



## Notice

### Happy Hijri New Year to all our readers!

Kuwait Times will not print July 31st in honor of the Hijri New Year. Readers can stay informed with breaking news and information via [KuwaitTimes.com](http://KuwaitTimes.com) and our digital media channels on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

## 2 Kuwait Premier receives FM, diplomatic missions' heads



## 3 Kuwait marks 'World Day against human trafficking'



## 15 Popp sends Germany into Euro final against England



# Interior cautions drivers amid unstable weather

## Call 112 in case of emergency, MoI advises

### Committee to study new proposals

KUWAIT: Official sources said a ministerial committee has been asked to look into several proposed laws that were submitted by members of parliament, as well as other government proposals on how to deal with the large number of expatriates in Kuwait. The committee is expected to study and make recommendations which will be presented to the National Assembly. The recommendations are expected to change Kuwait's population structure.

Sources said there are proposals to review the issuance of driver's licenses to expats. The proposals include (1) 'Not to issue' a license for any expat unless he provides a license from his home country (2) Not allow an expat to own more than one vehicle (3) Expats cannot own a vehicle unless he has a Kuwait license (4) Imposing annual fees of KD 1,200 for renewing expats' licenses and fees for money transfers.

Money transfers fees were rejected by the government earlier. The Ministerial Economic Committee believes there will be no economic harm despite fears and worries by the Exchange companies. Other proposals call for the quick transfer of expats' medical treatment to the private sector and imposing health insurance on every expat and granting expats 'permission to travel out of the country as well as charge 'cleaning fees'.



KUWAIT: Motorists wait at the traffic signal in Kuwait City. Ministry of Interior, on Thursday, called on drivers and beachgoers to exercise caution due to unstable weather. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Asia's richest woman loses half of wealth

BEIJING: Asia's wealthiest woman lost more than half her fortune over the past year as China's real estate sector was rocked by a cash crunch, a billionaire index showed Thursday. Yang Huiyan, a majority shareholder in Chinese property giant Country Garden, saw her net worth plunge by more than 52

percent to \$11.3 billion from \$23.7 billion a year ago, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

Yang's fortune took a major hit on Wednesday when the Guangdong-based Country Garden's Hong Kong-listed shares fell 15 percent after the company announced it would sell new shares to raise cash. Yang inherited her wealth when her father - Country Garden founder Yang Guoqiang - transferred his shares to her in 2005, according to state media. She became Asia's richest woman two years later after the developer's initial public offering in Hong Kong. But she is now barely holding onto that title, with chemical fibres tycoon Fan Hongwei a close runner-up with a net worth of \$11.2 billion on Thursday.

Chinese authorities cracked down on excessive

## Alarm as Earth hits 'Overshoot Day' Thursday

PARIS: Mankind marks a dubious milestone Thursday - the day by which humanity has consumed all earth can sustainably produce for this year, with NGOs warning the rest of 2022 will be lived in resource deficit. The date-dubbed "Earth Overshoot Day" - marks a tipping point when people have used up "all that ecosystems can regenerate in one year", according to the Global Footprint Network and WWF.

"From January 1 to July 28, humanity has used as

much from nature as the planet can renew in the entire year. That's why July 28 is Earth Overshoot Day," said Mathis Wackernagel, president of the Global Footprint Network. He added: "The Earth has a lot of stock, so we can deplete Earth for some time but we cannot overuse it for ever. It's like with money; we can spend more than we earn for some time until we're broke." It would take 1.75 Earths to provide for the world's population in a sustainable way, according to the measure, which was created by researchers in the early 1990s. Global Footprint Network said Earth Overshoot Day has fallen ever sooner over the last 50 years.

In 2020, the date moved back three weeks due to the Covid-19 pandemic, before returning to pre-pandemic levels. The burden is not evenly spread. If everyone lived like an American, the date would have fallen even earlier, on March 13, Wackernagel said. The two

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## Loss of smell, taste in 5% COVID cases

PARIS: Around five percent of people who have had COVID-19 develop long-lasting problems with their sense of smell or taste, a large study said Thursday, potentially contributing to the burden of long COVID. A lost sense of smell has been a hallmark of contracting coronavirus since the early days of the pandemic, but it has not been clear how often symptoms like this occur - or how long they can last. Seeking to find out, researchers analyzed the findings of 18 previous studies involving 3,700 patients.

In a new study published in the BMJ, they found that six months after contracting the virus, four percent of patients had not recovered their sense of smell, while two percent had not recovered their sense of taste. It was unclear if this represented a full or partial

recovery, however. The researchers estimated that loss of smell may persist in 5.6 percent of patients, while 4.4 percent may not fully recover their sense of taste.

One woman told the researchers that she had not recovered her sense of smell more than two years after contracting COVID. The researchers said that while most patients should recover their sense of smell and taste within the first three months of getting COVID, "a major group of patients might develop long-lasting dysfunction that requires timely identification, personalized treatment, and long-term follow-up."

Danny Altmann, an immunologist at Imperial College London not involved in the research, said it was a "strong and important study". "Studies such as this alert us to the hidden burden out there of people suffering with persistent symptoms, but perhaps not having thought it worth contacting the GP on the assumption there wouldn't be much to be done," he said.

The research also found that women were less likely to recover these senses than men. The cause of the disparity is not clear, but the researchers suggested women tend to have better senses of smell and

KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior, on Thursday, called on drivers and beachgoers to exercise caution due to unstable weather, in addition to the warnings of the Meteorological Department of the possibility of rainfall in the coming days. In a press statement, the ministry also called on everyone not to hesitate and to call (112) when facing any emergency.

Kuwait Meteorological Department said the heat will continue on Friday with hot wind. The accumulating clouds may be accompanied by scattered rains that could be thunderous. Some areas may witness sand storms. Head of Meteorological department Abdelaziz Al-Qarawi said that Friday's weather will be partly cloudy and humid along the coastal areas.

The winds will be light-to-moderate South-easterly and may reach 40 km at times. The expected temperature will be around 41-43 degrees Celsius. The sea is expected to have moderate waves - and may reach 6 ft at times. Saturday's weather is expected to be partly cloudy and humid along the coastal areas - with light-to-moderate winds. There are chances of scattered rains which might be thunderous at times. The expected temperatures will be between 38-40 degrees Celsius. "The weather at night will be partly cloudy with variable winds. There might be scattered rains and low temperatures of about 29-31 degrees Celsius," Al-Qarawi said.

debt in the property sector in 2020, leaving major players such as Evergrande and Sunac struggling to make payments and forcing them to renegotiate with creditors as they teetered on the edge of bankruptcy. Buyers across the country, furious at lagging construction and delayed deliveries of their properties, have begun withholding mortgage payments for homes sold before completion.

While Country Garden has remained relatively unscathed by industry turmoil, it spooked investors with a Wednesday announcement that it planned to raise more than \$343 million through a share sale, partly to pay debts. Proceeds from the sale would be used for "refinancing existing offshore indebtedness."

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BERLIN: An environmental activist cuts an orange, painted as a globe, during an event to mark the Earth Overshoot Day in Berlin. — AFP



VESOUL: A nurse prepares a syringe for an injection of a COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in Vesoul, eastern France. — AFP

taste in the first place, meaning they have more to lose. The data did not include which COVID variant the patients contracted. Previous research has indicated that more recent Omicron variants are less likely to lead to smell loss. — AFP

## News in brief

### Toxic alcohol kills 42

AHMEDABAD: At least 42 people have died and nearly 100 others have been hospitalized in western India after drinking toxic alcohol, police said on Thursday, with authorities ordering a crackdown on bootleggers. Dozens of people became ill earlier this week after drinking methanol - a poisonous form of alcohol sometimes used as an antifreeze - sold in several villages across Gujarat state. Senior police official Ashok Yadav told AFP that 31 people had since died in Botad district. Another 11 people died in nearby Ahmedabad district. V Chandrasekar, another senior police official, told AFP. "Investigation has revealed that the victims had consumed industrial grade methanol which caused the deaths," state Home Affairs Minister Harsh Sanghavi said in statement. Sanghavi said that 97 people had been admitted to hospital for treatment, with two in critical condition. — AFP

### Iran arrests five spies

TEHRAN: Iran arrested five people accused of links to Zionist spy agency Mossad, state media said on Thursday, in the second such report in as many days. "A spy network consisting of five members affiliated with the Zionist regime was identified and arrested," said a police intelligence statement quoted by the official news agency IRNA. The network had been in contact with a middleman from Mossad "with encouragement from the head of a separatist group", it said, without giving further details. On Wednesday, Iran's intelligence ministry said agents linked to Mossad who were arrested last week were also members of Komalah, a Marxist group which seeks autonomy for Kurdish-populated areas of northern Iran. They were alleged to have been planning to target "sensitive sites" in the Islamic republic, it said. — AFP



KUWAIT: Prime Minister retired General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in a group photo with Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and the new diplomats. —KUNA photos

# Kuwait's Premier receives Foreign Minister, diplomatic missions' chiefs

Selection 'continuation of the long history of Kuwait's unique diplomacy'



Prime Minister retired General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (right) with Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.



New chiefs of diplomatic and consular missions abroad attend the meeting.



KUWAIT: Prime Minister retired General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on Thursday at Seif Palace, where he introduced to him new chiefs of diplomatic and consular missions abroad. During the reception, the Prime Minister quoted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as having congratulated them on being chosen as Kuwait's representatives abroad, wishing them best of luck.

He addressed the diplomats by considering their selection as a "continuation of the long history of Kuwait's unique diplomacy," which, based on the

political leadership's directives, has earned Kuwait regional and international prestige that reflected the international community's trust in and respect for Kuwait. He urged them to do their best to help Kuwaiti citizens in the countries to which they are accredited by means of opening official communication channels that could meet their needs and remove any possible obstacles during their travel. He underlined the significance of maintaining international credibility gained by the State of Kuwait for its political line over the years, together with the integrity and prestigious status of the Foreign Ministry.

Meanwhile, the foreign minister said the new ambassadors on Wednesday took the constitutional



## Envoys urged to help Kuwaiti citizens abroad

## Spokesman: EU wants to enhance ties with Saudi Arabia, GCC countries

BRUSSELS: The European Union seeks to enhance relations with Saudi Arabia and other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). EU Lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Peter Stano, told a news conference in Brussels Thursday. "The European Union, Saudi Arabia, and all countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council share the interest to develop this relation, our cooperation," he emphasized. Stano recalled the EU's strategy on GCC, which was unveiled a few months ago, adding, "Where we clearly state that we want to enhance this partnership with all the countries of the Gulf because that is something mutually beneficial for us and for people in these countries."

"So this is one of the objectives of the EU and we want to engage further both with the GCC and its member states including Saudi Arabia," he underlined. The EU wants to enhance the relationship we have with Saudi Arabia in a number of fields not least in the field of energy and Green transition, he said. The EU spokesperson said this is something that has been discussed during the visit by EU High Representative Josep Borrell to

Riyadh a few months ago and reinforced by the visit of the Saudi foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud to Brussels not so long ago. He said that the EU is also discussing human rights issues with Saudi Arabia, adding that this year the 27-member bloc launched the first human Rights Dialogue with Saudi Arabia and all the related issues. With reference to Saudi Arabia 'a crown prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to Paris today, Stano said "the visit by representatives of third countries in the EU member states is something which is a natural part for our relations, in enhancing relations, reviewing relations advancing the relations." The six-member GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. —KUNA



Peter Stano

## Serbian President praises good relations with Kuwait

VIENNA: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic lauded the good relations that bind his country to the State of Kuwait. Vucic made the remark while welcoming Kuwait's outgoing Ambassador to Serbia Youssef Ahmad Abdulsamad in Belgrade, commending his personal contributions during his tenure to strengthening and developing relations between Kuwait and Serbia in various fields.

The Kuwaiti embassy in Serbia said that both sides expressed, during their meeting, the importance of pushing forward bilateral relations, especially in the economic, investment and energy security fields, as well as cooperation in the fields of tourism and food security. The statement quoted Ambassador Abdulsamad as saying that the two countries have long historical relations, and will celebrate the 60th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between them next year. President of the National Assembly of Serbia Ivica Dacic, and the Foreign Minister Nikola Selakovic earlier received Ambassador Abdulsamad to bid him farewell.



VIENNA: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic meets Kuwait's outgoing Ambassador to Serbia Youssef Ahmad Abdulsamad. —KUNA

They discussed the importance of holding the second meeting of the joint committee for economic and technical cooperation between the two countries in the near future. They also praised the parliamentary ties and relations through mutual visits between the Speakers and Members of Kuwaiti and Serbian Parliament during the past years. Ambassador Abdulsamad expressed his gratitude to the Serbian President and his government for what he felt during his stay in Belgrade during the past years of affection and cooperation to facilitate his tasks. —KUNA

Local

# Kuwait reiterates condemnation of repeated violations on Al-Aqsa

Events 'a spur to destroy stability in the region, reason to fuel hatred'

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait reiterated on Wednesday its strong condemnation and denunciation of the "repeated violations" on Al-Aqsa Mosque, deeming these acts a provocation to the feelings of Muslims worldwide and an explicit threat to the freedom to worship.

"These events, in addition to being a continuous episode of a series of flagrant violations of all international conventions and resolutions, are also considered a spur to destroy the pillars of stability in the region and a reason to fuel the feelings of hatred, extremism and violence," Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations Mansour Al-Otaibi told a Security Council debate on the Middle East situation. Al-Aqsa Mosque is subject to "repeated violations, whether by the Israeli occupation forces or by settlers," Otaibi added, most recently yesterday.



**'The perpetrators have escaped without accountability'**

holding the Zionist entity's forces fully responsible for the repercussions of these crimes, illegal and provocative practices in Jerusalem and the Haram Al-Sharif, and violations against the defenseless Palestinian people, their land and their holy sites. On this, he stressed the importance of collective action in order to intensify international efforts to restore a comprehensive calm and focus on reviving the peace process in the Middle East.

The Zionist entity's policies, which aim to ensure control over occupied Palestinian lands, to change the demographics and ensure the highest number of settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, confirm its unwillingness to reach a comprehensive and just peace agreement with the Palestinians, he said. These ongoing violations have led to the displacement of many Palestinian families after losing their property and homes to demolition.

Meanwhile, the perpetrators of these crimes have escaped without accountability, he explained. "There is no doubt that the absence of accountability and the continuation of impunity anywhere and at any time will necessarily lead to an expansion of the cycle of violence and a prolongation of the conflict and will



**NEW YORK:** Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during a Security Council debate on the Middle East situation. —KUNA



**SALFIT:** Zionist entity's security forces attack Palestinian protesters during a demonstration against settlement expansion, in the occupied West Bank town of Salfit, on July 27, 2022. —AFP

lead to a reduction in opportunities for sustainable peace and security," he underlined.

**Journalist's assassination**

The Kuwaiti diplomat reiterated his condemnation of the assassination of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh by the Zionist entity's forces as she was carrying out her duty to cover crimes committed against the Palestinian people in Jenin two months ago. This crime is in violation of international laws and norms requiring an immediate, independent and transparent international investigation to ensure that those responsible are identified and brought to justice, he said.

Separately, he reiterated Kuwait's full support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in its belief in the vital and important role the UN body plays in alleviating the suffering of Palestinian refugees. He also called on the international community to continue supporting the UN agency's role of providing health, educational and relief services to Palestinians. Kuwait adheres to the Arab, Islamic and international position, which affirms that peace is the strategic option and that the two-state solution is the only permanent, comprehensive and just solution to the crisis, he added. —KUNA

## Kuwait discusses child protection with UNICEF officials

**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs Khalid bin Shalfout received Deputy Representative UNICEF - Gulf Area Jumana Al-Hajj and office representative in Kuwait Tatiana Collin to discuss children protection and the implementation of the law, as well as child abuse and how to protect children through state institutions and society members.

Bin Shalfout said a committee from all authorities concerned with child protection will be formed soon and will put together a road map for all those related to the implementation of the law. Jumana Al-Hajj said the office is ready to present the necessary support to make it easier to implement the law of child protection through courses and workshops.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait and UNICEF officials during the meeting.



**KUWAIT:** Public Authority of Manpower officials pose for a group photo.

## Kuwait marks World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

**KUWAIT:** Director General of Public Authority of Manpower Dr Mubarak Al-Jafour said celebrating the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which is marked on July 30, comes under the theme of increasing awareness about the issue of fighting trafficking in persons and strengthening the culture of protecting rights and means of preventing this crime.



**Director General of Public Authority of Manpower Dr Mubarak Al-Jafour.**

Jafour, who is also member of the national committee for the implementation of the national strategy to prevent human trafficking, said the United Nations issued a decision in 2013 to designate July 30 each year as a world day against trading in persons, and this was to remind the world the importance of this issue which is considered one of the main issues of human rights as a cross-border crime.

He said Kuwait was among the first countries that took interest in this issue, pointing out the National Strategy to prevent trafficking in per-

sons that was approved by the Cabinet in its 261/2018 decision and formed the national committee for the implementation of the national strategy in which related government entities are members. "They are coordinating fully to fight this crime," he said. Also, a department concerned with fighting trafficking in persons was formed in 2015 at the criminal detectives directorate, and works on implementing the law besides creating a special prosecution for these issues, he added.

their income and payments reports no later than August 8. It said the types of projects must be mentioned, be it in Kuwait or abroad. NGOs and foundations that received approval from the ministry to carry out the projects in and outside Kuwait must submit financial and administrative reports about the projects, including the amounts of money collected, total expenses, and the percentage of completed jobs in search project. The number of charitable organizations that participated in the project is 61, including 46 NGO and 14 foundations.

## NGOs told to submit charity reports

**KUWAIT:** The Social Affairs Ministry's NGOs and Foundations Department asked all participants in the ninth project for collecting Eid Al-Adha 'udhiya' (sacrifice) donations for 2022 to head over

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## News in brief

## MoH launches blood donation campaign

**KUWAIT:** The Health Ministry announced on Thursday that it would launch the annual blood donation campaign, which coincided with the 32nd anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Speaking to the press, Director of the Department of Blood Transfusion Services at the Ministry Dr Reem Al-Radwan revealed that the donors would be received at the Kuwait Central Blood Bank in Jabriya area and other centers from 08:00 am until 8:00 pm local time. Last year, donors provided 359 blood packets during the campaign, she indicated, calling on citizens and residents alike to partake in this annual humanitarian gesture.

## 'Report information about missing Kuwaitis'

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's ministries of foreign affairs and defense on Wednesday renewed calls on citizens to report any information regarding the remains of missing Kuwaitis or Kuwaiti properties. In a joint statement, the two ministries urged Iraqis or any person who may possess information about the burial locations of Iraqis or Kuwaitis, lost in the beginning of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, or any information about Kuwaiti properties, namely documents and Amiri archives, to report back immediately. The ministries provided several phone numbers, including of Kuwaiti missions in the country, Iraqis, in and out of the country, could call. Foreign affairs ministry 009647901935623 - 009647901935622. The Directorate of Human Rights in the Iraqi Ministry of Defense handles the file of missing Kuwaitis.

## Kuwait expresses solidarity with Philippines

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Kuwait's solidarity with Philippines after a 7.1-magnitude earthquake left several casualties in the north-western province of Abra on Wednesday. "The State of Kuwait offers sincere condolences to the people and government of the Philippines and the families of the victims," the Ministry said in a statement, wishing those wounded a quick recovery.

## Pakistan's Prime Minister congratulates Kuwait's PM

**KUWAIT:** Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif congratulated retired General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on his appointment as Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait. The Prime Minister of Pakistan said in a tweet, "I look forward to working closely with him to further strengthen Pakistan-Kuwait fraternal relations, rooted deep in shared values and commonality of interests. Pakistan and Kuwait enjoy close and cordial relations and the top leadership of the two countries remains regularly in contact as exemplified through the exchange of visits from the two sides."

## Kuwait crude oil drops to \$108.71 pb

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait crude oil plunged \$2.48 during Wednesday's trading sessions to reach \$108.71 per barrel (pb), compared with \$111.19 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday. Brent crude rose \$2.22 to \$106.62 pb and West Texas Intermediate gained \$2.28 to \$97.26 pb. The price of OPEC basket of crudes fell by \$1.24 pb to \$108.11 pb on Wednesday from \$109.35 a day earlier. The annual average price of the OPEC basket in 2021 was \$69.89 per barrel, OPEC noted in its daily bulletin on Friday. On June 2, the energy ministers of the OPEC+ coalition agreed to increase the oil output by 648,000 barrels per day in this August.

## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** A woman stares at the Kuwait Towers through a window from Al-Hamra Tower in Kuwait City, on July 27, 2022. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Kurdistan region President expresses desire to strengthen relations with Kuwait

**IRBIL:** President of Kurdistan's region in Iraq Nechirvan Barzani expressed Thursday Iraq's and Kurdistan region's desire to strengthen relations with Kuwait. A presidential statement mentioned that this came during a meeting with Kuwaiti Consul General Omar Al-Kandari on occasion of concluding his work as consul in Kurdistan's region. Barzani commended Al-Kandari's role in boosting relations tying Kurdistan and Iraq, affirming the depth of these relations. He further hailed Kuwait's aid to the region across various sectors. Political and security developments in Iraq and the world were also discussed, in addition to issues of common concern. Meanwhile, Consul Al-Kandari thanked chief of Kurdistan region for his support, read the statement. The Consul provided a summary of his work and activities during his stay in Kurdistan. Dr Omar Al-Kandari is the first Kuwaiti diplomat to lead Kuwaiti diplomatic team in Kurdistan, during his stay he established a wide-ranging network of connections, and oversaw a Kuwaiti humanitarian campaign for refugees and displaced people in Kurdistan's region, dubbed "Kuwait by Your Side". —KUNA



**IRBIL:** President of Kurdistan's region in Iraq Nechirvan Barzani meets Kuwaiti Consul General Omar Al-Kandari. —KUNA

## Kuwait's IICO reopens school for displaced Iraqis in Irbil

**IRBIL:** The Kuwait-based International Islamic Organization (IICO) reopened on Thursday in the Iraqi Kurdistan city of Irbil a school for 750 displaced Iraqi students. Kuwait's General Consul in Irbil Dr Omar Al-Kandari attended the reopening ceremony of the "second Kuwait" school. The school was closed a month ago due to a fire that erupted in the facility. Speaking to the press, Consul Kandari indicated that the school was part of the 'Kuwait by your side' humanitarian campaign, noting that the reopening was coordinated with Barzani charitable institute. The State of Kuwait is keen on continuing its humanitarian role in Iraq so as to reflect the strong ties linking the two nations. The school was established in 2017 as part of Kuwait's outreach program to enable Iraqi students to continue their education. Omed Khoshnaw, Irbil province governor, expressed gratitude during the reopening ceremony of the school. He commended the continuous Kuwaiti assistance to Iraq and Kurdistan province, saying that the school of help boost education in the region.

Meanwhile, President of the Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF) Musa Ahmad praised the Kuwaiti role in supporting the displaced and needy people in the Iraqi region of Kurdistan. This came in a statement to the press on the sidelines of a ceremony held to honor Dr Omar Al-Kandari, attended by a large number of officials from the region. "Kuwait's humanitarian initiatives and stances toward the displaced and refugees in Kurdistan exceeded all expectations. Kuwait, with its humanitarian and relief institutions, has kept helping the Iraqi and Syrian needy and refugees since the start of the crisis," said Ahmad. He praised the various humanitarian assistances that included medical, educational, food supplies, in addition to well digging, and distributing gas and heaters. He evaluated the "important" and continuous role played by the Kuwaiti diplomatic team in Irbil to easily deliver aid supplies to the needy people.

In a similar statement, Kandari expressed his thanks for this honoring; stressing Kuwait continues support for the displaced and needy in Iraq and the



**IRBIL:** Kuwait's General Consul in Irbil Dr Omar Al-Kandari attends the school's reopening. —KUNA



**Kuwait's General Consul in Irbil Dr Omar Al-Kandari is seen at the school.**

Kurdish region. Kandari, who was the first diplomat to lead Kuwaiti diplomacy in the region seven years ago, expressed his pride in the solid and developed relations between Kuwait and the Kurdistan region since the era of the late Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani. Since 2015, Kuwait has been keen to support the displaced Iraqis in the Kurdistan region, which had the largest share in receiving the waves of displacement after the ISIS or Daesh took control of large areas of Iraq. The humanitarian leadership of Kuwait has spared no effort to stand with the displaced by providing various types of

support to the Kurdistan region of Iraq in order to overcome the crisis. These relief efforts included shelter camps, the provision of water and food, the establishment of health centers, a relief air bridge, orphan sponsorship, the distribution of food vouchers, blankets, furniture, oil heaters, and heating oil. The relief campaign also included visiting the displaced patients, distributing clothing, treating wounded civilians, building caravan schools, digging water wells, providing tons of medicines, ambulances, and building a medical section in the emergency hospital in Irbil. —KUNA



Drug mules fill women's jails in Hong Kong

## Pro-Sadr protesters storm Iraqi parliament in fortified Green Zone

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QUEBEC, Canada: Pope Francis arrives at the National Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupre in Quebec, Canada, where he will celebrate Mass on July 28, 2022. — AFP

## Pope denounces 'ideological colonization'

### I renew my request for forgiveness for the wrong done to the Indigenous peoples

QUEBEC CITY, Canada: Pope Francis decried "ideological colonization" Wednesday and renewed his apology to Indigenous peoples for decades of abuse in a speech to Canada's top officials, who invited him to take further action leading to "real reconciliation."

The leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics was speaking in Quebec City, the latest stage of his landmark tour of Canada which he kicked off this week with a powerful apology for the Church's role in the abuse of Indigenous children at Catholic-run residential schools. On Wednesday, the 85-year-old pontiff slammed the "deplorable" school system and again expressed his "deep shame and sorrow... I renew my request for forgiveness for the wrong done by so many Christians to the Indigenous peoples."

He derided the "colonialist mentality" of the past-adding that "today, too, there are any number of forms of ideological colonization that clash with the reality of life, stifle the natural attachment of peoples to their values, and attempt to uproot their traditions, history

and religious ties."

Praising multiculturalism, he vowed to promote the rights of Indigenous people and to "move forward on a fraternal and patient journey ... working for healing and reconciliation." From the late 1800s to the 1990s, Canada's government sent about 150,000 children into 139 residential schools run by the Church, where they were cut off from their families, language and culture in a failed policy of forced assimilation.

Many were physically and sexually abused, and thousands are believed to have died of disease, malnutrition or neglect. Francis has been welcomed in Canada, and his apology-which he first made on Monday in the western Indigenous community of Maskwacis-has been hailed as historic, though many Indigenous people who have spoken to AFP have warned there is more work to do.

That point was driven home again to the pope on Wednesday by Mary Simon, Canada's first Indigenous governor general, who along with Prime Minister

Justin Trudeau greeted Francis when he arrived in Quebec City from Edmonton. "Regardless of where you are listening from... you are on Indigenous land," she said. She praised the survivors of the school system, who came to hear the pope's words "with hearts and minds open, some willing to forgive, some still living with the hurt, but all willing to listen."

The pontiff's visit, she added, was "an important step towards further dialogue and actions that will lead to real reconciliation." Trudeau, too, looked to the future. "Survivors and their descendants need to be at the centre of everything we do together going forward," he said.

#### 'Intolerant' cultural fashion

Pope Francis also took on cancel culture on Wednesday, branding it "a cultural fashion that ... proves intolerant of difference and concentrates on the present moment, on the needs and rights of individuals, while frequently neglecting their duties with

regard to the most weak and vulnerable."

The pontiff also reiterated his feelings about the war in Ukraine, warning against "an arms race and strategies of deterrence" and raising the spectre of "terrible and protracted cold wars." Along the road from the airport to the Citadel in Quebec City, hundreds of people, smartphones in hand, crowded behind the barriers to catch a glimpse of the pope in his white Fiat. Some carried welcome signs or flags of the Vatican.

On Thursday, Francis will visit the National Shrine of Saint Anne de Beaupre, one of the main pilgrimage sites in North America, and preside over a mass. Later that day he will go to Notre Dame Cathedral in Quebec City to give a homily.

On Friday, he will travel to the Arctic archipelago of Nunavut, where he will visit the town of Iqaluit for the last stop of his six-day visit. Francis has been suffering from knee pain and often using a wheelchair during his Canada tour. — AFP

## US gun makers grilled over marketing

WASHINGTON: US gun makers earned \$1 billion in the past decade from sales of AR-15-style semiautomatic weapons, a House committee said Wednesday as lawmakers grilled firearms manufacturers after a series of grim mass shootings.

"The gun industry has flooded our neighborhoods, our schools and even our churches and synagogues with these deadly weapons and has gotten rich doing it," Democratic Representative Carolyn Maloney said.

"They are choosing their bottom line over the lives of their fellow Americans," the New York lawmaker told a tense day-long hearing of the House Oversight and Reform Committee. "This is beyond irresponsible."

Maloney and other Democrats accused the gun manufacturers of using "dangerous" marketing tactics

to sell firearms to young people and of failing to "acknowledge their role in the violence plaguing our nation." "We know the power of marketing, especially the power of marketing to young people, whether it's cereal or cigarettes, or in this case, guns," said Bradley Schneider, a Democratic congressman who lives in Highland Park, where a young man shot dead seven people during a July 4 parade. At a hearing attended by several relatives of victims of recent mass shootings, Democrats called for a lifting of the immunity from lawsuits enjoyed by gun makers so they can be held accountable. Under a 2005 law, gun manufacturers are not liable in the United States for the use of their firearms in the commission of a crime.

Marty Daniel, chief executive officer of Daniel Defense — maker of the gun used by a young man to kill 19 school children and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas — defended his company's business practices.

"The stated implied purpose of this hearing is to vilify, blame and try to ban over 24 million sporting rifles already in circulation that are lawfully possessed and commonly used by millions of Americans to protect their homes and loved ones," Daniel said.

"I believe our nation's response needs to focus not

on the type of gun but on the types of persons who are likely to commit mass shootings," he said.

Christopher Kilroy, president and CEO of Sturm, Ruger & Co., said it would be "wrong to deprive citizens of their constitutional right to purchase a lawful firearm they desire because of the criminal acts of wicked people."

#### Bill to ban assault weapons

Republican lawmakers also pushed back against their Democratic colleagues. "Gun manufacturers do not cause violent crime," said Representative James Comer of Kentucky. "Criminals cause violent crime."

"We'll continue to protect the rights of all law-abiding gun owners who safely use, store and carry firearms including the AR-15," Comer said.

According to a report by the House Oversight and Reform Committee, five major gun manufacturers reaped more than \$1 billion from the sale of assault rifles over the last decade. Daniel Defense's revenue from AR-15-style rifles tripled from \$40 million in 2019 to more than \$120 million in 2021, the report said. Ruger's earnings from AR-15-style rifles rose from \$39 million to \$103 million during the period while Smith & Wesson's revenue from long guns, including AR-15-style rifles, doubled, from \$108 million to \$253 million.

The Democratic-controlled House is moving forward for the first time in nearly 20 years with a bill that would ban the sale, import, manufacture or transfer of certain types of semi-automatic weapons.

The "Assault Weapons Ban of 2021" would likely be doomed to fail in the Senate, however. Democrats have 50 seats in the 100-member Senate and 10 Republican votes would be needed to bring the measure to the floor. Congress passed a 10-year ban on assault rifles and certain high-capacity magazines in 1994.

But lawmakers let it expire in 2004, and sales of those weapons have soared since then. After the Uvalde massacre, President Joe Biden appealed to lawmakers to again ban assault rifles or at least raise the minimum age for buying them from 18 to 21. But Republican lawmakers, who see such a restriction as going against the constitutional right to bear arms, have refused to go along with Biden's proposal. — AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: (COMBO) This combination of handout photos provided by the Hennepin County Jail created on June 03, 2020 shows (L-R) ex-officers Tou Thao and J. Alexander Kueng in booking photos. — AFP

## Ex-cops sentenced to prison for George Floyd killing

WASHINGTON: Two former Minneapolis police officers were sentenced to prison on Wednesday for their roles in the May 2020 killing of George Floyd, a Black man whose death sparked protests against racial injustice across the United States. US District Judge Paul Magnuson sentenced J. Alexander Kueng, 28, to three years in prison and 36-year-old Tou Thao to three and a half years on federal charges.

Kueng and Thao were convicted in February of violating Floyd's civil rights, showing "deliberate indifference" to his medical needs and failing to intervene to stop the use of "unreasonable force" by another officer, Derek Chauvin.

Kueng, Thao and Chauvin were among four police officers involved in Floyd's arrest for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill to buy a pack of cigarettes. Chauvin, a 19-year veteran of the force, was videotaped by a bystander kneeling on the neck of a handcuffed Floyd for nearly 10 minutes until he passed out and died.

He was found guilty of murder and is serving more than 20 years in prison. The fourth officer, Thomas Lane, was also convicted in February of violating Floyd's civil rights and was sentenced to two and a half years in prison.

Lane's lawyers had asked for a lighter sentence for him on the grounds that he had suggested placing Floyd on his side and tried to resuscitate him. "All four officers involved in the tragic death of George Floyd have now been convicted in federal court, sentenced to prison and held accountable for their crimes," Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke said in a statement. "The federal prosecution of all officers tied to the death of George Floyd should send a clear and powerful message that the Department of Justice will never tolerate the unlawful abuse of power or victimization of Americans by anyone in law enforcement," Clarke said.—AFP



WASHINGTON: Javier Cazares (L), father of 9-year-old Jacklyn Cazares, who was killed during the shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, in May 2022, sits alongside his daughter Jazmin Cazares (C) and his wife Gloria Cazares (R), during a House Committee on Oversight and Reform hearing on Examining the Practices and Profits of Gun Manufacturers. — AFP

## N Korea 'ready to mobilize' nuclear weapons

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country was "ready to mobilize" its nuclear deterrent in any future military clash with the United States and South Korea, state media said Thursday. Washington and Seoul have repeatedly warned that Pyongyang is preparing to carry out its seventh nuclear test—a move that the United States has warned would provoke a "swift and forceful" response.

In Kim's latest speech to mark the armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War-known as "Victory Day" in the North-he said the country's armed forces were "thoroughly prepared" for any crisis. "Our country's nuclear war deterrent is also ready to mobilize its

absolute power faithfully, accurately and promptly in accordance with its mission," Kim said in a speech on Wednesday, according to Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency. Speaking to war veterans on the 69th anniversary of the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, Kim emphasised the country's "thorough readiness" to "deal with any military clash with the United States". His latest threats come as South Korea and the United States move to ramp up joint military exercises, which have always infuriated the North as Pyongyang considers them rehearsals for invasion. This week, the US military held live-fire drills using its advanced Apache helicopters stationed in the South for the first time since 2019.

Kim also slammed South Korea's new, hawkish president Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May and has vowed to take a tougher stance against Pyongyang-which includes a plan to mobilize a pre-emptive strike capability.

"Talking about military action against our nation, which possess absolute weapons that they fear the

most, is preposterous and is very dangerous self-destructive action," Kim said of the Yoon administration, which he branded a group of "gangsters".

"Such a dangerous attempt will be immediately punished by our powerful strength and the Yoon Suk Yeol government and his military will be annihilated."

The North has carried out a record-breaking blitz of sanctions-busting weapons tests this year, including firing an intercontinental ballistic missile at full range for the first time since 2017. Nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington have stalled since a summit between Kim and then-US president Donald Trump in February 2019 broke down over sanctions relief and what the North would be willing to give up in return. The Kim regime has since rejected Washington and Seoul's repeated offers to resume talks, claiming the United States must first drop its "hostile" policies. Impoverished Pyongyang has long struggled to feed its people and its economy has been battered by pandemic-led border closures as well as sanctions over its nuclear programmes.—AFP

## International

# Pro-Sadr protesters storm Iraqi parliament in fortified Green Zone

## Protests are the latest challenge for oil-rich Iraq

**BAGHDAD:** Hundreds of supporters of powerful Iraqi cleric Muqtada Sadr danced and sang in parliament Wednesday after storming Baghdad's high-security Green Zone in protest at a rival bloc's nomination for prime minister. Police fired barrages of tear gas in a bid to stop the protesters from breaching the gates of the heavily fortified Green Zone, but the crowds surged forward and entered parliament. "I am against the corrupt officials who are in power," said protester Mohamed Ali, a 41-year-old day labourer, one of the hundreds who entered the zone that is home to both government buildings and diplomatic missions, before later leaving peacefully.



**'Revolution of reform, rejection of injustice'**

The protests are the latest challenge for oil-rich Iraq, which remains mired in a political and a socioeconomic crisis despite soaring global energy prices. Sadr's bloc emerged from elections in October as the biggest parliamentary faction, but was still far short of a majority and, nine months on, deadlock persists over the establishment of a new government. Crowds wandered around the parliament building waving national flags, taking photographs, chanting and cheering.

## Global fight against HIV 'In Danger'

**WASHINGTON:** The global fight against HIV has stalled from shrinking resources due to COVID-19 and other crises, according to a new report presented at the International AIDS Conference in Montreal, Canada. Across the world, new HIV infections fell just 3.6 percent between 2020 and 2021, the smallest annual drop since 2016, said the UNAIDS report, titled "In Danger."

Some 1.5 million new infections occurred last year — more than a million over global targets of fighting the virus. "The response to the AIDS pandemic has been derailed by global crises from the colliding pandemics of HIV and COVID, to the war in Ukraine and the resulting global economic crisis," UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima told reporters.

New infections climbed in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Latin America, in line with trends over several years. Asia and the Pacific saw a slight rise, bucking previous declines.

Bright spots included western and central Africa — the latter driven largely by Nigeria — and the Caribbean. "COVID-19 and other instabilities have disrupted health services in much of the world, and millions of students have been out of school, increasing their HIV vulnerability," the report said.

Globally, 38.4 million people were living with HIV in 2021, with 650,000 deaths from AIDS-related illnesses. Young women and adolescent girls were disproportionately impacted, with a new infection occurring in this population every two minutes. Sub-Saharan Africa still accounts for the majority of new infections — 59 percent in 2021 — but that proportion is decreasing as the decline in new cases slows in the rest of the world.

### Fatigue and Ukraine war

The report comes as high-income countries are cutting back aid. In 2021, international resources avail-

## Alarm as Earth hits 'Overshoot...'

Continued from Page 1

NGOs point the finger at the food production system and its "considerable" ecological footprint. "In total, more than half of the planet's biocapacity (55 percent) is used to feed humanity," the two NGOs said.

"A large part of the food and raw materials are used to feed animals and animals that are consumed afterwards",

## Asia's richest woman loses...

Continued from Page 1

general working capital and future development purposes," Country Garden said in a filing with the Hong Kong stock exchange. China's banking regulator has urged lenders to support the property sector and meet the "reasonable financing needs" of firms as analysts and policymakers fear financial contagion. The property sector is estimated to account for 18-30 percent of the country's GDP and is a key driver of growth in the world's second-largest economy. Analysts have warned that the industry is mired in a "vicious cycle" that would further dampen consumer confidence, following the release of dismal Q2 growth figures that were the worst since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

### 'Rejection of injustice'

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi called on the protesters to "immediately withdraw", warning that the security forces would ensure "the protection of state institutions and foreign missions, and prevent any harm to security and order". But it took orders issued by the Shiite leader Sadr before the crowds of protesters started to leave nearly two hours later. "Revolution of reform, and rejection of injustice and corruption," Sadr wrote on Twitter, in support of the protesters.

"Your message has been heard... you have terrorised the corrupt", he added, calling on the demonstrators to say a prayer "before returning home safe and sound". "We obey the Sayyed," the crowds chanted as they calmly left parliament, a term honouring Sadr by acknowledging him as a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Sadr's bloc won 73 seats in last year's election, making it the largest faction in the 329-seat parliament. But since the vote, talks to form a new government have stalled. The protesters oppose the candidacy of Mohammed al-Sudani, a former minister and ex-provincial governor, who is the pro-Iran Coordination Framework's pick for premier.

The Coordination Framework draws lawmakers from former premier Nuri al-Maliki's party and the pro-Iran Fatah Alliance, the political arm of the Shiit-led former paramilitary group Hashed al-Shaabi.

### 'Reject the political process'

"I am against Sudani's candidacy, because he is corrupt," added protester Mohamed Ali. "We reject the whole political process", said Bashar, a protester in parliament, giving only his first name. "We want an independent person who serves the people". Iraq was plunged deeper into political crisis last month when Sadr's 73 lawmakers quit en masse.



Doctor taking blood sample from a HIV patient.

able for HIV were six percent lower than in 2010, with bilateral assistance from the United States down 57 percent over the past decade.

The UN says the HIV response in low- and middle-income countries is \$8 billion short of the amount needed by 2025. Anthony Fauci, the United States' top infectious disease official, said he was worried that fatigue over HIV was holding back resource allocation.

"When you have the disease that we have been addressing as a community, now over 40 years, even that alone is a tough sell to keep the enthusiasm up," he said. With Covid and monkeypox added to the mix, "people are exhausted with epidemics and pandemics, so I think our challenge is we have to fight twice as hard to get HIV back on the radar screen," he added.

Andriy Klepikov, executive director of the Alliance for Public Health, an AIDS advocacy group in Ukraine, called for special attention to his country in light of the invasion by Russia. "Over 100,000 people living with HIV are actually living in areas directly affected by the war," he said, stressing the need for more funds from the United States' PEPFAR program for HIV as well as from UNAIDS. Seventy percent of cases globally were reported in key populations: Sex workers and their clients, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, and transgender people. The report also called attention to racial inequality as an exacerbator of HIV risks. In the United Kingdom and United States of America, Black people lag white people in declines in new infections. In Australia, Canada and the United States, HIV acquisition rates are higher in Indigenous communities. — AFP

said Pierre Cannet of WWF France. In the EU, "63 percent of arable land... is directly associated with animal production", he said. "Agriculture contributes to deforestation, climate change by emitting greenhouse gases, loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems, while using a significant share of fresh water," the NGOs said.

Based on scientific advice, they advocate reducing meat consumption in rich countries. "If we could cut meat consumption by half, we could move the date of the overshoot by 17 days," said Laetitia Mailhes of the Global Footprint Network. "Limiting food waste would push the date back by 13 days, that's not insignificant," she added, while one-third of the world's food is wasted. — AFP

## Morocco battles fires

**RABAT:** Moroccan firefighters stepped up their efforts on Wednesday to contain forest fires, fanned by fierce winds, that are sweeping across the north of the country, according to local authorities. In the most affected province of Larache, south of Tangier, intervention teams supported by the army were attempting to keep in check fires that were still active and threatening villages, local sources told AFP on Wednesday night. Three Canadian firefighting aircraft made 25 runs over the day. More than 900 families from 15 villages were also evacuated as a preventative measure, the same sources said. In the nearby region of Fahs Anjra, east of Tangier, rescuers managed to contain one forest fire and had begun cleaning up the affected areas, local authorities said. Another blaze was on its way to being totally contained in a forest in the province of Taounate, also in the north, after nearly 50 hectares of tree cover were destroyed. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Iraqis walk along a street in central Baghdad's Tahrir Square on July 28, 2022, a day after supporters of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr stormed the country's parliament. — AFP

Sadr had initially supported the idea of a "majority government" which would have sent his Shiite adversaries from the Coordination Framework into opposition. The former militia leader then surprised many by compelling his lawmakers to resign, a move seen as seeking to pressure his rivals to fast-track the establishment of a government. Sixty-four new lawmakers were sworn in later in June, making the pro-Iran bloc the largest in parliament. Earlier this month, hundreds of thousands of Muslim worshippers loyal to Sadr attended a Friday prayer service in Baghdad, in a display of political might.

The huge turnout came despite scorching heat and

the Shiite cleric not being there in person—an indication of his status as a political heavyweight, as well as a key religious authority. The mercurial cleric's sermon took aim at rivals from other Shiite factions.

"We are at a difficult... crossroads in the formation of the government, entrusted to some we do not trust," Sadr said in the speech on July 15, read out by Sheikh Mahmud al-Jayashi. Sadr's sermon took particular aim at the Hashed al-Shaabi, which has been integrated into the army, but is seen by many Iraqis as an Iranian proxy. Hashed supporters last year protested near the Green Zone, demonstrating against what they said was vote "fraud". — AFP

### Potential surrender

Since the historic victory by a left-wing candidate in June's presidential election run-off, security forces have been targeted in 75 attacks by Clan members and other groups, according to the Center for Conflict Analysis Resources (CERAC).

The clan "is escalating violence to present itself, in an eventual negotiation, as a group that can offer de-escalation," CERAC director Jorge Restrepo told AFP. Otoniel had indicated in 2018 that he was willing to turn himself in and Colombia's then-president Juan Manuel Santos, who had won the Nobel Peace Prize for signing a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia rebels, began organizing the process.

But it never came to fruition and the Clan continued to traffic cocaine. When authorities captured the drug lord in October after months of hunting him through the jungle, Duque declared the end of the Gulf Clan, but the cartel has since been more active than ever.

According to independent estimates, the Clan can count on 3,000 fighters and collaborators. Last week, a letter began circulating in which the Clan and other armed groups involved in the cocaine trade declared they were ready to call a ceasefire on August 7 ahead of an eventual disarmament.

Authorities have not confirmed the authenticity of the letter, but foreign minister-elect Alvaro Leyva said he was aware of the document. However, a collective surrender seems far-fetched "unless there is a big enough incentive for these groups to turn themselves in... something that would allow them to avoid extradition or keep their wealth," said Restrepo.

Petro has also opened up the possibility of suspending the extradition of drug-traffickers that "peacefully dismantle" their operations. He has admitted, though, that it depends on "a negotiation with the United States," which has not commented on the possibility.

Despite almost five decades fighting drug trafficking together with American authorities, Colombia remains the world's largest producer of cocaine, and the United States its biggest consumer. — AFP

## Cartel steps up attacks as Colombia power transfer nears

**BOGOTA:** A dozen police officers have been killed, and dozens more injured in recent weeks by Colombia's most powerful drug gang, the Gulf Clan. The group has been sowing terror in the country since May, when its boss Dario Antonio Usuga, known as "Otoniel," was extradited to the United States to face trafficking charges.

But those attacks have intensified even more recently as Colombia approaches the transfer of power on August 7 from conservative President Ivan Duque to leftist former guerrilla Gustavo Petro, who has vowed to negotiate with criminal gangs in a bid to end a decades-long conflict in exchange for more lenient sanctions.

"They are (carrying out attacks) with the sole intention of positioning themselves for political negotiations. This cannot be accepted," warned Defense Minister Diego Molano. Since the beginning of the year, 25 police officers have been killed by the Gulf Clan, almost half of them in the last month, according to officials. Another 60 officers have been injured in dozens of attacks using firearms and explosives.

And three police officers were killed just this week in separate attacks by suspected gang members, according to officials. "They attack patrols from behind... it's unacceptable," said Molano. Officials say the Gulf Clan, which is made up of former members of right-wing paramilitaries, has launched an "armed strike" following Otoniel's extradition.

According to police, the Clan is offering between \$1,000 and \$5,000 for each murder of a member of the security forces. It's a tactic reminiscent of that used by late cocaine kingpin Pablo Escobar in the 1990s as part of his "pistol plan" open war against the state. At least five Clan members have been killed and a dozen captured in the police counter-offensive.

## Moscow, Washington in prisoner swap talks

**MOSCOW:** Moscow confirmed Thursday that it was in talks with Washington on a possible prisoner swap but said there was no concrete agreement "yet" on a deal that reportedly might include a notorious Russian gang runner. The ongoing talks are one of the few areas where Moscow and Washington maintain dialogue as ties unravel over Russia's intervention in Ukraine and the onset of debilitating Western sanctions.

Russia and the United States have already conducted one prisoner swap since Moscow's Ukraine offensive. In April, Washington exchanged former US Marine Trevor Reed for convicted drug smuggler Konstantin Yaroshenko. "A concrete result has not yet been achieved," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday, referring to the ongoing talks.

Moscow hoped "the interests of both parties" would be taken into account, Zakharova said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on Wednesday that Washington had made a "substantial proposal" to Moscow to free basketball star Brittney Griner and former US Marine Paul Whelan. He declined to confirm reports that the United States was offering to trade them for convicted Russian arms trafficker Victor Bout.

"I have nothing more to add since there are no finalized agreements," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Blinken said he would speak to his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov "in the coming

days"—in what would be their first telephone call since Moscow sent troops to Ukraine on February 24. Bout, 55, is the highest-profile Russian prisoner in the United States. He is serving a 25-year jail term and inspired the 2005 arms smuggling movie "Lord of War" starring Nicholas Cage.

### 'Knows nothing'

He was dubbed the "Merchant of Death" by former British minister Peter Hain for supplying weapons to war-torn Angola and Liberia. "Victor knows nothing about negotiations between Russia and the United States about his exchange," his wife Alla told state news agency RIA Novosti late on Wednesday. "Of course, we assume that such negotiations might take place, but we don't talk about it because neither he nor I have any information." Bout was accused over several decades of selling weapons to despots in some of the world's bloodiest conflicts.

The former Soviet air force officer and polyglot was convicted in 2011 of conspiring to sell arms to Colombia's FARC rebels after being arrested in Thailand in a US sting operation. Whelan, a security official at an auto parts company, was arrested in Moscow and sentenced in 2020 to 16 years in prison for espionage, which he denies. Griner, a WNBA champion and two-time Olympic basketball gold medalist, was detained in Russia just days before Moscow launched its offensive in Ukraine.

The 31-year-old athlete has pleaded guilty to drug charges for possessing vape cartridges with cannabis oil. She is now on trial and faces up to 10 years in prison. Griner's defense team said it learnt about the US exchange offer from news reports. "The defense team is not participating in swap discussions," lawyer Maria Blagovolina said. — AFP

## International

# Easy targets: Drug mules fill women's jails in Hong Kong

'They find people who are in a precarious economic situation'

**HONG KONG:** Zoila Lecarnaque Saavedra sealed her fate when she agreed to transport a package from Peru to Hong Kong—a decision that landed her more than eight years in prison. A quarter of Hong Kong's prisoners are women, a record-high percentage skewed by impoverished foreign drug mules who are often duped or coerced.

Awaiting deportation after her release, Lecarnaque Saavedra sat on a bunk bed in a cramped hostel and described how she lost her gamble for quick money. It was 2013 and she was broke. Her husband, the main breadwinner for her family in Peru's capital Lima, had recently left and she needed eye surgery.

Word got around the neighbourhood and she said she was soon approached by a woman who offered her a deal: fly to Hong Kong to pick up tax-free electronics that could be sold for a profit on return, and be paid \$2,000.

"They find people who are in a precarious economic situation," Lecarnaque Saavedra told AFP. "They look for them and in this case it was me." A diminutive figure with a face lined by hardship, 60-year-old Lecarnaque Saavedra said she wanted to warn others who might be lured.

She lost composure when recounting the moment customs officers pulled her aside and it dawned on her she would not be seeing her daughter and mother for many years. "I reflected on the damage I caused to my family, to my children, to my mother, because they were the ones who felt worse than me and that hurts me," she said, her eyes filling with tears.

She described how officers found two jackets inside her suitcase that had been filled with condoms containing about 500 grams (17 ounces) of cocaine in liquid

form. In the hopes of receiving a lighter sentence, Lecarnaque Saavedra pleaded guilty, though she maintains she did not know about the cocaine and was never paid. "The bosses are free, they have not been arrested and I don't know why," she said.

## 'Coercion comes in many forms'

That story is all too familiar in Hong Kong women's prisons. Activists, prison volunteers, lawyers and women in jail who AFP spoke to over the last year said foreign drug mules make up a major chunk of those in female prison wings.

Hong Kong Correctional Services said 37 percent of foreign inmates were female but declined to comment on the reasons for this. With a thriving port and airport, Hong Kong has long been a global hub for trade both legitimate and criminal.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, its airport was one of the world's busiest and best-connected. Drug syndicates favour using women as mules, believing they are less likely to draw attention from authorities.

Official statistics show that a quarter of the 8,434 people serving time in Hong Kong last year were women—the highest rate globally, according to the World Prison Brief. Hong Kong dwarfs second-place Qatar, another global transport hub, where 15 percent of people in prison are women. Only 16 other countries or territories have proportions above 10 percent.

Father John Wotherspoon, a Catholic prison chaplain who has spent decades working with convicted drug smugglers, said the vast majority of female mules were vulnerable foreigners. "Coercion is a big problem and it can come in many forms, economic, physical, emotional," he told AFP from his office in a crowded Hong Kong

## The big problem is the masterminds



LIMA, Peru: File photo shows Peruvian national Zoila Lecarnaque Saavedra, who was convicted of drug trafficking in Hong Kong in 2014, upon her return flight home at Jorge Chavez Airport in Lima. —AFP

neighbourhood known for its red-light businesses.

Wotherspoon, a bundle of energy at 75 years old, has travelled repeatedly to Latin America to try and help families of those arrested—even confronting traffickers at times. He attends many of the drug trials that fill the daily schedule at Hong Kong's High Court, raises donations for the convicted and helps maintain a website that names some of the characters he thinks should be behind bars—collected in part by testimony

from those in jail. "The big problem is the masterminds, the big fish I call them, don't get much of a mention," he said.

Drug mules are easy pickings for police and prosecutors in Hong Kong, where an early guilty plea usually results in prison time being reduced by a third. Fighting a conviction is risky, given the city's harsh drug rules. Sentencing guidelines begin at 20 years for more than 600 grams of cocaine. —AFP

## UNSC condemns Myanmar executions

**BANGKOK:** The UN Security Council (UNSC) has condemned the Myanmar junta's execution of four prisoners, drawing praise Thursday from a shadow government of ousted Myanmar lawmakers.

In a rare consensus on the post-coup crisis, the Security Council on Wednesday released a statement condemning the executions — Myanmar's first in decades — and calling for the immediate release of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

"The members of the Security Council condemned the Myanmar military's execution of opposition activists over the weekend," the Council said.

"They recalled the Secretary-General's statement of 25 July 2022 and echoed his call for the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained prisoners."

The statement was endorsed by Russia and China — the junta's two

major allies that have previously shielded it at the UN — as well as neighbouring India.

"Welcome UN Security Council condemning execution of democracy activists", said the "National Unity Government" (NUG) on a verified Twitter account.

It was time for the council to "take concrete actions against the junta, it added. The NUG — dominated by lawmakers from Aung San Suu Kyi's ousted party — has been working to topple the coup and been declared a "terrorist" organisation by the junta.

The executions announced Monday sparked condemnation from around the globe, heightened fears that more will follow and prompted calls for sterner international measures against the already-isolated junta.

Among the four executed were Phyto Zeya Thaw, a former lawmaker from Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) and veteran democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu — better known as "Jimmy". Both were sentenced to death under anti-terrorism laws.

The junta is increasingly isolated on the world stage, with Cambodian leader



TOKYO: Activists including Myanmar nationals take part in a rally to protest against Myanmar's junta execution of four prisoners, including a former lawmaker from Aung San Suu Kyi's party, outside the United Nations University in Tokyo. —AFP

Hun Sen the only head of state to have visited since the coup that plunged the country into turmoil.

The Cambodian PM had also made a personal request to junta chief Min Aung Hlaing not to go ahead with the

executions. Myanmar's junta has lashed out against international condemnation of its use of capital punishment, saying the four executed prisoners "deserved many death sentences". —AFP

## 'A dirty game': Young Kenyans shun election hype

**KISUMU, Kenya:** As a familiar campaign jingle brings the Kenyan crowd to their feet, Hellen Atieno joins her compatriots and sways to the catchy tune at a political rally in the lakeside city of Kisumu.

Just don't expect the 23-year-old to vote. "I have only come to the rally because there is money. I hope there will be something," Atieno told AFP, referring to the widespread Kenyan practice of offering freebies to prospective voters. Currently without a job, the former fishmonger says she is so fed up with the country's insular political class that she plans to stay home when Kenya votes on August 9 in parliamentary and presidential polls. She is not alone.

The East African economic powerhouse ranks among the world's youngest countries—three-quarters of Kenyans are aged under 34, according to government figures. Many have no interest in participating in an electoral process they widely dismiss as corrupt and pointless.

The number of registered young voters has dropped five percent since the 2017 poll, in contrast to over-35s, whose tally has increased, Kenya's election commission announced last month. Over 22 million Kenyans are eligible to take part in this year's polls, with young people accounting for less than 40 percent of that number, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) said.

### 'A dirty game'

Politicians have responded with a freebie bonanza, offering cash, umbrellas, shirts, caps and even packets of maize flour—a dietary staple to anyone who attends their rallies. The bribes—an electoral offence that can attract a fine of up to two million Kenyan shillings (\$17,000) and/or a six-year jail term—are not new to Kenyan politics.



NAIROBI: Roots party Presidential candidate George Wajackoyah, gestures to his supporters during a campaign rally in Ruai, Nairobi on July 27, 2022, ahead of Kenya's August 2022 general election. —AFP

But galloping food inflation—made worse by the war in Ukraine—and an unemployment crisis have intensified the appetite for such handouts. According to census figures published in 2020, about five million young Kenyans were out of work. Brian Denzel has spent recent weeks hitting one rally after another, eager to pocket the cash on offer, even though the 19-year-old butcher has no plans to vote and sees politics as little more than "a dirty game".

"Who will reject the free money that they are given?" he said, while waiting in line to collect 200 shillings (\$1.70) from a local politician. Kenya's Interior Minister Fred

Matiangi even told reporters on Wednesday that the banks were running short of 100 and 200 shilling notes "because politicians are bribing villagers". In the months leading up to the polls, observers suggested that the youth factor could help heal Kenya's often toxic tribal politics, with a younger electorate less likely to vote according to ethnic affiliations.

Yet, although young Kenyans are less tribally-minded, they also lack "ideological steadfastness", Kisumu-based political analyst Francis Owuor told AFP. "That conviction that normally comes with the political process is not there," Owuor said. —AFP

## China hunts for cop on the run after killing 3

**BEIJING:** A manhunt was underway in southwest China Thursday with police offering a \$15,000 bounty

to a suspect in a gun attack that killed three people and injured two others, security officials said. Gun violence is rare in China, where the regulation on firearms is among the strictest in the world.

The shooting occurred on Tuesday afternoon in Muchuan, a small county under Leshan city in Sichuan province, the local public security bureau said in a statement Wednesday. The suspect identified as Li Qiang "injured two with guns and killed three with weapons", police said without offering details.

Police said all "guns and ammunition involved in the case were seized" and offered a 100,000 yuan (\$15,000) reward for anyone who "provides effective clues or captures the criminal suspects." The 36-year-old suspect was a police officer decorated for bravery last year after saving an elderly man and a woman from drowning in two separate instances, according to an article published by the city public security bureau.

That article has since been deleted from their website but was still available on Google cache. AFP was

able to confirm that the suspect was the same officer as police have published the suspect's full name and birth date on both the bounty announcement and the accolade for bravery.

It is unclear whether Li was still a serving officer, and when AFP contacted the Muchuan county police, an officer said she was "unaware" of whether Li was still on active duty at the time of the incident. The incident has led to heated debate online, with related hashtags viewed over 250 million times. —AFP

## Foreign climbers feared dead on Pakistani peaks

**ISLAMABAD, Pakistan:** Three foreign climbers are missing and feared dead on Pakistan's treacherous Karakoram mountain range in the country's far north, an official said Thursday. Pakistan is home to five of the world's 14 "super peaks"—those over 8,000 metres (26,246 feet) high—and the climbing season is currently in full swing.

A senior government official from the Gilgit Baltistan tourism department told AFP that Canadian Richard Cartier and Australian Matthew Eakin were missing on K2, the world's second-highest mountain, while Briton Gordon Henderson was lost climbing Broad Peak, the twelfth-highest.

"We cannot declare them dead until the bodies are found," the official said. "We pray we find them alive, but the chances are very slim." Henderson, a wing commander with Britain's Royal Air Force, went missing on July 19 on the 8,051-metre Broad Peak, the armed force said on its verified Facebook page.

"Our thoughts are with Wing Commander Henderson's family, friends and colleagues at this dreadful time," it said. Eakin and Cartier have been missing since the weekend on K2, which is nicknamed the "Savage Mountain" for its high level of difficulty.

Records have tumbled this season, according to the Pakistan Alpine Club, with over 140 people summiting the 8,611-metre K2 — including 20 women. Until this year, it had been scaled just 425 times, whereas Everest—the world's highest—had been conquered by more than 6,000 people since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first reached the top in 1953.

A video shared on social media by Nepali climber Mingma Gyalje earlier this week showed a long queue of tethered climbers pushing upwards on K2. "This is the scariest part," he said in an accompanying caption on his Facebook and Instagram pages. K2 earned its nickname because of its punishing conditions—in winter, winds can blow at more than 200 kilometres per hour (125 miles per hour), and temperatures drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius (minus 76 Fahrenheit).

Last week, Sanu Sherpa, from Nepal, became the first person to complete the double summit of all 14 super peaks after he reached the top of Gasherbrum II in Pakistan. Norwegian Kristin Harila, meanwhile, is attempting to break the record for climbing all 14 super peaks in the fastest time, taking on Nepali adventurer Nirmal Purja's record of six months and six days. The 36-year-old scaled K2 on Thursday—the eighth peak of the challenge—on day 70 of her pursuit. —AFP

FRIDAY, JULY 29, 2022

# Business

## US economy contracts again

### Recession fears deepen, gross domestic product declines at the rate of 0.9%

WASHINGTON: The US economy contracted for a second straight quarter between April and June, government data showed Thursday, adding fuel to recession fears in a headache for President Joe Biden ahead of midterm elections.

Gross domestic product declined at an annual rate of 0.9 percent in the second quarter, following a bigger drop in the first three months of the year, according to the Commerce Department.

While not the official definition, two quarters of negative growth is commonly viewed as a strong signal that a recession is underway, and a downturn in the world's largest economy would have global consequences, as well as domestic political costs.

Biden insisted that the US economy is "on the right path," despite the slowdown, but his critics are sure to seize on the report as proof of the veteran Democrat's mismanagement. After a 1.6 percent decline in the first three months of the year, the report said the slowdown in the latest quarter was largely due to drops in government spending at all levels and in private investment on goods, including autos, and on residential buildings, despite an increase in exports.

But personal consumption expenditures (PCE) continued to increase, though at a slower rate than the prior quarter, the data showed. The US economy also continues to battle sky-high inflation, as a result of supply chain snarls due to Covid lockdowns, as well as the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine which has sent food and fuel prices soaring.

Consumer prices topped nine percent in June, the highest in more than four decades, while the GDP data showed another key inflation measure, the PCE price index, rose a still-high 7.1 percent in the latest three months, the same as in the January-March period.

The US central bank has been raising interest rates



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference in Washington. The US Federal Reserve on July 27 again raised the benchmark interest rate by three-quarters of a percentage point in its ongoing battle to tamp down raging price pressures. — AFP

aggressively—with the latest big hike on Wednesday—to try to cool the economy and tamp down price pressures. "It's no surprise that the economy is slowing down as the Federal Reserve acts to bring down inflation," Biden said in a statement shortly after the GDP report was released.

"But even as we face historic global challenges, we are on the right path and we will come through this transition stronger and more secure," he said, noting the US "job market remains historically strong" and the economy created more than a million jobs in the past three months.

#### Recession debate

It would be highly unusual for an economy still

advantage of inflation; expected financial surpluses with the rise in the price of oil and investing in sovereign funds".

Others factors include: anticipating the positive effects of mega projects that will be put forward in Kuwait to keep pace with other GCC countries such as Islands and Silk City projects, infrastructure projects, domestic tourism development projects, and Mubarak Port, which will be a very important port in the economic development of Kuwait.

Al-Sager pointed out that these projects will directly affect the rise of per-capita income level which will generate huge profits. "Inflation certainly, will not be in the interest of the consumers because Kuwait and most GCC countries, mainly depend

on importing its basic materials. This will increase the financial pressures. Currently, the only beneficiaries of inflation are the owners of large projects," Al-Sager stressed. The report indicated that 80 percent of clients who were surveyed by the Boston Consulting Group expressed their desire to increase investing in crypto currencies. Investors must think about the suitability of the crypto currency. "These digital currencies are not the basis for the calculation of wealth. It can rise significantly and can as well, go down very quickly," Al-Sager explained.



Fahad Al-Sager

adding jobs at a rapid pace and with near record-low unemployment, to fall into recession, but even so many economists say the discussion of a downturn is more a matter of when, not if.

That poses a major political headache for the president, who has seen his approval ratings plummet in recent months as American families struggle to make ends meet due to surging inflation. Fed Chair Jerome Powell agreed with Biden and other economists who say the GDP figures are inconsistent with other strong data.

Powell on Wednesday said he does not think the country is currently in a recession because "there are too many areas of the economy that are performing too well." Mike Fratantoni, chief economist of the Mortgage

Bankers Association, was among those who echoed Powell's view, saying "the ongoing strength in the job market and other signs of growth make it unlikely that this will be categorized as a recession."

Powell also said it is possible to cool price pressures without causing a downturn or a big jump in joblessness, although he acknowledged the path to that thread that needle is narrowing. But economist Mohamed El-Erian said on Twitter that the data point to "Deepening stagflation and flashing red recession risk."

That impression may be the one that sticks in the minds of investors and consumers. Wall Street was not happy with the data. After big jumps in the wake of the Fed rate hike, all three major stock indices were lower in mid-morning trading. — AFP

## Kuwait's wealth expected to rise

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A new report by the Boston Consulting Group, entitled "Global Wealth 2022: Development is the Solution" indicated that the annual growth rate of financial wealth in Kuwait will reach 4.3 percent. The value of Kuwait's wealth is expected to rise from \$300 billion (in 2021) to \$400 billion (in 2026).

The Managing Director and Partner at Boston Consulting Group Middle East Mustafa Boska revealed that the financial wealth in the Middle East and Africa (including Kuwait) is witnessing a continuous annual growth (year after year) "despite the challenges witnessed by global markets." The financial wealth in the country has grown at an average rate of 3% annually. "Since 2016, the value of financial wealth has reached \$300 billion - and this compound growth is expected to continue increasing until 2026. The high-net-worth individuals whose wealth exceeds \$100 million constituted approximately 28 percent of the total wealth in Kuwait in 2021."

To discuss these economic factors, Kuwait Times spoke to the General Manager of the Institute of Economic and Financial Studies, Fahad Al-Sager. He said the report is "focused on several factors: The rapid growth of infrastructural projects in the country; acceleration in building of these projects; taking

## Biden, Xi hold talks on Taiwan, trade dispute

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping spoke by phone Thursday on mounting tensions over Taiwan, a festering trade dispute and their bid to keep the superpower rivalry in check. The White House said the phone call started at 8:33 am in Washington (1233 GMT). A statement would be issued after the call ended, a spokesman said.

While this was Biden's fifth talk with Xi since becoming president a year and a half ago, it's getting hard to mask deepening mistrust between the two countries. Already stuck in a trade war, Beijing and Washington increasingly risk open conflict over Taiwan, with little sign of resolution on either front.

"Tensions over China's aggressive, coercive behavior in the Indo-Pacific" will be high on the agenda, said White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby. The latest flashpoint is a possible trip by Biden ally and speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, to the island, which Beijing claims is part of China but has its own distinct, democratic government. Although US officials frequently visit Taiwan, separated by a narrow strip of water from the Chinese mainland, Beijing considers a Pelosi trip as a major provocation. She's second in line to the US presidency and given her position may travel with military transport.

Washington will "bear the consequences" if the trip, which Pelosi has yet to confirm, goes ahead, China warned Wednesday. General Mark Milley, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, told reporters that if Pelosi asks "for military support, we will do what is necessary to ensure a safe, safe conduct of their business."

And the dispute around Pelosi is the tip of an iceberg, with US officials fearing that Xi is mulling use of force to impose control over democratic Taiwan. Once considered unlikely, an invasion, or lesser form of military action, is increasingly seen by China watchers as possible—perhaps even timed to boost Xi's prestige when he moves later this year into a third term.

Biden's contradictory comments on whether the United States would defend Taiwan—he said in May that it would, before the White House insisted there was no change in the hands-off "strategic ambiguity" policy—have not helped the tension.

#### No face-to-face

Biden prides himself on a close relationship with Xi going back years but—in large part due to COVID travel restrictions—the two have yet to meet face-to-face since he took office. According to the White House, Biden's chief goal is to establish "guardrails" for the two superpowers.

This is meant to ensure that while they sharply disagree on democracy, and are increasingly rivals on the geopolitical stage, they can avoid open conflict. "He wants to make sure that the lines of communication with President Xi on all the issues, whether they're issues again that we agree on or issues where we have significant difficulty with—that they can still pick up the phone and talk to one another candidly," Kirby said.

Where to place the guardrails, however, is challenging amid so many unresolved disputes, including a simmering trade war begun under Donald Trump's presidency. Asked whether Biden could lift some of the 25 percent import duties placed on billions of dollars of Chinese products by Trump, Kirby said there was



This combination of file pictures created on June 08, 2021, shows US President Joe Biden (L) speaking at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, DC on June 2, 2021; and Chinese President Xi Jinping speaking on arrival at Macau's international airport on December 18, 2019. — AFP

still no decision. "We do believe... that the tariffs that were put in place by his predecessor were poorly designed. We believe that they've increased costs for American families and small businesses, as well as ranchers. And that's, you know, without actually addressing some of China's harmful trade practices," Kirby said. "I don't have any decision to speak to with respect to tariffs by the president. He's working this out." — AFP

## Spain jobless rate down

MADRID: Spain's unemployment rate fell in the second quarter of 2022, data showed on Thursday, helped by a recovery in the tourism sector and labour market reforms. Unemployment edged down to 12.48 percent in the period from April to June from 13.65 percent in the previous three-month period, national statistics institute INE said in a statement.

The number of unemployed people fell by 255,000 in the second quarter to a total of 2.92 million, while employment rose by 383,300 people to 20.47 million, it added. Most jobs were created in the services sector as Spain's key tourism sector continues to rebound following the end of most pandemic travel restrictions.

The improvement in the jobless rate has also been driven by a labour market reform which came into effect on January 1 and limits the back-to-back use of temporary contracts and makes permanent contracts the rule rather than the exception.

The number of job seekers in Spain fell below three million in May for the first time since November 2008 at the start of the global financial crisis. "Once again, the data show Spain's recovery is advancing," Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez tweeted after the data were released. Economy Minister Nadia Calvino said Tuesday that the improvement in Spain's labour market is "one of the motors" of the country's economic growth.

She predicted Spain's jobless rate would drop to 12.8 percent at the end of the year and to 12.0 percent in 2023. The government on Tuesday maintained its forecast for economic growth of 4.3 percent for 2022 in anticipation of a strong tourist season, but slashed its prognosis for 2023 to 2.7 percent from 3.5 percent.

Among western economies, Spain was one of the worst-hit by the economic fallout of the pandemic, with its gross domestic product collapsing by 10.8 percent in 2020, largely due to its heavy dependence on tourism. Some half-a-million people lost their jobs in 2020 in Spain, which has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.—AFP



WASHINGTON: US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York, speaks alongside a bipartisan group of Senators, including Mark Warner (L), Democrat of Virginia, and Todd Young (R), Republican of Indiana, following the passage of the CHIPS Act, providing domestic semiconductor manufacturers with \$52 billion in subsidies to cut reliance on foreign sourcing. — AFP

## US Senate passes bill to boost chip manufacturing

WASHINGTON: The US Senate passed a bill on Wednesday to boost domestic production of semiconductors, the in-demand microchips that power everything from smartphones to cars to weapons.

Global semiconductor supplies were disrupted by fallout from COVID-19 shutdowns, sparking widespread shortages of the chips—many of which are made in Asia. The legislation, which now goes back to the House of Representatives for final passage, provides \$52 billion to increase domestic semiconductor production and more than \$100 billion over five years for

research and development. The CHIPS Act was passed in the Senate by a rare bipartisan vote of 64 to 33, with 17 Republicans joining hands with Democrats. President Joe Biden welcomed Senate passage of the legislation that he said will "accelerate the manufacturing of semiconductors in America, lowering prices on everything from cars to dishwashers."

Global chip shortages notably slowed production of new automobiles last year, causing prices to increase. "It will mean more resilient American supply chains, so we are never so reliant on foreign countries for the critical technologies that we need for American consumers and national security," Biden said in a statement.

But Beijing hit out at the details, with foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian saying that while the act "claims to be aimed at improving the competitiveness of US technology and chips, (it) contains provisions that restrict normal scientific and technological cooperation between China and the United States."—AFP



Business

# Facebook-parent Meta posts first-ever revenue drop

## Reports an increase in daily Facebook users to 1.97 billion

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook-parent Meta reported on Wednesday its first quarterly revenue drop and a plunging profit as the social media powerhouse battles a turbulent economy and the rising phenomenon of TikTok.

Meta had long delivered seemingly endless upward growth but after this income miss-and reporting earlier this year its first decline in global daily users-the company sounded a more modest tone. "This is a period that demands more intensity, and I expect us to get more done with fewer resources," CEO Mark Zuckerberg told analysts after the firm reported a 36 percent drop in profit to \$6.7 billion.

Meta also faced steady scrutiny from lawmakers and regulators over not only its massive strength in the social media market, but also its impact on the health of its users.

The results came just hours after US regulators announced they would try to block Meta's acquisition of virtual reality fitness app maker Within, a potential blow to the tech giant's metaverse ambitions.

### US targets Meta VR purchase

"This acquisition poses a reasonable probability of eliminating both present and future competition," the FTC complaint said. "And Meta would be one step closer to its ultimate goal of owning the entire 'Metaverse'."

Meta is focused on building its metaverse vision for the internet's future, betting heavily on the interactive virtual world that the company believes will ensure its powerful position. The social media giant said the FTC's move defied reality, and expressed confidence that its buy of Within would be good for VR users as well as developers who make apps in that market. "The FTC's case is based on ideology and speculation, not evidence," Meta said in response to an AFP inquiry. Meta has also faced turbulence as it tries to adapt its platforms to better battle short-video app TikTok, which is threatening the Silicon Valley giant's primacy.

Meta-owned Instagram is attempting to quell complaints by users including celebrities Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian who say changes have made it too much like TikTok, including video recommendations.

Instagram chief Adam Mosseri posted a video on Twitter addressing the complaint, saying a number of changes were being experimented with and promising not to abandon photo sharing at the service.

"We are going to continue to support photos, it is part of our heritage," Mosseri said. Earnings season has gotten off to a less than great start with disappointing reports from Netflix, Snapchat's parent company and Microsoft.

Snap announced plans last week to "substantially" slow recruitment after bleak results wiped some 30 percent off the stock price of the tech firm, which is facing difficulties on several fronts. Even juggernaut Google reported its profit and revenue slipped as the internet giant's long sizzling ad revenue growth cooled, but the market seemed relieved the news wasn't worse.

The big tech platforms have been suffering from the economic climate, which is forcing advertisers to cut back on their marketing budgets, and Apple's data privacy changes, which have reduced their leeway for ad personalization. — AFP



MENLO PARK: A pedestrian walks in front of a new logo and the name 'Meta' on the sign in front of Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, California. US market regulators on July 27, 2022, went to court to stop Meta from buying virtual reality fitness app maker Within, a potential blow to the tech giant's metaverse ambitions. — AFP

Meta also said that revenue in the recently ended quarter ebbed a percent to \$28.8 billion, its first such slip since the firm, then known simply as Facebook, went public in 2012. "The year-over-year drop in quarterly revenue signifies just how quickly Meta's business has deteriorated," said analyst Debra Aho Williamson.

"The good news, if we can call it that, is that its competitors in digital advertising are also experiencing a slowdown." Meta however reported an increase in daily Facebook users to 1.97 billion, defying analysts' predictions of a drop, but noted monthly users fell about two million to 2.93 billion.

Its shares were down around 3.5 percent in after-hours trading, continuing a decline in the firm's stock since February that has erased about half of its value.



NEW YORK: A person on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) watches TV screens. US Federal Reserve on Wednesday again raised the benchmark interest rate by three-quarters of a percentage point in its ongoing battle to tamp down raging price pressures that are squeezing American families. — AFP

## Europe equities subdued after post-Fed surge

LONDON: European stock markets ran out of steam Thursday as investors digested another hefty Federal Reserve interest rate hike and awaited vital US economic growth data and key results from big-hitters Amazon and Apple. Frankfurt, London and Paris stocks rose at the open amid a flood of company earnings, but gains petered out as the morning progressed. Europe's energy sector was in particular focus with Britain's Shell and France's TotalEnergies posting bumper second-quarter profits on elevated oil and gas prices. Asian indices mostly climbed following a surge on Wall Street, fuelled by hopes that the US central bank could slow its pace of inflation-fighting interest rate hikes.

All eyes are now on the release of second-quarter

growth data and the latest earnings in the United States. The dollar meanwhile struggled to bounce back from a sell-off-sitting at a three-week low against the yen-that came in response to comments by Fed chief Jerome Powell suggesting its next super-sized increase could be its last.

However, analysts cautioned that the initial joy, which sent New York's three main indexes soaring, could be short-lived as the global economy continued to face several headwinds and inflation would likely not come down quickly.

As expected, the Fed lifted borrowing costs 75 basis points to a range of 2.25 to 2.5 percent, close to the neutral level it considers neither stimulating nor slowing economic growth. Forecasts have rates going as high as 3.8 percent in 2023, as the bank tries to control runaway inflation.

There is a growing concern that the sharp rise in rates is bearing down on the world's top economy and could send it into recession. In his post-meeting comments, however, Powell said he did not consider that was the case, because "there are too many areas of the economy that are performing too well". He did note that growth was slowing.—AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
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## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 28 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	1,064	1,066	1,072	1,060	12	25,487,049	2	0.19%	12.27%	1,064	1,080	19.3	2.07	2.3%	1.00
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	351	359	364	340	24	62,301,459	8	2.28%	35.11%	346	364	25.2	1.72	1.9%	1.16
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	223	223	226	222	4	8,214,246	1	0.45%	6.39%	217	224	32.8	0.68	1.7%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	234	235	244	233	11	26,114,913	0	0.00%	-1.69%	234	238	17.0	0.89	2.0%	1.33
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	894	883	907	860	47	61,460,403	-9	-1.01%	16.74%	861	890	31.0	3.92	1.2%	1.20
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	830	828	844	817	27	3,809,620	11	1.35%	16.23%	826	847	55.2	3.38	0.5%	1.09
204	National Investments	Financial Services	314	325	333	310	23	10,138,816	11	3.50%	48.40%	316	331	7.3	1.05	13.6%	1.74
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	148	152	155	146	9	18,428,851	5	3.40%	7.04%	147	153	27.8	0.80	3.3%	0.95
252	Al Imtiaj Investment	Financial Services	92	92.1	99	91.0	8.3	14,070,361	0.8	0.88%	-21.95%	90	95	94.2	0.55	9.5%	1.18
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	140	136	143	134	9	20,631,959	-4	-2.86%	-21.74%	132	140	19.7	0.97	2.2%	0.99
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	818	814	825	799	26	1,836,003	7	0.87%	8.81%	809	825	18.0	1.94	1.6%	1.14
501	National Industries	Financial Services	280	275	281	269	12	29,593,300	-2	-0.72%	14.13%	274	278	4.4	1.31	4.0%	1.41
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,410	1,475	1,498	1,377	121	1,884,225	85	6.12%	69.35%	1,450	1,490	14.6	1.18	4.1%	0.88
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	949	933	950	927	23	303,980	-12	-1.27%	9.51%	915	935	12.5	1.75	6.5%	0.94
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	302	305	318	299	19	3,193,415	4	1.33%	-12.10%	304	313	14.1	0.74	5.9%	1.02
603	Agility	Industrials	902	889	939	866	73	16,779,395	-1	-0.11%	12.89%	875	902	74.8	1.24	1.9%	1.43
605	Zain	Telecommunications	609	605	610	600	10	15,836,065	-3	-0.49%	1.68%	605	610	14.4	2.22	5.4%	0.87
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,249	3,299	3,308	3,195	113	889,075	41	1.26%	2.33%	3,286	3,315	6.9	4.08	12.1%	0.67
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	204	200	205	196	9	503,659	-5	-2.44%	-8.26%	195	203	-	0.70	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,910	1,920	1,950	1,880	70	1,540,676	20	1.05%	48.84%	1,880	1,939	25.6	15.70	1.7%	1.37
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	299	305	314	298	16	190,449,501	11	3.74%	20.68%	305	314	19.3	2.01	2.7%	1.76
821	Warba Bank	Banking	258	253	259	251	8	11,922,452	-4	-1.56%	-7.66%	249	258	29.7	1.38	0.0%	1.06
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	441	440	453	434	19	4,355,301	0	0.00%	-23.80%	432	453	21.4	1.22	3.6%	0.43
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	420	420	423	415	8	2,376,113	0	0.00%	2.30%	415	428	36.0	1.68	2.4%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	202	200	203	200	3	4,340,720	-3	-1.48%	-12.28%	196	201	15.5	2.53	9.0%	0.51
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,320	2,297	2,389	2,267	122	439,668	-22	-0.95%	13.71%	2,281	2,300	25.8	8.75	2.8%	0.76
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	885	869	885	856	29	4,925,088	-10	-1.14%	-	860	887	6.5	1.93	-	-

\* As of end of week closing

## Business

# In energy-starved South Africa, whites-only town basks in solar power

## 'Our big dream is to become an energy exporter'

**ORANIA, South Africa:** Most of South Africa is wallowing in endless power cuts, but a remote whites-only farming town in the country's sun-drenched centre is close to producing enough electricity to be self-sufficient. At the end of a gravel track outside the Afrikaner town of Orania, a diamond mesh gate opens onto hundreds of photovoltaic panels mounted in rows.

In energy-starved South Africa, the small settlement of 2,500 people is the only town nationwide close to reaching energy supply autonomy and freeing itself from the failing national power grid. "The solar farm is quite a huge game changer for us. It brings energy sustainability to the town," said Gawie Snyman, 43, who manages the municipality.

"Our big dream is to become an energy exporter". Africa's most developed economy has in recent years been plagued by epileptic power supply, which many blame on the ageing coal-fired plants operated by the state-owned energy giant Eskom.

After weeks of some of the worst blackouts in recent years, President Cyril Ramaphosa on Monday announced energy reforms, urging South Africans to "join in a massive rollout of rooftop solar" and sell excess to the grid.

Orania, a town some 620 kilometres (380 miles) southwest of Johannesburg, was already well on its way to becoming totally energy independent in just several years' time.

### Solar independence

Built on privately acquired land along the Orange River during the dying days of apartheid, Orania manages its affairs autonomously from the central government. It was set up to preserve the

"culture" of the Afrikaners-descendants of the Dutch and French-Huguenot Protestant settlers who came to South Africa in the 17th century.

Town spokesman Joost Strydom, 28, said the town in the Karoo region now aimed to make the best of year-round sunshine in order to enjoy "total electricity independence". With funding from the municipality and private investors, Orania started building its 10.5-million-rand (\$620,000) solar farm in June last year.

Just 12 months later, the town was generating 841 KW of electricity per hour—almost enough to power half the town and surrounding farms growing corn, wheat and nuts, local authorities say.

"It was the basic idea of self-sufficiency that drove us towards doing this," said Francois Joubert, the engineer who designed what has become known as the "Orasol" plant. Standing next to a row of solar panels, the 69-year-old in a grey flat cap said Eskom had "failed dismally" to provide the town with the necessary power. "You can't rely on anybody to supply you with basic ingredients to live here in the Karoo," he said. "We had to do that ourselves, we had to work it out... And it's working for us."

### Thirsty pecans

A few kilometres from the solar plant, at the De Groot Boord farm, Joubert's wife Annaljie watched as a mechanical tree shaker released pecan nuts onto a red net during early morning harvesting.

The 66-year-old former IT specialist turned farmer said a stable power supply was crucial for her orchard to flourish. When Eskom rations electricity to prevent the grid from collapsing, her trees go thirsty as she can't pump water from the river,



ORANIA, South Africa: Francois Joubert, 69 years old, an engineer who designed the Orasol solar farm, poses at the farm in Orania. —AFP

she explained. Yet "it's vital to complete your irrigation cycles especially with pecans nuts because they use a lot of water," she said. The new solar plant would allow her to do just that, she added. As the world grapples with a food crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, her husband said countries could ill afford more challenges to

domestic food production.

"We need to produce as much as possible of our own food, and therefore we need water... we need electricity," Joubert said. The town was proud to be playing its part through producing clean energy, said the engineer. "We are very glad that we can assist the green idea," he said. —AFP

## China lockdown, chip shortage hit Nissan profits

**TOKYO:** Japanese car giant Nissan said on Thursday that net profit sank nearly 60 percent in the three months to June as pressures including a lockdown in Shanghai and chip shortages weighed on business.

The firm, which in May reported a positive full-year net profit for the first time in three years, said it logged a net profit of 47.1 billion yen (\$347 million), down 58.9 percent on-year. The slump was also the result of a one-time boost in the first quarter of last financial year when Nissan unloaded Daimler sales.

But the firm said it was facing a range of headwinds. "During the first quarter, the extremely challenging business environment put pressure on earnings," Nissan said in a statement. "Production was constrained by the Shanghai lockdown caused by spread of the new coronavirus, and semiconductor supply shortages, while external factors such as soaring raw material prices and logistics costs also intensified their impact."

"The pandemic understandably remains a priority challenge," chief operating officer Ashwani Gupta told reporters. "At the same time, we experienced tailwinds with favourable foreign exchange rates," he added, referring to the yen's recent slump against the dollar, which helps inflate overseas profits for Japanese firms. The firm left its full-year forecast unchanged, projecting a net profit of 150 billion yen. That would be a 30.4 percent slump, however, from the previous year's 215.5 billion yen. Operating profit was down 14.2 percent to 64.9 billion yen, but that beat analyst estimates, according to Bloomberg.

### Ghosn saga

The firm was on a rollercoaster even before the disruption caused by the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine. It had been struggling with increasing sales costs, and is currently implementing a plan involving slashing models, cutting costs and restructuring operations. "Nissan is making progress after an excessive expansion policy in North America in the past that was a factor causing it to lose money," said Satoru Takada, auto analyst at TIW, a Tokyo-based research and consulting firm.

"Profits declined year-on-year relative to the robust rebound in last year's April-June quarter, when there was a recovery from the pandemic's impact and cost-cutting efforts," Takada told AFP ahead of the earnings report. "Nissan's challenge is how to minimise the impact of the chip shortage and sell attractive new cars, including those recently released," he said.

Gupta said the firm was looking to "invest in building greater resilience" as it battles the effects of obstacles such as China's lockdowns. He said its suppliers and dealerships had reopened, and "showroom traffic is recovering". On chips, he said Nissan was looking to develop alternatives as well as to replace custom-made semiconductors with general-purpose versions. And he added that the automaker was attempting to cut its use of precious metals in response to the rising cost of raw materials.

"As always, we move forward with cautious optimism while challenging ourselves to maintain (the) four million sales outlook for the fiscal year," he said. Nissan has also been buffeted by the saga surrounding its former chief Carlos Ghosn. —AFP

## US airline JetBlue announces \$3.8bn acquisition of Spirit

**NEW YORK:** JetBlue Airways plans to acquire low-price carrier Spirit Airlines for \$3.8 billion, the companies announced Thursday, in what would establish the fifth largest US airline. The proposed takeover, which requires regulatory approval, comes a day after Spirit terminated a combination with the Frontier Group following JetBlue's competing bid challenging the transaction.

By combining, the companies will be able to challenge giant US carriers American, Delta, United and Southwest. They expect \$600-\$700 million in annual savings by joining forces, said a joint press release from Spirit and JetBlue.

The companies plan to argue the deal will help consumers. "We believe we can uniquely be a solution to the lack of competition in the US airline industry and the continued dominance of the Big Four," said JetBlue Chief Executive Robin Hayes.

"By enabling JetBlue to grow faster, we can go head-to-head with the legacies in more places to lower fares and improve service for everyone. Even combined with Spirit, JetBlue will still be significantly smaller than the Big Four."

But some aviation watchers think the transaction could draw criticism in Washington, where antitrust regulators sued to block an alliance of American Airlines and JetBlue. The all-cash transaction adjusts the price if the deal is delayed because of regulatory challenges. The price will be \$33.50 per share if the transaction is completed by December 2023.

But the price would increase to \$34.15 per share if the transaction is consummated in July 2024. JetBlue also agreed to pay Spirit a fee of \$70 million and Spirit shareholders \$400 million "in the unlikely event the proposed agreement is not consummated for antitrust reasons," according to the press release.

In the wake of JetBlue's challenge to the Spirit-Frontier deal, Spirit leaders, including Chief Executive Ted Christie, had depicted the JetBlue transaction as a risky bet in light of antitrust concerns, as they continued to advocate for the Frontier tie-up.

But on Thursday, Christie told CNBC that at the time he was "actively soliciting" for the Frontier deal, but that



there is "a lot of reason to be excited about where we landed." "We've been listening to the folks at JetBlue and they have a lot of good thoughts on their plans," Christie told the network.

Although Spirit leaders continued to back the Frontier transaction, they ran into trouble with Spirit shareholders who wanted the richer JetBlue premium. Spirit was repeatedly forced to postpone an investor vote on the Frontier agreement before finally pulling the plug on the transaction on Thursday. Shares of Spirit rose 4.0 percent to \$25.27 in pre-market trading, while JetBlue gained 2.0 percent to \$8.57. —AFP

## Spain jobless rate down on recovery in tourism sector

**MADRID:** Spain's unemployment rate fell in the second quarter of 2022, data showed on Thursday, helped by a recovery in the tourism sector and labour market reforms. Unemployment edged down to 12.48 percent in the period from April to June from 13.65 percent in the previous three-month period, national statistics institute

INE said in a statement.

The number of unemployed people fell by 255,000 in the second quarter to a total of 2.92 million, while employment rose by 383,300 people to 20.47 million, it added. Most jobs were created in the services sector as Spain's key tourism sector continues to rebound following the end of most pandemic travel restrictions.

The improvement in the jobless rate has also been driven by a labour market reform which came into effect on January 1 and limits the back-to-back use of temporary contracts and makes permanent contracts the rule rather than the exception.

The number of job seekers in Spain fell below three million in May for the first time since

November 2008 at the start of the global financial crisis. "Once again, the data show Spain's recovery is advancing," Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez tweeted after the data were released.

Economy Minister Nadia Calvino said Tuesday that the improvement in Spain's labour market is "one of the motors" of the country's economic growth. She predicted Spain's jobless rate would drop to 12.8 percent at the end of the year and to 12.0 percent in 2023.

The government on Tuesday maintained its forecast for economic growth of 4.3 percent for 2022 in anticipation of a strong tourist season, but slashed its prognosis for 2023 to 2.7 percent from 3.5 percent. —AFP

## Huawei releases multitude of flagship products

**KUWAIT:** Huawei held a Flagship Products Summer Launch Event in Dubai that saw the introduction of incredible cutting-edge devices including the ideal flagship foldable phone HUAWEI Mate Xs 2, a flagship laptop HUAWEI MateBook X Pro, a flagship tablet HUAWEI MatePad Pro, HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 as well as HUAWEI MateBook 16s and HUAWEI MateBook D16. Each one of these devices come loaded with some innovative features that are set to take your user experience to next level. For those who did not get a chance to see the live stream, we've condensed everything Huawei announced:

### HUAWEI Mate Xs 2

Introducing the HUAWEI Mate Xs 2, HUAWEI's brand-new flagship foldable smartphone. To achieve an ultra-flat surface which is minimalist and natural, the phone uses the Falcon Wing Design. Through that, the movement of the hinge and screen is precisely synchronised via the fixed-length linkage control. For the phone's screen, the use of HUAWEI's self-developed innovative industry-first composite screen to absorb all shock and buffer makes the HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 ultra-reliable.

The True-Chroma Camera System of HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 includes a 50MP True-Chroma Camera for capturing true-to-life colours. The improved HUAWEI XD Optics brings brand-new information recovery technology to further elevate image clarity, helping restore image details in a way that breaks the boundaries of physics. To top that all off, the HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 incorporates innovative interactions with multitasking capabilities and Floating Window Swipe Gestures to provide a seamless control while operating the

multi-window. HUAWEI Mate Xs 2 will be available for with pre-orders in Kuwait starting on the 27th of July, 2022. As of the price, it shall be announced during the HUAWEI Flagship Products Summer Launch Event.

### HUAWEI MateBook X Pro

HUAWEI MateBook X Pro is a new-paradigm laptop that transcends the traditional notion of how a laptop should look, and what it is capable of. It comes in a skin-soothing metallic body and elegant colours, Ink Blue and White, standing out from the crowd of drab laptop exteriors, while the classic Space Grey is also available. The use of light and strong magnesium alloys in the full-CNC unibody design means that the laptop weighs only 1.26 kg making it highly portable and durable. The 14.2-inch Real Colour Full View Display obtained the world's first Eye Comfort 3.0 certification by TÜV Rheinland and universal colour consistency technology ensures that the same pristine colours will be displayed. All HUAWEI MateBook X Pro laptops were certified by Intel Evo, and come with 12th Gen Core processors. The 30W performance mode handles intensive tasks with remarkable ease. Thanks to system-level optimisation supported by upgraded Super Turbo technology, the laptop works perfectly with Windows system to unleash powerful performance and create a smoother experience in video conferences and heavy-load office work.

### HUAWEI MatePad Pro

This is a tablet designed to cover all aspects of entertainment with immersive visuals and sound. It is Huawei's first tablet to fea-



ture a 120Hz high refresh rate screen. The 11-inch OLED HUAWEI Real Colour Full View Display has an incredible screen-to-body ratio of 92% and supports the P3 colour gamut for authentically displaying over a billion colours. For the ultimate sound experience, the tablet features HUAWEI SOUND(r) that uses an array of six speakers to bring out high-fidelity sound and ensure a wider playback bandwidth with rich details. HUAWEI MatePad Pro is easy to use because of its thin and light body, which is only 5.9mm thick and weighs just 449g, also making it the lightest 11-inch tablet available on the market. It is also an ideal multi-tasking device that offers PC-like video conferencing with a 16MP Ultra HD front camera featuring FollowCam.

### HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2

HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 earbuds incorporate cutting-edge TWS capabilities, taking acoustics to new heights. It's portable listening as you've never heard it before. It comes with the Ultra-hearing dual-driver true sound system and digital cross-over technology, delivering a better surging bass and good sound quality with rich details. It received the HWA and Hi-Res Wireless Dual HD Audio Certification. In addition to sound quality, HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 continues to set new standards for TWS noise cancellation. The new call noise cancellation feature called

Pure Voice improves voice call quality, thanks to the presence of a 4-Mic Call Noise Cancellation system and Huawei-exclusive deep neural network (DNN) noise cancellation algorithm. The Triple Mic ANC System with 3 highly-sensitive microphones boosts the average ANC depth by industry-leading 15% when compared to its predecessor, with offers a wider noise cancellation frequency with up to 47 dB of noise cancellation. At the same time, HUAWEI FreeBuds Pro 2 is co-engineered with Devialet for tuning providing it with the perfect balance of technology and art to deliver a more appealing experience.

### More HUAWEI MateBook Surprises

HUAWEI MateBook 16s packs Intel's Evo-certified i9-12900H Processor, and features a vast 16-inch 2.5K touchscreen, with an average E1 high colour accuracy, and a 1080p AI camera, which keeps video calls crystal clear. HUAWEI MateBook D laptops have also drawn user acclaim, due to their compact design and excellent performance. The MateBook D 16 model is highlighted by a gorgeous 16-inch display, but thanks to its 18.4 mm thickness, manages to weigh just 1.7 kg. MateBook D 16 is the first laptop to come equipped with the HUAWEI Metaline Antenna, which improves the signal conversion rate by 56%, and facilitates high-speed Internet access, even in areas where the Wi-

## Lifestyle | Features



Vitaliy Charnykh (right), 21-years-old, conducts a wedding ceremony at a registry office in Kyiv. — AFP photos



A couple holds their hands during the wedding ceremony in one of the city register offices in Kyiv.



Daria Steniukova, 31, yoga coach poses for a picture during the wedding photo shooting in her bombed flat in Vinnytsya.

## BOMBSHELLS AND WEDDING BELLS: UKRAINE SEES WARTIME MARRIAGE RUSH

She should have awoken to the sound of popping champagne corks on her wedding day, but Tetyana was instead startled out of bed by Russian rocket fire near her home in central Ukraine. "At first I thought it was thunder. But the sky was clear, and I realized that it was shelling," the 31-year-old designer told AFP, recalling how she raced to the corridor outside her room in case of a direct hit. Shocked at the destruction wreaked by the pre-dawn explosions but determined to go ahead with their nuptials, Tetyana and her fiancé Taras exchanged their vows on schedule, six hours later.

"Initially I thought we should cancel the wedding, but my fiancé told me we should go ahead... The war doesn't have any right to ruin our plans," said Tetyana, who asked for the couple to be allowed to use assumed names. "And we have the right to create our family and live our lives to the fullest." The couple, who married in June in the industrial hub of Kremenchuk, 250 kilometers (155 miles) southeast of Kyiv, are part of a massive surge in weddings brought on by the war with Russia.

Her neighbor since the age of six, Taras proposed to Tetyana last year and they had originally envisaged a spring wedding. "In May we realized that the war might last quite a long time. We decided not to postpone life until later because, as this war has shown us, later might never happen," Tetyana told AFP. In the Poltava region where Tetyana and Taras tied the knot, there were 1,600 weddings in the first six weeks after Moscow's February

24 invasion-compared with 1,300 for the whole of 2020.

### 'The war goes on'

In the capital the uptick is even more pronounced, with 9,120 marriages registered in five months, a more than eightfold increase on the 1,110 ceremonies that took place during the same period in 2021. A sunny recent Saturday in Kyiv saw more than 40 newlyweds embark on their lives together in one downtown register office. "Getting married during the war is the bravest and hardest step you can take, because you never know what will happen next," said Vitaliy, 25, who was about to marry 22-year-old Anastasiya in full military uniform before heading to war. "I could leave for the front at any moment."

In Ukraine, would-be spouses have been taking advantage of a simplification in the red tape around marriage that allows them to wed on the spot, rather than having to register first and come back after a long wait. Vitaliy and Anastasiya, who did not give their surnames, have had vague notions of making their commitment official for three years-but only signed up the day before the happy occasion. "The war goes on. It's better to do it now," the groom told AFP.

Vitaliy Charnykh has been conducting back-to-back ceremonies at the administrative building since early March, and sees his role as his own special contribution to the war effort. "As a civil servant, I believe I can help my country by support-



Daria Steniukova, 31, yoga coach poses for a picture during the wedding photo shooting in her bombed flat in Vinnytsya.

ing Ukrainians emotionally," the 21-year-old told AFP.

### 'Defiant message'

Unsured of what the future might bring and suddenly forced to focus on the things that matter, young lovers have his-

torically proven unable to resist the urge to formalize blossoming romance in wartime. At the height of World War II in 1942, the United States saw 1.8 million weddings in 12 months-an 83 percent increase from a decade earlier. Charnykh said he had seen a particular upsurge in

soldiers getting married.

"In such tough times, people don't really know what will happen tomorrow, so they are eager to marry as soon as possible," he said. Daria Steniukova, a 31-year-old yoga teacher from Vinnytsya, 200 kilometers southwest of the capital, had been planning her wedding to 30-year-old Vitaliy Zavaliuk for weeks but disaster struck with just one day to go. A Russian cruise missile devastated the city centre two weeks ago, killing 26 people, damaging the register office and destroying her apartment. "We were shocked but determined to go through with it. It was out of the question to give up. My house was ruined, but not our life," she said.

They were forced to postpone the celebration with friends and family-no one in Vinnytsya was in the mood for partying-but they set their hearts on swapping vows that day in an alternative venue. "None of the administrative centers had a single free slot. But we decided to go to one even though we were told that we had no chance," Steniukova told AFP. "We were ready to wait the whole day but then we got a result: we were married within three minutes of arriving."

Topping an already astonishing wedding, they marked their union in an unusual but striking way-opting for a photo shoot in Steniukova's bombed flat. "It was a defiant message to the whole world-stressing how strong Ukrainians are. We are ready to get married even with rockets flying over our heads." — AFP



## Australian TV hit 'Neighbours' broadcasts last show

Cult Australian soap opera "Neighbours" broadcast for the last time on Thursday, with a series of nostalgic cameos from long-gone characters who are now household names such as Kylie Minogue, Guy Pearce and Margot Robbie. The storied show has been axed after 37 years of production due to a dwindling audience at home and in Britain, where it was once wildly popular. Set around the fictional Melbourne cul-de-sac Ramsay Street, the show was once so influential it was even blamed for UK children developing Australian accents.

It was a rite of passage for generations of Australian stars, including Russell Crowe and Liam Hemsworth, but was dropped by Britain's Channel 5 in March and was unable to secure another broadcast partner in the United Kingdom. The

finale-after almost 9,000 episodes-was poked with characters tearfully flipping through photo albums, a lingering melancholic piano score, the odd in-joke and a few grand entrances.

A mysterious figure riding around on a motorcycle turned out to be Guy Pearce's character, Mike Young. Ian Smith-who played Harold Bishop for nearly two decades-also made an appearance, as well as Natalie Imbruglia, Holly Valance, Robbie and the show's most popular couple of the late 1980s. Kylie Minogue reprised her role as Charlene Robinson and was reunited with her on-screen love Scott Robinson, played by Jason Donovan.

Ahead of the finale, executive producer Jason Herbison told AFP it was meant as "a celebration of the past and the present". He refused to rule out "Neighbours" continuing in some form if a new broadcaster can be found. The last episode ends "with the door very much left open for the future", he said. In the final monologue, lead character Susan Kennedy, played by Jackie Woodburne, waxes lyrical about the street and the show's global community of fans. "Everyone deserves a place in the history of Ramsay Street, even those who watched us from afar, we have been a perfect blend," she said. — AFP

## US rapper JayDaYoungan shot dead: Police

US rapper JayDaYoungan, known for his hit song "23 Island," was shot dead in Louisiana on Wednesday evening, police said. The musician, who had recently posted photos on Instagram showing him playing with his young son, died in his hometown of Bogalusa, local police said in a statement.

"Javorius Scott has died as a result of his injuries" after the shooting, which took place just before 6:00 pm (23:00 GMT), police said, also identifying Scott by his rap alias JayDaYoungan. A "close family member" who was also shot is in stable condition in hospital, the statement added. Media reports identified the other victim as the 24-year-old rapper's father. "Detectives are currently conducting interviews and working leads. Further information will follow as it becomes available," the Bogalusa police department said. "23 Island" was released three years ago and has 173 million views on YouTube, with another 121 million streams on Spotify. — AFP



English actor Matt Smith (right) and English-French actor Fabian Frankel (left) attend the World premiere of HBO original drama series "House of the Dragon".

## 'Thrones' prequel 'House of the Dragon' holds world premiere

"House of the Dragon" creators and stars were eager to leave behind the difficult final season of "Game of Thrones" as they launched its prequel at a glittering world premiere in Los Angeles on Wednesday. The original "Thrones," with its unique blend of fantasy, violence, medieval politics and dragons, became a global phenomenon that hooked audiences and swept television awards, but its finale was panned by fans and critics.

"It's a real shame that they were so disappointed-but it has been four years, and this is a different story," said Miguel Sapochnik, the director of several much-loved "Thrones" episodes, who returned for the prequel. "So now they get the chance to have a different experience. I hope they will," he told AFP on the premiere's red carpet.

Reviews and plot details of the first episode of "House of the Dragon," out August 21, are under embargo, but its screening drew a glowing reception at the recently opened Academy Museum in Los Angeles. Set years earlier in the same universe of George R.R. Martin's fantasy books, "House of the Dragon" depicts the glory days of the ancestors of popular "Thrones" characters, such as Daenerys Targaryen.



View of the backdrop for the World premiere of HBO original drama series "House of the Dragon" at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. — AFP photos

"Whereas the original 'Game of Thrones' was about multiple different families that are spread over multiple continents, ours is a much more intimate story," said Sapochnik. "It's really about the dissolution of one family. So in a way, it wasn't hard for it to be different."



British actors Eve Best (left) and Olivia Cooke (right) with Australian actress Milly Alcock (center) attend the World premiere of HBO original drama series "House of the Dragon" at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles.

Ryan Condal, who serves as the new series' showrunner along with Sapochnik, told AFP that it had been "very difficult" to end the original "Thrones" but that its prequel is "a totally new deal, it's 170 years in the past." "I think there was a grieving process for the fans," he said. "They had spent 10 years with these characters, they'd grown up with them." Condal said he believed there was still "a really strong underlying fan base" for the new series.

In "House of the Dragon," Paddy Considine plays the kindly King Viserys, while Matt Smith is cast as his ambitious brother Prince Daemon. Milly Alcock and Emma D'Arcy play younger and older versions of the king's only child Princess Rhaenyra, with the show's timeline spanning at least a decade. —AFP



## FDCI India Couture Week 2022: JJ Valaya Celebrates 30 Years in Fashion with a Grand, Opulent Show



It is very rare that you watch a fashion show and end up liking every look that the designer presents. That's what happened at JJ Valaya's show at the FDCI India Couture Week 2022, which celebrated the couturier's 30 years in fashion. The audience cheered and hooted as models brought out the best of what the Valaya brand has offered to its patrons in the past three decades.

The show began with an anecdote about how the designer went from being Jagsharanjit Singh Ahluwalia to JJ Valaya - a NIFT student who started his own brand after graduation. The collection was a new one with signature elements from Valaya's work of the past 30 years subtly included. Every look was essentially Indian, with a hint of the Spanish, and unapologetically glamorous. The outfits and jewels shone under the arlights, evoking awe and wonder from the audience.

Live music accompanied the models, a magical mixture of the piano, sitar, sarangi and multiple forms of percussion. The Spanish influence was evident in the music as well.

The designer, in his description of the collection, said, "Every year, for the past 30 years, my inspirational journeys start somewhere deep in my soul and are triggered by something visual that was arresting... this is where I start my research, dwelling on the visual treasures I chance upon either in books or through travel. It would be accurate to state that my intrigue for global cultures, (especially the ones connected with the Spice and Silk routes in one way or another) is my perennial love.

The history of this season's inspiration, Spain, goes back to over a million years



back and this is not the first time that I've been inspired by this magical country. But how can one fully and creatively explore any things that has such a vibrant past in just one collection! Therefore, I present to you ALMA (Meaning 'Soul' in Spanish), my all-new collection for the Couture seasons of 2022-23. My three constant expressions (Royale~Nomade~ArtDeco) find their soulmates in three diverse yet well-known facets of Spain, namely:

1. The costumes of the Matadors (Matador de Toros)
2. The motifs on the Manton shawl (Manton de Manila)

3. The patterns of the Hand Fan (Pericon)

"Luxurious fabrics, elegant details, inspired prints and of course, our timeless and much loved embroideries define this season's Couture collection in all its glory as it transcends its journey blending our ethos with that of Spain. This show also marks the completion of 30 years of JJ Valaya, a journey we have enjoyed thoroughly," he added. — [www.news18.com](http://www.news18.com)



Lifestyle | Fashion



Models present creations by designer JJ Valaya during the FDCI India Couture Week in New Delhi. — AFP photos

Sahib Singh becomes Burberry Children's first Sikh model

There is a consensus that fashion's days of tokenism need to be left in the past. Representation and a celebration of diversity are the only forward, and Burberry Children's Autumn-Winter '22 collection won the Internet for this very reason, as its corresponding campaign went live on Instagram last



evening. The reason? The British heritage brand's choice of casting four-year-old Sahib Singh, making him the first model to be wearing a patka - the turban worn by boys in the Sikh community, before they graduate to the pagri - in the iconic label's official imagery.

The collection of back-to-school designs sees London-based Singh - who is signed with agency South Coast Kidz - striking a pose in a Thomas Burberry Bear puffer jacket worn over a cardigan and shorts. "Sahib had an incredible day with the Burberry team, who really looked after all the children they were shooting with. To see our son, who does look different from his peers, being given a chance by the iconic British brand was truly a milestone moment," the child model's mother Harjot Kaur, who also runs his Instagram account, told Vogue India this morning. In just a few hours since it was posted online, the image has been the subject of multiple shares, with an outpouring of support and comments from members of the South Asian community. "The feedback has been beyond heartening. We are still trying to comprehend how big this has gotten! The South Asian community has pulled out all the stops to shower love on our little Singh," adds his father, Ranjeet Singh. This positive response isn't just about one image, but what it represents, and the message it sends out. One that is about reveling in the differences that make us unique, and owning where we come from. "We want not just Sahib but all the boys in our community to be proud of their heritage, and wear their patkas and paghs with pride and confidence," adds Kaur.

— www.vogue.in

Sahib Singh

Chaos and creation: Inside the making of Yeezy Gap

It was almost 90 degrees in New York City's Times Square on Thursday morning when a scene began to play out on Broadway that was so unexpected it could have been a mirage: 100 people were wrapped around the block outside the Gap, waiting for its doors to open.

Inside the store, which had been transformed into a kind of blackened cavern punctuated by digital screens, 24 industrial-size sacks were lined up in two long rows and stuffed with clothing from Yeezy Gap, the collaboration between the artist formerly known as Kanye West (now simply Ye) and the giant ur-American brand.

For anyone following the partnership

since its buzzy birth more than two years ago, this was a major development: the first time customers would be able to see and touch the clothes inside a store - albeit not hung from racks or folded on shelves, but piled into those huge bags.

They would get to try on the unisex tees, double-layered hoodies and long-sleeve shirts in dark colors: tops with slightly skewed, look-again proportions, sometimes seamless or cropped, with dropped shoulders. When they swiveled in front of the fitting room mirrors, they would see images of doves in flight printed across their backs.

Ultimately they would get to judge for themselves how the boxy silhouettes and thick cotton differed from Gap's typical offering - and decide whether that was enough to shift the fortunes of the brand: to make people across the country line up in anticipation, spend with alacrity and see Gap once again as a defining, disruptive staple of American fashion.

As opposed to viewing it as a corporation - Gap Inc. is the parent company of Gap, Banana Republic, Old Navy and Athleta - that is currently wrestling with the departure of its CEO after only two years, along with diminishing profits (including a net \$162 million loss in the

first quarter of this year) and dwindling cultural relevance.

It was that uncool factor that seemingly drove Gap to announce, in June 2020, a 10-year deal with the undeniably cool Ye and his fashion line Yeezy, with the option to renew at the five-year mark, at which point Gap hoped Yeezy Gap would be generating \$1 billion in annual sales. Though mass-market brands have engaged in one-off collaborations with high-end designers and celebrities for years, Yeezy Gap was, in scope and ambition, unlike any the retail world had seen.

Except that in its first 18 months, the partnership yielded just two products, both sold only online. It wasn't until a third party, Balenciaga, the French luxury house, entered the collaboration that a full Yeezy Gap collection was finally released this year (though it was still relatively small, with 36 styles in total unveiled in May). This weekend, a portion of the collection was rolled out in about 50 stores nationwide, in cities including Chicago, Dallas and San Francisco: a selection of eight styles, with more promised later in the year.

—www.indianexpress.com



## Sports

# 4-time world champion Vettel to retire from F1

## 'I want to spend more time with my family'

**LONDON:** Four-time Formula One world champion Sebastian Vettel will retire at the end of the 2022 season, he announced on Thursday. "The decision to retire has been a difficult one for me to take, and I have spent a lot of time thinking about it," Vettel, 35, said in an Aston Martin team statement. "At the end of the year I want to take some more time to reflect on what I will focus on next; it is very clear to me that, being a father, I want to spend more time with my family. But today is not about saying goodbye.

"Rather, it is about saying thank you - to everyone - not least to the fans, without whose passionate support Formula One could not exist." Vettel won four successive championships with Red Bull from 2010 to 2013, but struggled to reproduce his best results after moving to Ferrari before joining Aston Martin last year. His 53 Grand Prix victories place him third on the all-time list behind Lewis Hamilton (103) and Michael Schumacher (91). Vettel last won a race in Singapore in 2019.

"He is one of the all-time greats of Formula One, and it has been a privilege to have been able to work with him," said Aston Martin executive chairman and Canadian billionaire

Lawrence Stroll, whose son Lance is the team's other driver. "He will continue to race for us up to and including the 2022 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, which will be his 300th Grand Prix entry. We will give him a fabulous send-off." The German made his F1 debut with Sauber at the United States Grand Prix in 2007. He joined Toro Rosso that same year and raced the final seven races of the season.

### Youngest world champion

He then spent a full season with Toro Rosso before making the step up to Red Bull in 2009. Vettel's first title in 2010, aged 23 years and 134 days, saw him become the youngest world champion in history. He moved to Aston Martin last season after six years at Ferrari, with whom he twice finished runner-up for the world title to Hamilton in 2017 and 2018. Vettel admitted his time with the Italian giants was ultimately a failure, as he left unable to fulfill his target of emulating his idol Schumacher as a Ferrari title-winner.

Vettel trailed in 12th in the 2021 drivers' championship with his new team after achieving just one podium finish. He is 14th in the standings this season with just 15 points and missed the first

two races with COVID-19. "Although our results have not been as good as we had hoped, it is very clear to me that everything is being put together that a team needs to race at the very highest level for years to come," said Vettel.

"I hope that the work I did last year and am continuing to do this year will be helpful in the development of a team that will win in the future, and I will work as hard as I can between now and the end of the year with that goal in mind, giving as always my best in the last 10 races." Vettel, a devoted father-of-three, is an outspoken campaigner on social and environmental issues, and plans to take some time away from the sport following his retirement.

"I may stay in racing but maybe not straight away," he told AFP at the Miami Grand Prix in May. "It's what I love so you never know. "But I'm not going to be a TV expert. No, no." Vettel also recently became the first F1 driver in history to appear on the front cover of Britain's gay magazine Attitude. "I think a gay Formula One driver would be welcomed - and rightly so" said Vettel, who notched up another first appearing as a panellist on BBC's long running political show Question Time. —AFP



**SILVERSTONE:** In this file photo, Aston Martin's German driver Sebastian Vettel waves to fans as he arrives ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. —AFP

## King of Hungaroring targets ninth victory

**BUDAPEST:** Fresh from his and Mercedes' best result of the year in France last Sunday, Lewis Hamilton will hope to go one better and add to his record eight victories at the Hungarian Grand Prix this weekend. The seven-time world champion was second behind champion and series leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull at Le Castellet in his 300th Formula One race, one place ahead of team-mate George Russell. It was Mercedes' first double podium this season.

Hamilton relishes the sinuous Hungaroring circuit 20km north of Budapest where no other driver can match his record, Michael Schumacher his nearest rival having won there only four times. But Hamilton knows that even after four consecutive podiums he faces a daunting challenge to maintain his form as he seeks to become the first driver to win nine times at the same event.

In France, he was helped by Ferrari's problems - the luckless Charles Leclerc crashing out while leading and the penalised Carlos Sainz starting from the back of the grid - and the continuing travails of Sergio Perez to recover his early season form with Red Bull. He knows, too, that his capricious Mercedes car remains unpredictable and changeable from circuit to circuit. That can be a dramatic factor this weekend on the testing, tight and twisty Hungaroring, a slow track with subtle elevation changes, after the smooth, open and high-speed straights and corners of the Circuit Paul Ricard.

"I have no idea what to expect from us in Budapest," said team chief Toto Wolff. "We had expectations of fighting at the front in France, but we didn't. So, I don't know what to expect." Hamilton has won some of his most famous victories in Hungary, but like Wolff cannot predict a repeat on a track he loves and one on which Verstappen has never triumphed. "This year has been so confusing," he said. "From a driver's perspective, it was so difficult to understand the car, but we are now - at least a little more - and it is more enjoyable to drive."

"We still lack performance in some areas - like qualifying - but we are slowly getting there. It's about constantly chipping away at it. Unfortunately, we can't take big leaps at the moment, but who knows? Maybe one will come and we'll be right there." At 37, Hamilton has been revitalised by his car's progress after months of painful 'porpoising' and bouncing and such has been his recent zest Wolff believes he can continue for at least two more years. "I want to get back to winning and that's going to take time," he admitted. "But I'm sure we will and then we will talk about the future."

Mercedes lack of qualifying pace could be costly at the Hungaroring where it is notoriously difficult to overtake and Sunday's race will be a test of claims that the new 'ground effect' rules will enable closer racing and more passing. After their disappointment last Sunday, Ferrari will hope to bounce back and dominate with single-lap speed and then convert that into a one-two to revive their title challenge. Leclerc is now 63 points adrift of Verstappen after 12 of this year's 22 races, before the August summer break, while Red Bull head Ferrari by 396 to 341 in the constructors' championship.

Mercedes sit third on 270. All the leading teams are expected to bring upgrades to Hungary where Verstappen, in particular, is keen to see Red Bull kick on in their performance after recent outings. "I think we are still chasing, performance-wise, and the car is still overweight so that costs up lap time," he said. —AFP

## Sri Lanka thrash Pakistan to level series

**GALLE:** Spinner Prabath Jayasuriya grabbed another five-wicket haul as Sri Lanka thumped Pakistan by 246 runs in the second Test on Thursday. Chasing a mammoth 508 for victory, tourists Pakistan were bowled out for 261 in the second session on day five in Galle with skipper Babar Azam hitting a valiant 81. The 30-year-old Jayasuriya, a left-arm spinner, claimed his fourth five-wicket haul in just his third Test since making his debut against Australia earlier this month. Fellow spinner Ramesh Mendis took four wickets.

Sri Lanka were racing to wrap up the match ahead of forecast rain after Pakistan resumed with nine wickets remaining and gamely fought on through the morning. But Jayasuriya kept hitting back with regular strikes and got Agha Salman out for four at the stroke of lunch, then trapped talisman Azam lbw to end Pakistan's resistance. "When Babar was dismissed we knew that we could pull this off. Babar is their anchor," Jayasuriya, who has bagged 29 wick-

ets in three Tests, told reporters. "That was crucial and once he was out we knew we could pull it off."

Ramesh, who took five wickets with his off-spin in Pakistan's first innings, wiped off the tail to trigger Sri Lankan celebrations in former captain Angelo Mathews' 100th Test. Pakistan won the opener with a Galle record chase of 342 and fought hard to outdo themselves, with the in-form Azam scoring his 23rd Test fifty and putting on brave stands with overnight partner Imam-ul-Haq (49) and Mohammad Rizwan (37). Ramesh struck on his first ball of the day to get Imam caught behind, with the left-handed batsman adding just three to his overnight 46.

Jayasuriya, who took one wicket on day four, cut short Rizwan's stay with his left-arm spin. Fawad Alam was run out for one. Azam survived Jayasuriya's lbw call, which was given out by the umpire but successfully reviewed by the batsman, before the bowler claimed him for the third time this series. Azam, who began the day on 26 and needed some physio help for lower back discomfort, has been in top form with the bat and scored 119 and 55 in Pakistan's opening win.

### De Silva's game-changer

Sri Lanka ended their innings on Wednesday afternoon with a monu-



**GALLE:** Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis (left) catches the ball to dismiss Pakistan's Agha Salman (center) during the final day of the second cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle on July 28, 2022. —AFP

mental lead but weather was of concern to the hosts, with play ending early on day three and four due to bad light and rain predicted for Thursday afternoon. Dhananjaya de Silva, who stood in as Sri Lanka captain with back pain keeping Dimuth Karunaratne off the field, set up victory with his 109 in Sri Lanka's 360-8 declared. "We were definitely in the game but Dhananjaya's innings changed the game," said Azam.

Pakistan fell behind Sri Lanka by 147 runs after being bowled out for 231 in response to the hosts' first-innings 378. Back-to-back cricket tours have brought some joy to Sri Lanka, which is enduring a painful economic crisis and shortages of food and fuel. Political unrest saw the president flee the country in between the Australia series, which also ended 1-1 after the hosts again bounced back from their opening loss. —AFP

## Gill, Chahal lead India to series defeat of Windies

**PORT OF SPAIN:** India underlined their strength in depth with a crushing 119-run victory over the West Indies on the Duckworth Lewis Stern method in the rain-affected third and final One-Day International at Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad. Opening batsman Shubman Gill was left stranded two runs short of a maiden senior international century as rain ended the visitors' innings at 225 for three off 36 batting first.

Set a revised target of 257 off 35 overs, the home side crumbled to 137 all out off 26 overs with leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal leading the rout with figures of four for 17. Missing seven first-choice players for this Caribbean journey, India completed a 3-0 sweep and also extended their winning run in ODI campaigns to 12 series. For the West Indies, who came very close to upsetting India in the first two matches at the same venue, this was their ninth consecutive ODI loss.

It also leaves them with much work to do ahead of a three-match series against New Zealand next month when World Cup qualifying points will be at stake. Gill, who was named both man of the match and man of the series, played fluently from the outset for a run-a-ball 98, putting on 113 with opening partner and captain Shikhar Dhawan (58) and then



**PORT OF SPAIN:** Members of the India team after winning on the third and final ODI match between West Indies and India at Queens Park Oval in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on July 27, 2022. —AFP

86 with the energetic Shreyas Iyer (44). But he slowed within sight of the elusive three figures and was left frustrated when showers returned to end the innings.

"It wasn't meant to be but I am generally pleased with my performances today and in the three matches," said Gill after the match. "Still, I was just hoping to get one more over to get a chance at completing the hundred." Hayden Walsh was the most successful of the West Indies bowlers with two wickets while fellow spinner Akeal Hosein claimed the other. Facing a daunting challenge, the hosts were rocked onto the back foot immediately as Mohammed Siraj removed

Alisson is the closest to being available having resumed training, but the Brazilian is targeting the opening Premier League game against Fulham on August 6.

Jota faces a longer spell on the sidelines and was not with the squad at their training camp in Austria this week. "Ali trained today more than the day before, so he will definitely be available for Fulham, but not for the weekend," Klopp said. "Diogo is not here with us so how could he play a football game? It will take a while, unfortunately." Due to the early start to the campaign this year, Klopp admits he has not had enough time in pre-season to do all the work he would have liked.

Because of that, Liverpool will play another friendly against Strasbourg after the Community Shield. The FA Cup and League Cup holders are

also due to arrange another warm-up fixture even after the top-flight campaign starts at Fulham. "We have to extend our pre-season, if you like, into the season," Klopp said. "We play on Saturday against City and we play a pre-season friendly on Sunday against Strasbourg. Then Fulham and the next day we play another game."

Despite the tricky preparations for a season that will also feature a winter break for the World Cup in Qatar, Klopp is hoping his side can hit the ground running this weekend against Premier League champions City. City pipped Liverpool to the title by just one point on the final day of last season. "It's very important. We have played this 'final' a couple of times and it would be nice if we could win it," Klopp said. "It's the last domestic cup competition we didn't win yet, so we will give it a try." —AFP

## Alisson, Jota to miss Liverpool-Man City Shield clash

**LONDON:** Liverpool pair Alisson Becker and Diogo Jota have been ruled out of Saturday's Community Shield clash against Manchester City. Reds keeper Alisson has been struggling with an abdominal problem throughout pre-season, while Portugal forward Jota is dealing with a hamstring injury. Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp confirmed on Thursday that both players would be missing from the traditional curtain-raiser to the English top-flight season at the King Power Stadium.

Sports

# Prolific Popp sends Germany into Euro 2022 final against England

## Germany beat France 2-1 in semi-final

**MILTON KEYNES:** Germany captain Alexandra Popp said she is savoring a starring role at Euro 2022 all the more following years of injury struggles after scoring twice beat France 2-1 in Wednesday's semi-final. Popp's side will face hosts England in front of an expected record crowd for a women's Euro match of 87,000 at Wembley on Sunday. Just making it to the Euro was a success for the Wolfsburg striker after missing the two previous European Championships through injury. The 31-year-old battled back from two knee surgeries in the past 15 months to make the tournament and has exploded in England with six goals in five games.

"I am enjoying these moments a lot more. I enjoy football a lot more," said Popp after setting a new record by becoming the first woman to score in five consecutive women's Euro matches. "It doesn't mean I didn't enjoy it before, but it became a bit pedestrian. Now to have the moments on the pitch, I really value that a lot. "It makes it very special to be here with such a performance individually, but also as a team being so successful."

Popp's double also took her level with England's Beth Mead on six goals in the battle for the Golden Boot, matching the record for a single women's European Championship held by Inka Grings from Euro 2009. That tournament ended in a German rout over England in the final and Die Nationalelf will be hoping for a repeat as they aim to upset the hosts. "England versus Germany is a classic," said German boss Martina Voss-Tecklenburg. "We will play at Wembley in front of 80 or 90,000 people. Most will be supporting England but we accept the challenge.

It will be an incredible final."

In contrast to Germany's pedigree as eight-time winners of the women's Euro, France were in the last four for the first time. Les Bleues were left to regret a series of missed chances early in the second half as they lacked a clinical goalscorer without the injured Marie-Antoinette Katoto. "Unfortunately we weren't efficient tonight," said France coach Corinne Diacre. "We weren't able to hone in on the goalscoring chances we had."

Popp gave France a warning of what was to come when her powerful free-kick from the edge of the area was brilliantly clawed away by Pauline Peyraud-Magnin. The French goalkeeper was helpless five minutes before half-time when Svenja Huth's cross picked out Popp, who smashed home a volley into the roof of the net. However, the lead lasted just five minutes in unfortunate circumstances for German goalkeeper Merle Frohms. Kadidiatou Diani's fierce strike from outside the box came crashing off the post into the back of the Wolfsburg stopper and into her own net.

Frohms more than made amends at the start of the second period with a brilliant save to her left to turn Wendie Renard's header behind. Selma Bacha's goal-bound effort also rebounded behind off Kathrin-Julia Hendrich's face and Diani's shot from a narrow angle stung the palms of Frohms. But France failed to make that bright spell count and were made to pay by Popp's predatory instincts. Another Huth cross was hung high into the Milton Keynes sky and Popp timed her leap perfectly to power a header into the ground and past Peyraud-Magnin. —AFP



**MILTON KEYNES:** Germany's striker Alexandra Popp scores her second goal during the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 semi-final football match between Germany and France at the Stadium MK, in Milton Keynes, on July 27, 2022. —AFP

## Reusser wins Tour fourth stage, Vos retains lead

**BAR-SUR-AUBE:** Swiss rider Marlen Reusser won the women's Tour de France fourth stage on Wednesday as Dutchwoman Marianne Vos retained the overall leader's yellow jersey in fifth place. Team SD Worx's Reusser, 30, broke away with 15km left after four gravel sections in the Champagne wine region with Evita Muzic in second place and Belarusian Alena Amialiusik in third.

"I think here in this Tour every day is hard, at least for me," former doctor Reusser told Eurosport. "This stage suited the kind of rider I am with these gravel sections. "The team had a plan to do a hard race and not let it come down to an easy finale. We just said attack and one would go. I was lucky it was me," she added.

The 35-year-old Vos, who took over the yellow jersey with victory in stage two on Monday keeps a 16sec advantage over her closest rivals in Italian Silvia Persico and Pole Katarzyna Niewiadoma. Spanish veteran Mavi Garcia lost more than 1min 30sec in the general standings after issues on the uneven surface which included crashing with a team car as riders suffered numerous punctures but Vos and her fellow Jumbo-Visma riders survived unscathed.

"We spent a lot of energy to stay in front and you had to really fight for a position before the gravel sections and the climbs as well," Vos told reporters. "We weren't very concerned, we had to stay in front and stay out of trouble. We did, so I'm happy about that," she added. This is the longest edition of the women's Tour, after Amaury Sports Organization, who run the men's race, started with a one-stage event in 2014.

### Bonus for Reusser

During the dust-filled gravel sections, which passed through the world-renowned vineyards in eastern France, the likes of Tuesday's stage winner Cecilie Uttrup Ludwig and yellow jersey contender

Niewiadoma suffered punctures before rejoining the peloton. With 15km to go, Reusser, European road time-trial champion, made an attack from a big leading bunch as the riders returned to normal roads.

Niewiadoma's Canyon-SRAM team-mate Amialiusik, racing as a neutral rider after Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year, then followed the Swiss as the group broke up. Frenchwoman Muzic, aged just 23, completed the breakaway. Reusser claimed the three-second bonus atop Cote des Bergers with less than 10km to go and was first over the final climb of the day on Cote du Val Perdu, with 5km left.

She dominated the closing stages and pointed at her team name on her dust-covered jersey then held her arms wide open as she crossed the finish line in Bar-sur-Aube. Thursday's fifth stage is a flat 175.6km ride from Bar-le-Duc eastwards to Saint-Die-des-Vosges near the German border. The eight-day race finishes on Sunday on La Super Planche des Belles Filles, where two-time winner Tadej Pogacar claimed stage victory during the men's Tour earlier this month. —AFP

## LIV Golf expanding to 14 events in 2023

**NEW YORK:** The breakaway LIV Golf series on Wednesday announced a 14-event league for 2023, with organizers aiming to expand their reach across the globe. The Saudi-backed rebel series launched this year with eight events, vying for talent with the US PGA Tour and the Europe-based DP World Tour in a bitter battle that has created deep divisions within the sport. Star players recruited by LIV Golf chief executive Greg Norman include major winners Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka and Sergio Garcia. LIV Golf said Wednesday that 48 players and 12 team franchises would compete in a 14-event Golf League next year.

Players will be competing for \$405 million in prize money, with the season culminating in a team matchplay grand finale. Organizers emphasized the schedule "will not compete with the majors, international team events or heritage events". The full list of tournaments will be announced at a later date. LIV Golf League players will also be expected to compete in International Series tournaments - events staged in partnership with the Asian Tour.

In total, LIV Golf will put on 25 tournaments worldwide in 2023. "LIV Golf's expanding global platform will add a new dimension to the golf ecosystem as we know it, one that provides an opportunity for players and fans around the world to help maximize our beloved sport's true potential," said Norman, a former world number one. Launched this year with the backing of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, LIV Golf has attracted fierce criticism from human rights groups who say the venture exists as a tool to "sports-wash" the kingdom's international reputation.

Wednesday's expansion announcement came as LIV prepares to stage its third event of the year this week at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey. US players who have signed up to LIV Golf have been indefinitely suspended from the PGA Tour, meaning they are no longer eligible to play in the Ryder Cup, a team event that takes place every two years and pits the United States against Europe. —AFP

## Asia Cup moved out of crisis-hit Sri Lanka to UAE

**COLOMBO:** The Asia Cup Twenty20 tournament will be staged in the United Arab Emirates after the tournament was moved from Sri Lanka due to political turmoil in the island nation, the Asian Cricket Council said Wednesday. Sri Lanka has witnessed months of food and fuel shortages, blackouts and runaway inflation in the wake of its worst financial crisis on record. "Considering the prevailing situation in Sri Lanka, the ACC after extensive deliberation has unanimously concluded that it would be appropriate to relocate the tournament from Sri Lanka to UAE," said an ACC statement.

Sri Lanka recently hosted Australia in a bi-lateral series and is currently playing Pakistan in the second Test at Galle. "We were real-

ly looking forward to hosting our Asian neighbors in Sri Lanka for the much-anticipated Asia Cup," SLC president Shammi Silva said. "While I fully stand by the ACC's decision to shift the Asia Cup to UAE considering the current context and magnitude of the event, Sri Lanka cricket will work closely with the ACC and the Emirates Cricket Board to ensure that we still have an exciting edition of the Asia Cup"

The six-team Asia Cup, last held in 2018 as a 50-over tournament, will be played in the T20 format between August 27 and September 11. The UAE, Kuwait, Singapore and Hong Kong will play the qualifying round of matches. The winner of the qualifiers will join heavyweights Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh in the main draw. —AFP



**KUWAIT:** President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations received Deputy Chairman of the Board of KGL, Fadhel Al-Baghli and Director of the Chairman's office Tawfiq Jouhara at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber thanked them for sponsoring the meetings of the Arab Tennis Federation's General Assembly that was held in Kuwait (July 16 and 17) - with the participation of 18 Arab countries. The reception was attended by KTF Deputy Chairman Abdelsamad Al-Aryan, Secretary General Faleh Al-Otaibi and a board member Khalid Al-Musallam. He lauded the company's support for the ATF meetings.

# Classifieds

### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, SAHUL MOHAMED JABAR SHADIQ**, holder of Passport No. L3464129, do hereby change my name to **MOHAMED HANIF** (as given name) **JABAR**

**SHADIQ** (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **MOHAMED HANIF JABAR SHADIQ** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2026)

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### NOTICE

July 27, 2022

Mr. Zuhair Akbar Ali, Son of Mr. Akbar Ali, resident of 305 Hayat Mansion Basti Ram Ji Badi, Udaipur, Rajasthan and Ms. Amena, daughter of Mr. Mufadal Husain Sajad Husain, resident of Lehri Cottage, New Abadi Partapur, Banswara-327024, Rajasthan both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

(Kamal Singh Rathore)  
First Secretary (Community Affairs)  
and Marriage Officer,  
Embassy of India, Kuwait.  
Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in

### Vacancies in a Luxury Wellness Resort in Kuwait

Scheduled to open in 2022, the resort will be an ultra-luxury urban retreat targeting high profile individuals. It will offer unique and state of the art facilities and services to its members like ample spa facilities, private beach, indoor and outdoor pools, selected restaurant concepts, racket sports academy, comprehensive fitness facilities and unique fashion and sports retail. Currently, we are hiring exceptional talents in Kuwait in the following positions with minimum 3 years of experience in a 5-star luxury Hospitality:

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### 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



**BIRMINGHAM:** Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (left) sets off a race between the Commonwealth Games Mascot, Perry The Bull and athletes from Burchfield Harriers on the training track beside Alexander Stadium in Birmingham, central England. —AFP

## Commonwealth Games set for glitzy launch in Birmingham

### Over 5,000 athletes primed for action

**BIRMINGHAM:** More than 5,000 athletes are primed for action in the English city of Birmingham from Friday at a Commonwealth Games lacking several track and field stars but still boasting elite performers. Competitors from 72 nations and territories—many of which are former British colonies—will be vying for medals in 19 sports over a jam-packed 11 days in the Midlands.

Away from the marquee athletics and swimming events, women's Twenty20 cricket makes its debut and 3x3 basketball will feature for the first time while sedate lawn bowls is a fixture. There is an integrated para sports program in some events. The Games, held every four years, are often criticized as a quirky sporting relic but will be launched in style at Thursday's opening ceremony, headlined by 1980s pop band Duran Duran, formed in Birmingham.

Sporting powerhouse Australia have topped the medals table at every Games since 1990 except in 2014, when England finished top in Glasgow—the last time the event was held on British soil. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland compete as separate teams during the Commonwealths rather than as a combined British outfit. In the pool, Emma McKeon, Ariarne Titmus, Kaylee McKeown and teenage sensation Mollie O'Callaghan will lead the charge for a star-studded Australian team.

Double Olympic champion Titmus, 21, opted out of the recent world championships in Budapest to keep herself fresh for Birmingham. "I am so excited and I think we've got a great team going in. It's insane the

depth we have," said the Commonwealth Games 400 metres and 800m freestyle champion, McKeon, 28, who won seven medals—including four golds—at last year's Olympics in Tokyo, boasts a phenomenal Commonwealth Games record, with eight gold and four bronze medals in two appearances.

Headlining for England will be breaststroke superstar Adam Peaty, who missed the recent world championships with a foot injury. "I feel really good in myself, I feel really good in my fitness," he told Sky Sports. "But now it's all about getting that cash out of the bank and seeing where I'm at." He said he was relishing competing in front of home fans. "I was born in the Midlands, probably die in the Midlands, it's my home."

#### Calendar clash

The Commonwealth Games comes hot on the heels of the world athletics championships in Eugene, Oregon, which only finished on Sunday. The worlds were rescheduled from last year after the coronavirus pandemic forced a delay to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics but that has created a headache for athletes in a crowded schedule.

Olympic champions Andre De Grasse, Kirani James and Neeraj Chopra will definitely be absent from Birmingham. Chopra, who won javelin gold for India in Tokyo last year, said he was "hurt" at not being able to defend his Commonwealth title after suffering a groin strain during the world championships, where he won silver.

#### Currying flavor

Birmingham boasts plenty of Michelin-starred restaurants but its most famous culinary experience is the Balti Curry. The Balti made its first appearance in the United Kingdom in Birmingham, introduced to the city in the 1970s by Pakistani immigrants who adapted it from Kashmiri recipes to a more westernized palate. Its popularity has grown so much that there is a Balti Triangle and even the Balti Mile, which has 12 restaurants serving the curry. For those with a sweeter tooth, Cadbury Chocolate began life in Birmingham.

#### Chamberlain to 'Mr Blue Sky'

Perhaps Birmingham's most famous son is former prime minister Neville Chamberlain. His "peace in our time" declaration proved to be quite the opposite - within months World War II had broken out and he was to eventually step down to be replaced by Winston Churchill. The rest is history. Other "Brummies" of note include Jeff Lynne and Roy Wood, co-founders of the Electric Light Orchestra, whose song "Mr Blue Sky" was used in the handover ceremony to Birmingham at the end of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in 2018.

#### 'Second City' derby

Premier League side Aston Villa and second-tier Birmingham City enjoy a fierce rivalry, their matches titled the "Second City" derby. Villa were one of the founding members both of the Football League and then the Premier League, and won the European Cup in 1982. Birmingham is not a one-sport town though. Edgbaston regularly hosts Tests and other international cricket matches, and former England batsman Dennis Amiss and present international Moeen Ali were born in the city.

There are major doubts over the participation of Jamaican sprint trio Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Shericka Jackson and Elaine Thompson-Herah, who swept the 100m podium in Oregon. Jackson, who previously suggested she would be competing in Birmingham, followed up her 100m silver at the worlds by running the second-fastest time in history in the 200m. In another blow, British sprinter Dina Asher-Smith announced on Wednesday she had withdrawn from the England team due to a hamstring injury she sustained in Oregon "due to the short turnaround".

But there will still be star power at the Alexander Stadium, with Australian high jumper Eleanor Patterson and javelin thrower Kelsey-Lee Barber arriving as newly minted world champions. Jake Wightman, who shocked Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen to win 1,500m gold in the United States, will be one of big draws for home fans in the absence of Asher-Smith, with Scottish Olympic silver medalist Laura Muir another major name.

Cricket last featured at the Commonwealth Games in 1998 but the women will take part for the first time in Birmingham, with Meg Lanning's Australia hot favorites to win the T20 competition. Former Tour de France winner Geraint Thomas will compete for Wales and Australian cycling sprint ace Caleb Ewan will also feature after a disappointing Tour. Mark Cavendish, riding for the Isle of Man rather than under the British flag, will have something to prove after missing out on selection for the Tour de France this year. —AFP



**EUGENE:** Neeraj Chopra of Team India competes in the Men's Javelin Throw Final during the World Athletics Championships Oregon22 at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. —AFP

## No Chopra, but India still hoping to pack a punch

**NEW DELHI:** India's Commonwealth Games ambitions have been badly hit by the last-minute withdrawal of Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra but they still have high hopes of gold in several sports including boxing and badminton. The Commonwealth's most populous country is not generally known as a global sporting powerhouse - except for cricket - but it has regularly performed well at the Games.

India came third in the medals table behind hosts Australia, and England, at the last edition of the Games at the Gold Coast in 2018, and were in the top five at the previous four. But they could have a tough job replicating that when the Commonwealths start in Birmingham on Thursday. Shooting, traditionally India's most successful discipline, has been dropped from the program for these Games, much to India's anger.

And then Chopra, India's flag-bearer and the reigning Commonwealth and Olympic javelin champion, pulled out on Tuesday because of injury. "Needless to say I am hurt about not being able to defend my title and missing out on another opportunity to represent the nation," the 24-year-old Chopra said. But there are still several gold hopefuls among India's more than 200-strong contingent. India's boxing squad will be without injured six-time world champion Mary Kom, but will have her heir apparent, Nikhat Zareen. Zareen, who won the 52kg gold at the world championships in May, will be competing in the 50kg category and is billed as the favorite. As a woman from India's minority Muslim community, the 26-year-old's struggles before breaking out on the international stage have made her a household name in India. Zareen has spoken about how she was ridiculed for taking up boxing and looked down upon in the orthodox society she grew up in.

#### Badminton force

Double Olympic medalist P.V. Sindhu will lead India's strong badminton challenge. She prepared for Birmingham by clinching the Singapore Open title this month. Rising 20-year-old star Lakshya Sen, the men's world number 10, has been laid low by injury but is another with medal hopes. India's men's badminton team are buoyant after winning the prestigious Thomas Cup, the world team championship, for the first time in May. The men's hockey team will look to clinch their first Commonwealth gold after a disappointing 2018 campaign. India used to dominate field hockey but their bronze in Tokyo last year was the team's first Olympic medal in more than four decades. The women hockey players will also be aiming to finish on the podium but they only ended joint ninth with China at the recent World Cup in Spain. "Unfortunately, we couldn't play to our potential at the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup... but we are very determined to turn our form around at the Commonwealth Games," captain Savita Punia told Hockey India. —AFP

## Brummies and Baltis: Welcome to Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM:** The Commonwealth Games get under way in the central English city of Birmingham on Thursday. AFP Sports picks out five things to know about Birmingham:

#### Steaming along

Birmingham in the late 18th century was termed "the first manufacturing town in the world" and earned the nickname "the city of a thousand trades". Scottish inventor James Watt's revolutionary steam engine was created there in 1776. Letters may be a little outdated now, but it was Birmingham school teacher Rowland Hill who is widely credited with introducing the first postage stamp and the roots of what became the modern postal service.

#### Playing a Blinder

Birmingham was represented on television in the long-running soap opera "Crossroads", about life in a motel on the outskirts of the city. It was much ridiculed but had very high viewing figures. "Some of the acting would have disgraced the humblest of village halls. Many of the plots were so farcical they could have been written in a bad dream," said television historian Hilary Kingsley. The more recent hit crime drama series "Peaky Blinders" changed all that and helped put Birmingham on the global map. "An absolute winner internationally," purred one local tourism chief.



**BIRMINGHAM:** A model of the Commonwealth Games mascot 'Perry' is pictured in Birmingham, central England, ahead of the Commonwealth Games. The Commonwealth Games is set to run from July 28 to August 8. —AFP

Formula One's 1992 world champion Nigel Mansell grew up in Birmingham and although he was often bullied at school, he looks back with a certain fondness on those days and calls himself "a proud Brummie". —AFP