your doctor if you have a problem with your eyesight and attend your diabetic eye screening appointments regularly.

trade surplus with Japan skyrocketed by 173.0 percent to JPY 1.2 trillion (\$8.4 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region jumping 125.2 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 94.8 percent of the region's total export bills to Japan, inflated 129.5 percent.

The region's overall imports from Japan rose 16.9 percent on demand for steel and machinery. The world's third-biggest economy logged a global trade deficit of JPY 1.4 trillion (\$10.0 billion) in June for the 11th straight month, as surging energy bills and a weaker yen continued to push up the value of its imports. Exports increased 19.4 percent from the year before, thanks to robust sales of mineral fuels, steel and semiconductor components. Imports jumped 46.1 percent on higher energy prices, such as crude oil, coal and LNG. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. —KUNA

Meanwhile, the exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar settled Thursday at the level of 0.301 dinars while the exchange rate of the euro fell.

The Central Bank of Kuwait said in its daily bulletin on its website that the exchange rate of the pound stabilized at the level of 0.432 dinars while the Swiss franc fell at 0.310 dinars and the exchange rate of the Japanese yen remained at the same level. The US dollar continues to fall against major currencies, including the euro and sterling, while remaining close to unchanged levels against the yen after a recent US housing report below expectations put pressure on the dollar. —AFP

Kuwait's June trade surplus with Japan up more than 1.5 times

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan swelled more than 1.5 times from a year earlier to JPY 101.9 billion (\$735 million) in June on brisk exports, government data showed Thursday. The surplus soared by 161.2 percent, up for the 15th consecutive month, and Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 14 years and five months, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan surged 123.4 percent year-on-year to JPY 120.3 billion (\$868 million), for the 15th straight month of expansion. Imports from Japan grew 24.0 percent to JPY 18.4 billion (\$133 million), up for the second straight month. Middle East's

Kuwait oil falls to \$110.69pb: KPC

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil dropped 32 cents to \$110.69 per barrel on Wednesday, compared with \$111.01 pb the day before, as announced by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Thursday. Globally, the Brent crude went down by 43 cents to \$106.92 pb and so did the West Texas Intermediate by \$1.96 to \$102.26 pb.

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KUWAIT: Signing of the cooperation agreement between Ajial Real Estate Company and LOYAC.

Ajial, LOYAC ink deal to launch Al-Andalus cultural project

KUWAIT: Ajial Real Estate Company and LOYAC, a non-profit organization, signed a cooperation agreement to launch its new project under the theme 'Al-Andalus'. The agreement is considered the first-of-its-kind in Kuwait between the private sector and a non-profit organization that supports non-profit projects.

The agreement is the initial phase to establish 'Al-Andalus' complex, a historic destination for artists to perform the most noble and prestigious arts in Kuwait. It aims at spreading awareness about the importance of culture and arts in the society and their basic role to take the society further in addition to providing a platform for presenting youth's talents.

The importance of this agreement emanates from the influence "Al-Andalus" and "LOYAC" has in the society, as "Al-Andalus" is considered an integrated center that combines professionalism, entertainment and the unique experience. LOYAC, on the other hand, is known for its comprehensive activities that aim at achieving sustainable development for youth in particular and society in general. This makes the agreement a foundation to create an ideal relationship paving the way for strategic success and development for both sides.

Ajial CEO Abdelaziz Al-Khatrash said, "our view towards Al-Andalus is more than considering it just a multi-purpose project as we designed it such a way that it becomes an interactive space for professional expertise."

Al-Khatrash said, "the agreement with LOYAC organization augments the company's vision of supporting the civil society and provide a suitable environment for small and medium size business owners to display their creation and ideas in Al-Andalus complex. This is primarily due to LOYAC's vast experience and success in this field," he said.

Meanwhile, chairperson of LOYAC and Managing Director of LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) Fareah Al-Saaqaf said, "we at LOYAC are pleased with this agreement for several reasons, as the signing of this contract with a prestigious company like Ajial Real Estate is an important achievement in our development march that has important strategic goals for the service of society. It is also in the interest of LOYAC as a civil society establishment that seeks sustainability," she mentioned.

She said, "the agreement will help realize our goals that we seek continuously and will help expand our network with the private sector in a more interactive way to move towards our long-term goals that strengthen the society's cohesiveness and empower it for peace and prosperity". She said over the last 20 year, they have been moving steadily with the conviction about the societal partnerships and their role in the sustainable development, as the fruitful development action will only be achieved by active partnership.

Al-Saaqaf added, there is no unilateral development, so we were and still are seeking to increase our partners who are in agreement without vision. "We thank Ajial for its confidence in us and for the opportunity it gave us. The preparatory meetings for this agreement were very good and it included innovative ideas that aim at enriching the cultural sector in Kuwait.

She said LAPA and LOYAC will have major roles in carrying out the activities and will vary as far as the idea and contents are concerned, relying on our previous experience in this field for the past two years.

This agreement will be part of the two establishments' vision to invest in national talents at the Al-Andalus complex grounds, as well as adopting them within a rich environment and motivating for serious initiatives. Through this joint cooperation, Ajial will sponsor the organization's various activities while LOYAC will implement them which will reflect Al-Andalus's vision as a leading cultural organization.

Al-Andalus complex is a promising project as the first economic, health and social center that serves the future of businessmen and entrepreneurs in Kuwait through providing them with modern requirements in a facility that is able to combine multi-purpose programs on one side and the elements of culture, entertainment, shopping and healthcare on the other.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Families spend time on a beach in downtown Kuwait to beat the heat on one of the hottest days of the season on Thursday. According to Meteorological Department, Kuwait recorded very hot and relatively humid temperature over coastal areas on Thursday with the maximum temperature reaching 49 degree Celsius. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

KAF honors Nat'l Student Ambassadors from across US for anti-violence stand

Recognition dinner hosted for 39 out of 30,000 middle school students

WASHINGTON: The Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF) and the National Campaign to Stop Violence held the 2022 National Recognition dinner, honoring this year's Do the Write Thing (DWT) National Student Ambassadors from across the nation, who have taken a stand against violence.

The 2022 National Recognition dinner honored some 39 students out of over 30,000 middle school students across the US who participated in the program this year by submitting writing on the causes and solutions to youth violence and how violence has impacted their lives.

These National Student Ambassadors had their writings compiled into a book that will be presented to the Library of Congress. On this occasion, KAF Chairman Dr Hassan Al-Ebraheem told KUNA that this event "is a celebration of the commitment of our 2022 National Student Ambassadors to making this world a better, safer place; a celebration of their dedicated parents and guardians who have guided them along the way; and a celebration of the committed educators who have supported them on their journey." He added that "Do the Write Thing was born out of KAF's desire to reduce violence in communities across the US and its consequences on the lives of youth." He continued "our purpose has always been the promotion of peace and understanding, between individuals, across communities, and among nations, and it is my sincere hope that this aim will inspire us today, and continue to guide all of us in the days, months, and years to come."

For his part, Attorney General for the District of Columbia Karl Racine said in remarks at the event that "kids are the experts. They know exactly what's going. They also have an idea as to what we need in order to reduce the violence." He added that "what this program does is it actually asks young people to think about a tomorrow without violence.

Team HSKP held welcome meeting with Pakistan envoy

KUWAIT: Welcome to Malik Muhammad Farooq who has formally taken up his duties as the Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait. Team was led by President Inaam Morganite along with other team members. Team members extended their best wishes for the ambassador and wished him all the success. Deputy Head of Mission Faisal Majeed, Head of Chancery Tehreem Ilyas and Community Welfare Attache Farrukh AmirSial were also present.

President Inaam Morganite enlightened the vision and mission of the organization. He mentioned that "Hum Sub Ka Pakistan" is an organization with the aim of providing different services to Pakistani community in Kuwait as well as portraying a soft and positive Image of Pakistan in the country.

Ambassador of Pakistan, Malik Muhammad Farooq extended his best wishes for the team and he mentioned that Pakistani diaspora residing in Kuwait is doing very good job for their countrymen residing in Kuwait. There are many high qualified Pakistanis working on top positions in the best organizations of Kuwait. Moreover, we should work more and more to strengthen the ties between two brotherly countries and uplift the positive image of Pakistan. Team HSKP, despite of any political affiliation, is doing great work for the two brotherly countries and giving their maximum to serve the Pakistani diaspora residing in Kuwait.

On this Occasion, Farooq mentioned that "we have a great scope to import food goods from Pakistan and many other sectors also which need



WASHINGTON: Students attend the National Recognition dinner hosted by Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF). —KUNA

He shed light on the mass shootings witnessed across the nation so far this year, saying "right now is the time more than ever for us to redouble our efforts" to listen to our children to stop the violence. Meanwhile, Deputy Surgeon General Denise Hinton, in her remarks, thanked the National Student Ambassadors for using their "words and voices" to make change. Addressing the students, Hinton said "you're acting as leaders. You are empowered leaders. You're making progress, and you should be so proud of yourselves."

I'm proud to say that all of us I think by being here, committing to work together to ensure that we continue to make change happen, to continue to put

policies in place so each and every one of our friends feel safe or maybe get the mental health support that they need," she remarked. Recognized by educators, juvenile courts and police forces as a valuable program, DWT works with students in 30 communities. Since its inception in 1994, it is estimated that over two million students have participated in the program, with over 1.5 million of these students preparing writings on the causes of and solutions to violence. 'Do the Write Thing' was born out of the Kuwait-America Foundation's desire to reduce youth violence in communities across the US and alleviate its consequences on the lives of youth. —KUNA



more attention. In near future, we'll try our maximum level best to arrange cultural events between Kuwait and Pakistan. He assured the team that the embassy and his staff are always available for their services when and where required to serve Pakistanis in Kuwait. He mentioned that the embassy of Pakistan is fully supporting all the result-oriented organizations who are providing their services to the community.

Team HSKP was led by President Inaam Morganite and team members included Abdullah Abbasi, Rashid Al-Marrie, Dr Jehanzeb Usman, Fayyaz Wardague, M Irfan Shafiq, Faisal Jameel, Sulman Khan and Ahmed Ashraf. Ladies Wing Head Nida Mirza and Secretary General Noman Ghumman were also present.



KUWAIT: Pakistan Ambassador-designate Malik Muhammad Farooq called on the Dean of Diplomatic Corp/Ambassador of Tajikistan Dr Zubaydullo Zubaydov. The Dean extended a warm welcome and recalled his memorable stay in Pakistan.



New Sri Lanka prez sworn in, eyeing unity govt

Angry Iraq mourns dead from shelling blamed on Turkey



ROME, Italy: Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi (C) stands as Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio (L) and Italian Defence Minister Lorenzo Guerini (R) applaud upon his arrival at the Parliament, in Rome. —AFP

Italy PM resigns after coalition implodes

Snap election campaign could bring hard right to power

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi resigned Thursday after efforts to bring the country's fractious parties to heel failed, kicking off a snap election campaign which could bring the hard right to power. The internationally respected 74-year-old formally handed his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella, who rose to the task of now guiding the country out of the crisis.

Mattarella is likely to dissolve parliament and call early elections for September or October, according to political analysts. Draghi may stay on as head of the government until then. "Italy betrayed", the Repubblica daily frontpage cried, while the Stampa ran with "For Shame".

Based on current polls, a rightist alliance led by Giorgia Meloni's post-fascist Brothers of Italy party would comfortably win a snap election. Draghi, a former head of the European Central Bank, was parachuted into the premiership in 2021 as Italy wrestled with a pandemic and ailing economy. On Wednesday, he had attempted to save the government, urging his squab-

bling coalition to put aside their grievances for the sake of the country.

Ready?

"Are you ready?" he asked the Senate four times. Now was not the time for uncertainty, amid a myriad of challenges, from a struggling economy and soaring inflation to the Ukraine war, he said. Three parties—Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right Forza Italia, Matteo Salvini's anti-immigrant League and populist Five Star Movement—decided they were not. They opted to sit out the vote, saying it was no longer possible for them to work together.

The crisis was sparked when Five Star snubbed a key vote last week, despite warnings from Draghi that it would fatally undermine the coalition. His downfall comes in spite of recent polls suggesting most Italians wanted Draghi to stay at the helm until the scheduled general election next May.

Anxious investors were watching closely as the coalition imploded. The European Central Bank was due Thursday to unveil a tool to correct stress in bond markets for indebted eurozone members, such as Italy. The spread—the difference between 10-year Italian and German treasury bonds—widened to 215 points by market close on Wednesday. Milan's stock market dropped 2.0 percent on opening Thursday.

'Period of uncertainty'

Supporters of Draghi had warned a government collapse could worsen social ills in a period of rampant inflation, delay the budget, threaten EU post-pandemic recovery funds and send jittery markets into a tailspin.

Laurence Boone, France's European affairs minister, said Draghi's expected resignation would open a "period of uncertainty" and mark the loss of a "pillar of Europe". The Brothers of Italy party, which has neo-fascist roots, is flying high in the polls—but it would

need the support of Forza Italia and the League—and the three parties often clash.

Should it win, such a coalition "would offer a much more disruptive scenario for Italy and the EU" than Draghi's national unity government, wrote Luigi Scazzieri, senior research fellow at the Centre for European Reform.

Research consultancy Capital Economics said, however, there were "powerful fiscal and monetary incentives" for the next government to implement the reforms demanded by the European Union, or risk missing out on post-pandemic recovery funds worth billions of euros. Brothers of Italy has repeatedly blamed the EU for Italy's troubles.

But Meloni's support for a "strong and common EU response" to Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, "has already distanced herself from some other right-wingers in Italy and Europe," said Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg Bank. —AFP

UK PM contenders squabble over tax as campaign kicks off

LONDON: Liz Truss, the favourite to become Britain's next prime minister, on Thursday criticised rival Rishi Sunak over his tax policies while finance minister as the pair kicked off six weeks of campaigning.

The foreign minister wrote in the Daily Mail that "we have been going in the wrong direction on tax, with the tax burden at its highest in 70 years". She promised to reverse recent rises and suspend green levies on energy bills.

Sunak oversaw the tax hikes as the UK battles to fix public finances after the coronavirus pandemic and amid spiralling inflation, and has accused those promising cuts of "fantasy economics". The pair reached the final run-off to try to persuade some 200,000 party members after the last round of voting among Conservative MPs on Wednesday.

The final result is due on September 5. Sunak launched his bid to woo grassroots members by saying he was the only candidate capable of winning a general election, due within the next 18 months. "We've got a really positive message to take out to all our members now—crucially, who is the best person to beat Keir Starmer and the Labour Party at the next election?" he

wrote in the Daily Telegraph.

"I believe I'm the only candidate who can do that." But he faces an uphill struggle, with polling suggesting that party members support the more right-wing Truss. The fight has already turned personal during televised debates, but Sunak seemingly called for a truce on Thursday, writing that "I like and respect" Truss.

The pair will lobby members face-to-face for the first time on Thursday, before a dozen hustings across the country over the next few weeks.

'I was wrong'

Truss's message to the members is that she is a politician of conviction who will "bulldoze" through institutions that stand in the way of reform. But she was forced to defend a record of ideological and policy U-turns, including her previous support for the Liberal Democrats and opposition to Brexit, which she now supports.

"I was wrong and I'm prepared to admit I was wrong," on Brexit, she told BBC Radio 4 on Thursday. "I have developed my political views and ideas. I think the idea that somebody should have the same views, age 17 as age 46 is completely ludicrous."

Sunak's resignation earlier this month helped to topple Prime Minister Boris Johnson after months of scandal including "Partygate". Downing Street is reportedly running an "anyone but Rishi" campaign.

At his last Prime Minister's Questions session in parliament on Wednesday, Johnson hinted support for Truss's Thatcherite platform. He urged his successor to

advisers urging him continuously to take action, to take more action." Luria told CNN the committee will examine Trump's actions "minute by minute," starting with a fiery speech to his supporters near the White House claiming the November 2020 election was stolen to when he finally told the rioters they were "very special" but it was time to go home.

Liz Cheney, the Republican vice chair of the committee, said the panel will present evidence that "Donald Trump never picked up the phone that day to order his administration to help." "For multiple hours, Donald Trump refused to intervene to stop it," Cheney said.

The panel has subpoenaed numerous advisers and aides to Trump as it seeks to determine whether the former president or associates had a role in planning or encouraging the bid by his supporters to prevent certification of Democrat Joe Biden's election victory.

Thursday's two-hour hearing in Washington, the committee's eighth, will start at 8:00 pm (0000 GMT). It is



LONDON: Britain's Foreign Secretary and a contender for the leader of the Conservative party, and Britain's next Prime Minister, Liz Truss (C) is heckled by a protester (L) as she arrives to attend a hustings event in central London. —AFP

"cut taxes and deregulate where you can to make this the greatest place to live and invest".

The BBC and Sky News both plan to host live TV debates between the pair, the first on Monday, with other potential duels possible before party members' postal voting ends September 2. Sunak won the two previous televised debates, according to snap polls, and the second one featured a no-holds-barred clash with Truss.

But his popularity with the grassroots has faded since questions were raised over his family's tax arrangements, and as inflation has sky-rocketed to a new 40-year high of 9.4 percent in June. —AFP

expected to be the last one this summer although the committee has not ruled out further sessions. The committee's opening hearing was also held in primetime, when television audiences are largest.

Two witnesses are expected to deliver live testimony at Thursday's session: former deputy White House press secretary Sarah Matthews and Matthew Pottinger, who served on the National Security Council. Matthews and Pottinger both resigned on January 6 as Trump supporters stormed the Capitol. Committee members said the hearing would also feature excerpts from a videotaped deposition by White House counsel Pat Cipollone. In testimony aired previously, Cipollone said he agreed that there was no evidence of significant election fraud and that Trump should have conceded to Biden. Previous committee hearings have focused on Trump's attempt to sway elections officials in swing states that Biden narrowly won and pressure put on Vice President Mike Pence not to certify the Electoral College results. —AFP

News in brief

Bangladesh bans rooftop train travel

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court on Thursday banned people from travelling on train roofs—a common sight in the country during peak holiday periods—in an effort to prevent passenger deaths, a prosecutor said. A bench of two High Court judges, Nazrul Islam Talukder and Khizir Hayat, passed the order as part of a clampdown on corruption in Bangladesh Railway (BR) — the state-run rail monopoly. People climb onto carriage roofs in the South Asian nation to avoid buying tickets—or when demand soars during major Islamic festivals, when tens of millions of people return to their villages. The practice is high-risk, with travellers regularly killed falling from trains or hitting overhanging trees or low-clearance bridges on the country's 3,600-kilometre (2,200-mile) rail network. Railway staff are said to accept bribes to allow rooftop access.

Iran charges 20 over building collapse

TEHRAN: Iran has issued indictments against 20 people after the deadly collapse of a building that triggered widespread anti-corruption protests, the judiciary said on Thursday. The 10-storey Metropol building that was under construction in the city of Abadan in southwestern Khuzestan province collapsed on May 23, leading to death of 43 people. It took emergency services almost two weeks to recover the bodies of those killed in the disaster, one of Iran's deadliest in years. The tragedy sparked a series of demonstrations across the country against authorities accused of corruption and incompetence. At the time, the provincial judiciary said it had arrested 13 people, including Abadan's mayor and two former mayors in connection with the case. "Considering the importance of the matter... the case has been carefully evaluated and indictments have been issued against 20 people," said the judiciary's Mizan Online website. —From AFP

US House to examine Trump's actions during Capitol attack

WASHINGTON: The House committee investigating the storming of the US Capitol by Donald Trump supporters wraps up its gripping public hearings on Thursday with a televised primetime finale dissecting the former president's actions on the day.

"It's pretty simple," said Congresswoman Elaine Luria, a member of the panel made up of seven Democrats and two Republicans who voted to impeach Trump after the violent January 6, 2021 insurrection.

"He was doing nothing to actually stop the riot," the Democratic lawmaker from Virginia said, despite "his

International

Angry Iraq mourns dead from shelling blamed on Turkey

Turkey deny its troops were responsible

ARBIL: Iraq held a day of national mourning Thursday for nine holidaymakers killed in the bombardment of a Kurdish hill village that the government has blamed on neighbouring Turkey.

Turkey denied its troops were responsible, instead blaming rebels of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), prompting Germany to call for an urgent investigation. The coffins of the nine dead, draped in Iraqi national flags and festooned with flowers, were put on board a flight to Baghdad from Kurdish regional capital Arbil by an honour guard led by top officials.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein and Kurdish regional president Nechirvan Barzani led the pallbearers carrying the smallest of the coffins, a child's, onto the military plane, an AFP correspondent reported.

In Baghdad, the bodies were to be handed over to their families for burial. Thursday's shelling in the Zakho district village of Parakh also wounded 23 people, the majority of them domestic tourists seeking respite from the heat of the plains in the mountains of the Kurdish north. The deaths in a village pleasure garden prompted angry anti-Turkish demonstrations in cities across Iraq.

In Baghdad, dozens of demonstrators protested outside the Turkish visa office early Thursday, despite a heavy police presence.

Loudspeakers blared out patriotic songs as protesters chanted slogans demanding the expulsion of the Turkish ambassador, an AFP journalist reported.

Protesters brandished portraits of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan labelled "terrorist" and trampled Turkish flags underfoot. "We want to burn down the embassy. The ambassador must be expelled," said demonstrator Ali Yassin, 53. "Our government is doing nothing." There were similar protests on Wednesday night in the Shiite shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala and in the southern city of Nasiriyah.

In an unusually strong rebuke, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi warned Turkey on Wednesday that Iraq reserves the "right to retaliate", calling the artillery fire a "flagrant violation" of sovereignty — a line echoed by the north's autonomous regional government.

Iraq said it was recalling its charge d'affaires from Ankara and demanded an official apology from Turkey along with "the withdrawal of its armed forces from all Iraqi territory". The Turkish foreign ministry denied responsibility for the bombardment, saying these "kinds of attacks" were committed by "terrorist organisations". On its Twitter account, the Turkish embassy offered its condolences to "our brother Iraqis killed by the PKK terrorist organisation". —AFP



ARBIL, Iraq: President of the Kurdistan region in Iraq Nechirvan Barzani (3-R) and Iraq's Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein (L) carry the casket of one of the victims killed a day earlier in a Kurdish hill village in an attack blamed on Turkey. — AFP

Fire crews gain upper hand against blazes

MADRID: Firefighting crews made progress Thursday in their battle to contain dozens of wildfires in Spain as most of the country went back on alert for high temperatures, officials said. A blaze near the northeast town of Ateca has seen a "positive" evolution, the regional government of Aragon said, having forced the evacuation of 1,700 people and cut off the motorway linking Madrid to the country's second city of Barcelona. "There have been some flareups which have been stamped out," the government tweeted. The A2 motorway linking Madrid and Barcelona, which was cut near Ateca on Tuesday due to the blaze, reopened on Thursday.

"The return of the people who were evacuated to their homes is getting closer, but we must be prudent," the head of the regional government of Aragon, Javier Lamban, told reporters. In the northwest province of Zamora a huge blaze which killed a firefighter and a shepherd was under control, regional officials said.

Spain was gripped by a heatwave affecting much of Western Europe which pushed temperatures as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in some regions last week, sparking dozens of wildfires.

The July 9-18 heatwave was one of the most intense ever recorded in Spain in terms of its geographic extension and duration. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Wednesday that more than 500 people died as a result.

While temperatures eased slightly on Wednesday, meteorological agency AEMET expects the mercury to rise again on Thursday and has issued heat warnings for most of the country, forecasting 41C in the eastern region of Extremadura and 40C in Andalusia in the south. —AFP



ATECA, Spain: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (C) greets firefighters during a visit of the areas affected by wildfires, in Ateca, near Zaragoza. — AFP

Russian rockets pummel...

Continued from Page 1

economy. The central bank on Thursday said it was devaluing the Ukrainian currency, the hryvnia, by 25 percent. "The new hryvnia rate will become an anchor for the economy and will add its resilience in conditions of uncertainty," the bank said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the resumption of gas supplies from Russia to Europe through Germany came a day after Europe unveiled emergency measures to circumvent Russian energy "blackmail". In its latest package of penalties Wednesday, the European Union targeted gold exports and froze assets at Russia's largest bank Sberbank. The German government had been worried Moscow would not reopen the taps on the Nord Stream pipeline after Russia in recent months severely curbed flows in retaliation against sanctions.

"It's working," a Nord Stream spokesman said Thursday, without specifying the amount of gas being delivered. Western powers have stepped up arms supplies to Ukraine but President Volodymyr Zelensky has asked for more and speedier deliveries. Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin said Wednesday Washington would send four more M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (Himars), which have notably boosted Kyiv's capabilities.

Fed-up Sri Lankans rush for...

Continued from Page 1

in June stood at 54.6 percent, according to official figures, and the Indian Ocean island country has defaulted on its \$51 billion debt.

Overseas remittances - also hit by the coronavirus - have long been another economic mainstay, with over 10 percent of the 22 million population working abroad, mostly in Gulf countries. That number is now swelling. The immigration department has already issued more passports this year than for the whole of 2021, their figures show. Numbers have generally been around 50,000 a month but jumped to an estimated 122,000 in June.

'Help our country'

Many passport applicants travel long distances from rural areas on crowded buses. "I know some people in Saudi Arabia. They have promised to help me

"Ukraine needs the firepower and the ammunition to withstand this barrage and to strike back," Austin told reporters, adding that the new shipment would bring the total of US Himars sent to Kyiv to 16. Russia has warned about arms supplies and said it will no longer be focused only on wresting control of the east Ukraine regions of Lugansk and Donetsk, which have been partially controlled by pro-Moscow rebels for years. In recent weeks, Russian forces have hit civilian targets in cities and towns far away from the frontline, leaving scores of civilians dead.

Months in refugee centre

In an emotional speech before the US Congress on Wednesday, Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenska described the suffering of millions of Ukrainian parents and children, and asked Washington for air-defence systems to fend off Russian missiles. Zelenska displayed images of children who were killed or maimed by Russia, including a four-year-old killed by a strike in the city of Vinnytsia. Photos of her blood-spattered pink stroller and footage of her final moments went viral on social media. "Help us to stop this terror against Ukrainians," Zelenska said.

Refugees who fled Ukraine in the early weeks of the war have found themselves in limbo. At a refugee centre at the Global Expo exhibition centre in Warsaw, some 1,500 people have been camped out in what they thought would only be a temporary shelter before finding more permanent housing or being able to return to Ukraine. "All I hope for now is to return home... or else to be relocated somewhere in Poland," said Olena Polonitska, who has been living at the centre for four months with her 11-year-old son Kyrill. —AFP

find work as a housemaid there," said housewife Shantakala, 46, from Chilaw. "My husband will look after our farmland where we don't make enough for both of us and I will go away." Others are students abandoning their education.

"We need to get out of here, find work and support our family in this difficult economic situation," said Imesh Tarusha, 18, one of a family of six. On Wednesday, Ranil Wickremesinghe was elected Sri Lanka's next president, taking over from Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country and resigned after protesters forced him from his palace. Colombo is also in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout, but the would-be emigrants have little hope of improvement soon.

"My country is beautiful but without fuel. It's very difficult," said Shantakala. "I hope it will get better but I don't know how long it will take." Immigration officers are working around the clock to hand out documents. "It's exhausting work," one staff member told AFP on condition of anonymity. "No one goes home." "It's important to issue as many passports as possible so that people can travel and send remittances home," the staffer added. "That will help our country." —AFP

Ukraine makes China rethink whether to invade Taiwan: CIA

WASHINGTON: China appears determined on using force in Taiwan, with Russia's experience in Ukraine affecting Beijing's calculations on when and how-not whether to invade, the head of the CIA said Wednesday.

Appearing at the Aspen Security Forum, Central Intelligence Agency Director Bill Burns said that China likely saw in Ukraine that "you don't achieve quick, decisive victories with underwhelming force." He played down speculation that Chinese President Xi Jinping could move on Taiwan after a key Communist Party meeting later this year but said the risks "become higher, it seems to us, the further into this decade that you get."

"I wouldn't underestimate President Xi's determination to assert China's control" over self-ruling Taiwan, he said. Burns said that China was "unsettled" when looking at Russia's five-month-old war in Ukraine, which he characterized as a "strategic failure" for President Vladimir Putin as he had hoped to topple the Kyiv government within a week. "Our sense is that it probably affects less the question of whether the Chinese leadership might choose some years down the road to use force to control Taiwan, but how and when they would do it," Burns said.

"I suspect the lesson that the Chinese leadership and military are drawing is that you've got to amass overwhelming force if you're going to contemplate that in the

future," he said. China also has likely learned that it has to "control the information space" and "do everything you can to shore up your economy against the potential for sanctions," he said in a live interview with NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell. Burns, in line with previous US assessments, said that the United States does not believe that Beijing is offering military support to Russia despite rhetorical backing. He said China has stepped up purchases of Russian energy but appears careful about not incurring Western sanctions.

'Peaceful reunification'

China's defeated nationalists fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the mainland's civil war. The island has since developed into a vibrant democracy and leading technological power, but China claims it as its territory. Speaking before Burns at the forum in the Rocky Mountains, China's ambassador to the United States, Qin Gang, said that Beijing still preferred "peaceful reunification." But he accused the United States of supporting "independence" forces in Taiwan, where President Tsai Ing-wen has asserted the island's separate identity. "No conflict and no war is the biggest consensus between China and the United States," Qin said. But the United States is "hollowing out and blurring" its stated policy of only recognizing Beijing, he said. —AFP

Smoke without fire? Experts question...

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AFP. The paper also found that previous research on IQOS - the majority of which has been funded by the tobacco industry - had compared a stick to a typical cigarette.

However IQOS sticks are much smaller, containing around 200 milligrams of tobacco compared to 645 milligrams for a standard cigarette, it said. Because research by Philip Morris International (PMI) did not use a "like against like" comparison, it "underestimated" the levels of harmful and potentially harmful constituents (HPHCs) from IQOS, the review added. PMI said the level of HPHCs in IQOS emissions - per stick - was "reduced on average by 90-95 percent compared to cigarette smoke". However that level fell to 68 percent when comparing the tobacco content of the two products, the Nottingham University experts said, calling for more research.

'Not smoke': PMI

PMI told AFP that the paper "misleadingly leverages pieces of the scientific assessment while omitting other important pieces of evidence". "Numerous international combustion experts and a number of government agencies have reviewed the same evidence package and concluded that the IQOS aerosol produced is not smoke," it said. Reto Auer, a doctor at Germany's University of Bern who has previously researched heated tobacco, praised the Omega paper, telling AFP

it was "one of the rare reports to dare to tackle the question of 'smoke' so deeply".

Jamie Hartmann-Boyce of the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine at Oxford University, an author of a highly regarded review on HTP science published earlier this year, said the "important" paper "made some very good points". "I think mechanistically there are a lot of reasons to suspect HTPs might be more harmful than e-cigarettes and possibly less harmful than traditional cigarettes - but we really need more data," she told AFP.

'Difficult balance'

IQOS is available in more than 60 countries under widely varying regulations, and sticks come in flavours such as menthol, cherry and grape, which critics say help attract younger users. Last month the European Commission proposed banning flavoured HTP varieties after stick sales in the EU soared more than 2,000 percent - from 934 million to nearly 20 billion - between 2018 and 2020. PMI told AFP that the "proposal from the Commission is not underpinned by evidence". "It fails to prove, for instance, that flavors pose any additional health risks or that they attract a significant proportion of non-nicotine users," it said. Hartmann-Boyce said "there is every reason to be concerned about the extent to which the tobacco industry is manipulating the science and messages around new tobacco products." But she warned it was a "difficult balance" to communicate the risks of such products because of the overwhelming damage done by cigarettes. Tobacco kills half its users, according to the World Health Organization. "If we say something is safer than cigarettes, that is not saying it's safe - it's like saying that this knife is safer than a loaded gun," Hartmann-Boyce said. —AFP

Biden tested positive for...

Continued from Page 1

to Saudi Arabia. He is now expected to stay at the White House for several days. The CDC, the leading US government health agency, says that older adults are more likely to get severely sick from COVID-19, with risk increasing with age. On assuming office, Biden made a point of abiding by strict COVID protocols, holding socially distanced meetings or Zoom gatherings, and wearing a mask to public events - in sharp contrast to his predecessor Donald Trump.

While other members of the Biden's family and a significant number of his close advisors contracted the virus, the president had remained Covid free until Thursday. Trump had tested positive for coronavirus in October, 2020 - in the middle of the bitterly fought election race he eventually lost to Biden. The news

that he and the first lady, Melania Trump, had both contracted the virus was a shocking development at a time when the pandemic was still unfolding across the globe.

Trump, who was 74 at the time, was transferred to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where he spent the weekend and received various treatments. He returned to the White House three days later. The White House said Biden had last tested negative on Tuesday, and it pledged to provide a daily update on the president's health "out of an abundance of transparency."

The next two people in the line of presidential succession - Vice President Kamala Harris and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi - have both previously tested positive for COVID. Good wishes poured in from US politicians across the country's sharp divide as well as from abroad. "Wishing you... a swift recovery from #COVID19. Stay strong!" tweeted World Health Organization chief Tedros Ghebreyesus. "Wishing President Biden a speedy recovery from COVID," said leading US Republican Lindsey Graham. —AFP

International

New Sri Lanka president sworn in, eyeing unity government

'We as an opposition will provide constructive support to alleviate human suffering'

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's six-time prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in Thursday as president of the crisis-hit nation, with plans to form a unity government to manage the turmoil. The 73-year-old veteran politician, who was overwhelmingly elected as head of state in a parliamentary vote Wednesday, took his oath of office with the country's police chief and top military brass standing behind him.

Official sources said the new leader was expected to shortly form a cabinet featuring several opposition lawmakers to steer the country out of its worst economic crisis since gaining independence from Britain.

Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa, who supported a rival candidate in Wednesday's vote, said he had met with Wickremesinghe to discuss how to protect the country from further "misery and disaster".

"We as an opposition will provide our constructive support for efforts to alleviate human suffering," Premadasa tweeted Thursday. A foreign exchange crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic and exacerbated by mismanagement has left Sri Lanka suffering lengthy power blackouts and record-high inflation. The country's 22 million people have also endured months of food, fuel and medicine shortages. Public anger boiled over when tens of thousands of protesters stormed the home of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, forcing him to step down.

Wickremesinghe has been tainted in the eyes of many Sri Lankans by his association with Rajapaksa, whose political party backed the new president's ascent. "We don't need Ranil, he is the same as Gota," said Irfan Hussain, a poultry farmer in the capital Colombo.

"I don't think he is going to make our country better," he added. "He only thinks about himself, not the people." Wickremesinghe is widely expected to invite his school-

mate and former public administration minister Dinesh Gunawardena to be the prime minister in the unity government. But political sources said at least two other candidates were in the running. "There will be a few MPs from the main opposition joining the cabinet," a source close to Wickremesinghe said, adding that he was keen to ensure a rainbow coalition.

Wickremesinghe prorogued parliament for 24 hours on Thursday to start a fresh session of the legislature, with chief government whip Prasanna Ranatunga telling reporters that the new president wanted to reconstitute parliamentary committees. Live coverage of the ceremony to swear in Wickremesinghe at the tightly guarded parliament complex was cut off just as he and his wife Maithree walked into the building after reviewing a military parade. A top defence official told AFP an investigation into why the broadcast was interrupted was underway.

'Dumb bets'

A priority for the new government is to pursue ongoing bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund and restructure its unsustainable foreign debt. The US Central Intelligence Agency overnight blamed Sri Lanka's financial crisis on high-debt Chinese investments, several of which funded white elephant infrastructure projects. "The Chinese have a lot of weight to throw around and they can make a very appealing case for their investments," CIA chief Bill Burns said. He said that Sri Lanka had "made some really dumb bets about their economic future", attributing the current "catastrophic" economic conditions to those decisions.

China is Sri Lanka's largest single bilateral foreign lender, accounting for more than 10 percent of its \$51 billion external debt, on which the government announced a default in April. A larger share of borrowings is owed to



COLOMBO: President-elect Ranil Wickremesinghe (front R) swearing-in as Sri Lanka's President at the parliament in Colombo. Sri Lanka's six-time prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in as president. —AFP

international sovereign bondholders, while economists have blamed unsustainable tax cuts pushed through by Rajapaksa for crippling government revenue. Beijing's for-

eign ministry spokesman Weng Wenbin said comments from US officials would not affect China's "friendly and beneficial" relationship with Sri Lanka. —AFP

Fuel shortages, power cut bring life to a halt in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE: With gang violence racking Haiti's capital, other cities across the island nation face another major issue: a shortage of both fuel and electricity threatens daily life for millions. In addition to their deadly battles in Port-au-Prince, where at least 234 people have been killed or injured in the Cite Soleil neighborhood since early July, Haitian gangs have also hampered activity at the country's three main oil terminals.

Armed groups regularly block access to the facilities, halting the flow of fuel into the country. In Jeremie, a coastal town on the southwestern tip of the island, gas stations have been running low on fuel for months.

Residents are forced to turn to the black market, where gasoline and diesel are readily available—but at prices six times higher than the rate set by the government. "You can find fuel everywhere, except in the gas stations," says Yvon Janvier, a law professor.

With little legal fuel available, and soaring black-market prices, Jeremie's least well-off residents are forced to take their journeys by foot. The vast majority of energy in Haiti is produced by diesel-burning plants, so "it's very

simple: no fuel, no electricity," says Janvier.

One paved road

Jose Davilmar, administrative director of the country's public electricity utility (EDH), says there are "enormous difficulties in transporting fuel to certain provincial towns." "Most recently, three boats loaded with fuel could not dock because there were retaliations by bandits in Cite Soleil."

With control of only two short kilometers (1.2 miles) of national highway in Martissant, a poor suburb of Port-au-Prince, gangs have gained power over the flow of goods to half the country. Armed groups have had total control over the only paved road leading to Haiti's southern regions since June 2021.

Reduced hospital service

Without electricity from power plants, entire regions of the country must turn to gas-powered generators to keep the lights on. For those who cannot afford their own generator, daily life has become a headache.

In Jacmel, on Haiti's southern coast, painter Joseph Stevenson must ask among his neighbors to see who has



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Haitians protesting high prices and shortages burn tires on a street of Port-au-Prince. Soaring prices, food and fuel shortages and rampant gang violence are accelerating a brutal downward spiral in the security situation in the Haitian capital Port au Prince. —AFP

power each time he needs to charge his phone. "Sometimes I have to go all the way downtown to get just a few percent of a charge," says the artist. "Can you imagine that, in the 21st century?"

In Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second-largest city, bars and restaurants equipped with generators have been able to stay open, but have reduced their hours of operation due to the rising price of gas. The northern city's mayor, Patrick Almonor, warns that the power outages have had major impacts on medical facilities.

"Hospitals are working at a slower pace with reduced services because it has been nearly six months since the EDH has provided electricity in the city," says Almonor.

In Les Cayes, the third-largest city, some health centers are only open a few hours a day, says doctor Kinsky Hippolyte. The situation is largely due to the lack of electricity, but also problems transporting equipment and medicine out of the capital, 200 kilometers to the north. —AFP

Nine dead after ferry sinks in Indonesia

JAKARTA: At least nine bodies have been found after a ferry sank off the coast of an Indonesian island due to bad weather, a search and rescue official said Thursday. The KM Cahaya Arafah capsized in waters off Indonesia's Ternate island on Monday evening, prompting a search and rescue operation for 13 missing people.

Rescuers found four bodies on Wednesday evening and five bodies on the fourth day of the search, the Ternate search and rescue agency said in a statement. Four people remain missing. The boat was carrying 77 passengers and crew on board as it travelled to nearby Halmahera island.

Sixty-four people were evacuated to a nearby village after the sinking. Local villagers had sailed out in their longboats to help authorities in a vessel with the search operation. Marine accidents are common in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of around 17,000 islands, where people rely on ferries and small boats to travel around despite poor safety standards.

In May, a ferry carrying more than 800 people ran aground in shallow waters off East Nusa Tenggara province and remained stuck for two days before being dislodged. No one was hurt in that accident. In 2018, more than 150 people drowned when a ferry sank in one of the world's deepest lakes on Sumatra island. —AFP



TERNATE, Indonesia: Indonesia's National Search And Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) shows a rescue team next to victims' bodies after a ferry sank in bad weather in waters off Indonesia's Ternate island. —AFP

seeks to crush dissent. Prak Sokhonn, a special envoy of regional bloc the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), warned there was no quick solution to the crisis.

"For those who want to see quick solutions, I am afraid there are none," he said in an online speech to a forum organised by Singapore-based think-tank ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. "Patience is the operative word here. There are no shortcuts. There is no magic wand, no special elixir."

Prak Sokhonn, who is also the foreign minister of ASEAN chair Cambodia, said it took his own country 20 years to achieve peace following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979. "Peace talk needs time, patience and concessions from all parties concerned. Due to the inherent divergence of interests, a peace talk is a lengthy bargaining process," he added.

He said his second visit to Myanmar from June 29-July 3 had shown "encouraging results" as it had paved the

way for some humanitarian assistance, including COVID-19 vaccines. He also said he was able "to open a new space for political dialogue" even with groups the junta designated as "terrorists", under certain conditions, including that they must say they have no intention of replacing the government.

And while he was not allowed to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi, who is currently in jail, the envoy said he was promised he could in the future. On calls for him to engage with leaders of the shadow "National Unity Government", which is seeking to overturn the coup, Prak Sokhonn said "we don't need to shout from the rooftop on whom, on how, on when or where we engage with those actors deemed important to the political dialogue". Negotiations are mostly done discreetly or in secret, he added.

In an interview with Singapore news outlet CNA on Wednesday, Prak Sokhonn said he hoped to make his third visit to Myanmar in September. —AFP

Malawi's struggle with deadly witchcraft violence

LUPEMBE, Malawi: The calm air cloaking Lupembe, a sleepy village on the sandy shores of Lake Malawi, conceals a dark secret. On December 26 2019, a mob driven by rumours of sorcery hunted down and lynched a grieving family. The killings are among dozens of witchcraft slayings that have shaken the southern African country, prompting talk of dramatic change to colonial-era laws on rumour-mongering.

"Hundreds of villagers descended on our home from all directions and started assaulting me, my brother and my parents," Walinye Mwanguphiri, 36, told AFP. Mwanguphiri said he made a lucky escape, but his parents and brother, as well as an aunt, were killed.

Belief in witchcraft in the southern African country is almost as widespread as its poverty — nearly three people in four live on less than \$2 a day, according to World Bank data. Since 2019, mobs have killed at least 75 people suspected of dark magic, the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR), a non-governmental organisation based in the capital Lilongwe, says.

Only last week, local media reported that residents in Dedza, central Malawi, killed the village chief on suspicion he had used sorcery to murder his nephew. In 2017, the United Nations was forced to pull out its staff from southern Malawi after at least seven people were killed as rumours about vampires swept the region.

'Recognising' magic

Last December, a special commission tasked with drafting legal proposals to address the issue concluded that the best way around the problem was to acknowledge that magic is real. Malawi's current laws assume that witchcraft does not exist. Under a law drafted during British colonial rule, it is a crime to accuse someone of witchcraft.

But since most Malawians believe in magic, the commission suggested it was better to recognise the existence of sorcery — and make its practice a crime. "People's beliefs cannot be suppressed by legislation," retired Supreme Court judge Robert Chinangwa, who headed the commission, wrote in his findings. "The commission therefore recommends recognising the existence of witchcraft and states that the law must penalise all witchcraft practices." CHRR director Michael Kaiyatsa says criminalising witchcraft could help prevent people from taking the law into their own hands to punish suspected sorcerers.

But securing convictions might prove tricky, he said. "Witchcraft... is not something that you can see or prove," he said. His group says killings caused by rumour-mongering have only rarely resulted in arrests and prosecutions. It brands this a failure of law enforcement that has stoked a climate of impunity and fed the violence. It urges more action to bring killers to justice.

Survivor's tale

AFP this month visited Lupembe, which lies on a sandy shoreline of Lake Malawi near the border with Tanzania, some 550 kilometres (350 miles) north of Lilongwe. Outwardly, the village of 700 souls showed little sign of the bloody episode of the recent past. Men idled on a beach under the morning sun, waiting for a catch of sardines caught overnight to dry, while women washed dishes and clothes. Inside his grass-thatched home, Mwanguphiri, the survivor, stuttered with emotion as he recounted his ordeal and how he felt to be living today among his family's killers.

The family, he said, had gathered at the village graveyard to bury his cousin's son, who had died after a short illness. It was then that the mob descended on them. They accused "us of killing (him) through witchcraft," he said. —AFP

No 'magic wand' to end Myanmar crisis: Envoy

SINGAPORE: A regional envoy tasked with kickstarting dialogue between Myanmar's junta and anti-coup fighters warned Thursday there was no "magic wand" to end the country's bloody crisis. Myanmar has been embroiled in turmoil since the military seized power last year and ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, prompting fierce resistance and informal militias.

A local monitoring group says more than 2,000 people have been killed and almost 15,000 arrested as the junta

Business

FRIDAY, JULY 22, 2022

Oil expert foresees Kuwait's economic growth Kuwait needs to focus on development and manufacturing process

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A recent report showed that Kuwait will have the highest economic ranking in terms of its growth with the anticipation of a new government, new economic strategies and visions. Oil expert and consultant, Abdulsamee Bahbahani told Kuwait Times that if Kuwait's economic initiatives such as Vision 2035 and the projects of the General Secretariat for Planning are applied with the ideal scenarios, the next government will focus on "the administrative solution and the selection of important and reasonable commercial projects, like privatization projects and adopting small and medium enterprises.



Abdulsamee Bahbahani

"If the new government did not develop these two aspects and did not put the right man in the right place, our economic situation will remain the same, especially in state's dependence on oil." According to the "Economist Intelligence" of the British magazine, The Economist, Kuwait will record the highest economic growth in Middle Eastern this year (at around 8 percent), and will record the highest budget surplus (current account) in 2022 and 2023. The study also showed that the region's major oil exporters will benefit in 2022 due to strong oil demand, increased production, and high prices, with expectations of a

continuation of the active oil market in 2023-2024.

On the same hand, Bahbahani mentioned that global rules for economic growth and performance are not usually applied in oil producing countries and Kuwait in particular. "The global assessment of economic growth depends on two consecutive quarters of the year. If there is a decline, it is considered as a decline in the country's economic growth and vice versa. In addition to the issue of employment, if it is less than 4 percent, this means an economic recovery for the state," he said.

"According to international rules and measures, Kuwait will have a high economic growth, especially with the rise in oil production. We shall expect 35 percent budget surplus by the end of 2022-2023. When we see infrastructures and other economic factors such as sustainable economy, industrialization, tourism, you notice that they do not reflect the real annual economic growth rate of Kuwait," Bahbahani added.

He pointed out that Kuwait economy relies on oil production. "As for oil, it is not considered a fake factor for economic growth due to its global demand, but Kuwait needs to focus on development and manufacturing process - relying more on petrochemicals and derivatives, and reducing their exports in large quantities. Investing in the energy sector is vital due to its impact on economic growth. In the next ten years, oil will be the safest investment and not gold. I believe oil will maintain the \$100 barrel limits, which will give huge surpluses for oil-exporting countries. Therefore, oil must be turned into a financial commodity that can be used to develop Kuwait's economy," he stressed.

Meanwhile, Moody's Investors Service expected an



An aerial view of Kuwait City. Kuwait's economy will benefit from elevated international oil prices in 2022-23.

increase in Kuwait's oil production to reach 2.9 million barrels per day in 2022 and 3.1 million barrels per day in 2023 and it is likely that the OPEC+ production cuts will be completely canceled by September 2022, as the increase in production will support output growth. It noted that real GDP growth in Kuwait was weak in 2021 due to the decline in non-oil economic activity.

Regarding the economic future of Kuwait in the light of global political fluctuations, Bahbahani said "I don't think the Russia-Ukraine war has negatively affected oil production and Kuwait is benefiting from global political tensions and high oil demand". On the other hand, Bahbahani said that raising interest rate does not solve the problem - rather it complicates it.

UK's Tempest fighter project soars as rival remains in limbo

FARNBOROUGH: Britain's future combat fighter jet project Tempest soared this week past a key barrier at Farnborough Airshow 2022, but Europe's rival FCAS concept is stuck in limbo. Defence spending has been a hot topic at this year's Farnborough, as nations bolster their armed forces following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Tempest was launched to great fanfare at the previous Farnborough event in 2018, as part of the UK's much-trumpeted combat air strategy.

Defence giant BAE Systems is a member of the Team Tempest alongside the UK government, Leonardo, European missile specialist MBDA and British engine maker Rolls-Royce. Their objective is to develop by 2035 a twin-engined stealth aircraft that can be operated manned or unmanned, cannot be detected by radar, and will boast impressive features such as laser-directed weapons and a virtual cockpit.

Combat cloud

The consortium hope to produce a ground-breaking fighter jet capable of connecting via a "combat cloud" with its own drones and other military warfare assets. Italy joined Team Tempest in 2019 and Sweden followed a year later. Japan — which is already assisting with engine and radar sensor technology — is now set to jump on board. "A flight combat demonstrator will fly within the next five years," Richard Berthon, director for future combat air at Britain's Ministry of Defence, said at Farnborough. This preliminary demonstration version, or pre-prototype, is intended to test the proposed cutting-edge technology.

'Once-in-a-generation'

"It is a once-in-a-generation activity," said Herman Claesen, managing director for future combat air systems at BAE Systems. "The last one was some 40 years

ago for the (Eurofighter) Typhoon," he said at the airshow's Tempest event.

Eurofighter was developed by a European consortium comprising Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain. It was initially conceived as a European fighter aircraft project in which France was involved. However, Paris withdrew in 1985 and instead launched its Rafale fighter jet, produced by France's Dassault.

The French government began exploring with Britain a future unmanned combat jet project in 2014, but this cooperation was withdrawn after Brexit. All the participants in these fighter projects are seeking to retain technological expertise in military aviation for decades to come. For Tempest, London has so far earmarked £2.0 billion (\$2.4 billion) and Rome has committed 2.0 billion euros (\$2.0 billion) over a 15-year period.

Not far off

In stark contrast to Tempest, Europe's Future Combat Air System (FCAS) project, backed mostly by France and Germany, faced stagnation over the last year. Berlin, Paris and Madrid first launched FCAS back in summer 2017 — and aim to develop their fighter jet by 2040. The overall bill is expected to approach 100 billion euros, rendering it far too costly for a single country to finance. Yet the FCAS programme has faced an exceedingly bumpy ride. France, Germany and Spain negotiated for months over how to divide the complex workload that would bring the project forward.

They finally inked an agreement in August 2021 to inject a combined 3.6 billion euros into the project's initial stage, known as Phase 1B. Team FCAS had aimed to launch their own flight demonstrator in 2025 which would then take to the skies two years later. Since then, however, the airwaves have gone quiet for the proposed European hi-tech combat plane. — AFP

ECB surprises with aggressive rate hike, first since 2011

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank on Thursday brought an end to the era of negative interest rates in the eurozone, with a bigger than expected half-point hike as inflation soars and an energy crisis looms. The rate hike is the Frankfurt institution's first since 2011. The ECB said its new "assessment of inflation risks" justified taking "a larger first step on its policy rate normalisation path than signalled at its previous meeting" in June when policymakers shared their intent to raise rates by a more modest 25 basis points or a quarter of a percentage point.

Inflation in the eurozone hit 8.6 percent in June, the highest-ever level in the currency club and well above the central bank's target of two percent. The ECB also unveiled the first details of a new crisis tool to fight bond market stress in parts of the eurozone. The instrument is a response to recent increases in the borrowing costs for governments in more highly indebted, usually southern eurozone members, such as Italy. Dubbed the "Transmission Protection Instrument (TPI)", the targeted bond-buying scheme "can be activated to counter unwarranted, disorderly market dynamics that pose a serious threat to the transmission of monetary policy across the euro area," the ECB said in a statement.

Negative outlook

The ECB's hike lifts its deposit facility out of negative territory for the first time in eight years, to zero percent. The rate on its main refinancing operations climbs to 0.50 percent and on its marginal lending facility to 0.75 percent. With prices taking off, the euro weak against the dollar and other central banks racing ahead with bigger hikes, the ECB was under pressure to think about making a bigger move at the meeting on Thursday. Future rate hikes "will be appropriate", the ECB said, as it looks to catch up with the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England which both started raising rates earlier and more aggressively. The "frontloading" of the rate hikes meant the ECB could take a "meeting-by-meeting approach to interest rate decisions", it said, stressing that future moves would be "data-dependent". The ECB had a fine line to tread between soaring inflation and the weakness of the eurozone economy, rattled by the war in Ukraine. The continent's dependence on Russian energy imports has eurozone members bracing for a difficult winter and planning to ration supplies if Moscow halts gas deliveries.

Central banks would normally hesitate before raising rates with the economy in such a delicate position, "but inflationary pressures have increased to a point where the ECB has to act whatever it breaks", said Frederik Ducrozet, head of macroeconomic research at Pictet.

More aggressive tightening?

ECB watchers are divided over the size of the anticipated rate hike. Until recently, most market players had been betting on a quarter-point increase. However, "a larger hike would make sense in the current scenario of high inflation, but could also increase doubts over the growth prospects of the eurozone, and intensify the risk of fragmentation in the periphery," ActivTrades analyst Evangelista said. Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson said there has been "some chatter about a double-hit 50-basis-point hike, which has seen markets move swiftly to price in more aggressive tightening, lifting the euro from its multi-year lows.

"However, I believe it is not in the ECB's nature to go off-beam and rip up the guidance it issued



Christine Lagarde

Lost transmission

A problem not faced by other central banks is the question of what to do about the widening spread between the borrowing costs faced by the 19 members of the eurozone. Limiting the divergence was "critical" to make sure monetary policy moves were felt evenly across the bloc, ECB vice-president Luis de Guindos said in early July. Besides designing a new instrument, the ECB has said it will "flexibly" reinvest maturing bonds from its portfolio to Hoover up debt from more at-risk countries and ease the pressure. The new tool, whose design was sped up after an emergency ECB meeting in mid-June, was initially met with scepticism by some governing council members. Bond purchases under the programme, were it ever to be used, were "not restricted" ahead of time, the ECB said. Instead, the scale would depend "on the severity of the risks facing policy transmission". — AFP

Ford to cut jobs

NEW YORK: US carmaker Ford is preparing to cut several thousand jobs to reduce costs and intensify its transition to electric vehicles, US media reported on Wednesday. The group is expected to announce the elimination of more than 4,000 jobs in the coming weeks, according to the Wall Street Journal, which cited people close to the matter.

Factory workers are not expected to be affected, the report said. Bloomberg said as many as 8,000 jobs could be affected. Contacted by AFP, a Ford spokesman did not want to comment on "speculation". But the group has scheduled a conference call on Thursday to give an update on its plan to transform to electric vehicles. "Key Ford executives will provide details on how the company is building out its industrial system to reach a global production run rate of 600,000 EVs, growing to more than 2 million EV annual global run rate by 2026," the company said in a statement. "As we've said lots of times, to deliver our Ford+ transformation and lead an exciting and disruptive new era of electric and connected vehicles, we're reshaping our work and modernizing our organization across all of the automotive business units and the entire company," the spokesperson said in his message. — AFP



FARNBOROUGH: Senior vice president of Commercial Sales & Marketing for The Boeing Company, Ihsane Mounir (L) and Senior Vice President of Fleet & TechOps Supply Chain for Delta Air Lines Mahendra Nair speak during a press conference at the Farnborough Airshow, in Farnborough. — AFP

Euro up as Russian gas returns

PARIS: The euro gained ground against the dollar on Thursday after Russia resumed gas supplies to Europe but stock markets were twitchy ahead of a European Central Bank policy meeting, where the guardian of the euro is expected to announce its first rate hike in over a decade.

At around half-way through the session, London's FTSE 100 and Frankfurt's DAX index were both down by nearly 0.5 percent, while the Paris CAC 40 trod water. In Italy, where the Prime

Minister Mario Draghi has quit, the FTSE MIB shed nearly two percent.

"The euro is on the front foot... claiming back some of the previous session's losses to the dollar," said ActivTrades analyst, Ricardo Evangelista. "Russia resumed the supply of gas to Europe through the Nord Stream pipeline, in a move that is positive for the single currency. However, the sigh of relief from euro bulls was limited."

Russia on Thursday restored critical gas supplies to Europe through Germany via the Nord Stream pipeline after 10 days of maintenance, but uncertainty lingered whether the Kremlin would still trigger an energy crisis on the continent this winter.

just weeks ago." Complicating the situation was the news of Draghi's resignation and the ensuing political instability in Italy it will entail.

"Italy's political turmoil will stay the hand of the ECB," said Wilson at Markets.com. "It seems all too apposite that Mario Draghi, the man who 'saved' the euro, is going to fall on his sword the very day the ECB raises rates for the first time in more than a decade, and that the economic problems in Italy that his policies papered over as ECB chief have not been resolved."

On the commodities markets, oil prices extended their losses — with WTI below \$100 — after data showed US stockpiles rose more than expected last week as Americans opted not to pay for expensive petrol. — AFP

Business

Chinese ride-hailing giant Didi hit with \$1.2bn fine

Clampdown wiped billions of dollars off value of Chinese tech companies

BEIJING: China has fined ride-hailing giant Didi more than 8 billion yuan (\$1.2 billion), regulators announced Thursday, concluding a year-long investigation into alleged data security violations. Didi has been one of the highest-profile targets of a widespread crackdown on China's tech firms, which saw years of runaway growth and the emergence of supersized monopolies.

The clampdown launched in 2021 wiped billions of dollars off the value of Chinese tech companies. Some were targeted over monopolistic behaviour while others—such as Didi—for cyber and national security concerns.



HANGZHOU, China: A Didi online ride-hailing car makes its way in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on July 21, 2022. China has fined ride-hailing giant Didi more than \$1.2 billion, regulators announced. — AFP

The probe found "conclusive evidence" that Didi had committed violations of an "egregious nature", the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) said in a statement. It accused Didi of illegally storing the ID information of more than 57 million drivers in plain text instead of a more secure format.

The regulator said the firm also analysed passenger details without their knowledge—including photos on their mobile phones and facial recognition data. "Didi's illegal operations have brought serious security risks to the security of the country's key information infrastructure and data security," CAC said.

"Even when regulatory authorities ordered correc-

tions, comprehensive and in-depth corrections were not carried out." Didi's violations took place over seven years starting June 2015, according to the regulator.

CAC also accused Didi of unspecified national security violations in its data processing activities. The firm was also found to have violated China's Cybersecurity Law, Data Protection Law and Personal Information Protection Law—a landmark code introduced last year that is modelled on the European Union's GDPR legislation.

Tech crackdown

The fine amounts to more than four percent of Didi's \$27.3 billion total revenue last year. "We sincerely accept this decision (and will) resolutely obey it," the company said in a statement on social media.

"We will take this as a warning... (and) further strengthen the construction of network security and data security." This was the largest fine imposed by Chinese authorities since e-commerce behemoth Alibaba was ordered to pay around \$2.75 billion in April 2021 for anti-competitive practices.

Didi got into hot water in June last year after it pressed ahead with an initial public offering in the United States, reportedly against Beijing's wishes. Days after it raised \$4.4 billion in New York, Chinese authorities launched their cybersecurity probe, sending Didi shares plunging.

Since then, Didi's app has been removed from Chinese stores and it has been unable to register new users. The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this week that the fine would pave the way for Didi to list in Hong Kong and register new users.

China's tech crackdown has eased this year as it grapples with the economic fallout from its zero-Covid strategy, with the country struggling in its pursuit of 5.5 percent GDP growth. In May, Premier Li Keqiang urged support for tech companies to list both domestically and abroad.

But there is still a strict regulatory environment: President Xi Jinping last month called for stronger oversight and better security in the financial tech arena. Since the Didi investigation was launched in July last year, overseas IPOs from big Chinese firms have all but dried up.

Beijing now requires internet firms with more than one million users to undergo a data security review before listing overseas, partly for national security reasons as US-China tech competition heats up. — AFP

Hit by China shutdown, Tesla boosts auto prices, sells bitcoin

NEW YORK: Tesla reported solid quarterly earnings Wednesday despite a hit from COVID-19 lockdowns in Shanghai that Chief Executive Elon Musk said prompted the company to liquidate most of its bitcoin holdings. Musk, who has generated recent headlines over his controversial withdrawal from a \$44 billion acquisition of Twitter, said the company had navigated a tricky environment with the Shanghai closure and lingering supply chain problems that have raised costs.

The electric vehicle maker reported second-quarter profits of \$2.3 billion, about twice that in the year-ago period as the automaker lifted car prices to "embarrassing" levels, as Musk put it. Although Tesla profits topped estimates, they lagged behind those in the first quarter, the first sequential profit drop since late 2020, which coincided with a fall in automotive profit margins due to rising costs.

And while revenues jumped 42 percent to \$16.9 billion, they came in below the \$17.1 billion projected by analysts. Musk described the period as a "unique quarter," but told investors and analysts on a conference call that the restart of the Shanghai plant and the ramp-up of new factories in Germany and Texas create "the potential for a record-breaking second half of the year."

The company cited the drag from Shanghai, where its factory was shuttered for part of the quarter. But Tesla said it finished the three-month period with "a record monthly production level" after the China restart. Tesla said supply chain challenges remain an ongoing headache, as factory shutdowns, labor shortages, logistics and other issues "limited our ability to consistently run our factories at full capacity."

Bitcoin sale

During the quarter, Tesla liquidated about 75 percent of its holdings in bitcoin, the value of which has declined sharply in 2022. The moves on bitcoin resulted in one-time costs of \$106 million, said Chief Financial Officer Zachary Kirkhorn.

Musk attributed the move to the need to raise cash because of the uncertainty of when Shanghai operations would return. The sale "should not be taken as some verdict on bitcoin," Musk said at the outset of the call.

But cryptocurrency is a "side show to the side show" compared with the goal of accelerating the energy transition, said Musk, who pointed to the scorching heat now plaguing many countries as underscoring the need for change.

Torrid demand for Musk's electric vehicles has allowed Tesla to pass on higher prices to consumers. In the United States, Tesla's cheapest vehicle, the Model 3, starts at nearly \$50,000. "We've raised our prices quite a few times, they're frankly at embarrassing levels," Musk said. "But we've also had a lot of supply chain and production shocks and we've got crazy inflation. I am hopeful this is not a promise or anything, but I'm hopeful that at some point we can reduce the prices a little bit," he said.

Bullish on rest of 2022

Several analysts had viewed the second quarter as the weakest of the year for Tesla in the aftermath of the Shanghai factory lockdown and other supply chain issues. But many Tesla watchers are bullish on the second half of 2022 in light of the company's growing production profile.

CFRA Research analyst Garrett Nelson told AFP the second quarter was "especially impressive" given the headwinds of the Shanghai closure and the costs of upping production at new plants. Musk has shown boundless confidence in Tesla's ability to shake up the auto market, leading the company as it has met production targets on its core product, even as the cars remain too expensive for many consumers.

But Musk has been less enthusiastic of late about the economy as a whole, saying last month that a recession "appears more likely than not" and confirming plans to reduce the company's salaried work force by about 10 percent.—AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 21 JULY 2022

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,060	1,064	1,069	1,056	13	23,645,666	4	0.38%	12.06%	1,055	1,064	21.9	2.10	2.7%	1.00
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	320	351	356	318	38	38,201,531	32	10.03%	32.10%	346	364	24.4	1.66	1.9%	1.13
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	214	222	224	214	10	15,487,752	8	3.74%	5.91%	217	224	32.2	0.66	1.8%	1.15
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	232	235	236	228	8	24,497,296	3	1.29%	-1.69%	234	238	16.3	0.85	2.1%	1.34
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	832	892	892	832	60	51,133,540	60	7.21%	17.93%	890	902	29.9	3.79	1.3%	1.21
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	780	817	837	778	59	5,171,397	38	4.88%	14.69%	813	822	64.6	4.04	0.6%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	295	314	318	295	23	5,603,404	20	6.80%	43.38%	310	316	6.9	0.99	14.4%	1.74
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	143	147	150	142	8	11,287,282	4	2.80%	3.52%	147	153	26.5	0.77	3.4%	0.94
252	Al Intiaj Investment	Financial Services	90	91.3	92	88.7	3.0	9,617,554	1.3	1.44%	-22.63%	90	95	90.0	0.53	9.9%	1.18
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	135	140	141	134	7	16,313,471	4	2.94%	-19.44%	137	143	20.0	0.99	2.1%	1.02
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	784	807	818	770	48	1,778,382	27	3.46%	7.87%	787	809	17.4	1.88	1.7%	1.12
501	National Industries	Financial Services	253	277	278	253	25	39,450,141	26	10.36%	14.96%	264	278	4.3	1.29	4.1%	1.40
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,273	1,390	1,410	1,260	150	2,333,356	140	11.20%	59.59%	1,350	1,390	13.6	1.10	4.4%	0.87
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	910	945	945	905	40	783,525	34	3.73%	10.92%	935	949	12.4	1.74	6.5%	0.95
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	320	301	324	291	33	3,553,753	-17	-5.35%	-13.26%	296	304	13.6	0.71	6.1%	1.04
603	Agility	Industrials	772	890	899	770	129	27,520,061	123	16.04%	13.02%	875	902	70.8	1.17	2.0%	1.42
605	Zain	Telecommunications	595	608	614	595	19	15,960,878	16	2.70%	2.18%	607	610	14.2	2.19	5.5%	0.87
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,099	3,258	3,275	3,090	185	824,725	178	5.78%	1.05%	3,250	3,286	6.7	3.95	12.5%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	196	205	205	195	10	3,763,994	10	5.13%	-5.96%	203	206	NULL	0.71	0.0%	1.15
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,892	1,900	1,918	1,872	46	1,338,536	11	0.58%	47.29%	1,880	1,939	25.3	15.55	1.7%	1.39
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	283	294	297	274	23	126,775,179	14	5.00%	16.33%	287	296	17.7	1.85	3.0%	1.72
821	Warba Bank	Banking	242	257	259	242	17	17,168,359	15	6.20%	-6.20%	249	258	29.8	1.39	0.0%	1.06
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	418	440	450	410	40	4,579,584	24	5.77%	-23.80%	432	453	20.3	1.15	3.8%	0.42
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	400	420	420	400	20	3,185,525	20	5.00%	2.30%	415	428	35.5	1.66	2.4%	0.74
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	205	203	207	200	7	9,772,266	-2	-0.98%	-10.96%	201	205	15.5	2.53	9.0%	0.55
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,295	2,319	2,319	2,250	69	236,698	22	0.96%	14.80%	2,300	2,350	25.6	8.66	2.9%	0.80
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	846	879	887	844	43	9,978,753	29	3.41%	-	860	887	6.6	1.97	-	-

* As of end of week closing

Business

Bank of Japan sticks to easing, raises inflation forecast

BoJ to buy government bonds to maintain low cap on long-term yields

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan dug its heels in on its easy-money policies Thursday while raising its inflation forecast, even as other countries hike interest rates to tackle soaring prices. Policymakers have refused to move away from measures put in place a decade ago as the BoJ battles to achieve sustained price rises in the world's third-largest economy.

But the decision leaves it increasingly alone as its peers raise rates, sending the yen tumbling to a 24-year low against the dollar. Highlighting the different approaches, the European Central Bank is later Thursday expected to announce its first rate increase since 2011.

Prices are rising in Japan, and the BoJ raised its inflation forecast for fiscal 2022-23 to 2.3 percent, up from 1.9 percent in April, "due to rises in prices of such items as energy, food, and durable goods". "Thereafter, the rate of increase is expected to decelerate" as energy prices stabilise, it said.

The BoJ added that it would hold rates at minus 0.1 percent and continue buying unlimited government bonds to maintain a low cap on long-term yields. These monetary easing policies are intended to achieve sustained two-percent inflation, a target the bank considers key for stable growth.

The central bank views current price increases, driven by pandemic supply snarls and higher commodity prices linked to the war in Ukraine, as temporary. So while its counterparts elsewhere are moving to tame inflation, it

sees no need to change tack.

"There is no sign of meaningful accelerations in the rate of increase in wages, which is necessary for a sustainable rise of prices," said Ryutaro Kono, chief economist at BNP Paribas. And some feel rate hikes would not address current inflationary pressure in Japan.

"Higher rates would do little to meaningfully change the situation", Stefan Angrick, senior economist at Moody's Analytics, told AFP. "Inflation in Japan is driven predominantly by higher prices for imported food and energy, which are beyond the BoJ's reach."

Rate hikes are also not guaranteed to boost the yen, he added, noting that "many other currencies have depreciated against the dollar despite their respective central banks hiking rates."

Following Friday's announcement, the dollar jumped as high as 138.55 yen before easing slightly, though that still compares with 115 yen at the start of the year. The BoJ cut its economic growth forecast for the current fiscal year to 2.4 percent, down from 2.9 percent in its previous forecast, warning that "extremely high uncertainties" remain, from COVID-19 to the situation in Ukraine.

Speaking Thursday afternoon, Governor Haruhiko Kuroda insisted the bank was committed to its easing policy "until the (price) target is met in a sustainable manner".

He acknowledged that the yen's slump against the dollar was causing some difficulties, by



TOKYO: Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda (center) attends a parliamentary session at the Upper House in Tokyo. —AFP

"increasing uncertainties in the outlook, making it hard for companies to plan, which is negative and unfavourable for the economy." But he emphasised

that the currency intervention is the preserve of the finance ministry, and that a weak yen brought benefits for exporters. —AFP

Qatar Airways confirms \$3.3bn order for 25 Boeing MAX jets

FARNBOROUGH, United Kingdom: Qatar Airways finalised Thursday an order for 25 Boeing MAX 10 single-aisle passenger jets worth \$3.3 billion at the Farnborough airshow. The announcement, including options for 25 more, comes after Boeing and the Doha-based carrier signed a memorandum of understanding for the 737 MAX aircraft in January.

The news was revealed by Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker on the fourth day of the airshow, held in Farnborough southwest of London and which opens to the public on Friday. "We are honored that Qatar Airways has decided to add Boeing's single-aisle family to its fleet with improved economics, fuel efficiency and sustainable operations," said Stan Deal, president and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes.

"The 737-10 is ideally suited for Qatar Airways' regional network and will provide the carrier with the most capable, most fuel-efficient planes in its class." Boeing has triumphed over its European rival Airbus in the traditional Farnborough battle for orders this year, while also turning around the fortunes of its crisis-hit MAX jet.

US airline Delta had agreed to purchase 100 MAX-10 planes on Monday in a blockbuster \$13.5-billion deal, with an option for 30 more. The MAX aircraft had suffered two deadly crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia, in 2018 and 2019, killing a combined 346 people.

The disasters triggered the temporary global grounding of the jet before it returned to service in late 2020. Thursday's news also comes after Boeing's fierce European rival Airbus cancelled a multi-billion-dollar order of 50 single-aisle A321neo jets from Qatar Airways earlier this year in a feud over the carrier's grounding of A350 aircraft.

Major economies unprepared for climate change

PARIS: Major economies such as India, Brazil and Russia face "cascading" crises driven by climate change such as food insecurity, energy shortages and civil unrest, an industry analysis warned Thursday.

While developing nations of Africa and Southeast Asia are predicted to be worst hit by higher temperatures, extreme weather and sea-level rise, some middle-income nations lack the infrastructure and legislative freedom to keep pace with the changing climate.

And, as Europe counts the cost of another record-shattering heatwave, the analysis showed how even nations with typically few climate-linked crises will need to adapt as global temperatures rise. The analysis looked at countries' performances across 32 structural issues-including weather-related events, political stability, economic power, resource security, poverty and human rights-to assess each nation's capacity to manage crises.

It then divided countries into three categories: insulated, precarious and vulnerable. Unsurprisingly, most wealthy nations performed well and were found to be the most insulated against climate shocks thanks to a combination of good governance,

purchasing power and robust infrastructure.

Developing nations were mainly deemed to be in the vulnerable category for lacking these safeguards. Several middle-income countries, however, including India, Indonesia and South Africa also fell into this grouping.

Risks will spill over

"The low levels of investment in looking at the secondary risks show that most countries are almost entirely unprepared to deal with the wider political, economic and developmental impacts of a warming planet," said the analysis.

Will Nichols, head of climate and resilience at consultancy firm Verisk Maplecroft that conducted the assessment, said the major surprise was in the middle-or-the "precarious" category-which contained powerhouses such as Brazil, Mexico, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

"Brazil is teetering on the edge," Nichols told AFP. "A slight change could see it drop into that bottom group and we are certainly seeing the erosion of environmental and social protections under (President Jair) Bolsonaro. "In Russia, Arctic infrastructure is going to be undermined by warming and you could see a leader like (President Vladimir) Putin point the finger at other groups and seek to expand its territory," Nichols said.

Although a G20 economy, Mexico landed in the precarious category largely due to its proximity to Central and South American nations such as Venezuela facing extreme climate-linked disruption,

particularly in the form of mass migration.

"These risks aren't contained by political boundaries, they will spill over," said Nichols. "Even if you have your house in order, if your neighbour is a basket case that can seriously undermine your ability to protect yourself."

'Don't have resilience'

Under the UN-led climate action plan, rich nations promised in 2009 to provide \$100 billion annually to at-risk countries by 2020 but have so far failed to even approach that level of funding. Nichols said the analysis showed the need for developed countries to help nations that cannot help themselves.

"We've seen relatively small amounts of people arriving in Europe and the US due to climate impacts causing major issues," he said. "There's an argument that we as insulated nations have a responsibility to help vulnerable nations to protect themselves, which in turn helps protect us."

Nichols said this week's deadly heatwave in Europe was proof that even rich countries needed to factor climate change into future business and governance decisions. "The scale of the climate threat isn't diminishing-it is obviously going to have a huge impact," he said.

"But countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and South America don't have the resilience to manage both the physical climate threat and the knock-on effects of political and supply chain instability." —AFP

Electrolux's profit hit by supply chain disruptions

STOCKHOLM, Sweden: Swedish home appliances maker Electrolux said Thursday that supply chain disruptions massively impacted its bottom line in the second quarter and warned that uncertainty would continue to cloud the outlook for the rest of the year.

Electrolux said in a statement that its net profit

plunged by 81 percent to 257 million Swedish kronor (\$25 million) in the period from April to June. Analysts polled by Factset had been pencilling in net profit of some 650 million kronor for the second quarter.

Investors were disappointed by the figures, with Electrolux shares plummeting eight percent on the Stockholm stock exchange. "As in the first quarter, we were impacted by significant supply chain challenges," said chief executive Jonas Samuelson.

"The irregular deliveries of multiple components, mainly electronics, continued to significantly impact our volumes, cause severe production inefficiencies and increase costs for airfreight," he said.

By contrast, second-quarter sales increased by 11

percent to 33.7 billion kronor, as higher selling prices offset the supply crunch. Electrolux said it was still unable to meet demand, especially in its laundry and premium cooking segments.

"We continue to collaborate closely with our suppliers to mitigate these supply chain constraints and expect sequential improvements from mid-2022," Samuelson said, noting the risk of further disruptions still loomed.

Samuelson also said that given the "historically high levels, increased interest rates, global supply chain constraints, as well as uncertainty regarding the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the visibility for the rest of the year is limited." —AFP

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 reviewed, depicted

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2, Huawei's brand-new flagship foldable smartphone, has taken a great design to even more heights. This Ideal Foldable phone is now ultra-flat, ultra-thin, ultra-light and super durable, thanks to the combination of innovative hardware with the ultimate Smartphone experience. The new Falcon Wing Design design of the phone is a unique but functional approach it brings with it a slew of advantages in terms of aesthetics and usability. Adding to it is the phenomenal True-Chroma Camera System and all-new Smart Multi-Window feature. But there's more.

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 Innovative materials and the new Falcon Wing Design

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 brings you the industry's first Double-rotating Falcon Wing Hinge design to achieve an ultra-flat foldable screen. When the phone is opened, the screen becomes as flat and smooth as a mirror. The new design ensures that the hinge and the screen are precisely synchronized at different angles while reducing the screen-stretching caused by the folding of the hinge. The hinge uses ultra-light, high-strength steel, which has a substantial load-bearing capacity. As a result, HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 is both lighter and durable.

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 also employs numerous other innovative materials. For instance, its backplane uses ultra-light glass fibres commonly used for aerospace industries, while the screen structure uses aerospace-grade titanium alloys. These materials reduce the phone's overall weight while giving it excellent

strength and fracture toughness. Consequently, it only weighs about 255g, with a thickness of merely 5.4mm when unfolded. Furthermore, the Composite Screen on the phone comprises four layers: a protective layer, a buffer layer, a barrier layer, and a display layer, which shares a similar design with the anti-collision system in cars. This shock barrier is there to improve the phone's resistance to drops and impacts, enhancing the device's durability.

True flagship camera experience

The True-Chroma Camera System on the HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 consists of a 50MP True-Chroma Camera, a 13MP Ultra-Wide-Angle Camera, and an 8MP Telephoto Camera. The improved HUAWEI XD Optics, with its brand-new information recovery technology, elevates image clarity by 10%. Taking full advantage of the HUAWEI XD Fusion Pro True-Chroma Image Engine, coupled with the 10-Channel Multi-Spectrum Sensor and colour calibration with more than 2000 colours in P3 full colour gamut, HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 allows users to capture all the vibrancy in the world accurately.

The Mirror Shooting feature on the phone allows both the user and the subject to preview the real-time shot through the digital viewfinder of the camera on both screens at the same time. HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 has the new generation of AI Remove.

Immersive Experience with Smart Multi-Window

The phone incorporates a brand-new dynamic folding visual effect and some pre-installed dynamic wallpapers to go with it. When users unfold the phone, the desktop screen will automatically expand. Users can avail of the Split-screen function enabling collaboration and interaction between different applications for better continuity while multitasking. The phone even supports using two applications in

parallel. For example, you can chat while editing emails, shop online while watching videos or take notes while reading. This helps users increase efficiency and speed. Swipe Gesture supports easy access and control of the floating windows, allowing buttery-smooth operations with one quick swipe.

Brilliant 7.8" True-Chroma Foldable Display

Unfolded, HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 has a 7.8-inch True-Chroma Foldable Display, with a 8:7.1 display ratio. Folded, the screen measures 6.5-inch with a 19:9 display ratio, comparable with a typical non-foldable Smartphone. Having a resolution of 2480x22001 and a pixel density of 424ppi means that it has one of the highest resolutions and pixel densities among foldable phones. The Ultra HD True-Chroma Foldable Display brings clearer text and more refined images, delivering the ultimate visual experience.

Long battery life and fast charging

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 delivers great standby battery life with a high capacity 4600mAh battery in its compact body. It supports 66W2 HUAWEI SuperCharge, which allows the phone to be charged to 90% in just 30 minutes. It uses an innovative parallel charging technique that increases the charging speed by 15%, allowing users to charge safely and quickly.

Industry's first 3D Fibreglass Design

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 features the industry's first 3D Fibreglass Design for a more refined texture, giving a delicate, soft touch while reducing fingerprint smudges. The metal frame and leather-like pattern also bring a modern look and feel. The phone comes in two colours, each with a different leather pattern, which is complementary to one another: the Black colours with crosshatch leather texture and the White colourway with natural



leather texture. Each colourway is unique and layered with exquisite details.

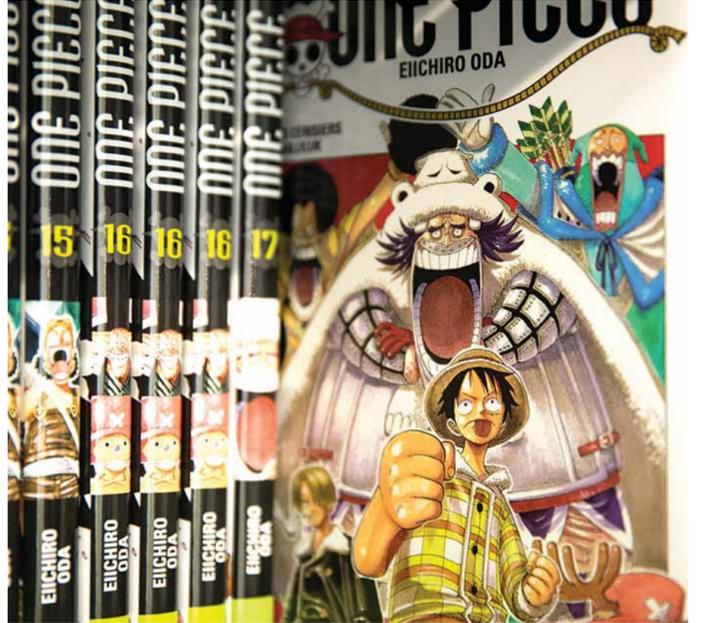
Dual stereo speakers for a stunning sound field

To create a surround sound field, the phone uses ultra-thin and large-amplitude stereo sounds with a double-closed large sound cavity. There is also the new AI Sound Engine to enhance this effect. All of these together deliver a better stereo balance, taking the audio-visual experience to new heights. The device also supports a hands-free function to pick up sounds from up to three metres away, ensuring a clear and stable sound when making calls and video calls with HUAWEI MeeTime.

Graphene Liquid Cooling System for rapid heat dissipation

HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 adopts innovative Graphene Heat Dissipation technology with good thermal conductivity performance. Thanks to the Vapor Chamber (VC) structure, which increases the heat dissipation efficiency and performance, keeping the device cool at all times.

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo "One Piece" comic books are displayed at the Paris Book Fair 2019 (Salon du livre) at the Parc des Expositions in Paris. — AFP

'LUFFY HIMSELF': 'ONE PIECE' AUTHOR REMAINS CHILD AT HEART

He is the creator of one of the world's best-known manga, but "One Piece" author Eiichiro Oda shuns stardom with a carefree attitude that evokes the beloved hero of his work. The 47-year-old famously refuses to be referred to as "sensei", an honorific typically used to address seasoned manga creators of his status. He is even reputed to show up at fancy restaurants and hotels dressed exactly like "One Piece" protagonist and pirate Monkey D Luffy, in a pair of short trousers and sandals.

"I want kids who read 'One Piece' to think of me as their neighborhood brother," media-shy Oda said in a rare 2017 interview, published in a special magazine to mark the 20th anniversary of the franchise. "I know I'm now old enough to be more like their uncle... so maybe a funny,

easy-going uncle." It is a modest aspiration for a man whose tale about aspiring "pirate king" Luffy and a motley crew of fellow adventurers earned him a Guinness World Record for "most copies published for the same comic book series by a single author."

On Friday, the cultural phenomenon that has sold about 500 million copies worldwide will mark the 25th anniversary of its serialization. It is now on the cusp of its final arc, set to begin in next week's edition of Japan's weekly Shonen Jump magazine.

'Luffy himself'

"One Piece" follows straw hat-wearing Luffy and his team as they hunt for the titular treasure coveted by all pirates. Loud, gluttonous and lovingly simple-minded,

Luffy is meant to be an embodiment of how Oda sees his stated target audience: teenage boys. "Every week I ask myself to assess what I've drawn: 'would I have enjoyed reading this when I was 15?'" Oda said in 2009. There are few swoon-worthy romances in the series, as Oda believes his core fan base would not be interested.

"I know there are many adult readers nowadays, but if I align myself with their taste too much, I feel 'One Piece' would lose its value," he said. And Oda's childlike impishness makes him well-suited to keeping his younger readership in mind. He has turned his house into something of an amusement park, with features like projection mapping, miniature trains and a claw crane. "You could say he is Luffy himself," one of Oda's closest editors

once told a Japanese TV programme.

Workaholic?

A native of southern Japan's Kumamoto region, Oda entered Japan's competitive manga world at 17, when his action-packed maiden work "Wanted!" won a Shonen Jump award. It was not quite smooth sailing from there though, and it took several flops before "One Piece" was serialized, when Oda was 22. The work, partly inspired by his childhood fascination with pirate anime "Vicky the Viking", was all-consuming for Oda.

"I think I was too passionate about manga in my 20s. I was even ready to skip my parents' funeral if they died while I was on the deadline," he recalled in an interview five years ago. Over time, he relaxed into his role but his passion never

faded and he relies only minimally on assistants, drawing almost every character and object himself. "To me, drawing manga is a pastime. I never get stressed about it, so I'm confident I will never suffer karoshi (death from overwork)," he told the 2017 anniversary magazine.

But for all his popularity around the world, Oda has yet to win over some of his own family. "My daughter is into more girly stuff," he said in a 2009 conversation with a musician published by Switch magazine, jokingly lamenting the popularity of "Pretty Cure", an anime franchise featuring evil-fighting schoolgirls. "Buying 'Pretty Cure' goods for her makes me feel defeated." — AFP

Peele skewers modern obsessions with 'Nope' film, theme park attraction

"Nope," Jordan Peele's latest withering horror-satire about our modern obsession with attention and spectacle, lands in movie theaters—and at a fittingly Instagram-friendly Los Angeles theme park attraction—this Friday. The Oscar-winning writer-director—who is widely credited with elevating and revitalizing the horror genre with "Get Out" and "Us"—re-teams with Daniel Kaluuya, who plays OJ, a horse trainer spooked by otherworldly phenomena in the skies above his California ranch.

OJ and his sister Emerald (Keke Palmer) must juggle their fear of the mysterious and potentially dangerous UFO activity with their desire to achieve fame and wealth by capturing it on camera. "The real villain is our addiction to attention and spectacle, and our inability to be able to actually react in real time," Palmer told AFP on the red carpet at the film's Hollywood premiere this week.

"It's no different from all the rubbernecking on a freeway when there's an accident—no one calls but everyone stops to watch. "That's the real horror that our film is talking about." It builds on themes Peele introduced in his searing 2017 race satire "Get Out," which was made for less than \$5 million and grossed \$255 million. It also earned him an Oscar for best original screenplay. He followed that up with another hit, "Us," securing a reputation as one of Hollywood's most in-demand, daring directors and top Black filmmakers.

'His vision'

Such was Universal Pictures' confidence in Peele's latest project, it took the unprecedented step of opening a permanent new "Nope" attraction at its Universal Studios theme park on the same day the movie opens. "This is the first time that we've ever opened an attraction day-and-

date with a new film," said Universal Creative head Jon Corfino.

"It's the first time I've ever heard of that happening." The actual movie set of Jupiter's Claim—a fictional small Western-themed amusement park which features prominently in "Nope"—was carefully deconstructed when filming ended at the movie's California desert shooting location, and meticulously rebuilt in the real-world Los Angeles theme park. "This whole set was the actual authentic set that was used in the production," said Corfino.

"It was actually broken apart and brought back here put together... it's basically exactly his vision." Appropriately for the movie's themes, visitors who pay for the VIP studio tour have the opportunity to wander around its fake but hyper-realistic streets, snapping selfies and shooting TikTok videos in front of the saloon, sheriff's office and gold panning mill.

'Ambitious'

It becomes the latest permanent attraction on Universal's studio tour, where tourists are ferried around working soundstages, and sets from classic movies such as Steven Spielberg's "Jaws" and Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho." "Jordan Peele takes his place among that lineage," said Corfino. Whether the film does so remains to be seen—early reviews have been mixed, with Empire praising an "ambitious, provocative swing," but the Guardian describing Peele's latest work as "clotted and heavy." "There's a million storylines within this and metaphors that anyone in the audience can take differently," said "Nope" star Brandon Perea. "You can take it how you take it, and I think that's great." — AFP



Customers enjoy their drive in horse driven carriages (Fiakers) passing by Hofburg palace in Vienna, Austria. — AFP photos



Coachmen of horse driven carriages (Fiakers) get ready at the stables of a leading fiaker business prior to leaving stables for daily tourist tours in Vienna, Austria.



A coachman of horse driven carriages (Fiakers) passes by Hofburg palace in Vienna, Austria.

Vienna's horse-drawn carriages feel the heat

As much of Europe stifles under record high temperatures, Vienna's "fiaker" horse carriage drivers fear for their future with animal rights activists turning up the heat. At the stables of one of the Austrian capital's leading fiaker businesses, driver Marco Pollandt explains how the animals are coping with increasingly hot weather and how much time off they enjoy. Rights activists want horses to stop work as soon as temperatures hit 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) and not 35C as under current rules—a demand that fiaker or carriage drivers say will destroy their centuries-old profession.

"We can all live with the 35 degrees but going down more is actually not good for the horses, and we also have to discuss the economic results of this," Pollandt tells AFP. The 28-year-old Viennese says horses trained to pull carriages need the exercise, while their caretakers need the income. On hot days, fiaker drivers ensure the horses drink enough, while the places where they wait for customers are shady in the afternoon. "The climate is changing and it's getting more and more hot," Pollandt says. "And of course it makes a difference if we have seven days a year that we are not

allowed to ride or if we have 30 days a year we are not allowed to ride."

High demand

Pollandt—who used to work in gastronomy and started to offer dining in a fiaker five years ago—has been running a website to inform people about the horses and the carriage driving profession. He also runs stable tours offering a glimpse behind the scenes. Three hundred horses still pull carriages through Vienna, past the town hall and other tourist sites, generating thousands of jobs, he notes.

"I realized no one actually explains to people how everything works," says



Coachman Boris of horse driven carriages (Fiakers) waits for customers near Hofburg palace in Vienna, Austria.

Pollandt pointing to strict regulations and regular veterinary checkups to keep the horses fit. Hurt by Covid lockdowns and travel curbs since 2020, business has picked up again swiftly this year. But activists say the animals suffer in the big city especially in scorching temperatures.

"This work is clearly linked to animal suffering. The horses are sometimes in the sun at 34.5 degrees and working. "They are exposed to noise, exhaust fumes, traffic and of course stress," says David Fenzl of the Association against Animal Factories. In June, city officials considered the demands to enforce stricter regulations, but in the end decided to delay lowering the temperatures under which horses are not allowed to work, pending a study to be carried out next year.

So for now, fiakers can ride on—unless temperatures exceed 35C, as predicted later this week. Scientists say heat waves are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change. Britain and France went on unprecedented heatwave alerts this week as southwest Europe wilted and ferocious wildfires devoured more forests. — AFP



Lifestyle | Features

Alleged shooter of Lady Gaga's dog walker freed by mistake

US authorities were on Wednesday searching for the suspect accused of shooting Lady Gaga's dog walker in 2021, after admitting he was accidentally released from custody months ago. James Howard Jackson, 19, is charged with shooting Ryan Fischer with a handgun near Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles during an attempted kidnapping of the star's valuable French bulldogs.

Jackson was released in April due to a "clerical error," the US Marshals Service acknowledged, describing him as armed and dangerous.

It offered \$5,000 for information about Jackson, one of three men charged with attempted murder and robbery over the attack. Two of the suspects got out of a vehicle and demanded Fischer hand over the pets at gunpoint. Fischer was shot in a

struggle before the men fled with two of the dogs, Koji and Gustav.

A third dog, Miss Asia, ran away during the encounter before returning to Fischer, who suffered serious chest injuries. Police said they do not believe the suspects targeted the dogs because of their famous owner, but because they are a coveted breed that can sell for thousands of dollars.

At the time, the three men were described by Los Angeles police as "documented gang members." A 50-year-old woman handed the two missing pets in to the police two days after the theft and was later also arrested. Lady Gaga had offered a \$500,000 reward for the dogs' safe return. — AFP



US singer-songwriter Lady Gaga

New AI tool that turns words into art enters testing phase

A million people eager to dabble with a new artificial intelligence tool that lets them create images simply by describing them with words will soon get their wish, its creators said Wednesday. Artificial intelligence research firm OpenAI is conducting a wide-scale beta test of DALL-E, a cutting-edge software that creates images from textual descriptions.



This handout image courtesy of OpenAI shows an image generated by Artificial Intelligence's representation of "A white cat with golden sunglasses on pink background with studio lighting".



This handout image courtesy of OpenAI shows an image generated by Artificial Intelligence's representation of "A sea otter in the style of Girl With a Pearl Earring by Vermeer".



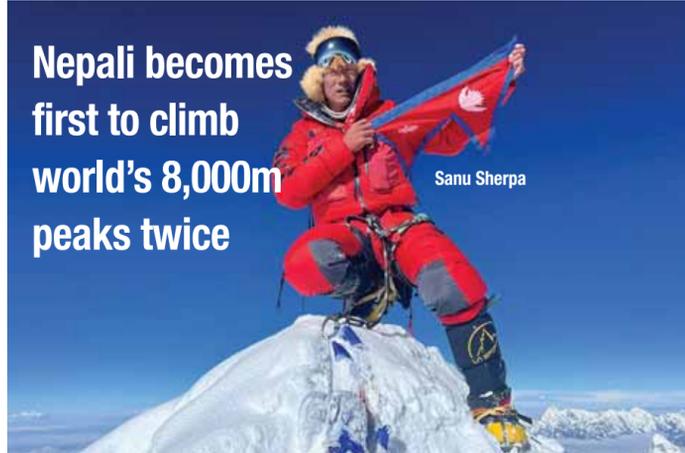
This handout image courtesy of OpenAI shows an image generated by Artificial Intelligence's representation of "An astronaut riding a horse". — AFP photos

Although the arrival of AI has led to fears of humans being replaced by machines in fields from customer care to journalism, enthusiasts see the technology more as an opportunity than a threat. A video showcasing the tool on the company's web site showed DALL-E generating an image of a polar bear playing a guitar, a photo of a koala dunking a basketball, and the famed Mona Lisa painting but with the subject sporting a mohawk hair style.

"We've already seen people use DALL-E to make music videos for young cancer patients, create magazine covers, and bring novel concepts to life," the company said in a post. OpenAI said invitations will be sent in coming weeks to a million people on a waiting list to try the

tool's latest version.

Amid concerns that this and similar tools could be misused in disinformation campaigns, OpenAI said it worked with researchers and developers to build in safeguards to curb abuses such as DALL-E being used for deception. "We reject image uploads containing realistic faces and attempts to create the likeness of public figures, including celebrities and prominent political figures," OpenAI said. Filters built into DALL-E block violent, political, sexual or other content barred by its policies, and the system is designed to avoid assumptions about race or gender, OpenAI said. — AFP



Nepali becomes first to climb world's 8,000m peaks twice

Sanu Sherpa

Nepali mountaineer on Thursday became the first person to complete double summits of all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks, expedition organizers said. Sanu Sherpa, 47, reached the summit of Pakistan's Gasherbrum II (8,035 meters) on Thursday morning, leading a Japanese client, completing his quest to stand on the world's highest peaks twice. "This is a proud moment for us. Sanu Sherpa has made history in the mountaineering world by climbing all the 14 peaks not once, but twice," expedition organizer Pasang Sherpa of Pioneer Adventure told AFP.

Sherpa, who began working in mountaineering as a porter, climbed his first 8,000-metre mountain in 2006, guiding foreign climbers to the summit of Cho Oyu. By 2019, he had summited all 14 8,000-metre peaks at least once-one of around 40 people to do so. "I need one more summit to achieve my goal," Sherpa wrote on Facebook in June before head-

ing to Pakistan. "With the warm wishes of my friends and god's blessings, I've gained extra strength so, I'll try to climb Mt. Gil - 8,035m."

Sherpa has reached the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) top of Mount Everest seven times, and three times summited Lhotse and the challenging Manaslu. Nepali guides-usually ethnic Sherpas from the valleys around Everest-are considered the backbone of the climbing industry in the Himalayas, carrying the majority of equipment and food, fixing ropes and repairing ladders.

Long in the shadows as supporters of foreign climbers, they are slowly being recognized in their own right. Last year, a team of Nepali climbers made the first winter ascent of K2, the world's second-highest peak-the notoriously challenging 8,611-metre (28,251-foot) "savage mountain" of Pakistan. — AFP



A tourist fills her water bottle at a fountain in Venice on June 9, 2022. — AFP photos

Venice pushes tourists to drink from fountains and shun plastic

A few steps from Venice's St Mark's Square, a little girl fills her water bottle at a courtyard fountain, a haven of peace far from the hordes of tourists. "Plastic bottles are super annoying to me," said 11-year-old Keira from Tucson, Arizona. "There is so much plastic in the ocean and everywhere." Her father, Charlie Michieli, also believes in swapping plastic for refillable bottles: "You can go through quite a lot, especially on a long trip... litres and litres and litres of plastic bottles."



A tourist fills his water bottle from a fountain at the Flora hotel in Venice.

In Venice, which welcomes millions of visitors each year, tourism contributes to between 28 and 40 percent of garbage production depending on the season, according to local government data-including piles and piles of plastic water bottles. To combat the waste, local authorities now promote the use of refillable water bottles by calling tourists' attention to the vast network of drinking water fountains dotting the squares and alleys of the watery city.

"In the historic centre, there are 126 fountains spread over the area, they're easy to find, there's one nearly every 100 meters (330 feet)," said architect Alberto Chinellato in his city hall office overlooking the Rialto Bridge. To make things even easier, water distribution company Veritas has launched an app showing a map with all the nearest fountains.

"Encouraging the use of free drinking water certainly produces less waste... but also brings fewer bottles in the historic centre, which means less pollution and less transport," said Chinellato. Leaving Chinellato's office, AFP observed an empty plastic water bottle bobbing between two gondolas on the Grand Canal-underlining the battle against plastic is far from being won.

Little blue drop

At the centrally located Hotel Flora, owner Gioele Romanelli has also decided to contribute to the crusade against plastic by educating his guests. "We simply had a card printed on which we pointed out the fountains of Venice with a little blue drop," said Romanelli, proudly displaying a copy on a small bistro table. "Not only with a refillable bottle, but also by recycling a small (plastic) water bottle you can keep all day," said the 49-year-old hotelier.

At check-in, guests are briefed about Venice's "good water." "They are sometimes surprised to learn that the water in Venice is drinkable," he said. "With this small gesture, our customers can actively participate in the battle against plastic," he said, seeing it as a way, in a city with "an insane number of tourists", to give them a certain sense of responsibility.

In addition to the card marking the city's fountains, the hotel has done away with single-dose shampoo and shower gel bottles in the rooms in favor of refillable dispensers. At breakfast, plastic is something of the past, with the hotel now using small glass containers for muesli, dried fruit and yogurt, Romanelli said. — AFP

Three dead in Spain bull runs

Three men including a French tourist have died this week after suffering severe injuries during bull runs in eastern Spain, emergency services said Wednesday. Two men, aged 50 and 46, died after being violently struck by bulls on Tuesday at a bull run held in a suburb of the eastern port city of Valencia, a local emergency services spokesman said.

A French tourist in his 60s who had been in intensive care since he was gored by a bull in a village near Alicante on July 8 died on Monday, the spokesman added. Bull running festivals, where groups of people run in front of one or more half-tonne fighting bulls, are a longstanding Spanish tradition with many towns holding such events each year.



Participants run ahead Miura bulls during the last "encierro" (bull-run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona, northern Spain. — AFP

The most famous is held in the northern city of Pamplona in July. The week-long San Fermin festival sees hundreds of daredevils race every morning with six fighting bulls along an 850-metre (2,800-foot) course from a holding pen to Pamplona's bullring. Five people

were gored at the festival this year which ended on July 14. Sixteen people have died at Pamplona's bull runs since 1911. — AFP



Participants run ahead Miura bulls during the last "encierro" (bull-run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona, northern Spain.

Lifestyle | Features

Longest-living male giant panda in captivity An An dies at 35

The world's longest-living male giant panda under human care, An An, has died at the age of 35, the Hong Kong zoo where he spent most of his life said Thursday. An An's health had deteriorated in recent weeks, with a severe decrease in physical activity and appetite, and he was euthanized by veterinarians early Thursday morning, a statement from the amusement park and zoo Ocean Park said. The park said he was equivalent to 105 in human years, and that "the difficult decision" to put him down had been made for welfare reasons in consultation with Chinese experts.

Born in the wild of mainland China's Sichuan province, An An was one of a panda pair gifted to Hong Kong by Beijing to celebrate the second anniversary of the city's handover from Britain in 1999. He and his mate Jia Jia spent the rest of their lives in Ocean Park. They were a venerable pair-Jia Jia held the Guinness World Records for the oldest living panda and oldest panda ever in captivity when she died at the age of 38 in 2016. A panda's average life span in the wild is 14-20 years, according to the World Wildlife



In this file photo giant panda An An eats snacks in his enclosure at the currently closed local theme park Ocean Park in Hong Kong.—AFP

Fund. After Jia Jia's death, her surviving mate led a rather solitary life-in 2021, he celebrated his 35th birthday alone with a Haagen-Dazs fruit and bamboo ice cake, surrounded by a number of handmade birthday cards from the Park's staff.

Political animals

Pandas are a top choice of diplomatic gift from Beijing, and An An and Jia Jia enjoyed a fair degree of political clout for zoo-dwellers. When they first arrived in the city, then-chief executive Tung Chee-hwa said that their names would inspire Hong Kong to be stable (An) and achieve great performance (Jia). And when news of An An's lack of appetite was announced last week, Hong Kong's chief executive John Lee called Ocean Park to express concern.

Ocean Park has set up condolence books in the exhibition hall that An An

used to live in. Within an hour of the park announcing his death, hundreds of tributes appeared under the social media post. "Thanks for all the happiness you have brought us over so many years," user "Tang Cc" wrote. "I really can't accept you passing away but I also can't see you suffering. I will be missing you," user "Tuan Yuan Panda" said. Hong Kong has another pair of pandas-Ying Ying and Le Le-who were gifted by Beijing in 2007.

They hit the headlines recently for beginning to show mating behavior during the pandemic after almost a decade of disinterest. Pandas are notoriously bad at reproducing, especially in captivity. They are categorized as "vulnerable" by WWF with a record of 1,864 living in the wild.—AFP

Instagram top news source among UK teens

Instagram is now the most popular news source among UK teenagers, followed by TikTok and YouTube, according to a report published by media watchdog Ofcom on Thursday. Nearly three in 10 teenagers used Instagram as their news source in 2022, with TikTok and YouTube both on 28 percent.

Only a quarter of teens receive their news from BBC One and BBC Two, traditionally the most popular sources among teens, down from 45 percent five years ago, according to online polling. BBC One is still the most-used news source among all online adults but those numbers have also fallen by six percent.

TikTok has seen the biggest rise in news users, with an estimated 3.9 million UK adults now turning to the app-around

the same number that use the Sky News website and app. Half of TikTok's news users are aged between 16 to 24.

Despite the falling numbers, television news remains the most trusted news source for 71 percent of UK adults, with news on social media only trusted by 35 percent. The use of print and online newspapers also fell to 38 percent from 51 percent in 2018.

"This is being driven by the substantial decrease of print newspaper reach in recent years, with the trend seen pre-pandemic appearing to accelerate, likely exacerbated by the pandemic," said Ofcom. The proportion of teenagers using Facebook for news has also decreased to 22 percent from 34 percent in 2018. —AFP



Mammals became warm-blooded later than thought

The ancestors of mammals started to become warm-blooded around 20 million years later than previously thought, researchers suggested Wednesday, after analyzing inner-ear fossils hoping to solve "one of the great unsolved mysteries of paleontology". Warm-bloodedness is one of the quintessential characteristics of mammals, along with fur, but exactly when they first evolved the feature has long been a subject of debate.

Previous research has indicated that the ancestors of mammals began evolving warm-bloodedness, or endothermy, around 252 million years ago-around the time of the Permian extinction, known as the "Great Dying". However figuring out the timeline has proved difficult. "The problem is that you cannot stick thermometers in your fossils, so you cannot measure their body temperature," said Ricardo Araujo of the University of Lisbon, one of the authors of a new study in the journal Nature.

He was part of an international team of researchers that found a new way to determine how body heat changed throughout time, by examining the semicircular canals in the inner ears of 56 extinct species of mammal ancestors. Fluid runs through the tiny ear canals, which help animals keep their balance.

The researchers realized that as body temperatures warmed up, so did the ear fluid. Araujo gave the example of oil used to fry hot chips. Before you warm the oil up, it is "very viscous, very dense," he told AFP. "But then when you heat it up, you'll see that the oil is much runnier, it flows much more easily." The runnier ear fluid led to animals evolving narrower canals-which can be measured in fossils, allowing the researchers to track body temperature over time.

Unlike previous research on this subject, the team developed a model that not only works on extinct mammal ancestors, but also living mammals, including humans. "It can look at your inner ear and tell you how warm-blooded you are-that's how accurate the model is," lead study author Romain David of London's Natural History Museum told AFP. Using the model, they traced the beginnings of warm-bloodedness to around 233 million ago, in the Late Triassic period.

'Not a gradual, slow process'

Michael Benton, a paleontologist at Britain's University of Bristol who was not involved in the study, said the new metric "seems to work well for a wide array of modern vertebrates". "It doesn't just provide a yes-no answer, but actually scales the 'degree' of endothermy in terms of actual typical body setpoint temperature," he told AFP. Benton, whose previous research had given the 252 million years date, said the transition to warm-bloodedness likely took place in stages, and "there were several significant prior steps before this semicircular canal switch".

Araujo said the new research suggested that warm-bloodedness came about simply and "very quickly in geological terms, in less than a million years". "It was not a gradual, slow process over tens of millions of years as previously thought". David said it seemed unlikely that warm-bloodedness would begin around the extinction event 252 million years ago, because global temperatures were extremely hot then.—AFP

Wild tiger numbers higher than previously thought

There are 40 percent more tigers in the wild than previously thought, but with a maximum of 5,578 on the prowl, they remain an endangered species, conservationists said Thursday. The jump in numbers is due to improved monitoring, with the population thought to be stable or increasing, said the International Union for Conservation of Nature, but habitat protection projects showed that "recovery is possible".

The tiger reassessment came as the IUCN updated its Red List of Threatened Species-the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of plants, animals and fungi, assessing their risk of extinction. The migratory monarch butterfly is now classified as an endangered species on the Red List due to climate change and habitat destruction.

And all surviving sturgeon species are now at risk of extinction due to dams and poaching. "Today's Red List update highlights the fragility of nature's wonders, such as the unique spectacle of monarch butterflies migrating across thousands of kilometers," said IUCN director general Bruno Oberle. "To preserve the rich diversity of nature we need effective, fairly governed, protected and conserved areas, alongside decisive action to tackle climate change and restore ecosystems."

Tiger poaching threat

The Red List assigns species to one of eight categories of threat. A total of 147,517 were assessed in the latest version, with 41,459 species deemed as being threatened with extinction. Of those, 9,065 are critically endangered, 16,094 are endangered and 16,300 are deemed vul-



This file photo shows a Monarch butterfly (Danaus plexippus) pictured at the Sanctuary of El Rosario, Ocampo municipality, Michoacan state, Mexico.

nerable. Established in 1964, the Red List counts 902 species that are now extinct, and 82 which are extinct in the wild. There are thought to be between 3,726 and 5,578 wild tigers — 40 percent more than at the last assessment in 2015. The increase was chiefly put down to better monitoring.

While the tiger remains endangered, the population trend indicates that projects such as the IUCN's Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Program "are succeeding and recovery is possible as long as conservation efforts continue", the organization said. Major threats include poaching of tigers themselves, poaching and hunting of their prey, and habitat destruction due to agriculture and human settlement, said the IUCN. "Expanding and connecting protected areas, ensuring they are effectively managed, and working with local communities living in and around tiger

habitats, are critical to protect the species," it said.

Hope for butterflies

The migratory monarch butterfly, a monarch subspecies, is well known for its migrations from Mexico and California to summer breeding grounds throughout the United States and Canada. The native population has shrunk by between 22 and 72 percent over the past decade, the IUCN said, with logging and deforestation having destroyed substantial areas of their winter shelter. Meanwhile pesticides and herbicides used in intensive agriculture kill butterflies and milkweed-the host plant that their larvae feed on. Climate change is also a fast-growing threat, with drought, wildfires, extreme temperatures and severe weather having a significant impact. "It is difficult to watch monarch butterflies and their extraordinary migration teeter on

the edge of collapse, but there are signs of hope," said Anna Walker, who led the assessment of monarchs.

"From planting native milkweed and reducing pesticide use to supporting the protection of overwintering sites and contributing to community science, we all have a role to play in making sure this iconic insect makes a full recovery." The western population is at greatest risk of extinction, the IUCN said, having declined by an estimated 99.9 percent, from as many as 10 million to 1,914 butterflies between the 1980s and 2021. The larger eastern population also shrank by 84 percent from 1996 to 2014. "Concern remains as to whether enough butterflies survive to maintain the populations and prevent extinction," the IUCN said.

Sturgeon on the brink

The global sturgeon reassessment found that all remaining 26 sturgeon species are now at risk of extinction, up from 85 percent in 2009. Their decline over the past three generations is steeper than previously thought. The Yangtze sturgeon has moved from critically endangered to extinct in the wild, while 17 species are now critically endangered. The reassessment confirmed the extinction of the Chinese paddlefish.

"Sturgeons have been overfished for their meat and caviar for centuries," the IUCN said. It called for reinforcement of protections under international law, with poaching affecting more than half of sturgeon species. Dams affect their migration, while warmer rivers due to climate change disrupt their reproduction.—AFP



This file photo shows a Royal Bengal Tiger pausing as it walks through a jungle in Kaziranga National Park, some 280kms east of Guwahati. — AFP photos

BBC pays 'substantial' damages to royal nanny over Diana interview

Princes William and Harry's former nanny on Thursday received substantial damages from the BBC over "false and malicious" claims about her used to obtain a 1995 interview with Princess Diana. Alexandra Pettifer, known at the time as Tiggy Legge-Bourke, was given a public apology for "fabricated" allegations that she had an affair with the princes' father, Prince Charles.

The High Court in London was also told that she was falsely accused of becoming pregnant by him when she was

his personal assistant and of having an abortion. Pettifer's lawyer Louise Prince said the allegations caused "serious personal consequences for all concerned" and her client did not know where they came from.

But she said it was likely that the "false and malicious allegations arose as a

result and in the context of BBC Panorama's efforts to procure an exclusive interview with Diana, Princess of Wales". The explosive interview saw Diana detail her troubled marriage to Charles, his affair with Camilla Parker Bowles, and how she had also been unfaithful.



Britain's Prince Charles (second right) and Princess Diana (second left) are greeted by India's Vice-President Shankar Dayal Sharma and his wife Vimala Sharma at the presidential Palace on February 10, 1992 at New Delhi. — AFP

Questions were immediately raised about how little-known interviewer Martin Bashir secured Diana's agreement to take part in the program, which sent shockwaves through the royal family. It has since emerged that he used subterfuge, including fake documents alleging some of her aides were in the pay of the security services.

Pettifer's lawyer said the "totally unfounded" claims "appeared to exploit some prior false speculation in the media" about her and Charles. "After Diana, Princess of Wales, became aware of the allegations in late 1995, she became upset with the claimant without apparent justification," she added. Prince said Pettifer "holds the BBC liable for the serious impact the false and malicious allegations have had" which had caused her "25 years of lies, suspicion and upset".—AFP

Sports

India favorites in series against West Indies even without stars

India poised to pile more misery on Windies

PORT OF SPAIN: West Indies and India commence a three-match One-Day International series in Trinidad on Friday with the visitors, even without their most prominent players, favored to get the better of a struggling home side. Fresh from a 2-1 series triumph in England, the Indians have opted to rest regular captain Rohit Sharma, key batsman Virat Kohli, wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant, all-rounder Hardik Pandya and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah for this assignment.

The mega stars' absence has presented an opportunity for eager fringe players to shine at the expense of a team that was swept 3-0 by Bangladesh in Guyana last week. West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran complained about both the quality of pitches against the Bangladeshis at Providence and the early start time which he felt conspired to favour the team bowling first too heavily for there to be an even contest.

That speculation overlooks the reality that the two-time former World Cup winners have been consistently poor in the 50 overs-per-side format for several years, and given the unsettled weather leading up to the series-opener, it is quite possible that the playing surface will not be dissimilar to the bowler-friendly conditions in Guyana.

Quality and variety

"We have players quite capable of batting for long periods but we need to get it together and hold strong," said West Indies coach Phil Simmons in looking ahead to the challenges his top order is expected to face in the series. "Players like (Shai) Hope and (Kyle) Mayers are Test batsmen so they have the temperament to bat right through the innings."

Even with that quintet of star players opting for a rest, India enjoy an embarrassment of riches, not least in the bowling department where they possess the quality and variety to exploit both the conditions and a vulnerable West Indies batting line-up.

Pacer Mohammed Siraj, one of an array of players who responded magnificently to the challenge of filling the breach in India's Test series triumph in Australia in 2020/21, and wrist-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal are expected to lead the effort to keep pressure on their opponents, many of whom were found wanting technically and temperamentally against Bangladesh's spin-dominated attack. For the home team, the one bit of encouraging news in the days since the end of the Bangladesh series is the return of Jason Holder.

Having been rested for series in The Netherlands, Pakistan and the visit by Bangladesh, the all-rounder and former captain will be looked to for inspiration with bat and ball. Pressure is very much on current skipper Pooran though to lift his team out of the doldrums into which they have appeared to sink so rapidly following comfortable 2-0 series wins in Tests and T20 Internationals against Bangladesh.

His top-score of 73 last Saturday at the Guyana National Stadium ended a succession of mediocre contributions in ODI's but the West Indies will need to have all hands on deck, especially opening batsman Shai Hope, if they are to get anywhere close to posting the sort of totals which could seriously challenge their opponents.

With so many big names absent for India, the likes of batsmen Ishan Kishan, Shubman Gill and Suryakumar Yadav, together with all-rounder Deepak Hooda are expected to come to the fore,



India's Rohit Sharma

and with another World T20 campaign mere months away in Australia followed by India's hosting of the next World Cup in 2023, incentives to deliver are aplenty.

Aside from the desire for long-overdue team success, several West Indies cricketers, like spinner Akeal Hosein and batsman Brandon King, will also view these matches as opportunities to advertise their abilities to the franchise owners of the lucrative Indian Premier League as they seek

to join the conveyor belt of Caribbean talent which has been on show since the advent of the IPL in 2008.

All three ODI's will be played at Queen's Park Oval after which the teams switch format but stay in Trinidad for the first T20 International at the Brian Lara Stadium in Tarouba. From there it's on to St Kitts for two games before the five-match series concludes in the United States with two fixtures at Lauderhill in Florida. —AFP

Motsepe hails CHAN hosts as qualifying series kick off

JOHANNESBURG: African football chief Patrice Motsepe has praised 2022 African Nations Championship (CHAN) hosts Algeria ahead of qualifying for the 18-team tournament, which kicks off on Friday. On a visit to the country, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) president told the media that he "really liked" what he saw in Algiers.

"I inspected the infrastructure in the capital and was impressed. I will be back in September for the finals draw and also attend the opening match, the semi-finals and the final." Algeria, hosting a CAF tournament for the first time since the 1990 Cup of Nations (AFCON), are under pressure to have stadiums, training facilities, accommodation and other infrastructure ready in time.

Pre-tournament delays are common in Africa, most recently in Cameroon, who fell so far behind with preparations for the 2019 AFCON that it had to be belatedly switched to Egypt. The central African country staged the following edition in 2022, but even three years later there was a last-minute scramble to complete preparations. Two venues in Algiers and one each in Annaba, Constantine and Oran will stage a unique national team competition as it is restricted to footballers playing in their country of birth.

But despite the absence of Europe-based stars like Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah, FIFA categorises CHAN matches as full internationals and they count toward national team rankings. The tournament in Algeria, postponed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, has also been subjected to a change of dates with the kick-off put back five days to January 13, 2023. It will also be the first time a CAF competition has been planned with different size groups—three will consist of four teams and two will have only three teams.

Tunisia banned

Two teams will qualify for the quarter-finals from each of the three larger sections but only one from each of the two smaller ones. Apart from automatic qualifiers Algeria, defending champions Morocco and former winners Libya have also secured places because they are the only north African entrants in a regional draw. Tunisia, another country that has lifted the trophy, are barred having withdrawn from the 2020 edition after qualifying, citing domestic fixture congestion.

Egypt have entered only once, for 2018 qualifying, saying clubs have too many national and international commitments to release players for each CHAN. With three places at the tournament already filled, 42 nations will compete for 15 other slots with the first two-leg qualifying round scheduled for July and the second for late August and early September. The process begins this weekend with 12 first legs and Senegal, Ghana, South Africa and Zambia are among the countries who will be in action.

Senegal are away to Liberia, a team they eliminated in 2020 qualifying, while twice runners-up Ghana host Benin, one of 23 nations that have never qualified for the finals. South Africa hope to improve on a dismal record of only one qualification from five attempts, starting with a match in the Comoros. Zambia are buoyant before a journey to Mozambique having won the annual southern Africa championship last weekend by edging Namibia 1-0 in the final in Durban. No team will crave victory more than Eswatini, who are away to Botswana having failed to win any of 16 previous qualifiers. —AFP

Bracewell hat-trick completes NZ rout of Ireland in T20

BELFAST: Michael Bracewell rounded off New Zealand's crushing 88-run win over Ireland in the second T20 at Belfast on Wednesday with a hat-trick. Ireland, chasing 180 to win, collapsed to 91 all out inside 14 overs at Stormont and were all but beaten when off-spinner Bracewell removed tailenders Mark Adair, Barry McCarthy and Craig Young with successive deliveries to become only the third New Zealand bowler to take a hat-trick at this level after pacemen Jacob Oram and Tim Southee. Leg-spinner Ish Sodhi broke the back of Ireland's innings by removing Curtis Campher, Lorcan Tucker and George Dockrell in a return of 3-21.

Had it not been for an eighth-wicket stand of 37 between Adair, who top-scored in the innings with 27, and McCarthy, Ireland might have suffered an even more crushing defeat. Ireland's chase had started in style, with experienced opener Paul Stirling smashing spinner Mitchell Santner for a six and a four in the first over. Stirling also struck fast bowler Lockie Ferguson through the covers for another four only to fall for 21 when he sliced the pacesman to mid-off.

Heat on Leclerc to deliver Ferrari hat-trick in France

LE CASTELLET: Charles Leclerc will seek to complete Ferrari's first hat-trick since 2019 by fending off world champion Max Verstappen and a likely threat from reinvigorated Lewis Hamilton at this weekend's French Grand Prix. The 24-year-old Leclerc, who battled to victory in Austria last time out after team-mate Carlos Sainz triumphed in Britain, is likely to enjoy strong support from a big holiday crowd sweltering in the merciless sunshine of south-eastern France.

But he will need to overcome several challenges if he is to further trim Red Bull star Verstappen's 38-point advantage at the half-way mark in this 22-race season, not least from Sainz, who is keen to add to his maiden Silverstone success. Ferrari team chief Mattia Binotto has made clear he will not issue team orders to support Leclerc - not yet, at least - and with potent attacks expected from Sergio Perez, in the second Red Bull, and George Russell, in the second Mercedes, a tight, combative and dramatic race is in prospect.

"We have closed the gap in terms of speed," said Binotto, of Ferrari's pursuit of Red Bull. "I think they still have a slight advantage, but very little, or negligible." Given the forecast high temperatures of close to 40 degrees, Ferrari's recent frailties could be exposed again as aerodynamics chief Diego Tondi suggested in a team preview. "The high temperatures mean that

'Wife thinks I'm idiot': Ex-All Black Spencer returns to the ring

WELLINGTON: Former All Blacks star Carlos Spencer will return to the boxing ring on Thursday, but admitted it was a hard fight to convince his wife about his latest charity bout. The 46-year-old will face ex-New Zealand rugby league star Paul Whatuira, 40, over three rounds in Auckland in a 'Fight for Life' charity event.



Doug Bracewell of New Zealand

His exit prompted a dramatic collapse that saw seven wickets lost for 31 runs as 23-0 was transformed rapidly into 54-7, with Jacob Duffy bowling No 3 Gareth Delany for a golden duck. Earlier, Dane Cleaver's unbeaten 78 took New Zealand to 179-4 after Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie won

the toss. Cleaver, playing only his second T20 international, faced 55 balls including five fours and four sixes after coming into bat when New Zealand were 44-1 in the fifth over. The series concludes when the teams return to Stormont on Friday. —AFP



SPIELBERG: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (left) leads the pack on the Red Bull Ring race track in Spielberg, Austria, during the Formula One Austrian Grand Prix. —AFP

ensuring the power unit and the tyres perform at their best is a real challenge - and it's up to those working on the aerodynamics to take the appropriate counter-measures," he said.

Ferrari's hopes of an imposing one-two in Austria were wrecked by a late engine failure for Sainz while Leclerc's title challenge has suffered after four likely wins escaped him due to car failures or strategy errors. Well aware of the need for consistency, Binotto said he will avoid orders to favour either driver, but will prioritise the team's overall points haul at each race.

"The fastest car on track is the one to be prioritized," he said. "By doing so, certainly at this time of the championship, it's the best thing. Later maybe one driver has an opportunity for full priority, but not right now - I'm happy to see them fighting." Verstappen won last year's race from pole position, passing Hamilton in the closing laps of a strategic race decided by tyre wear, and the Dutchman will want to win to foil Ferrari and retain the initiative.

"This one was always going to be hard getting it across the line with my wife," Spencer told news site Stuff.co.nz. "This is the last thing she thinks I should be doing." "She thinks I'm bloody mad and I'm a bloody idiot, but I managed to convince her that I'll be fine and it is for a great cause, after all." Spencer will be back in the ring after previous charity bouts against ex-league players Awen Guttenbeil, Jarrod McCracken and most recently Monty Betham, his only defeat, in 2014.

Spencer retired from rugby in 2010 having made 44 appearances and scoring 383 points for New Zealand. He has just returned from the USA after a stint as assistant coach to Major League Rugby side New Orleans Gold. "I've only been back in New

Zealand for four weeks," Spencer told the New Zealand Herald. "It's about learning to box again rather than conditioning. I've put on weight—I'm normally around 84kg, but I've put on six kilos in three weeks, to get a bit more power behind my punches."

Like many fellow New Zealanders, Spencer was dismayed to see the All Blacks lose the home series to Ireland after a 32-22 defeat in last Saturday's third Test in Wellington. "They've become a bit predictable on attack," Spencer said of the All Blacks. "With the players we've got, that should never happen. "Whereas the northern teams used to be a few steps behind us, they are a step ahead now I think. "Ireland have good variety to their game and play an exciting brand-I enjoy watching them." —AFP

Sports

England women rally to reach Euro 2022 semis

From the brink of elimination England beat Spain

BRIGHTON: England rallied from the brink of elimination to beat Spain 2-1 after extra time and reach the semi-finals of Euro 2022 thanks to Georgia Stanway's stunning strike. Ether Gonzalez's opener had the hosts heading for an early exit, but Ella Toone rescued the Lionesses six minutes from the end of normal time before Stanway's winner took England into the last four of a fourth consecutive major tournament. Sarina Wiegman's side will face Sweden or Belgium in the final four on Tuesday. England were given a boost pre-match with the return of Wiegman to the touchline after she tested negative for Covid-19 earlier in the day.

The Lionesses had everything their own way in the group stage as they plundered 14 goals without reply against Austria, Norway and Northern Ireland. However, despite their own struggles to reach the

knockout stages, Spain were a big step up in class. "I won't forget this day," said Wiegman. "A crazy day, I came with the team late, prepared, trying to stay calm. The whole game was a test. The level of this game was so high. I haven't experienced that too much."

Spain had been pre-tournament favourites before injuries to reigning Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas and all-time top goalscorer Jennifer Hermoso rocked their preparation. Jorge Vilda's side suffered their first defeat since 2019 to Germany in the group stage, but even in that game dominated possession of the ball. Spain's ability to keep the ball off the hosts frustrated England and another sell-out crowd of 29,000 in Brighton for the vast majority of the first 90 minutes. England have still never lost in now 18 games since Wiegman took charge in September.

But they have never come so close to defeat in that time and had to show admirable fight to battle back from a goal down. "That just shows the level that we're at," said Stanway. "We get a setback and we come back and do it." Spanish substitute Athenea Del Castillo jinked past Rachel Daly and squared for Gonzalez, who had time to take a touch before firing low into the far corner. Mary Earps then had to make a brilliant save to prevent a cross from the lively Del Castillo from floating into the far corner to double Spain's lead.

Wiegman did not waste time in turning to her bench with Ellen White, Fran Kirby and the tournament's top goalscorer Beth Mead surprisingly sacrificed for the introduction of Chloe Kelly, Alessia Russo and Toone. "We were behind and knew we had to do something," added Wiegman. "We scored quickly

after doing that so we could go back into our normal shape. "The fans behind us, you could feel it. This is home advantage." Wiegman's changes had the desired effect to keep England's hopes of a first major tournament win in the women's game alive.

Lauren Hemp's cross was headed down by Russo for her Manchester United teammate Toone to fire in from close range. Suddenly the momentum completely swung in England's favour and six minutes into extra-time they led. Stanway drove forward before the Bayern Munich-bound midfielder smashed the ball past Sandra Panos from outside the box. Aitana Bonmati came closest to a reply when she fired wide early in the second period of extra time. But Spain's wait to win a knockout game at a major women's tournament goes on. —AFP

First Kuwait Boxing Championship starts



Director of Saudi boxing team Mohammad Alem



Head of Referees Committee Mijbel Al-Azmi



KBF Chairman welcomes Umar Kremlyov

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Preliminaries of the first Kuwait Boxing Championship will end on Friday with nine matches in all weights. Kuwait's boxer Khalid Al-Shimmari expects a tough match as he clashes with his Ukrainian opponent Nikita in the 91 Kg category, while his teammate Mansour Al-Shimmari will have a competitive match with his Bahraini opponent Sayyed Fadhel in the 51 Kg category.

The opening ceremony was held on Thursday in the presence of the president of International

Boxing Association Umar Kremlyov, president of Asia Boxing Federation Pichai Chunhajra, president of Arab Boxing Federation Yousef Al-Kazem, president of Kuwait Boxing Federation Mohammad Mansi and other senior sports officials. The ceremony was followed by six matches out of nine as three boxers withdrew after medical check-up and weighing.

There will be 100 boxers from 20 countries participating. President of International Boxing Association Umar Kremlyov said the association is keen on extending all types of support to Kuwait Boxing Federation to ensure the success

of the first Kuwait International Boxing Championship.

Meanwhile, head of the referees committee Mijbel Al-Azmi said the total number of referees is 17 as the international rules will be applied in this tournament, and bouts will be of three rounds - three minutes each. Director of the Saudi team Mohammad Alem said Kuwait International tournament is one of the most important tournaments in 2022 adding that "it is expected to see strong and exciting competitions as a large number of ranked boxers are participating."

Kuwaiti referee participates in Chess Olympiad

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti international referee Khalaf Al-Azmi will participate in the World Chess Olympiad in Chennai, India, scheduled from July 27 to August 10, at the invitation of the International Chess Federation. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Azmi said he was proud of this invitation, which confirms the good reputation he gained through his refereeing of many local and regional championships. Al-Azmi added that this Olympiad is the largest international chess event. It is a series of matches held every two years, each chess team recognized by the International Chess Federation can participate by a four-player team. —KUNA



Khalaf Al-Azmi

De Bruyne at the double as City see off Club America

HOUSTON: Kevin De Bruyne's double strike was enough to help Manchester City see off Club America 2-1 in Houston on Wednesday as Pep Guardiola made Erling Haaland wait for his debut. The Belgian international's superbly taken brace settled a feisty clash at NRG Stadium but City's new \$61 million striker could only look on from the bench as the Premier League champions began their two-match US tour with a win.

This was Guardiola's first pre-season match while Club America are three games into their Liga MX campaign and it showed as the Mexican side were organized and lively early on. Haaland may have been waiting in the wings but fellow new striker Julian Alvarez, the Argentine international signed from River Plate, was making his first start for City.

He was subbed after 70 rather ineffective minutes of a match which threatened to boil over midway through the first half when both

sets of players had to be pulled apart after Jack Grealish became involved in a pushing match with keeper Guillermo Ochoa. The bad feeling shown towards the City midfielder extended into the second half with America fans jeering his every touch.

Both players were let off with a warning and on 30 minutes, Ochoa was left helpless as De Bruyne curled home an unstoppable effort from just outside the box. The Mexican international was subbed soon after and his replacement was almost beaten by a fiercely struck Joao Cancelo effort but as the clock ticked towards half-time, City were undone by a long ball forward and Henry Martin saw off Ake's challenge before rolling home.

The irrepressible De Bruyne, however, restored the lead when he was fed by Riyad Mahrez and finished clinically for his second of the evening just before half-time. New signing Kalvin Phillips, the England international midfielder signed for \$54 million from Leeds, came on as a central defender after the interval as Haaland looked on with Saturday's game against Bayern Munich at Green Bay's Lambeau Field the next chance to get his first minutes under Guardiola following his move this summer from Borussia Dortmund. —AFP

Ukraine athletes hope to offer 'positive emotions'

EUGENE: Ukraine might have sent its smallest delegation of athletes ever to a world championships, but acting federation president Yevhen Pronin said the 22-strong team were just glad to be present in Eugene and offering up a glimmer of hope for compatriots. Yaroslava Mahuchikh claimed a silver medal in the women's high jump on Tuesday, a day after Andriy Protsenko claimed Ukraine's first medal of these championships with bronze in the men's high jump.

"Our country, our team are still in a difficult situation," said Pronin, who hails from a military family and has spent the last four months on the frontline. "Other teams can stay at home, train at home, see their parents, their children." Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February, a move that saw World Athletics ban athletes from Russia and Belarus from competing in international competition.

The embrace of Ukraine by the international community had been heart-warming, according to Pronin, who will return to the frontline post-Eugene for three weeks before hoping to make it to Munich for the European championships. "When the war started in Ukraine... we all said we must be together in other countries, we must be together in Ukraine," he said. "We're feeling a lot of support. The first day we came to a student dining room here in Eugene, five or six people asked 'can we pay for your lunch?' 'You see a lot of Ukrainian flags in windows in Eugene, but it's not Ukrainian athletes living there!'"

No words for Putin

Pronin has a simple answer when asked whether there was a message he had for Russian President Vladimir Putin. "The first message is no words. Five months ago, I can ask Putin to please stop the war, stop the soldiers, but when he killed 300 Ukrainian children, I have no words. "We must only be doing something, not saying anything. They started this war but we must finish this war." High jumper Iryna Geraschenko, who left Ukraine on March 15 but aims to head back to Kyiv post-season on September 10, added: "I'm very thankful for our military, our soldiers, for this possibility" to compete.

Mahuchikh said the fact the Ukrainian team were taking part in Oregon had helped them form a strong bond, no more so when she medalled and returned to a traditional welcome by the entire team. "I was so long in doping control, it was so late, but they were all there waiting up for me!" the world indoor champion said. "We're all together, we support each other, we're like a big sports family." Fellow high jumper Yulia Levchenko said she was "so proud of every Ukrainian athlete because they still have opportunities to compete even if it's a difficult situation for us. I hope for better".

Competition, she said, was "for us like a separate life and we can do something for our soul and mind and still be helpful, and for the Ukrainian people it maybe gives them positive emotions". Ukraine's situation has not been lost on World Athletics, with president Sebastian Coe helping to set up a foundation to provide funding for athletes. "We have no money from government: when war starts, sports is not first place," Pronin stressed. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh

24814764	
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ranjit Khiva S/o Nachhatar Khiva R/o Mohalla Kesari Bagh, Kapurthala, Punjab, India. That I am holding an Indian Passport No. L1435090. That Nachhatar Khiva and Nacchattar Singh both names are belong to one and the same person i.e. my Father. (C# 2020) 20-07-2022

I, Sahil Royal S/o Parminder Singh holder of Indian Passport No. V-9366205 issued from Kuwait on date 22/09/2021 permanent resident of B-5/109, Dada Colony Industrial Area Jalandhar and presently residing at Salmiya, Block 10, Issa Al-Qatami Street, Building No. 51, Kuwait do hereby change my name from Sahil to Sahil Royal with immediate effect. Kindly

note. (C 2022) 20-07-2022

I, am Narajan Pal holder of Indian Passport No. M9149587 having permanent resident of VPO Pachranga Teshil and Jalandhar District, India, Pin No: 144201 residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Naranjan Surname: Pal (C 2021) 20-07-2022



EUGENE: Kazakhstan's Norah Jeruto (right) competes in the women's 3000m steeplechase final during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon on July 20, 2022. —AFP

Jeruto storms world steeple

China's Feng wins world women's discus gold

EUGENE: Kenyan-born Norah Jeruto won world gold for Kazakhstan in the women's 3000m steeplechase on Wednesday while China's Feng Bin threw a massive personal best to claim the discus title. While day five of action at Hayward Field featured only two finals, South African heavyweights Caster Semenya and Wayde van Niekerk were trackside along with 400m hurdles stars Sydney McLaughlin and Dalilah Muhammad in a series of high-calibre heats and semi-finals.

Jeruto clocked the third fastest time in history and a championship record of 8min 53.02sec for the steeplechase victory in Eugene, with Ethiopian Werkuha Getachew claiming silver in a national record of 8:54.61. A second Ethiopian, Mekides Abebe, made the most of a mistake by Kenyan-born Bahraini Winfred Mutile Yavi on the final water barrier, to snatch bronze (8:56.08).

The discus was all but over after the first round as Feng threw 69.12m on her opening visit to the ring,

improving by more than three meters her previous best of 66.00m set in Beijing in April. Croatia's Sandra Perkovic, a two-time Olympic champion and also twice a world gold medalist, claimed silver with 68.45m. American Valarie Allman, who won Olympic gold at the Tokyo Games, took bronze with 68.30m. Semenya's first appearance in a world championships in five years saw the controversy-mired South African fail to qualify for the women's 5000m finals.

'Cooking' Caster

In roasting mid-afternoon temperatures, the two-time Olympic gold medalist finished 13th in the first of two rounds in 15:46.12, more than 45sec off the 15th and final qualifying place. "Cooking!" said Semenya, who was forced to switch from her favored 800m (in which she is also a former three-time champion) to the longer event due to gender eligibility rules that required her to take testosterone-reducing drugs to compete in races

between 400m to a mile post-race.

"It was hot, I could not keep up with the pace, I tried to stick as much as I can, but you know, it is a part of the game. "I think it is great to be able to run here," she added. "Just being able to finish the 5k, for me it is a blessing. I am learning and I am willing to learn even more." Her time was far off the heat-winning 14:52.64 set by Ethiopian Gudaf Tsegay, fresh from her silver in the 1500m.

Semenya's teammate Wayde van Niekerk qualified for the final of the men's 400m after finishing second in his semi-final in 44.75sec. Van Niekerk set the world record of 43.03sec when winning Olympic gold in Rio, but then sustained a nasty knee injury that saw him sit out track for three years. "It is the challenge of doing this 400m and not having as many races in my legs as I would love to have by now," he acknowledged.

"But I made it through and I felt comfortable for the majority of the race. So it is about recovering

now and getting ready for the final." Van Niekerk added: "It is a learning process in every race. I am listening to my body and executing that way. "It has been a challenging three years and now, I just want to come out and do my best. I need to be back with every step I take to be able to challenge my record." US one-lap medal hope Michael Norman topped qualifying times for what should be an ultra-competitive final on Friday.

Elsewhere, Sydney McLaughlin underscored her status as favorite to add a world gold to her Olympic 400m hurdles crown as she motored into a final showdown with USA team-mate and defending champion Dalilah Muhammad. "It's going to be a great race, I know that for sure," said McLaughlin. Finally, there was bad news for the US men's 4x100m relay team as newly-crowned 100m champion Fred Kerley was ruled out of action. Kerley was diagnosed with a "slight injury to his quad" in the semi-finals of the 200m, from which he failed to advance. —AFP



Kuwait team grabs 2 medals at swimming championship

ALGIERS: Kuwait's national team grabbed two medals, a gold and a silver, at the fifth Arab swimming championship, which opened on Oran city, northwest Algeria, on Wednesday. Ali Al-Zamel secured the gold medal of the 50m backstroke

race, finishing in 25:72 seconds. Walid Alabd-Errazzaq won silver in the 100 meters butterfly race, finishing in 54:29 seconds. The fifth Arab swimming championship continues for four days with 13 countries taking part. —KUNA

Bayern thrash DC United 6-2

WASHINGTON: New signings Sadio Mane and Matthijs De Ligt scored debut goals as Bayern Munich thumped Major League Soccer's DC United 6-2 in a friendly on Wednesday. Senegalese international Mane, who joined Bayern from Liverpool last month in a transfer worth a reported \$42 million, opened his account for the Bundesliga champions from the penalty spot after five minutes.

Mane's spot-kick was awarded after DC United centre-back Donovan Pines upended Lucas Copado as the teenage striker surged into the penalty area.

The early strike set the tone for a one-sided clash at Washington's Audi Field that underscored the work facing former England and Manchester United star Wayne Rooney, recently installed as manager of the struggling MLS side. Elsewhere, however, the mid-season form of MLS clubs made a difference against Premier League rivals as Minnesota United downed Everton 4-0 and Charlotte FC came out on top in a pre-season penalty shootout over Chelsea after holding the English giants to a 1-1 draw in 90 minutes.

Arsenal, meanwhile, used two second half goals to subdue Orlando City 3-1. Bayern doubled their lead in the 12th minute when Marcel Sabitzer's shot from outside the area wrong-footed DC United goalkeeper Jon Kempin. Serge Gnabry made it 3-0 just before half-time, tucking away a low cross from Mane in the 44th minute. De Ligt then marked his move from Italy's Juventus earlier this week with a goal on debut after coming on as a substitute at half-time.

The Dutch defender crashed in a volley from a corner to make it 4-0 after 47 minutes. Joshua Zirkzee added a tap-in after a patient build up from Bayern to make it 5-0 in the 51st minute before Skage Lehland's consolation effort for DC United three minutes later. Theodore Ku-Dipietro added a second for DC United three minutes from time before German veteran Thomas Mueller made it 6-2 deep into injury time. The matches in Charlotte and Orlando both started more than an hour late because of severe weather.

In Charlotte, the excitement of seeing Raheem Sterling in Chelsea colors for the first time was tempered as the hosts came out on top 5-3 in the shootout.

Chelsea dominated from the start and saw a spate of early attempts go unrewarded before US international Christian Pulisic fired them ahead in the 30th minute with a right-footed shot over diving Charlotte goalkeeper Kristijan Kablina.

That opener was cancelled by a Daniel Rios penalty that was



WASHINGTON: Sadio Mane of Bayern Munich runs with the ball during the pre-season friendly match between DC United and Bayern Munich at Audi Field on July 20, 2022. —AFP

converted in the final minute of injury time. England international Sterling, signed this month to a five-year contract for a fee reported to be 50 million pounds (\$59 million) after winning four Premier League titles with Manchester City, came on in the second half. He nearly bagged his first goal in the 84th minute, but his left-footed blast was turned away.

Arsenal pull away

It looked as if Chelsea would still walk away with the win, but a handball by Trevoh Chalobah gave Charlotte an opening and when Conor Gallagher's spot-kick was saved in the shootout the MLS club could celebrate. In Orlando, Arsenal notched their fourth straight pre-season win. Eddie Nketiah scored the go-ahead goal in the 66th minute and Reiss Nelson sealed it in the 80th. The Gunners had seized the lead in the fifth minute when Gabriel Martinelli's shot was deflected in. Uruguayan Facundo Torres pulled Orlando level in the 29th with a blistering shot past goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale, but with their top players brought in at halftime Arsenal pulled away after the break. Arsenal and Chelsea will continue their preparations for the start of the Premier League season when they meet in Orlando on Saturday. Everton head home after a disappointing two Stateside defeats. They fell 2-0 to Arsenal in Baltimore on Saturday. —AFP