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Kuwaiti oil minister hails decision to increase oil production

Kuwait's Schengen visa waiver bid gains momentum

BRUSSELS: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem described Thursday talks between the Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation and their European Union (EU) counterparts as "very positive". In a statement published by Al-Dustour news network, Ghanem said meetings with chairs of committees and parties in the European Parliament regarding finalizing a deal on allowing Kuwaitis visa-free travel to Schengen countries were fruitful.

The approval of the European Parliament and the European Council on allowing Kuwaitis visa-free travel to Schengen countries is an important requirement, he added. Members of Ghanem's delegation - including MPs Hamad Al-Matar and Obaid Al-Wasmi - as well as Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium, the EU and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi, were present at the meetings. — KUNA (See Page 3)



BRUSSELS: (From left) MP Hamad Al-Matar, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Chair of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Arabian Peninsula Hannah Neumann, Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium, EU and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi and MP Obaid Al-Wasmi are seen before a meeting on Thursday.

VIENNA: Major oil producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia agreed on Thursday to open the taps wider than expected amid soaring prices and hard on the heels of an EU ban on Russian oil imports. Analysts had foreseen OPEC+ producers sticking to their policy of modest output increases, as they have done since May 2021.

However, pressure has been rising for the 23-strong group to boost output further to try to stabilize prices, which have hit record highs since Russia invaded Ukraine, drawing heavy Western sanctions. OPEC+ has decided to add 648,000 barrels per day to the market in July, up from 432,000 in previous months, it announced after monthly videoconference meetings that lasted about an hour. "The meeting highlighted the importance of stable and balanced markets for both crude oil and refined products," the cartel said in a statement.

Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares said the decision to increase oil production will contribute to stabilizing the oil market. This came in a statement by Fares issued by the oil ministry after the minister's participation in the 19th OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial meeting.

Continued on Page 6

4 Palestinians killed by Zionist forces in 2 days

RAMALLAH: Zionist troops shot dead a teen in the West Bank on Thursday, the Palestinian health ministry said, the fourth Palestinian killed in the occupied territory in two days. The ministry identified the slain Palestinian as 17-year-old Odeh Odeh, who was hit in the chest by what it said was a Zionist bullet near the village of Al-Madiya, west of Ramallah.

It came hours after a Palestinian man was killed during a clash with Zionist forces conducting an arrest operation in the

Dheisheh refugee camp near Bethlehem. On Wednesday, a woman allegedly approaching soldiers with a knife was shot, and later that day a man was killed in a Zionist raid in the northern West Bank.

Zionist security forces have stepped up their operations in the West Bank in recent months, carrying out almost daily raids. The army said troops had entered Dheisheh to arrest a Palestinian "suspected of terrorist activities" and were met with volleys of petrol bombs and cement blocks. They responded with live rounds.

Late Wednesday, Zionist troops mounted an incursion into the village of Yabad outside Jenin to demolish the home of the assailant in a March attack that killed five people in the Tel Aviv suburb of Bnei Brak. The health ministry said that after that raid a Palestinian man died in hospital in Jenin.

He had been admitted in critical condition, having been "shot by live bullets in the chest and thigh".

Palestinian news agency Wafa said that six Palestinians were wounded in the Zionist raid. The army said it had also arrested the "terrorist's father". It said it had informed the family of the shooter, Diaa Hamarsha, on April 17 of the demolition order against the family home. The Zionist entity regularly destroys the homes of individuals it blames for attacks on Zionists. The practice, which often fuels tensions, has been condemned by critics as a form of collective punishment. On Wednesday morning, Zionist soldiers in the southern West Bank shot dead Ghofran Warasnah, 31, near Hebron after she "advanced" towards soldiers with a knife, the army said. — AFP



JENIN: Mourners carry the flag-draped body of a Palestinian youth killed by Zionist troops in the town of Yabad a day earlier during his funeral on June 2, 2022. — AFP

Depp celebrates verdict, Heard 'heartbroken'

FAIRFAX, Virginia: A jubilant Johnny Depp said Wednesday that a US jury "gave me my life back" by overwhelmingly taking his side in a bitter defamation battle with his ex-wife Amber Heard over mutual allegations of domestic abuse. The jury, after a six-week trial, found that Depp and Heard had defamed each other, but weighed in far more strongly with the "Pirates of the Caribbean" star.

The 58-year-old Depp, who lost a libel case against The Sun tabloid in London in 2020 for calling her a "wife-beater", celebrated the split verdict in the case as a victory while Heard said she was "heartbroken". The five-man, two-woman jury, after deliberating over three days, unanimously found Heard liable for all three counts of defamation against Depp and awarded him \$10 million in compensatory damages and \$5 million in punitive damages. Virginia law caps punitive damages at \$350,000 meaning the total award is \$10.35 million. — AFP (See Page 12)

Queen Elizabeth II kicks off historic jubilee celebrations

LONDON: Tens of thousands of people cheered Queen Elizabeth II on Thursday as she kicked off the first of four days of celebrations marking her record-breaking 70 years on the throne. The 96-year-old royal's appearance at the Platinum Jubilee - a milestone never previously reached by any British monarch - had been in doubt due to illness and recent mobility problems.

But dressed in dove blue, her hands clasped on a walking stick, she appeared on the Buckingham Palace balcony to take a salute after the centuries old Trooping the Colour military parade. — AFP (See Page 13)



LONDON: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II stands with Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, Prince Louis, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, Princess Charlotte, Prince George, and Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, to watch a special flypast from the Buckingham Palace balcony on June 2, 2022. — AFP

3D ear made of live cells transplanted

WASHINGTON: A US medical team said Thursday they had reconstructed a human ear using the patient's own tissue to create a 3D bioimplant, a pioneering procedure they hope can be used to treat people with a rare birth defect. The surgery was performed as part of an early-stage clinical trial to evaluate the safety and efficacy of the implant for

people with microtia, in which the external ear is small and not formed properly.

AuriNovo, as the implant is called, was developed by the company 3DBio Therapeutics while the surgery was led by Arturo Bonilla, founder and director of the Microtia-Congenital Ear Deformity Institute in San Antonio, Texas. "As a physician who has treated thousands of children with microtia from across the country and around the world, I am inspired by what this technology may mean for microtia patients and their families," Bonilla said in a statement.

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SAN ANTONIO: This May 31, 2022 image shows a before (left) image of a patient's ear and an image 30 days after surgery to reconstruct the earlobe. — AFP

Local



KUWAIT: Photo shows a construction worker at a site. The huge rise in the prices of construction materials has affected building of houses, with some citizens freezing construction of their properties, while others have speeded up work over worries about further price increases.

Huge rise in prices of construction materials

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The huge rise in the prices of construction materials has affected building of houses, with some citizens freezing construction of their properties, while others have speeded up work over worries about further price increases. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic and increase in residency costs for workers in Kuwait has resulted in a labor shortage, leading to a huge rise in daily wages of workers.

Kuwait Times visited construction material shops to learn more about the price hikes. Abu Mohammad, a business owner, said prices of all materials related to petroleum products have increased by almost 30 percent due to the high prices of oil, shipping and raw materials. "The problem is that Kuwait doesn't have industries related to oil derivatives, which forces us to import the materi-

als from GCC countries, which have doubled their prices," he said. "The labor shortage is a real problem for us and citizens too, as the daily wage for labor has risen by 20 percent."

Taha Abu-Elneel, an employee at a construction materials company, said the increase in construction material prices started during the pandemic with only 5 percent. Today, prices have increased by more than 25 percent, and in some cases, they have doubled, as some suppliers took advantage and monopolized materials to increase prices.

Abu-Elneel said prices rose the highest before Ramadan, as workers went on vacation during this month, which increased the demand for residential construction among citizens and caused extreme price hikes. "Due to the labor shortage, the daily wage bill has increased a lot. While earlier it was KD9 per day, it has reached extreme highs of between KD18 and KD25 daily," he said.

"New residential projects such as Mutlaa and West Abdullah Al-Mubarak highly affected construction material and labor demand in a short period, while import prices of materials have increased," Abu-Elneel said. "Iron and wood materials are the most affected by the price hikes," he added.

Amer Al-Sayed, manager of a construction brokerage company, told Kuwait Times: "Prices of survey material have increased three times since March, while National Industries have increased prices of materials and reduced the supply to restrict 90 percent of these for new residential projects. The fees for customs clearance tripled in a very short time from \$900 to \$3,000 per shipment," he said.

Hossam Ahmad, an employee at a construction company, said the main price increase is for iron materials. "The price difference reached KD70 per ton, which means for 10 tons the customer loses KD700,

plus the high daily wages, which affected contractors who build for customers, who decided to freeze their construction due to the price hikes," he said.

Abu Hamza, an employee at a construction company, said: "Import sources raised their prices and reduced the amount that is allowed to be imported of all materials. Since last month, suppliers started to reduce iron prices as their stores are full to KD280 from KD295 per ton," he said.

An official government source told Kuwait Times the issue of construction material price hikes is under consideration. "House owners are not affected by price hikes due to the governmental support that covers KD30,000 for materials. If the owner wants to add other material, the cost will be higher," he said. Regarding price control, he said "the construction market in Kuwait is unrestricted over prices," adding "it's a competitive market - the client can choose the price that is best for them."

GCC unity 'an effective force globally'

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has thrown its weight behind mediation efforts to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict, emphasizing that such measures should fall in line with international laws and principles. These efforts should comply with the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, which encapsulate the GCC's stance towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict, according to a final communique drawn up after Gulf Arab foreign ministerial-level talks in the Saudi capital.

The talks underlined the importance of a ceasefire and subsequent dialogue as part of mediation efforts aiming to carve out a political path out of the conflict, citing the need to get more than 22 million tons of grain still stuck in Ukraine out to world markets, which has triggered a fledgling food crisis. The GCC reiterated

its support for referring the issue of missing Kuwaiti prisoners of war (POWs) during the 1990-91 Gulf War to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), saying it looked forward to more cooperation from Baghdad in order to bring closure to the matter.

On the fight against terrorism, the bloc expressed its utter rejection of all forms of the scourge, saying it backs all regional and international efforts to exterminate terrorist and extremist groups, citing Yemen's Houthi group as a case in point. Addressing Gulf Arab ties with Iran, the GCC said it is committed to established United Nations principles and conventions on international relations, calling on Tehran to change its behavior that often imperils regional stability. On a number of conflict-hit countries around the region, including Yemen, Syria, Libya and Sudan, the ministers agreed that commitments to national interests and maximum restraint are the only solutions to stifle the unrest.

GCC unity

Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan affirmed on the unity of GCC states and stands towards international issues and crises which has led to

the emergence of the council as one of the effective and influential international forces. The remarks by Prince Faisal came in a speech during the GCC 152nd session of the Ministerial Council at the headquarters of the Council's secretariat in Riyadh.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah headed the Kuwaiti delegation in the meeting, in the presence of the ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and with the participation of GCC Secretary-General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf. Prince Faisal added, "today we witnessed two fruitful meetings with the foreign ministers of Russia and Ukraine, which reflected our unified position towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and its negative repercussions, especially with regard to food security in the affected countries and the world."

Prince Faisal noted, "establishing the foundations of our regional security is one of the most important pillars of our unity, which faces great challenges that require close coordination to reach a common approach towards our international relations to take care of our interests." The Saudi top diplomat asserted in



RIYADH: Foreign Minister heads Kuwait's delegation in the Gulf countries and Russia meeting at the Secretariat's headquarters in Riyadh. — KUNA

this regard, "Iran's nuclear and ballistic programs, its arming of militias, its support for terrorism, and its destabilizing behavior in the region come at the top of these challenges."

He stressed the need for "our dialogue and communication with Iran to be based on a unified Gulf position, through which

we call on it to calm down, cooperate and adhere to the principles of international legitimacy and good neighborhood status so that we can work together to achieve our development plans within a stable regional environment that embraces partnerships and supports economic diversification programs." — KUNA

Kuwait's envoy, DAFG president discuss relations

BERLIN: Kuwait ambassador to Germany, Najeb Al-Bader on Thursday met with the President of the German-Arab Friendship Association (DAFG) Christoph Bloss to discuss bilateral ties between Kuwait and Germany. Al-Bader said the meeting also discussed the latest regional and international developments, in addition to parliamentary cooperation between the two sides. He also stressed on the importance of developing the economic and commercial partnership between both countries by allowing German companies to open in Kuwait. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The National Guard organized a graduation and swearing-in ceremony for new batches of officers on Thursday under the patronage of the National Guard Chief, His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and in the presence of Undersecretary of the National Guard Major General Eng Hashem Abdul Razaq Al-Rifai. The batches includes; senior commanders and officers, specialized doctors and field officers holding university degrees.

KD 53 million raised during Ramadan

KUWAIT: An official at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor said on Thursday that total donations gathered by charitable entities during the Holy Month of Ramadan last year had reached KD 53 million. In a press statement, head of the charitable societies' administration at the ministry Abdulaziz Al-Ajmi affirmed that the afore-

mentioned number reflected Kuwaiti society's keenness on providing alms and assistance to the needy. The donations would be geared towards charitable programs within Kuwait and abroad with the latter step being coordinated with the Foreign Ministry, he indicated.

GCC humanitarian societies

Meanwhile, the national Red Crescent Societies at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries possess efficient and highly qualified cadres capable of practicing their humanitarian role. Vice Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Anwar Al-Hasawi said on Thursday. The GCC societies are committed to their

humanitarian message and practicing their responsibilities by offering aid to people in need and belief in humanitarian values and working in accordance to the international charts on that matter. Al-Hasawi told KUNA following his participation on in the GCC Heads of the Red Crescent Associations' 18th meeting held in Riyadh.

The conferees decided during the meeting that each GCC country's Red Crescent Society or affiliated body should nominate three candidates to be honored each December, he affirmed. The two-day meeting held yesterday, attracted senior officials of Red Crescent Societies and affiliated authorities in GCC countries. — KUNA



RIYADH: The GCC Red Crescent Societies, officials hold meeting in Riyadh. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait's Speaker meets MEP, discusses Schengen visa issue

'We are happy to count Kuwait among our friends'

BRUSSELS: Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem met on Thursday with chair of European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula Hannah Naumann - discussing the issue of lifting the Schengen visa for Kuwaiti citizens. According to the Al-Dostour news network, the two officials also touched on cooperation between Kuwait and the EU on all possible domains. Members of the Al-Ghanem's delegation as well as Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium, the EU, and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi were present at the meeting.

Kuwait among our friends

Meanwhile, Vice President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas has lauded reforms undertaken by Kuwait regarding the lifting of Schengen visa requirements and for siding with Europe in these "difficult times." He made the state-

ment to KUNA, and Kuwait State Television after a meeting with Mohammed Obaid Al-Rajhi, Kuwaiti Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, in Brussels.

"It was a pleasure to welcome the minister at our headquarters. We discussed the importance of our proposal to grant visa waiver for Kuwait. This is a very tangible very symbolic sign of the reforms that the state of Kuwait has undertaken so far in all the areas connected to the visa requirements," he said. Schinas noted that "at the same time this is also a sign of the fact that Kuwait has been siding with the EU in these difficult times in all issues of international, political, economic and diplomatic agenda where Europe is counting our friends."

"We are very happy to count Kuwait amongst our friends," stressed the Greek politician. They also discussed the process of the adoption of the Commission proposal on the Schengen visa that

would require further discussions with the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers, he said. "I was delighted to accept the invitation by His Excellency to visit Kuwait. I hope that by the time I will visit I will be a traveler without a visa" added Schinas.

On his part, minister Mohammed Obaid Al-Rajhi said he discussed with the European Commission Vice President the lifting of the Schengen visa obligation for Kuwaiti citizens. He expressed his thanks to Schinas for his total cooperation and for his serious work and commitment to complete this visa file "very soon." Mohammed Obaid Al-Rajhi arrived in Brussels on Tuesday evening accompanying the speaker of the Kuwait Parliament Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his delegation for talks with the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola and heads of other political parties in the EP. — KUNA



BRUSSELS: Vice President of the European Commission meets with Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs. — KUNA

Mental health problems common among students

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Mental health problems are as common among students as they are in the general population, but many parents do not identify these issues as mental health conditions in order to benefit from counseling. Students in Kuwait, whether at university or school, suffer from stress and anxiety, so Kuwait Times spoke with students, parents and psychiatrists to learn more about issues they are going through and strategies they use to deal with their feelings.

Dr Bibi Al-Amiri, Adult, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Consultant, told Kuwait Times that parents should reduce stress at home and protect their children by not exposing them to any domestic disturbances. "Children are more likely to be harmed, as the child's brain is still developing, and what happens in their life affects the formation of the brain negatively."

Children are among the most vulnerable to anxiety, depression and stress, and it will affect them in the future in their ability to make choices and make them hesitate in their decisions," she said. "For children to be able

to resist negative influences, they must have positive relationships in their lives from friends, relatives, teachers, therapists or counselors to make them more resilient and able to resist psychological stress," Amiri added.

Commenting on how children can act in similar situations, she said: "No matter how old the child is, they are not mature enough to change the current situation they are going through. Even if they try to avoid problems, this will cause other issues in the future. The mind is smart in receiving what we are trying to avoid. Also, it is not children's role to avoid problems, but of parents to protect their kids." Regarding stress relief, Dr Amiri revealed that parents should not put pressure on students to study. "Sports and outdoor activities away from school can be a great relief of psychological pressure on the child and make their academic performance better," she added.

Yousef Ahmed, a 22-year-old university student, told Kuwait Times that psychological pressure comes from the difficulty of exams and the large number of projects that the student should complete. "I think that with time, the pressure decreases. The first year was a



Dr Bibi Al-Amiri

nightmare, but after I made many friends, life began to get better. We study in groups to limit the stress," he said.

Ahmed suggested a specialist who can communicate with students to help with mental issues should be a requirement. "Psychological problems are both related to academics and family at the same time. The consultant can listen to the student's problem and reduce the academic burden due to the circumstances they are going through. We hope that there will be a counselor for students to help them with their university prob-

lems, which may be associated with other social pressures," he added.

Jarrah Al-Dhafiri, 19, said many students have mental health problems and it greatly affects their study and the performance of the duties required of them. "Psychological stress mostly comes from school or family, but I do not think anyone will turn up if a psychiatric clinic is opened inside the university. It will be better if there is a student guide to help them and allow them to open up and talk about their current situation," he said.

Faris Al-Qabani, 21, sees a problem with the term "psychiatric clinic", which may alienate students from accessing it. "I think they must use the term social worker or advisor instead and suggest actual solutions, so that students can trust them," he suggested.

Bouts of anxiety and depression can lead students to struggle with the ability to focus, loss of motivation and lack of interest in school. The Ministry of Education launched last month an online platform for mental health and social counseling for students, but parents are also applying for their children. Iman Al-Essa, a mother of two students, told Kuwait Times that support for students experiencing difficulties with their mental health is not yet professional in Kuwait. "So I think it will be a waste of time," she said, adding that it is just a phase that student goes through and will vanish by the end of exams.

Ali Muhammed, a father of a student in

elementary school, said mental illness is surprisingly common, but some people think that their children's mental health is not bad enough to get support, which is not true, as everyone deserves care. Speaking to Kuwait Times, Sama Abdullah, a 13-year-old top student, said: "Psychological stress greatly affects her study and is the main reason for not concentrating while studying for exams."

When I am upset and have an exam, I will not be in the mood to study or even be able to remember during the exam the next day." She added: "With my family fighting inside the house, I lose my passion for study. I blame my personality that focuses on negative issues in my life instead of focusing on my exam, which will lead to failure in the future."

Enas Fathi, 16, told Kuwait Times she knows learning is very important and has a great role in making her a useful part of the society, but the main issue is with school. "There are a lot of smart children in school, but the teacher will not appreciate them and give them a difficult test, saying 'you must study beyond your capacity'," she said. "Parents and teachers care 1 percent how this can affect our mental health. I have reached a stage where I should choose between literature and science. This thing may affect my future and my grades may drop, and all I think now is how to enjoy my time before the stress of school and family disagreements."

Iraq FM calls for new chapter of cooperation with Kuwait

BAGHDAD: Iraq Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein called on Wednesday to open new horizons for cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait and to work and coordinate in everything that would provide security and stability for the whole region and the world. This came during Hussein's reception of Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq Salem Al-Zamanan, on the occasion of ending his tenure as Kuwait's ambassador to Baghdad.

A statement by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry quoted Minister Hussein as praising the role of the Kuwaiti ambassador in promoting bilateral relations between the two nations. The statement

indicated that the two sides reviewed the bilateral relations between Baghdad and Kuwait and stressed the importance of increasing the volume of cooperation in all fields. For his part, the Kuwaiti ambassador expressed his appreciation and thanks for the support provided to him from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which ensured success of his mission.

In another development, Saudi Minister of Energy, Prince Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the Iraqi Minister of Oil, Ihsan Ismail on Thursday explored issues of common interest in various energy fields. Saudi Press Agency (SPA) stated that the meeting discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in the energy fields in order to achieve shared leadership through the Saudi-Iraqi Coordination Council. SPA added that they also discussed the oil market conditions and joint cooperation between the two countries to support and maintain market stability and their active role within OPEC+. — KUNA

Saudi issues health requirements for hajj

RIYADH: Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation issued a statement to airlines working in the kingdom's airports, including private airlines, in regards to health requirements for Hajj pilgrims for the year

2022. A statement explained that all airlines carrying passengers to Saudi Arabia for Hajj purposes must adhere to the requirements, stating that travelers should be no older than 65 years, and are fully vaccinated with accredited vaccinations by the ministry of health. Travelers must also provide a negative PCR test result, taken within 72 hours of traveling to Saudi Arabia. The authority asserted that not adhering to the requirements will be countered with the necessary measures. — KUNA

Fire Force denies death rumor



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force on Thursday denied the validity of what is being circulated on some social media sites about the death of a firefighter who was injured in the tent market fire accident, confirming that it is "completely untrue." The Public Relations

and Media Department of the fire department said in a press statement that one of the firefighters was injured while performing his duties in the aforementioned accident and was transferred to a nearby hospital. — KUNA

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Kuwait delegation attends IDB 47th ministerial meeting

SHARM ELSHIEKH: The Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Kuwait Governor at the Islamic Development Bank, Abdulwahab Al-Rashaid, headed the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the 47th annual ministerial meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank Group (IDB).

In a statement on Thursday, the Ministry of Finance said that the ministers will discuss a number of items on the agenda, the most important of which is the election of Kuwait as a member of the Board of Directors of the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation for a period of three years. The statement also noted that the meetings will touch on the 47th annual report for the fiscal year (2021) of the Islamic Development Bank, which includes the bank's financing operations and various activities in addition to global economic developments.

Kuwait oil plummets

In another development, the price of Kuwait oil plummeted by \$7.35 to settle at \$117.03 per barrel on Wednesday in contrast with \$124.36 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Thursday. At the global level, the price of the Brent Crude went up by 69 cents to \$116.29 per barrel, the same case with West Texas Intermediate, which went down by 59 cents to \$115.26 pb.

OPEC basket down

Meanwhile, the price of the OPEC crudes went down by \$5.87 to settle at \$117.07 per barrel on Wednesday as opposed to \$122.94 pb last Tuesday, said the international oil cartel on Thursday. According to the OPEC bulletin, the average oil price of the cartel basket in 2021 was at \$69.89 per barrel. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Mercy (Venezuela).

General index down

Bursa Kuwait closed its trading on Thursday with the general market index dropping 43.8 points to reach the level of 7765.29 points - a decrease of 0.56 percent. 251.7 million shares were traded through 14,938 cash deals, worth 69.7 million Kuwaiti dinars (about 250.9 million US dollars). The Premier Market index decreased 66.3 points to reach the level of 8589.53 - a decrease of 0.77%. In parallel, the index fell 17.4 points to reach the level of 6372.36 points, with a decrease of 0.27 percent.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Arabian Gulf coastline is captured in this photograph. The Kuwait Meteorological Department is expecting the weather to be hot during the day and hot at night with relatively humid in the coastal areas at the weekend. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Blue Bird arrives in Casablanca



KUWAIT: As part of the continuous efforts to expand its network of destinations, Kuwait Airways announced the launch of its first scheduled commercial flights to Casablanca, Morocco, commencing from 1st June 2022, with two flights per week on Sundays and Wednesdays. In this regard, Kuwait Airways CEO, Eng Maen Razouqi stated, "Kuwait Airways is pleased to launch its first flight to the city of Casablanca in Morocco.

This destination has always been of immense preferential importance to our customers, due to its popular touristic attractions, as well as its historic and cultural landmarks." Razouqi said, "Choosing Casablanca as a destination complements the plans developed by Kuwait Airways to expand its network of routes around the world, and to new and preferred markets that meet the aspirations and requirements of its customers. The selection of this destination came after extensive and systematic research of the feasibility, effectiveness, and profitability of this route for the Company."

Razouqi indicated that Kuwait Airways is fully equipped with a

young diverse fleet of the latest types of aircraft, with state-of-the-art technology, and the Airbus A330-800 was selected to facilitate the travel of passengers to and from Casablanca. The A330-800 is known for its unique features and characteristics that will enable customers to enjoy a comfortable and pleasant travel experience.

He added that Kuwait Airways was steadily progressing towards digital transformation and to attain the best levels of excellence. Moreover, he pointed out that customers could make their reservations through different channels, starting with the Kuwait Airways website and KAC application. In addition, customers can receive assistance or make enquiries through KAC's WhatsApp, on 22200171, or by contacting the Call Center on 171.

Customers can also visit the Company's offices at the Avenues Mall, the Ministries Complex, the Farwaniya Office and Terminal 4, which provide numerous services, including reservations, amending, upgrading and ticket cancellations, as well as assisting with all enquiries, complaints, and comments from cus-



tomers.

Razouqi explained that Kuwait Airways is relentlessly striving to provide its passengers with diverse options for meeting their travel requirements with better services by including new destinations, as well as offering them with all means of comfort during their travel on board, starting from providing reservations for customers through all available channels and providing them appropriate services, from the check-in at Terminal 4, completing their travel procedures with ease and enjoying the Company's services on board.

It is worth noting that Kuwait Airways is dedicated to the comfort and convenience of its passengers as those traveling on Royal and First Class are allowed to carry three pieces of baggage weighing 32 kilograms per piece. Business Class passengers can carry two pieces of baggage weighing 32 kilograms per piece and passengers on Economy Class carry two pieces of baggage of 23 kilograms each. Moreover, passengers travelling on board Kuwait Airways, in all classes, can carry hand baggage, that does not exceed 7 kilograms.

The inaugural ceremony for the commencement of operations to Casablanca, was attended by Kuwait Airways CEO, Eng Maen Razouqi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the State of Kuwait, HE Ali Ibn Issa, the Deputy Director General for Kuwait International Airport Affairs at DGCA, Eng Saleh Al-Fadaghi, the Acting Director of General Administration for Airport Security, Brigadier Issa Al-Failakawi, KAC's Chief Operations Officer, Captain Eisa Al-Haddad, the Chief Commercial Officer, Dr Walid Abillama, and various officials from the company.

The first flight to Casablanca witnessed the implementation and completion of comfortable and convenient travel procedures for passengers, and meeting their requirements to the fullest, who in turn, appreciated the employees of Kuwait Airways for their services, from the entrance of Terminal 4 to the check-in area, until they arrive at the boarding gate, as well as providing them with the best services on board, in addition to KAC's adherence to its schedule in the departure and arrival of its flights.



KUWAIT: The Italian Embassy held Wednesday a reception on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Italy where it was hosted by the Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait Carlo Baldocci and attended by Kuwait Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Majdi Ahmed Ebrahim Al-Dhafiri, diplomats and other dignitaries. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Italy Embassy celebrates 76th anniversary of National Day



KUWAIT: Italy Embassy on Wednesday celebrated the 76th Anniversary of the National Day of the Italian Republic - the first time after the two-year period of COVID-19 pandemic. Italian Republic is a young and modern Republic with an ancient civilization and thousands of years of history. The Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait Carlo Baldocci recalled one of the great challenges that the world had to deal with two years ago; Italy was heavily hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. He thanked Kuwait for its solidarity and immediate aid.

"With our Kuwaiti friends we share the same attitude in dealing with international threats and crises through dialogue and tolerance and on many occasions we have similar analysis and positions, which results in mutual understanding and in reinforcing day by day our excellent bilateral relations. In December 2021, both countries celebrated 60 years of extraordinary friendship with a series of events in Kuwait:

musical concerts, art and architectural exhibitions outlining the two nations' mutual cooperation and rich history of cross-fertilization and interaction," he said.

"This year we also started with a rich cultural agenda, with different programs and activities such as concerts, seminars, art, gastronomy and events that keep bringing more of Italy to Kuwait, with the aim to make Kuwaitis enjoy what Italy is famous for worldwide, as well as discover different sectors where our country has an international leading position. As you all know, Italy is a cultural mega-power," he added.

He invited everybody to visit the Italian exhibitions that are currently going on: "DIVA, Italian Glamour in Fashion Jewelry" exhibition, curated by Professor Alba Cappellieri at Contemporary Art Platform (CAP), which will continue until June 18th and also "The Mystic Letters", a calligraphy exhibition by Antonella Leoni, at Dar Al-Funoon and will continue until June 23rd.





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LIVIV, Ukraine: People watch as dark smoke billows following an air strike in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. —AFP

Russia tightens noose around Ukraine city

Germany to deliver air defence system capable of shielding major city from Russian air raids

SOLEDAR, Ukraine: Russian forces on Thursday hammered the last Ukrainian defences holding a strategic city in the Donbas region as the war approached its 100th day and Washington warned it could still last for months.

Vladimir Putin's troops have set their sights on capturing eastern Ukraine since Ukrainian forces repelled them from seizing Kyiv after the Russian invasion began on February 24. Defending the east has come at a high cost for Ukraine, with President Volodymyr Zelensky reportedly admitting that up to 100 Ukrainian soldiers are dying daily.

Russia's invasion-set to enter its 100th day on Friday-has killed thousands of people and sent millions of Ukrainians fleeing. The industrial hub of Severodonetsk in Lugansk, part of the Donbas, has become a key target for Moscow, and the local governor said that 80 percent of the city was already now under Russian control.

"The most difficult situation is in the Lugansk region, where the enemy is trying to displace our units," said Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, the commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces in a statement. "Street fighting continues" in Severodonetsk, said Lugansk regional governor Sergiy Gaiday on

Telegram, vowing that Ukrainian forces would fight "until the end".

Severodonetsk's Azot factory, one of Europe's biggest chemical plants, was targeted by Russian soldiers who fired on one of its administrative buildings and a warehouse where methanol was stored.

Ukrainian troops were still holding an industrial zone, Gaiday said, a situation reminiscent of Mariupol where a huge steel works was the south-eastern port city's last holdout until Ukrainian troops finally surrendered in late May.

'Fuel to the fire'

Ukraine's commander in chief pleaded for modern armaments from NATO, telling France's top general, Thierry Burkhard that "the enemy has a decisive advantage in artillery." "It will save the lives of our people". This week, US President Joe Biden announced that more advanced rocket systems were on the way.

The Himars multiple launch rocket system, or MLRS, is a mobile unit that can simultaneously launch multiple precision-guided missiles up to 80 kilometres (50 miles) away. They are the centre-piece of a \$700 million package unveiled

Wednesday that includes air-surveillance radar, more Javelin short-range anti-tank rockets, artillery ammunition, helicopters, vehicles and spare parts.

But analysts caution against a sudden battlefield game changer, not least because Ukrainian troops need time to learn how to use them effectively. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused Washington of "adding fuel to the fire" with the new weapons, although US officials insist Ukraine has promised not to use them to strike inside Russia.

Germany said Wednesday it would deliver an air defence system capable of shielding a major city from Russian air raids, although it will take months to get to the frontline. EU leaders agreed this week to ban most Russian oil imports but played down the prospects of shutting off Russian gas on which many member states are hugely dependent.

The sanctions are biting—a panel of investors said Wednesday Russia has failed to pay \$1.9 million of accrued interest on a sovereign bond.

Russian energy giant Gazprom said its gas exports to countries outside the former Soviet Union dropped by more than a quarter year-on-year between January and May after losing several European clients. — AFP

French envoys strike over reform plan

PARIS: French diplomats launched a one-day strike Thursday to protest a plan to strip foreign ministry envoys of their special status, a move they say will weaken Paris's influence abroad. It is only the second time in its history that the institution staged an open revolt over a government proposal.

The diplomats say the move to remove their special status will weaken French diplomatic influence by making posts available to all senior civil servants and not just those specifically trained for the foreign service.

"The reform says that agents are, in a way, interchangeable," Olivier Da Silva, a diplomat and union chief, told AFP. "And that basically, if you meet a few conditions, you could go from a position at the agriculture, education or interior ministry to a position at the foreign ministry."

Political interference?

The decree that calls for the corps' "extinction" was unveiled in April by President Emmanuel Macron, who wants to create a single pool of elite "state administrators" capable of working throughout the public sector.

That means France's roughly 700 most senior diplomats could be asked to join other ministries, and face competition from non-diplomats for postings. Critics say Macron is seeking a freer rein to name ambassadors after his unsuccessful attempt to install a friend, the writer Philippe Besson, in a prime post as consul general in Los Angeles.

That decree sparked an outcry in the corps before being nullified in 2019 by the State Council, France's top administrative law court. The government says the reform will attract more diverse candidates to the diplomatic service by opening new routes to the foreign ministry, but critics see a danger of political interference.

"The door is now open to American-style nominations," a former ambassador to Washington, Gerard Araud, tweeted last month. American ambassadors are named by the president, who often uses the power to reward political allies and donors with plum foreign postings. The last and only strike by French diplomats was in 2003 to push for pay increases. France has the third-biggest foreign service in the world after China and the United States, with around 14,000 employees at the foreign ministry in total. The vast majority are non-diplomats or people on local contracts abroad. —AFP

Gunman kills four at Tulsa hospital in US mass shooting

TULSA, United States: A gunman has killed at least four people at a hospital building in Tulsa, Oklahoma, police said—the latest in a string of mass shootings across the United States in recent weeks. The killings come as Texas families bury their dead after a school shooting left 19 young children dead just eight days earlier.

The Tulsa shooting suspect, who was armed with a rifle and a handgun during his attack on the Saint Francis hospital campus, died by suicide, police said Wednesday. "Right now we have four civilians that are dead, we have one shooter that is dead, and right now we believe that is self-inflicted," Tulsa Police Department Deputy Chief Eric Dalglish told reporters.

He said officers responded immediately after emergency calls came in reporting that a gunman had stormed into the second floor of the Natalie Building,

which houses a clinic on the Saint Francis campus.

Police "were hearing shots in the building" when they arrived, according to Dalglish, who said officers then searched each room and floor while trying to clear the building during what authorities described as an active shooter situation.

Police Captain Richard Meulenberg said officers treated the scene as "catastrophic," with "several" people shot and "multiple injuries." It was not clear how many other people might have been wounded.

Dalglish said the entire assault—from the moment emergency calls came in, to the time officers engaged the shooter—lasted about four minutes. He also noted that the suspect had yet to be identified.

US President Joe Biden has been briefed on the shooting, the White House said in a statement, adding that the administration has offered support to Tulsa officials. According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been 233 mass shootings this year in the United States—more than one such incident per day in 2022 so far. US media reported the country was hit by a dozen mass shootings over the recent Memorial Day weekend. The United States generally counts mass shootings as involving four or more deaths.

Elizabeth Buchner, a legal assistant who lives behind the building where the shooting occurred, said



TULSA, United States: Handout photo shows, police officers respond to a call about a man armed with a rifle at the Natalie Building at St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A gunman killed at least four people Wednesday at a hospital campus in Tulsa, Oklahoma. —AFP

she rushed out of her house when she heard helicopters and a loud commotion coming from the direction of the hospital. — AFP

War, COVID-19 cast gloomy shadow over Europe

PARIS: Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the list of Europe's woes keeps growing as it battles rising food and energy prices and continued disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. From political upheaval to battered industries and the threat of a migration crisis, European leaders face myriad threats to the stability and prosperity of the old continent.

Here is an overview: 'Anti-system politics'

Europe's population is under increasing pressure as the war in Ukraine stokes energy and food price

risers and inflation generally accelerates. A study by the insurance company Allianz Trade believes "the worst is to come" in terms of food prices, with an average increase of 243 euros (\$260) in an individual's food budget per year in the European Union.

"In the medium term, the cost of living crisis raises demands on governments to mitigate some of the impact," said Laurence Allan, the director of Country Risk Europe at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Europeans may turn to radical politics, particularly if governments implement austerity measures. The 2008 financial crisis was "the catalyst for the expansion of so-called anti-system politics", said Allan. Traditional parties were suddenly faced with multi-fronted challenges to their dominance, with the emergence of parties such as Syriza in Greece, Five Star and Lega in Italy and Podemos in Spain, Allan added.

In France, "the three main political forces are now the centre, the far left and the far right", said

Agathe Demarais, global forecasting director at The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). Both the far left and the far right in France have made purchasing power their main theme during the April presidential elections and for the upcoming June parliamentary polls.

Battered industries

Western sanctions imposed on Russia's economy aim to cut off the country's income funding the war, but also inadvertently harm Europe's economy. "The sanctions against Russia mostly weigh on the European Union, are beneficial to China and don't cost the US anything," said France's former ambassador to Russia Jean de Gliniasty in the monthly French Journal of National Defence (RDN). The German car industry is in particularly deep waters. Already hit by shortages of semiconductors due to COVID-19 shutdowns, Germany's auto industry is also facing "rising prices, particularly of metals, due to the Ukraine war," said Demarais. — AFP

NOTICE

Kuwait Airways would like to point out the following:

There was an error in the Company's announcement, which was published in your esteemed newspaper on Thursday, 2 June 2022 on Page 5. This is in regard with the job vacancy advertised, where Clause No. (3) in the "General Terms" and Clause No. (4) in "How to apply" is not required.

International

'Battle of flags' flares in Zionist-Palestinian conflict

'Many martyrs fell for the sake of this flag'

HUWARA, Palestinian Territories: Dozens of Zionist soldiers stood guard in the occupied West Bank town of Huwara, where the Palestinian flag was blowing in the warm breeze from an electricity pole. Suddenly, a Jewish settler jumped from a car, hoisted himself up the pole and tore down the flag, to the fury of Palestinian onlookers. The soldiers watched on, without intervening.

"Many martyrs fell for the sake of this flag, many people were killed," said Zafer al-Sayegh, a local store-owner. "It's not possible for us to take it down." In recent weeks, the Zionist-Palestinian conflict has flared with an intense wave of violence again, and so has the latest round of the "battle of the flags".

As passions have become inflamed, Zionists have marched with the blue-and-white Star of David standard while for Palestinians the black, white and green flag with the red triangle has served as a symbol of defiance.

Unrest erupted at the funeral last month of American-Palestinian Al Jazeera TV journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, killed during an army raid in the West Bank, when Zionist police attacked mourners waving the flag.

This week, members of the Zionist parliament even announced plans to ban the flying of the Palestinian flag.

'Our dignity'

In Huwara, many storefronts have Hebrew writing, a reminder of more peaceful days when Jews would come to trade with Palestinians. That goodwill has vanished, as Zionists living in nearby settlements, considered illegal by most of the



"To us, it's a symbol"

international community, have repeatedly entered the town's outskirts to pull down Palestinian flags, angering residents and prompting clashes between Palestinians and the army.

The Palestinians say the army has stood

by and watched, refusing to stop what they call settler provocations. Today, the Zionist army has a heavy presence in Huwara. The main roads into town are blocked with mounds of dirt and rubble, and squads of nervous soldiers patrol the back streets on foot, making Huwara look like a town under siege.

"They have made an issue of the Palestinian flag," Wajeh Odeh, a former mayor of the town, told AFP. "To us, it's a symbol. It means everything, it means our dignity, it means our right to defend ourselves against the Zionists."

'Invent provocations'

The flag is also an issue in annexed east Jerusalem, which was captured by Zionist entity in 1967. At the funeral of Abu Akleh last month, Zionist police were filmed beating pallbearers as officers waded into crowds of mourners to tear down Palestinian flags.

In a rare scene that afternoon, east Jerusalem's Old City was awash with thousands of Palestinians defiantly waving the flag. Two weeks later, tens of thousands of Zionists nationalists held their annual "flag march" through the same Old City, leaving it awash in blue



HUWARA, Palestinian Territories: A young boy rides a bicycle showing a Palestinian flag in the town of Huwara near Nablus in the occupied West Bank. —AFP

and white to mark Israel's 1967 capture of the eastern sector of the city.

It is not illegal to wave the Palestinian flag in Jerusalem, Laura Wharton, a liberal member of the city's municipality, told AFP, though the police regularly make

arrests on the grounds that the flags are being used as a provocation. She described the police's crackdown on flags as an attempt by the Zionist far right to "invent provocations where there aren't any". — AFP



RECIFE, Brazil: Firefighters and Brazilian Army soldiers search for victims of a landslide in the community of Bola de Ouro, city of Jaboatão dos Guararapes, Pernambuco state, Brazil. —AFP

Fear of landslides haunts Brazil survivors

RECIFE, Brazil: While firefighters search for missing people under thick mud, residents in the Brazilian city of Recife can barely sleep: they fear landslides like the ones that claimed 120 lives in recent days.

"We have children, we have all our things inside the house. We stay up until dawn, afraid that the hill will fall on us," Claudia do Rosario told AFP on Wednesday, standing at the door of her modest home with its sheet-metal roof and pink walls stained by damp.

A few streets away from her neighborhood of Vila dos Milagres, the torrential rains of last weekend caused landslides that destroyed everything in their path and

buried several houses.

If it rains so heavily again, as the National Institute of Meteorology forecasts for the next few hours, the 43-year-old fears the same thing will happen to her house.

The neighbors who lost their homes "called the Civil Defense many times and they never came. They only came after the deaths occurred. Are they waiting for the same thing to happen here to come?" said Rosario, who is unemployed. Storekeeper Maria Lucia da Silva, 37, was also worried.

"Whenever it rains, the hill gives way a little... we are all very nervous here. We call the authorities but so far they have not given us a solution, they say that the priority is in the part of the neighborhood that was most affected," she said. In the areas where the landslides swept in, firefighters, municipal workers and other officials were searching Wednesday for three people who remained missing, an AFP videographer confirmed. — AFP

Tunisia's Saied sacks 57 judges, tightens grip

TUNIS, Tunisia: Tunisian President Kais Saied on Thursday sacked 57 judges accused of corruption and other crimes, after passing a new law strengthening his grip on the judiciary. Saied, who has steadily extended his powers since he sacked the government and suspended parliament last July, issued a decree late on Wednesday allowing himself to unilaterally sack judges for "actions ... that could compromise the judiciary's reputation, independence or functioning".

In the early hours of Thursday, the official gazette published a list of judges who had been dismissed, and who may face prosecution. The gazette did not list the reasons for their sacking. But Saied had at an earlier cabinet meeting accused unnamed judges of corruption, stalling "terrorism" cases, sexual harassment, collusion with political parties and obstruction of justice.

In February, he already scrapped an independent judicial watchdog and replaced it with a body under his own control, a move critics decried as his latest blow to democracy in the birthplace of the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011.

Saied had long accused the previous judicial watchdog, whose members were partly elected by parliament, of blocking politically sensitive investigations and being influenced by his nemesis, the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party. A former head of the dissolved body is among those who lost their jobs on Thursday, along

with a former anti-terror court spokesman and a former customs chief. Also on the list are judges involved in a long-running inquiry into the 2013 assassinations of two left-wing politicians, Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmî.

'Affront'

Wednesday's ruling, applicable immediately, goes further than Saied's February decree, which had given him powers to dismiss "any judge failing to perform his professional duties" and had banned judges from going on strike.

Saied now has powers to sack judges "by decree and without any process", the International Commission of Jurists' regional director Said Benarbia warned on Thursday. He called the move "an affront to the separation of powers and judicial independence".

"Through it, the collapse of the rule of law & the constitutional order is now complete," he tweeted. Saied has insisted he has no intention of interfering with the judiciary, but rights groups have accused him of placing it under the direct control of the executive.

Saied's power grab on July 25 last year was welcomed by many Tunisians tired of a parliament seen as corrupt and self-serving but political parties and civil society groups have warned that the country is drifting back towards authoritarianism a decade after the fall of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Saied has laid out a roadmap to a referendum next month on a new constitution, which has yet to be published, and elections in December. Tunisians are meanwhile struggling with high unemployment, inflation and food shortages, aggravated by the war in Ukraine. — AFP

OPEC+ agrees bigger output...

Continued from Page 1

The minister said OPEC+ is closely following the conditions of the global oil market and prices, praising the organization's decision, which was taken unanimously.

Ahead of the meeting, speculation had swirled about a break in the agreement between the 13 members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, chaired by Saudi Arabia, and their 10 partners, led by Russia. The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday that OPEC was considering suspending Russia from the output deal.

OPEC+ drastically slashed output in 2020 as demand slumped when the world locked down under the coronavirus pandemic. They have increased output modestly to the tune of around 400,000 barrels per day each month since last year, resisting pressure by top consumers, including the United States, to open the taps wider, until now.

But Jeffrey Halley, an analyst at Oanda, said the move would not alleviate the crude supply crunch from sanctioned Russian oil, calling it a "huge disappointment to oil consuming nations". "It seems that OPEC has thrown the US and Europe a few bones... whilst also maintaining OPEC+ unity," he said. "Russia will walk away happy as prices will remain firm."

3D ear made of living cells...

Continued from Page 1

He said he hoped the implant would one day replace the current treatment for microtia, which involves either grafting cartilage from a patient's ribs or using synthetic materials, porous polyethylene (PPE), to reconstruct outer ears. The procedure involves 3D scanning the patient's opposite ear to create a blueprint, then collecting a sample of their ear cartilage cells and growing them to a

sufficient quantity.

These are then used to create a 3D-bioprinted, full-sized outer ear. The clinical trial expects to enroll 11 patients and is being conducted in California. Bonilla said: "The AuriNovo implant requires a less invasive surgical procedure than the use of rib cartilage for reconstruction. We also expect it to result in a more flexible ear than reconstruction with a PPE implant."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, microtia occurs in about 1 of every 2,000-10,000 babies. Factors that can increase risk include diabetic mothers and maternal diet that is lower in carbohydrates and folic acid. Absent other conditions, children with microtia can develop normally and lead healthy lives - though they may have self-esteem issues. — AFP

Yemen's warring parties renew two-month truce

DUBAI: Yemen's warring parties have agreed to renew a two-month truce, the United Nations said on Thursday, in an 11th-hour move on the day it was set to expire. Aid agencies and Western governments had urged the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels to extend the truce, which went into effect in April and significantly reduced the intensity of fighting in a conflict the UN says has triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"I would like to announce that the parties to the conflict have agreed to the United Nations' proposal to renew the current truce in Yemen for two additional months," the UN special envoy on Yemen, Hans Grundberg, said in a statement. Yemen has been gripped by conflict since the Iran-backed Houthi rebels took control of the capital Sanaa in 2014, triggering a Saudi-led military intervention in support of the beleaguered government the following year.

Grundberg said the truce was extended under the same terms as the previous one. It officially came into effect when the old one expired, at 7:00 pm Yemen time (1600 GMT). US President Joe Biden hailed the extended ceasefire, noting also "it's important that we work from here to make it permanent". Saudi Arabia likewise welcomed the announcement on Thursday, saying it was "keen to support UN efforts for a long-term political solution to the Yemeni crisis", reported the official Saudi Press Agency.

The Norwegian Refugee Council said that the extension "shows a serious commitment from all parties to end the senseless suffering of millions of Yemenis". "We hope this... will allow for further progress on the reopening of roads linking cities and regions, allow more displaced people to return to their homes, and ensure humanitarian aid" reaches those previously beyond reach NRC's Yemen country director, Erin Hutchinson, said in a statement.

On Wednesday, a Yemeni aircraft left Sanaa for Cairo on the first commercial flight between the two cities since 2016. It was the seventh such flight under the truce, with the previous six all heading to the



SANAA: A member of the traffic police loyal to the Houthi rebels controls traffic along a road outside the old city in this March 24, 2022 photo. — AFP

Jordanian capital Amman. Beyond opening Sanaa airport to some commercial flights - a lifeline to Yemenis needing medical care abroad - the truce has allowed oil tankers to dock 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, angering the government which is demanding roads to the city be opened. The rebels in turn have called on the government to pay the salaries of public sector employees working in areas under their control.

"In order for the truce to fully deliver on its potential, additional steps will need to be taken, particularly on the matters of road openings and commercial flight operations," Grundberg said. He would continue to engage on such issues, he said, to help "move towards a sustainable political settlement to the conflict that meets the legitimate aspirations and demands of Yemeni women and men."

A Sanaa resident, Nabil Al-Qanis, said Yemenis were "tired" of the war and wanted it to be over. "All parties must work hard to stop the war... and the UN must put pressure on any obstinate party," he told AFP. The conflict has killed hundreds of thousands of people and left millions on the brink of famine. More than four million people have been displaced, and 19 million stand to go hungry this year, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres, said on Wednesday. That includes "more than 160,000 who will face famine-like conditions", he said. — AFP

International

Hong Kong police warn against Tiananmen anniversary gatherings

Residents risk committing crime of 'unlawful assembly' by being in the park

HONG KONG: Hong Kong police have warned that people risk breaking the law if they gather on Saturday to commemorate China's Tiananmen crackdown—particularly in the city's Victoria Park, the site of a once annual candlelit vigil. Discussion of the 1989 clampdown, when the government set troops and tanks on peaceful protesters, is all but forbidden in mainland China.

But semi-autonomous Hong Kong had been an exception until two years ago, when Beijing imposed a national security law to snuff out dissent after huge pro-democracy protests in 2019. Residents risk committing the crime of "unlawful assembly" by being in the park, senior superintendent Liauw Ka-kei said Thursday—even if they go there alone.

"When there are other people there, and you share a common goal to express some appeals, that's already sufficient to make you a member of an unlawful assembly," Liauw said. Asked if residents can wear black clothes, bring flowers or candles and appear near the park at all, he said: "If that person makes us feel that his or her purpose of appearance is to incite others, we of course will search for evidence."

He said police had noticed calls on social

media to gather at the park on Saturday, but did not give details. Since the security law came into force in 2020, a drive to remove all trace of Tiananmen has swept through the city. The Hong Kong Alliance, the most prominent Tiananmen advocacy group and the Victoria Park vigil organiser, was prosecuted as a "foreign agent" over incitement to subversion.

Last September its leaders were arrested, their museum shuttered after a police raid, and digital records deleted overnight. Police banned the vigil and locked down the park in 2020 and 2021, citing a ban on gatherings under coronavirus rules.

Liauw said police had not received any application to organise an assembly in the park on June 4 this year but officers would be guarding the area anyway. Four of six soccer pitches in the park have been booked from early morning all the way to around midnight "by individual citizens for the purpose of playing soccer", Hong Kong's Leisure and Cultural Services Department said.

The two other pitches have been sealed for "maintenance" since early May. Liauw also said any person who promoted an unauthorised assembly in Victoria Park, even if they themselves did not show up, will have contravened the law.

scenes at the airport were almost identical to those in early March when Paul Harris, another British rights lawyer and former chairman of Hong Kong's Bar Association, headed swiftly for a night flight just hours after a long conversation with national security police.

Harris too was labelled "anti-China" and a "favourite lawyer of the black-clad violence" — a pejorative term for the 2019 demonstrations.

"You only need to have a look at the way rights lawyers have been dealt with in mainland China to know where the wind is blowing and I believe those cold winds have arrived in Hong Kong," Vidler said.

In April he boarded a one-way flight out of the city and his firm, Vidler & Co. Solicitors, officially ceased to operate on Friday.

No space to operate

Hong Kong faces scrutiny over whether its legal system can maintain its independence as China cracks down on dissent with the security law.

In March, two of Britain's most senior judges pulled out of sitting on Hong Kong's top court, citing the law's impact on freedoms, though nine other foreign judges said they would stay.

Vidler's decision to shut his practice after 19 years was taken as he felt "it was no longer possible for me to conduct the sort of work that I had set up the firm to do".

The company was known for judicial reviews that skewered government policies on constitutional tests, ranging from human trafficking and sexual violence to LGBTQ rights and country park development. And some of their 2019 protest cases attracted the authorities' wrath. They defended

actress, all Muslims, in three separate assassination-style attacks. Days before that, a Hindu government employee was shot dead inside his office by gunmen who police said belonged to Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Toiba.

The Resistance Front (TRF) rebel group claimed responsibility for Kumar's death on its Telegram channel, though it later deleted the post. The claim could not be independently verified.

Last year TRF claimed responsibility for a string of other killings including of policemen, minority Hindus and a female Sikh teacher, accusing them of working for the security forces.

Police later said all militants responsible for the killings were "eliminated". The killings evoked widespread condemnation from both pro-India politicians and separatist groups. The relatively new TRF surfaced after August 2019, when Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government dissolved the partial autonomy of Indian-controlled Kashmir.

The change allowed all Indians for the first time to buy land in the territory and extended to them domicile rights earlier reserved for its permanent residents. Tension has run high since then, with many accusing New Delhi of "settler colonialism"

Wednesday for mayors and provincial governors, including the capital Seoul and the country's second largest city, Busan.

The PPP's current Seoul mayor, Oh Se-hoon, was re-elected with 59 percent of the vote, while the PPP's Park Heong-joon was re-elected mayor of Busan with 66.4 percent. Yoon thanked South Koreans for the "successful completion" of the elections on Thursday.

"I want to accept the results of this election as the will of the people to revive the economy and take better care of the people's livelihood," Kang In-sun, Yoon's spokeswoman, quoted him as saying. Public sentiment has soured on the opposition Democratic Party's former president Moon Jae-in and his administration, which have been blamed for soaring housing prices in Seoul-up nearly 120 percent during his time in office.

In parliamentary by-elections, the PPP took five of the seven seats up for grabs in the National



HONG KONG: File photo shows a woman holding candles in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong after police closed the venue where Hong Kong people traditionally gather annually to mourn the victims of China's Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 which the authorities have banned and vowed to stamp out any protests on the anniversary. —AFP

Gatherings in other locations would receive similar treatment, he added. Asked if lighting a candle on a private balcony is unlawful—a move

many have adopted over the past two years in the absence of other options—Liauw said he could not see any law banning that. —AFP

HK rights lawyer says he fled 'cold winds' of suppression

HONG KONG: When he saw the crowd of reporters waiting for him at Hong Kong airport, British human rights lawyer Michael Vidler knew he had been right to close his firm and flee the city.

"Are you afraid of being arrested? Are you afraid of Hong Kong's security law?" journalists from pro-Beijing newspapers shouted as they chased him, cameras pointing at his face.

The events that led Vidler to leave the city he had called home for over three decades with just two days' notice are testament to the withering of Hong Kong's once-vibrant civil society — and the stifling of dissent brought by the national security law that Beijing imposed in 2020.

Vidler decided to shutter his firm when it was singled out in a national security case in February.

Two months later, when the closure was announced, he was attacked in state-associated media and accused of helping demonstrators who took part in huge pro-democracy protests that engulfed Hong Kong three years ago.

Vidler told AFP he never represented any of the 2019 protesters in court and that he was not contacted by national security police.

But "when I was accused of being an 'anti-China black hand', I had seen how that had worked out for people", he said. "That's why I left."

He is not the first to make that calculation. The

Indian bank employee shot dead in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Suspected rebels shot dead a bank manager Thursday in Indian-administered Kashmir, police said, the seventh in a spate of targeted killings in the disputed territory.

For more than three decades, rebel groups have fought half a million Indian soldiers deployed in the Muslim-majority territory, demanding independence for Kashmir or its merger with Pakistan.

An attacker shot the Hindu bank employee, who moved from the western state of Rajasthan a week earlier, in his office with a pistol in the Kulgam area, a police officer told AFP.

"#Injured bank employee namely Vijay Kumar #succumbed to his injuries at hospital," police said on Twitter. On Tuesday a Hindu female schoolteacher was also shot dead by suspected anti-India militants in the same area.

Last week suspected militants also shot dead three off-duty policemen and a television

South Korea ruling party wins landslide in local elections

SEOUL: South Korea's ruling party won a landslide victory in local elections for leaders of major cities and provinces, official results showed Thursday, giving newly elected president Yoon Suk-yeol a significant boost. An avowed anti-feminist and political novice, Yoon won the March presidential election by just 0.7 percent—the narrowest margin ever—and faces an opposition-controlled National Assembly that has vowed to closely scrutinise his policies.

But Yoon's People Power Party won 12 of the 17 major posts up for grabs in elections held



Michael Vidler

Veby Indah, an Indonesian journalist who was shot in her right eye by a police projectile, and represented "Ms X", a woman allegedly raped by officers at a police station.

Chris Tang, then police chief and now Hong Kong's security minister, openly accused Ms X of giving a false statement and put her name on the wanted list.

But Vidler said it was after the security law took effect that the firm's space to operate collapsed, with people no longer willing to come forward, NGOs dissolving or withdrawing, and political opposition largely wiped out.

"Any criticism of the government appears to be described as a national security offence or sedition," Vidler said. "Hong Kong, I've felt over the last two years, is frankly a place I don't recognise anymore," he added. "Civil society has all but disappeared." —AFP



SRINAGAR, India: Activists from Jammu and Kashmir Awami Aawaz Party hold placards during a protest against the assassination in Srinagar on June 2, 2022. Suspected rebels shot dead a Hindu bank manager in Indian-administered Kashmir. —AFP

aimed at effecting a demographic change in the highly militarised territory.

Indian-administered Kashmir is also claimed by Pakistan, which controls part of the region. The conflict over the previous three decades has left tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and rebels dead. —AFP

Assembly, although the opposition Democratic Party still holds the majority. The PPP's Ahn Cheol-soo, who withdrew from the presidential race to support Yoon, secured a seat representing a district in Seongnam, just south of Seoul.

Lee Jae-myung, who was the DP's presidential candidate, was also elected to parliament representing a district in the port city of Incheon.

Public approval

Experts said the landslide win gives Yoon the public approval he needs to push his agenda, despite lacking a majority in the parliament. "The public has ruled against the Democrats, who have massive control within the National Assembly," Shin Yul, a political science professor at Myongji University told AFP.

"Yoon and his administration will now have more confidence to push forward their policies, despite hitting a roadblock in the parliament,

Nepal tightens flight rules after crash that killed 22

KATHMANDU: Flights in Nepal will be cleared to fly only if there is favourable weather forecast throughout their route, according to new regulations announced in the wake of a recent crash that killed 22 people, officials said Thursday.

A full investigation into the crash of the Twin Otter aircraft in western Nepal on Sunday is underway, but a preliminary inquiry suggested that bad weather caused the accident. Air traffic control lost contact with the twin-prop plane shortly after it took off from Pokhara and headed for Jomsom, a popular Himalayan trekking destination.

The wreckage was found a day later, with all 16 Nepalis, four Indians and two Germans who were on board killed. Aviation companies have raised concerns about how to implement the new regulations, citing the country's limited weather forecasting infrastructure.

Authorities say flight permits will now only be issued after the aircraft's operator submits a flight plan with weather information for the destination and the entire route of the flight, according to a Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal notice issued on Tuesday.

Providing en-route weather information was previously not mandatory. Air operators could also be prohibited from conducting flights if the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology forecasts adverse weather conditions for a certain time in any area.

Aircraft operators say Nepal lacks infrastructure for accurate weather forecasts, especially in remote areas with challenging mountainous terrain where deadly crashes have taken place in the past. "Though the decision is essential and plays a vital role in the flight safety, we are confused on how to implement it as there is no clear way to get the en route weather information for domestic flights," said Yog Raj Kandel Sharma, spokesperson of the Airlines Operators Association of Nepal.

The aviation authority has also formed a committee to look into the possibility of making it mandatory for there to be two pilots on board single-engine helicopters. Sunday's crash was the latest air accident in the Himalayan country, which has some of the world's trickiest runways to land on and where pilots must deal with capricious mountain weather.

Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas. In addition to difficult flying conditions, however, it has been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance. The European Union has banned all Nepali carriers from its airspace over safety concerns. —AFP

knowing that the public has their back." The DP, which took 14 of the mayoral and gubernatorial posts in the last election in 2018, only won five key races this time, including three in its southern stronghold of Jeolla.

The electoral setback comes as the party struggles with internal rifts, prompted largely by rising star and interim chief Park Ji-hyun's call for reform following its defeat in the presidential election. It also expelled one of its lawmakers earlier this month over allegations of sexual misconduct.

The DP's former Seoul mayor Park Won-soon—who was a vocal advocate for women's rights—took his own life in 2020 after facing an allegation of sexual abuse. Oh Keo-don, the party's former mayor of Busan, was also forced to resign for sexually assaulting a female staffer. "We received our second punishment after the presidential election," said DP interim chief Park. "The results were worse than we thought." —AFP

Business

FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 2022

China to double wind, solar capacity by 2025

Beijing sets up \$120bn credit line to drive infrastructure

BEIJING: China aims to double its wind and solar capacity by 2025, according to a new road map that also allows for more coal-fired power plants to bolster energy security. The world's biggest polluter earlier estimated it needs to double wind and solar use by 2030 to deliver on its pledges under the Paris climate accord. The latest plan - if implemented - means China might reach that goal earlier.

But Beijing has also ramped up reliance on coal-fired power plants in recent months to support its ailing economy as the Ukraine war pushes up global energy prices. The country's central economic planner said 33 percent of power supply to the national grid will come from renewable sources by 2025, up from 29 percent in 2020, in a document released Wednesday.

"In 2025, the annual power generation from renewable energy will reach about 3.3 trillion kilowatt-hours... and the wind power and solar power generation will double," the plan said. China, already the world's largest producer of renewable energy, has accelerated investment in solar and wind projects to tackle pollution at home, which researchers say kills millions every year.

Beijing has pledged to peak emissions by 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060. Investment in solar energy nearly tripled in the first four months of the year to 29 billion yuan (\$4.3 billion) compared with January to April investment in the previous year, data from the National Energy Administration shows. But China's energy policy has remained a two-headed beast, with the country burning about half the coal used globally each year to power its economy.

Policymakers further embraced coal as the Ukraine war pushed up prices of oil and natural gas. Premier Li Keqiang said coal underpinned China's energy security in an emergency meeting last week to address economic woes, and the central bank has approved a \$15 billion credit line to fund coal mining and coal-fired plants. In March, the cabinet ordered miners to dig up 300 million tons of extra coal this year.

Local governments started building new power plants last year that will boost capacity from coal by the most since 2016, after an energy crunch paralyzed swathes of the economy. Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, said "energy security - avoiding another energy shortage and managing geopolitical risks - is the overwhelming priority" for China with the economic outlook uncertain.

The latest energy plan says renewables will supply "50 percent of the growth in power consumption" to 2025, lower than previous official estimates and signaling more room to expand coal power. "The planners are projecting, or preparing for, faster demand growth which would see fossil fuel use and emissions still increase," Myllyvirta said.

Meanwhile, China has launched a \$120 billion credit line for infrastructure projects, state media reported, as Beijing tries to jump-start its ailing economy, which has been pounded by the country's zero-Covid measures. Growth has slowed sharply in recent months as the Communist leadership sticks to a strategy of quashing virus clusters with mass tests and lockdowns - forcing factories to halt work and clotting supply chains.



SHENYANG, China: This photo taken on June 1, 2022 shows a worker transferring newly-produced cars at a BMW factory in China's northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP

Premier Li Keqiang last week called for "reasonable" expansion in the second quarter as fears mount for the vaunted official annual growth target of around 5.5 percent. Pump priming hard-hit provinces with infrastructure schemes has emerged as a key tool to create jobs and drive growth in local economies flattened by the virus and a concurrent collapse in receipts from land sales to developers.

A State Council meeting chaired by Li on Wednesday approved a mammoth new sum for

infrastructure. "It is necessary to increase the credit line of policy banks by 800 billion yuan (\$120 billion)," state broadcaster CCTV reported. Experts say the announcement is likely to help provincial governments match Beijing's banner statements on supporting growth. "It will provide long-term support to various infrastructure projects," said Betty Wang and Zhaopeng Xing of ANZ Research in a report on Thursday. In turn that will "drive business activities along the supply chain". — AFP

Key Facebook force Sandberg steps down

SAN FRANCISCO: Meta's second most powerful executive Sheryl Sandberg made the shock announcement Wednesday she will leave after a 14-year tenure that included helping steer scandal-prone Facebook to advertising dominance. Sandberg, 52, has been one of the most influential women in Silicon Valley and her departure comes as the social media juggernaut faces an uncertain future and fierce competition.

Her exit from Facebook parent Meta will be effective in the fall, she wrote on the platform, adding she planned to remain on the firm's board. A Harvard-educated executive, Sandberg joined Facebook in 2008 when it was still just a startup, playing a formative role in its development into a multi-billion dollar advertising empire. "Fourteen years later, it is time for me to write the next chapter of my life," Sandberg said. "I am not entirely sure what the future will bring - I have learned no one ever is."

Her job made her not just a recognizable face in tech but also a household name, particularly thanks

to her 2013 book "Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead." The best seller encouraged women to "lean in" to their careers in order to reach their full potential and overcome workforce obstacles. It has drawn applause from admirers for articulating a new modern feminist vision and sharp criticism from detractors who say her lofty position has made her out-of-touch with the grueling personal cost of combining career and family.

The social network has recently rebranded itself in a pivot toward a belief the internet is headed towards becoming an immersive virtual world, referred to as the metaverse. The Silicon Valley colossus has seen its image tainted by accusations it has put profit over user privacy and even the good of society. "Sandberg leaves Meta, and the social media environment that Facebook helped create, in a far worse place than she found it," said Media Matters for America president Angelo Carusone. "Hers is a legacy of enabling trolling, harassment, and abuse."

Meanwhile, the likes of TikTok, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter and even Apple now vie with Meta for people's online attention as the Facebook platform is increasingly seen as a place for older people. CEO Mark Zuckerberg said that the role Sandberg held at the company will be reshaped, with Javier Olivan becoming Meta's chief operating officer.

The next COO will be more traditional, different



SUN VALLEY, Idaho: In this file photo taken on July 8, 2021, CEO of Facebook Mark Zuckerberg walks with COO of Facebook Sheryl Sandberg after a session at the Allen & Company Sun Valley Conference. — AFP

from the close second-in-command status Sandberg holds, Zuckerberg said. "She has taught me so much and she has been there for many of the important moments in my life, both personally and professionally," Zuckerberg said in a Facebook post. "I'm going to miss running this company with Sheryl." Meta shares fell more than two percent on word that Sandberg was leaving, another blow to a stock value that has plummeted on worries that the company's regular growth was coming to an end. — AFP

Bread factory holds tough as Ukraine hopes for recovery

NOVI PETRIVTSI, Ukraine: Balls of dough file past on the assembly line and a sweet scent fills the air at a bread factory that embodies Ukraine's determination and its tentative recovery 100 days on from Russia's invasion. Located near the capital Kyiv, the Tsar-Khlib factory continued production even as Russian troops advanced, keeping city residents fed despite a missile attack on a neighboring facility.

Tsar-Khlib had to contend with extreme challenges. At one point, the factory was less than eight kilometers from the front line, and many of the factory's workers were stranded in territory held by Russian forces. Most of its clients had fled to safety. "But we quickly realized that we had to keep pro-

ducing because some people were staying on," said Anton Paliy, the 43-year-old head of production. In the end, the immediate crisis passed, as Russian troops withdrew from the area at the end of March.

Operating with just a fraction of its 800 employees, the factory continued producing 16 tons of fresh bread a day, compared to its normal level of 100 tons. When the air raid sirens sounded, workers would run into the basement. When they returned, they would find messy piles of fresh bread outside the oven. Paliy said the sound of the machinery drowned out the noises of war in the background, making the situation a little more bearable "psychologically".

The state-of-the-art Shanta factory, just a few hundred meters away, was not so lucky. Russian missiles destroyed the building on March 16. Oleksandr Tarenenko, the director of Khlilni Investizii, which owns both facilities, said the attack was a war crime because Russian forces had targeted civilian infrastructure. A missile shot down by Ukraine's air defense forces can still be seen outside the building.

Reconstruction could be lengthy and costly, and



NOVI PETRIVTSI, Ukraine: An employee loads baked bread in trays in the Tsar-Khlib factory in this village near Kyiv on May 25, 2022. — AFP

the facility's 140 workers are unemployed. But at Tsar-Khlib, activity is picking up as Kyiv residents return to the city. Demand "is increasing every week", said Tarenenko. — AFP

Stern childhood fueled Musk's ambition: Father

LANGEBAAAN, South Africa: Elon Musk knows how to dominate a news cycle, but for all the coverage of the world's richest man, the tech billionaire's early life in apartheid-era South Africa remains sketchy. Amid Musk's roller-coaster pursuit of Twitter, his father Errol Musk told AFP in an interview that he had tried to raise his sons "as South African boys", instilling in them the same discipline he learnt in the military.

"I was a strict father. My word was the law. They learnt from me," the 76-year-old said. He said that even as a preschooler, Elon had set his sights on becoming the wealthiest man alive, crediting that

uber-macho "South African boy" upbringing with driving his ambition. "It's part of the way we lived, the way I lived. We strove to be the best we could," he told AFP in an interview from his home in the quaint oceanside town of Langebaan, 120 km from Cape Town.

"I strove to be the best in the type of business that I was in," the retired engineer and property developer said. "It's sort of our make-up. So we sort of expect that." Musk was born in Pretoria on June 28, 1971, to Errol and Maye, a Canadian model and dietitian who grew up in South Africa. He was the oldest of three children, closely followed in age by his brother Kimbal and sister Tosca.

He left South Africa at the height of apartheid to avoid the unpopular army draft. After his parents' acrimonious divorce, Elon decided to live with his father - taking an overnight train alone when he moved in. "I go down to Johannesburg Station and there was this little Elon, beaming face, come up on the train by himself, nine years old," his father recalled. Yet Elon has



Errol Musk

said on numerous occasions that he had an unhappy childhood. As an adult, father and son suffered a major split when Errol had a child in 2017 with a stepdaughter four decades his junior. "Elon thought that was not very good. — AFP

Russia braces for economic upheaval as sanctions bite

MOSCOW: At his garage in the south of Moscow, 35-year-old mechanic Ivan is starting to worry. With billions of dollars in financial reserves and money still coming in from oil and gas exports, Russia has yet to feel the full impact of the barrage of Western sanctions imposed over its offensive in Ukraine. But Ivan sees storm clouds on the horizon.

The foreign parts he needs to fix his clients' cars are getting harder to find, and prices have jumped by at least 30 percent after many brands halted exports to Russia. "We're running out of stock. At some point, there won't be anything left," said Ivan, who declined to give his last name when speaking to international media. "People who have foreign cars are worried, they are wondering what to do in the future," he said.

Faced with a shortage of imported parts in factories, authorities eased safety and emission standards for locally produced cars in May - including dropping the requirement for airbags. President Vladimir Putin has been defiant in the face of Western sanctions, insisting that the Russian economy will emerge stronger, and pointing to "chaotic measures" in Europe that have boosted global energy prices. Officials say the damage from sanctions will be temporary, with the economy expected to shrink by eight percent this year and then bounce back to growth in 2024.

VAT points to spending drop

But Russia is heavily reliant on imports of everything from manufacturing equipment to consumer goods, and economists believe the worst effects of the sanctions are still to come. Now almost 100 days into the conflict, officials and ordinary Russians are reporting a litany of problems, including shortages of everything from paper to medicine. Authorities have stopped releasing key data, making it difficult to assess the impact of sanctions.

But the few available economic indicators point to significant problems. Strict capital controls, high energy prices and a collapse in imports have led to a surge in the ruble, prompting Russia's central bank to slash its key rate last week in a bid to rein in the currency. Inflation meanwhile hit 17.8 percent year-on-year in April, the highest for 20 years.

And revenues from domestic value-added or sales tax collapsed by more than a half in April, VAT fees on imported goods dropping by a third compared to the same month in 2021. "In April, the revenues of the overwhelming majority of companies in Russia took a hit," Andrei Grachev, head of tax practice at Birch Legal, told The Bell, an independent Russian business website.

"This didn't merely affect those who ceased operations in Russia, but also those who continued to work but lost clients and profits." That hit is evident on the streets of Moscow, which are now lined with shuttered shops: from McDonald's and Starbucks to clothing retailers H&M and Zara. Central bank chief Elvira Nabiullina warned in April that problems were emerging "in all sectors, both in large and small companies." — AFP

Business

Biden defends his handling of spiraling baby formula crisis

White House using military transport for speedy shipping from manufacturers abroad

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden defended his handling of a spiraling baby formula supply crisis Wednesday, insisting at a meeting with infant food executives that the White House is doing all it can. A product recall and shutdown of a major plant by industry leader Abbott in February triggered a dramatic and ongoing reduction in availability of formula for parents across the country.

Increasingly, the issue is also turning into a political maelstrom for Biden, with critics questioning his command of the crisis. Biden told reporters Wednesday that he was only informed about the looming problem in early April and that he'd pulled all the levers of government to resolve shortages ever since. "I don't think anyone anticipated the impact of the shutdown of one facility," Biden said at a meeting with the executives from five companies helping to take up the slack caused by Abbott's problems. "Once we learned the extent of it and how broad it was, it kicked everything into gear," Biden said.

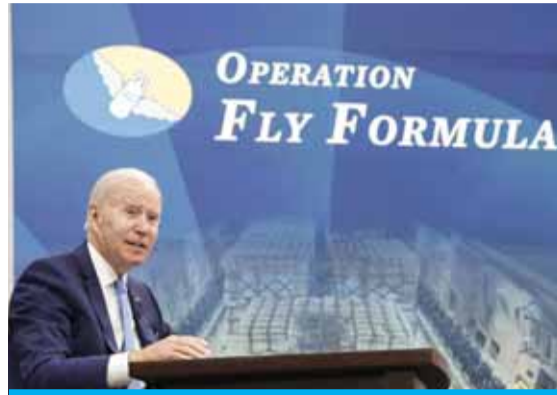
However, the executives at the meeting contradicted this, saying they'd been able to tell immediately in February that a crisis was imminent. "We knew from the very beginning," said one, Robert Cleveland, a senior vice president at Reckitt.

Pressed later by reporters about the White House response and Biden's command of the situation, Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre insisted that staff had been taking action from "day one," even if Biden himself had not been involved initially. Top executives from Reckitt, ByHeart, Bubs Australia, Gerber and Perrigo joined by video conference at the meeting featuring Biden, Health Secretary Xavier Becerra and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. The notable absence was anyone from Abbott.

'Frustrated'

The dramatic absence of baby formula on supermarket shelves is compounding a growing sense of unease for ordinary Americans as they navigate an uncertain economic post-COVID pandemic path. Unlike other shortages and supply bottlenecks, this one has less to do with inflation or the uneven return to economic health among US trade partners worldwide that has seen snags for Americans trying to get everything from foreign-made furniture to cars.

In this case, with Abbott controlling about 40 percent of the US baby formula market, the order by health regulators to shut down its factory in



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden meets virtually with baby formula manufacturers at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on June 1, 2022. — AFP

Michigan for safety reasons was enough to single handedly spark the crisis. As the crisis veers from a stress on families trying to feed their babies to a question of Biden's political competence, the administration is scrambling to show that it has answers.

In addition to asking rival domestic manufacturers to step up production, the White House is running what it dubs Operation Fly Formula, using military transport for speedy shipping from manufacturers abroad. Earlier Wednesday, the Biden administration announced that two more flights would leave in just over a week from Melbourne, Australia, to Pennsylvania and California, delivering the equivalent of 4.6 million eight ounce (237 milliliter) bottles of Bubs Australia infant formula.

With US regulators cutting red tape to ease imports, Bubs Australia is planning to send a total of 27.5 million bottles. Addressing the CEOs, Biden said, "There's nothing more stressful than the feeling you can't get what your child needs." "That's why I've directed my administration to use every tool available to increase the supply," he added. Ultimately, however, the United States needs to reform its market to broaden the supply chain, Biden said. "We need more entrants into the marketplace."

As the political temperature around the issue rises, Jean-Pierre stressed that Biden shares the worry of ordinary people. "The president himself is frustrated by the situation we have and he is frustrated on behalf of American families," she said. "He gets what families are going through." — AFP

Biden takes aim at inflation but short on weapons

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has launched a battle against soaring prices as he tries to claw back waning public support ahead of key congressional elections, but is finding he has few tools to defuse sky-high inflation. Consumer prices have surged at the fastest pace in more than 40 years, overshadowing an otherwise strong US economy. Supply chain snarls brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic were exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, sending prices up as demand rapidly outstripped the supply of available goods, while a worker shortage pushes up wages.

Biden has been left scrambling for solutions as he tries to ease the pain faced by American families ahead of November midterm elections in which his Democrats are forecast to lose control of Congress to opposition Republicans. But "there's not much the administration can do directly to fight inflation," Gregory Daco, chief economist at Ernst & Young Parthenon, told AFP.

Writing in the Wall Street Journal on Monday, Biden outlined his long-term plan to ease price pressures and help the world's largest economy transition to "stable, steady growth," by boosting economic productivity and reducing the federal budget deficit. But the Federal Reserve, not the White House, has the primary role in tackling inflation, and has started aggressively raising interest rates to cool the economy.

Biden pledged to give the central bank the space to do its work free of political interference - unlike some of his predecessors, including Donald Trump who engaged in a relentless campaign against the Fed. "It starts with a simple proposition: respect the Fed, respect the Fed's independence," he said Tuesday, following a rare meeting with Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

'Limited and slow impact'

While employment is back near pre-pandemic levels and growth is strong, savage price increases for essentials including food and fuel have sparked growing public dissatisfaction. Biden has pivoted to more aggressively trying to explain inflation as a byproduct of forces beyond his control, including blaming Russian leader Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine that has pushed energy and food prices higher. Biden calls the effect "Putin's price hike."

But the US leader's approval ratings are barely in the 40 percent range as people pay more at the gas pump and in the grocery store. Gas prices on Wednesday jumped to a national average of \$4.67 a gallon, from \$4.19 a month ago and just \$3.04 in June 2021, according to AAA. The administration has released oil from the strategic petroleum reserve to try and bring down gas prices, but with little effect.

Other steps include clean energy tax credits and federal investments in production, as well as expanding Medicare to lower medical costs. On Monday, Biden unveiled the Housing Supply Action Plan, which aims to improve housing supply and affordability.

But many of the contemplated steps "either require Congress to pass legislation (good luck with that) or they're policies that won't do a lot to bring down inflation in the near term," said Stephanie Kelton, an economics professor at Stony Brook University, in a blog post.

Biden on Wednesday acknowledged that his power to have an immediate impact is limited. "The idea that we're going to be able to click a switch" to lower prices is "unrealistic," he said. "We can't take immediate action" on gas prices, he said, but instead can try to "compensate" to lower costs of other goods.

As the US economy roared back to life following the pandemic downturn, policymakers cheered but they were caught off-guard by the inflation surge. Powell and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen last year repeatedly assured Americans that rising prices would be "transitory," but have since admitted they misjudged. "I think I was wrong then about the path that inflation would take," Yellen told CNN. — AFP



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WEEK ENDED ON 02 JUNE 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,033	1,029	1,038	1,010	28	35,434,079	23	2.29%	8.37%	1,024	1,038	21.2	2.03	2.8%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	343	314	345	312	33	294,186,715	-27	-7.92%	18.17%	310	316	22.3	1.50	2.1%	1.18
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	225	222	227	222	5	16,557,823	0	0.00%	5.91%	217	224	32.6	0.67	1.7%	1.14
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	273	275	279	271	8	7,592,552	5	1.85%	15.04%	275	283	19.4	1.01	1.7%	1.32
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	871	878	905	871	34	73,995,791	18	2.09%	16.08%	861	896	31.5	4.28	1.2%	1.24
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	840	817	855	812	43	9,791,996	-1	-0.12%	14.69%	813	822	65.3	4.04	0.5%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	369	339	369	334	35	18,865,090	-49	-12.63%	54.79%	331	348	7.5	1.08	12.6%	1.70
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	166	177	179	162	17	18,040,095	15	9.26%	24.65%	172	179	32.2	0.93	2.9%	0.90
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	103	108	109	103	6	14,316,571	6	5.88%	-8.47%	102	112	106.9	0.63	8.5%	1.17
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	152	159	161	150	11	24,898,921	7	4.61%	-8.51%	158	166	23.2	1.15	1.8%	0.99
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	814	813	851	800	51	6,329,947	13	1.63%	8.67%	787	825	17.8	1.91	1.6%	1.09
501	National Industries	Financial Services	295	305	311	295	16	62,555,947	13	4.45%	17.20%	300	316	4.4	1.35	0.0%	1.43
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,555	1,650	1,698	1,500	198	3,522,595	160	10.74%	89.44%	1,650	1,750	16.4	1.33	3.7%	0.78
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	1,080	1,086	1,111	1,047	64	3,766,822	41	3.92%	27.46%	1,083	1,109	14.6	2.04	5.1%	0.87
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	367	369	379	365	14	2,311,507	2	0.54%	6.34%	365	371	16.9	0.88	4.3%	0.98
603	Agility	Industrials	1,130	1,135	1,155	1,115	40	19,846,207	34	3.09%	20.11%	1,111	1,145	66.5	1.32	1.8%	1.40
605	Zain	Telecommunications	621	617	634	615	19	33,630,866	1	0.16%	3.70%	617	626	15.3	2.36	5.3%	0.87
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,158	3,139	3,168	3,104	64	808,376	-2	-0.06%	-2.64%	3,100	3,200	6.5	3.89	12.8%	0.68
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	190	216	224	188	36	22,568,349	29	15.51%	-0.92%	212	217	NULL	0.75	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,869	1,939	2,030	1,851	179	4,997,278	88	4.75%	50.31%	1,939	1,958	25.9	15.86	1.7%	1.39
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	275	275	280	271	9	78,277,063	6	2.23%	8.81%	246	275	17.3	1.81	3.0%	1.74
821	Warba Bank	Banking	260	271	273	260	13	15,855,507	11	4.23%	-1.09%	269	275	31.7	1.47	0.0%	1.04
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	576	530	576	520	56	1,329,406	6	1.15%	-10.02%	519	541	25.3	1.43	3.0%	0.31
824	Integratd Holding	Industrials	430	447	458	430	28	5,879,734	17	3.95%	2.30%	445	458	38.3	1.79	2.2%	0.70
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	215	215	215	212	3	3,776,705	0	0.00%	-5.70%	213	220	16.6	2.70	8.4%	0.52
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,499	2,550	2,590	2,418	172	375,978	135	5.59%	26.24%	2,483	2,600	28.6	9.70	2.5%	0.75

* As of end of week closing

Business

Italy's 'Motor Valley' proves fertile ground for supercars

Area comprises 16,000 companies, four racing tracks, six training centers

MODENA, Italy: If Tuscany has Chianti, the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna has "Motor Valley", an area that boasts one of the highest concentrations of luxury sports cars and motorbikes in the world. The so-called Land of Motors, covering around 1,000 sq km of prime agricultural land roughly between Bologna and Modena, is home to Lamborghini and Ferrari, Maserati and Ducati, in addition to less well-known brands.

Every year - with a hiatus for coronavirus - industry types and fans flock to Modena for a weekend to talk business and admire the spectacular cars and bikes displayed around town. Among those on show this year was a Pagani Huayra, a futuristic hypercar produced just a few kilometers away in Pagani's base at San Cesario sul Panaro, where vehicles are made to measure - and start at a cool euro 2.6 million (\$2.8 million). Christopher Pagani, the son of the founder and communications chief, told AFP it takes between eight and nine months to manufacture a car, with customers normally waiting two years between order and delivery. "In 2022 we are producing some 40 to 45 cars. They are all special because every customer has the opportunity to get in touch with us, visit us, and go on this journey," he said.

In the factory - dubbed the "workshop" - a few dozen mostly young people work in the hushed and ordered environment of a science lab. For the brand, weight is everything and they use 40 different types

of carbon fiber, as well as titanium and aluminium to make the car as light as possible. But Pagani said talks were underway with clients about a potential electric version, even if it would be heavier due to the battery, as part of a trend towards greener vehicles.

Best place to be

Pagani's father, Horacio, founded the company in 1998 after working at Lamborghini, another of Italy's top luxury brands based in the area. According to legend, Ferruccio Lamborghini, the wealthy owner of a tractor factory, turned his hand to sports cars in the 1950s after complaining about the Ferraris he owned. Enzo Ferrari is said to have told him that if he didn't like what he made, he should go and build his own.

Ferrari's Maranello site is located outside Modena, while the region also boasts Dallara, which provides cars for IndyCar racing in the United States, and motorbike firm Energica. "The success dates a long way back, it is the fruit of several generations," said Andrea Corsini, who handles transport, infrastructure and tourism for the Emilia Romagna region.

The name "Motor Valley" alludes to California's Silicon Valley, where a grouping of tech companies drew talent and cash. Here, manufacturers found a ready skills base among farmers who, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, had to learn to repair their own machinery. Today, the area comprises 16,000 companies, four racing tracks, six training centers, and



SAN CESARIO SUL PANARO, Italy: A Pagani Zonda R is pictured at the factory of Italian sports cars manufacturer Pagani on May 27, 2022 near Modena. —AFP

employs more than 90,000 people, according to think tank Riparte l'Italia. "In terms of job opportunities and contacts with companies, this is the best place to be," said 24-year-old Emilio, studying car engineering in the south of Italy, who came to Modena for the weekend. The sector records a turnover of €16 billion a

year, of which seven billion is in exports, and is in good health, with Bugatti, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bentley and Porsche all posting record results in 2021. It was also here that Bugatti produced in the early 1990s its celebrated B110 GT, sold for a staggering 500 million lire (around €260,000 at the time). —AFP

KFH continues efforts to support Diraya campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues efforts to support "Diraya" financial and banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association for the second year in a row. The campaign aims to shed light on customers' rights, rules and regulations of dealing with banks, information safety and security against intrusion, combating fraud transactions in addition to other warnings and regulations. This campaign comes as part of the bank's obligation to keep the customers informed about their rights and duties towards banking and financial transactions and their cyber security.

The campaign discusses finance types, banking cards, awareness of customers with special needs, tips on cyber security and protection of bank accounts. Also, it provides the mechanism to lodge complaints, protect customers rights and identify the banking sector duties and its role in enhancing and developing national economy.

KFH's contribution in the campaign comprises the dispatch of various messages on different topics related to the main components of the campaign. These messages are sent to all types of customers to suite the culture and nature of each tier. Also, messages are sent on continuous basis to employees who are considered as the second main component in the awareness triangle (customers - employees - public) who are either potential or targeted customers, thus aiming to achieve the targets of the campaign.

The main targets of the campaign comprise awareness, identification of and warning against any possible risks of failing to follow safety and security instructions upon using modern technology means. Regulations include refraining from extending any information about accounts and personal transactions to any unknown parties or reply to messages from unknown sources as this would be a violation to data privacy and banking protection regulations.

KFH is keen on spreading financial education, saving and investment knowledge and customer's awareness of the bank's products and services. KFH appreciates the efforts extended by the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association in organizing the Be Aware "Diraya" campaign to spread awareness in society regarding banking and financial transactions and e-banking services. Technology has opened vast business opportunities.

However, several risks and challenges were also detected considering the several attempts, most of which failed, to hack customers accounts and cause system damage. Accordingly, this situation has called for a comprehensive awareness plan and enhancement of the cyber security systems, anti-money laundering systems and prevention of other legally incriminated and suspicious activities.

NBK organizes ACI Operations Certificate for its employees

KUWAIT: As part of its continuous efforts to increase the competence of its employees, in cooperation with the most reputable educational institutions, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched its first ACI Operations Certificate training program for the Operations Division, in partnership with Peter Skeritt & Associates, a well-known and reputable organization around the world.

The program will be held over a period of 2 months for a total of 19 participants, and aims to provide theoretical and practical knowledge of foreign exchange markets, treasury operations, for back and middle office staff, as well as relevant support areas. It is worth mentioning that the ACI Operations Certificate is designed to provide a variety of training programs relevant to Treasury, Risk Management and Operations staff, by focusing on Financial Markets Environment, Foreign Exchange Rates (Money and Interest Rate Markets), Fixed Income, Currency and Commodity



LuLu Hypermarket lauds winners of Food Fest competitions

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the retailer of choice in the region, held a prize distribution ceremony on June 1 at the Dajeez outlet of the hypermarket, to announce and award prizes to winners of the recent Food Fest 2022 competitions. The prizes were presented to the winners by some of the leading chefs in the country, in the presence of top management of LuLu Hypermarket

Jazeera Airways, Austria promote travel to Vienna

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways hosted the Austrian National Tourist Office in a trade event endorsed by the Ambassador of Austria to the State of Kuwait Marian Alexander Wrba. The event was attended by travel agents and business partners and promoted tourism in Vienna as well as the rest of Austria.

Giving a presentation about Austria and its natural gems, the Director for the Middle East and South East Asia at the Austrian National Tourist Office, Robert Groblacher, said that tourists can now easily travel to Austria as vaccination and PCR tests are no longer required. He said: "We are very happy to be welcoming visitors to Austria to enjoy all what its rich history, culture and unique nature has to offer."

One of the leading tourist destinations in the world, Austria was ranked the 11th most visited country with over 150 million overnight tourists visiting the country in 2019, of which 1.3 million were tourists from GCC countries. Across its provinces, Austria offers new and refurbished hotels, chalets, and guest houses as well as plenty of new experiences that range from hiking and biking trails, adventure sports opportunities, family-friendly activities, culinary adventures, secret mountain getaways, rustic huts serving traditional Austrian foods, luxury Alpine stays, private wellness temples in

in Kuwait, and a large gathering of shoppers and competition participants. Food Fest 2022, which ran at all outlets of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait from 25 May to 1 June, offered shoppers the opportunity to purchase a wide variety of food items at amazing discounts and special prizes. The weeklong Food Fest was also marked by several competitions and contests that allowed participants to display their cooking talents and food presentation creativity. Winners of the main Cookery Contests, in Indian, Arabic, Italian/Continental and ASEAN cuisines, as well as a contest in the Desserts category, were presented at the prize distribution event.

The competitions were judged in live cooking contests by a panel of eminent chefs, and the first prize

winner in each category received a gift voucher worth KD 100. The second prize winners were presented with gift vouchers worth KD 75, while the third prize winners received gift vouchers for KD 50.

Winners of the other competitions held as part of the Food Fest 2022, including Wow The Master Chef, Junior Chef, Taste And Win, Health Food Competition, and Cake Challenges Contest, as well as consolation prizes to other participants, were already presented earlier. The excitement and interest of shoppers during the festival, as well as the superb selection of food items available at very competitive prices, meant that everyone who visited and shopped at the week-long LuLu Food Fest 2022 was a winner.



the heart of Austria's rich nature, and many other experiences.

Groblacher said: "Austria is also one of the safest countries in the world, and with its rich landscape, was ranked 11th on the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index in 2019. Its capital, Vienna, was ranked as the greenest capital in the world with its woods, grassland, parks and gardens accounting for around half its area. It was also named the city with the highest quality of living for 10 consecutive years."

In addition to Vienna, Austria's other eight provinces each offer unique experiences. Vorarlberg, Austria's westernmost province, borders Switzerland and offers ski resorts and alpine villages perfect for a hiking trip. The province Tirol offers a blend of urban lifestyle with spectacular Alpine landscape. As for Salzburg, tourists can find ancient salt mines and medieval castles to Austria's highest peaks and biggest

glaciers. The Upper Austria combines small historic towns and limestone formations. Carinthia is the province with over 200 lakes that speckle a landscape marked by high peaks and gouged valleys. Styria is called the "Green Heart" of Austria with large forests throughout the province and inviting vineyards. In Burgenland, tourists will find bike routes, spas, lakes to swim and natural landscapes. The Lower Austria province gives unique experiences with farmlands, music festivals in castles perched on the countryside.

Jazeera Airways spokesperson said: "Jazeera is launching yet a new tourist destination for its customers to enjoy a restrictions-free vacation this summer. Austria offers them great active and relaxing escapes, ideal for the whole family. We look forward to flying them with direct flights from Kuwait to Vienna very soon." Flights to Vienna will be operated on Mondays and Thursdays, starting June 23.

Derivatives and Financial Markets Applications.

On this occasion, Hanouf Al-Juwaied Senior Training Operations Officer at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK believes that its employees are its most valuable asset, and that investing in the human capital is one of its key strategies and plans for a sustainable future. Therefore, the bank always strives to improve the performance of its employees and develop their academic and practical skills, which is positively reflected on their job performance."

Al-Juwaied explained that "Continuous Learning" approach is consistently exhibited by Group Human Resources across the NBK Group, within a culture and work environment driving employees to pursue personal growth and recognizes their long-term career path, in addition to its contribution to investing in their talents and skills, which serves the bank's sustainable growth.

"NBK's investment in human capital makes it the employ-



Hanouf Al-Juwaied



er of choice for Kuwaiti talent in the private sector, for the firmly established work environment culture and the remarkable support provided to its employees, which helps them constantly develop and progress to build a sustainable future career," she added.

"We live in a continuously changing environment that is full of challenges, which requires our employees to be more flexible and capable of continuous development. Therefore, long time ago, we changed the traditional concept of training and raised the motto of "Continuous Learning" with the aim of enhancing the skills of our employees throughout their

career," she concluded.

Al-Juwaied emphasized that NBK is always committed to support, empower and qualify its employees by providing the best training programs and workshops to enhance their skills in the areas of leadership, implementation of strategies, change management and innovation to keep pace with the rapid developments in the banking industry. NBK's human capital development strategy is placed at the heart of its strategic plans, as the work team efficiency ensures the quality of all types of banking services provided across the different markets in which it operates.

Lifestyle | Features

Canadian 'Instapoet' Rupi Kaur tackles censors - on and offline

From a run-in with Instagram over a picture of menstrual blood, to a push to ban her books from American schools—Canadian poet Rupi Kaur has knocked heads with would-be censors since bursting onto the global literary scene. The Punjab-born Kaur, the best-known of a new generation of so-called "Instapoets," shot to fame with her self-published first collection of writing in 2014. Sexual violence, mental health, immigration—no topic is taboo, as far as the 29-year-old is concerned, and her candor has earned her a devoted online fan base, with some 4.5 million Instagram followers.



This undated image courtesy of Rupi Kaur, Inc. shows Canadian 'Instapoet' Rupi Kaur. — AFP

But her no-holds barred approach is not to everyone's liking—and pressure groups in several US states, including Texas and Oregon, have banned or are seeking to ban her first book, "Milk and Honey," from schools and libraries. "It breaks my heart that parents and lawmakers are attempting to ban this book," she said in an interview with AFP following a stage show in Ottawa, where she presented her latest book "Home Body" to a mostly-female audience. She sees the ban as a refusal to contemplate "sexual assault and violence experienced by a young woman." "But this is a larger problem. We're stepping into this territory where we're banning culture and expression."

Quiet teen, loud poet

Born in northeast India, Kaur immigrated to Canada at age four with her Sikh parents and grew up in a suburb of Toronto. "I grew up going to protests and talking about revolution and human rights at our dinner table. And that has always been a thread in my work," she said. The eldest of four children, the "quiet, shy" teenager found her voice through poetry, which allowed her to "be as loud as I wanted."

Admiring the poems of Lebanese-American bard Khalil Gibran, Kaur writes

about her own experiences in the first person, without capitals, in a nod to her mother tongue, Punjabi. Proud of her roots, she regrets that there "aren't enough women of colour represented in publishing and media." But she does find inspiration in the news itself. "My poetry is a response to what's happening in the world," she explains. "To see Roe vs. Wade being overturned angered me to a whole different level," she said of the landmark 1973 US Supreme Court ruling on abortion rights now under review. "I'm trying to write something that encapsulates my feelings on it, but it's just so infuriating that I haven't been able to really create the piece that I want."

Instagram censorship

From her breakout collection "Milk and Honey" to her second book "The Sun and Her Flowers," Kaur has sold more than 10 million copies, and her works have been translated into more than 40 languages. Thousands flock to her spoken word performances, also buying up her books and memorabilia such as t-shirts and temporary tattoos. "Last night, I did a show in Chicago, talking about mental health and abuse and surviving all of that. And there's over 2,000 people in the audience... connecting and telling me how we're not alone in our experiences of anxiety and depres-

sion. I think that's pretty cool," she told AFP.

Her feud with Instagram over a photo of herself lying on her back, her jogging pants stained with menstrual blood, arguably gained her more admirers, as the image and her scathing response to its removal from the social media site went viral.

Kaur's poems "are not very complex, the figures of speech are not very sophisticated, but maybe that's exactly what the public likes," said Stephanie Bolster, a creative writing professor at Concordia University in Montreal. Her straightforward and short poems are not "intimidating" and her "accessible" style attracts new readers to the medium, she said. That was the case for Christine Blair, a 27-year-old nurse for whom Kaur's universe was "a gateway" to poetry. By addressing topics such as rape and interpersonal relationships, Kaur is "very vulnerable and I like that about her," Blair said at the National Arts Centre show in Ottawa that kicked off a world tour. Kaur, dressed in a leopard print skirt, tells the audience before sharing personal anecdotes and memories of a childhood uprooted: "Why don't we jump into my therapist's favorite topic, my mental health." — AFP

Cuddles with corgis to celebrate the queen's favourite dogs

Wearing a Union Jack bandana, Obi the corgi stares intently at the camera as he snuggles on a floral sofa with a woman in a tiara. "The queen would approve," his owner says after the photo session, giving him a snack. Corgis—lively brown-and-white dogs with pointed ears and short legs—are closely associated with Queen Elizabeth II, who celebrates her Platinum Jubilee this week. At the "Corgi Cam" pop-up in London's historic Leadenhall Market, visitors can take pictures with a rotating team of dogs while dressing up in faux ermine robes, crowns and tiaras.

The 96-year-old queen has kept Pembroke Welsh Corgis since she was 18, and even appeared with her dogs in a spoof James Bond clip filmed for the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics. The free Corgi Cam event outstripped expectations, with some waiting for several hours to attend, says organizer Katie Raby. "Everyone associates the dog with her majesty and we wanted to be able to celebrate that," she says.

The breed experienced a rush of interest recently due to the Netflix series "The Crown," but still remains quite rare in the United Kingdom. "Many people have never actually met a corgi," Raby says. "There aren't many around these days." The event runs from midday to 6 pm, with people getting slots of about five minutes each with a corgi. "They're used to doing

gigs with members of the public and they're very used to being fussed over," Raby says of the dogs.

'Rare breed'

"We'd just seen this and thought we'd come down," says Ria Measom, 23, posing with her university friend, Megan Oakley, 24, in a red robe, crown and tiara. "We've been queuing for about two hours," Measom says. "But it was worth it because they brought the corgis out and we could pet them while we waited." "It's good. I think the queen would like it, she should bring her corgis," she says, giggling. "We'd never seen one (a corgi) this close before," adds Oakley. "They're really soft."

Another visitor, Zaida Flores, has brought along her parents who are visiting from Ecuador, and they sit together with two of the dogs. Flores, 31, wears a tiara on her long, green-tinted hair. "We like dogs, we're dog lovers so it was a really nice experience," she says. Emma Warren-Brown, a dog expert, is watching the sessions and checking the animals are happy and healthy. "It's so nice to see the public's reaction to corgis because actually you don't see many of them around," she says.

"They are what we would call a rare breed. "We've really got to hope that their popularity surges. I'd hate to see them die out, because as a breed, that's what would happen. And of course they are synonymous with the queen." The queen stopped raising corgis in her 90s but kept two "dorgis"—dachshund and corgi crosses—to keep her company in her final years. One, Vulcan, died in 2020. The other, Candy, was in March 2021 joined by two new corgi puppies—Luick and Sandy—during the coronavirus lockdown. —AFP



Two friends Megan Oakley and Ria Measom pose with two corgi dogs named Obi and Percy.



Two friends Megan Oakley and Ria Measom pose with a corgi dog named Percy during the Corgicam event taking place at Leadenhall Market, central London, prior to the Platinum jubilee celebrations of Britain's Queen. — AFP



The French comedian Nathalie Vairac, from the performative play and installation "The Supreme Remnants", poses for a portrait in Dakar. — AFP

In Dakar, Rwandan director breathes life into plundered African art

In Rwandan playwright Dorcy Rugamba's latest work, a young African steps into an austere European museum and tells an ancient mask he is looking for the soul of Africa. The artefact comes to life as a woman. "You will find neither the truth about your ancestors, nor your past—here Africa is extinguished," it responds, with shrill laughter. The unconventional performance, "Supreme Remnants", premiered at this year's Biennale of Contemporary African Art being held in the Senegalese capital Dakar until June 21.

"If you follow me, I will take you on a tour of the rivers that led us from your ancestors to these places," says the mask, played by the French actress Nathalie Vairac. But, she warns, "we will have to walk through mud." As she leads the museum visitor through one large room after another, she invites audience members to examine the blind spots in the official narrative of colonial history. In one, they meet a scientist from the late 19th century who measured skulls hoping to prove alleged European superiority. In another, they encounter a Belgian army general based on a real historical figure—who kept the skulls of three African dignitaries at home. Rugamba, the play's director, said the performance was rooted in history. "Scientists ordered human remains from the conquerors by the thousands, which were then used to develop racial theories and stereotypes," he said.

'Age of disquiet'

Towards the end of the tour, spectators find themselves among the rolling hills of Rwanda for an initiation ceremony. The character of the museum visitor learns to "unlearn the past". French academic Benedicte Savoy said she was "overwhelmed" by the performance. "It seemed to convey in just one hour things that we normally have to read in hundreds of pages," she said at a debate after a performance last week. She and the Senegalese writer Felwine Sarr published a landmark report on the restitution of African cultural heritage in late 2018.

Sarr said much progress had been made since, as what was once a niche topic had made its way into public debate. "Now museums have to be transparent and reflect on so-called ethnographic collections—it's unprecedented," he said. "These museums have entered an age of disquiet." In November 2021, France returned 26 artefacts to Benin. The works—part of the royal treasures of Abomey that colonial troops looted in 1892 — had been held in the Musee du Quai Branly in Paris. An exhibition of the returned treasures recently attracted nearly 200,000 visitors to Benin's city of Cotonou in just 40 days, according to the authorities. France also returned a sabre to Senegal in 2019 and a crown to Madagascar in 2020. The play's director Rugamba, who is also an actor, asked how an entire continent could be emptied of its cultural heritage. "An African researcher who wants to work on the history of his country must travel to a thousand places without even being sure that he'll be given a visa," he said. "It's an untenable situation."

'Move forward'

Hundreds of thousands of African works of art continue to be held in Western museums and private collections, but there have been mounting calls for them to hand back the colonial spoils. Sarr said he welcomed African nations demanding restitution. In 2019, "seven West African countries requested the equivalent of 10,000 objects, including countries that were at war and that you would expect to have other concerns," he said. The Biennale's symposium last week featured a debate on how to re-invest meaning into returned artefacts and reconnect them to contemporary Africa.

"If we believe an object to have historical, artistic value and that it must be there to tell a story, then we should put it in a museum," said Sarr. But objects that have ritual functions can be returned to communities, while those that researchers would like to study can go to universities or art centres, he added. —AFP



Adnan Abdelrahman, 56, a member of Iraq's black community, looks on during an interview with some of his drums at his home in the southern city of Zubair.



Adnan Abdelrahman, 56, a member of Iraq's black community, beats a "tar" hand drum at his home in the southern city of Zubair.

In Iraq, centuries-old black community still on the margins

Adnan Abdelrahman shows off the drums he learned to play at age 12. He belongs to Iraq's centuries-old black minority, guardians of musical traditions but relegated to the margins of society. Centered in the city of Zubair, near Basra in the far south of Iraq, the community has its origins in East Africa. Like other remote parts of Iraq, Zubair is a place of poverty and decaying public services, where dusty roads are lined with simple cement houses. While activists denounce the community's marginalization, talk of racism or discrimination offends Zubair's inhabitants, who prefer the euphemism "dark skin" in Arabic to the word "black".

Abdelrahman, 56, is a member of one of the popular music troupes that have made Zubair famous throughout the country and in Kuwait, only 30 kilometers (20 miles) away. "It's a profession you inherit," he said, explaining that his uncle sang and his father played the drum. "If someone dies, his son takes his place so that the art doesn't disappear." Equipped with darboukas, tambourines and large goat skin drums, musicians live on weddings by leading the "zaffa", a procession of song and dance to celebrate the bride and groom. Abdelrahman, who has played for four years in a heritage group sponsored by the culture ministry, said the majority of players are black and added that he does not feel discrimination. "Racism is something we have never seen," he said.

History of slavery

But many activists within the black community disagree, among them 32-year-old Majed al-Khalidi. "Those with dark skin are fifth-class citizens, not even second-class," said Khalidi, who works for an oil company in Basra. "Since the establishment of the Iraqi state, we have not seen anyone from the community occupy a senior position in the state. We have not seen a governor, a minister or a lawmaker." He said the community faces a high drop-out rate from school, poor job opportunities and offensive language, even from religious clerics, with many people still using the Arabic term "slave" to designate a black person.

The minority numbers 250,000 to two million people, according to a wide range of informal estimates. Their ancestors came from Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan, said historian Ibrahim al-Marashi of California State University. They are centered in Iraq's southern Basra region, where black slaves were brought from East Africa "for the backbreaking work of draining the salt marshes" east of the city, said Marashi. "In the historical record, the first mention of the community is in 869 CE when they revolted" against the Abbasid Caliphate, he said.

Today "black Iraqis continue to face systematic discrimination and marginalization", according to the Minority Rights Group International. The London-based MRG says in an online report that Iraq's black community suffers disproportionately high illiteracy and unemployment rates and that "many cannot find employment other than as labourers or domestic workers".



Adnan Abdelrahman, 56, a member of Iraq's black community, looks on during an interview with his drum collection: (from left) mirwas, zambour, tar, banguz, and darbuka tabla; as he sits at his home in the southern city of Zubair. — AFP photos

'Below poverty line'

In a recent sign of progress, a state-run TV news channel hired a young black woman, Randa Abdel Aziz, as a presenter—but such steps remain rare. More change is needed, said Khalidi, the activist. In a multi-faith, multi-ethnic country, he demanded the inclusion of his community in the quota system which reserves parliament seats for certain minorities, including Christians and Yazidis. "To claim your rights, you have to be close to the decision-makers," he said about a political system where lawmakers can open the doors to all kinds of state largesse, especially public sector jobs.

Saad Salloum, an expert on religious and ethnic diversity, agreed that "discrimination is seen at all levels" against black Iraqis. "Politically, they have no representation. Socially, certain stereotypes remain rooted in the dominant culture. Economically, the majority live below the poverty line." The group MRG recalled that after the fall of former dictator Saddam Hussein, "black Iraqis began to organize and develop a political consciousness for the first time". The Free Iraqi Movement, the first group to defend the rights of black Iraqis, was founded in 2007 and encouraged by the election in the United States of Barack Obama as president. —AFP



In this file photo US actor Johnny Depp gestures to spectators in court after closing arguments at the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse in Fairfax, Virginia. — AFP photos



US actress Amber Heard looks to her lawyer Elaine Bredehoff after the jury announced a split verdict in favor of both Johnny Depp and Amber Heard.



This combination of pictures shows US Actor Johnny Depp (left) and US actress Amber Heard.

FOUR KEYS TO JOHNNY DEPP'S VICTORY OVER AMBER HEARD

In this analysis, EL PAIS takes an in-depth look at the jury's decision, the likelihood it will be appealed and what it means for both parties. A seven-person jury reached a verdict on Wednesday in what may be the most-talked-about case since the trial of basketball star O. J. Simpson - the defamation battle between actor Johnny Depp and his ex-wife Amber Heard.

After an intense six-week trial, which heard allegations of sexual assault and physical abuse, the jury ruled that both parties were guilty of defamation, but not to the same degree. While Heard was sentenced to pay Depp \$15 million in damages, Depp must only pay Heard \$2 million - a clear win for the Pirates of the Caribbean star. But this is just one element of the much-anticipated verdict. Here is a breakdown of the main keys to the jury's decision.

1. The verdict

The jury had to decide whether or not six specific statements - three from each side - were defamatory. Depp was suing Heard over statements she made in an op-ed in The Washington Post, in which she claimed she was a victim of abuse. While Heard was suing the actor for comments made by Depp's former lawyer, who accused the actress of lying.

The jury ruled that all three of Heard's statements were defamatory, while only one comment from the lawyer was found

to have been harmful. During the trial, the Aquaman star claimed that her ex-husband had struck her and sexually assaulted her. The jury did not rule on whether or not this happened, but given that they found her statements to be defamatory, it can be inferred that they did not believe her testimony i.e. that she was not a victim of abuse. This gives Depp a moral victory, as well as \$15 million in damages.

2. Amber Heard's statements

The jury ruled that all three statements made by Heard in her op-ed were false and harmed Depp, meaning they were defamatory. These were the statements:

"I spoke up against sexual violence - and faced our culture's wrath. That has to change." "Then two years ago, I became a public figure representing domestic abuse, and I felt the full force of our culture's wrath for women who speak out."

"I had the rare vantage point of seeing, in real time, how institutions protect men accused of abuse." Despite the fact that Heard's article did not mention Depp by name, the jury responded "yes" to the following three questions: "The statement was about Mr. Depp," "The statement was false" and "The statement has a defamatory implication about Mr. Depp."

3. Johnny Depp's statements

With respect to Heard's claim, the lawsuit focused on statements made by Depp's former lawyer Adam Waldman in



Ben Chew and Camille Vasquez, attorneys for US actor Johnny Depp, speak to reporters outside the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse.

The Daily Mail. Although the actor did not make the comments, Heard argued that the lawyer said them on his behalf.

Of the three statements, this was the only one found to be defamatory:

"Quite simply this was an ambush, a hoax. They set Mr Depp up by calling the cops but the first attempt didn't do the trick. The officers came to the penthouses, thoroughly searched and interviewed, and left after seeing no damage to face or property. So Amber and her friends spilled a little wine and roughed the place up, got their stories straight under the direction of a lawyer and publicists, and then placed a

second call to 911." (The Daily Mail, April 27, 2020).

The jurors ruled that the other two did not were not defamatory:

"Amber Heard and her friends in the media use fake sexual violence allegations as both a sword and a shield, depending on their needs. They have selected some of her sexual violence hoax 'facts' as the sword, inflicting them on the public and Mr. Depp." (The Daily Mail, April 8, 2020).

"[W]e have reached the beginning of the end of Ms. Heard's abuse hoax against Johnny Depp." (The Daily Mail, April 27, 2020).

In other words, the jury did not consider it defamatory to claim that Heard had made "fake" and "hoax" accusations about being the victim of sexual abuse. But it did think it was defamatory to say that she and her friends had "roughed up" a place to make it appear like a scene of violence.

4. Damages

Depp's defamation lawsuit demanded \$50 million (€47 million) in compensation. Heard countersued for \$100 million, although her lawyer stated this amount was only intended to "send a message" to the actor.

In both cases, the jury awarded a lower amount. Heard was sentenced to pay Depp \$10 million in compensatory damages and another \$5 million in punitive damages. However, legislation in the state of Virginia, where the trial was held, limits punitive damages to \$350,000. As a result, the judge reduced the damages to a total of \$10.35 million.

Depp, meanwhile, must pay Heard \$2 million in compensatory damages. The jury did not award her any punitive damages, meaning the jury did not think the actor should be punished. This is another moral victory for Depp. Apparently, instead of putting a zero in the box for punitive damages, the jury left it blank, which caused a tense, minutes-long delay in the reading of the verdict. — www.english.elpais.com



In this file photo US actor Johnny Depp and his wife US actress Amber Heard arrive for screening of the movie "Black Mass" presented out of competition at the 72nd Venice International Film Festival at Venice Lido.



In this file photo Actors Johnny Depp (left) and Amber Heard attend the Los Angeles Premiere of "The Danish Girl", in Westwood, California.



In this file photo US actors Johnny Depp (right) and wife Amber Heard pose for photographers on the red carpet for the premiere of Black Mass during the BFI London Film Festival in central London.

Heard 'absolutely not' able to pay Depp \$10.4 million in damages

Actress Amber Heard is unable to pay her ex-husband Johnny Depp more than \$10 million in damages, her lawyer said Thursday, after a US jury took the side of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" star in a bitter defamation trial. The lengthy, high-profile televised court battle ended Wednesday, when a seven-person jury found that Depp and Heard had defamed each other, but weighed in far more strongly with Depp. The jury awarded him \$10.35 million in damages, in contrast with \$2 million awarded to Heard.



US actress Amber Heard waits before the jury announced a split verdict in favor of both Johnny Depp and Amber Heard.

Asked on NBC's TODAY show if Heard will be able to pay up, her attorney Elaine Bredehoff answered: "Oh no, absolutely not." She added that Heard wants to appeal the verdict. The 58-year-old Depp, who lost a libel case against The Sun tabloid in London in 2020 for calling him a "wife-beater," celebrated the split verdict in the case as a victory while Heard said she was "heart-broken." Depp sued Heard over an op-ed she wrote for The Washington Post in December 2018 in which she described herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse."

The Texas-born Heard, who had a starring role in "Aquaman," did not name Depp in the piece, but he sued her for implying he was a domestic abuser and sought \$50 million in damages. The 36-year-old Heard countersued for \$100 million, saying she was defamed by statements made by Depp's lawyer, Adam Waldman, who told the Daily Mail her abuse claims were a "hoax." Bredehoff said Depp's legal team worked to "demonize" Heard and suppressed crucial evidence in the trial, preventing the jurors from examining evidence of Depp's alleged abuse. — AFP

Can Depp's career bounce back with defamation verdict?

After a US jury largely sided with Johnny Depp in his libel battle against Amber Heard, could the verdict help the "Pirates of the Caribbean" star to resurrect his flagging career? A jubilant Depp on Wednesday said the jury "gave me my life back" as he was awarded more than \$10 million in damages for defamation, in contrast to just \$2 million for his ex-wife, who had counter-sued.

Central to the high-profile trial were testimonies from Hollywood agents, accountants and lawyers, who were asked to assess whether the former couple had derailed one another's careers. Jurors heard from Depp's side that he had lost a \$22.5 million payday for a sixth "Pirates" film due to Heard's claims of abuse. But Heard's legal team introduced witnesses who said her ex-husband's star was already losing its luster due to "unprofessional behavior" which included drinking and drug use.

"The damage that's done is done, and from this it might start a process back to some sort of normalcy," said a Hollywood producer who has worked with Depp in the past, but asked not to be identified. "But I don't think he's going to get big, big, big studio jobs where there's so much on the line."

"If he's throwing bottles and taking drugs, and he's late, they're not gonna put up with the tardiness that costs a boatload of money for somebody who isn't a shining star any longer." Major Hollywood studios may find it difficult to get insurance for mega-budget productions featuring Depp, the producer added. "It's too risky to put a guy like that into billion-dollar franchises now," they said.

Similarly, while jurors and social media opinion may have swayed in Depp's direc-

tion during the trial, that is no guarantor that his box office appeal will return, particularly among women. "The things he said are vile," said the producer, pointing to text messages introduced during the trial, which featured Depp calling Heard an "idiot cow" and talking about her "rotting corpse."

'Bad boy'

Of course, while not directly comparable, Hollywood titans from Marlon Brando to Mel Gibson have enjoyed massive box office success after seismic controversies.

"I think there are studios that will be willing to work with him at this point," said Karen North, a University of Southern California professor specializing in reputation management. Despite a string of recent flops, "he's almost always been very good for the box office," she said, noting that Depp is "as much in the public eye now as he ever has been because of the trial."

While a comeback from lurid accounts of alcohol- and drug-fueled binges could be problematic for someone with a more clean-cut image, Depp "has never said that

he was a mild-mannered do-gooder." "When somebody is a bit of a bad boy... when they're accused of doing something that involves being volatile, people say, 'Well, I'm not surprised-it doesn't change who I think that person is.'"

"I think Johnny Depp is gonna come back personally, it makes sense," said North. "That's assuming that he wants to, right? He has a lot of choices." Depp spent the days before the verdict playing rock concerts in England with guitarist Jeff Beck, potentially demonstrating his interest are broader than a silver-screen comeback.

'French films'

And if he were to return to the big screen, it would not necessarily need to be in glitzy Hollywood. "He could become an indie darling, where the shoots are six to eight weeks, the payment is \$250,000, and he gets 25 percent of the ownership of the movie, or something like that," said the producer who worked with Depp. "And he could get nominated for some cool little role where the stakes aren't so high, and the budget's a couple million bucks, and he blows people away with some crazy performance." And failing that? "He'll work in Europe. I mean, they don't care about this kind of thing," said the producer. "He'll make French films. He'll make German films." — AFP



This file photo shows actors Johnny Depp (left) and Amber Heard arrive at the Costume Institute Benefit at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



Members of the public fill The Mall ahead of a fly-past over Buckingham Palace, during the Queen's Birthday Parade, the Trooping the Color, as part of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, in London. — AFP photos



Members of the Household Division Foot Guards march past Buckingham Palace during the Queen's Birthday Parade.



Members of Band of the Household Cavalry take part in the Queen's Birthday Parade.

CROWDS CHEER QUEEN AT START OF HISTORIC JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Huge crowds on Thursday cheered Queen Elizabeth II for the first of four days of celebrations to mark her historic Platinum Jubilee, in what could be the last major public event of her long reign. Tens of thousands of people converged on central London in bright sunshine to witness the centuries-old Trooping the Colour military parade.

The 96-year-old monarch's appearance at the festivities for her record-breaking 70 years on the throne had been in doubt due to illness and recent mobility problems. But dressed in dove blue, her hands clasped on a walking stick, she took a salute from mounted troops from the balcony of Buckingham Palace, under the fluttering royal standard. The Mall below was awash with red, white and blue union flags, with some die-hard royal fans having camped for days to be in prime position for the display of pomp and pageantry.

But many acknowledged the coming end of an era. "We know it's a special occasion because it might be the last day we'll see Her Majesty in a public event," ambulance service worker Gilbert Falconer, 65, told AFP after travelling from Scotland. Recognition of the queen's unprecedented reign saw tributes from political and religious leaders from across the world, including the leader of pro-Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland.

Michelle O'Neill's message, praising



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (center) stands with from left, Vice Admiral Timothy Laurence, Britain's Princess Anne, Princess Royal, Britain's Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, Britain's Prince Louis of Cambridge, Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, Britain's Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, Britain's Prince George of Cambridge, Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, and Britain's Sophie, Countess of Wessex, to watch a special flypast from Buckingham Palace balcony following the Queen's Birthday Parade, the Trooping the Color, as part of Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee celebrations, in London.

Appearances

The queen, a keen horsewoman, has previously taken the salute in person at Horseguards Parade, the site a short ride down The Mall where king Henry VIII once jostled. But her 73-year-old son and heir Prince Charles stepped in this year, in the latest public sign of his future role as king. Joining him at the parade of the colour or regimental flag of the 1st Battalion Irish

The queen will make a second appearance on the balcony later to watch a six-minute fly-past of more than 70 military aircraft, including iconic models from World War II. At nightfall, the queen will be at Windsor Castle, west of London, to take part in a ceremony to light more than 3,000 beacons across the country and the Commonwealth of 54 nations that she heads.

enthusiasm," she added.

Respite

The jubilee, held against a backdrop of rising inflation that has left many Britons struggling, is being seen not just as respite for the public after two years hit by COVID, as well as world events. "All the horrors that's been going on in the world are put behind for us for a day and we

year, she lost her husband of 73 years, Prince Philip, and was forced to sit alone at his funeral due to coronavirus restrictions. Since then, she has struggled with her health, and also the fallout from Andrew's links to the convicted sex offenders Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell.

Andrew, who in February settled a US civil claim for sexual assault, has effec-



Britain's Prince George of Cambridge (left), Britain's Prince Louis of Cambridge (center) and Britain's Princess Charlotte of Cambridge travel in a horse-drawn carriage during the Queen's Birthday Parade, the Trooping the Color, as part of Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee celebrations.

the queen's "significant" contribution to the peace process would have been unthinkable before the 1998 peace deal that ended years of violence over British rule. Sinn Fein was the political wing of the Irish Republican Army paramilitary group, which blew up the queen's cousin, Lord Louis Mountbatten, in 1979.

Guards was his sister Princess Anne, 71, and his eldest son, Prince William, 39, both in ceremonial uniform. Senior royals watching included Charles' younger son, Prince Harry, and his wife Meghan, on a rare visit from California. But the queen's disgraced second son, Prince Andrew, 62, did not join them.

Thank you

Elizabeth was a 25-year-old princess when she succeeded her father king George VI in 1952, bringing a rare touch of glamour to a battered nation recovering from World War II. Seventy years on, she is now the only monarch most Britons have ever known, becoming an enduring figurehead through often troubled times. Britain's first and very likely only Platinum Jubilee will see street parties, pop concerts and parades until Sunday.

It has not yet been confirmed if she will attend a thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral on Friday, while her planned attendance at horseracing showcase The Derby on Saturday is off. She could yet put in a final appearance—again from the palace balcony—on Sunday, at the climax of a huge public pageant involving 6,000 performers. The queen on Wednesday thanked everyone involved in organizing community events in Britain and around the world, and said she was "inspired by the goodwill" shown to her. "I... hope that the coming days will provide an opportunity to reflect on all that has been achieved during the last 70 years, as we look to the future with confidence and



Britain's Prince George of Cambridge (left), Britain's Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (center) and Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (right) leave Buckingham Palace, on their way to the Queen's Birthday Parade.

can just enjoy really celebrating the queen," said Hillary Matthews, 70. But the jubilee will also be welcome for the royal family.

Harry, 37, and Meghan, 40, caused shockwaves in early 2020 by moving to North America, from where they have publicly criticized royal life. In April last

tively been fired from his royal duties. Attention is increasingly turning to the succession, and the monarchy's future at home and in the 14 other Commonwealth countries where the queen is also head of state. — AFP

Jubilee crowds turn London red, white and blue

Huge crowds waving Union Jack flags massed Thursday near Buckingham Palace as royals took part in a parade for the start of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. During the queen's Birthday Parade, the Trooping the Color, crowds could see Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis sitting together in a horse-drawn open-top carriage,

waving at crowds.

George, the eldest and third in line for the throne, wore a dark suit and tie, while Louis wore a sailor suit and Charlotte wore a blue dress. Sitting opposite them were the children's mother, Kate, in a white tailored outfit and black and white straw hat, and their grandfather Charles' wife, Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, in a striped jacket, light blue hat and tartan skirt. Some royal fans had spent the night in tents just to secure a spot outside Buckingham Palace to see the carriages and the queen emerge onto the balcony in a long-anticipated moment, wearing a light blue suit and hat.

"It's probably going to be the only time—or one of the only times—that the queen is going to be able to do this," said

Paul Fletcher, 55, who works for the National Health Service and had come with his family. "It's been 70 years on the throne for the queen. It's never been known before and I don't think it would ever happen again." Kimber Beasley from the United States called the queen "a great example" for America and the whole world. "It's a part of history. How many times you get to see this?" she said.

Along the parade's route on The Mall, Union flags hung over the crowd barriers or stuck jauntily from headbands, while some fans wrapped themselves in the flag and painted it on their cheeks with face paint. Some wore T-shirts in the red, white and blue national colours or sequined tops. Liam Roddis, a 49-year-

old operations manager for a local authority in northern England, opted for a total look with a Union Jack flag suit.

"I'm here for the queen," he said, calling himself "dead proud to be British, dead proud that she's my queen—for however much longer she is." In the throng, many had little view of events but said this did not matter. "We can't see anything but we just wanted to be part of it," said Hilary Matthews, a 70-year-old retired nurse in a Union Jack bowler hat.

'Historic event'

For 61-year-old tree surgeon David Hare, the event was a moment of joy after grim world events. He said he has come out for all the royal weddings, too, sometimes sleeping outside the night

before. "I think it's just great to have a celebration out there for the next four days... to forget about all those things for the day," he said, citing "Covid and this sad, sad war in Ukraine". The best view was enjoyed by those in the seated stands—with tickets allocated by a ballot.

Among these were 65-year-old Gilbert Falconer, who had come with his wife from Scotland after striking lucky in the national ballot. "It's like winning the lottery for me," said the ambulance service worker. "We just want to show our appreciation for what she has done for this country," Falconer said of the queen. "She's done such an amazing job through her reign." — AFP

Sports

'Ferocious' Kambosos: Australian boxer with Pacquiao in his corner

Tattooed Australian labors for recognition

MELBOURNE: George 'Ferocious' Kambosos has risen from humble beginnings to the precipice of being crowned undisputed lightweight champion of the world, with boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao playing a big role. For years, the heavily tattooed Australian, 28, has labored for recognition. But all that could change on Sunday in Melbourne if he wins his showdown against American Devin Haney, with the WBA, IBF, WBO and WBC belts all on the line.

After a stellar amateur career spanning more than 100 fights, Kambosos successfully moved up to the professional ranks as a teenager and now boasts a 20-0 record, with 10 knock-outs. But it took a lucky break in 2017 to help set him on the road to his blockbuster moment this weekend. Little-known, he was at Freddie Roach's famed gym in Los Angeles when the legendary trainer thought he would make a good sparring partner for Pacquiao ahead of his WBO welterweight bout against Jeff Horn in Brisbane.

Pacquiao stunningly lost to Horn, but the Filipino and Kambosos struck up a friendship and the Australian helped him prepare for two more title fights, clocking up over 250 rounds with the 12-time world champion. Kambosos says the experience helped forge him into who he is today. "Back then he said to me that I'd become world champion and hearing that from an all-time great, hearing that from a guy like Manny Pacquiao, that gave me that extra boost," Kambosos told reporters.

Pacquiao, who retired from boxing last year and

unsuccessfully ran for the Philippines presidency last month, said he knew from their first meeting that Kambosos could go all the way. "He wanted to be the best and he treated his sparring sessions with me as part of his education," he told The Sydney Morning Herald. "I never saw the same fighter twice. He was more than a sparring partner, he was a training partner. "George worked harder than anyone in the camp, I think that is why we got along so well."

Bullied for his weight

Born in southern Sydney to parents of Greek descent, Kambosos was often bullied as a child for being overweight, which led to his father enrolling him in boxing classes to improve his fitness. He lost the excess weight and fell in love with the sport. After rising through the ranks as an amateur, he took the plunge to become professional and won his first bout in front of his home fans in Sydney in 2013.

To further his career, he and his team decided to base themselves in the United States, a move that led to the relationship with Pacquiao. Defeating Lee Selby in London in 2020 made him the mandatory challenger for the IBF lightweight title which ultimately earned the Australian a crack at WBA, IBF and WBO champion Teofimo Lopez at Madison Square Garden in November. Kambosos grabbed his chance in a bloody battle, catapulting himself into the big time by upsetting the American in a stunning split decision victory as a



MELBOURNE: Boxer Devin Haney of the US poses for a photo during his final public work out in a boxing ring in Melbourne's Federation Square on June 2, 2022 ahead of his undisputed lightweight champion of the world title fight against Australian fighter George 'Ferocious' Kambosos on June 5. — AFP

heavy underdog to win all three belts.

"Everything in my career I've had to earn. I've had to work hard, extremely hard to get to this position," said Kambosos ahead of Sunday's bout against Haney, who is the WBC lightweight titleholder and undefeated in 27 fights. "I've never really been given something or

opportunities, I've always worked hard to earn them. And that's how I love it to be." That work has put Kambosos on the brink of his greatest achievement with more than 50,000 people expected to pack Melbourne's Marvel Stadium to see if he can become one of Australia's greatest boxers. — AFP

Europe rugby shakes up cup competitions with S African entry

PARIS: A South African team could succeed La Rochelle in lifting the European Champions Cup trophy in 2023 after it was announced on Thursday that five franchises from the country will compete in the European Champions Cup and Challenge Cup from next season. "In a landmark expansion of its tournaments, EPCR is delighted to confirm that the five leading clubs from South Africa will compete in the Champions Cup and the Challenge Cup from the 2022/23 season and beyond," read a statement by European Professional Club Rugby (EPCR).

"The Cape Town-based Stormers, the Bulls from Pretoria and the Durban-based Sharks will compete in next season's Champions Cup following impressive campaigns in the United Rugby Championship, while the Lions from Johannesburg and the Cheetahs will fly the flag for South Africa in the Challenge Cup."

Whether this paves the way for South Africa being invited into the Six Nations is open to question as the organizers of the northern hemisphere championship have denied this was on the cards. The Springboks are tied to the southern hemisphere competition till 2025. However, they had notified the southern hemisphere's governing body, SANZAAR that they were exploring the option of joining the Six Nations. Jurie Roux, CEO of SA Rugby, thanked those who had made Thursday's announcement possible, adding that based on their participation in the URC competing in the two European competitions would only improve playing standards in South Africa. "It has happened earlier than planned, as we started this process more than two years ago after Super Rugby imploded, but this has now become reality, which really is great news for South African rugby," said Roux in a SA Rugby statement.

"The first season of the URC has really been an eye-opener for our teams, but it also presented a wonderful opportunity to our players to participate in a superb competition. "I firmly believe we are on the right track by playing in these competitions in the Northern Hemisphere, and we certainly can't wait to get involved in the EPCR competitions as it will only further enhance the local game." South African teams were brought into the expanded URC (formerly the Celtic League) after New Zealand Rugby withdrew from Super Rugby in 2020. EPCR counterpart Anthony Lepage said it would boost the sport globally. "This is a hugely significant step forward in realising our ambitions to grow our tournaments and bring these outstanding competitions to new audience across the globe," he said. The formats for next season's Champions Cup and Challenge Cup will be announced shortly, in conjunction with details of the pool draws which will be staged towards the end of the month. — AFP



NEW YORK: Andrei Vasilevskiy #88 of the Tampa Bay Lightning gives up a goal to Filip Chytil #72 of the New York Rangers (not pictured) as Adam Fox #23 of the New York Rangers and Cal Foote #52 of the Tampa Bay Lightning react during the second period in Game One of the Eastern Conference Final of the 2022 Stanley Cup Playoffs on June 01, 2022. — AFP

Rangers rout Lightning to open NHL Eastern Conference finals

NEW YORK: The New York Rangers, back in the NHL's Eastern Conference finals for the first time since 2015, thumped the two-time defending champion Tampa Bay Lightning 6-2 on Wednesday to open their best-of-seven series. Filip Chytil scored twice for the Rangers, whose victory on home ice at Madison Square Garden gave them a series lead for the first time in this post-season.

They won each of their two earlier series in seven games. The Lightning had enjoyed nine days off since closing out the Florida Panthers, and the battle-tested Rangers jumped on them early with a goal from Chris Kreider-off a pass from Mika Zibanejad — 71 seconds into the contest. Zibanejad, Artemi Panarin and Frank Vatrano all had a goal and an assist while Alexis Lafreniere and Adam Fox each had two assists for New York, who had 37 saves from goalie Igor Shesterkin.

Steven Stamkos had a goal and an assist, Ondrej Palat scored, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 28 saves for Tampa

Bay, who had allowed only three goals in their four-game sweep of the Panthers. The six goals surrendered by the Lightning were the most they have allowed this post-season and tied the most allowed by Vasilevskiy in a playoff game. Chytil made it 3-2 in the second period off a pass from Kaapo Kakko behind the net. Chytil beat Vasilevskiy with a one-timer from the right circle to make it 4-2 at 15:43. Stamkos had tied it 1-1 at 7:18 of the first with a slap shot from the top of the slot.

Vatrano put the Rangers back up, snagging a loose puck and sending a wrist shot over Vasilevskiy's right shoulder. Palat pulled the Lightning level again 42 seconds later, but then they ran out of answers. Panarin made it 5-2 in the first minute of the third period and Zibanejad scored a power-play goal for the final tally. The winner of the series advances to the Stanley Cup finals, where they'll play either the Edmonton Oilers or Colorado Avalanche. — AFP

McCullum making England feel '10 feet tall'

LONDON: Ben Stokes has said Brendon McCullum was already making England's players "feel 10 feet tall" ahead of the first Test against the coach's native New Zealand at Lord's starting Thursday. The series opener of a three-match contest will be England's first since new Test captain Stokes, himself born in New Zealand but brought up in Cumbria, in England's northwest, succeeded Joe Root as skipper.

It will also be England's first game following the appointment of former New Zealand captain McCullum as their Test coach, with the new leadership duo bidding to revive the fortunes of a team who have won just one of their last 17 matches at this level and gone over 12 months without a red-ball series victory.

They now face a New Zealand side that under Kane Williamson, McCullum's successor as captain, became the inaugural World Test champions by defeating India in the final at Southampton last year, shortly after they completed a 1-0 campaign triumph away to England. For all the talk of a fresh start, England had just one debutant in fast bowler Matthew Potts when they named a familiar-looking XI on Wednesday.

Nevertheless, dynamic all-rounder Stokes's influence has led to the recall of veteran new-ball duo James Anderson and Stuart Broad. The pair, England's two most successful bowlers at this level, with 1,177 Test wickets between them, were controversially omitted from a recent 1-0 series loss in the Caribbean. Stokes has also been a prime mover in the decision to promote Ollie Pope to number three, despite the Surrey batsman's modest Test record, with star batsman Root now back in his favored position of number four, and to retain struggling opener Zak Crawley.

'Our time'

"I've said to the guys who are in now: you've got the backing," Stokes told a pre-match news conference at Lord's on Wednesday. "This is our time and we are going to dictate how things go forward...I just want everyone to feel free under my captaincy. "It's been a good few days working with Brendon. He is all about making everyone feel, in his own words, '10 feet tall'. I'm actually not nervous-I am just very excited to get going."

Potts, a county team-mate of Stokes at Durham, gets his chance after an injury crisis deprived England of several fast bowlers including Mark Wood, Chris Woakes, Ollie Robinson and Jofra Archer, with the 23-year-old having taken 35 wickets in six County Championship matches this season. New Zealand have yet to name their XI, although Daryl Mitchell will replace sidelined batsman Henry Nicholls. But doubts remain over whether outstanding left-arm quick Trent Boult can feature at Lord's, given he only arrived in England after playing in last weekend's Indian Premier League final.

New Zealand, with Tim Southee, Matt Henry, Neil Wagner and Kyle Jameson all in their squad, do have plenty of other pacemen capable of challenging England's fallible top order. "Trent is a world-class player but we've got great variety in our bowling attack," Williamson said. One of the world's leading batsmen, the 31-year-old added he was fully fit following an elbow injury and looking forward to leading his team of "purists" at Lord's, where Williamson already has a coveted place on the dressing room honors board thanks to a hundred he made against England at the London ground in 2015. The teams, however, may not be greeted by a traditional full house for a Test at the 'Home of Cricket', with thousands of tickets, some priced as high as £160 (\$202) per day, still to be sold amid a cost of living crisis and the rival attractions provided by this week's platinum jubilee of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, who is also New Zealand's head of state. — AFP



Gulf Handball Clubs tournament kicks off

KUWAIT: The 38th Gulf Handball Clubs Champions Tournament will start on Saturday and will continue until June 12th at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah complex in Sabah Al-Salem area. The tournament will have seven clubs divided into two groups. The first group includes Kuwait (the host), Ahly from Qatar; Jazeera from UAE and Muscat from Oman. In the second group, there will be Salmiya from Kuwait, Mudhar from Saudi Arabia and Najma from Bahrain.

The tournament will be held in One Round League system where the first and second team in each group will qualify for the semi-finals. The first round will see three matches - Al-Jazeera vs Al-Ahly (4:00pm), while the second match will be between Salmiya and Mudhar from the second group (6:00pm). That will be followed by a match between Kuwait and Muscat (8:00 pm).

Tournament director Nawaf Al-Jurayyed said the organizing committee has completed all the preparations and wished all participants a pleasant stay in Kuwait - the land of friendship and peace. Al-Jurayyed expected the tournament to be successful. Head of handball team at Kuwait Club, Haitham Al-Rashidi said the club is ready for the competitions.

Sports

Messi stars as Argentina beat Italy in Finalissima

Mancini transitioning to a younger generation

LONDON: Lionel Messi stole the show as Copa America holders Argentina powered to a 3-0 win against European champions Italy in the Finalissima at Wembley on Wednesday. Inspired by the peerless Messi, Argentina raced into a two-goal lead in the first half of the prestigious friendly thanks to strikes from Lautaro Martinez and Angel Di Maria. Paulo Dybala capped Argentina's rout, but after a disappointing season with Paris Saint-Germain by his sky-high standards, it was the sight of Messi back to his imperious best that took the spotlight.

The 34-year-old's eye-catching display featured two assists and was worthy of his rare appearance at one of football's great cathedrals. Thrown into the air by his jubilant team-mates after the final whistle, Messi said: "Today was a nice test because Italy are a great team. We knew it was going to be a nice game and a nice setting in which to be champions. "It was a beautiful final, full of Argentines. What we experienced here was beautiful."

It was another memorable moment for Argentina, who have qualified for this year's World Cup as they extend the golden afterglow from the victory over Brazil that ended their 28-year wait to win the Copa America in 2021. Argentina were already established as one of the leading contenders to win the World Cup and defeating Italy was another statement of intent from La Albiceleste, who are now unbeaten in 32 matches. If Messi can play at this level in Qatar, Lionel Scaloni's side will be a force to be reckoned with as they chase a first World Cup title since 1986.

"Everything changed after the Copa America. Now we are enjoying ourselves and things are happening much more easily. We are excited but must keep our feet on the ground," Di Maria said. For Italy, it was a disappointing return to Wembley 11 months

after they beat England on penalties in the Euro 2020 final. Roberto Mancini's team have gone into a steep decline since that triumph. They failed to qualify for the World Cup after suffering a humiliating loss to North Macedonia in their play-off semi-final.

After the World Cup failure, Mancini is transitioning to a younger generation, with the forthcoming Nations League matches against Germany, England and Hungary his real focus. Mancini's overhaul effectively started at half-time when Italy said farewell to 117-cap skipper Giorgio Chiellini, who was substituted in his final game before international retirement. "They were better than us. We were in the game in the first half but didn't do enough to turn it around after the break," Mancini said.

Messi masterpiece

This was only the third Finalissima contest between the respective champions of Europe and South America and the first since Diego Maradona's Argentina beat Denmark in 1993. Fittingly, Messi-the heir to the legendary Maradona-used the occasion to remind the world of his astonishing talents. The 87,000 sell-out crowd created a colourful backdrop for Messi's mastery, with Argentina's raucous fans turning the north London suburb of Brent into Buenos Aires for one ear-splitting evening.

Every touch from Messi lifted the decibel levels and he played a key role as Argentina took the lead in the 28th minute. Messi worked his magic on the touchline, showing tremendous strength to hold off Giovanni Di Lorenzo before unfurling a precise low cross to Martinez, who applied the finishing touch from close-range. In first half stoppage-time, Martinez drove forward with bullish tenacity and slipped a perfectly weighted pass to



LONDON: Argentina's striker Lionel Messi lifts the trophy as Argentina's players celebrate on the pitch after their victory in the 'Finalissima' international friendly football match between Italy and Argentina at Wembley Stadium in London on June 1, 2022. — AFP

Di Maria, with the PSG forward clipping a cool finish over Donnarumma.

Di Maria almost struck again on the hour, but his curler was brilliantly tipped over by Donnarumma as it fizzed towards the far corner. Messi was unstoppable, robbing Jorginho and embarking on a mes-

merizing run that finished with a save from Donnarumma. Messi's name echoed around the stands as Argentina's fans paid tribute to their idol's latest masterpiece. Dybala's clinical strike in stoppage-time came via a deft Messi pass as the maestro provided one final flourish. — AFP

Ghana romp to AFCON victory

JOHANNESBURG: AS Roma teenager Felix Afena-Gyan, 19, scored as Ghana cruised to a 3-0 win over Madagascar on Wednesday and claimed the leadership of Group E as 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifying kicked off. Angola came from behind to edge the Central African Republic 2-1 in the same section and lie second, behind Ghana on goal difference in a competition that will produce 23 finalists for the Ivory Coast.

In the other match, dominant Libya failed to convert a penalty but still won 1-0 against brave Botswana in Group J in Benghazi. Qatar World Cup qualifiers Ghana, who welcomed captain Andre 'Dede' Ayew back after he served a two-match ban, controlled the opening half against Madagascar in Cape Coast without scoring. The deadlock was broken on 53 minutes when a run down the right flank, a cross and a dummy left unmarked Mohammed Kudus with the simple task of firing into the net.

Afena-Gyan, seen as a future international star,

doubled the advantage three minutes later, flicking the ball into the net after a clever corner manoeuvre. Substitute Osman Bukari completed the rout on 86 minutes by getting ahead of a Malagasy defender and rounding goalkeeper Razakanirina Rakotohasimbola before pushing the ball into the net. Ghana, who shocked Nigeria three months ago to book a fourth World Cup appearance, face the Central African Republic in Luanda on Sunday, then head to Japan for World Cup warm-ups.

Mammoth task

The four-time African champions face Japan in the Kirin Cup in Kobe on June 10 and Chile or Tunisia in the final or third-place play-off four days later in Osaka. Ghana face a mammoth task in Qatar to get past the first round having drawn Cristiano Ronaldo-inspired Portugal, Uruguay and South Korea in Group H. In Luanda, Angola laid siege to the Central African Republic goalmouth, but the closest they came to an early goal was a shot that rebounded off the underside of the crossbar.

Completely against the run of play, the visitors took the lead on 32 minutes when Simon Nlend sidefooted a cross past goalkeeper Hugo Marques. Angola captain Alfredo 'Fredy' Ribeiro blazed a



ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast's players take part in a training session in Abidjan, on June 1, 2022 ahead of their Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2023 qualification football match against Zambia. — AFP

second-half penalty wide before two goals in four minutes turned the tide in favour of the home side. M'Bala Nzola leveled on 72 minutes, nodding a corner into the net at the far post, and a shot into the corner of the net four minutes later from Jacinto 'Gelson' Dala won the match.

French coach Corentin Martins made a winning debut in charge of Libya, who last reached the Cup

of Nations finals in 2012. The match-winner came when a Sanad al Warfali penalty was parried by goalkeeper Goitseone Phoko and Saleh al Taher hammered the loose ball into the net. There are two qualifiers on Thursday with minnows Mozambique and Rwanda meeting in Johannesburg before World Cup qualifiers Tunisia tackle improving Equatorial Guinea in Rades. — AFP

US thump Morocco in friendly; Pulisic shines

CINCINNATI: Chelsea star Christian Pulisic played a leading role as the United States launched their final preparations for the World Cup with a convincing 3-0 friendly win over fellow qualifiers Morocco on Wednesday. Pulisic created a goal for new Leeds signing Brenden Aaronson and won a penalty converted by debutant Haji Wright as the US claimed a first ever win over Morocco at Cincinnati's TQL Stadium.

Lille forward Timothy Weah scored the other US goal in a torrid outing for Morocco, who also missed a dubiously awarded second-half penalty when Selim Amallah hit the crossbar. "Christian was in a position where he could hurt them, he was our man of the match, the way he led with intensity and also his performance on the field," US coach Gregg Berhalter

said. Berhalter meanwhile was happy with his team's display as they build towards Qatar, where their first round opponents will be England, Iran and either Ukraine or Wales.

"We talked before the game about having a baseline about how we can perform against World Cup opponents and they showed how good we can be although sometimes we were vulnerable," Berhalter said. "We need to keep improving, they were a dangerous opponent but we controlled the match well and created a number of chances." Berhalter had demanded an aggressive performance, and the hosts delivered with a bright opening, striker Jesus Ferreira and Weah forcing saves Morocco's Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine Bounou early on.

Morocco, who will play Belgium, Canada and Croatia in the first round of the World Cup, should have taken the lead on 12 minutes, when Watford left back Adam Masina exposed the US defence only to see his shot parried away by new Arsenal goalkeeper Matt Turner. Tarik Tissoudali pounced

on the follow-up but his effort was blocked by Aaron Long for a corner.

Morocco continued to look dangerous on the counter-attack, and another flowing move saw Masina advance down the left flank and pass inside for Tissoudali but his effort failed to trouble Turner. The American breakthrough came on 26 minutes with a goal crafted by Pulisic. A hopeful long ball forward from defender Walker Zimmerman sent Pulisic clear and the Chelsea forward controlled superbly, danced away from Samy Mmae and Romain Seiss before squaring to Aaronson who buried a low finish into the empty net.

The US doubled their tally six minutes later with an individual strike from Weah. The France-based forward was given too much space on the edge of the Morocco area and thumped a firm shot through the hands of Bounou, who should have done better. The US could have made it 3-0 on the stroke of half-time, when Aaronson threaded a pass through to Ferreira whose shot was saved by Bounou. Berhalter rang the changes



CINCINNATI: Christian Pulisic #10 of the United States controls the ball against Morocco at TQL Stadium on June 01, 2022 in Cincinnati, Ohio. — AFP

at half-time with Wright replacing Ferreira, Cameron Carter-Vickers coming on for Zimmerman and Joe Scally stepping in for Antonee Robinson. — 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
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From the event.

Zain celebrates Kuwait champions

Leading digital service provider sponsors 3rd GCC Games

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, took part in the special event held to recognize and celebrate Kuwait's champions who competed in the recently concluded Third GCC Games. The regional games, sponsored by Zain, were hosted by the State of Kuwait during the past two weeks and organized by the Kuwait Olympic Committee under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Zain joined the special event held at the Kuwait Olympic Committee's headquarters, attended by the committee's members, heads of local sports federations, and government representatives. The event celebrated all Kuwaiti champions who received gold, silver, and bronze medals in the

recent GCC games, in which Kuwait was crowned the champion with a total of 96 medals.

Zain is proud to have supported this grand regional sporting event in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee, which succeeded in presenting it in an outstanding fashion that was befitting of Kuwaiti sports. The company is keen on supporting the various sports programs and official competitions hosted in Kuwait with the aim of elevating the Kuwaiti sports scene. Zain strongly believes in the role played by the sports sector in progressing national economy and developing the local touristic scene.

The Third GCC Games featured wide participation from GCC national teams in 16 different sports,

including fencing, esports, table tennis, swimming, karate, judo, athletics, tennis, shooting, cycling, ice hockey, futsal, basketball, volleyball, handball, and padel. The competition concluded by crowning Kuwait as the champion with a total of 96 medals, 36 of which were gold, 28 silver, and 32 bronze.

The games featured the participation of over 1,700 players from across the GCC and were held across 12 sporting venues in Kuwait. The competition awarded 300 gold medals, 300 silver medals, and 300 bronze medals to winners. The Third GCC Games have selected the fox Salmi as the event's official mascot, inspired by the Fennec fox (Al Hesni), one of the icons of Kuwaiti wildlife, known for its ability to live in Kuwait's harsh desert envi-

ronment and extreme heat.

The company's support to this event sprung from its corporate sustainability strategy towards supporting Kuwaiti sports. Zain is a strong believer in the talents and capabilities of the nation's athletes and continues to support a great number of local men and women who represent Kuwait in local, regional, and international arenas.

As a leading private sector company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti sports and athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition and support they deserve.

Cilic joins 'Big 4' with Slam mark

PARIS: Croatia's Marin Cilic said it was a "great achievement" as he joined Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and Andy Murray in becoming only the fifth active player to make the semi-finals at all four Slams. Cilic, the 2014 US Open champion, fired 33 aces past seventh-seeded Andrey Rublev to reach his first French Open semi-final on Wednesday with a 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (10/2) win. He also crashed 88 winners in the four-hour 10-minute tie and will play either eighth-seeded Casper Ruud of Norway or Danish teenager Holger Rune for a place in Sunday's final.

"Absolutely fantastic achievement for me. To be mentioned among them," said 33-year-old Cilic. "I'm feeling great on the court, enjoying myself, being me, playing my own game. It's paying off, and I am enjoying the run." Rublev, playing in his fifth quarter-final at the majors, grabbed the first set but wilted under a Cilic barrage over the next two. The Croatian had stunned world number two Daniil Medvedev in the fourth round and he rediscovered that free-swinging assault to level the contest with a 17th ace on a fifth set point. He pocketed the third with a lone break in the seventh game.

Rublev, who had been knocked out of the Australian Open by Cilic in January, battled back with a crucial break in the eighth game of the fourth set. Cilic, the 2017 Wimbledon and 2018 Australian Open runner-up to Federer, had a match point saved in the ninth game of the decider but then swept through the super tiebreaker. Despite having been number three in the world, winning 20 career titles and banking close to \$30 million, Cilic remains happy to keep his low profile and let the likes of Djokovic,

Nadal and Federer hog the limelight.

"These guys have been on the top of the game so many years. Looking at my own career, I had some obviously huge successes and won so many things," he said. "But also comparing to the top guys, it was not as consistent. Had three, four seasons that were incredibly good, incredibly consistent, but I was a little bit in and out. I really don't mind being under the highlights. I'm just trying to use my opportunities as much as I can during my career."

Cilic, Ruud book semis

Meanwhile, Cilic and Ruud moved into the French Open semi-finals for the first time on Wednesday courtesy of two big-hitting displays which overwhelmed their opponents. Cilic fired 33 aces and 88 winners past seventh-seeded Andrey Rublev in a 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (10/2) win. Eighth seed Ruud booked a clash against the 33-year-old Croat when he became the first Norwegian man to reach a Grand Slam semi-final with a 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 victory over Danish teenager Holger Rune.

Cilic, the 2014 US Open champion, needed four hours and 10 minutes to defeat Rublev who has now lost all of his five quarter-final appearances at the Slams. The 20th seeded Cilic becomes only the fifth active men's player after Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and Andy Murray to make the semi-finals at all four majors. "The fifth set was an incredible battle," said Cilic who is in his first Grand Slam semi-final in four years. "Andrey played so well. Today was my day. He just didn't have the luck." Rublev grabbed the first set but wilted under a Cilic barrage over the next two.



PARIS: Croatia's Marin Cilic celebrates after victory over Russia's Andrey Rublev in their men's quarter-final singles match on day eleven of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris on June 1, 2022. —AFP

The Croat had stunned world number two Daniil Medvedev in the fourth round and he rediscovered that free-swinging assault to level the contest with a 17th ace on a fifth set point. He pocketed the third with a lone break in the seventh game. Rublev, who had lost to Cilic at the Australian Open in January, battled back with a crucial break in the eighth game of the fourth set. Cilic, the 2017 Wimbledon and 2018 Australian Open runner-up to Federer, had a match point saved in the ninth game of the decider but swept through the super tiebreaker.

'Serving very well'

"He was serving very well," said Rublev. "I relaxed after the first set but then I wasn't thinking. I could not manage the emotions in the previous quarter-finals. Today I was close to the semi-final." Rune, ranked 40, had knocked out fourth seed and 2021 runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas in the

fourth round. The 19-year-old was bidding to become the first Danish man to reach the last-four in Paris and first at any Slam since Jan Leschly at the 1967 US Championships. However, Ruud overpowered the youngster, firing 13 aces and 55 winners while Rune had to fight off 12 of 17 break points carved out by the Norwegian.

"I started the match well, but Holger raised his level of play, he came back and it was tough until the end," said Ruud after beating the Dane for the fourth time in four meetings. "I had met him three times and he is improving. He has become unpredictable, he isn't afraid of anything and will be dangerous for the next few years," added Ruud who had never passed the round of 16 in a Grand Slam before this French Open. Friday's other semi-final will see 13-time champion Rafael Nadal take on Alexander Zverev after his epic quarter-final win over Novak Djokovic.—AFP

Iga Swiatek says 'sky is the limit'

PARIS: World number one Iga Swiatek said on Wednesday that "the sky is the limit" as she looks to extend her 33-match winning streak and reach the French Open final. The 2020 Roland Garros champion faced Russian Daria Kasatkina in the last four on Thursday, with the winner to face either Coco Gauff or Martina Trevisan—who meet in the second semi-final in Saturday's show-piece match.



Iga Swiatek

Polish star Swiatek has climbed from world number seven to the top of the rankings on the back of a remarkable unbeaten run which has seen her win five successive tournaments, including four WTA 1,000 titles. "I kind of felt like the sky's the limit for me, so I feel more free right now, I feel like I've proven myself," said Swiatek, who turned 21 on Tuesday. "A lot has changed in my mind and for sure I also realise that I can actually be number one and really cope with it properly. So that's pretty cool."

Swiatek will be playing in her third Grand Slam semi-final, after also making that stage at this year's Australian Open. Kasatkina won her first clash with Swiatek on the Eastbourne grass last year, but has lost all three of their meetings in 2022 in straight sets, without winning more than five games in a match.

But those defeats all came on hard courts at the Australian Open and in Dubai and Doha. "We played few times this year, but, okay, I lost those matches, but was a different story," said Kasatkina. "It was a hard court, beginning of the year, I was not in the same shape as I am now. I cannot compare what we are going to have tomorrow and what we had in February, March when we were playing. It's going to be completely different match..." "She's good on hard court, she's good on clay, so it doesn't matter. But I think for me it's better to face her on clay."

Gauff has threatened to break into the highest echelons of the sport since her fairytale run to the Wimbledon last 16 as a 15-year-old three years ago. Her victory over Sloane Stephens in the previous round was only her second Grand Slam quarter-final, but now a maiden final is just one win away. "You don't want to let other people limit your dreams," said the 18th seed. "It's important that you don't put yourself into a box. So I always try to tell young kids that, to dream big, and you never know when your moment is going to happen." Gauff lost her only previous match against Italian Trevisan in the second round at Roland Garros in 2020.—AFP

Birthday boy Nadal eyes 14th Open final despite future fears

PARIS: Rafael Nadal looks to celebrate his 36th birthday on Friday by reaching a 14th French Open final which by his own admission could be the last of his record-breaking career. Nadal, the 13-time champion, faces Germany's Alexander Zverev but is clear his chronic, long-term foot injury has put him on borrowed time. "The last three months and a half for me, the only thing that I can say is haven't been easy," said the Spaniard after his epic four-set win over old rival Novak Djokovic in the quarter-finals.

"But I have to keep going," Nadal, chasing a record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title to move two in front of Djokovic and Roger Federer, is working constantly to find a cure for the foot issue. "If we are not able to find an improvement or a small solution, then it's becoming super

difficult for me. "I am just enjoying every day that I have the chance to be here, and without thinking much about what can happen in the future. "I'm going to keep fighting to find a solution, but for the moment, we haven't." Nadal's win over defending champion and world number one Djokovic was the 110th of his 17-year Roland Garros career. He has had to dig deep into his resources to reach his 15th semi-final in the French capital. It took him four hours and 21 minutes to defeat Felix Auger-Aliassime in the fourth round in a tie which saw him stretched to five sets for only the third time at the tournament. Against Djokovic, he needed four hours and 12 minutes, saving two set points in the fourth set to avoid another five-setter.

Djokovic is the man responsible for two of Nadal's three losses at the French Open. With his career-long rival out of the way, and world number two Daniil Medvedev and fourth-ranked 2021 runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas eliminated, Nadal remains favourite to lift the trophy on Sunday. Against Zverev, he boasts a 6-3 winning record, capturing four of the pair's five clay court meetings. Zverev, 11 years younger than Nadal, is still searching for a maiden Slam title. He is into a second successive French Open semi-final. He defeated teenage sensation Carlos Alcaraz in the



PARIS: Spain's Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Serbia's Novak Djokovic during their men's singles match on day ten of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris. —AFP

quarter-finals but had to save a match point in a five-set win over Argentina's Sebastian Baez in the second round. He has also never defeated Nadal or Djokovic at the majors.—AFP