



Parents crushed under pressure of school activities, fee hikes

Expenses rising for extracurriculars • Licenses of offending schools could be canceled

Four women named to Municipal Council in historic first

KUWAIT: The Cabinet appointed four women to the Municipal Council on Tuesday, a historic step in Kuwait's women empowerment efforts. All four have impressive academic qualifications and technical experience, and their appointment is considered a positive step in boosting the role of Kuwaiti women.



Alyaa Al-Farsi

Academic qualifications:

- MSc in Civil Engineering – Kuwait University.
- BSc Civil Engineering – Kuwait University.

Experience

- Laboratory Engineer/Assistant Teacher at Kuwait University.
- Senior civil engineering specialist at the office of the deputy rector for planning at Kuwait University.
- Head of structural planning and projects design at the office of the deputy rector for planning.



Sharifa Saleh Al-Shalfan

Academic qualifications:

- MSc in City Design and Social Science — London School of Economics and Political Science
- BSc in Architecture — University of Southern California

Experience

- Cities Program at London School of Economics (LSE) — Consultant
- World Bank — Urban Planning Consultant
- Silk City Development Program — Consultant



Munira Jassem Al-Amir

Academic qualifications:

- MSc in Civil Engineering — Kuwait University
- BSc in Civil Engineering – Kuwait University

Experience

- General Manager of Miras National General Contracting Company for Buildings
- Director of project control at Commercial Real Estate Company



Farah Salem Al-Roumi

Academic qualifications:

- BSc in Civil Engineering – Kuwait University

Experience

- Engineering Expert - Justice Ministry Experts Department
- Ministry of Public Works – Senior Specialized Engineer - Construction Projects Sectors.

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Parents are under a lot of financial pressure after schools have started to hold a host of post-pandemic events and activities. Parents have to provide their children with the required items such as clothes, souvenirs and many other things, not to mention extra homework assignments that cost parents a lot of money, along with private classes, whose fees are rising too.

Amidst the activities and events in schools, giving gifts to teachers has become a new trend that puts more pressure on parents. According to a parent, spending on extracurriculars exceeds KD 500 per semester to cover it all. "Some public schools constantly obligate their students to do extra homework that is not related to school subjects, and due to the study pressure, most of them rely on student services centers, which costs the parents lots of money every semester," said Haya Al-Rashidi, assistant manager of a public school.

Rashidi said the school administration is mainly responsible for increasing demands by teachers, especially since this affects students' grades if they do not submit their extra homework to the teacher. Rashidi said repeated school events and activities that require buying related items, especially for elementary and kindergarten grades, pile social pressure on parents, who cannot afford to constantly buy non-essential things. At the same time, they do not want to deprive their children from being treated the same as other kids.

Um Fahad, the mother of a high school student who attends a public school, complained about the high prices of the school's study notes, which is not available in school and costs her almost KD 10 to print the notes for each subject. She said the total costs in a semester reach KD 100 to 120 KD to just print the notes from printing centers.

Um Fahad bemoaned the pressure on parents due to the amounts of money they must spend on preparing their children for school events.

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News in brief

Abu Dhabi restricts plastic bags

ABU DHABI: Restrictions on single-use plastic bags took effect in Abu Dhabi Wednesday, as part of its efforts for a "greener future". The "single-use plastic bags ban starts today... to encourage sustainable living in Abu Dhabi", the emirate's media office said. There are exemptions for medicine bags, bag rolls for produce in supermarkets, rubbish sacks and large brand name shopping bags. — AFP

Call to alleviate 'food crisis'

STOCKHOLM: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday called for quick and decisive action to ensure a "steady flow of food" as the war in Ukraine has disrupted global food and energy markets. Speaking in Stockholm, Guterres said "the war must end now" while condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine as "a violation of its territorial integrity and a violation of the UN Charter". — AFP

'FluBot' phone scam busted

THE HAGUE: Police in 11 countries have taken down a mobile phone scam dubbed FluBot that spread around the world via fake text messages. Dutch and EU police said on Wednesday. Dutch cybercops led an operation in May targeting the malware, which infects Android phones using texts which pretend to be from a parcel firm or which say a person has a voicemail waiting. Hackers would then steal bank details from infected phones, which automatically sent messages to other mobiles in the user's contact list, passing on the scam like a flu virus. — AFP

Chimp genetic map produced

WASHINGTON: Scientists have produced the first genetic map of chimpanzees in the wild, offering a detailed reconstruction of the endangered species' past migrations, and a new tool to combat illegal trafficking. The genomic catalogue can now be used to link kidnapped chimpanzees - or their meat and body parts - to their place of origin within 100 km. — AFP

MP calls to restrict expats from changing jobs, wants 5-yr ban

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji submitted a proposal on Wednesday calling to restrict the trans-

fer of workers to other jobs, urging the government to change laws to protect employers who recruit and train the workers. In his proposal, Turaiji called on the interior ministry to coordinate with other government departments to study the phenomenon of workers who escape from employers, or what he called "a theft of trained and skilled workers" by other employers.

The lawmaker said employers recruit workers or domestic helpers and provide them with good training, boosting their experience and skills, but are surprised when they desert them for other employ-

ers for better pay or working conditions. He called for reviewing legislation and regulations and taking the necessary decisions to protect the rights of the "first" employer who employs workers for at least six months, directly contributing to improving their work skills.

Turaiji proposed that workers who are recruited by employers and work for them for at least one year and then want to change jobs should be asked to leave the country and be allowed to return only after five years.

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Iran building collapse feeds protest anger

PARIS: The deadly collapse of a building in southwestern Iran has accentuated anger over price rises and economic deprivation that sparked protests which have now lasted three weeks and show no sign of abating, observers say. With video footage showing the use of bitter slogans against the government and even supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the protests present a hugely delicate moment for the Islamic republic's leadership.

Protests have taken place in several Iranian cities since early May over the rise in costs of basic food-stuffs such as bread. But the Abadan building collapse added a new factor of uncertainty. "The protests present a significant challenge to the

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ABADAN, Iran: Iranian Vice President Mohammad Mokhber visits the site where a ten-storey building collapsed in this southwestern city on May 27, 2022. — AFP

Yemen truce hangs in balance as talks falter

SANAA: A fragile UN-brokered truce between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels hung in the balance Wednesday as talks on renewing it hit trouble, threatening the humanitarian gains of the past two months. Aid agencies and Western governments have urged Yemen's warring parties to extend the truce, which has significantly reduced the intensity of fighting in a conflict the United Nations says has

triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

But with just one day before the truce expires, there was no sign of any breakthrough in UN-backed talks. A Yemeni aircraft left the rebel-held capital Sanaa for Cairo on the first commercial flight between the two cities since 2016, the latest gain from the truce deal. The office of the United Nations special envoy for Yemen told AFP there were 77 people on board the Yemenia flight from Sanaa airport, which has been closed to commercial flights for nearly six years.

It is the seventh such flight since the truce went into effect on April 2. The six previous flights had all been to the Jordanian capital Amman. Yemen has been gripped by conflict since the rebels overran Sanaa in 2014, triggering a Saudi-led military inter-

vention in support of the beleaguered government the following year.

On May 16, a Yemenia plane carrying 126 passengers, including critically ill hospital patients and their relatives, became the first commercial flight to leave Sanaa since Aug 2016. Air traffic into the rebel-held capital has been largely halted by a Saudi-led blockade, but there have been exemptions for aid flights that are a key lifeline for the population. Despite accusations of violations from both the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthi rebels, the truce has significantly reduced levels of violence.

The Houthis have said they are considering renewing the ceasefire amid UN efforts to extend the truce. But on Tuesday, the United States warned

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Officials discuss removal of Kuwaitis from 'sanctions list'

Assistant FM meets Ombudsperson to UN Security Council committee

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Development Affairs and International Cooperation Hamad Suleiman Al-Mishan met Ombudsperson to the UN Security Council ISIL (Daesh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee Richard Malanjum in New York on Tuesday.

The meeting, the first between a Kuwaiti official and the Ombudsperson, focused on the delisting requests of Kuwaiti nationals on the sanctions list and the efforts of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this regard, said Ambassador Al-Mishan, also chairman of the committee on the implementation of the UNSC resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

"The State of Kuwait supports the legitimate grievances raised by concerned citizens," he affirmed in statements to KUNA following the meeting. Ambassador Al-Mishan noted that he invited Malanjum to visit Kuwait in a bid to facilitate gathering information and meeting the ad hoc committee on rehabilitation of those included in the UNSC sanctions list.

The ad hoc committee is affiliated to the inter-agency committee on the implementation of the UNSC resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Led by the Foreign Ministry, the interagency committee includes the Interior Ministry's state security agency, the Health Ministry's psychology dept., Kuwait University's Faculty of Sharia, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and the Public Prosecution.

The Security Council Committee was established pursuant to the UNSC resolutions 1267 6/1/22, (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Daesh), Al-Qaeda and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. The Office of the Ombudsperson, established pursuant to the UNSC resolution 1904 (2009), is in charge of assessing relevant reports and the delisting requests from the concerned parties. —KUNA



WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Development Affairs and International Cooperation Hamad Suleiman Al-Mishan meets Richard Malanjum. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Palestine Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub visited Kuwait Times on Wednesday and met with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MoH inaugurates oncology dept at Jaber Hospital

KUWAIT: Kuwait Health Minister Dr Khaled M S Al-Saeed inaugurated the Oncology Department at Jaber Hospital - the first of its kind outside the Kuwait Cancer Center for citizens from all regions of the country. Al-Saeed said in a press statement on Wednesday that Kuwait Cancer Control Center will provide service to citizens from all regions of the country.

The opening came within the Ministry's plan to facilitate the provision of service and health care to all citizens in accordance with the best standards of quality required and in the context of continuing efforts to upgrade the health service in the country and improve its quality level and also in implementation of the pillars of the development plan and the vision of 'New Kuwait 2035'. The department is equipped with the latest technologies, devices, specialized medical staff.

He said that work is also underway to equip



KUWAIT: Kuwait Health Minister Dr Khaled M S Al-Saeed inaugurated the Oncology Department at Jaber Hospital - the first of its kind outside the Kuwait Cancer Center for citizens from all regions of the country. —KUNA photos



another oncology department in Jahra Medical City - thanks to the sincere efforts of health cadres in various sectors. He pointed to the presence of medical staff and the availability of devices such as the PET SCAN device, which is the most important device for diagnosing cancer cases - explaining that there are patients who

were actually examined in Jaber Hospital after the opening.

For his part, the Head of the Oncology Department at Jaber Hospital Dr Faisal Al-Terkait said in a similar statement that the opening of the department comes to relieve pressure on the Kuwait Cancer Control Center,

pointing out that there is an electronic link between the Oncology Department at Jaber Hospital and the patient file in Makki Juma. He appreciated the role of the engineering sector in the ministry in equipping clinics and rooms and providing the department with the latest technologies. —KUNA

Kuwait's FM participates in 152nd session of GCC ministerial meeting

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah headed the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the 152nd round of the GCC's ministerial meeting, held Wednesday at the Secretariat's headquarters, Riyadh. The meeting handled a host of topics listed on its agenda including resolutions boosting joint Gulf work in various fields.

A meeting between Gulf countries and Russia, and another virtual meeting joining Gulf countries with Ukraine were held on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting. The Council of Ministers stressed that the cooperation council's role in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is based on the international laws and UN charter, adding that they support any attempts that may result in solving the ongoing conflict. The council praised the humanitarian and relief assistance provided by the GCC countries, and their efforts in exporting food and humanitarian resources from Ukraine to affected countries.

Also, Kuwait Foreign Minister met Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the joint ministerial meeting between the GCC states and the Russian Federation, which was held earlier on Wednesday in Riyadh. During the meeting, both sides touched on bilateral ties between the two friendly countries and ways of boosting joint cooperation as well as latest regional and global developments especially the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed Kuwait's support for all efforts aimed at reaching a political solution in a manner that preserves international security and stability. —KUNA



Local

PAM launches sudden inspection campaigns

Outdoor work ban goes into force, to continue till end of August



KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower launched a sudden inspection campaign at open worksites in southern Abdullah Al-Mubarak on Wednesday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) on Wednesday launched a sudden inspection campaign at open worksites in southern Abdullah Al-Mubarak on the first day of the ban on working in open areas from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm from June till August. Hamad Al-Mekhyal, Head of the Occupational Safety Department in Jahra Governorate of the Public Authority of Manpower, said in a press statement that the decision aims at organizing work and protecting laborers, adding inspection teams will keep carrying out sudden tours of more of 30 worksites to spot any violations.

Mekhyal stressed administrative decision number 535/2015 is in compliance with international labor standards and agreements approved by Kuwait to protect workers' rights, adding such laws aim to safeguard the health of workers, especially since working in open areas at noon during the period between early June and the end of August is difficult because of the harsh climatic conditions.

"In the event of a violation, the company will be warned, given a grace period, and the worksite will

be reinspected. If the violation persists, legal action will be taken, resulting in fines ranging from KD 100 to KD 200 per worker, paid by the business owners," he noted. Mekhyal explained the implementation of the decision means the obligation of employers to ensure the health and safety of all their workers, as well as keenness to adhere to the rules and regulations of the labor law.

He pointed out that the authority is keen on the safety of workers without harming projects and the interests of their owners, explaining that owners can shift working hours in the early hours of the morning or after 4 pm in the afternoon. Mekhyal stressed the inspection teams will conduct continuous campaigns over a period of three months at worksites to monitor violations, calling on people to contact a hotline (99523590) to report any violation.

He said that the decision will force business owners to guarantee the health and safety of all workers at worksites and will oblige them to abide by international work regulations and subsidiary laws. The inspection teams toured 50 worksites and registered 40 violations, with 32 workers working on the sites during the ban hours.



Mead fishing season starts

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) announced on Wednesday the mead fishing season started on June 1, according to ministry decree 245/2022. The season continues till the end of November. Since 2017, the mead fishing season always starts on July 1, but this year it started earlier.

Fishing was allowed earlier after PAAAFR studied the issue and considered this timing suitable as it coincides with the ban on fishing zubeidi (pomfret), to ensure enough supplies of local fish for consumers. The fishing ban during the rest of the year was set to protect mead from overfishing. PAAAFR is protecting Kuwait territorial waters

from fishing violators, and its inspectors are monitoring the sea every day. Those who violate the law will be fined between KD 50 and KD 500.

A PAAAFR official explained the Environment Public Authority (EPA) is also involved in observing some marine areas. "Kuwait Bay (Jon Al Kuwait) is protected by EPA, and fishing there is banned in general for all kinds of fish. Exemptions were given for fishing in the bay to amateur fishermen. They should book an appointment and pay a fee," he told Kuwait Times.

He also explained how inspectors recognize amateur fishermen from professional or commercial ones. "Fishermen can only fish with line and hook. Using other fishing tools such as nets, traps, etc is forbidden in Kuwait Bay. Fishing in Kuwait Bay is considered an environmental crime and penalties are stricter than for violating the fishing ban in other areas. Violators are penalized by inspectors, and their case will be transferred to the general prosecutor to be investigated," added the official.



KUWAIT: People are seen at a fish market in Kuwait City on June 1, 2022. The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) announced on Wednesday the mead fishing season started on June 1, according to ministry decree 245/2022. The season continues till the end of November. Since 2017, the mead fishing season always starts on July 1, but this year it started earlier. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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Arab League seeks end to detainees' suffering

CAIRO: The Arab League called on all international and Arab organizations, led by the Human Rights Council, to redouble efforts and put more pressure on the Zionist authorities to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian detainees. This came in a statement by the Arab League regarding the trial of the Palestinian prisoner, Mohammad Al-Halabi. It noted that Al-Halabi, "a father of five children and detained for six consecutive years," tops the list of administrative detainees, as his trial sessions are renewed over a period of 6 years, reaching 170 and scheduled for this month, in conditions that lack the lowest conditions of justice.

The Arab League also affirmed that the Zionist authorities are continuing large-scale arrest campaigns in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the administrative detention of more than 650 detainees in Zionist prisons, within the framework of the policy of collective punishment and aggression against the Palestinian people.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian woman shot in the chest by the occupation forces near (Al-Oroub) camp for refugees, north Al-Khalil City on Wednesday. In a statement, the ministry said, Ghofran Warasneh, 31, was shot in the chest, and was transferred to Al-Ahli hospital, after the occupation forces obstructed the arrival of its crews to provide ambulances.

Occupying forces shot the woman while she was walking near the entrance of Al-Oroub camp, accusing her of holding a knife. In a similar statement, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry condemned the accident saying that "the crime is an extension of a long and continuous series of field executions committed by the occupation forces in accordance with the instructions and directives of the occupying state." —KUNA



KUWAIT: As part of the implementation of Ministerial Decision No 56/2022 with regards to increasing the share (rations card) of frozen chicken to 3 kilograms per month, the Ministry continued its supplies in Tamween branches in all governorates to satisfy consumers as it continues to play its role in supplying the basic goods.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Photo captures the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center along the Arabian Gulf coastline. The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre is a multidisciplinary public space owned by the Amiri Diwan - striving to entertain, educate and inspire the people. It offers a range of events - in music, theatre, film, workshops and spoken word - for every generation and sector of society. The center provides a space for dialogue to share and showcase skills and knowledge, giving younger voices a forum in which to speak. It is a platform for educational and cultural exchange; moreover, it functions as an influential entertainment and culture powerhouse and productive space for the region. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Sheikha Intisar awarded Knight Order of the Crown

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Belgium to Kuwait Marc Trenteseau on Tuesday handed the Knight Order of the Crown to Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah in appreciation of her contributions to the voluntary action and support to victims of war. King Philippe of Belgium granted this order, one of Belgium's highest honors, to Sheikha Intisar in

recognition of her praiseworthy efforts and initiatives, Trenteseau said in a celebration held on this occasion. The Belgian diplomat extolled Sheikha Intisar for her voluntary actions, including medical care for patients and children since 1999, and support to the ICRC, as well as the social initiatives geared to youth. —KUNA



Sheikha Intisar receives the Knight Order of the Crown.

Kuwaiti project receives 'certificate of excellence'

GENEVA: The International Telecommunication Union on Wednesday awarded the Kuwaiti project (Social Watcher) a certificate of excellence among the five best projects in the world in the field of "Employing Technology" Information and communication in the field of media." This came within the framework of the activities of the World Summit on the Information Society Award organized annually by the United Nations Union in Geneva. The Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Houlin Zhao, handed over a certificate of excellence to each of the Professor of Computational Linguistics and Computational Processing of the Arabic Language at Kuwait University Dr Salah Al-Najem and Media Adviser Ahmed Al-Essa.

It is one of the most successful global experiences that have benefited from information technology in analyzing social media to help decision makers in community planning and analysis. He explained that the project is concerned with monitoring, measuring and analyzing public opinion on social media and disseminating it with the aim of community awareness.

The award jury chose the Kuwaiti project among the five best projects that received the largest number of votes in the (media category) out of a total of more than 1.3 million votes

last March. The union described the project as an electronic platform for measuring real public opinion by analyzing content and interaction on social media, and sorting and neutralizing automated and fake accounts that distort and deceive public opinion in some issues in order to reach the highest accuracy rate using advanced tools and software.

Dr Salah Al-Najem, co-founder of the project, said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the project employs computer processing techniques for natural language, artificial intelligence and analysis of big data to reach the results it provides to the community. He stressed that Kuwaiti researchers are behind the success of this platform that aims to raise community awareness and public service by employing information technology in analyzing public opinion trends using computer processing techniques for natural language, artificial intelligence, big data analysis and other modern techniques in order to present their results in a simplified way to the public and those interested. He pointed out that the project had published a large number of reports on its website and pages in social media, and these reports had received Kuwaiti and Arab media attention who said that it plays an "important role in community awareness".

For his part, the co-founder of the project, Ahmed Al-Essa, told KUNA that the Social Watcher project had already been recognized last year by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) as a "pioneering Arab model in the field of technology employment."

Al-Essa added that the Social Watcher platform has become (with the recognition of the United Nations), "an Arab model and a global success story that was born in Kuwait."



GENEVA: The Kuwaiti project receives a certificate of excellence from the International Telecommunication Union. —KUNA

Ministries, government agencies, private companies, public benefit institutions and international universities from different countries of the world submitted 966 projects specialized in various fields to compete for the World Summit Award for the Information Society. The World Summit Award for the Information Society aims to encourage and honor distinguished projects globally that have succeeded in making use of information and communication technology as a tool to achieve sustainable development and to enable development in multiple areas, including e-government, e-commerce, media and local electronic content and e-learning. —KUNA

American International University celebrates 'Night of Historic Firsts'



KUWAIT: American International University held its first Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 28, 2022. This marked the beginning of what will become a long-standing tradition for the university which offers an authentic American-style education. Rigorous courses and well-developed campus' activities, including the traditional commencement ceremony, are what set AIU apart and cement its position as the top institution for higher learning in the region.

In addition to this being AIU's first commencement, there were many other "firsts" that were celebrated that evening. The first female graduate from the School of Architecture and Design was chosen by the university and her peers to deliver the graduating class of 2022's speech. Rahaf Al Khalaf, who remarked that she was

nervous about speaking in English before entering AIU, delivered the address to her fellow graduates with poise and grace.

She stated, "My growth at AIU has also given me the ability to help my peers when they seek me out, and this ultimately helped me further develop my skills. My discipline and commitment to my work have been important for me and through this, I understand that I have become a role model for my peers. I have learned the importance of being approachable, encouraging, and knowledgeable."

The commencement address was delivered by Dr Fayza Al-Kharafi, Kuwait University's first female president. Dr. Al-Kharafi has been the lead researcher on over twenty projects and was the founder of the Corrosion

and Electrochemistry Research Laboratory which was founded in 1984. In addition to being a member of the United Nations University Council and Vice President of the World Academy of Sciences, she serves on numerous boards benefitting the scientific advancement of Kuwait.

One of the most powerful women in the Middle East, as named by Forbes Magazine, Dr Al-Kharafi congratulated the graduating students wishing them success in their future endeavors. Dr Al-Kharafi also highlighted the relevance of the academic programs offered at AIU and the benefit afforded to the education industry and to Kuwait as a whole. AIU looks forward to establishing more time-honored traditions such as commencement to celebrate the success of our current and future students.



China says not competing for influence in S Pacific Port

Texas lays to rest 19 young children killed in school shooting

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Ukraine braces for Severodonetsk fall

Kremlin accuse Washington of 'adding fuel to the fire'

SOLEDAR, Ukraine: Ukraine looked close to losing the key eastern city of Severodonetsk to Russian forces but was boosted Wednesday by the US decision to send more advanced rocket systems to help with its defence.

"The Russians control 70 percent of Severodonetsk," Lugansk region governor Sergiy Gaiday announced on Telegram, adding that Ukrainian forces were withdrawing to prepared positions. "If in two or three days, the Russians take control of Severodonetsk, they will install artillery and mortars and will bombard more intensely Lysychansk," the city across the river, which Gaiday said remained held by Kyiv.

One of the industrial hubs on Russia's path to taking the eastern Lugansk region, Severodonetsk has become a target of massive Russian firepower since the failed attempt to capture Kyiv. But in a boost for

the outgunned Ukrainian military, President Joe Biden confirmed that more US weaponry was on the way to allow them to "more precisely strike key targets" in Ukraine.

The new weapon is the Himars multiple launch rocket system, or MLRS: A mobile unit that can simultaneously launch multiple precision-guided missiles. They are the centrepiece of a \$700 million package being unveiled Wednesday that includes air-surveillance radar, more Javelin short-range anti-tank rockets, artillery ammunition, helicopters, vehicles and spare parts, a US official said. With a range of about 50 miles (80 kilometres), they will allow Ukrainian forces to strike further behind Russian lines.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused Washington of "adding fuel to the fire", saying "such supplies" did not encourage Kyiv to resume peace talks. In an article in the New York Times, Biden insisted: "We

are not encouraging or enabling Ukraine to strike beyond its borders."

He wrote: "We do not seek a war between NATO and Russia. As much as I disagree with Mr. (President Vladimir) Putin, and find his actions an outrage, the United States will not try to bring about his ouster in Moscow. "So long as the United States or our allies are not attacked, we will not be directly engaged in this conflict, either by sending American troops to fight in Ukraine or by attacking Russian forces."

While some analysts have suggested the Himars could be a "game-changer", others caution they should not be expected to suddenly turn the tables, not least because Ukrainian troops need time to learn how to use them effectively. What they may do is improve morale, according to one Ukrainian soldier getting pummeled on the front line. — AFP



NOVYI DONBAS, Ukraine: Ukrainian servicemen assist their comrades not far from the frontline in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas. —AFP



VIBORG, Denmark: Danish voters cast their ballots at a polling station in Viborg, Denmark, on June 1, 2022, as traditionally eurosceptic Denmark votes in a referendum on whether to overturn its opt-out on the EU's common defence policy after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Danes vote on joining EU's defence policy

COPENHAGEN, Denmark: Traditionally eurosceptic Denmark began voting Wednesday in a referendum on whether to overturn its opt-out on the EU's common defence policy after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The vote comes on the heels of neighbouring Finland's and Sweden's historic applications for NATO membership, as the Ukraine war forces countries in Europe to rethink their security policies.

More than 65 percent of Denmark's 4.3 million eligible voters are expected to vote in favour of dropping the exemption, an opinion poll published on Sunday suggested. Analysts' predictions have, however, been cautious, given the low voter turnout expected in a country that has often said "no" to more EU integration, most recently in 2015.

Polls opened across the country at 8:00 am (0600 GMT), and were set to close at 8:00 pm. Final results were due around 11:00 pm (2100 GMT). At Copenhagen's city hall, voting was busy in the early morning as residents of the capital hurried to cast their ballots on their way to work.

"I think that these kinds of votes are even more important than earlier. In times of war it's obviously important to state if you feel that you want to join this type of community or not," Molly Stensgaard, a 55-year-old scriptwriter, told AFP. Mads Adam, a 24-year-old political science student, agreed.

"History changes and it affects us here in Denmark, and obviously we have to react to that," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had urged Danes to vote in a final televised debate on Sunday. "I believe with all my heart that we have to vote 'yes'. At a time when we need to fight for security in Europe, we need to be more united with our neighbours", she said.

Denmark has been an EU member since 1973, but it put the brakes on transferring more power to Brussels in 1992 when 50.7 percent of Danes rejected the Maastricht Treaty, the EU's founding treaty. It needed to be ratified by all member states to enter into force. In order to persuade Danes to approve the treaty, Copenhagen negotiated a series of exemptions and Danes finally approved it the following year.

Since then, Denmark has remained outside the European single currency, the euro—which it rejected in a 2000 referendum—as well as the bloc's common policies on justice and home affairs, and defence. —AFP

Four killed as quakes hit southwest China

BEIJING: At least four people are dead and 14 others injured after two earthquakes hit southwestern China on Wednesday, state media reported. A shallow 6.1-magnitude quake hit a sparsely populated area in Sichuan province about 100 kilometres (60 miles) west of provincial capital Chengdu, broadcaster CCTV said.

It was followed three minutes later by a second quake of magnitude 4.5 in a nearby county where the deaths and injuries occurred, according to CCTV. Footage obtained by the broadcaster showed dozens of schoolchildren screaming and ducking under desks as their building started to shake, before dashing out of the classroom with arms over their heads.

Another video posted on social media by state-run broadcaster CGTN appeared to show the first quake sparking a landslide that damaged cars and left rocks and soil strewn over a road. Authorities in the city of Ya'an dispatched more than 4,500 people to the quake area, including emergency rescue workers,

firefighters and military police, CCTV reported.

It said the city was "going all out to rescue those who have been trapped... and reduce the number of dead to the greatest extent possible". Officials were also scrambling to "ensure no casualties are caused by secondary disasters", CCTV added.

The China Earthquake Networks Center said the first quake, in Ya'an's Lushan county, struck at a depth of 17 kilometres at about 5 pm local time. The US Geological Survey said the quake registered a magnitude of 5.9 and was shallower at a depth of 10 kilometres.

Tremors were felt in cities across Sichuan province, damaging some telecommunications lines, state media reported. Provincial authorities said some buildings had been damaged but there were no initial reports of any structures collapsing.

At a press briefing Wednesday evening, officials at the provincial earthquake bureau said the first quake was an aftershock from a magnitude 7.0 quake in 2013 that killed around 200 people. Mountainous Sichuan—a popular tourist destination home to China's giant pandas—is an earthquake-prone area. A shallow quake on the border with neighbouring Yunnan province in January this year injured more than 20 people. —AFP




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Kuwait Airways announces the opening of applications for the jobs listed below in accordance with the following specific requirements and specifications:

Required Job	Required Experience	Qualifications
1 - Director Supply Chain	15 years of experience of which 6 years in a supervisory role in managing supply chain, projects, housing and facilities, preferably in aviation.	Bachelors degree in engineering or business management or supply chain or finance or equivalent.
2 - Director Cargo	15 years of experience of which 6 years in a supervisory role in managing cargo marketing, sales and operations, preferably in aviation.	Bachelors degree in business administration or economics or marketing or statistics or equivalent.
3 - Deputy Operations Director – Flight Services	12 years' experience in cabin services with at least 3 years in a supervisory position, with appropriate management skills and 3 years' experience as Safety Instructor or Flight Crew qualification as instructor/examiner.	Bachelor's degree in hospitality industry, hotel or aviation management.
4 - Assistant Director, Pricing & Revenue Management & Central Reservation	12 years of experience, in related airline market research planning and pricing activities including 5 years in supervisory position.	Bachelor's degree in Engineering or Administration of Science or Marketing or equivalent.
5 - Assistant Director, Network Planning & Evaluation	12 years' experience in commercial airline marketing, planning and revenue producing operations.	Bachelor's degree in Engineering or Administration of Science or Marketing or equivalent
6 - Head of Development Research & Employee Relations	15 years of experience in development, research and employee relations.	Bachelor's degree in law.
7 - Sr. Manager, Outstations Accounts GCC, ME, Far East & IATA	12 years' experience in the field of outstation accounting in aviation minimum of 4 years leading small to medium sized outstation team in an airline.	Bachelor's degree in Accounting.
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- 1- Priority in appointment shall be for eligible Kuwaitis.
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- Applications shall be submitted on the website careers.kuwaitairways.com within 15 days from the publication date of this announcement .
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- 5- A certificate from the General Organization for Social Insurance (career progression certificate) and an experience certificate, if any.
- 6- A copy of licenses, technical certificates required if any, certificate of previous supervisory experience (based on the job).
- Non-compliant and incomplete applications will be excluded, and such exclusion shall itself be a formal apology without the need to notify the applicant.
- Receipt of the application does not mean acceptance and the company reserves the right not to accept any applicant for the vacancies mentioned above.

Kuwait Airways
2 June 2022

International

Texas lays to rest 19 young children killed in elementary school shooting

As community mourned, anger has seethed over the response of police

UVALDE, United States: The traumatized Texas town of Uvalde began on Tuesday laying to rest the 19 young children killed in an elementary school shooting that left the small, tight-knit community united in grief and anger.

The body of Amerie Jo Garza, 10, arrived in a silver coffin and was carried into Sacred Heart Catholic Church by six pallbearers wearing white shirts with red carnations. Mourners, some of them dressed in the purple color of Robb Elementary School across the street, gathered outside the church ahead of the funeral amid a strong police presence.

Another girl, Maite Yuleana Rodriguez, also 10, was due to be laid to rest later Tuesday, with further ceremonies scheduled through the coming weeks. A funeral for one of the two teachers killed, 48-year-old Irma Linda Garcia, will take place Wednesday, according to a local CBS News affiliate.

As the community mourned, anger has seethed over the response of police. Officers have come under intense criticism since the May 24 tragedy over why it took well over an hour to neutralize the gunman — the “wrong decision,” Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) director Steven McCraw has admitted. ABC news on Tuesday cited multiple law enforcement sources saying that the Uvalde police department and school district had stopped cooperating with the DPS’s investigation into the handling of the attack.

The great-grandfather of one of the young victims

berated police near the memorial of white crosses surrounded by wreaths and bouquets of flowers. “They could tell me ‘Oh, we made a mistake. We made the wrong decision’. But my great-granddaughter is not coming back to me,” said a distraught 78-year-old Ruben Mata Montemayor.

When President Joe Biden visited the town, about an hour’s drive from the Mexico border, over the weekend, shouts of “do something!” rang out from the crowd. The shooting — the latest in an epidemic of gun violence in the United States that came less



“Wrong decision”

than two weeks after 10 people died in an attack at a Buffalo grocery store by a young gunman targeting African Americans — has spurred desperate calls for gun reform.

“There’s no words to describe (it),” said Esther Rubio, who traveled from nearby San Antonio to



UVALDE, United States: People pay tribute and mourn at a makeshift memorial for the victims of the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, Texas, May 31, 2022. The traumatized Texas town of Uvalde began on Tuesday laying to rest the 19 young children killed in an elementary school shooting that left the small, tight-knit community united in grief and anger. —AFP

attend the wake on Monday for Amerie Jo. Her pictures decorated the funeral home close to the school, where an 18-year-old gunned down 19 children and two teachers before he was killed by police. Actor Matthew McConaughey, who grew up in Uvalde and has flirted with the idea of running for Texas governor, also visited the memorial Tuesday.

While mass shootings draw anguished attention and spur momentary demands for change, gun regulation faces deep resistance from most Republicans and some rural-state Democrats. Biden on Monday vowed to “continue to push” for reform, saying, “I think things have gotten so bad that everybody is getting more rational about it.” —AFP

Amnesty accuses Iran of ‘hostage taking’

LONDON: The UK government should investigate Iran’s six-year detention of dual national Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe as “an act of hostage-taking” and try to prosecute Iranian officials, Amnesty International said Wednesday.

The rights group has compiled a detailed analysis of the case, which it says includes “compelling evidence that Iran’s detention of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe amounted to an act of hostage-taking”.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 43, who was first detained in Iran in 2016, returned to Britain in March along with fellow dual national Anoosheh Ashoori after the UK agreed to pay a longstanding debt to Tehran.

“The Iranian authorities deliberately and shamelessly deprived Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe of her freedom,” Diana Eltahawy, deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty, said in a statement.

“They used spurious national security charges and sham judicial proceedings against her with the aim of exerting pressure on the UK government to settle its debts.”

The NGO last month submitted its evidence to the UK parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, which has launched its own inquiry into state-level hostage situations.

Amnesty said there was an urgent need for the international community to step up efforts to prevent and prosecute hostage-taking amid growing evidence that Iranian authorities are holding others unjustly.



Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

It highlighted at least seven cases of dual nationals currently held in Iran, including Swedish-Iranian Ahmadreza Djalali, Austrian-Iranians Kamran Ghaderi and Massud Mossaheb and German-Iranians Nahid Taghavi and Jamshid Sharmahd.

Two other British-Iranians, Mehran Raoof and Morad Tahbaz—who is also a US national—are also still detained by Tehran. “The prevailing climate of impunity in Iran has emboldened the authorities to continue using dual and foreign nationals as political bargaining chips without any fear of consequences,” Eltahawy added.

“The hostage-taking of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe must not go unpunished,” Amnesty urged the British government to review the evidence in her case and request the extradition of Iranian officials “in order to prosecute them in fair trials”.

It noted both Iran and the UK are parties to the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, which criminalises hostage-taking by state and non-state actors and obligates them to take action to prevent and punish such acts. —AFP

UK’s PM launches new ‘Partygate’ defence as rebels mobilize

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday denied breaching the UK government’s ministerial code of conduct, as he bids to head off a growing Conservative revolt over the “Partygate” scandal. Former Conservative leader William Hague said Johnson could face a no-confidence vote among his own MPs as soon as next week, following numerous lockdown-breaching parties held in Downing Street.

Johnson became the first serving UK prime minister found to have broken the law while in office when he was fined by police for attending a birthday party in June 2020. Although he has apologised, he has repeatedly refused to resign, and doubled down on his defence in a letter to his independent adviser on ministerial interests, Christopher Geidt.

Lord Geidt issued an annual report laying out the need for Johnson to explain why he had not breached the ministerial code, in light of the police fine. Under previous governments, violations of the code were considered a resigning offence, but Johnson has already stood by others in his ministerial team found to have been in breach.

Responding to Geidt, Johnson said “I did not breach the code”. There was “no intent to break the law”, he said, insisting he had been “fully accountable” to parliament “and rightly apologised for the mistake”. However, dozens of Tory MPs have now publicly criticised their embattled leader over the parties under his watch, which happened when the government was ordering the public to

respect Covid lockdowns.

If 54 of them write a letter of no confidence in Johnson to a powerful backbench committee of Tory MPs, that will trigger a vote of all 359 Conservatives lawmakers on whether he should continue as leader and thereby prime minister.

Nearly 30 MPs are publicly known to have submitted such a letter but the process is shrouded in secrecy and the real tally is impossible to gauge. Parliament is not sitting this week and with four days of celebrations for Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee beginning on Thursday, any announcement about a possible vote would not come until next week at the earliest.

The latest heavyweight Tories to express doubts about Johnson include former attorney general Jeremy Wright, who on Monday urged him to resign, and ex-cabinet minister Andrea Leadsom. Hague said the intervention of Leadsom—a prominent “Brexititeer” who campaigned alongside Johnson in Britain’s 2016 EU referendum—had lit a “slow fuse” on a no-confidence vote.

“The fuse is getting closer to the dynamite here and it’s speeding up,” Hague told Times Radio, adding it was “just another indication the Conservative Party is moving faster towards a vote”. Support for Johnson among Conservatives has ebbed further away following last week’s publication of an internal inquiry.

The probe by senior civil servant Sue Gray found that he presided over a culture of parties that ran late into the night and even featured a drunken fight among staff. Johnson secured an 80-seat majority at the last general election in December 2019, on a promise to take the UK out of the European Union.

But despite that, an increasing number of Tory MPs have come forward to say they do not believe the party can win the next election, which is due by 2024, under his leadership. —AFP

Parents crushed under pressure...

Continued from Page 1

“Despite it not being an obligation for parents to bring, for example, souvenirs to distribute among students and teachers during traditional days, parents always buy expensive mementos, which places a huge burden on them,” she told Kuwait Times.

On the reason why parents force themselves to buy such things, Um Fahad said, “many teachers treat the students who bring fancy souvenirs or gifts differently,” adding, “if other parents do not do the same, their children will be ignored”.

Um Ali, an expat mom whose kids go to a private English school, detailed to Kuwait Times about her monthly expenses for school events. “It varies from one school to another, but for me, I spend approximately KD 100 to KD 120 per month on clothes, souvenirs and other items related to school events. Gifts for teachers is necessary to keep the teacher’s focus on my child’s development,” she explained.

Um Ali said her child’s school usually holds three to four events a week. “The items we buy have a one-time use, which puts financial pressure on some parents who cannot afford these expenses but are forced to do it to not make their children feel different than their peers,” she said. “Meanwhile, schools are very strict

regarding tuition fees, and they are not lenient with parents over payment. Earlier, schools charged KD 50 for registration fees, but now we have to pay KD 200 at the beginning of the semester,” she complained.

Dalia Al-Sayed, another expat whose children also attend a private English school, explained another side of the financial pressure on parents. “My children’s school increased its fees, which doesn’t match what they provide to our kids. Most teachers don’t explain lessons well, which forces us as working parents to hire a private tutor to teach them,” she said.

Sayed told Kuwait Times that she tried many times to pay the school fees in full at the beginning of the year, but the school doesn’t allow this in order to constantly increase the fees, which by the end of the semester rise by 7 percent. “Every two months, the school issues a revision book and forces students to buy it from them for KD 10, while printshops sell it for only KD 1.250. But the school principal told me he will not allow the teachers to teach my kids if I buy the book from outside,” she said.

The financial controller of the Private Education Department of the Ministry of Education told Kuwait Times there is no law that obligates parents to participate in extracurricular events. He said if students are subjected to any kind of pressure from schools, they should visit the department and submit an official complaint, which will be taken seriously and in complete confidentiality. He said penalties for such complaints reach the point of canceling a school’s license, adding “this is what actually happened to a school two weeks ago”.

experience and skills, they demand to go to another employer for better pay, adding that in many cases such workers are encouraged by labor offices and other citizens or foreigners.

The same applies to law offices that recruit legal advisers, who after gaining the necessary experience, move to other employers for a “limited” salary increase. Turaiji blamed brokers and labor offices for part of the problem and what he described as the greed of workers as the other part. Under Kuwaiti law, a majority of expat workers are free to change jobs after serving for at least one year with their current employers. If the employers refuse to provide them with the necessary release, the court will force them to do so.

Yemen truce hangs in balance...

Continued from Page 1

the truce talks were in “trouble” as it pushed for an extension to help support millions of people at risk. Talks on extending the ceasefire “haven’t ended yet but seem to be in a bit of trouble”, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said.

Aid agencies have urged Yemen’s warring parties to extend the truce, saying it had “positive humanitarian impacts”. “As organizations working across Yemen, we have seen the positive humanitarian impacts of the truce,” more than 30 aid agencies, including Save The Children, Oxfam and the Norwegian Refugee Council, said in a joint statement. They said the reopening of Sanaa airport to commercial flights had allowed hundreds of patients

in “critical need of lifesaving medical treatment outside of the country” to finally receive it.

The truce has also seen oil tankers docking in the rebel-held port of Hodeida, potentially easing fuel shortages in Sanaa and elsewhere. But a provision for the rebels to ease their siege of Yemen’s third-largest city Ta’ez has yet to be implemented, to the anger of both the government and residents, who have held repeated protests in recent weeks. The head of Yemen’s presidential leadership council, Rashad Al-Alimi, discussed the implementation of the truce with UN chief Antonio Guterres by telephone on Tuesday.

He urged the UN chief to “redouble the pressure on the Houthi militia to abide by its commitments to the truce, including opening roads to Ta’ez”, the official Saba news agency reported. Ta’ez has been largely cut off from the rest of government-held territory since 2015, with all supplies coming in by a single tortuous road through the mountains. The war in Yemen has killed more than 150,000 people and displaced millions of civilians, according to the UN. —AFP

Iran building collapse feeds...

Continued from Page 1

Islamic Republic as people on the Iranian streets are no longer blaming the government for their ills, but are directly calling out Ayatollah Khamenei and the clerical regime in its entirety,” said Kasra Aarabi, senior Iran analyst at the Tony Blair Institute.

He said the protests are becoming “increasingly widespread” in both cities and more rural areas and are being led by the working class, usually the bedrock of support for the system. Regular protests concentrated in western and northwestern Iran, home to the country’s Arab and Kurdish minorities, had already been taking place for over two weeks when the 10-storey building under construction in Abadan in Khuzestan province collapsed on May 23.

The tragedy, blamed on shoddy construction standards and corruption, left at least 36 dead, according

to the official toll. But unconfirmed reports said the real number could be even higher and the developer had not died, as widely reported, but been allowed to flee. The protests in Abadan, according to Iranian opposition activists, have now continued for seven consecutive nights.

Slogans shouted targeting senior regime officials have included repeated chants of “death to Khamenei”, according to footage posted on social media accounts. Hecklers in Abadan drowned out an address by an ayatollah with calls of “shameless”. Protests have spread to other cities including the Gulf hub of Bushehr, where protesters twisted the Islamic republic’s traditional mantra of “Death to America” by chanting “our enemy is right in front of us, they lie when they say it is America!”

Opposition group the People’s Mujahedin (MEK), said it had confirmed protests in several provinces outside Khuzestan including Hormozgan province, Tehran, Isfahan province, and Fars in the south. Activists said five deaths among protesters had been confirmed in mid-May even before the Abadan collapse, with extra security forces sent to the city using live fire to quell the protests. —AFP

MP calls to restrict expats from...

Continued from Page 1

However, the lawmaker called for considering legislation changes that establish a balance between the legal protection for workers guaranteed by the constitution and at an international level and safeguarding the rights of employers and Kuwait’s labor market.

Turaiji specifically referred to cases where citizens recruit domestic helpers, drivers, farmers or cooks without any experience and after helping them gain

International

China says not competing for influence in South Pacific Port

‘China respects Australia’s historical and traditional ties in the region’

VILA: China has insisted it has “no intention to compete” for influence in the South Pacific as foreign minister Wang Yi and his Australian counterpart Penny Wong again jettied around the region Wednesday on duelling diplomatic charm offensives. In a statement distributed by the Chinese embassy in Canberra, Beijing said it “does not seek exclusive rights” in the region and “we have no intention to compete with others”.

Although Wang failed to secure support for a regional security deal that would have seen Beijing play a much bigger role in sensitive areas including policing and cybersecurity, he has inked a series of country-specific agreements on his trip.

In Vanuatu on Wednesday, agreements were announced on deepening economic ties and sending Chinese medical teams to the country. In Tonga on Tuesday, Wang pledged China’s support for sports stadium and wind power projects, according to Chinese state media, while signing deals on disaster prevention and mitigation, agriculture, fisheries and health care. Wang’s South Pacific trip concludes with a stop in Papua New Guinea on Thursday and Friday.



PORT VILA, Vanuatu: Visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrives at the convention center with Chief of Malvatumauri National Council Willie Plasua (2nd L) after a meeting with the Vanuatu President Tallis Obed Moses in Vanuatu capital city of Port Vila on June 1, 2022. — AFP



Wang pledges China’s support for wind power projects

The claim comes as Wang nears the end of a contentious 10-day visit to Pacific Island nations that has seen China pitch a radically increased role in regional security, much to the concern of the United States and Australia. “China respects Australia’s historical and traditional ties in the region and there is enough space in the vast Pacific Ocean for China, Australia and all island countries to share peace, development and prosperity,” the statement said.

Australian blitz
The visit has prompted the newly elected Australian government to embark on a diplomatic blitz to shore up decades-old alliances. Australia’s new foreign minister Penny Wong said she was heading back to the Pacific Islands, travelling to Samoa and Tonga just days after Wang visited.

Since being sworn in nine days ago, Wong has already visited Japan for a meeting of Quad countries the United States, India, Japan and Australia-and Fiji. Australia’s new centre-left government is playing catch-up after years of relations with the Pacific being

hampered by the former conservative administration’s foot-dragging on climate change.

Rising sea levels are seen as an existential threat by many of the low-lying Pacific Island nations. Visiting Fiji, Wong said Australia would set new, more ambi-

tious emissions targets and bid to co-host a future UN climate conference with Pacific Island countries.

There would be no more “disrespecting” Pacific nations or “ignoring” their calls to act on climate change, she said. — AFP



File photo shows Karen villagers, injured during air strikes in the area following the February military coup, rest after receiving medical treatment while taking shelter in a jungle near Day Pu No in Hpa-pun in eastern Myanmar’s Karen state. — AFP

Number of displaced in Myanmar tops 1m

YANGON: Post-coup violence has pushed the number of displaced people in Myanmar over one million for the first time, the UN has said, warning of “dire” conditions as the monsoon approaches and fighting rages.

Almost 700,000 people have been forced to flee their homes since the toppling of Aung San Suu Kyi’s government last year, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said on Tuesday. Civilian militias have formed to fight back against the coup across the country, and the junta has responded with an onslaught that rights groups say includes razing villages, mass extra-judicial killings and airstrikes on civilians.

The violence has added to an estimated 346,000 people already displaced before the coup. That includes those affected by long-running conflicts with ethnic rebel groups along the Thai and Chinese borders, and Rohingya Muslims forced from their homes during a brutal 2017 crackdown.

More than 12,000 civilian properties are estimated to have been burned or destroyed since the putsch, UNOCHA said, with the approaching monsoon rains threatening more misery for those living in displacement camps.

More than 300,000 of those displaced since the coup were from the northwestern Sagaing region, where fighters clash regularly with junta forces, it added. It noted that authorities had cut mobile data services across much of Sagaing and neighbouring Magway — another hotspot — and that there were “restrictions” in place affecting the transport of rice, medicine and fuel.

“Reports suggest there remains a dire need for health services, food, and relief items and shelter in these areas,” it said. Diplomatic efforts to end the crisis are moribund. A “consensus” brokered last year by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations aimed at facilitating dialogue between the military and its opponents and the delivery of humanitarian aid has been largely ignored by the junta.

In March junta chief Min Aung Hlaing said the military would “annihilate until the end” its opponents. More than 1,800 people have been killed and more than 13,000 arrested in the junta’s crackdown on dissent since the coup, according to a local monitoring group. — AFP

World’s ‘most neglected’ refugee crises in Africa

PARIS: The world is paying too little attention to a slew of mass displacements of people across Africa, risking starvation deaths and prolonging conflicts, the Norwegian Refugee Council warned in a report published Wednesday. “With the all-absorbing war in Europe’s Ukraine, I fear African suffering will be pushed further into the shadows,” the aid group’s chief Jan Egeland said in a statement. The countries with the most neglected crises according to the NRC are, in order: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burkina Faso, Cameroon, South Sudan, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Nigeria, Burundi and Ethiopia.

It is the first time that all 10 crises on the Council’s annual list-based on shortfalls in the international political response, media coverage, and the amount of aid pledged—are on the African continent.

In the DRC, the most-neglected country on the list for the second year running, around 27 million people went hungry last year, or one-third of the population.

Meanwhile 5.5 million people were internally displaced, the aid group said, with a further one million fleeing abroad. But there were no high-level meetings or donor conferences about the DRC’s hunger crisis or the conflict in the country’s east, and only 44 percent of the \$2.0 billion requested by the UN for humanitarian aid was received. By contrast, the NRC highlighted that it took just one day this March for a humanitarian appeal for Ukraine to be almost fully funded. “The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the immense gap between what is possible when the international community rallies behind a crisis, and the daily reality for millions of people suffering in silence within these crises on the African continent that the world has chosen to ignore,” NRC head Egeland said.

In other countries on the Council’s list, climate shocks such as droughts and floods have exacerbated food crises, while conflicts or endemic violence both put civilians to flight and made it harder for aid groups to reach them. And lack of press freedom in many affected nations raises the hurdle to media coverage even higher. The NRC noted that seven of the 10 countries on its list had made repeated appearances in recent years. “This points to a vicious cycle of international political neglect, limited media coverage, donor fatigue, and ever-deepening humanitarian needs,” the report said. The aid group called for “adequate attention” from the UN Security Council and other international bodies, with measures like assigning one or more members to “champion” specific displacement crises and support for NGOs working on the ground. — AFP

Sinn Fein defends N Ireland protocol in Brussels visit

BRUSSELS: Sinn Fein leaders on Wednesday accused British Prime Minister Boris Johnson of being “reckless” with peace in Northern Ireland as they visited Brussels to defend the EU-UK Brexit deal on the UK province.

The leader of the Irish nationalist party, Mary Lou McDonald, told a media conference it was “unacceptable” that Johnson’s government was looking to unilaterally walk away from parts of the Northern Ireland Protocol in the Brexit treaty.

“Boris Johnson must, and the British government must, come off this very, very destructive path because they put in peril, they put in jeopardy, the peace and the Good Friday Agreement settlement that we have all built so painstakingly over decades,” she said. She and Sinn Fein vice president Michelle O’Neill, who is poised to take up the first minister’s post in the Northern Ireland administration after their party emerged from elections last month as the province’s biggest party, were in Brussels to defend the protocol.

They said they met with the EU’s pointman on Brexit, European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic, to express their support for the bloc and Britain to resolve problems over Northern Ireland within the protocol’s framework.

London and Brussels are in deadlock over the Northern Ireland Protocol, which was struck to uphold the peace gained from the 1998 Good Friday Agreement which put an end to sectarian violence that killed thousands over three decades.

It created a customs border down the Irish Sea, keeping Northern Ireland in the EU’s customs orbit so as to avoid a hard border between it and EU member Ireland. While both sides acknowledge there are problems in implementing the deal, they are split on how to resolve them. The EU says the mechanisms in the protocol permit fine-tuning on issues such as animal and plant checks and supermarket supplies. But Britain, backing Northern Ireland unionists, wants the protocol fundamentally rewritten and is threatening to disapply parts of it if the EU does not bend. “They are cynically using the people of the North in their game of chicken with the European Commission,” McDonald said. — AFP

Hurricane Agatha hits Mexico

OAXACA, Mexico: The toll from Hurricane Agatha climbed to at least ten dead and around 20 missing in southern Mexico, where heavy rains triggered landslides and flooding, local officials said Tuesday. The storm, the first hurricane of the Pacific season, was the strongest to make landfall along Mexico’s Pacific coast in May since record keeping began in 1949, the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

Agatha weakened as it moved inland with its remnants producing torrential rain Tuesday over Veracruz state. “Right now we’re at around 20 people missing, most of them are in the upper mountains,” Oaxaca state governor Alejandro Murat told Radio Formula, adding that “ten who lost their lives were unfortunately preliminarily reported by local authorities.”

“When Agatha made landfall, the day ended without any loss of human life, but heavy rains that occurred early Tuesday morning caused rivers to burst their banks and landslides,” Murat said earlier in the day. An earlier toll had reported three dead and eight missing. Two people aged 18 and 21 years old died when part of a hill collapsed in the community of Santa Catarina Xanaguia, the Oaxaca civil protection office said. Another woman died and her son was injured in a landslide in Llano del Chillar, it said. Agatha made landfall Monday near Puerto Angel in Oaxaca as a



HUATULCO, Mexico: Employees of the municipality remove branches before Hurricane Agatha makes landfall in Huatulco, Oaxaca State, Mexico. Hurricane Agatha, the first of the season, made landfall Monday near a string of beach resorts on Mexico’s Pacific Coast. — AFP

Category Two hurricane—the second lowest on a scale of five—with winds of 165 kilometers (105 miles) per hour. Mexico is regularly lashed by tropical storms on both its Pacific and Atlantic coasts, generally between

the months of May and November. The deadliest storm to hit Mexico last year was a Category 3 hurricane called Grace that killed 11 people in the eastern states of Veracruz and Puebla in August. — AFP

Workers recall rape, beatings at VW Brazil unit

RIO DE JANEIRO: Victims forced to work in slave-like conditions at a Brazilian property owned by Volkswagen during the country’s dictatorship recount “grave and systematic” abuses, including rapes, beatings and being tied to trees, a prosecutor said Tuesday.

The German carmaker is facing legal action in Brazil over allegations of rampant human-rights violations at a large farm it ran in the Amazon rainforest basin in the 1970s and ‘80s under the country’s then military regime, media in Germany reported Sunday.

The lead prosecutor on the case, Rafael Garcia, told AFP that investigators had collected depositions from victims who were lured to the farm with false promises of lucrative jobs, then forced to cut down the jungle under grueling conditions against their will to make way for Volkswagen’s cattle ranch, which became the biggest in the northern state of Para.

“Workers who tried to escape were beaten, tied to trees and left there for days,” he said. “Those who tried to slip into the forest never came back—there were simply stories that they had been killed. Workers were systematically, physically abused.” Garcia said a task force of investigators had spent three years assembling evidence in the case, after a local Catholic priest came forward with horrifying accounts of abuse at the property he had compiled over the years. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2022

Zain showcases its role in supporting digital transformation during pandemic

Company took part in panel discussion at Microsoft Smart Government Summit



KUWAIT: Haya Al-Wadani, Eaman Al-Roudhan and Hamad Al-Marzouq during Zain Microsoft Smart Government Summit 2022.



KUWAIT: Ihab Foudeh and Alauddin Kareem recognize Al-Marzouq for his participation

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, took part in a panel discussion during the Microsoft Smart Government Summit 2022 themed "Technologies shaping the Government Future". The event was held in collaboration with the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) and under the patronage of Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Rana Al-Fares.

The event's opening ceremony was attended by CAIT Director General Haya Al-Wadani, Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq, GM Public Sector of Microsoft MEA Ihab Foudeh, Director General of Microsoft Kuwait Alauddin Kareem, and many prominent government officials and private sector executives.

During the panel discussion titled "How technology helped during the COVID-19 Pandemic", Zain Kuwait Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq said: "First, I'd like to thank Microsoft for inviting me to take part in this summit, which I personally see as a fantastic step for us all from both the private and public sector to exchange ideas and discuss the role of advanced cloud computing services like Microsoft Azure

in empowering digital transformation within the government".

He added: "Since the start of the pandemic, Zain was committed to actively take part in all efforts directed towards overcoming the crisis' challenges. We made our tech capabilities available to serve the government's efforts, especially during such unprecedented times that

stranded abroad. The app, which was developed internally by Zain's team in partnership with Microsoft and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, had a great effect in containing the spread of the virus in Kuwait".

Al-Marzouq continued: "I would like to stress on our long-term partnership with Microsoft, which has, without a

- **Hamad Al-Marzouq:** Zain's leadership allowed it to become a main partner of government in developing "Shlonik" app and overcoming COVID challenges.
- Our partnership with Microsoft contributed to achieving our goals for serving New Kuwait vision and will lead way to new stage of empowering digital transformation in public sector.

required doubled efforts and an effective collaboration between the private and public sectors, in order to limit the pandemic's health, economic, and social impacts".

Al-Marzouq explained: "Zain's leadership and experience allowed it to be a main partner of the government in developing the "Shlonik" app within a relatively short period of time right after the nation's leaders directed the implementation of the evacuation plan for citizens

doubt, contributed to achieving our goals to serve the New Kuwait vision. This partnership will surely lead the way towards a new stage of empowering digital transformation within the public sector. Our extensive portfolio of cloud computing and cybersecurity services will attend to the needs of all government institutions, ultimately benefiting citizens and residents".

Al-Marzouq concluded: "The private sector plays a crucial role in empowering



KUWAIT: Al-Marzouq takes part in the panel discussion

government digital transformation projects in Kuwait, and the local market is very mature. That is why we look forward to more achievements and aspire for further developmental projects that will achieve the nation's vision and help put Kuwait on the international tech scene".

The Microsoft Smart Government Summit 2022 brought together government leaders and senior ICT professionals to learn more about leveraging the innovative technological solutions to

improve the public services offered by various entities. Microsoft hosted panel discussions and specialized breakout rooms for the leaders to interact with technology experts on new and emerging technologies such as Infrastructure/App Modernization, Cyber Security, Data and AI, and E-services which would help formulate a unique roadmap to adopt such technologies and accelerate the government's journey in providing smart services.

Iraq faces further power cuts as Iran gas debt missed

BAGHDAD: Iraq has failed to pay \$1.6 billion owed to neighboring Iran for gas imports, a debt needed to guarantee further supplies critical to prevent worsening power cuts, Baghdad's authorities said Wednesday. Payment of the debt was a key requirement to ensure energy supplies for Iraq's power plants during the intense heat of the upcoming summer months, when electricity demands surge as people seek to keep cool.

"Iran had demanded the payment by Iraq of its financial obligations for the payment of the gas," Iraq's electricity ministry said in a statement. However, due to "the delay in the adoption of the budget", as well as parliamentary blockages stalling a bill aimed to guarantee debt payments in the elec-

tricity sector, this led to "delays".

Supplies have already been reduced by five million cubic meters of gas per day, limiting the operation of the power stations and "reducing the hours of electricity supply", the ministry added. Despite its immense oil and gas reserves, Iraq remains dependent on imports to meet its energy needs.

Iran currently provides a third of Iraq's gas and electricity needs, but supplies are regularly cut or reduced, aggravating daily load shedding. The electricity ministry stressed the "efforts of parliament and the government" to allow the ministry to "find compromise solutions with Iran in order to pay the arrears and guarantee the supply of gas". The debt, which was due to have been paid by the start of June, dates back to 2020.

It was stalled amid sanctions against Iran by the United States, which mean that Baghdad cannot pay directly for energy imports in cash. Instead, it must be used in a complicated process to buy goods from the agriculture or pharmaceutical sectors.

Last year, when temperatures in Iraq soared to 52 degrees Celsius (125 Fahrenheit) in the shade,



NASIRIYAH: A General Electric employee stands near a power plant in Nasiriyah, Iraq.—AFP

swathes of the country suffered blackouts, sparking several sporadic protests and prompting the electricity minister to resign. Iraq is already sweltering, with temperatures climbing to 48 degrees Celsius (118 Fahrenheit) on Thursday, according to the meteorological service.—AFP

Singaporeans in a flap at Malaysian chicken export curbs

SINGAPORE: Long queues at stalls selling a popular chicken dish, increasing prices and warnings about supply disruptions—Singaporeans are in a flap due to curbs on poultry exports from neighboring Malaysia. Malaysia's move to halt exports of 3.6 million chickens a month, which kicks in Wednesday, is the latest protectionist move in Asia aimed at tackling domestic shortages and taming surging inflation.

But the surprise step has caused consternation in Singapore, a tiny city-state that relies on its larger neighbor for a good chunk of food imports, including around a third of its chicken.

Of particular concern is the impact on chicken rice, a hugely popular dish of poached chicken, rice and chili dip, often sold at the city-state's ubiquitous open-air food courts. Chicken prices "will definitely go up", said Foo Kui Lian, founder of Tian Tian

Hainanese Chicken Rice, one of the best-known stalls selling the dish in Singapore. "If (suppliers) raise prices by a lot we would have to raise ours a bit, or it'll be difficult for us to survive."

A day before the export curbs kicked in, a long queue formed at the stall as diners sought to get a taste of the dish before a feared surge in prices. Office worker Meilan Lim was among those who bought the dish ahead of the restrictions. "Even though I'm not really a chicken rice person, it's just that sometimes you do have the craving," she told AFP.

"So if (the ban is) going to be lasting for a while, it's going to be a problem for me." Some stall holders have already hiked their prices, and officials are warning about disruptions to chicken supplies. The city-state's food agency has advised consumers to buy only what they need, consider buying frozen instead of refrigerated chicken, or shift to different meats.

Most chickens from Malaysia are imported to Singapore alive, and then slaughtered and chilled there. Frozen chicken is often imported from other countries, including Brazil. Like many other countries, Malaysia is battling rising inflation, particularly when it comes to food, which prompted it to impose the curbs. But Singapore—which has had a



SINGAPORE, Singapore: A vendor prepares a plate of chicken rice at a hawker centre in Singapore on May 31, 2022. Singapore imports a third of its chicken supply from Malaysia, which will halt the export of 3.6 million chickens a month from June 1 onwards, amid surging prices and supply concerns.—AFP

fractious relationship with Kuala Lumpur for decades—is also facing rising prices, with inflation at a decade-high.—AFP

Russia moves to 'minimize' effects of EU oil ban

MOSCOW: Russia said Wednesday it was moving to limit the damage from an EU oil ban as its other key energy export, gas, has fallen after President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine. At a summit on Monday, the EU agreed to a sixth package of sanctions on Moscow that will see the majority of Russian oil stopped, but exempted supplies by pipeline in a concession to Hungary.

"Sanctions will have a negative effect for Europe, us and the whole global energy market," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Peskov added that a "reorientation" was under way to find alternatives for the oil that will no longer be sold to Europe.

"These are purposeful, systematic actions that will allow us to minimize the negative consequences," he said. After Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, Russia was hit with a barrage of sanctions that targeted its economy and financial institutions. The Wall Street Journal reported that OPEC was considering whether to remove Russia from an agreement that has locked producers into limited output increases.

Moscow's removal would mean an early end to the pact and allow major crude nations such as Saudi Arabia to open the taps, analysts say. Separately, Russian energy giant Gazprom said on Wednesday that its gas exports to countries outside of the former Soviet Union dropped by more than a quarter year-on-year between January and May after losing several European clients.

Exports to countries outside the region totalled 61 billion cubic metres, a 27.6-percent fall from the same period last year. Gazprom said in a statement. Gazprom added that gas deliveries to China via the "Power of Siberia" pipeline were increasing, but it did not provide any figures.—AFP



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Global chip shortage likely to last through 2023: US official

US consumer confidence deteriorated in May: Survey

WASHINGTON: The global shortage of critical semiconductors is likely to last at least through next year and perhaps longer, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo warned on Tuesday. Shutdowns of key Asian suppliers due to the COVID-19 pandemic crippled supplies last year, just when American consumers, flush with cash from government aid, went on a spending spree buying cars and electronics, which depend on the chips.

"I do not unfortunately see the chip shortage abating in any meaningful way anytime in the next year," Raimondo told reporters following her recent trip to Asia. She said she convened a dozen CEOs, including leaders of chipmakers, during her time in South Korea to discuss the shortage "and they all agreed that ... deep into 2023, possibly early '24 before we see any real relief."



WASHINGTON: US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo warned that the global shortage of critical semiconductors is likely to last at least through next year and perhaps longer.

She repeated her call for Congress to act to provide funding for legislation that aims to stimulate domestic manufacturing of the computer chips that are key to a wide array of products, from smartphones to medical equipment to vacuum cleaners.

"We are really on borrowed time," she said. "Every other country has subsidies on the table now, and if Congress doesn't act very quickly," key producers like

Samsung, Intel and Micron "are going to build in another country and that be that would be hugely problematic."

The US Senate and the House of Representatives each have approved \$52 billion bills—the CHIPS Act and the America COMPETES Act—that would invest in domestic chip research and manufacturing, but so far have failed to agree on the final form of the legislation.

Meanwhile, Americans' feelings about the economy deteriorated in May amid concerns about job prospects, but remained relatively strong even as high inflation bites, according to a survey released Tuesday. Amid the fastest increase in US consumer prices in more than four decades, made worse by the war in Ukraine, consumer confidence dipped slightly after a modest increase in April, falling to 106.4 from 108.6, according to The Conference Board's monthly survey.

Consumers flush with savings and government support money have been a key driver of the recovery of the world's largest economy, spending freely on big-ticket purchases like homes, cars and appliances. But supply chain snarls, made worse by COVID-19 lockdowns in China, meant demand has outstripped supply, and that dynamic has fueled inflation.

Feelings about the present situation dropped for the second month, falling more than three points to 149.6, caused by the deterioration in views on the labor market, with an increasing share of respondents saying jobs are "hard to get," according to the report. Expectations for six months ahead retreated slightly to 77.5 after gaining in the prior month.

Lynn Franco, the institution's senior director of economic indicators, noted that the readings are still relatively high despite the declines. "Overall, the Present Situation Index remains at strong levels, suggesting growth did not contract further in Q2," Franco said in a statement, referring to the current April-June quarter. "That said, with the Expectations Index weakening further, consumers also do not foresee the economy picking up steam in the months ahead. They do expect labor market conditions to remain relatively strong, which should continue to support confidence in the short run."

The Federal Reserve has launched an aggressive cycle of interest rate increases to tamp down inflation by cooling demand, which Franco said "pose continued downside risks to consumer spending this year." The survey also measures consumers' spending plans in the next six months, and shows a slowdown in

intentions to purchase high-dollar items like homes and cars.

"Vacation plans have also softened due to rising prices. Indeed, inflation remains top of mind for consumers," Franco said. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon

Economics noted that households still have a stockpile of cash and "So far, they have been willing to dip into these savings despite reporting that they feel less positive. It's not called retail therapy for nothing, but we just don't know how long it will continue." — AFP

SWIFT: Crucial cog of global banking system

COLOMBO: By booting more Russian banks from SWIFT over the war in Ukraine, the West has left them out of the backbone of the international financial transfer system. The European Union agreed on Monday to exclude three more Russian banks from SWIFT, including the country's biggest, Sberbank, as part of a sixth set of sanctions over the conflict.

The EU had previously kicked seven Russian banks out of the financial messaging system in an effort to cripple the country's banking sector and currency.

Here are five questions regarding SWIFT:

What is SWIFT?

Founded in 1973, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, or SWIFT, actually does not hold funds or manage accounts itself. But its messaging system, developed in the 1970s to replace the use of ageing Telex machines, provides banks the means to communicate rapidly, securely and inexpensively. The non-listed, Belgium-based firm is actually a cooperative of banks and proclaims to remain neutral.

What does SWIFT do?

Banks use the SWIFT system to send standardized messages about transfers of sums between themselves, transfers of sums for clients, and buy and sell orders for assets. More than 11,000 financial institutions in over 200 countries use SWIFT. But its preeminent role in finance has also meant that the firm has had to cooperate with authorities to prevent the financing of terrorism.

Who represents SWIFT in Russia?

According to the national association Rosswift, Russia is the second-largest country following the United States in terms of the number of users, with some 300 Russian financial institutions belonging to the system. More than half of Russia's financial institutions are members of SWIFT, it added.

Russia does have its own domestic financial infrastructure, including the SPFS system for bank transfers and the Mir system for card payments, similar to Visa and Mastercard.

Are there precedents for excluding countries?

In November 2019, SWIFT "suspended" access to its network by certain Iranian banks. The move followed the imposition of sanctions on Iran by the United States and threats by then-Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin that SWIFT would be targeted by US sanctions if it didn't comply.

Iran had already been disconnected from the SWIFT network from 2012 to 2016. Seven Russian banks were excluded in March. Sberbank had not initially made the list in order to allow EU countries to pay for Russian gas and oil deliveries. Gazprombank, the financial arm of Russian energy giant Gazprom, remains in the system. Most of EU payments for Russian oil and gas deliveries go through that bank.

Is exclusion an efficient weapon?

In practical terms, being removed from SWIFT means Russian banks cannot use it to make or receive payments with foreign financial institutions for trade transactions. Sberbank said Tuesday that it was not affected by the new EU sanctions, pointing to previous US and UK measures that already isolated its financial system. It said the cutoff from SWIFT "does not change the current situation for international transactions", while transactions within Russia do not use the Belgium-based messaging platform.

Excluding a major country such as Russia could also spur Moscow to accelerate the development of an alternative transfer system with China. — AFP

Business

Drought, Ukraine war threaten Morocco's economic rebound

Poor harvests and price hikes expose structural weaknesses

RABAT: A withering drought and poor harvests plus price hikes fuelled by the war in Ukraine are threatening Morocco's fragile economic recovery and exposing structural weaknesses, experts say.

The North African kingdom had bounced back last year after a sharp recession in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, and the government of gas tycoon Aziz Akhannouch had forecast growth this year topping three percent. But since Russia's invasion of Ukraine he has been forced to slash that figure to at most 1.7 percent, telling parliament that "sudden external events and climate change" were to blame.

The International Monetary Fund has forecast even lower growth of 1.1 percent. Morocco has pumped resources into diversifying its manufacturing sector, particularly by attracting auto giants such as Renault. But those efforts "have not changed the structure of the economy".

That is the conclusion of a 2021 report by a commission on the "New Model of Development" (NMD), a strategy announced last year which sets out ambitious plans including slashing Morocco's wealth gap and doubling per capita economic output by 2035. Morocco depends heavily on agriculture, a sector that accounts for 14 percent of gross domestic product and around a third of all jobs.

But farmers are on the front line of climate change, and have been hit hard in recent months with rainfall down by more than a third on the long-term average.

That has had a direct impact on crops, and the agriculture ministry now expects a cereal harvest two-thirds down on last year's figure. Despite an uptick in fruit and vegetable exports, the sector overall is set to shrink by 14 percent this year.

That will "directly hit jobs and the level of consumption, especially in rural areas", said economist Abderrahim Hendouf. Over-reliance on agriculture, particularly for jobs, makes Morocco's economy more vulnerable, he said.

Profiteering, oligopolies

But drought is not the country's only vulnerability. The war in Ukraine has sent grain and energy prices spiralling globally, pushing fuel prices in Morocco to record levels. Many Moroccans have also pointed the finger at speculators and fuel distributors, accusing them of profiteering from the crisis.

In April, as Muslims marked the holy month of Ramadan, consumer inflation hit 5.9 percent on an annualized basis. "The situation has hit Moroccans' buying power and risks feeding social anger," said Rachid Aourraz, a researcher at the Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis.

Akhannouch's government has announced a billion-euro assistance package to help farmers, as well as tackle inflation. Aourraz predicts "the consequences of this crisis could be less severe than last time, thanks to positive developments in other sectors like services and industry".

Since the start of the year, the government has doubled fuel and flour subsidies as well as offering direct financial aid to transport workers who had held a weeks-long strike over the crippling rise in costs. Akhannouch has also vowed to boost state investments to create jobs.

But even prior to the current impasse, Morocco had seen a decade of slowing growth as well as gaping social and regional inequalities, with the richest fifth owning a half of the country's wealth.

The kingdom is hoping to go beyond six percent



RABAT: Agriculture accounts for 14 percent of Morocco's gross domestic product and around a third of all jobs. —AFP

growth by 2035, partly by bringing the large informal sector into the formal economy and by nurturing industry. But the latter will need a major boost in private investment. The commission for the NMD says it will also require major shifts in the business environment, currently hobbled by "oligopolies and

anti-competitive practices".

Karim Tazi, one of the report's authors, points to the banking sector, dominated by three main operators, and the energy sector as particularly uncompetitive. Such practices "are enough to destroy the growth of any economy," he said. —AFP

News in brief

Floods, COVID slow Australian growth

SYDNEY: Australia's economy grew by just under one percent in the first quarter, slowed by floods and the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Australian Bureau of Statistics said growth slowed to 0.8 percent in the March quarter, with floods hitting the east coast and the spread of Omicron driving down working hours. The result was roughly in line with market expectations and pointed to a windfall for the country's resources sector as prices rose for key exports like coal and iron ore. "Exports of mining commodities rose 10.5 percent in current price terms," the bureau reported. —AFP

Russian gas exports drop 27%

MOSCOW: Russia's Gazprom said Wednesday its gas exports to countries outside of the former Soviet Union dropped by more than a quarter year-on-year between January and May after losing several European clients. Exports to countries outside the region totaled 61 billion cubic meters, a 27.6 percent fall from the same period last year, the energy giant said in a statement. Gazprom added that gas deliveries to China via the "Power of Siberia" pipeline were increasing, but it did not provide any figures. Since Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, Moscow has demanded that clients from "unfriendly countries"—including EU member states—pay for their gas in rubles. —AFP

Brazil unemployment falls

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's unemployment rate fell to 10.5 percent for the three months from February to April, the lowest for the period since 2015, the government said Tuesday. The figure, a drop of 0.7 percentage points from the three months to January, came in lower than expected-welcome news for Latin America's biggest economy, which has been struggling with weak growth and high inflation. Analysts polled by business daily Valor had forecast the rate would be 10.9 percent for the sliding three-month period. Despite the improvement, there are still 11.3 million jobless workers in the country of 213 million people. —AFP

Argentina reaches debt deal

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina announced on Tuesday that it has reached agreement with the Paris Club of creditor countries to defer repayment of a debt of more than two billion dollars until September 2024. The decree in the Official Bulletin formalizes an agreement announced in March on the final repayment of a debt renegotiated in 2014. Argentina had already secured two extensions to the \$2.45 billion debt, the latest of which was due to expire on Friday. The Paris Club is a group of creditor countries that specialize in finding payment solutions with debtor countries that risk defaulting. —AFP

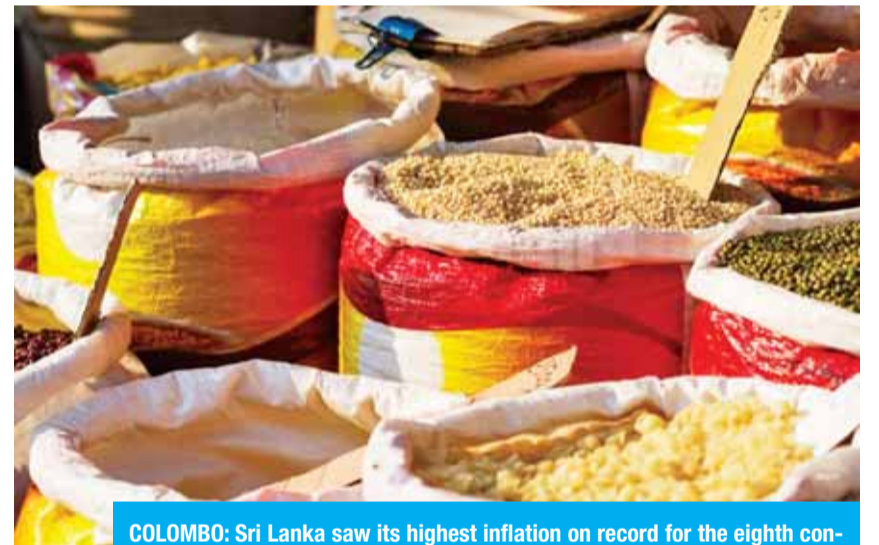
Inflation in Sri Lanka hits fresh record

COLOMBO: Cash-strapped Sri Lanka saw its highest inflation on record for the eighth consecutive month in May, official data showed Wednesday, as the island nation grapples with its worst-ever economic crisis. The Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) rose 39.1 percent year-on-year last month, up from 29.8 percent in April, according to the statistics department.

Food inflation in Colombo came in at 57.4 percent, up from 46.6 percent in April. The price increases in May were yet to fully capture the sharp increases in fuel, one of the

many vital commodities in scarce supply across the country. Private economists say consumer prices are rising even faster than official records show, with one John Hopkins University analyst tracking March inflation at 133 percent—more than six times the official figure. Sri Lanka's import-dependent economy has been hammered by a critical foreign currency shortage, leading to months of acute shortages of food, medicines and other essentials. Faced with a huge cash crunch, the government on Tuesday raised taxes across the board by rolling back cuts ordered by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in November 2019.

Weeks of protests outside the president's seafront office have demanded his resignation over government mismanagement of the crisis. Sri Lanka has defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt and is



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka saw its highest inflation on record for the eighth consecutive month in May, official data showed Wednesday.

seeking international aid to revive its bankrupt economy, including from the International Monetary Fund. —AFP

NBK named 'Best Financial Innovation Lab in Kuwait 2022'

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) Group Digital Office was awarded the "Best Financial Innovation Lab in Kuwait for 2022" by Global Finance, as part of The Innovators 2022, based on the input from a large panel of experts, analysts, consultants and corporate executives around the world.

NBK wins this prestigious award for the second year in a row, being the first bank in Kuwait pioneering the innovation field in the country and the region. This year's awards highlight the leading players and emerging trends in FinTech innovation and have become one of the premier awards in the field.

NBK's Group Digital Office acts as an Innovation Lab for National Bank of Kuwait, comprising Digital Office and Digital Factory under one umbrella, acting as an accelerator. Using agile methodologies, design thinking and global research processes, NBK drives creativity and the development of innovations in line with its digital transformation strategy.

This achievement is shared by all entities under the NBK umbrella, including all international subsidiaries at the group level. Recently, NBK established a Design Center within Group Digital Office to accelerate and harmonize UX design-related work required for the digital product/service development and augment the bank's in-house design capabilities. By partnering with an internationally renowned design agency, NBK is



expertly equipped to enhance all critical areas of the bank's digital product portfolio.

As the largest financial technology accelerator, NBK is currently working with dozens of startups and FinTechs across the globe. Being a core aspect of the digital roadmap, engaging with global FinTechs allows NBK to bring new ideas and networking opportunities to expand its products and services successfully to customers. Group Digital Office currently engages with over 20 startups, exploring possible ventures to bring to the bank. Additionally, it often distributes content and analysis on global trends, ensuring the bank is aware of emerging innovations and enabling the transfer of knowledge.

Commitment to Digital is a key strategic pillar for NBK, as the bank boasts maintaining the proactiveness

The Arctic's tricky quest for sustainable tourism

LONGYEARBYEN, Norway: Home to polar bears, the midnight sun and the northern lights, a Norwegian archipelago perched high in the Arctic is trying to find a way to profit from its pristine wilderness without ruining it.

The Svalbard archipelago, located 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) from the North Pole and reachable by commercial airline flights, offers visitors vast expanses of untouched nature, with majestic mountains, glaciers and frozen fjords. Or, the fjords used to be frozen. Svalbard is now on the frontline of climate change, with the Arctic

warming three times faster than the planet.

The local coal mines—the original reason for human settlements here—have closed one after the other over the years, and tourism has become one of the main pillars of the local economy, along with scientific research. "It's always hard to defend because we know that tourism worldwide creates challenges to all the places people visit, but also in the bigger climate change perspective," acknowledged Ronny Brunvoll, the head of tourism board Visit Svalbard.

"But we can't stop people from travelling. We can't stop people from visiting each other, so we have to find solutions," he said. Around 140,000 people visit these latitudes each year, according to pre-pandemic data, where 65 percent of the land is protected.

Like the 3,000 local residents, visitors must follow strict rules that bar them from disturbing the animals—tracking a polar bear can lead to a

of group-wide transformation strategy and expanding its digital ecosystem. This mindset is not limited to a single unit, domain or segment—but a holistic approach for the bank.

Global Finance, founded in 1987, is one of the most reputable magazines specialized in finance and economics. It has a circulation of 50,000 readers in 193 countries, including senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment and strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions. The magazine conducts various surveys annually about innovation and profitability for banks and financial institutions all over the world, based on which it selects top performers on the regional and international levels.

big fine—or picking flowers in an ecosystem almost devoid of vegetation. "You are really confronted with nature. There are not a lot of places like this left," said Frederique Barraja, a French photographer on one of her frequent trips to the region.

"It attracts people, like all rare places. But these places remain fragile, so you have to be respectful when you visit them." Ultra-polluting heavy fuel, commonly used by large cruise ships, has been banned in the archipelago since the start of the year, ahead of a ban to be progressively implemented across the Arctic as of 2024. The ban may be another nail in the coffin for the controversial cruise ships that sail into the region. The biggest of the behemoths can drop off up to 5,000 passengers in Longyearbyen, the archipelago's modest main town whose infrastructure, such as roads and toilets, is not designed to accommodate such large crowds. —AFP

Business

Cyprus takes risky bet on casinos

City of Dreams Mediterranean to be the largest integrated casino resort in Europe

LIMASSOL, Cyprus: Europe's largest gaming resort, the City of Dreams Mediterranean, is emerging from bulldozed vineyards and lemon groves on Cyprus's southern coast. Looking like an Inca temple facing out to sea near Limassol, Hong Kong gambling giant Melco has a grand vision for its first casino in the EU. With 14 floors, three swimming pools, nine restaurants and cafes and a "family adventure park", it "will be the largest integrated casino resort in Europe," said Grant Johnson, the American tasked with delivering the dream, "with 1,000 slot machines and 100 gaming tables."

But its arrival could lead to new rivalries on the island-divided since 1974 when Turkey invaded following a Greek-sponsored coup-where the breakaway north is already home to no less than 34 casinos. Gambling is an economic lifeline for the isolated Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is only recognized by Ankara.

The overwhelmingly Greek-Cypriot Republic of Cyprus in the south already has four casinos, all operated but not owned by Melco. But the government in Nicosia hopes the gigantic City of Dreams Mediterranean will put the island in another league, attracting 300,000 more visitors a year, including free-spending high rollers.

Rotten luck

Before the pandemic, tourism accounted for a crucial 15 percent of the south's GDP. Melco already has thriving City of Dreams casinos in Macau and Manila, but so far it has been dealt a string of bad hands in Cyprus. The pandemic delayed the opening, which is now set for the end of the year. Then came Russia's invasion of Ukraine and subsequent EU sanctions and travel bans on Moscow. Melco had been banking on Russians-who normally account for a fifth of Cyprus's tourists-being some of their best customers. Despite the setbacks, it aims to break the north's near-total stranglehold on the Cyprus casino sector. Experts, however, are warning of the danger of money laundering.

Once City of Dreams Mediterranean opens the island will be "in a rather exceptional situation" of having gamblers and their money flowing in "potentially from Asia but also from Turkey, Russia, Europe and the Middle East," said Marie Redon, a specialist in the sec-



LEMESOS, Cyprus: This picture taken on November 28, 2021 shows an aerial view of construction work on the "City of Dreams Mediterranean" casino in Cyprus' southern coastal city of Limassol. — AFP

tor at Sorbonne Paris North University, increasing the potential for illegality. The more the cash "comes from different places, the more it circulates, there is a greater chance of things like money laundering," Redon warned.

'We are not ready'

"Casinos are a sensitive subject" on the island, a Greek-Cypriot anti-money laundering specialist-who asked to remain anonymous-told AFP. "I am very careful when I talk about it because you can get problems."

Casinos were not legalized in Cyprus until 2015. The powerful Greek Orthodox church had opposed them, and leftist former president Demetris Christofias feared they would bring "corruption".

But after the near-collapse of the Cypriot banking system in 2013 — the same year Christofias left office—"we had big names approaching the government and it decided the opportunity was too great not to take," said the source, who works in the banking sector. "The problem is we are not ready to deal with what goes

hand in hand with casinos: the underground economy and money laundering. We can't choose to close our eyes. It could cost us dear as we are members of the EU. We can't do like the north does." But the Cypriot finance ministry strongly disputes this, telling AFP that "the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing is a challenging and continuous process."

"The authorities are working continuously... and minimizing risks," the ministry said, adding international assessments found "a robust framework is being implemented". Gambling has been a huge business in the TRNC since Turkey outlawed casinos on the mainland in 1997. It generated nearly \$600 million for the self-declared state in 2019, almost 15 percent of its coffers, according to analysis from London-based Business Year.

Casinos in the north can either pay taxes on their earnings, or buy a license at a fixed price. The second option allows a "great deal of opacity" and means most do not reveal their real revenue, the anti-money laun-

dering expert said. It also means that "the Turkish Cypriot state isn't going to check if casinos are doing a huge amount of money laundering," said Turkish-Cypriot activist and journalist Esra Aygin, who had to flee the north after getting death threats.

Aygin argues that the north has been "taken hostage" because the breakaway territory "depends entirely on the casino business". Professor Sertac Sonan, a specialist on the north's economy and corruption there, pointed to the example of Turkish gaming behemoth Merit.

It has its own newspaper and television channel on the island to help it gain influence, Sonan said. "It is very hard for local politicians to say no to these big Turkish players. And even harder to regulate them, tax them properly and monitor them."

'Las Vegas of the Middle East'

While most casino owners in the north are Turks, Erbil Arkin, who owns the powerful Arkin group, was born on Cyprus. "I am one of the pioneers of the casino business in Cyprus-if not the pioneer," he boasted, caressing a work by the great 19th-century French sculptor Auguste Rodin, one of around 30 he owns.

Arkin, who looks more like a film director than a casino king, even founded an art school not far from one of his casinos outside the north coast resort of Kyrenia. Charismatic and highly-cultured, Arkin decided to get into the casino business while he was studying art in London in 1976.

"The opportunities were huge," he said. When the north declared itself a state in 1983, it was isolated and impoverished, Arkin said, almost entirely dependent on Turkey. It was eking out a living from a little tourism and "the loot" taken from Greek-Cypriots after the invasion, he said. But the casinos changed everything. "We put a pariah state on the map... It became the Las Vegas of the Middle East," Arkin declared. Casinos now employ 80,500 people-a large chunk of the working population-with most players coming from Turkey, Arab countries and Zionist entity. "You could call me a saint or a sinner," Arkin smiled. "A sinner because of gambling-a saint because since we have had casinos in North Cyprus, the economy really changed." — AFP



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

US, Taiwan launch trade talks in challenge to China

WASHINGTON: The United States and Taiwan launched talks on Wednesday aimed at deepening their trade ties, in a clear challenge to Beijing. The process, labeled the US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade, follows an agreement President Joe Biden announced last week with 12 Asian economies, which excluded Taiwan. Like that effort, the discussions with Taiwan will not involve tariffs or market access-items that would require congressional approval, officials said.

"Both sides will work at pace... to develop an ambitious roadmap for negotiations for reaching agreements with high-standard commitments and economically meaningful outcomes," the US Trade Representative said in a statement. Despite the limited scope of the talks, which a senior administration official said was in keeping with the "unofficial" relationship with Taipei, they are likely to anger Beijing which bristles at any sign Washington is treating the self-governing democracy as an independent nation.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken accused China of "increasingly provocative rhetoric and activity." Biden also is under pressure to deepen ties with the island after a bipartisan group of 52 senators urged him to include Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) launched last week, which includes about 40 percent of the global economy. They argued in a letter to Biden that leaving an important trading partner out would "allow the Chinese government to claim that the international community does not in fact support meaningful engagement with Taiwan."

'Robust' relationship

A senior official said there is still time to add Taiwan to that effort. "We didn't include Taiwan in the initial launch. However, going forward, we intend to take a flexible and adaptable approach to IPEF participation," the official told reporters. The official reiterated Washington's "long-standing one China policy," but said the Biden administration also maintains a "robust unofficial relationship with Taiwan and... is committed to deepening it."

Deputy USTR Sarah Bianchi and Taiwan's lead trade negotiator John Deng met on Wednesday to launch the new initiative, which the trade agency said "is intended to develop concrete ways to deepen the economic and trade relationship, advance mutual trade priorities based on shared values, and promote innovation and inclusive economic growth for our workers and businesses."

The first meeting under the initiative will be held in Washington later in June, and will cover customs procedures and regulations, including rules governing agriculture trade, worker rights and the fight against "harmful non-market policies"-a clear reference to China.

Another administration official said the goal is to produce a "high framework, binding agreement," but gave no timeframe for reaching a deal. Taiwan is the 10th largest export market for the United States as well as a vital source of semiconductors which are seeing a global shortage, hitting industries that rely on them from autos to smartphones and pushing inflation higher.—AFP

SAS narrows loss, pins hope on transformation plan

STOCKHOLM: Ailing Scandinavian airline SAS on Tuesday reported another quarter in the red, albeit a narrower loss, as it said it would press ahead with its cost-cutting plan. The airline posted a net loss of 1.5 billion Swedish kronor (\$155 million, 144 million euros) in the second quarter, compared to a net loss of 2.4 billion kronor a year earlier. SAS said it was seeing positive signs as the number of passengers rose 28 percent compared to the previous quarter.

"Looking back at the second quarter, we can see that demand improved as travel restrictions were eased," SAS CEO Anko van der Werff said in a comment. Revenue also grew by 27 percent compared to the preceding quarter to seven billion kronor, up 5.1 billion kronor compared to a year earlier, "but still 31 percent below the second quarter in 2019, which was unaffected by COVID-19."

"Despite this positive development, SAS continues



STOCKHOLM, Sweden: SAS CEO Anko van der Werff poses next to the model of a plane during an interview in connection with the company's interim report released on May 31, 2022 in Stockholm, Sweden. — AFP

Markets waver on inflation worry; oil rebounds from losses

LONDON: Asian and European stock markets wavered on Wednesday, as traders digested Wall Street losses and data showing that runaway inflation shows no sign of easing. Oil however rallied after sinking sharply on reports that OPEC was considering suspending Russia from an output deal, which observers said could allow producers to pump more.

Equities have enjoyed a largely healthy run of late on hopes that inflation could be nearing a peak and a sell-off across markets may have run its course. The easing of some lockdown measures in China added to the optimism.

Yet investors were brought down to earth with a bump Tuesday after data showed that eurozone inflation hit a record high in May on rocketing energy costs. The news puts extra pressure on the European Central Bank to act quicker to rein in prices by hiking interest rates, along with the Bank of England and the US Federal Reserve.

Markets remain fearful of the Ukraine conflict fuels massive price gains for energy and food, translating into spiking inflation-and damaging the post-pandemic global economic recovery.

"There are heightened concerns around inflation and where central banks are likely to go trying to

combat inflation," Kristina Hooper, of Invesco Advisers, told Bloomberg Radio. "This has gone from just an inflation scare to a growth scare. Uncertainty has grown."

Oil rebounds

Equities were also mixed in Asia, with traders shrugging off a further easing of lockdown restrictions in China that many hope will give a much-needed boost to the world's number two economy. Hong Kong and Shanghai slipped along with Taipei, Bangkok, Mumbai and Manila, though Tokyo, Sydney, Singapore and Wellington rose.



HONG KONG: A woman passes a sign showing the numbers for the Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong. — AFP

Pfizer to exit GSK joint venture after demerger

WASHINGTON: US drugs giant Pfizer will exit its consumer healthcare joint venture with GlaxoSmithKline after the unit is spun off next month, the British drugmaker said Wednesday. GSK will list the healthcare division on the London stock market on July 18 as it looks to concentrate on the pharmaceutical business, it said in a statement.

The London-listed firm currently owns a majority 68 percent of the unit, with Pfizer holding the remainder. "Pfizer intends to exit its 32-percent ownership interest in Haleon in a disciplined manner, with the objective of maximizing value for Pfizer shareholders," GSK said.

Covid jab maker Pfizer is seeking to pursue its focus on "innovative medicines and vaccines", it noted. The unit, which will be named Haleon after the demerger, makes products including Sensodyne toothpaste, pain relief drug Panadol and cold treatment Theraflu. For its part, Glaxo will "monetize its holding in Haleon in a disciplined manner to further strengthen the company's balance sheet", it added.

The company is pressing ahead with the demerger after rejecting a bid worth \$50 billion for the unit from consumer goods titan Unilever. The announcement Wednesday came one day after GSK snapped up US biopharmaceutical firm Affinivax for up to \$3.3 billion as part of the overhaul.

The Cambridge, Massachusetts-based group specializes in vaccines for diseases including meningitis, pneumonia and bloodstream infections. Glaxo last month also bought US group Sierra Oncology, a specialist in medicines for rare forms of cancer, for \$1.9 billion. Chief executive Emma Walmsley is seeking to reshape Glaxo after she faced fierce investor criticism over the company's delay in producing Covid jabs and treatments. — AFP

Back in Europe, London fell and Frankfurt rose, while Paris flatlined. The oil market rebounded somewhat after tanking by more than four percent late Tuesday in reaction to a Wall Street Journal report that OPEC was considering removing Russia from an agreement that has locked producers into limited output increases. Moscow's removal would mean an early end to the pact and allow major crude nations such as Saudi Arabia to open the taps, analysts said. "If there's any confirmation from OPEC+ members that the absence of Russia is being discussed, then prices can drop to as low as \$100," said Will Sungchil Yun, at VI Investment Corp. — AFP



People enjoy a boat tour on a lake in Halfeti. — AFP photos



A photograph shows dried black roses of Halfeti inside a greenhouse at Halfeti town in Sanliurfa.

TURKEY BLACK ROSE PRODUCERS CHASE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

To the naked eye, the delicate velvet roses in southeastern Turkey appear black and overwhelm the senses with their irresistible sweet smell. The rosebuds are just as dark, and when fully developed, the flower takes on the color of an intensely rich red wine. These black roses, known as "Karagul" in Turkish and thornier than others, can only grow in the town of Halfeti with soil that has distinctive features including a special PH level. The unique color cannot be preserved elsewhere, experts say.

Now Halfeti's residents want to transform the rose into a brand since Turkey's rose sector is a blooming business. The industry is currently dominated by the western province of Isparta, known as Turkey's "rose garden". Today, Turkey and

Bulgaria make up around 80 percent of the world's rose oil production. But Halfeti resident Devrim Tutus, 28, has already seen business flourish. After coming up with a business plan to promote the black roses, he now supplies Istanbul with petals for colognes, Turkish delight and ice cream.

Demand is already outgrowing supply. That doesn't stop Tutus who already has his next plan: Karagul wine. "There's a huge market out there in Istanbul. It's all about Isparta roses. Why not the same here?" he said.

Roses rescued

The black rose's fortunes were not always so sweet. It once aroused only indifference among residents, said a local official in charge of preserving the roses.

"They were everywhere in the gardens but nobody paid attention to them," said his friend who only gave his name as Bulent. "Locals had no idea the roses were unique. We transported some to higher ground and started production in greenhouses," said the official, who did not wish to be named. In upper Halfeti, one greenhouse operated by the town's agriculture department is home to 1,000 roses.

But the town's residents rallied to rescue the rose after a dam on the Euphrates River flooded the region in the early 2000s, threatening to bury the flower like dozens of archaeological sites from ancient Mesopotamia. The construction of the Birecik dam in 2000 was part of a series of controversial development projects in southeast Turkey. Today, 20 variants of



A photograph shows a black rose of Halfeti inside a greenhouse at Halfeti town in Sanliurfa.



A man displays black roses of Halfeti inside a greenhouse at Halfeti town in Sanliurfa.

black roses have been identified worldwide including sixteen in Turkey, said botanist Ali Ikinici.

"Karagul is not an endemic species in Halfeti," Ikinici, a professor at Harran University in Sanliurfa province, said. "But the particular ecology, climate and soil cause it to bloom darker there. If you plant that rose somewhere else, it won't be as dark or black."

A French connection?

The professor insisted Halfeti's rose was "unique". The color of the rose darkens, becoming more black and the scent is stronger as one moves from Sanliurfa where Halfeti is towards Syria, which is 60 kilometers (38 miles) to the south, Ikinici said. The Halfeti official explained the rose blossoms on higher ground because the soil close to the dam is more acidic because of the Euphrates' waters.

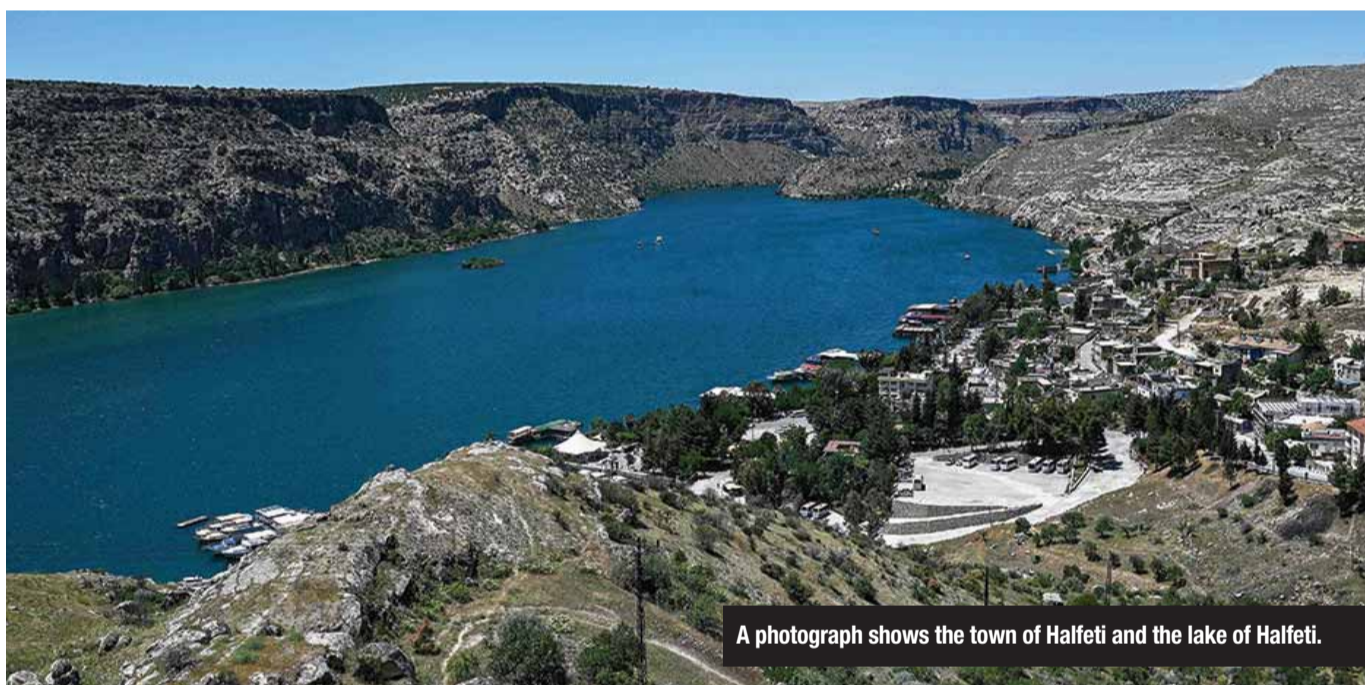
Ikinici believes the origins of Karagul could be the "Louis XIV" black rose, grown in France in 1859 and named after the French king. But for Frederic Achille, deputy director of the Botanical Gardens of

the Museum of Natural History in Paris, it's much ado about nothing. "Louis XIV" could really be transformed by the waters of the Euphrates... and bogus communication," he said with a smile.

Green rose

Halfeti is also home to the peculiar green rose that has the appearance of a weed, but it is real and not just photo-shopped by avid Instagram users. "It remains mysterious. Some locals had it in their gardens. But because it's odourless, it failed to attract attention," Ikinici said. Achille was blunter about why: "It's quite ugly."

The green flower was "just a curiosity in rose gardens" after it was introduced in Europe in 1856 by British nurseries, he added. But that won't stop Halfeti taking advantage of its real, hidden treasures. By the shores of the dam, a few amateur gardeners promote the black rose to tourists alongside boat tours to see the caves, now underwater. — AFP



A photograph shows the town of Halfeti and the lake of Halfeti.

Trump's 'Big Lie' comes to big screen - and makes box office splash

A new movie that pushes dubious and widely debunked conspiracy theories to bolster Donald Trump's claim that he was robbed of a second term as president has become a surprise hit at the US box office. Despite warnings by experts, "2000 Mules," a film by Dinesh D'Souza—who was convicted of violating campaign finance laws before being pardoned by the former president—has garnered more than \$1.2 million at the box office since its release in late May.



With large buckets of popcorn in hand, a group of elder moviegoers crowd into a matinee screening in a cinema in a commercial district in Virginia. Passing by theaters showing the adventures of "Doctor Strange" or the latest "Sonic the Hedgehog" movie, the senior citizens settle down in front of the documentary promising to "expose widespread, coordinated voter fraud in the 2020 election, sufficient to change the overall outcome."

'Lifeblood of democracy'

The film opens with footage of anonymous voters enthusiastically slipping their ballots into boxes stamped with the American flag, while D'Souza tells the audience that "elections are the lifeblood of our democracy." But, he says as the background darkens, the 2020 election "haunts

the American mind." Like millions of Americans, including former president Trump, D'Souza voices the debunked belief that the Democrats rigged the result of the last presidential election, relying on the widespread use of mail-in ballots during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We can't move on unless we know the truth," the director says in his voiceover. In an attempt to prove his theory, which has been rejected by all relevant US authorities, D'Souza shows himself, leaning on a kitchen counter and phoning a group based in Texas called True the Vote, which claims to "support election integrity." A meeting is arranged.

'A cartel'

In a kind of hangar packed with computer servers, two members of the group claim to have proof of the existence of a well-planned operation which, "like a cartel," hired "mules" to stuff ballot boxes in a series of states that were key to Joe Biden's victory in 2020. To validate their hypothesis, they rely on vast troves of anonymous location data from smartphone apps, which they claim show the comings and goings of these "mules" between the headquarters of various NGOs and ballot boxes.

It's a "heist" and "a crime," says the outraged D'Souza. In the theater in Virginia, the audience is sold. "It's like a nuclear bomb," says one man. The theories pushed in the movie have been seriously questioned by multiple disinformation experts. They say that a delivery man, a taxi driver, or a postman working in the neighborhood could easily have given the mistaken for people making such nefarious trips.

But for Trump and his supporters, this is the ultimate proof of the fraud they have been decrying for a year and a half. "They rigged and stole the 2020 election, we cannot be okay with this, we cannot simply move on," says D'Souza as the film ends. And as the first notes of the American national anthem play, he issues a call to action: "The America we love needs us now more than ever." — AFP

Venice film fest to give Deneuve lifetime achievement award



French actress Catherine Deneuve speaks with French writer Marek Halter (not in the picture) on his book "La memoire d'Abraham" as part of the month of Judaism at the Rachi center in Paris on January 9, 1986. — AFP

French film legend Catherine Deneuve will receive an honorary award at the 79th Venice Film Festival, organizers said Wednesday. The star is to be given a Golden Lion lifetime achievement award at the world's oldest film festival, which runs from August 31 to September 10. "It is a joy to receive this prestigious award at the Venice Film Festival, which I have known and loved for a long time, since Luis Bunuel's 'Belle de jour' won the Golden Lion," the 78-year-old actress said in a statement.

Festival director Alberto Barbera was behind the decision to present Deneuve with the award. He described her as "an eternal diva, a real icon of the silver screen... among the greatest performers in

the history of cinema". Barbera also highlighted Deneuve's "artistic collaborations with some of the most important European actors and directors", including Roger Vadim, Jacques Demy, Francois Truffaut, Roman Polanski and Gerard Depardieu.

Deneuve has many awards to her name, including two of France's esteemed Cesars for best actress in 1981 for "Le Dernier Metro" and in 1993 for "Indochine", which also won an Oscar for best foreign film. She won a Palme d'honneur at Cannes in 2005, as well as a Silver Bear at the Berlin film festival in 2002 for best artistic contribution in Francois Ozon's "Huit Femmes". — AFP



French actress Catherine Deneuve flanked by Christophe Carita (fifth right) inaugurates the new hairdressing saloon "Carita" in Paris on December 4, 1988.

Lifestyle | Features

K-pop supergroup BTS 'devastated' by US hate crimes

South Korean K-pop sensations BTS didn't sing a word but in a White House visit Tuesday to meet President Joe Biden the supergroup's message against anti-Asian racism came loud and clear. The seven stars, dressed in matching dark suits and ties, with white shirts, joined White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre at the briefing room podium—a tiny, but powerful stage. The singer Park Ji-min, better known as Jimin, said through a translator that the group is "devastated by the recent surge of hate crimes" in the United States.

Another member, Suga, appealed for tolerance, saying, "It's not wrong to be different. I think equality begins when we open up and embrace all of our differences." Group members did not take questions from reporters before going into a meeting with Biden and, according to the White House, recording "digital content." Outside the mansion's grounds on the other side of a tall black fence, fans who dub themselves the "Army" gathered in hopes of a glimpse.

The brief appearance before journalists itself reportedly garnered more than 300,000 viewers on the White House's YouTube channel, more than 10 times the traffic on a day when the only people watching events in the briefing room are mostly media or political professionals. It was certainly something new for economic policy advisor Brian Deese, who had been scheduled to brief reporters on Biden's fight against US inflation right after the group left. "I get to go home and tell my kids that BTS opened for me," he said to laughter.

'Youth ambassadors' against hate

Biden issued the invitation to "discuss the need to come together in solidarity, Asian inclusion and representation, and addressing anti-Asian hate crimes and discrimination, which have become more prominent issues in recent years," the White House said. Anti-Asian sentiment and violence in America have grown during the coronavirus pandemic in a phenomenon many blame on fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Biden's



(From left to right) Jungkook, Jimin, V, RM, Jin, J-Hope and Suga of the South Korean pop group BTS speak at the daily press briefing at the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

Republican predecessor Donald Trump often blamed the pandemic, which originated with an outbreak in Wuhan, China, as "the China virus" and also mocked the deadly virus as "kung flu."

Just in 2021, hate crimes against Asians shot up 339 percent, according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism. The trend stands out within a general rise in violent crime, with the ugliest incident taking place in the Atlanta area, where a man shot dead eight peo-

ple at massage spas, six of them Asian women. The White House praised BTS's floppy haired, stylish stars as "youth ambassadors who spread a message of hope and positivity across the world."

Band members, all in their 20s and who frequently appear wearing earrings and lipstick, have given a voice worldwide to a generation comfortable with gender fluidity. They are credited with generating billions for the South Korean economy, and their label enjoyed a surge in profits despite holding fewer concerts during the pandemic.

Biden, who at 79 is the oldest person to become president, has often reached out to young celebrities and social media influencers to try and inject some glamor into his team's messaging on social and health issues. These included pop singer Olivia Rodrigo and the Jonas Brothers in campaigns to persuade young Americans to get their COVID-19 vaccines. — AFP



The Rolling Stones open 60th anniversary tour in Madrid

British rock legends The Rolling Stones on Wednesday open their European tour with a gig in Madrid to mark six decades since the band was formed. The Sixty tour will include 14 concerts across Europe with the first taking place in the Wanda Stadium, home to Atletico Madrid football club. It follows the band's "No Filter" tour, which began in 2017 but saw the North American leg postponed due to the pandemic.

After a long delay, they resumed the tour late last year, wrapping it up with a million tickets sold, although missing their drummer Charlie Watts who died in August at age 80. The Rolling Stones helped define the Swinging Sixties and the hippie era with timeless hits such as "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction".

Frontman Mick Jagger, 78, and fellow band members Keith Richards, also 78 and Ronnie Wood, who turns 75 today, arrived in the Spanish capital last week. "Sympathy for the Devil in Madrid. The Stones are in town! Countdown to the first show is on!" they wrote on Instagram, posting a picture of the Fallen Angel fountain in the Retiro Park, referencing one of their best-known songs.

"Enjoying lots of what Madrid has to offer, from fallen angels to Flamenco!" tweeted Jagger, with pictures of him having a beer and visiting Picasso's "Guernica". He also posted a brief flamenco-style clip of "Paint It, Black".

Whistle-stop tour

The Stones will tour 13 cities in Europe, playing two gigs in London. Following the opening night in Madrid, they head to Munich and then on to Liverpool to play at the city's Anfield football stadium in what will be their first gig in more than 50 years in the hometown of The Beatles. They will also play in Amsterdam, Bern, Milan, London, Brussels, Vienna, Lyon, Paris then the German town of Gelsenkirchen with their final show in Stockholm on July 31. As well as celebrating their 60th anniversary, the Stones are also marking 50 years since the release of one of their most iconic albums "Exile on Main St".

Jagger and Richards were childhood friends who lost contact until a chance encounter as teenagers on Dartford station southeast of London. The following year, they would go on to form what would become one of the world's best known rock bands. Dartford station today carries a blue plaque to mark the historic encounter. They did their first tour of the UK in 1963, kicking off a stellar career which would see them release more than 50 albums, both studio and live, with millions of copies sold. — AFP

UK forgets crisis to party for queen's jubilee

Putting aside a biting inflationary crisis and doubts over the monarchy's future, Britons prepared Wednesday for four days of festivities to mark a record-breaking 70 years on the throne for Queen Elizabeth II. The Platinum Jubilee offers a brief respite from a surge in prices not seen since the 1970s, with accounts emerging daily of people struggling to put food on the table and pay spiraling bills.

With two public holidays from Thursday and then the weekend, pubs, restaurants and retailers are hoping for a timely sales boost, after a difficult period including the Covid pandemic. "With the sun set to shine across the four days we're hoping to see pub gardens filled with people raising a toast to Her Majesty the Queen and showing their support for two great British institutions," the British Beer and Pub Association said.

There are thousands fewer pubs in Britain than when the queen ascended the throne amid gloomy post-war rationing in 1952. And support for the monarchy itself is an open question once the increasingly frail, 96-year-old monarch departs the scene. With Prince Charles taking over more of his mother's duties for occasions of state, there is a sense that the first-and possibly the last-Platinum Jubilee in British history marks a turning of the page. A poll for The Sun

newspaper this week gave the queen a 91.7-percent approval rating. But Charles commanded only 67.5 percent, behind his son Prince William on 87.4 percent.

'Magical'

Unlike the vocal Charles, the queen has rarely vented an opinion in public, and her sheer longevity means that she has been a fixture of the life of nearly every Briton alive. She has overcome numerous family traumas, including Charles' very public split from Princess Diana, and personal heartache when her consort Prince Philip died aged 99 last year, modernizing the monarchy along the way.

She reportedly endured a turbulent flight returning to London from a short break at her Scottish estate of Balmoral. Lightning forced her private jet to abort its landing Tuesday, before it made a second successful attempt, The Sun newspaper said. Meanwhile on The Mall, leading to Buckingham Palace, royal enthusiasts from far and wide have been camping out, despite torrential downpours.



In this file photo Britain's Queen Elizabeth II takes part in the launch of the Queen's Baton Relay for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, from the forecourt of Buckingham Palace in London. — AFP

Police probe death of star Bollywood singer KK at 53

Indian police said Wednesday they are investigating the death of star Bollywood singer Krishnakumar Kunnath, popularly known as KK, who died at age 53 after a concert. The singer died shortly after performing at a college festival in Kolkata on Tuesday evening, prompting a wave of tributes. He was rushed to hospital from his hotel at around 10:30 pm, where doctors pronounced him dead.

Aroop Biswas, a government minister in the eastern state of West Bengal, said KK had died of a "suspected cardiac arrest". But police said they are probing whether he died an "unnatural death", with media reports saying there were injuries to his face and head. An autopsy was to be performed later in the day. "We are also talking to the hotel authorities and scrutinizing CCTV footage to understand what had happened before he was taken to the hospital," said police official Sanjoy Mukherjee.

Versatile performer

Born in Delhi into a south Indian family, the versatile singer began his career with advertising jingles and recorded



In this file photo Bollywood singer Krishnakumar Kunnath, popularly known as KK performs during a musical evening featuring the soundtrack of upcoming Hindi film 'Guzaarish' in Mumbai.



Policemen give a gun salute next to the coffin of late Bollywood singer Krishnakumar Kunnath, popularly known as KK, in Kolkata.

songs in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi and Bengali. Like other playback singers in India who become stars in their own right, his songs were featured in films in which actors lip-synched along to his vocals. His hits from the 2000s included "Aankhon Me Teri" from the movie "Om Shanti Om" and "Khuda Jaane" from "Bachna Ae Haseeno".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the tributes to the singer. "His songs reflected a wide range of emotions (and) struck a chord with people of all age groups," Modi said on Twitter. "We will always remember him through his songs. Condolences to his family and fans." "I cannot believe that such a talented artist

left us this way. He had two back-to-back programs in Kolkata," composer Anupam Roy told AFP.

Fans paid tribute on an Instagram post put up by his management with photos showing KK singing in front of a roaring crowd. The post was accompanied by the caption "Pulsating gig tonight at Nazrul Mancha ... Love you all." "Rest in peace legend, you will be always in our heart," wrote one user. "You're gone too soon!!!!!!" commented another. One of the Hindi songs he sang at his last concert was "Pal", which has the lyrics "whether we live or not, we will remember this moment". —AFP



In this file photo Bollywood singers Mohit Chauhan (left), Krishnakumar Kunnath — popularly known as KK (center) and Shaan attend a concert in Mumbai.

Royal family's biggest fan gets ready for jubilee

It takes agility to get past the thousands of commemorative pictures and teacups piled up in the London home of Margaret Tyler, one of the UK's biggest collectors of royal memorabilia. Days ahead of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee marking 70 years on the throne on Thursday, the 78-year-old pensioner wearing a Union Jack jacket shows off her collection, which fills the ground floor of her house in the north-western suburb Wembley.

"I think it's wonderful that she's done 70 years on the throne. The one thing that does upset me is the fact that prince

Philip isn't here," says Tyler, casting her eye over the shelves dedicated to the queen's husband, who died last year aged 99. The house's exterior sets the tone: a front door guarded by two queen-inspired garden gnomes, a replica of a bearskin hat-wearing royal guard and a pennant in the red white and blue of the Union Jack.

Inside, Tyler has collected more than 12,000 royalty-themed objects over the last 40 years, from teacups bearing the image of all the members of the royal family, to posters, framed pictures, books, statues, even slippers and ashtrays. "If I like it, I buy it," she says. So much that her children have barred her from going on the internet in the hope of slowing her spending. "I don't know whether to go to libraries" for the internet, she jokes. "They wouldn't know." —AFP



Royal super-fan Margaret Tyler poses for a photograph with her collection of Royal memorabilia in her 'Jubilee room' at home in London. — AFP photos

Sports

US investment fund RedBird to buy Serie A champions AC Milan

ROME: AC Milan said Wednesday that its current owners, investment fund Elliott Management, have agreed to sell the newly-crowned Italian champions to rival US fund RedBird for 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion). "The transition to new ownership will take place over the summer, with an expected closing no later than September 2022," the club said in a statement, adding that, under the terms of the deal, Elliott will "retain a minority financial interest in the club and seats on the board of directors."

"RedBird's priority is to work with the club's title-winning sporting and club management team to continue Milan's journey back to the summit of world football," added the statement. Milan last month won their first Serie A title since 2011, the 19th in their history, as they pipped city rivals, and last year's champions, Inter by two points.

RedBird's move comes after they bought a minority stake last year in Fenway Sports Group, the owners of Liverpool and of Major League Baseball's Boston Red Sox. Their acquisition of Milan follows their purchase of a majority stake in French club Toulouse in 2020.

Toulouse this year won promotion back to France's Ligue 1. "We are honored to be a part of AC Milan's illustrious history and are excited to play a role in the club's next chapter as it returns to its rightful place at the very top of Italian, European and world football," said Gerry Cardinale, RedBird's founder and managing partner.

Elliott Management acquired the Italian club in 2018 when Chinese businessman Li Yonghong was unable to repay a loan he had taken out when he bought the club from Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest in 2017. The club was bought by Berlusconi in 1986 and spent three decades in the hands of Italy's former prime minister, firmly establishing themselves as one of the most glamorous names in world foot-

ball. They were European champions five times between 1989 and 2007.

Huge losses

In April, Italian media reported interest from Bahrain-based investment fund Investcorp, but the talks ended without a deal at the end of May. Italian media reported that the deal between Elliott and Investcorp collapsed as seven-time European champions Milan's owners pushed for a higher purchase price off the back of winning the Scudetto.

The Gazzetta Dello Sport said Investcorp would not budge from a price of around one billion euros they thought had been agreed and already saw as an overvaluation. And RedBird not only offered a higher fee, they also allowed Elliott to remain minority shareholders and keep both sporting directors Paolo Maldini and Frederic Massara in place. Milan announced losses for last season of 96 million euros, down from a deficit of 195 million euros in 2020. Elliott have invested 740 million euros in the club since 2018, according to Italian media.

"When Elliott acquired AC Milan in 2018, we inherited a club with a tremendous history, but with serious financial problems and a mediocre sporting performance," Elliott's managing partner, Gordon Singer, said in a statement on the club's website. "Our plan was simple: to create financial stability, and to return AC Milan to where it belongs in European football. Today, I believe we have accomplished both."

New stadium plans

RedBird's takeover comes amid plans for the two Milan clubs to build a new stadium on the site of their iconic San Siro home. The current ground is supposed to stay in place until at least 2026, as it will host the opening ceremony of that year's



MILAN: In this file photo taken on April 21, 2021 the logo of AC Milan is pictured on a corner flag prior to the Italian Serie A football match AC Milan vs Sassuolo at the San Siro stadium in Milan. —AFP

Winter Olympics.

Milan are one of a string of Italian clubs under North American ownership, with Roma, Bologna, Fiorentina, Venezia, Spezia and Genoa all in the hands of investors from the United States or Canada. Atlanta are also partly American-owned. The Rossoneri, who won the last of their seven

European Cups in 2007 with Carlo Ancelotti as coach, will be among the top seeds in next season's Champions League group stage following their title triumph under current coach Stefano Pioli. However, one of the stars of the title-winning team, Ivory Coast midfielder Franck Kessie, is out of contract and widely expected to join Barcelona. —AFP

Bale writes goodbye letter to Real Madrid:

MADRID: Gareth Bale wrote a farewell letter to Real Madrid on Wednesday, the Welshman bringing an end to his nine-year spell at the Spanish club, where he said his "dream became a reality". Bale will leave Real Madrid when his contract expires at the end of June, with the 32-year-old yet to confirm what he will do next. His future is likely to depend on whether Wales qualify for the World Cup in Qatar, with retirement a possible option if they miss out.

"I write this message to say thank you to all my teammates, past and present, my managers, the backroom staff and to the fans that supported me," Bale wrote in a letter to Real Madrid, posted on social media in both English and Spanish.

"I arrived here nine years ago as a young man who wanted to realize my dream of playing for Real Madrid. To wear the pristine white kit, to wear the crest on my chest, to play at the Santiago Bernabeu, to win titles and to be part of what it's so famous for, to win the Champions League. I can now look back, reflect and say with honesty that this dream became a reality and much, much more.

"To be a part of this club's history and to achieve what we achieved while I was a Real Madrid player has been an incredible experience and one I will never forget. I also want to thank president Florentino Perez, Jose Angel Sanchez and the board for giving me the opportunity to play for this club. Together we were able to create some moments that will live forever in the history of this club and football. It has been an honor."

After joining Madrid from Tottenham for 100 million euros in 2013, Bale went on to win 16 major trophies with Real Madrid, including five Champions Leagues, three La Ligas and one Copa del Rey. He also won three Club World Cups, three UEFA Super Cups and a Spanish Super Cup.

Memorable moments

More than his trophies, Bale will be remembered for a handful of spectacular moments, including his two goals scored off the bench against Liverpool in the 2018 Champions League final in Kiev, the first coming from a stunning bicycle kick.

He scored another hugely important goal in the 2014 Champions League final in Lisbon, his header at the back post giving Real Madrid the lead against Atletico Madrid in extra-time, as they went on to win the club's long-awaited 10th European Cup.

Perhaps most memorable was Bale's incredible solo goal at Mestalla to win the 2014 Copa del Rey final against Barcelona. Bale's popularity with the Real Madrid fans, though, has plummeted in recent years as injuries and a perceived lack of commitment pushed him to the fringes of the first team. He was barely on speaking terms with Zinedine Zidane by the end of the 2017-18 season and hopes that Cristiano Ronaldo's departure might revive his Real Madrid career were never realized.

A frosty relationship with the Spanish press harmed his reputation, with aspects of his personal life - including his passion for playing golf and a lack of fluency in Spanish - increasingly used to support the idea he had lost interest in his Real Madrid career. —AFP

Man Utd confirm Pogba's departure

MANCHESTER: French World Cup-winning midfielder Paul Pogba is to leave Manchester United at the end of June, the club said Wednesday, bringing the curtain down on a largely disappointing second spell.

The 29-year-old's departure at the end of his contract will see United recoup none of the then record £89 million (\$112 million) he cost them when they bought him from Juventus in 2016. However, new United manager Erik ten Hag has clearly decided Pogba's chances at the club have come and gone.

A second spell at Juventus — where he won four Serie A titles — may well be on Pogba's menu as Italian media have suggested he has given a verbal agreement to return and accepted a lower salary. French champions Paris Saint-Germain have also been mentioned as a possibility as they are due for an overhaul and built round his fellow World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe.

Ten Hag wishes to refresh a side that has seen their city rivals Manchester City become the powerhouse they once were under Alex Ferguson. United have rarely threatened to repeat those days since he

retired in 2013.

Pogba flourished initially under Jose Mourinho — who also brought in the since departed Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Romelu Lukaku — and was part of the sides that won the League Cup and Europa League in 2017.

His subsequent performances rarely matched those he produced for France in their 2018 World Cup campaign. He did show glimpses of his abundant talent especially in their run to the 2021 Europa League final — scoring goals against AC Milan and Roma in the knockout stages. However, he was then anonymous in the final as United lost to Villarreal on penalties.

Fitness problems limited him to 27 appearances last season in an unimpressive campaign for both player and club as United had to be content with a Europa League spot. The fans had lost patience with his inconsistent displays and booed him off the pitch when he was substituted in a victory over Norwich in April.

"The club can announce that Paul Pogba will leave Manchester United at the end of June, upon the expiry of his contract," read the club statement. "The last of his 233 United games ended in the 10th minute of a defeat at Anfield in April 2022. It was a low-key end to a United career that brought so many individual high moments. So many beautiful

Zouma handed community service for cat cruelty

LONDON: West Ham defender Kurt Zouma was on Wednesday ordered to carry out 180 hours of community service after he admitted kicking and slapping his pet cat. A judge at Thames Magistrates Court in east London also banned the 27-year-old France international from keeping cats for five years.

Zouma triggered international outrage after a video of him emerged in February volleying the pet across his kitchen before throwing a pair of shoes at it. He was seen slapping the Bengal cat's head and saying: "I'll swear I'll kill it." The clip, shared on Snapchat, featured laughing emojis.

French minister accused of lying over CL Final chaos

PARIS: French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin faced growing criticism and accusations of lying on Wednesday after he blamed the chaos at this weekend's Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid on "massive" ticket scams.

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen suggested he should resign after he defended the French police and blamed ticket counterfeiting for the crushes on Saturday which overshadowed the biggest night in European football. "The facts are extremely serious and the lie by the minister is extremely serious," Le Pen told France 2 television.

"In any other democracy, faced with such a fiasco, with chaos that occurred in front of 400 million people watching on television, which offered a dreadful image of France, then he should consider himself that he should resign," she added.

Darmanin blamed "massive, industrial-scale and organized fraud in fake tickets" for the chaos and said that 30,000 to 40,000 Liverpool fans had turned up at the stadium either "without tickets or with counterfeited tickets". He also claimed that as many as 70 percent of tickets were found to be

fraudulent by staff at the first security checkpoints outside the Stade de France.

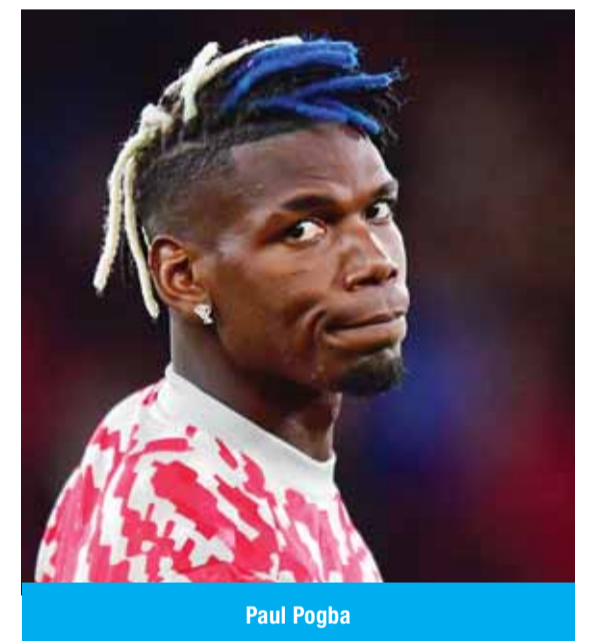
Sources within UEFA and the French football federation told AFP on Tuesday that only 2,800 fake tickets were detected at the entrance gates of the stadium, suggesting the problem was more about managing flows of ticketless fans outside. Darmanin, 39, has rejected criticism of the police — calling it "rather low and inappropriate" — despite images showing some officers firing teargas and pepper spray that affected children and handicapped fans.

The scenes have caused renewed tensions between France and Britain, whose ties are already strained, and have become a domestic political headache for the government less than two weeks before parliamentary elections. President Emmanuel Macron was reported Wednesday by the BFM TV channel to be "furious" with his interior minister.

'Fake figures'?

Darmanin is a pugnacious rightwinger from northern France who was recently extended in his role as interior minister by Macron following presidential elections in April. Suspected of harboring presidential ambitions of his own, he is an ardent defender of the French police against recurrent criticism of their tactics, once saying that "when I hear the term 'police violence', personally I choke."

The remark in July 2020 came amid a debate in France about the use of so-called "chokeholds" by police that had been linked to the deaths of two



Paul Pogba

goals, assists and pieces of skill. For a boy that joined the Academy at 16 to make over 200 United appearances and lift the Youth Cup, along with two major pieces of silverware, is something that should be applauded and celebrated." —AFP

hours of community service. Yoan, a lower-league footballer, sent the video to a woman he was due to go on a date with but she called off the meeting after seeing the footage. "I don't think hitting a cat like that is OK — don't bother coming today," she told him. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which brought the prosecution, has called the brothers' actions "shocking".

"We hope this case will serve as a reminder that all animals deserve to be treated with kindness, compassion and respect, and that we will not tolerate cruelty by anybody," said RSPCA chief inspector officer Dermot Murphy.

West Ham said after the case that it condemned "in the strongest terms any form of animal abuse or cruelty". "This type of behavior is unacceptable and is not in line with the values of the football club," it added in a statement. "Within 48 hours of the footage emerging, we fined Kurt the maximum available to the club," it said. The money had been donated to animal welfare groups. —AFP

men of African origin. The leftwing Liberation newspaper depicted him on its frontpage on Wednesday with his nose stretched out like Pinocchio, which was applauded on Twitter by English football legend Gary Lineker.

The newspaper's editorial headlined "Lie" said the final "risks remaining in the annals of the republic long even after it has been forgotten by football fans." Senior leftwing opposition MP Manuel Bompard told Franceinfo on Wednesday that "the explanation given by Mr Darmanin... is an explanation that does not make sense."

"When you make a mistake — and mistakes happen — the best thing is to acknowledge your error, not to invent fake figures to try to hide it," he said.

Hearing

Darmanin and Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera are expected to appear before a Senate commission later Wednesday where they will face questions about security at the game, which tarnished France's image ahead of its hosting of the rugby World Cup next year and the Olympics in 2024. "What we expect is clarity and, I almost want to say, honesty," the head of the Senate commission, FranAois-Noel Buffet, told Franceinfo radio.

On the number of counterfeited tickets, "we need to know what the truth is. The two ministers need to say what they are basing their statements on," added Buffet, who is from the opposition Republicans party. —AFP

Sports

Warriors, Celtics poised for NBA Finals classic



SAN FRANCISCO: Jordan Poole #3, Klay Thompson #11, and Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors walk downcourt during the game against the Dallas Mavericks during Game 2 of the 2022 NBA Playoffs Western Conference Finals on May 20, 2022 at Chase Center in San Francisco, California. — AFP photos



MIAMI: Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics dribbles the ball during Game 7 of the 2022 NBA Playoffs Eastern Conference Finals on May 29, 2022 at FTX Arena in Miami, Florida.

SAN FRANCISCO: A resurgent Golden State Warriors are bidding to reclaim their throne at basketball's summit against a Boston Celtics team chasing history when the NBA Finals tip-off on Thursday. After a grueling regular season and a roller coaster playoff campaign, Golden State and Boston will open their best-of-seven finals showdown on Thursday in what has all the makings of a classic between two evenly matched teams.

Two years ago, the once-mighty Warriors — the dominant NBA franchise of the past decade — appeared to be facing up to the end of an era. A league worst 15-50 record left them propping up the foot of the Western Conference, a precipitous fall for a franchise that graced the NBA Finals five times in a row between 2015 and 2019, winning three championships.

But with three pillars of that dynastic run — Stephen Curry, Draymond Green and Klay Thompson — back to fitness, and under the shrewd leadership of head coach Steve Kerr, the Warriors are back in their preferred habitat. The Warriors' swift return to the finals is a byproduct of a culture that endured throughout the depths of 2020's mis-

erable 15-win season, or last season's elimination in the play-in tournament.

"The times when it was rough, we were losing, I think we still had a good group of guys," said Warriors center Kevon Looney, a member of the 2017 and 2018 title-winning Warriors teams. "We were still able to keep that same culture in the locker room, even though we were losing. We still played our style of basketball, still holding guys to a high level and a high standard."

While relatively recent recruits such as Jordan Poole, Andrew Wiggins and Jonathan Kuminga have all played key roles in this season's resurgence, the old guard of Curry, Green and Thompson have led the way in the playoffs.

Curry was named the Western Conference finals MVP. Green has been his usual combative self, while Thompson, who returned this season after a two-year injury absence, has produced bursts of scoring at pivotal moments in series wins over Memphis and Dallas.

'The pieces fit'

"A DNA that you can't really teach," was how

Curry described the Warriors' locker-room culture. "The pieces fit, first and foremost, and our core and how we play and what we do, what makes us unique and different," the two-time NBA Most Valuable Player added. Whether Curry is left celebrating a fourth NBA title by the end of this year's finals will depend on his team's ability to navigate their way around a Celtics team that in the eyes of many has been the most complete unit in the postseason.

"The Celtics are going to win the series and they are going to win the world championship because they are the best team remaining in the playoffs right now in my opinion," was the unambiguous verdict of NBA icon Charles Barkley.

The Celtics would become the most successful franchise in NBA history with an 18th title, putting them one clear of their bitter rivals the Los Angeles Lakers. Boston's offense has been spearheaded by the superb form of Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown, while the Celtics defense led by Marcus Smart and Robert Williams III has proved to be a formidable barrier.

The Celtics, who started the season as 50-1 outsiders for the title, have made a nonsense of those odds since surging into the playoffs after the mid-

point of the regular season. The star-studded Brooklyn Nets were swept aside 4-0 in the first round, before the Celtics then dispatched the defending champion Milwaukee Bucks in the second round.

In the Eastern Conference finals, top seeds Miami were beaten 4-3, the Celtics sealing victory with a gutsy game seven win on Sunday in Florida. The fate of the series may well hinge on which team best manages its roster. Both Williams and Smart have been nursing knocks in recent weeks; and whether their battered bodies can last another long series has to be open to question.

A gulf in experience between the two rosters may also shape the outcome. The Celtics roster has zero games of NBA Finals experience; Golden State has a combined 123 games of experience. Celtics coach Ime Udoka however insists experience won't be an issue. "I don't think any of our guys are awed or intimidated by the moment at all," Udoka said this week. "We understand what it is, we know the opponent in front of us, and for us, as always, this year, it's been business as usual, going on the road, not fazed by that at all." — AFP

Kerr the constant as Warriors dynasty endures

SAN FRANCISCO: Eight years that have seen the Golden State Warriors rise and fall and rise again have featured one constant in "visionary" head coach Steve Kerr. Under Kerr's guidance, the Warriors are the first franchise to reach the NBA Finals six times in an eight-season span since Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls from 1991-98.

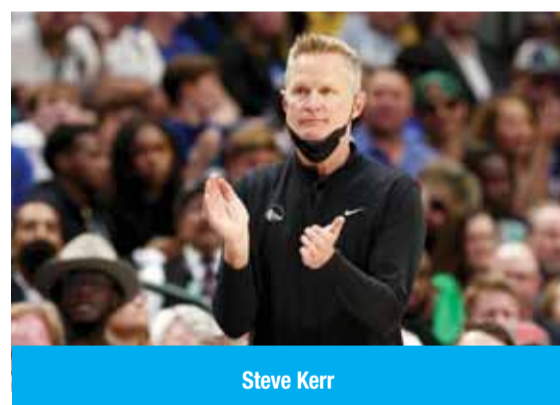
Kerr played on the last three of those Bulls' title teams and claimed two more championships as a player with the San Antonio Spurs. Now he's aiming for his fourth title as a head coach, after masterminding the Warriors' five straight trips to the Finals from 2015-19 that yielded three titles.

"Steve is a leader of us," shooting guard Klay Thompson said after the Warriors completed their Western Conference finals triumph over the Dallas Mavericks. "He's just an incredible visionary when it comes to thinking basketball. There's a reason he's been around so much winning his whole life because he's just that type of person who just gravitates towards greatness," Thompson said.

"I'm so grateful to play for a coach like Steve. He's a real player's coach. He's just an incredible person," Thompson added of the coach who has earned respect off court for his passionate and thoughtful commentary on social issues such as racism and gun violence.

Thompson, a lynch-pin of the Warriors' title runs in 2015, 2017 and 2018, returned in January for his first game since tearing a left knee ligament in game six of the 2019 NBA Finals. More than 17 months later he tore his right Achilles tendon. Thompson's extended absence was just one of the devastating blows that many expected to end the Warriors' dynasty, along with Kevin Durant's decision to bolt to Brooklyn after the 2019 season.

With superstar Stephen Curry also battling injuries the Warriors endured a precipitous fall, post-



Steve Kerr

ing the league's worst record in 2019-20. They were eliminated in the play-in tournament in the pandemic-shortened 2020-21 campaign, when Curry noted that despite their struggles Kerr "makes everybody on the roster feel valued." Kerr has needed that ability again this season, when injuries again threatened the Warriors' chances of returning to the top.

'Incredibly meaningful'

Thompson played in just 32 games, Talismanic forward Draymond Green played in 46 as he struggled with back trouble, Curry missed 18 games with a foot injury. James Wiseman, whose rookie season was cut short last April by a knee injury, didn't play at all.

"In the regular season, we literally never got our main guys on the floor at the same time until game one of the Denver series," Kerr noted. "So it was sort of a rocky path to get here, but I feel good about the process and our potential if we could get all of our key guys on the floor."

Amid the roster fluctuations, Andrew Wiggins earned his first All-Star nod and Jordan Poole and Gary Payton II emerged as solid contributors as the Warriors posted the third-best record in the league. Kerr said working through the changes has made returning to the Finals all the more satisfying. "We've done it before. But in a different way, it was incredibly meaningful given everything that we've been through organizationally over the last couple years," Kerr said. —AFP

First-year coach Udoka has Celtics vying for 18th crown

SAN FRANCISCO: Boston Celtics first-year coach Ime Udoka knows a gritty run through the Eastern Conference playoffs isn't enough to cement his young team's place in the history of a storied NBA franchise.

"Yeah, it would all be for naught if we go lay an egg in the Finals, and we understand that," Udoka said after the Celtics edged the Miami Heat 100-96 in game seven of the East finals to line up a championship clash with the Golden State Warriors.

Sparked by young stars Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown and anchored by veterans Marcus Smart and Al Horford, the Celtics opened the playoffs with a four-game sweep of a star-studded Brooklyn Nets team led by two-time NBA Finals MVP Kevin Durant.

They followed up with a seven-game win over Giannis Antetokounmpo and the defending champion Milwaukee Bucks before sending the top-seeded Heat home in another series that went the distance. It might be impressive stuff, but the 44-year-old Udoka knows the Celtics franchise, whose 17 NBA titles are tied with the Los Angeles Lakers for the most in history, demands more.

"Guys were quick to celebrate but quick to flip the page and say, we've got four more," Udoka said. "We don't hang or celebrate Eastern Conference championships in the Celtic organization. So we all fall in line and appreciate that standard of excellence."

Udoka, like his Golden State counterpart Steve Kerr, once played for Gregg Popovich at the San Antonio Spurs and he was an assistant coach under Popovich when the Spurs won the NBA title in 2014.

But his first season as a head coach didn't appear to be heading for a title tilt when the Celtics were under .500 at the midpoint of the season and Udoka's public criticism of his young stars didn't appear to be helping the situation.

"There were definitely some tough moments throughout the season where (you don't) doubt your-



Ime Udoka

self but maybe question, can we do it?" Tatum said. "You start to realize how hard it is to win. You start to question yourself — are you good enough to be that guy?" Smart said Udoka's hard-nosed approach did, indeed, motivate the Celtics, who have used a powerhouse defense to overcome other shortcomings. "(He) embodies everything that we embody," Smart said. "He kind of puts it on you to let you know that, hey, I'm not taking no slack. And if you don't like it, you can get up out of here."

'Ready for challenge'

Udoka said he never doubted the Celtics would respond, despite the injuries and the lingering uncertainties of the Covid pandemic that dogged all teams early in the season. "To get to this point we had to flip the switch and turn around in a lot of ways, and guys were always receptive to being coached hard, to being pushed, to being asked to do more," he said. "And that shows the character of (being) pushed to grow and take the next step ... our focus is getting four more." Udoka has a chance to become the 10th coach to win a title in his first season — a list that also includes Kerr who guided the Warriors to the crown in 2015.

The two teams split their two regular-season games, but tellingly, the Celtics held the Warriors to under 100 points in both. "Very confident going in," Udoka said. "We know it's a high level team, executing team, has a ton of great shooters, great players overall, guys I know well, and we're ready for the challenge." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

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

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
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KUWAIT: Kuwait's karate players pose on the podium with their medals.



Kuwait's tennis team poses with Kuwait's flag.

Kuwait dominates 2022 Gulf Games

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait was declared champions of the 3rd Gulf Games at the conclusion of the tournament which the country hosted since May 16, as it collected a total of 96 medals including 36 gold, 28 silver and 32 bronze. Kuwait picked two gold medals in the final day of the tournament in the fencing event and two more in karate.

Bahrain was second in the overall table with 20 gold, 23 silver and 21 bronze. UAE finished in third place with 18 gold, 16 silver and 16 bronze. Saudi Arabia moved to fourth with 16 gold, 22 silver and 29 bronze. Qatar placed fifth with 16 gold, 21 silver and 15 bronze, while Oman was sixth with 12 gold, 5 silver and 16 bronze.

Tennis gold: Kuwaiti

Kuwait won the tennis gold after defeating the bronze medalist Saudi Arabia 2-0. Qatar was second after defeating Bahrain 2-0 in the game's finals that were held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. Kuwait's Essa Qabazard won the singles gold medal earlier by defeating Ammar Al-Hagbani while Saud Al-Hagbani won the bronze medal after defeating Qatar's Rashid Nawaf.

Qatar picks handball gold

Qatar Handball Team defeated Bahrain 29-28 in the fifth and final round of competitions collecting the 8 possible points while Bahrain had 6. Kuwait won the bronze medal with 3 points when UAE which has 2 points defeated Saudi Arabia that had 1 point.

More gold for Kuwait fencing

Kuwait came out with the lion's share of the fencing event's gold when it raised its wins to four out of six gold medals in singles and teams. Kuwait won the teams Sabre gold, and the silver medals in the Foil and Epee.

Kuwait won gold by defeating Saudi Arabia 45-36 in the final match that was held at Jaber Al-Ahmad Center Hall at the Olympic Committee premises. The bronze medal went to UAE. Kuwait's team included Bandar and Yousuf Al-Shamlan, Ammar Al-Ammari and Abdelaziz Jumaa.

Saudi Arabia won the Epee gold by beating Kuwait 45-34 while Bahrain and UAE shared the bronze medal. Qatar won the Foil event by beating Kuwait 45-38, as Bahrain and UAE shared the Bronze.

Outstanding performance

The final day of karate saw the Saudi team grab three gold medals as Kuwait won two gold in the Kumite

event. In the under 67 kg, Saudi Arabia's Fahad Al-Khathami won gold by defeating Kuwait's Mousa Hassan 8-4, while Saudi Arabia's Fayed Al-Nashri won the under 84 kg by defeating Bahrain's Salem Al-Jumaa 6-1. Saudi Arabia's Tareq Al-Hamidy won the 84+ kg gold by defeating Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Majidi 2-1. Kuwaiti player Sultan Al-Mutairi won the under 55 kg gold beating the Saudi player Yasser Barqi 3-0 while Abdallah Shaaban won the under 60kg gold by beating Saudi player Bader Al-Otaibi.

Fulaiteh thanks Olympic Committee

Director General of Public Authority for Sport Dr Humoud Fulaiteh thanked President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Naser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and committee members for the success of the 3rd Gulf Games Kuwait 2022 and congratulated them for the outstanding results achieved by Kuwait athletes. He also thanked the Gulf delegations who participated in the games and contributed to its success.

Meanwhile, President of Qatar Handball Federation Ahmad Al-Shaabi thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait Olympic Committee and Handball

Association for the excellent organization adding that the success of Kuwait is the success of all.

Successful in all standards

President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber lauded Kuwait's organization of the 3rd Gulf Games adding the games were "a total success organizationally, technically and in terms of fans' attendance." He added that Kuwaiti teams crowned this success with achievements that placed Kuwait on top of the medals table. "We hope such events are held frequently due to their benefit for improving the standards and results of Kuwait players," he added.

Joint efforts

Head of the Qatar delegation Ibrahim Al-Khulaifi said Kuwait succeeded in hosting the GCC Games, adding "we thank all those who worked for the success of the games starting with the government represented by the Public Authority for Sport and Kuwait Olympic Committee as well as athletes and fans." He said among the positives of these games was the strong competition between athletes both in singles and teams' contests, as evident by the tennis competitions as the gold medal was not determined until the final day after five days of competing.

Nadal downs Djokovic to reach 15th French Open semi-final

PARIS: Rafael Nadal edged a late-night classic against old rival Novak Djokovic in the early hours of Wednesday in four sets to reach his 15th French Open semi-final. The 13-time Roland Garros champion won the pair's 59th career meeting 6-2, 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4) after a four-hour-and-12-minute quarter-final on a raucous Court Philippe Chatrier.

Nadal sealed his eighth victory in 10 French Open matches against last year's winner Djokovic at 1:16 am local time (23:16 GMT Tuesday) to set up a last-four clash with third seed Alexander Zverev on Friday. "I'm very emotional. For me it's incredible to play here," said Nadal. "Playing against him is always an amazing challenge... To win against Novak, there is only one way, to play your best from the first point until the last."

The 35-year-old has lost just three of his 113 matches on the Paris clay since his 2005 title-winning debut and now only trails Djokovic 30-29 in their career head-to-head. The Spaniard, seeded fifth, remains on course for a record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title after lifting this year's Australian Open, which Djokovic missed after being deported from the country over his Covid vaccination status.

Djokovic overturned a double-break deficit to take an 88-minute second set and missed two set points when serving for the fourth to force a decider. The world number one will rue those missed chances while he waits until Wimbledon for his next opportunity to take his Slam tally to 21. "Congratulations to Rafa, he was better in the important moments," said Djokovic. "He showed why he was a great champion. Well done to him and his team, he deserves it."

Nadal was a slight underdog heading into the match after being taken to five sets in the previous round by Felix Auger-Aliassime and he had even hinted it could be his last appearance in Paris due to a persistent foot injury.

The colder, slower conditions of the night session were also expected to favor Djokovic. But the 'King of clay' smashed 57 winners in a trademark performance to delight the crowd as he gained revenge for his semi-final loss to the same opponent 12 months ago.

Nadal makes fast start

The spectators quickly realized they were not going to be disappointed, as Nadal broke in a bruising 10-minute opening game before saving



PARIS: Spain's Rafael Nadal reacts after winning against Serbia's Novak Djokovic at the end of their men's singles match on day ten of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris early June 1, 2022. —AFP

two break points to open a 3-1 lead. A crushing forehand winner in the fifth game gave Nadal a double break and he went on to serve out the opener with relative ease, ending his opponent's winning run of 22 sets.

The first game of the second set was even longer than the first, but the result was the same as Nadal took his sixth break point. A string of unforced errors from Djokovic and Nadal's cute winner at the net saw the reigning champion a double break behind again.

Djokovic finally took a break point for the first time when Nadal netted a drop shot, before winning another grueling return game — in which Nadal was given a warning for a time violation — on his fifth break point to level the set.

Opportunities came and went for both players, but Nadal fired long as Djokovic took his second set point in the 10th game. Nadal came out fighting tough and broke, to love, in the first game for the third successive set.

Djokovic saw another break point come and go before giving up his own serve again to slip 4-1 adrift. Nadal served out for a two-sets-to-one lead in game eight as Djokovic blazed wide on the second set point, with the clock ticking past midnight and shivering fans reaching for blankets to keep warm.

Djokovic missed a simple shot early in the fourth set and lashed out at the net in frustration, drawing deafening boos from the crowd. The top seed immediately refocused though and broke serve for a 2-0 lead when a hotly-contested line call went in his favor.

Djokovic had the chance to send the match into a decider on his own serve. But Nadal saved two set points before gobbling up a second break point with a trademark forehand winner. Nadal made a rapid start to the crucial tie-break to race into a 6-1 advantage. Djokovic managed to save three of the match points, but Nadal got over the line at the fourth time of asking. —AFP

Kuwaiti shooters secure gold in World Cup

BAKU: Kuwait shooting athletes continue their dominant performance in international events, as the Trap team of Nasser Al-Miqlid, Abdelrahman Al-Faihan and Talal Al-Rashidi won first place in the teams trap event at the World Cup Tournament being held in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, Talal Al-Rashidi won the silver medal of the singles competition held in Azerbaijan from May 27 to June 7 with the best shooters of the world competing.

Kuwait's Trap team surpassed all 19 teams participating and was able to defeat a stubborn American team, which was second, while Croatia placed third. In the singles events, Talal

Al-Rashidi was second to Olympian Gold Medalist Jiri Liptak from Czech Republic, while Italy's Daniele Resca in third with the Bronze.

President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engineer Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi expressed his pride during a phone call with Kuwait's head of delegation Dr Nidal Al-Asem of the achievements of Kuwaiti shooters, and hoisting Kuwait's flag high at international arenas despite tough competition with the top world shooters. Otaibi appreciated the efforts of Kuwait shooters that made them get the wins in the name of Kuwait. Otaibi hoped for more good results in the skeet competitions. Otaibi dedicated the win to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well as the Kuwait people.



BAKU: Kuwaiti shooters pose with their medals.