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# Pro-Russia rebels sentence foreign fighters to death

## Britain 'deeply concerned' as fighting rages



MARIUPOL: Fresh graves are seen at a cemetery in the city of Mariupol, amid the ongoing Russian military action in Ukraine. — AFP

LYSYCHANSK: Pro-Russian rebels sentenced to death two British fighters and a Moroccan who were captured while fighting for Ukraine, as a Ukrainian governor called for western arms on Thursday to win the battle for a crucial eastern city. The death sentences come as Moscow concentrates its firepower on the strategic industrial hub of Severodonetsk, where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says the fierce fighting could determine the fate of the entire Donbas area.

Separatist authorities in the Donetsk region, which is part of the Donbas, ordered the death penalty for Aiden Aslin, Shaun Pinner and Saadun Brahim after they were accused of acting as mercenaries for Kyiv, Russian media reported. Britain said it was "deeply concerned" by the sentences. "Under the Geneva Convention, prisoners of war are entitled to combatant immunity," said a spokesman for Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The two Britons surrendered in April in Mariupol, the southern port city that was captured by Russian troops after a weeks-long siege. They later appeared on Russian TV calling on Johnson to negotiate their release. Brahim surrendered in

March in the eastern town of Volnovakha. During a trial that lasted three days, the men pleaded guilty to committing "actions aimed at seizing power and overthrowing the constitutional order of the Donetsk People's Republic", Russian news agency Interfax said.

Western countries have provided weapons and aid for Ukraine since the February 24 invasion, while a number of people from abroad have come to fight against Russian forces. The fiercest fighting is now focused on Severodonetsk in the Lugansk region, where Ukrainian officials say their outgunned forces are still holding out amid street battles despite the city being mostly under Russian control.

The regional governor of Lugansk - also part of the Donbas - said Western artillery would quickly help secure a Ukrainian victory for the bombarded city. "As soon as we have long-range artillery to be able to conduct duels with Russian artillery, our special forces can clean up the city in two to three days," governor Sergiy Gaiday said.

In his evening address to the Ukrainian people on Wednesday, Zelensky said the battle for the city.

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### The Kuwait Stitch

A Novel Surgical Technique for Surgical Wound Closures

Dr. Muthana Sartawi

Health Science Report  
08 Jun 2022 Volume 5 Issue 4  
WILEY

KUWAIT: Dr Muthana Sartawi has invented a stitch he named 'Kuwait Stitch' which is used to hold body tissues together after surgical procedures. He registered a patent at the American patents office and was approved for publication in a prestigious medical journal. This is the first stitch named after an Arab country.

## Spain backs visa exemption for Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: Spain fully supports the exemption of Kuwaitis from the Schengen visa requirements, allowing the Gulf country's nationals to travel freely into the European signatories of the pact, a visiting diplomat said on Wednesday. Madrid will seek to see the completion of related procedures to this effect, Angeles Moreno Bau, State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs was quoted as saying.

The position was outlined, amid

other affairs, as the visiting Spanish diplomat and Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhefeeri held talks, which dealt with Kuwait's efforts regarding the matter. Both sides expressed "satisfaction" with achievements made so far to this effect and expressed their determination to work together to complete remaining procedures for the entry into force of the exemption.

The two countries' diplomats also discussed their "distinguished friendship," reviewing related developments, and reaffirmed their determination to work according to a specific timeframe going forward, which reflects the depth of their political, economic, investment and cultural bilateral ties. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhefeeri welcomes Spain's State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs Angeles Moreno Bau. — KUNA

## Erdogan to run in 2023 presidential election

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday said he would run in next year's presidential vote and brushed aside rumors of a snap poll in the economically-battered nation. It was the first time that the strongman, who has been in power since 2003, officially announced his widely-expected candidacy.

"Let me say it here. Tayyip Erdogan is the candidate of the People's Alliance", Erdogan told a party rally in the western city of Izmir, referring to an alliance between his ruling conservative AKP party and the right-wing MHP party. The opposition CHP



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

party, the second largest in parliament, has not yet fielded a candidate and Erdogan tossed a challenge to its leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu. "Declare either your candidate or your candidacy," Erdogan said. Erdogan said the election would be held on time, on June 24 next year. — AFP

## IAEA warns as Iran removes site cameras

VIENNA: The UN atomic energy watchdog said on Thursday that Iran was removing 27 surveillance cameras at its nuclear facilities, warning this could be a "fatal blow" to negotiations to revive a landmark deal. Talks began in April last year to bring the United States back to the 2015 accord, lifting sanctions, and Iran back into compliance, limiting its nuclear activities.

But negotiations have stalled since March, and raising tensions, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) members on Wednesday passed a resolution censuring Iran over its lack of cooperation with the watchdog. Iran has condemned the motion as "unconstructive", announcing earlier on Wednesday that it had disconnected some IAEA cameras monitoring its nuclear sites.

"What we have been informed is that 27 cameras ... are being removed in Iran," IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told reporters on Thursday. "So this of course poses a serious challenge to our ability to continue working there." Grossi urged Iran to engage with him "immediately".

He said if a solution was not found within three to four weeks to the issue, this would be "a fatal blow" to negotiations. Grossi said about 40 monitoring cameras remained in the Islamic republic.

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## Palestinian killed by Zionist forces

RAMALLAH: A Palestinian died on Thursday after being shot in the stomach by Zionist forces during what the army described as a "counter-terrorism" operation in the occupied West Bank. The Palestinian health ministry said 27-year-old Mahmud Favez Abu Ayhour was killed in Halhul, north of the flashpoint city of Hebron. The Red Crescent had earlier reported several injuries following unrest in Halhul. The army told AFP that security forces "conducted counter-terrorism activities to confiscate terror funds in the town of Halhul".

It said the operation was concentrated in a store "suspected of being a focal point" for resources linked to the Hamas Islamist group that controls the Gaza Strip but also has a presence in the West Bank.

Continued on Page 6

## Zionist entity, UAE leaders hold talks after trade deal

ABU DHABI: Zionist entity's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett held talks with the leader of the United Arab Emirates on Thursday during a surprise visit, a day after a formal rebuke of Iran by the UN's nuclear watchdog. Bennett's second trip to the UAE, which

Continued on Page 6



ABU DHABI: UAE's President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (right) meets with Zionist entity's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett during his snap visit, in Abu Dhabi. — AFP



## Local

# Kuwait concerned over rising tensions on Korean Peninsula

## Kuwait condemns North Korea's launch of ballistic missiles

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait reiterated Thursday that it is following with great concern the rise in tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the danger of military escalation following the launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles by North Korea, saying that it is one of the oldest and most serious issues. This was in a statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi before the UN General Assembly, under the topic of strengthening the UN system, that discussed the use of the veto by Russia and China in the Security Council (UNSC) on a US draft resolution on North Korea.

North Korea launched ballistic missiles during the past few days, he pointed out, underlining that Kuwait condemns the launch of these ballistic missiles since they constitute a violation of UNSC resolutions as well as a threat to regional and international peace and security. The use of the veto by some of the five permanent members in many cases contributed to undermining the decision-making process in the UNSC, which in some cases led to the UNSC's inability to carry out its responsibilities and generated a state of frustration among people for not taking the necessary measures to maintain international security, he said. They believe that the

veto, this exceptional and rare privilege enjoyed by only five countries in the world, is a responsibility first and foremost, he mentioned. He went on to say that they followed the course of the UNSC session that was held on May 26, under the subject of non-proliferation and North Korea, as they reviewed the report presented by the UNSC's president regarding the use of the veto. There is division and dis-



### Kuwait stresses importance of peaceful solution

agreement in the UNSC on the North Korea file for 15 years.

In this context, he underscored the importance of a peaceful solution to this crisis in accordance with treaties and agreements concluded between the

concerned parties, as well as relevant UNSC resolutions, along with the positive engagement of all parties in dialogue and negotiations, in order to reach a peaceful solution conducive to the establishment of stability, peace and security on the peninsula. He stressed the need to adhere to the Charter of the UN, its purposes and principles, which stipulate good neighborliness, resolving disputes by peaceful means, and refraining from using force or threatening to use force against other countries.

He reiterated Kuwait's principled and solid stance on non-proliferation issues, which is to condemn the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction anywhere, anytime and by any party, as a grave violation of international law. He also underlined the need to preserve the international non-proliferation regime, reiterating his conviction in this regard that security, safety and stability in the world will not be achieved without the complete and final disarmament of nuclear weapons. Otaibi hoped that the UNSC would be able to restore its unity towards non-proliferation issues, including those related to North Korea, and that the UNSC would assume its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security. — KUNA



**NEW YORK:** Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks before the UN General Assembly. — KUNA

## Kuwait's Prime Minister receives OIC chief

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Thursday the visiting Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha and his accompanying delegation at Seif Palace. The meet-

ing was attended by Head of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakheel Al-Dakheel, and Kuwait's Consul General in Jeddah Wael Al-Hathal Al-Enezi.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah also met Thursday the visiting Secretary-General of Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Both sides discussed the OIC's future activities as well as the latest international and regional developments, challenges the Muslim world is facing and issues of mutual interest. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Hissein Brahim Taha. — KUNA photos



**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Hissein Brahim Taha. — KUNA photos

## Foreign Minister, Huawei CEO discuss cooperation



**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Huawei CEO in the GCC William Zhao. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Minister, Chairman of the Board for Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah met on Thursday with Huawei CEO in the GCC William

Zhao. Both sides discussed several ways of enhancing cooperation in all fields. Director General for Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Dr Mishal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attended the meeting. — KUNA

## Kuwait Ambassador extols Mahdi's IFAD nomination

**ROME:** Kuwaiti Ambassador in Rome Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah said on Thursday that the nomination of Dr Khaled Mahdi to head the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) as reaffirming Kuwait's strong support for the fund's mission. Speaking to the press, Sheikh Azzam said the Kuwaiti govern-

ment's nomination of Dr Al-Mahdi to lead this UN agency at this critical time of crises that threaten the food security of hundreds of millions of people around the world, reflects Kuwait's desire to contribute to the fund's development by nominating Mahdi, who has been serving as Secretary-General of

the Supreme Council for Planning and Development since 2016. He believed that Kuwait's pioneering role in humanitarian action and sustainable economic and human development and its praiseworthy success in the management of regional and international multilateralism, especially within the IFAD, show the ability of its candidate to take over this post.

He added that the Kuwaiti government believes that Dr Mahdi would contribute to promoting the IFAD's role and carrying out its development projects. During its first extraordi-

nary session on July 7, the IFAD's board of governors is expected to elect the fund's seventh president, the post that was earlier held by Fawzi Al-Sultan of Kuwait in 1993. In a nomination letter to IFAD Secretary Luis Jimenez-McInnis on April 27, Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid said Dr Mahdi is fully qualified to head the fund and support its core functions of achieving agricultural development and combating rural poverty around the world. — KUNA

## Kuwait funds new college in Iraq's Irbil

**IRBIL:** Kuwaiti Consul General in Irbil Omar Al-Kandari on Thursday laid the foundation stone of a new college of Islamic studies at Salahaddin University in Iraq's Kurdistan capital, Irbil. Speaking to the press, Kandari said the project, which is part of Kuwait's humanitarian campaign in Iraq, will be funded by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and will be carried out by the Kuwait Society for Relief. Since Kuwait launched its campaign: "Kuwait Beside You" in mid-2015, it has been keen on carrying on its humanitarian and relief aid to Iraq in general and Irbil in particular, he pointed out. The educational sector is one of the main beneficiaries of the Kuwaiti humanitarian campaign, with more than 85 schools having



**IRBIL:** Kuwaiti Consul General in Irbil Omar Al-Kandari (center) lays the foundation stone of the project. — KUNA

been built in various provinces, including Irbil, the Kuwaiti consul added. Meanwhile, Salahaddin University's President Dr Kamran Younis voiced much thanks to Kuwait for financing the construction of an Islamic science college, which would cer-

tainly serve the educational process in the Iraqi province. He added that the new funding comes in the context of Kuwait's humanitarian aid to the people of Iraq's Irbil region, expressing thanks and appreciation to Kuwait for this help. — KUNA



**RIYADH:** GCC Secretary-General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf meets senior officials of the GCC Economic and Development Affairs Authority. — KUNA

## GCC Secretary-General meets Economic, Development Affairs Authority officials

**RIYADH:** GCC Secretary-General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf met Thursday with senior officials of the GCC Economic and Development Affairs Authority. In a statement, the GCC secretariat said that the meeting touched on activating the Economic Authority role to help boost joint Gulf economic and development and achieve a qualitative leap in these fields to follow up on the completion of the requirements of the Gulf common market, the customs

union and the economic judiciary, leading to economic unity in 2025. The statement pointed out that Hajraf stressed the importance of preparing all the legal, structural, financial and human factors necessary to develop the economic dimension of the joint Gulf cooperation. The talks also witnessed the participation of the Kuwaiti Assistant Undersecretary of Finance for Economic Affairs Talal Al-Namesh. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mikrad received the honorary member of Kuwait Fire Protection Association Lt Gen Yousuf Al-Ansari, Association Chairman Adel Al-Nassar and several board members, who thanked Mikrad

for patronizing the "major accidents... causes and solutions" seminar. Mikrad expressed support to any activity that contributes to limiting accidents through best means and solutions in order to protect lives and properties.

## Indian ambassador meets Al-Rushaid



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Abdulwahab Mohammed Al-Rushaid received Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George in his office on June 8. They discussed India-Kuwait bilateral relations, particularly the financial sector and ongoing investment in India and other issues of common interest.



Local

# Invasion museum remains closed without near solution

## Founder laments NCCAL's lack of interest in restoring key site



KUWAIT: Dr Yousef Al-Amiri guides a tour at the Kuwait House of National Works Museum.

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait House of National Works Museum remains closed for over four years without any replacement. An important site in Kuwait that narrates the sad story of the 1990 Iraqi Invasion of the country through many valuable pieces, the museum was built by a personal initiative of its founder Dr Yousef Al-Amiri with the help of many volunteers in 1997 and had welcomed hundreds of visitors daily.

The government cut power to the museum about four years ago claiming that reconstruction will take place on its location. But until today, the building remains abandoned in the same location and no roads or projects were built on its place.

"The irony is that the land on which the museum stands was not exploited throughout the past years and no project was built on its site as they told us," Amiri told Kuwait Times. "They didn't offer us a spacious alternative land to contain all the items of the museum. Cutting electricity to this valuable museum that tells the story of our nation's struggle and fight against the aggressor is a crime. The National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NCCAL) should take full responsibility for this crime as they didn't defend or protect this important site."

Hundreds of visitors were visiting the museum daily, according to Amiri. "About 150 students were visiting us daily. Also, soldiers from the US army were always visiting the museum, and

sometimes they reached 50 soldiers per visit. Furthermore, delegations from different countries and foreign ministries were visiting us. Then of course the residents of Kuwait, including both citizens and expats," he added.

The museum was divided into different sections. "It included a section telling the history of the ruling family and the family tree, a section on Kuwait's history, followed by the panorama about the invasion and the resistance of Kuwait's people, then the scene of citizens and expats leaving Kuwait, burning oil fields, environmental destruction, and Kuwait's liberation. Also, there was a drawing panorama and cinema, in addition to 29 booths for the allied countries," he pointed out.

"The value of the items that were displayed

exceeded KD 600,000. It included photos, pictures, maps, and rare and expensive items such as the bust of a statue of Saddam Hussein that was brought to our museum directly from Tikrit, his hometown," explained Amiri.

Amiri said he was not optimistic about any near solution. "I don't think that the problem of our museum will be solved anytime soon, as long as the officials at NCCAL don't care about the culture and history. I think that the only solution is the support of the allied countries who participated in Kuwait's liberation and who have sections in this museum. We in fact started contacting them recently, and we hope they will be able to help us save this valuable place," concluded Al-Amiri.



## Four fire stations battle Ardhiya blaze



KUWAIT: A food warehouse in industrial Ardhiya area caught fire Thursday and Ardhiya, Jleeb and Bidaa firemen were dispatched. Firemen found out the fire was in refrigerators where food was stored. The fire was put out without injuries, Kuwait Fire Force said.

## Police arrest 91 in Bneid Al-Qar, Shuwaikh raid



KUWAIT: Capital security directorate carried out a campaign in Bneid Al-Qar and Shuwaikh Industrial Thursday, resulting in the arrest of 91 persons including two on drugs suspicion, one wanted on

criminal case, 13 absconders, 19 people with expired residency permits, 40 in violation of the residency law, one with expired entry visa, and 15 without IDs. They were sent to concerned authorities.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Waleed Al-Khubaizi meets Wang Di, Director General for West Asia and North Africa Affairs in the Chinese Foreign Ministry. — KUNA

## Kuwait, China discuss boosting cooperation

**KUWAIT:** The second round of cooperation mechanism between Kuwait and China concluded on Thursday at Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters. Both sides discussed ways of enhancing

cooperation, common interests and boosting bilateral ties in the political, economic and cultural levels, in addition to reinforcing strategic partnership between the two countries, said Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a press release. Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Waleed Al-Khubaizi headed the Kuwait's side, meanwhile, Wang Di, Director General for West Asia and North Africa Affairs in the Chinese Foreign Ministry headed the China's side. — KUNA

## Kuwait Airways signs codeshare agreement with Italy's ITA Airways

**KUWAIT:** As part of the continuous efforts to expand its network around the world, develop customer service and provide various travel options, Kuwait Airways announced the signing of a codeshare agreement with Italy's ITA Airways, as of 1st June 2022. The agreement enables Kuwait Airways to include its code within ITA flights to 12 destinations in Italy, namely Palermo, Catania, Florence, Brindisi, Bari, Venice, Torino, Genova, Trieste, Bologna, Naples, and Lamezia Terme and two international destinations from Rome to Athens and Nice.

This agreement is in line with the remarkable growth and travel requirements to Italy, opening the way for the Blue Bird and ITA customers to a variety of travel packages to different destinations. This is in addition to consolidating joint relations between the two countries in the field of trade and tourism. All travel packages are available for reservations, for both customers and travel agents through the Kuwait Airways website, application, or travels agents' reservations systems. Separately, Kuwait Airways announced the



launch of its first scheduled flight to Sarajevo, Bosnia, with two flights a week on Sundays and Thursdays, commencing from 9th June 2022. It comes as part of the continuous efforts to expand its network of destinations and develop its services to the highest levels of quality, the airline said in a press statement. The company said that the launching of operations to Sarajevo is in response to significant and growing requirements of customers in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf region, while pointing out that KAC had recently launched operations to Manchester, Casablanca, Sohag, Alexandria, Sharm El-Sheikh, Trabzon, Bodrum, Izmir and Mykonos and most recently Salalah, which will be followed shortly by operations to destinations such as Nice in France, Madrid and Malaga

in Spain, and Vienna in Austria. This is also in addition to commencing operations to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Kathmandu, Nepal in the coming months. Moreover, the company stated 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 with appropriate services, from the check-in at Terminal 4, completing their travel procedures with ease and enjoying the Company's services on board its diverse fleet of aircraft.



Local

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KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Ali Al-Saeed poses for a group photo with African envoys. — Photos by Chidi Emmanuel and Yasser Al-Zayyat

# African Day showcases business opportunities, cultural diversity

## Kuwait pushes for closer trade ties with Africa

By Chidi Emmanuel

KUWAIT: African diplomats, experts, professionals, Kuwaitis and thousands of African expats converged in Crowne Plaza Hotel on Wednesday to celebrate Africa Day in a unique style. African Day is an annual commemoration of the 1963 founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), presently known as the African Union (AU). Celebrations were held in many countries across the globe.

The event in Kuwait was organized by African envoys in the country. It featured lots of cultural displays - with each African nation showcasing cultural heritage in its respective booth. 'African Day' also featured food fair, bonanza, free gifts and traditional dances. "We are celebrating our African diversity and heritage as we promote the investment potential in the continent," the Senegalese Ambassador in Kuwait Ibrahim Al Khalil Seck told Kuwait Times. The ambassador in his goodwill message thanked Kuwaiti leadership for promoting peace in the region. He urged Africans in Kuwait to be good ambassadors of their respective countries.

"Africa has lots of investment opportunities and untapped resources. We used this event to promote and lure investors," Sierra Leonean Ambassador to Kuwait Haja Ishata Thomas said. She highlighted the key programs lined up to make Africa an investment magnet and one of the greatest economies. On Africa-Kuwait relations, the top diplomat said that Kuwait and African nations enjoy good bilateral ties.

### Trade ties

Speaking on the occasion, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Ali Al-Saeed said Kuwait is eager to bolster trade and investment rela-

tions with African countries, which in turn would help meet the needs of the local market. He cited an ambitious plan to boost bilateral trade ties, adding that an improvement in relations is aimed at stemming the food security crisis sparked by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "Kuwait and Africa envoys have ratcheted up high-level talks recently as part of efforts to bring common goals to fruition," he said.

The African Union has designated 2022 as the Year of Nutrition. "On this year's Africa Day, the world must join together in solidarity with all Africans to strengthen food security, and put nutrition within reach of every person. We celebrate the enormous promise and potential of this diverse and dynamic continent," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, adding that the United Nations will



### Boosting trade ties to stem food security crisis

continue to stand proudly with Africans. "As we mark this day, we celebrate the socioeconomic achievements of the continent. Africa is a home for all. On this day, we harness the enormous promise and potential of this diverse and dynamic continent. Our prospects are bright. Africa has a growing and vibrant youth population," Emeka Obodo, an African expat and businessman said.



Kenya's booth.



Egypt's booth.



Somalia's booth.



Nigeria's booth.



Tanzania's booth.



South Africa's booth.



Senegal's booth.



Sudan's booth.



Ghana's booth.



Ethiopia's booth.



Libya's booth.



Morocco's booth.



Mauritania's booth.



Algeria's booth.





Ukraine says fate of Donbas rests in battleground city

## Another member of Sri Lanka's ruling clan quits

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LOS ANGELES: US President Joe Biden speaks during the opening ceremony of the 9th Summit of the Americas at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles, California on June 8. —AFP

# Biden vows to step up action on climate

## Brazil leader joins Americas summit amid hopes for progress

LOS ANGELES: Joe Biden sought Thursday to step up action on climate at an Americas summit with hopes for at least small progress with Brazil, whose far-right leader will hold a potentially tense meeting with the US president.

Some two dozen leaders have descended on Los Angeles for the Summit of the Americas, where Biden late Wednesday implored them to show that democracy can produce results. "There is no reason why the Western Hemisphere shouldn't be secure, prosperous and democratic, from Canada's northernmost reaches to the southern tips of Chile," he told a welcoming reception with pop performers at a downtown Los Angeles theater.

But as China makes rapid inroads in Latin America, long viewed by Washington as its turf, Biden has steered clear of big-dollar pledges and has instead sought cooperation in targeted areas.

The summit on Thursday focused on climate, with Vice President Kamala Harris tasked with meeting leaders of Caribbean nations that are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels.

One outlier from the international chorus to battle climate change has been Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, a champion of agribusiness who has horrified environmentalists who warn that further erosion of the Amazon rainforest will disrupt a vital natural sink for the planet's carbon emissions.

Ahead of Biden's first meeting with Bolsonaro on Thursday, the White House said Brazil, Colombia and Peru joined a US-backed initiative to explore ways to reduce Amazon deforestation motivated by commodities industries.

The White House also said that Brazil and four other nations were joining a renewable energy initiative launched at last year's UN climate summit in Copenhagen. In the pact, countries promise to work toward a goal of 70 percent renewables in their energy mix by 2030.

Despite coming under criticism over the Amazon, Brazil's sixth most populous nation has one of the least carbon-intensive economies for a major economy and already meets the goal on renewables, mostly through hydropower.

The meeting with Bolsonaro could be awkward due to more than climate. Bolsonaro was an ally of Biden's predecessor Donald Trump and has appeared to follow the former president's playbook by alleging that Brazil's October elections are threatened by fraud.

On the eve of his trip, Bolsonaro went further by backing Trump's claims of irregularities in the 2020 US election won by Biden. There has been no evidence of widespread fraud.

Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security advisor, said the president would not shy away from discussing the Brazilian election. "I do anticipate that the president will discuss open, free, fair, transparent democratic elections," Sullivan told reporters.

Bolsonaro has trailed in early polls against his likely challenger, former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a leftist icon who was jailed on controversial corruption charges.

A victory by Lula would mark a further swing to the left in Latin America. Colombia, one of the closest US allies, could see a historic shift on June 19 if there is a

victory by leftist Gustavo Petro, who topped the first round of voting. While promising to work with leaders across ideology, Biden has held firm against inviting the leftist leaders of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela on the grounds that they are autocrats.

His stance led to a boycott of the summit by Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, a crucial partner on addressing rising migration into the United States. Harris started the week-long summit by announcing commitments of \$1.9 billion by businesses in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in hopes of creating jobs and discouraging migration—an issue seized upon by Trump's Republican Party. Also at the summit, the Biden administration announced a plan to help train 500,000 health workers in Latin America and a \$300 million project to improve food security, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupting grain exports.

Biden also announced what he called a new economic partnership for the Americas, although there were few concrete details and no promises of funding or greater market access. —AFP

## Iraq's Sadr warns MPs could 'resign' to break deadlock

BAGHDAD: Iraq's firebrand cleric Moqtada Sadr made a high-stakes protest Thursday by calling on the 73 lawmakers loyal to him to ready resignation papers to end an eight-month parliamentary paralysis. Parliament in Baghdad has been in turmoil since

October's general election, and intense negotiations among political factions have failed to forge a majority in support of a new prime minister to succeed Mustafa Al-Kadhemi.

The two groupings—a coalition led by Sadr, and its powerful rival, the Coordination Framework—each claim to hold a parliamentary majority, and with it the right to appoint the prime minister. Iraqi lawmakers have already exceeded all deadlines for setting up a new government set down in the constitution, prolonging the war-scarred country's political crisis.

"If the survival of the Sadrist bloc is an obstacle to the formation of the government, then all repre-

sentatives of the bloc are ready to resign from parliament," Sadr said in a televised statement.

Sadr called on his lawmakers to "write their resignation", warning that "they won't disobey me". "Iraq needs a government backed by a majority that serves the people," Sadr said. The 47-year-old cleric once led an anti-US militia following the 2003 invasion to topple Saddam Hussein, and he maintains a large and dedicated following. Sadr has said he wants all Shiite forces to be involved in a "consensus government".

While Sadr counts on the direct loyalty of 73 lawmakers, his wider bloc also includes Sunni law-

makers from the party of parliamentary speaker Mohammed Halbusi and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). But the grand total of Sadr's bloc of 155 still falls short of the absolute majority needed in the 329-member parliament. Lawmakers have already failed three times to elect a new national president, the first key stage before naming a prime minister and the subsequent establishment of a government.

If the parliamentary impasse cannot be broken, new elections could follow—but that would itself require lawmakers to agree on dissolving parliament. —AFP

## France to choose new parliament in test for Macron

PARIS: France votes on Sunday in parliamentary elections, with allies of President Emmanuel Macron seeking to retain a majority in the face of an increasingly competitive challenge from a new left-wing coalition.

Elections for the 577 seats in the lower house National Assembly are a two-round process. The shape of the new parliament will become clear only after the second round, a week later, on June 19.

The ballots provide a crucial coda to April's presidential election, when Macron won re-election and pledged a transformative new era after a first term dominated by protests, the COVID pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine. Stepping into the fray on Thursday, Macron acknowledged the stakes were high, warning France against choosing "extremes" which would add "crisis to crisis".

"If the presidential election is crucial, the legislative election is decisive," he said on a visit to the rural Tam region, calling for a "strong and clear majority".

If the president's centrist alliance Ensemble (Together) retains an overall majority, he will be able to carry on governing as before. Falling short could prompt a coalition with right-wing parties and an unwanted cabinet shuffle only weeks after the government was revamped. A win by the left-wing alliance—seen as unlikely by analysts but not impossible—would be a disaster for Macron. It would raise the specter of a clunky "cohabitation"—where the prime minister and president hail from different factions—of the kind that has paralyzed French politics in the past.

Left-wing leader Jean-Luc Melenchon, a former Marxist, has already made clear his ambition to become prime minister and stymie Macron's plan to raise the French retirement age, although the president would retain control over foreign policy.

While Macron and his European Union allies



CAEN, France: French leftist La France Insoumise (LFI) party leader Jean-Luc Melenchon addresses supporters. —AFP

breathed a heavy sigh of relief after his solid if unspectacular presidential victory against far-right leader Marine Le Pen, the last weeks have brought no sense of a honeymoon. Energy and food prices are soaring in France as elsewhere in Europe, the treatment of English fans at the Champions League final in Paris damaged France's image abroad and Macron has been accused by Ukraine of being too accommodating to Russia.

His new disabilities minister Damien Abad faced two rape accusations—which he vehemently denied—while new Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has yet to make an impact.

Meanwhile, the French left has moved on from the disunity that saw it fail to make the presidential election run-off by forming the NUPES alliance, which groups Melenchon's hard-left France Unbowed party, the Socialists, Greens and Communists.

It is mounting an increasingly serious challenge to Macron's own alliance, though the two-round system and an abstention rate predicted to reach record levels of well over 50 percent could both play into the hands of the president.

The Together alliance and NUPES will be neck-and-neck in terms of the popular vote on around 28 percent in the first round, polls show. "The day after Emmanuel Macron's re-election, his lieutenants saw the legislative elections as a formality," said leading French daily Le Monde. —AFP

## World's poor paying more for less food: UN

PARIS: Poor countries are expected to suffer the most from worldwide food crises exacerbated by the war in Ukraine as they will be forced to pay more for less food, the United Nations warned on Thursday. The global food import bill was on course to hit a new record of \$1.8 trillion this year as the Ukraine conflict pushes up cereal and grain prices.

But it was higher prices and transport costs rather than volumes that would account for the bulk of the expected increase, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization wrote in its latest Food Outlook.

"Worryingly, many vulnerable countries are paying more but receiving less food," the report said. The FAO calculated that the global food import bill was projected to rise by \$51 billion from 2021, of which \$49 billion reflected higher prices. The least developed countries were anticipated to see a five-percent contraction in their food import bill this year.

But sub-Saharan Africa and net food-importing developing countries were "expected to register an increase in total costs, despite a reduction in imported volumes", the agency said. World production of major cereals was expected to decline in 2022 for the first time in four years, while global utilization was also seen down for the first time in 20 years, the FAO said.

Amid soaring input prices, weather concerns and increased market uncertainties stemming from the Ukraine war, the forecasts "point to a likely tightening of food markets and food import bills reaching a new record high", said FAO economist Upali Galketi Aratchilage. "These are alarming signs from a food security perspective, indicating that importers will find it difficult to finance rising international costs, potentially heralding an end of their resilience to higher prices." —AFP

SCHEDULE II FORM B PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (Regulation 12 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016) FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS OF M/s. Punj Lloyd Limited	
1. NAME OF CORPORATE DEBTOR	Punj Lloyd Limited
2. DATE OF INCORPORATION OF CORPORATE DEBTOR	26 <sup>th</sup> September 1988
3. AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH CORPORATE DEBTOR IS INCORPORATED/REGISTERED	Registrar of Companies, Delhi, Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
4. CORPORATE IDENTITY NUMBER / LIMITED LIABILITY IDENTITY NUMBER OF CORPORATE DEBTOR	L74899DL1988PL033314
5. ADDRESS OF THE REGISTERED OFFICE AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE (IF ANY) OF CORPORATE DEBTOR	Address of Registered Office: Punj Lloyd House, 17-18, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019, Address of the Principal (Corporate Office): Corporate Office I, 78, Institutional Area, Sector-32, Gurgaon-122001, Haryana.
6. DATE OF CLOSURE OF INSOLVENCY RESOLUTION PROCESS	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
7. LIQUIDATION COMMENCEMENT DATE OF CORPORATE DEBTOR	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 (Order published on 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2022)
8. NAME AND REGISTRATION NUMBER OF THE INSOLVENCY PROFESSIONAL ACTING AS LIQUIDATOR	Mr. Ashwini Mehra Regn No. IB/MPA-001/IP-P00388/2017-18/10706
9. ADDRESS AND E-MAIL OF THE LIQUIDATOR, AS REGISTERED WITH THE BOARD	C 1201, Salarpuria Magnifica, Old Madras Rd, Bangalore 560016 Email: mehra.ashwini@gmail.com Tel: + 91 1242620150/776/790
10. ADDRESS AND E-MAIL TO BE USED FOR CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE LIQUIDATOR	Correspondence Address: Mr. Ashwini Mehra, Liquidator Punj Lloyd Limited C/O Mr. Surendra Raj Gang GT Restructuring Services LLP L-41, Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110001 Email: LQ.Punj@in.gt.com Tel: + 91 1242620150/776/790 For submission of Claims, Kindly upload your claims on the link given below: <a href="https://ipclaims.wct.in">https://ipclaims.wct.in</a> OR email at <a href="mailto:claims.punj@in.gt.com">claims.punj@in.gt.com</a>
11. LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF CLAIMS	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
Notice is hereby given that the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi has ordered the commencement of liquidation of the M/s. Punj Lloyd Limited on 27 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 (Order was published on the official website of Hon'ble NCLT on 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2022). The stakeholders of M/s. Punj Lloyd Limited are hereby called upon to submit a proof of their claims, on or before 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2022 to the liquidator at the address mentioned against item 10. The financial creditors shall submit their proof of claims by electronic means only. All other stakeholders may submit the proof of claims in person, by post, by electronic means, or on the link as mentioned in item no. 10. Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties.	
Date: 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2022 Place: Bengaluru	Name of the Liquidator: Sd/- Mr. Ashwini Mehra
Form C- proof of claim by operational creditors except workmen and employees Form D- proof of claim by financial creditors Form E- proof of claim by a workman or employee Form F- proof of claim by authorised representative of workmen or employees Form G- proof of claim by any other stakeholder The above-mentioned forms can be downloaded from IBBI website. Alternatively, the forms are also available on the link given in item no. 10.	



## International

## Ukraine says fate of Donbas rests in battleground city

## Shelling and air strikes kill another 11 people around Ukraine

**KYIV:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the fate of the whole Donbas region hinges on the "very fierce" battle with Russian troops for the flashpoint eastern city of Severodonetsk.

Moscow's forces are concentrating their firepower on the strategically important industrial hub as part of efforts to capture a swathe of eastern Ukraine.

As shelling and air strikes killed another 11 people around the country, Ukraine said on Thursday that the western long-range artillery it has been begging for would end the fight for Severodonetsk in days.

In his evening address to the nation on Wednesday, Zelensky said the battle for the city was "very fierce... very difficult. Probably one of the most difficult throughout this war. In many ways, the fate of our Donbas is being decided there."

Following days of raging street battles, Ukrainian officials conceded that Russian troops control a large part of Severodonetsk and that their own forces might have to pull back due to constant shelling.

The cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk, which are separated by a river, were the last areas still under Ukrainian control in Lugansk. Lysychansk is still in Ukrainian hands but under fierce Russian bombardment.

After being repelled from Kyiv following their February 24 invasion, Russian President Vladimir Putin's troops have refocused their offensive on the Donbas region, comprising Lugansk and Donetsk.

## 'Very primitive'

Part of the Donbas had already been held by pro-

Russian separatists since 2014. At the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres added his voice to increasingly dire warnings about the war's impact.

"For people around the world, the war is threatening to unleash an unprecedented wave of hunger and destitution, leaving social and economic chaos in its wake," he said. Severodonetsk appeared close to being captured just days ago but outgunned Ukrainian forces launched counterattacks and managed to hold out.

Lugansk regional governor Serhiy Gaiday said Western artillery would help secure a Ukrainian victory, echoing Kyiv's repeated calls for more military aid.

"As soon as we have long-range artillery to be able to conduct duels with Russian artillery, our special forces can clean up the city in two to three days," he said.

Gaiday added that Ukrainian forces in the city remained "highly motivated" and that "everyone is holding their positions", while describing Russian tactics as "very primitive." The United States and Britain have announced they are providing Kyiv with long-range precision artillery batteries, defying warnings from Putin.

## Global food crisis

The Ukrainian presidency said four people were killed and five more wounded in a Russian air strike on Toshkivka, a village around 25 kilometres (14 miles) south of Severodonetsk. Four more people were killed in fighting in Donetsk, and two were killed by shelling in the north-eastern city of Kharkiv, it said. Another person was killed in the Mykolayiv region in the south.

Russia's defence ministry meanwhile said it had tar-

geted a Ukrainian training centre for "foreign mercenaries" in the Zhytomyr region.

Zhytomyr governor Vitaliy Bunechko confirmed a Russian strike overnight in the town of Novograd-Volynskiy but did not mention a training centre and said he had no information about victims.

The shockwaves from the Ukraine conflict continue to reverberate, especially from a looming global food crisis.

Russia and Turkey made little headway in striking a deal to secure safe passage for grain exports stuck in Ukraine.

At the request of the United Nations, Turkey has offered its services to escort maritime convoys from Ukrainian ports, despite the presence of mines.

"We are ready to do this in cooperation with our Turkish colleagues," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters in Ankara.

Lavrov's Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu called Russian demands for an end to sanctions to help grain onto the world market "legitimate".

## 'Everyone has run away'

But Kyiv, which was not represented at the Ankara talks, blamed "Russian aggression, not sanctions" for high grain prices.

Before the war, Ukraine was a major exporter of wheat, corn and sunflower oil.

The situation on the ground in other parts of the Donbas is increasingly desperate.

In the city of Bakhmut, an unoccupied school building was reduced to a smouldering wreck after being shelled



**LYSYCHANSK, Ukraine:** A woman holds her baby as she waits to board a bus and evacuates from the city of Lysychansk in the eastern Ukraine region of Donbas on June 9, 2022, as Russian forces have for weeks been concentrating their firepower on Severodonetsk and its sister city of Lysychansk across the river. —AFP

Wednesday, with burnt books visible among the rubble, according to AFP journalists. No injuries or deaths were reported. In Severodonetsk's twin city Lysychansk, residents who had chosen to stay were facing fierce Russian bombardments.

"Every day there are bombings and every day something burns. A house, a flat... And there is nobody to help me," 70-year-old Yuriy Krasnikov told AFP.

"I tried to go to the city authorities, but nobody's there, everyone has run away." —AFP

## Family of UK man missing in Amazon call for deeper search

**LONDON:** The family of a British journalist missing in the Amazon urged British and Brazilian authorities in London on Thursday to step up their efforts to find him.

Dom Phillips, 57, a regular contributor to The Guardian, and Bruno Pereira, 41, a specialist in indigenous peoples, were reported missing on Sunday after they ventured into the middle of the Amazon rainforest.

"Where is Dom Phillips? Where is Bruno Pereira?" asked the journalist's sister, Sian Phillips, in a statement to the media during a gathering of around 30 people in front of Brazil's embassy in London. "We want the UK authorities to put pressure on the Brazilian government," she added, before she and other family members were received by the ambassador.

"We want to carry on with the search. We want to find out what is happening to them and we want anyone responsible for any criminal act to be brought to justice. We want a persistent deep and open investigation," she added. She blamed the Brazilian authorities for delaying the search but said they "all have hope" that the pair will be found. "He is a great writer and journalist. He is a caring man. He cares about the environment. He loves Brazil," Phillips said of her brother.

"He's a great guy and we love him with all



**MANAUS, Brazil:** General Placido (center) speaks between Eduardo Alexandre Fontes (right), Regional Superintendent of Amazonas State Federal Police and Colonel Muniz during a press conference regarding a missing reporter and indigenous expert in the Amazon rainforest, in Manaus, Brazil, on June 8, 2022. —AFP

our heart". The Brazilian authorities said they are hopeful of finding the men alive but do not exclude any outcome, including that of homicide, in a region where trafficking is rife. High-profile personalities and environmental and human rights groups have rallied to the cause, urging President Jair Bolsonaro to step up the search.

"We've been assured that everything has been done that can be done," Paul Sherwood, Phillips' brother-in-law, told AFP. Phillips and Pereira pair went missing in the Javari Valley in Amazonas state, located in the west of the Amazon basin, near Peru. The remote region is experiencing an escalation in armed violence due to the presence of miners, gold diggers, poachers and drug traffickers. —AFP

## Medvedev: Russia's reforming president turned arch-hawk

**MOSCOW:** Dmitry Medvedev as Russian president chomped on a burger at an American diner with Barack Obama, praised independent media and made ambitious promises of reform to create a more open Russia. But with the Kremlin's war against Ukraine raging for over three months, he now vows to make enemies of Russia "disappear", warns of military strikes on the West and darkly comments the "horsemen of the apocalypse" are on their way.

What happened to Medvedev, 56, president from 2008-2012 and premier from 2012-2020, once seen by admirers as Russia's great hope for reform? His path is also emblematic of that of Russia over the last two decades, as the country swung from a potential reliable member of the international system to the current isolation, inwardness and radicalism.

"Dmitry Medvedev is, it seems, trying to demonstrate his relevance-and loyalty-in a system that has become markedly more hawkish and less tolerant of shades of grey," said Ben Noble, associate professor of Russian Politics at University College London.

As president, Medvedev never stepped out of the shadow of Vladimir Putin, his fellow Saint Petersburg to whom he owes his political career. Putin in 2008 had to switch jobs, becoming premier in order not to break constitutional rules, with Medvedev assuming the presidency. Putin returned to the Kremlin in 2012 as Medvedev stepped aside.

He became prime minister-dubbed a Putin-Medvedev "castling" in Russia-before becoming deputy chairman of the national security council eight years later.



**As president, Medvedev never stepped out of the shadow of Vladimir Putin to whom he owes his political career. — AFP**

But the presidency of Medvedev-which now appears to belong to a different epoch-still contained remarkable gestures towards change. He championed a "reset" of relations with Washington that saw Obama visit Moscow in 2009 and Medvedev the US the next year, famously being presented with an iPhone in Silicon Valley by Apple founder Steve Jobs.

In April 2011, he popped into the studios of independent TV channel Dozhd (Rain), giving an interview and declaring it a "great place" as his Kremlin sought to cautiously cultivate independent media.

He attempted to take on the mantle of reforming Tsar Alexander II who abolished serfdom, saying Russia's current hydrocarbon-dependent economic model was at a "dead end" while political freedom "cannot be put off for another day". Medvedev boasted of an affinity with Western culture, proclaiming to be a fan of US rock band Linkin Park and seizing the chance to meet his music heroes like Bono of U2 and Deep Purple. —AFP

## Zionist entity, UAE leaders hold talks...

Continued from Page 1

normalized relations with Zionists in 2020, also comes after the two countries struck a free-trade deal last month and as his governing coalition faces a serious challenge from the right-wing opposition.

There was no prior announcement of the trip, which Bennett's office described as a "snap visit" at the invitation of Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the UAE's newly appointed president. Speaking before leaving Zionist entity, Bennett hailed the International Atomic Energy Agency for its motion condemning Iran's lack of cooperation with the UN body.

Approved by 30 members of the IAEA board with only Russia and China voting against, the motion was the first criticizing Iran since 2020, and came as talks flounder on reviving an accord aimed at curbing Tehran's nuclear ambitions. "We see here a firm stance by the countries of the world regarding the distinction between good and evil, as they clearly

state that Iran is concealing things," Bennett said, according to a statement from his office.

Concern about Iran, including its alleged nuclear program, was widely viewed as a factor that led the UAE to forge ties with Zionist entity under the US-brokered deals known as the Abraham Accords. The UAE was the first Gulf country to normalize relations with Zionist entity and only the third Arab nation to do so after Egypt and Jordan. Bennett and Sheikh Mohammed discussed investment, food security and "other vital sectors", the UAE's official WAM news agency said, without giving details.

Bennett also expressed his condolences over the death last month of Sheikh Khalifa, the UAE's long-ailing ruler who was replaced by Sheikh Mohammed, already the de facto leader. The free-trade agreement signed in May-(Zionists' first with an Arab state)-abolished customs duties on more than 95 percent of products exchanged between the two sides.

Two-way trade last year totaled some \$900 million dollars, according to Zionist figures. Talks for the free-trade agreement began in November and concluded after four rounds of negotiations. Bennett and Sheikh Mohammed met twice last year, in Abu Dhabi in December and in Egypt. — AFP

## Palestinian killed by Zionist...

Continued from Page 1

More than 1.1 million shekels (\$328,000) was confiscated, the army added. "During the operation, dozens of Palestinians hurled explosive devices, Molotov cocktails and rocks at the soldiers, who responded with riot dispersal means and live fire. A hit was identified," the army continued, without commenting specifically on the Palestinian fatality.

In recent weeks, the Zionist army has been conducting near daily operations across the West Bank,

making multiple arrests. The most recent operation, conducted overnight, involved nine arrests, the army said. Nineteen people, mostly civilians - including 18 inside Zionist entity and a Jewish settler - have been killed in attacks by Palestinians and Arabs in Zionist entity since late March.

Security forces have responded with raids inside Zionist entity and in the West Bank, particularly in and around Jenin. Three Arab attackers and a police commando have been killed. Forty Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank - suspected militants but also non-combatants, including an Al Jazeera journalist who was covering a raid in Jenin and bystanders. Separately in Gaza on Thursday, the army reported that gunshots fired from the blockaded strip landed in a field inside Zionist entity. No one was injured. — AFP

## IAEA warns as Iran removes...

Continued from Page 1

Wednesday's motion - approved by 30 of the 35 members of the IAEA board of governors, with only Russia and China voting against - was the first to criticize Iran since June 2020. Iran's foreign ministry criticized the resolution - submitted by the United States, Britain, France and Germany - as a "political, unconstructive and incorrect action". The resolution came after the IAEA said Iran continued to fail to explain adequately the previous discovery of traces of enriched uranium at three sites which Tehran had not declared as having hosted nuclear activities.

Iran, which had already responded angrily to Grossi's decision to visit the Zionist entity ahead of the board of governors meeting, accused the watchdog of relying too much on "fabricated" the Zionist entity's intelligence reports. The Zionist entity's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett welcomed the IAEA's censure of Iran. "We see here a firm stance by the countries of the world regarding the distinction between good and evil, as they clearly state that Iran is concealing things," Bennett said before heading to the United Arab Emirates, a fellow Iran critic, for a previously unannounced visit on Thursday.

After the resolution was adopted, the US, Britain, France and Germany urged Iran "to fulfill its legal obligations and cooperate with the IAEA". The US State Department said that if confirmed, Iran's reported counter-measures were "extremely regrettable" and "counterproductive" to attempts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. The foreign ministry in Tehran said besides deactivating the cameras in response to the IAEA censure motion, Iran has also installed additional advanced centrifuges for uranium enrichment.

The landmark agreement set limits to Iran's nuclear activities in return for relief from international sanctions. But it has been in disarray since then US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed crippling sanctions. In response, Iran, which has repeatedly denied any ambition to develop a nuclear weapons capability, began rolling back on its own commitments under the deal.

European capitals have expressed mounting concern over how far Iran has gone in resuming nuclear activities since the US began reimposing sanctions. Iran has built up large stockpiles of enriched uranium, some of it enriched to levels far higher than those needed for nuclear power generation. The IAEA head said on Monday it would be "a matter of just a few weeks" before Iran could obtain sufficient material needed for a nuclear weapon if it continues to develop its program. — AFP

## Pro-Russia rebels sentence foreign...

Continued from Page 1

was "probably one of the most difficult throughout this war. In many ways, the fate of our Donbas is being decided there." Up to 100 Ukrainian soldiers were being killed every day in frontline fighting and as many as 500 wounded, Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said. The city of Lysychansk, which is separated from Severodonetsk by a river, is still in Ukrainian hands but under fierce Russian bombardment.

After being repelled from Kyiv following their February 24 invasion, Russian President Vladimir Putin's troops have refocused their offensive on the Donbas. Pro-Russian separatists have held part of that region since 2014. Moscow, which has repeatedly warned the West against getting involved in



## International

# Another member of Sri Lanka's ruling clan quits in fresh crisis

## Basil Rajapaksa denies responsibility for the economic crisis

COLOMBO: Another member of Sri Lanka's ruling family quit public office on Thursday, denying responsibility for an economic crisis that has caused severe hardship in the island nation.

Basil Rajapaksa was once nicknamed "Mr Ten Percent" in a BBC interview, in reference to commissions he allegedly skimmed from government contracts. He has insisted that he had committed no wrongdoing in office. The 71-year-old had until April served as finance minister under President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, his elder brother, who has stared down months of protests demanding his resignation for economic mismanagement. "I entered parliament to manage the economy, but since I am no longer the finance minister, there is no point in remaining an MP," Basil told reporters in Colombo.

During the younger Rajapaksa's tenure, Sri Lanka began to suffer acute shortages of food, fuel, medicines and other essential goods that continue to this day. The crisis was sparked by dwindling foreign currency reserves-blamed on unsustainable tax cuts brought in by the president in 2019 — that left importers unable to pay for goods.

Queues for petrol at filling stations have stretched for hours and sometimes even days, while many businesses have shut because they have run out of diesel fuel to power generators during prolonged blackouts. Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt shortly after Basil left the finance ministry and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout.

But Basil insisted that he was not responsible for the country's painful downturn. "I did not create the crisis, it was already there when I took over the finance ministry," he said. Basil, also a citizen of the United States, was nominated to parliament for a second time in 2021 after his brother Gotabaya scrapped constitutional provisions barring dual citizens from becoming legislators.

On Thursday he said he was motivated to return to



COLOMBO: Former Sri Lanka's finance minister Basil Rajapaksa, the younger brother of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, speaks during a press conference to announce his resignation as member of parliament, in Colombo on June 9, 2022. — AFP

parliament to clear his name and noted authorities had last week withdrawn a long-running corruption investigation against him. The probe centered on claims that he had amassed wealth and assets which could not be explained by income from his government salary. Basil's announcement comes a month after the resignation of his elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa as the island's prime minister.

Mahinda stepped down on May 9 after his supporters attacked peaceful protesters in the capital Colombo, sparking violence that saw at least nine people killed and arson attacks on dozens of homes belonging to government lawmakers. A replacement for Basil was not immediately named, but sources from his party said he could soon be succeeded by Dhammika Perera, a casino magnate and Rajapaksa loyalist. —AFP

## Female Mozambican force policing violence against women

MANICA, Mozambique: An angry husband grabs his wife and raises his fist to strike her. But the gesture isn't real—the man is a participant in a training exercise, and in this drill he's been stopped by two women dressed in traditional skirts who volunteer for a Mozambican police unit. It's part of a scheme designed to educate women in a remote region of central Mozambique about gender-based violence. The project seeks to change perceptions in a country where half of all women are married before they are 18 and, according to UN figures, more than one woman in five has suffered violence. The sense of helplessness among victims is pervasive, for few ever file charges.

Eighteen-year-old Fatima is a survivor who was forced into a marriage at age 15. "My husband beat me but my mother told me to stay," she said, shyly. She was able to leave when her husband was finally jailed.

In 2009, a law was introduced to punish violence against women, but implementation has been slow, especially in remote areas. Every one of the trainees enrolled in the scheme in Manhene village in Manica district said they had been attacked.

### Talk and the law

The project is part of an effort by the community to change things, using a mix of verbal dissuasion and awareness programs backed by the power of the law. Since 2011, a civilian policing unit made up entirely of women—originally set up to search female suspects and if necessary arrest them—has retrained. It is empowered to arrest offenders in violence against women and

detain them while waiting for police to arrive from the nearest town.

But the team's main approach is to talk and dial down the confrontation. And they say they're having impressive results. "At first there was a lot of resistance from men. But after 10 years, and lots of talking, explaining and raising awareness, we see less violence," said Elisa Eduardo, the brigade's coordinator. "Now we only have about one case a month."

Her unit rarely needs to use force. Most conflicts are defused verbally. Their priority is to educate and assist the women, rather than punish their aggressors.

With local authorities poorly trained to settle gender-based violence, three-quarters of Mozambicans resort to community courts to resolve conflicts, according to UNICEF. Near the community's makeshift jail, a separate room has been set up for victims. Here they can receive care and testify in privacy and safety—something that was unthinkable not long ago.

### Weight of tradition

Silence is often the watchword in rural Mozambique. If they dare to complain about the abuse they face at home or on the street, women tend to find little support from their families. "Before this, they didn't see their abuse as oppression," Eduardo said. "They thought these bad things were because of tradition." The volunteer force receives help and financial backing from a local organization called Lemusica, an acronym from Portuguese words that mean "Get up, woman, and follow your way." The group also offers shelter to children and teenagers in the regional capital Chimoio.

Lemusica's emphasis is on education and emancipation—but this sometimes meets resistance in rural villages. "The patriarchal system teaches us that women have no voice, no power to make decisions and that they have nothing important to do in their lives," said Achia Anaiva, Lemusica's president. —AFP



MANICA, Mozambique: Women from the Mahnene community gather and speak during a training session on prevention and awareness for violence against women in Manica Province, Mozambique on May 18, 2022. — AFP

## Jihadists kill 23 in northeast Nigeria

KANO, Nigeria: Jihadists have killed at least 23 men in Nigeria's northeast Borno state in the latest violence to hit the conflict-ridden region, militia sources said Thursday. Fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) seized the men on Tuesday as they searched for scrap metal as part of a 50-strong group in the Magdala village in the Dikwa district, they said.

The incident was reported only on Thursday because telecom towers destroyed by jihadists have slowed communication in the area. "For now 23 bodies have been recovered and they were all slaughtered by the terrorists," militia leader Babakura Kolo told AFP.

"Three people made it back to Dikwa while the fate of the remaining 24 is still unknown," he said.

There were fears that the missing men had been

taken hostage by the militants, said another militiaman Ibrahim Liman. He said search teams were combing the bushes as the missing men "could have been shot dead while trying to flee". Nigerian military has recently intensified ground and air attacks against ISWAP and rival Boko Haram and said it had killed several high-profile commanders. This week's killings could have been revenge, as the jihadists accuse metal scavengers of passing information on their positions to the military, the militiamen said.

Last month, 30 metal scavengers in Mudu village in the same district were killed by jihadists.

ISWAP split from mainstream Boko Haram in 2016. The two groups have increasingly been targeting civilians, particularly loggers, farmers and herders, accusing them of spying on them for the military and the local militias fighting them. The jihadist violence has killed over 40,000 people and displaced around two million from their homes in the northeast since 2009, according to the UN. —AFP

## N Korea's missile tests cost up to \$650m: Report

SEOUL: North Korea has spent up to \$650 million on missile tests this year—enough money to pay for a COVID-19 vaccination for the impoverished country's entire population, a government-affiliated think tank in Seoul said Thursday. Pyongyang has conducted a record-breaking 18 weapons tests this year, and continued to launch missiles even after confirming its first COVID infections in May, with more than four million cases of what authorities term "fever" now reported.

Kim Jong Un's regime spent an estimated \$400 million to \$650 million on developing and testing the 33 missiles it fired this year, according to a report by the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses.

The money would "have made it possible to make up for this year's food shortage, or provide a single dose of COVID-19 vaccination for all North Koreans", said the report. North Korea struggles with chronic food shortages, which have been exacerbated by a years-long self-imposed coronavirus blockade, coupled with biting international sanctions over its weapons programs.

Despite state media reports claiming COVID is under control, the World Health Organization warned last week they "assume that situation is getting worse not better". Experts have said the outbreak could trigger a major health crisis in the country, which has one of the world's worst health-care systems. North Korea reported its first Omicron cases on May 12 and the virus has since torn through its unvaccinated population of 25 million, with state media confirming Thursday more than 4.3 million cases of "fever" in total.

"As required by the maximum emergency anti-epidemic system, we demand all staff strictly abide by anti-pandemic rules and regulations," sanitation official Kim Hye Kyong told AFP in Pyongyang Thursday as hazmat-clad workers sprayed down trolley buses. Early in the pandemic, Pyongyang repeatedly rejected offers of Covid vaccines, including from the WHO, and more recently has ignored new offers of medical assistance and jabs from Seoul and Washington.

Pyongyang's state media—which typically reports on successful weapons tests 24 hours later—has not reported on any of the country's recent missile launches. This means most North Koreans will know very little "about how many resources their government has been blasting into the sea", Sokeel Park, South Korea country director at Liberty in North Korea, said on Twitter.

North Koreans have been kept in the dark about military spending even as they deal "with the pandemic, shortages from two years of lockdown, and skyrocketing medicine prices", he added. US and South Korean officials also have been warning for weeks that Kim's regime is preparing to carry out a fresh nuclear test. Wendy Sherman, US deputy secretary of state, on Tuesday said there would be a "swift and forceful" response if Pyongyang goes ahead with its seventh nuclear test. —AFP

## Taiwan welcomes fourth US arms sale under Biden

TAIPEI: Taiwan on Thursday welcomed US approval of a \$120 million sale of naval equipment that the two allies said would bolster the island's "combat readiness" and ability to work with American forces. Self-ruled, democratic Taiwan lives under constant threat of invasion by authoritarian China, which views the island as part of its territory to be retaken one day-by force if necessary.

Under a law passed by Congress, the United States is required to sell Taiwan military supplies to ensure its self-defense against Beijing's vastly larger armed forces. US President Joe Biden, meanwhile, has come under bipartisan pressure to deepen ties with Taiwan as Washington vies for influence in the Asia-Pacific region to counter China.

Washington announced Wednesday it had approved the sale of spare and repair parts for ships and ship systems, as well as "logistical technical assistance", all of which would enhance Taiwan's "interoperability with the United States and other allies". "The proposed sale will contribute to the sustainment of the recipient's surface vessel fleet, enhancing its ability to meet current and future threats," the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement. It would be the fourth arms sale to Taiwan under Biden, and the third this year.

### 'Practical needs'

Taipei on Thursday said the deal was expected to take effect in one month. The sale would help Taiwan's ships "maintain proper equipment... and meet the practical needs of combat readiness tasks in light of recent frequent activities by Chinese aircraft and warships around our sea and air", Taipei's defense ministry said in a statement.

China has ramped up its saber-rattling since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016. She rejects its stance that the island is part of Chinese territory. Its foreign ministry on Thursday said Beijing "firmly opposes and strongly condemns" the arms sale. —AFP



## Australia lashes out after US nuclear subs plan revealed

SYDNEY: Australia's government lashed out at "loose" comments by the former defense minister Thursday, after he revealed sensitive plans to buy US nuclear-powered submarines over their British rivals. Peter Dutton, who left office as defense minister a few weeks ago after his conservative coalition lost elections, disclosed his previously secret plans to choose the US Virginia-class submarines.

The multibillion-dollar project is the centerpiece of Australian efforts to toughen its defenses in the face of a more belligerent China under President Xi Jinping. The comments by Dutton, who is now opposition leader, were "damaging to Australia's national interest", said the new defense minister and deputy prime minister, Richard Marles. "The government has made no decision on the preferred submarine. All options are on the table," he said in a statement sent to AFP. The choice of contractor—Britain or the United States—will have a significant economic impact and would closely enmesh the Australian navy with that of the chosen nation. Dutton wrote in The Australian that he had planned to buy two Virginia-class submarines from the United States by 2030 and build another eight to bring the total fleet strength to 10.

He said it became "obvious" to him as defense minister that the US submarines were a better choice, in an article apparently aimed at pushing the new government into following his plan. Australia's former government had agreed to acquire either US or British nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines as part of a three-way defense alliance known as AUKUS sealed last September. Australia is conducting an 18-month study of its nuclear-powered submarine options as part of the AUKUS deal. Marles described Dutton's statements as "rank politics".

"The comments are loose and undermine the AUKUS agreement," he said. The cost of building even a smaller fleet of eight submarines—Australia's original plan—has been estimated by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute think-tank to be Aus\$70 billion (US\$50 billion) at an "absolute minimum", before accounting for inflation.

### 'Very unusual'

"Clearly these were confidential discussions that he had with the Americans which he was not prepared to disclose while he was in office, and yet he did so afterwards," said Sam Roggeveen, director of the Lowy Institute's international security programme.

The US submarines were capable of launching missiles vertically and were based on a "mature design", Dutton wrote. The British Astute-class option, however, involved a new design with "inevitable" cost blowouts and design faults, he said. Dutton said nuclear-powered submarines are needed to compete with China because they are stealthier than Australia's diesel-electric vessels, with no need to surface to recharge batteries. —AFP



# Business

FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2022

## WB: GCC must move towards a low-carbon growth model

### Kuwait expected to achieve a growth rate of 5.7% in H1 2022

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Economic Society (KES) on Wednesday hosted a seminar in partnership with the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University and the World Bank Country office in Kuwait to discuss the World Bank Economic report for the GCC countries (Spring 2022).

Issam Aboulseiman, World Bank Country Director of the GCC countries, Middle East and North Africa, said that the World Bank report which was issued under the title of "Achieving Pledges Related to Climate Change" describes the economies of the GCC countries that have succeeded in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic during 2021 and early 2022.

"In this report, we focus particularly on the steps needed to move towards a new low-carbon growth model, including reconsidering energy subsidies and fiscal consolidation, and the importance of obtaining appropriate prices for an enabling environment that can put the private sector at the forefront of the new growth model," he said.

Aboulseiman noted that international pressure due to the war in Ukraine and economic sanctions may lead to additional investments for GCC countries to expand oil and gas production in an addi-



**KUWAIT:** Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Economic Society, Khaled Al-Mutairi.

and public authorities. The report pointed out that it is more appropriate for Kuwait to take advantage of the opportunity of the public financial conditions to diversify the economy from oil and push towards structural reforms.

In his opening speech, Chairman of the board of directors of Kuwait Economic Society, Khaled Al-Mutairi said that the society will continue its active role by using independent professional methods to overcome the challenges that are facing Kuwait's national economy, through positive interaction and meaningful dialogue with specialists and those who are interested in economic affairs.



**KUWAIT:** Regional Director of the GCC Countries of the World Bank Issam Aboulseiman speaks during the seminar.

He pointed out, "After the GCC countries have witnessed a sharp decline in economic growth in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were able to overcome the crisis through vaccination campaigns and easing the restrictions related to the pandemic, which resulted in the economic recovery in 2021 in all the GCC countries."

He added, "Public financial deficits witnessed a remarkable improvement. It is expected that the GCC countries will achieve growth in economic activity in 2022."

Dean of the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University, Mohammad Zainal, said that



**KUWAIT:** Dean of the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University, Mohammad Zainal

the current developments such as challenges and new work programs imposed on the government institutions and private sectors, on regional, local, and international levels, which must be dealt with.

"The College of Business administration at Kuwait University continuously seeks to have an effective and essential role in supporting reform and economic development programs by providing solutions and alternatives to overcome economic and social challenges in partnership with the World Bank to support the Kuwaiti economy through exchange of experiences and studies," he mentioned.



### KES seminar discusses World Bank report

tional effort to support the energy security of major importers, particularly the GCC countries with significant spare capacities such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, adding "This will lead to a real dilemma, as it may delay the necessary diversification towards a non-hydrocarbon economy in the GCC countries."

The World Bank report expected Kuwait to achieve a growth rate of 5.7 percent by the end of the first half of this year, indicating that the growth is expected to decline by 3.6 percent during the year 2023 and then to 2.5 percent during the year 2024. Meanwhile, the real GDP is expected to grow by an average of 3 percent in 2023/2024 due to the increase in oil exports and the credit growth.

The report expected that the consumer price index (inflation) would reach 3.6 percent during the current year, while it will return to 2.8 percent next year, and then to 2.3 percent during the year 2024. It said that oil production would increase by 8.6 percent during the current year with OPEC+ raising production quotas and increasing the production capacity of the Al-Zour refinery.

While the report predicts a large surplus in Kuwait's total public financial balance to 13 percent of the GDP this year, which would allow a partial settlement of the arrears amounting to \$7.7 billion owed by the Ministry of Finance, other ministries



**KUWAIT:** A view of the audience attending the seminar organized by the Kuwait Economic Society (KES) on Wednesday. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## IMF likely to cut global growth estimate: Official

**WASHINGTON:** The IMF expects to once again cut its forecast for world growth this year amid a continued deterioration of conditions in the global economy, a fund official said Thursday.

"So much has happened and (is) happening very quickly," IMF spokesperson Gerry Rice told reporters, including the ongoing war in Ukraine, accelerating inflation and a steeper-than-expected slowdown in China. The fund in April cut the 2022 GDP estimate to 3.6 percent from 4.4 percent, but now "we're seeing this confluence of crises... that could lead us to revise down further," he said.

"We see the global economy headed into a growth slowdown," Rice said, adding that "a number of countries may be looking at recession." The World Bank on Tuesday slashed its projection by more than a point to 2.9 percent, and warned that the United States faces a worrisome return of 1970s-style "stagflation" with tepid growth, high joblessness and surging prices.

But Rice downplayed that risk, noting that while the United States is "facing some severe headwinds" including inflation, "growth in the US economy continues to be strong."

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development likewise lowered its outlook due to the fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, cutting the GDP growth estimate to just 3.0 percent from 4.5 percent in December, but minimized the stagflation risk.



Gita Gopinath

The US Federal Reserve has been raising interest rates aggressively and is expected to approve another big hike next week as it tries to cool surging prices that jumped 8.3 percent in April.

The central bank is walking a fine line as it tries to slow the economy without tipping it into recession, and IMF number two Gita Gopinath on Wednesday said the Fed faces an "incredibly narrow path" and may have to raise rates steeply to tamp down inflation pressures.

Meanwhile, the IMF announced Wednesday that it had reached a staff-level agreement with Argentina on the first review of its massive loan package, paving the way for the country to access some \$4.03 billion. "The (staff-level) agreement is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board, which is expected to discuss it in the coming weeks," said Julie Kozack, deputy director of the IMF's Western Hemisphere Department. "Upon completion of the review, Argentina would have access to about US\$ 4.03 billion." In March, the IMF approved a 30-month credit program with Argentina totaling \$44 billion, with an immediate disbursement of \$9.66 billion.

Kozack noted that "all quantitative targets in the first quarter of 2022 were met" by Argentina, and that the South American country had also made progress on "the structural agenda and growth-enhancing reforms in line with program commitments, including on the energy front." — AFP

## Stocks extend losses as ECB eyes multiple rate hikes

**LONDON:** Stock markets moved deeper into the red on Thursday after the European Central Bank said it was planning a series of rate hikes from next month to tame runaway inflation in the single currency area. The ECB said after its policy meeting that it would raise interest rates for the first time in over a decade in July, bringing the curtain down on the eurozone's era of cheap money.

While the announcement had been widely anticipated, stock prices in Frankfurt, London and Paris — which had been weaker all morning — extended their losses and yields on eurozone countries' sovereign bonds moved higher. "Inflation expectations are higher than anticipated, which is worrying the markets and explains the rise in long-term rates," said Guillaume Truttmann, bond trader at Meeschaert Amillon.

Over on the other side of the Atlantic, Wall Street also opened lower. After refusing to act while other central banks around the world already started tightening monetary policy, ECB chief Christine Lagarde cautioned that the first quarter-point rate hike in July was not expected to have an immediate effect on inflation.

As a first step, the ECB said it would end its massive bond-buying stimulus as of July 1. The central bank also sharply upgraded its inflation forecasts for this year and next year while lowering the economic growth outlook. But for Clemens Fuest, head of the Ifo economic think tank in Munich, the move

comes too late.

"It is the right step, but it comes too late," he said. "It was not acceptable that, with an inflation rate of eight percent, the ECB stuck to negative interest rates and asset purchases." In foreign exchange, the euro softened against the dollar and pound. Inflation around the world has reached the highest levels in decades, fuelled largely by soaring oil and gas prices. Energy demand has surged as economies emerge from pandemic lockdowns, while supplies have been hit by the invasion of Ukraine by major producer Russia. Oil prices fell slightly on Thursday.

### 'Gloomy summer'

Traders were also awaiting US inflation data due Friday. Analysts expect the Federal Reserve to stick to its hawkish path and hike US interest rates by half a point for at least three more meetings this year as it tries to bring down American consumer prices.

"Until we reach peak inflation, which will trigger a less hawkish Fed and lower recession odds, it could be a gloomy summer for global stock pickers," forecast SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes. There was fresh uncertainty over the economic outlook in China as Covid fears linger over the world's second-biggest economy.

While data showed China's exports rebounded strongly in May, with factories restarting and supply chains untangling as Shanghai slowly emerged from a gruelling lockdown, the metropolis will Saturday shut a district of 2.7 million people for mass coronavirus testing. "There are lingering concerns that China's brisk recovery could be a false dawn given that the zero-Covid strategy is staying firmly in place and that could mean rolling lockdowns will continue," noted Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter. —AFP



Business

# ECB begins inflation fightback with July rate hike: Lagarde

## Wage growth has begun to pick up in eurozone

AMSTERDAM: The European Central Bank on Thursday said it would raise interest rates for the first time in over a decade next month to combat runaway inflation, bringing the curtain down on the eurozone's era of cheap money. ECB governors, exceptionally meeting in Amsterdam instead of Frankfurt, provided markets with an unexpectedly precise statement setting out their path to monetary policy normalization after years of ultra-low rates and easy credit.

The European Central Bank plans a series of rate hikes over the next months to battle sky-high inflation, President Christine Lagarde said Thursday, warning that the first rise in July will not immediately dampen soaring consumer prices. "Do we expect that July interest rate hikes will have an immediate effect on inflation? The answer to that is no," she told journalists. Rather, the bank was planning "a series of moves over the course of the next months," she said, in reference to planned rate rises.

Wages in the eurozone have begun to increase as workers in the bloc face record high inflation, Lagarde said Thursday, adding that the pay hikes could further accelerate as the economy strengthens. "Wage growth, including in forward-looking indicators, has started to pick up," Lagarde said at a press conference in Amsterdam after the ECB announced plans to raise rates in July to ward off spiraling price rises.

The bank's governing council then plans "to raise the key ECB interest rates by 25 basis points" at its next meeting on July 21, the ECB said in a statement. It will raise rates again in September, with the size dependent on the economic outlook. The last time the ECB hiked rates was in 2011.

"The ECB officially ends its long era of unconventional monetary policy," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski. Pressure had been growing on the ECB to take tough action after other major central banks like the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England already moved to rein in prices with aggressive rate hikes. Inflation in the 19-nation euro area rose to a record 8.1 percent in May, well above the ECB's two-percent target. The surge has largely been driven by the war in Ukraine, which has pushed up the cost of energy, food and raw materials around the globe. The ECB lowered its eurozone economic growth forecast while raising its projections for inflation.

"High inflation is a major challenge for all of us," the ECB said in a statement. Attention now shifts to ECB chief Christine Lagarde's afternoon press conference, where she will be grilled about the ECB's next moves.



AMSTERDAM: Christine Lagarde (center), President of the European Central Bank (ECB) and President of The Netherlands Bank (DNB) Klaas Knot (left) arrive for a press conference on Governing Council meeting focused on monetary policy in the euro zone in Amsterdam on June 09, 2022. — AFP

### 'Dampened growth'

The biggest challenge facing Lagarde right now is finding the right balance between raising borrowing costs to cool inflation, without jeopardizing the eurozone's already stuttering economy. Underscoring those worries, the ECB slashed its growth outlook for the 19-nation club to 2.8 percent in 2022 and 2.1 percent in 2023, from 3.7 and 2.8 percent previously.

The war in Ukraine "is disrupting trade, is leading to shortages of materials, and is contributing to high energy and commodity prices," it said, adding that "these factors will continue to weigh on confidence and dampen growth, especially in the near term." The July 1 end of its bond-buying scheme will draw a line under the last in a series of debt-purchasing measures worth a total of around five trillion euros (\$5.4 trillion) since 2014. Scrapping the scheme paves the way for what Lagarde has called a "lift off" in rates.

Of the ECB's three main rates, the so-called deposit rate currently stands at minus 0.5 percent—meaning lenders pay to park excess cash at the bank. Lagarde has said the ECB aims to exit eight years of negative rates by the end of September. "Today's decision

shows it's managed to find a compromise between the doves and the hawks," Brzeski said. "A 50 basis point rate hike in July seemed to be fended off by opening the door for 50 basis points in September."

### Strong labor market

The size of September's hike will depend to a large extent on how the outlook for the economy changes. Despite unveiling a downgraded forecast for economic growth on Thursday, the ECB expressed optimism over the longer term outlook. "Once current headwinds abate, economic activity is expected to pick up again," it said. "The conditions are in place for the economy to continue to grow on account of the ongoing reopening of the economy, a strong labor market, fiscal support and savings built up during the pandemic."

On inflation, the ECB said it expected consumer prices to soar to 6.8 percent in 2022, up from 5.1 percent in its previous forecast. Inflation is seen easing to 3.5 percent in 2023 and 2.1 percent in 2024 — both also higher than earlier estimates. "These projections indicate that inflation will remain undesirably elevated for some time," it said. — AFP

## Lebanon prosecutor requests charges against CB chief

BEIRUT: A Lebanese prosecutor probing central bank chief Riad Salameh on suspicion of financial misconduct has requested charges be issued against him based on preliminary investigation findings, a court official said Thursday. Lebanon opened a probe into Salameh's wealth last year, after the office of Switzerland's top prosecutor requested assistance in an investigation into more than \$300 million which he allegedly embezzled out of the central bank with the help of his brother.

On Thursday, prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat "concluded preliminary investigations into the central bank governor," a court official told AFP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the issue. "He transferred the case to the public prosecutor's office in Beirut and asked the court to charge Salameh, his brother and Salameh's secretary," the official added. The suggested charges include embezzlement of public funds, money laundering, illicit enrichment, tax evasion, fraud and forgery, the court official said. Lebanon's courts have already slapped Salameh with a travel ban and are investigating him in connection with several other cases.

Salameh's brother Raja posted bail of 100 billion Lebanese pounds (\$3.7 million) — a record figure—and was freed last month after two months' detention. He was arrested on March 17 by order of judge Ghada Aoun on charges of money laundering, embezzlement, illicit enrichment and smuggling large amounts of money out of the country. Salameh is among the top Lebanese officials widely blamed for an unprecedented financial crisis that the World Bank says is of a scale usually associated with wars. He also faces lawsuits in European countries, including France and Britain, on charges of financial misconduct. —AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 09 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	1,029	1,029	1,032	1,022	10	17,506,394	0	0.00%	8.37%	1,024	1,038	21.2	2.03	2.8%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	315	311	315	307	8	39,973,570	-3	-0.96%	17.04%	310	316	22.1	1.48	2.1%	1.17
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	222	218	222	217	5	12,064,315	-4	-1.80%	4.00%	217	224	32.1	0.66	1.7%	1.13
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	274	275	277	267	10	6,862,781	0	0.00%	15.04%	271	283	19.4	1.01	1.7%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	878	855	878	850	28	44,206,673	-23	-2.62%	13.04%	844	861	30.7	4.17	1.3%	1.25
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	817	803	822	797	25	7,673,264	-14	-1.71%	12.72%	803	813	64.2	3.97	0.6%	1.07
204	National Investments	Financial Services	339	294	339	287	52	28,804,789	-45	-13.27%	34.25%	289	310	6.5	0.93	15.0%	1.74
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	180	165	180	164	16	13,096,001	-12	-6.78%	16.20%	161	175	30.0	0.87	3.0%	0.90
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	108	104	108	103	5	7,344,022	-4	-3.70%	-11.86%	102	112	103.0	0.61	8.7%	1.16
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	159	152	160	150	10	16,741,183	-7	-4.40%	-12.54%	150	154	22.2	1.10	1.9%	1.00
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	814	794	814	785	29	3,615,347	-19	-2.34%	6.13%	787	825	17.4	1.87	1.7%	1.10
501	National Industries	Financial Services	304	300	304	296	8	24,213,180	-5	-1.64%	15.28%	300	308	4.3	1.32	4.0%	1.42
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,620	1,500	1,635	1,500	135	1,352,953	-150	-9.09%	72.22%	1,490	1,513	14.9	1.21	3.9%	0.79
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	1,086	1,056	1,090	1,056	34	2,556,121	-30	-2.76%	23.94%	1,049	1,089	14.2	1.99	5.6%	0.88
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	379	359	379	357	22	1,816,217	-10	-2.71%	3.46%	357	365	16.5	0.86	4.4%	0.98
603	Agility	Industrials	1,135	1,129	1,135	1,110	25	9,426,232	-6	-0.53%	19.47%	1,111	1,145	66.1	1.31	1.8%	1.40
605	Zain	Telecommunications	617	608	617	603	14	17,369,391	-9	-1.46%	2.18%	607	610	15.1	2.32	5.4%	0.88
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,140	3,128	3,140	3,100	40	404,350	-11	-0.35%	-2.98%	3,100	3,160	6.5	3.87	12.8%	0.67
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	216	205	217	203	14	4,810,617	-11	-5.09%	-5.96%	203	212	NULL	0.71	0.0%	1.15
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,937	1,899	1,940	1,890	50	841,912	-40	-2.06%	47.21%	1,880	1,939	25.3	15.54	1.7%	1.40
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	274	269	274	259	15	67,155,606	-6	-2.18%	6.44%	267	276	17.0	1.78	3.1%	1.74
821	Warba Bank	Banking	271	263	271	260	11	10,051,960	-8	-2.95%	-4.01%	260	269	30.7	1.43	0.0%	1.04
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	526	490	533	488	45	2,796,706	-40	-7.55%	-16.80%	490	519	23.8	1.35	3.2%	0.32
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	440	420	444	416	28	3,178,231	-27	-6.04%	2.30%	415	428	36.0	1.68	2.3%	0.71
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	215	216	218	214	4	4,371,560	1	0.47%	-5.26%	213	220	16.7	2.72	8.4%	0.52
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,563	2,529	2,563	2,470	93	335,086	-21	-0.82%	25.20%	2,483	2,600	28.4	9.62	2.6%	0.74
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	950	847	966	836	130	50,802,198	NA	NA	NA	-	860	NULL	NULL	NA	NULL

\* As of end of week closing



## Business

# China exports rebound in May as coronavirus controls ease

## Trade surplus around \$79 billion in May, up from \$51 billion in April

BEIJING: China's exports rebounded strongly in May, data showed Thursday, with factories restarting and supply chains untying as Shanghai slowly emerged from a grueling COVID lockdown. The economic hub started going under a lockdown in late March and most of its 25 million residents were confined to their homes for around two months as China persists with its zero-COVID strategy.

Strict movement restrictions in multiple cities—sometimes over just handfuls of cases—kept consumers at home and battered the economy, dragging retail sales, factory output and export growth to their lowest levels in about two years. But as curbs began to ease, overseas shipments from the world's second-biggest economy bounced back 16.9 percent on-year in May, up from 3.9 percent in April, according to customs data released on Thursday.

"The export rebound is actually quite surprising... I believe that's mainly because of the Shanghai port," said Iris Pang, ING's chief economist for Greater China. The world's busiest container port was running at around 90 percent capacity in late May, boosting shipments, she added.

The data suggests that China is "becoming

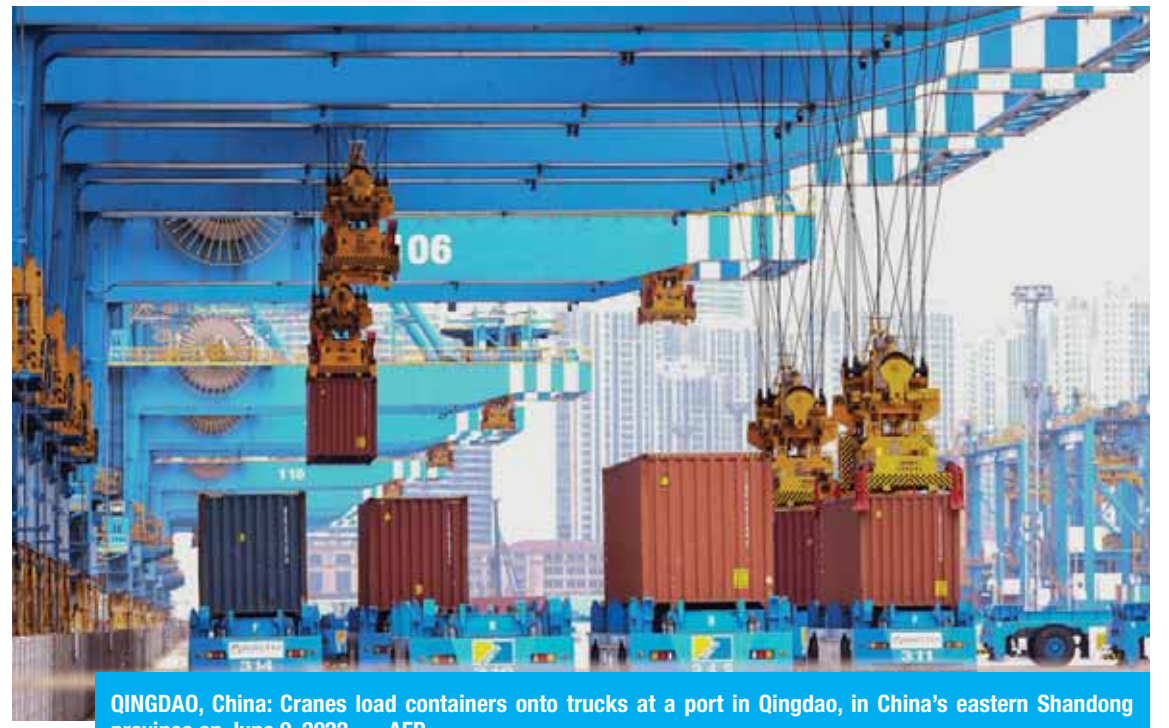
more agile at dealing with COVID flare-ups" while keeping exports running, said Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management.

But this could also mean "less incentive" for officials to move away from a zero-COVID strategy quickly, he added. Analysts polled by Bloomberg had expected a spike of around eight percent in exports.

"If (US) tariffs are lifted... there will be even stronger growth," Pang said, referring to remarks by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen that the United States is considering lifting some tariffs imposed during the Trump administration. Some observers warned that the rebound could be short-lived.

"Extensive disruptions in the Yangtze River Delta in the past couple of months and Beijing's determination to carry on with its zero-COVID strategy may cause some foreign customers to shift their orders to... neighboring countries," Nomura analysts said in a recent note. Shanghai's announcement Thursday that it will lock down a district of 2.7 million people reflected lingering risks. Imports rose 4.1 percent last month, according to customs data, also beating expectations.

China's trade surplus was around \$79 billion in May, up from \$51 billion in April, the Customs Administration said. —AFP



QINGDAO, China: Cranes load containers onto trucks at a port in Qingdao, in China's eastern Shandong province on June 9, 2022. —AFP

## Beijing dashes hopes it is reviewing Ant Group's IPO

BEIJING: Beijing on Thursday rebuffed reports it has started discussions over the potential revival of an initial public listing for Chinese financial giant Ant Group, in an apparent denial of claims that the scuttled IPO could be back on. The planned record-breaking IPO by Alibaba's digital-payments affiliate was pulled at the last minute amid a sweeping crackdown by Chinese authorities on the country's influential tech sector.

The scrutiny, which kicked off in late 2020, saw Alibaba hit with a record \$2.75 billion fine over the alleged unfair and anti-competitive practices. But following signs in recent weeks that the crackdown may be easing, Bloomberg reported earlier Thursday that financial regulators had started dis-

cussions about reviving the IPO. Citing a source familiar with the matter, Bloomberg said the state regulator had established a team to assess Ant's share sale plans—as well as nearing the last stage to issue a long-awaited license which could make the company regulated more like a bank.

Regulators appeared to pour water on the idea later Thursday, however. The Securities Regulatory Commission said in a brief statement that the work had not begun. The regulator "has not conducted evaluation and research work in this regard, but we support eligible platform companies to list at home and abroad," the statement said.

Ant Group, which was founded by China's most famous billionaire Jack Ma, did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AFP.

Ma has largely disappeared from public view in China after giving a speech that appeared to criticize state regulators just before the planned IPO. Chinese tech stocks have soared in recent weeks after reports that authorities are preparing to wrap up a probe into ride-hailing giant Didi.

Didi, once known as China's answer to Uber, got



into hot water after ploughing ahead with an initial public offering in the United States in June 2021, reportedly against the wishes of regulators in Beijing.

Official guidance in recent days has called for more "predictable regulation" in tech, suggesting that some segments of government are willing to signal more clearly ahead of policy changes. —AFP

## Lufthansa axes hundreds of flights over staff shortages

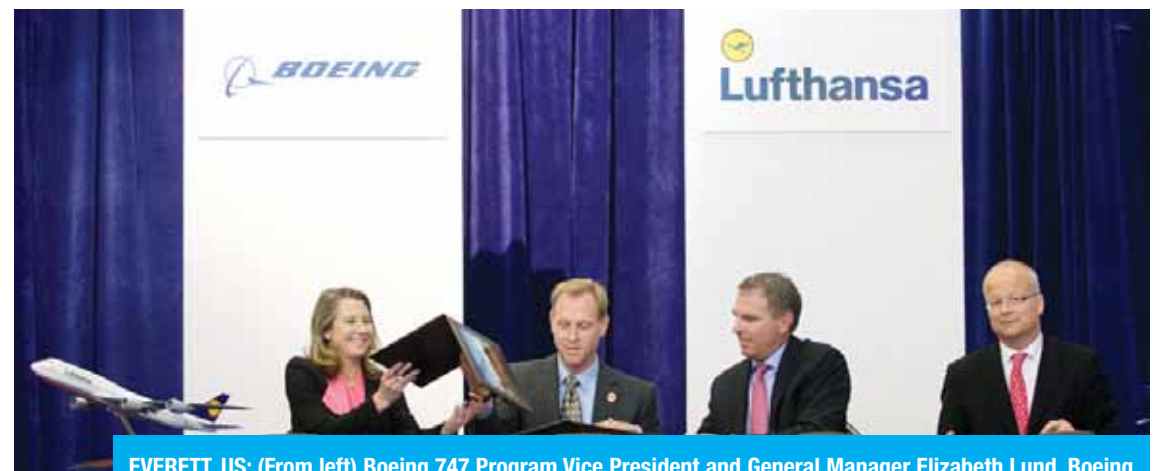
FRANKFURT: German national carrier Lufthansa said Thursday it was cancelling hundreds of flights during the summer holidays because of staff shortages as the industry attempts to bounce back from the pandemic. The company said in a statement it had seen a "jump in demand" as the coronavirus outbreak has eased, which "after the most severe crisis in aviation is good news".

However, it said that "infrastructure has not fully recovered", leading to "bottlenecks and staff shortages" in Europe, hitting airports, ground services, air traffic control and airlines. As a result Lufthansa said it had scrapped 900 German and European flights for July at its hubs in Frankfurt and Munich on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays—around five percent of its normal weekend capacity. Its carrier Eurowings axed "several hundred flights" for July. The company said passengers who had already booked flights would be informed and rescheduled.

It added that it was asking its customers to allow enough time at airports to deal with possible delays, use digital services as much as possible and reduce carry-on luggage. Lufthansa chief executive Carsten Spohr said last month the airline was projecting a record summer for tourist activity, with the latest data showing passenger numbers bouncing back from the coronavirus pandemic.

The number of passengers on Lufthansa flights had "more than quadrupled" in the first quarter to 13 million, from three million in 2021, Spohr said, when travel restrictions in many markets were more severe.

Lufthansa had said that ticket prices could rise as the cost of energy soars following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Increases in the prices for jet fuel were "too high to be offset by additional cost reductions", group



EVERETT, US: (From left) Boeing 747 Program Vice President and General Manager Elizabeth Lund, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Senior Vice President Pat Shanahan, Deutsche Lufthansa AG CEO Carsten Spohr and Lufthansa Executive Vice President Nico Buchholz take part in a signing ceremony for Boeing a 747-8 Intercontinental airliner to launch partner Lufthansa at the Boeing factory at Paine Field Airport May 1, 2012 in Everett, Washington. —AFP

chief financial officer Remco Steenbergen told a press conference. Higher energy costs meant "ticket prices will have to rise", Steenbergen said.

The carrier had already "pushed through a couple of price hikes" that have been "accepted" by business and leisure travelers alike, he added. Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr said the airline was projecting a record summer for tourist activity, with the latest data showing passenger numbers bouncing back from the coronavirus pandemic. Spohr said the number of passengers on Lufthansa flights had "more than quadrupled" in the first quarter to 13 million, from three million in 2021, when travel restrictions in many markets were more severe. "New bookings are increasing from week to week," he told a press conference.

"We are expecting strong growth in the summer and probably more holiday-makers than ever before," Spohr said. For business travel, the group is expecting traffic to reach "around 70 percent" of its pre-coronavirus level

by the end of the year, it said in a statement. In all, Lufthansa expects to offer "around 75 percent" of its pre-crisis capacity over the year.

The figure would be higher in the summer for popular tourist destinations, reaching 95 percent on short-haul routes in Europe and 85 on transatlantic services, the group said. Lufthansa also said Thursday it had seen a considerable improvement in its financial results for the first quarter, supported by the recovery in passenger numbers. The group recorded a net loss of 584 million euros (\$620 million) over the first three months of 2022, down from one billion euros in the same quarter last year. Lufthansa's cargo division had a "record result" in the first quarter, the carrier said, as demand for freight remained high amid turmoil in global supply chains. The segment recorded an operating result—a key measure of underlying profitability—of 495 million euros, up from 315 million euros in the first quarter of 2021. —AFP

## Zuckerberg staying at Meta helm for years 'makes sense': Clegg

NEW YORK: Mark Zuckerberg's presence at the helm of Facebook parent Meta for "many, many years" would be perfectly natural, his global affairs director has told AFP, even as the founders of many tech companies hand off to fresh blood. Succession at the mega company has been in the headlines in recent weeks with the announcement of the departure of Sheryl Sandberg after 14 years as the firm's number two.

But while the founders of companies like Amazon, Twitter and Google have all moved on, Zuckerberg has shown no sign of giving up the reins—despite raging criticism over privacy scandals and the rampant spread of misinformation across Facebook. Now as Meta rolls out its plans for the metaverse—the immersive virtual world that it con-

siders the future of the internet—there's no reason for the 38-year-old to go anywhere anytime soon, said Nick Clegg, the company's director of global affairs.

"It's a multi-year project. It would make sense to me that Mark Zuckerberg would want to continue, to build this new chapter of the company, and that's going to last for many years, many years," Clegg told AFP on the sidelines of the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles. "He is the founder of the company, of Meta, but he is also the architect of the new chapter, of this construction, of these augmented reality and virtual reality technologies."

Facebook bought virtual reality headset maker Oculus in 2014 and launched a social VR platform.

The technology has taken off in the gaming industry, and become popular among players of Fortnite and Roblox. But Clegg, a former British deputy prime minister, said the metaverse promised great opportunities in the fields of education and medicine, as well as entertainment.

For example, he said, teachers can take their students on a virtual trip through ancient Greece, and



Mark Zuckerberg

medics can learn sophisticated surgical techniques. And, he said, as hardware improves, the need for specialist equipment will diminish. "In years to come, people will be able to access these new technologies through their phones," he said.

"We are exploring how we can increase access to everyone and not just people who can afford the new and latest hardware." —AFP

## Rocketing petrol prices fuel British PM's woes

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday sought to reset his embattled leadership with a policy blitz to tackle Britain's cost-of-living crisis, including contentious new measures to boost home ownership. After narrowly surviving a no-confidence vote among his own Conservative MPs on Monday, Johnson is under pressure to turn the page on a series of scandals including lockdown-breaching parties in Downing Street.

In a speech later, he was to vow "more affordable energy, childcare, transport and housing", according to excerpts released by Downing Street. "And, while it's not going to be quick or easy, you can be confident that things will get better, that we will emerge from this a strong country with a healthy economy," Johnson added.

The scale of the inflationary crisis hitting millions of Britons was underlined as the price of filling up the average family car topped £100 (\$125) for the first time, according to data from the RAC motoring group. RAC spokesman Simon Williams called it "a truly dark day" for hard-pressed drivers, and urged the government to slash sales tax on petrol and diesel.

The government says much of the crisis is caused by factors beyond its control, such as the impact of the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine. But with two difficult by-elections coming up this month, unhappy Tory MPs want bolder measures including tax cuts after 40 percent of them voted against Johnson on Monday.

### Back to the 80s

Updating a signature policy of 1980s predecessor Margaret Thatcher, Johnson's speech was set to detail a plan to enable more low-income renters to buy their own social housing. Senior minister Michael Gove told Sky News that "home ownership is not just good for individuals, it's good for society overall". He vowed the measures would help redress a crippling shortage in housing stock that has seen both purchase and rental prices rocket well out of reach of many Britons, especially younger adults.

But the opposition Labour party noted that the plan would need billions in extra money, which Gove admitted was not on offer, relying instead on existing funding at a time when the Treasury is already trying to rein in government spending.

"By their own reckoning, this will help a few thousand families a year," senior Labour MP Lisa Nandy told BBC radio. "For those families that will be very welcome," she said, while warning it could make "the housing crisis worse for everybody else". Britain's newspapers honed in on the surging prices on Thursday, with the Guardian, Daily Mirror and Johnson's former employers at the Daily Telegraph featuring front-page stories on the record fuel costs. But the conservative Daily Mail declared that "emboldened Boris Johnson will cut bills left, right and centre in his most radical move yet to ease the cost-of-living crisis".

All the papers noted a warning from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that Britain must cut taxes or raise spending, as it forecast the country would have the weakest economic growth in the developed world next year.

Under current Conservative party rules, Johnson cannot be challenged again for a year, which leaves little time for any new leader to emerge before the next general election due by 2024. But Johnson's Tory enemies still appear to be manoeuvring, with reports that he faces a "war of attrition" and "vote strikes" to paralyze the government's legislative agenda. Such "vote strikes" hurt Theresa May's three-year stint in Downing Street, before she was brought down in 2019 by Johnson and his allies over how to execute Britain's exit from the European Union. —AFP





CAIRO: A troupe of whirling dervishes performs the traditional "tanoura" (skirt) dance during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, at the medieval Sultan al-Ghuri Complex (built in 1505) in the Islamic Cairo district of Egypt's capital on April 20, 2022. Egypt's kaleidoscopic whirling dervish performance is a world away from those of Turkey, who trace their origins to the teachings of Sufi poet and mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi. Though the Egyptian version of the art has become a festive occasion, most practitioners hold to the roots of the ritual in the mystical tradition of the Muslim Mevlevi order, founded in the 13th century by Rumi in Konya, present-day Turkey. Today, it is a staple of Egyptian tourism, with some dancers, particularly in hotels and entertainment venues, attaching lights to their skirts for an added surprise factor, to the delight of tourists and spectators. — AFP photos

## EGYPT'S TANOURA PUTS KALEIDOSCOPIC SPIN ON DERVISH TRADITION

In a 500-year-old stone theatre in the Egyptian capital, two young dervishes spin ceaselessly. Slowly, then all at once, they are consumed in a flurry of vivid fabrics. Born into a lineage of whirling dervishes, Mohamed Adel, 20, takes great pride in the uniquely Egyptian interpretation of the centuries-old ritual known colloquially as "tanoura", or skirt in Arabic. "I choose the colours and the shapes that are sewn into the skirts," Adel said, pointing to the folds of his purple skirt with green and yellow appliques moments before stepping on stage to perform at a folk art festival.

The kaleidoscopic performance is a world away from the UNESCO-listed whirling dervishes of Turkey, who trace their origins to the teachings of Sufi poet and mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi.

Distinguished by their white robes, camel-wool hats and fealty to ascetic Sufi spiritualism, the ceremonies in Turkey bear only a fleeting resemblance to the psychedelic performances popular in Egypt.

Sufis in Egypt, who number more than 15 million, with nearly 80 different orders, adopted the ritual, progressively adding colours and rhythms, turning the spiritual practice into a folkloric art in its own right.

**'Escape'**  
Every time it is the same: Adel steps into a counter-clockwise twirl. As his skirts bloom, he raises his right arm to the sky, to receive divine blessing, and reaches his left arm to the ground, delivering the blessing to the public. Then he picks up the pace. His steps grow faster,

and he ties the cords that hold his different skirts together, raising one high above his head. The topmost tanoura represents the sky, the one below the earth.

As he spins the first above his head while the other forms an undulating disc around his waist, he recounts the story of genesis, and how the sky and Earth were separated. This rendition is no small feat, with each skirt weighing nearly 10 kilograms. If Adel deviates from his axis or loses the rhythm of his feet, he can fall and drop them.

"At the beginning, of course I would get dizzy and even fall sometimes," he told AFP. "But training every single day, either on stage or at home, I escape somewhere else with the music."

To the sound of Sufi chants, percus-

sion beats, or the haunting melodies of the traditional flute or rababa—a lute-like string instrument—the revolutions of the dervishes of the Giza Troupe for Folkloric Arts seem as unstoppable as the planets.

**'Like flying'**  
Side by side, but without their skirts ever coming in contact, they perform acrobatics as they spin. They throw their skirts above their heads, catch them midair, fold and unfold the flag of their Sufi order, their spirals never ceasing. For Ali Morsi, 25, it is a labour inspired by "the love of God and the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)". Though the Egyptian version of the art has become a festive occasion, most practitioners hold to the roots of the ritual in the mystical

tradition of the Muslim Mevlevi Order, founded in the 13th century by Rumi in Konya, present-day Turkey.

Today, it is a staple of Egyptian tourism, with some dancers, particularly in hotels and entertainment venues, attaching lights to their skirts for an added surprise factor, to the delight of tourists and spectators. Both spectacle and ritual, tanoura is indispensable for artists like Adel and Morsi, who cannot imagine making their living any other way.

"It's like I'm flying, I can no longer feel my body, I am no longer on earth," said Morsi, who has been a dervish for 11 years. "I only think of God and nothing else." — AFP



## Thailand takes step towards legalising medicinal cannabis

Thailand relaxed its cannabis laws Thursday, with users permitted to possess and grow the plant — albeit under complicated new guidelines. The change comes after Thailand's landmark 2018 legalisation of medicinal cannabis — the first such move by a country in Southeast Asia, where anti-drugs laws are notoriously harsh.

The kingdom's public health ministry announced in February that marijuana would be removed from its banned narcotics list, and the rules came into effect

on Thursday. Activists welcomed the development and Bangkok cannabis shop Highland Cafe was doing a brisk trade in buds on Thursday.

"It's a dream come true," said co-owner Rattapon Sanrak. "We've been fighting for it (legalisation) for about 10 years," the 35-year-old said. Thailand has previously taken a tough stance on drugs, with people found with cannabis on them facing up to 10 years in prison and a hefty fine.

But some warned against lighting up outside just yet. While possession and sale of cannabis are now legal, smoking the substance outside your home could still get you arrested. Offenders could potentially be fined 25,000 baht (\$780) and face up to three months in jail.

And cannabis extracts with more than 0.2 percent concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — the psychoactive compound that produces the drug's "high" — remain illegal. Activist Clark K. Linn,

author of a popular Thai cannabis newsletter, said the latest change was "effectively and practically, a very radical legalisation of cannabis in Thailand".

Jeremy Douglas, regional spokesman for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, urged caution however, saying the



A man smells a dried cannabis flower for sale at the Highlands cafe in Bangkok.

legal reforms have "been a bit difficult to track". "Fundamentally what we understand from ONCB (Office of the Narcotics Control Board) is that the part of the law governing cannabis has expired while in the review process, and until it is final and cleared by parliament cannabis can be sold," he said.

"So it became legal due to the ongoing process, by default," Douglas said, adding that the ONCB maintains the legal THC level will remain at 0.2 percent. But outside the Highland Cafe people were optimistic.

"I think it will take a long way to full legalisation like Canada, like Amsterdam, but I think this is a good step," said 27-year-old Siravit Taweechan as he patiently queued. — AFP

## Auction gathers horse-lovers from across divided Libya

A trainer walks a mare around a grassy pen under the gaze of potential buyers from across Libya, where passion for horses is undimmed despite years of violence. The three-day auction in the Mediterranean city of Misrata found homes for 96 of some 150 horses on sale.

And despite years of conflict and division since the fall of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, breeders and buyers from across Libya were able to attend. "There were horses from the west, the east and the south — from every city in the country," said Hussein Shaka, one of the organisers.

Equestrianism has a prominent place in Libya as in other parts of the Arab world, with weekly horse races as well as shows and parades. Libyan horse-lovers have managed to keep their traditions alive, including the crafts of making saddles and tack — and breeding pedigree chargers.

"I present you with Labaris," the auctioneer said enthusiastically, as a carefully groomed brown stallion was led around the show pen by a handler in a white T-shirt. Prospective buyers in the all-male audience held up numbered wooden plaques to place their bids. The highest price of \$8,000 went to an off-white mare who, according to the auctioneer, "has run in 21 races in France, taking first, second and third places". Dozens of buyers sat on white plastic chairs around the sun-drenched show pen as the auctioneer extolled the virtues of the beasts on show from a small stage. — AFP



A man gestures after buying a pack of cannabis at the Highland cafe in Bangkok on June 9, 2022.



A man looks at a dried cannabis flower.



# Isolated Russia celebrates tsar who opened 'window to Europe'



People visit the Motherland Calls statue.

More than three centuries after he sought to bring Russia closer to Europe, Russians on Thursday marked the 350th birthday of tsar Peter the Great with the country deeply isolated over the Ukraine conflict. Inspired by time spent abroad, Peter made huge efforts to modernise his vast and under-developed nation during his rule from 1682 to 1725, most famously building Saint Petersburg as Russia's "window to Europe".

Celebrations will be held in his namesake city and Moscow to mark the anniversary of Peter's birth on June 9, 1672, with President Vladimir Putin attending a new exhibition in the capital dubbed "Peter the Great: The Birth of the Empire". With ties between Russia and

the West shattered by Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine, authorities are downplaying Peter's affinity for Europe, instead focusing on his role in expanding Russian territories and consolidating state power.

"An outstanding statesman, military leader and patriot, he devoted his whole life to serving the Fatherland," Putin, himself from Saint Petersburg, said in a statement this week to mark the anniversary. Peter was inspired by trips to Europe as a young man to transform Russia into a great European power. Over his reign he implemented sweeping political, military and social reforms aimed at Westernising Russia, transforming the country into a naval power

and vastly expanding its territory. He also tolerated little dissent, brutally putting down an uprising in 1698 by torturing and publicly executing more than 1,000 rebels. "Peter I can be an emblematic figure for both supporters of European-style liberalism and for supporters of the 'strong state'," Saint Petersburg historian and journalist Daniel Kotsubinsky told AFP. "The current authorities will put the emphasis on his role as a strongman for the state," he said.

#### 'Close the window'

The conflict in Ukraine, which saw Moscow send troops into the pro-Western country in late February, has left Russia more isolated from the West than

at almost any time in its history. Flights to the European Union have been banned, sanctions have cut off Russians from Western imports and Western retailers, from McDonald's and Starbucks to clothing retailers H&M and Zara, have shuttered their doors.

In the run-up to Thursday's anniversary, Russian social media has been full of commentary wondering what happened to Peter's vision. Memes making the rounds show photos of the tsar, sometimes in a montage with Putin, and slogans like "Peter I opened the window to Europe, Putin will close it" or "Close the window to Europe, the view is horrible."

Asked about the anniversary recently,

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted the window remained open. "No one is planning to close anything," he told journalists. For Russian historian Boris Kipnis, "whatever the historical circumstances, if we abandon the path set by Peter I, we will ruin the country and the people."

"Russia is a European country," he said. Despite the tensions, 47-year-old Saint Petersburg Svetlana Stepanova said she was planning to enjoy Thursday's festivities. "Peter I made Russia into a great power, Putin also wants to see a great Russia," she said. "That is what's most important." — AFP



Russian honour guards march in front of the Motherland Calls statue at the Mamayev Kurgan World War Two Memorial complex in Volgograd.



A man walks past a graffiti depicting Peter the Great, the founder of Saint Petersburg, in Saint Petersburg. The city celebrated the 350th anniversary of the birth of Peter the Great on June 9.



Russian honour guards march beneath the names of deceased Russian soldiers written on the wall. — AFP photos

## Europe's 'largest predatory dinosaur' found by fossil hunter

A giant crocodile-faced dinosaur discovered on the Isle of Wight by one of Britain's best fossil hunters was probably the largest predator ever to stalk Europe, scientists said on Thursday. Most of the bones of the two-legged spinosaurid were found by the late local collector Nick Chase, who dedicated his life to combing the beaches of the island on England's southern coast for dinosaur remains.

Researchers at the University of Southampton then used the few bones available to identify what they have called the "White Rock spinosaurid", they said in a study published in the journal PeerJ. "This was a huge animal, exceeding 10 metres (33 feet) in length and judging from some of the dimensions, probably represents the largest predatory dinosaur ever found in Europe," said Chris Barker, a PhD student who led the study.

While admitting it would be better to have more bones, Barker told AFP the "numbers don't lie-it is bigger than the biggest known specimen" previously found in Europe. Thomas Richard Holtz, a vertebrate paleontologist from the University of Maryland not involved in study, agreed that the new find "does seem to be larger" than a huge predator whose fossilised remains were discovered in Portugal.

#### Why the long face?

The White Rock spinosaurid-which the

researchers hope to formally name as a new species-is from the Early Cretaceous period and is estimated to be around 125 million years old.

Barker said that makes it the youngest spinosaurid found in Britain, two or three million years younger than the well-known Baryonyx. Spinosaurids are known for their elongated heads. Rather than having the boxy skull of a Tyrannosaurus rex, their faces look more like that of a crocodile.

A leading theory to explain this trait is that they hunted on water as well as land. "They're kind of like storks and herons, wading in and snatching fish from the surface," Barker said. The White Rock spinosaurid was discovered in a lagoonal coastal environment where few dinosaur fossils are normally found.

"It helps start to paint a picture of what animals were living in the time, which is a very poorly known part of English palaeontological heritage," Barker added.

The team had already discovered two new spinosaurid species on the Isle of Wight, including the Ceratosuchops infero-

dios-dubbed the "hell heron". "This new animal bolsters our previous argument-published last year-that spinosaurid dinosaurs originated and diversified in western Europe before becoming more widespread," study co-author Darren Naish said.

#### Collector's 'uncanny ability'

The palaeontologists paid tribute to Chase, who always donated whatever bones he found to museums. "Most of these amazing fossils were found by Nick Chase, one of Britain's most skilled dinosaur hunters, who sadly died just before the Covid epidemic," said study co-author Jeremy Lockwood, a PhD student at the University of Portsmouth.

Barker said Chase's "uncanny ability" to find bones showed that "it's not just professional palaeontologists who are making impacts in the discipline". The discovery "highlights the fact that collectors have a big role to play in modern palaeontology and their generosity helps move science forwards", he added.

And if there any aspiring fossil hunters hoping to pick up where Chase left off, the palaeontologists would welcome more White Rock spinosaurid bones. "We hope that a passerby might pick up some bits and donate them," Barker said. — AFP



This handout picture released by the University of Southampton on June 8, 2022 shows fossil hunter Nick Chase, who found and donated many Isle of Wight dinosaur specimens. — AFP

## Letters reveal Proust's house guest from hell

A trove of never-before-seen letters reveal that French literary giant Marcel Proust made a previously unknown trip to England and was driven around the bend by a scrounging house guest. Any crumbs about the author (1871-1922), whose monumental "In Search of Lost Time" is considered one of the greatest books of all time, are treated with fan-boy excitement by the world's many Proust obsessives.

So a new book of letters between the writer and a lifelong banker friend, published in France on Thursday, makes for a veritable banquet of Proustian marginalia.

Horace Finaly was a classmate who ended up heading the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, today's giant BNP Paribas. The letters had been kept by Finaly's family, and emerged last year when they were sold at auction for 78,000 euros.

Among the nuggets is that Proust needed Finaly's help to get rid of a free-loading house guest who had been staying with him for nearly three years, racking up vast tailoring bills in his name. Proust had taken in Swiss emigre Henri Rochat in 1918 when he was working as a waiter, thinking it would only last a few weeks.

But Rochat "spent a lot more than Proust himself", Thierry Laget, who edited the letters, told AFP. Rochat may have

helped inspire one of the central female characters of "In Search of Lost Time"-Albertine, who enjoys luxury clothes and other lavish gifts. "He was a dandy, who offered nothing other than this inspiration, a few games of cards and some nights at the piano," Laget said.

#### Trip to England

Ultimately, the two friends hatched a plot to get rid of him, with Finaly finding Rochat a job in a bank in Recife, Brazil. Worried that Rochat will back out, Proust writes that he had left an allowance for him with the captain of the ship-only to be handed over once they had set sail.

Little else is known about Rochat, who is thought to have died in northeastern Brazil around 1923. Another scoop in the letters is a very brief trip to England-the only time Proust is thought to have crossed the Channel despite his love of English literature and his many admirers there.

Proust mentions travelling from Ostend to Dover with Finaly at a young age-though they came straight back. "Do you remember, we took the boat together to Dover and without even getting off, took the next boat and returned with just a little seasickness," the letter reveals.

"It's nonetheless the only thing that allows me to say to my English readers that I was once 'in England', if I ever responded to their letters." Such details will keep Proust scholars busy for years.

The letters were bought at auction by the Societe des Hotels Litteraires, which runs a series of hotels dedicated to great writers. "I was not expecting the letters at all," said Laget. "When they were shown to me, I was amazed." — AFP



Lifestyle | Features



In this photograph taken on May 25, 2022, a vendor prepares to serve Rooh Afza watermelon beverages to customers along a roadside stall in Karachi. — AFP photos



A vendor (R) prepares Rooh Afza watermelon beverages for customers.



A vendor displays Rooh Afza beverage bottles to customers at a market in Karachi.

# PINK 'SOUL REFRESHER' UNITES WILTING INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS

Pakistan and India have fought three wars and countless skirmishes, but as summers get hotter with climate change, their peoples are united by love for a cooling 115-year-old pink libation with a secret recipe. The ultra-sweet concoction of herbs and fruits, Rooh Afza—which translates as “refresher of the soul”—has not only survived the 1947 partition of the two countries but thrived on both sides of the border.

On a furnace-hot recent day in Old Delhi, the formidable vendor Firoza chops up in a metal cauldron an ice block delivered to her by motorbike down the tight alleyways. She then stabs the top of a bottle of Rooh Afza and squeezes in the viscous, lipstick-red concentrate before attacking a milk carton and adding that too, along with pieces of watermelon.

This is the 50-year-old's own special version, “Sharbat e Mohabbat” (“Drink of Love”) — every vendor has their own—which she sells for 20 rupees (\$0.25) per plastic goblet. “We use more than 12 bottles of Rooh Afza and 20 boxes of milk, even 30 at times, and up to 40 when business is good,” she told AFP in her booming voice, hoarse from hawking her elixir.

“I took over this shop a decade ago



Hamid Ahmed, the chief executive officer and trustee of the Hamdard Laboratories India, speaks during an interview with AFP at the factory in Manesar. — AFP

when my husband passed away. He started selling Rooh Afza here some 40-50 years ago. It's my only source of income.”

### Topped with a date

In Pakistan, the drink is a particular favourite in the holy month of Ramadan, when it is served as an evening thirst-quencher with the Iftar feast, when Muslims break their fast. But served in desserts, milk and custards, it remains popular throughout Pakistan's summer season, during which temperatures hit 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) earlier this year.

At one roadside stall in the megacity of Karachi, owner Muhammad Akram handles a hectic cash flow of dog-eared banknotes proffered by eager customers. “A homeless man once suggested that if I blended Rooh Afza with diced watermelon it would be delicious,” he told AFP. “The taste was marvellous.”

At the same stall, Abdul Qahar works 12-hour shifts commanding a dozen staff serving tankards of Rooh Afza brimming with chunks of ruby watermelon, topped with a date and speared with a straw. “It soothes the spirit,” said 25-year-old housewife Neelam Fareed, who travelled five kilometres (three miles) on a moped with her husband just for a drink.

### Divided

Rooh Afza was first sold in 1907 in Old Delhi, the congested heart of the Indian capital, by Hakim Hafiz Abdul Majeed, a traditional healing practitioner. In 1947, with the partition of British India, one son stayed in Delhi while the other upped sticks for the new Pakistan.

They set up factories in each country—as well as one in East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh in 1971 after a bloody independence war—under



A worker opens tins of ingredients during the production of the Rooh Afza beverage.

two firms, Hamdard India and Hamdard Pakistan.

Hamid Ahmed, the great-grandson of the founder, who runs the Indian business, said the recipe had not changed in the last 115 years. “It's a big secret; even the people at the factory will not know it... There would be, I think, three people who would know it,” the 45-year-old told AFP with a chuckle.

### Bright future

Apart from being served ice cold, the drink's blend of fruits and herbs is thought to help with the northern sub-

continent's dusty summer winds, known as the loo. Since South Asia is suffering ever-hotter summers, a phenomenon blamed on climate change, the future is bright for Hamdard's business prospects at least.

“I think with global warming, temperatures are increasing... the relevance of Rooh Afza is not going anywhere soon,” Ahmed told AFP. “Sales are increasing.” — AFP



File photo taken on April 20, 2022 shows a visitor viewing “Oratorio”, 2009, by Portuguese artist Paula Rego, during a press day at the 59th Venice Art Biennale in Venice on April 20, 2022. — AFP

## British-Portuguese artist Paula Rego dies aged 87

The celebrated British-Portuguese artist Paula Rego has died aged 87 in London, her representative the Victoria Miro gallery said on Wednesday. A statement said she “died peacefully this morning after a short illness at home in north London surrounded by her family.”

“Our heartfelt thoughts are with her children Nick, Cas and Victoria Willing, and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.” Rego, who was born near Lisbon on January 26, 1935 and moved to Britain in the early 1950s, attended the prestigious Slade School of Fine Art.

In the 1960s, she exhibited with the London Group of artists, including Frank Auerbach and David Hockney. She was known for figurative, emotionally charged paintings and prints based on storybooks, often reflecting feminism and Portuguese folk tales.

Last year, Tate Britain held a major retrospective of her work, hailing her as “an uncompromising artist of extraordinary imaginative power.” “She has revolutionised the way in which women are represented,” the London gallery said.

One series of pastels she made in 1998 after the failure of a referendum to legalise abortion in Portugal had a huge impact in her traditionally strongly

Catholic homeland, ultimately helping to shift public opinion to allow terminations under certain circumstances in a second referendum in 2007. The series portrayed women after illegal terminations. She also depicted human trafficking and female genital mutilation.

Another 1990s series of work, entitled Dog Women, also brought to the fore feminine capacity to rise above suffering and oppression, nurturing within themselves a survival instinct. Elena Crippa, the curator of the Tate exhibition, told the BBC in 2021 that she saw Rego's influence in the work of most female painters.

“I would struggle to think of a significant painter, particularly in Britain, where I can't see a connection to Paula,” she said. “Paula takes you to uncomfortable places — Jung called it the shadow. They are taboo areas, where love and cruelty touch each other, and our drives and fears live.”

“This is a national loss,” said Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa in a statement, hailing a “very complete” artist of “great international repute.” Portugal's Minister of Culture Pedro Adao e Silva described Rego as “the most international of artists” his country has produced, as the government prepared to decree an official period of mourning.

Rego, who was married to the British artist Victor Willing until his death in 1988, received numerous honours in Portugal and Britain. She was made a dame by Queen Elizabeth II in 2010. A museum to her work opened outside Lisbon in 2009. — AFP

## The rise, fall and return to grace of an African great

At the end of an abandoned field in Mali's war-ravaged Mopti region lies the overgrown tomb of Yambo Ouologuem, once a huge star of African literature whose career imploded in scandal after he was accused of plagiarism. He was all but forgotten until last year when a young Senegalese writer won France's top literary prize for a novel inspired by Ouologuem's strange and tragic life. Mohamed Mbougar Sarr became the first sub-Saharan African to win the Prix Goncourt in November for “The Most Secret Memory of Men”, which recounts the misadventures of an African writer not dissimilar to Ouologuem.

Ouologuem himself had been the first African to win another major French award, the Renaudot Prize, for his 1968 novel “Bound to Violence”. That was in his first life as an urbane and acclaimed writer in France, before a stunning fall from grace led to a second life as a “crazy” and reclusive Islamic fundamentalist in Mali. Today Ouologuem's youngest son Ambibe occupies the cinder block house in the town of Sevare where the Malian author lived out his final years until his death in 2017. Ambibe makes tea before leading visitors to his father's tomb, which, judging by the weeds, has lain unvisited for a long time.



Ambibe Ouologuem (C), son of author Yambo Ouologuem, returns from his father's grave in Sevare. Yambo Ouologuem, the first African writer to win the Renaudot prize in 1968, had it confiscated following accusations of plagiarism.

### Breaking up bars

His son recalls his father's lost years, full of anger at the West and at the injustice he felt he had suffered. He said his father would demonstrate alone in front of the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali.

Ouologuem would also take his son on a motorbike to raid local bars. “We would arrive, he would break bottles and tell people they were bad Muslims—then we would leave,” Ambibe said with a laugh, proud of a man he said was “right in his ideas”.

Ouologuem was “traumatised” by the scandal he suffered in France when he returned to Sevare, family members say. Born in 1940 when Mali was still colonial French Sudan, the brilliant son of a school inspector moved to Paris to study when he was 20, the same year his country achieved independence. By 28 Ouologuem had published “Bound to Violence” an acerbic critique of the violence of pre-colonial West African empires. It was critically acclaimed and won the Renaudot that year. Then Ouologuem's story began to sour.

First the book was criticised by his African contemporaries-intellectuals like Leopold Sedar Senghor, the longtime president of Senegal. His answer to the horrors of colonialism was to glorify African culture and he accused Ouologuem of “denying his ancestors” to “please the whites.”

Then Ouologuem was accused of plagiarising other writers including the British novelist Graham Greene. He argued that his borrowings were about paying homage, but his Renaudot award was withdrawn and Ouologuem's books disappeared from the shelves.

### Raging against whites

By the end of the 1970s Ouologuem gave up trying to write and returned home to Mali, where he began a new life. He embraced Islam, replacing his tailored suit and cigarette with a traditional boubou robe. He no longer wanted to hear about literature and forbade his family from reading. He would regularly rush onto the soccer field next to his house to interrupt the “white sport.” “He was an old fool,” said a local elder, reluctant to say more about a family rumoured to have a lot of land and connections in the neighbourhood.

On a small chair in his courtyard, El Hadj Amadou Yebedie, the imam of the local mosque, said Ouologuem “wanted to know everything about Islam” when he returned to Mali. “He read a lot,” he said. “Above all, he shunned anything to do with white people.” Ouologuem's son Ambibe, who runs a small freight business, did not know about his father's former life until he was 12. “He didn't say anything,” the son said. “I couldn't believe he smoked cigarettes when I saw the photos.” Today there is no trace of Ouologuem or his work in Sevare, where the children who fill the sandy streets at dusk have their heads in TikTok rather than books. A Malian literary prize in his name was renamed several years ago.

But in 2018, Ouologuem's French publisher, Seuil—with whom he had long fallen out—brought out a 50th anniversary edition of the novel that changed his life. “It is now generally agreed that ‘Bound to Violence’ is a dizzying montage of rewritten texts from multiple cultural horizons [assembled] to form an autonomous literary work that brilliantly detaches itself from its sources,” the publisher said.—AFP



Amadou el-Hadj Yebedie, imam and one of Yambo Ouologuem's only friends, leaves the mosque where Yambo used to pray, in Sevare. — AFP photos



## Sports

# F1 pitches up in Baku with Perez out to promote title credentials

## Baku has a reputation for serving up the unexpected

**BAKU:** Sergio Perez has fond memories of last year's Azerbaijan Grand Prix and this weekend the Mexican finds himself returning to the fast and furious streets of Baku as a viable contender for the world championship. 'Checo' arrives on the Caspian Sea coastline fresh from his Monaco triumph and with the ink barely dry on a two-year extension to his Red Bull contract. Monaco, following three second-place finishes, lifted Mexico's most successful F1 driver to within 15 points of his world champion teammate Max Verstappen.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc is only six points in front of Perez heading into this eighth round of the 22-race season which welcomes back fans for the first time since the COVID pandemic. "He's in this championship just as much as Max is," Red Bull boss Christian Horner stated in the aftermath of Perez's third career win after Azerbaijan in 2021 and in Bahrain the season before. Perez was helped in Monaco by his team's pit stop prowess with Ferrari bungling theirs but Horner warned the Italian constructor's faster car will be hard to stop "over the coming races".

Baku has a reputation for serving up the unexpected, with cars hurtling down the Nefchilar Avenue, the longest straight on the calendar, at 350kmh, before snaking through the sinuous old town framed by Baku's medieval city walls. It's unpredictable nature is borne out by the results, with a different driver winning each edition since Nico Rosberg won the first Grand Prix held there, the European, in 2016.

Verstappen readily concedes it's not one of his favourite weekend destinations after last year's dramatic tyre blow out with the chequered flag his for the taking continuing his sorry sequence of

never making the podium. The Dutchman had to settle for third in Monaco but still came away satisfied at extending his title lead over Leclerc, who judged his home race as "a freaking disaster" after starting from pole to finish fourth. The man from Monaco has seen the title momentum he established with wins in Bahrain and Australia disappear with Red Bull on a five-timer after annexing the last four races.

### Dominating

"Everything went against us...we'll come back stronger," said Leclerc, that sentiment echoed by his team boss. "We are pretty aware: being competitive is a fact; winning is another task and it's another level of difficulty. And I think as a team we are still progressing, learning, and maybe it will take some more time," said Ferrari principal Mattia Binotto.

While Red Bull and Ferrari are dominating the early season limelight Mercedes have struggled to unleash the full potential of their car. Upgrades in Barcelona last month looked encouraging as Toto Wolff's under pressure team sought to iron out the 'bouncing' that has bedevilled their performance. The Silver Arrows' undoubted speed should make deposited seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton and his astute new teammate George Russell a force to be reckoned with in qualifying.

But it is perhaps wishful thinking to suggest they are in a position to add to their three wins from the five races held here on Sunday just yet. Aside from Perez last year the other that escaped the mighty German manufacturer was in 2017, when Daniel Ricciardo won for Red Bull from 10th on the grid. The Australian's trademark smile has been tested



**BAKU:** Mechanics work on the car of Mercedes' British driver George Russell ahead of the Formula One Azerbaijan Grand Prix at the Baku City Circuit in Baku on June 9, 2022. — AFP

this term as he struggles to make a mark in his McLaren, collecting only 11 points to 48 for his teammate Lando Norris.

At Monaco he more or less agreed with team boss Zak Brown that so far his move to the team had failed to meet expectations. "No one's going to

be harder on me than myself," he said. "I know that I don't want to be racing around in 10th, 12th places. I still believe I can be at the front and belong at the front, so it's been a little bit more, certainly, testing at times, in terms of us trying to get up there and maximize myself in this car. — AFP



## Kuwait Futsal team remain on the top

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Futsal National team goalkeeper Mohammad Majki said that beating Palestine 5-1 in the third and final round of group one competitions in the 4th West Asia championship placed Kuwait on

top of the group. "The Palestinian team are known for being fast and skilled while Kuwait team are known for pressuring the opponent," he added. Majki was the only goalkeeper because Mohammad Al-Hazeeb had a red card in the previous match and will return in the semifinal on Saturday. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia joined Kuwait in the semifinals after a tough match against Iraq 3-2. Kuwait are on top of the group with 7 points while Saudi Arabia have 6 points while Iraq remain with 4 points. Palestine is out of the tournament without a point.



## Record-setting Azam trumps Hope, West Indies in first ODI

**MULTAN:** Pakistan skipper Babar Azam became the first batter to knock three successive one-day international hundreds twice as he anchored a five-wicket win over the West Indies in Multan on Wednesday. Ranked number one batter in both limited overs formats, Azam cracked a brilliant 107-ball 103 with nine boundaries to help Pakistan overhaul a tough 306-run target in 49.2 overs. Opener Shai Hope knocked a 134-ball 127 for his 12th one-day international century to help the West Indies post an impressive 305-8 — their highest against Pakistan in Pakistan.

The win gives Pakistan a 1-0 lead in the three match series and 10 crucial points in the ODI Super League, a qualification process for 2023 World Cup (50 overs) to be hosted by India. But once Azam and Mohammad Rizwan (59) fell in quick succession, Pakistan were in a spot of bother with 50 needed off 32 balls. Khushdil Shah lived up to his big hitting and carted four sixes in his 23-ball 41 not out — three successive in Romario Shepherd's 47th over before Mohammad Nawaz hit the winning six in the final over.

Azam generously handed his man-of-the-match

award to Khushdil. "I want to give the award to him for his outstanding knock," said Azam. "We planned the chase and showed intent which worked in our favor." West Indian skipper Nicholas Pooran praised his team. "Getting 300 plus in tough conditions was a great effort," said Pooran. "I am proud of the guys and although result did not go our way but that's cricket." Azam added 103 for the second wicket with Imam-ul-Haq who scored 71-ball 65 after opener Fakhar Zaman fell for 11.

Haq hit six boundaries before he gave an easy catch, failing to keep a reverse sweep down off spinner Akeal Hosein. Azam added 108 with Rizwan for the third wicket and during that stand guided spinner Hayden Walsh to third man boundary for his 17th hundred in ODI cricket. Azam had knocked two hundreds in Pakistan's last two one-day matches against Australia in March-April this year. He also smashed three hundreds in successive ODIs against the West Indies in United Arab Emirates in 2016.

Former Sri Lankan Kumar Sangakkara hit four consecutive centuries in as many matches leads the chart with nine other batsmen have three successive centuries once each. Azam holed out to paceman Alzarri Joseph who finished with 2-55. Earlier, West Indies, who won the toss and batted, were guided by Hope and Shamarh Brooks. Hope, who cracked 15 boundaries and a six, added an innings-building 154 with Shamarh Brooks after the visitors lost opener Kyle Mayers for three in the third over, caught and bowled by pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi. Brooks scored a polished 83-ball 70 with seven boundaries. — AFP

## Mickelson and Johnson tee off in Saudi-backed breakaway series

**ST ALBANS:** Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson are among the stars who tee off on Thursday at the LIV Golf Invitational London, the launch event of a lucrative and divisive series that is rocking the sport. The \$25 million event in St Albans — the biggest prize pot in history — is the first of eight tournaments this year bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, worth a combined \$255 million. A number of marquee names are in the 48-man field for the opener including six-time major winner Mickelson, former world number one Dustin Johnson and Sergio Garcia.

European Ryder Cup stars Lee Westwood, Ian Poulter and Graeme McDowell are also playing at the Centurion Club in St Albans. Reports say Bryson DeChambeau, Patrick Reed and Rickie Fowler will become the latest big names to join the series. Organizers are pledging to "supercharge" golf and widen its appeal, offering 54-hole tournaments with no cuts, simultaneous "shotgun starts" and a team element. Signs around the course proclaim: "Golf. But Louder".

### Power struggle

But the series is being staged in defiance of the main established tours, which are weighing up how to react in an intense power struggle. Neither the US PGA Tour nor the DP World Tour, formerly known as the European Tour, have yet announced sanctions, though a decision is expected soon. Players have faced tough questions over Saudi Arabia's human rights record in the days running up to the three-day event and have been accused of greed in chasing the huge prize money on offer. Mickelson confirmed earlier this week he had signed up for the breakaway series, refusing to con-

firm or deny if he had been suspended, or currently was suspended, by the PGA Tour.

And he did not dispel rumors that he was receiving an eye-watering fee of \$200 million to compete. The American, 51, has not played since the publication of comments in February in which he criticized the PGA Tour and LIV Golf's Saudi backers. Mickelson faced an uncomfortable grilling at a press conference on the eve of the tournament, often pausing before answering questions carefully. He insisted he did not "condone human rights violations", adding that golf could be a force for good.

Amnesty International renewed its call for players to speak out about "human rights abuses" in Saudi Arabia, rather than being "willing stooges of Saudi sportswashing". Two-time major winner Johnson, who is reportedly receiving \$150 million in appearance fees, is among a handful of players to have resigned their PGA Tour membership. When asked whether he had opted for money over his country, he said he had chosen "what's best for me and my family".

Rory McIlroy, Jon Rahm and Tiger Woods are among a group of players who have all committed themselves to the PGA Tour, but Ian Poulter believes more top golfers could defect. Speaking in the run-up to the PGA Tour's Canadian Open, which clashes with the LIV event, McIlroy said: "It's a shame that it's going to fracture the game. "The professional game is the window shop into golf. If the general public are confused about who is playing where and what tournament's on this week and oh, he plays there and he doesn't get into these events, it just becomes so confusing."

LIV Golf is fronted by two-time major winner and former world number one Greg Norman. Players will compete as individuals and teams for purses of \$25 million in all seven regular-season events, being held in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, with the winner of each competition taking home \$4 million. The eighth and final event will be a team championship, with a total prize fund of \$50 million. — AFP

## LIV Golf is 'a shame, bummer and stinks'

**TORONTO:** Multiple major winners Rory McIlroy and Justin Thomas declared the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Invitational Series "a shame" and "a bummer" on Wednesday for fracturing the sport at its peak. Along with top-ranked Scottie Scheffler, the pair spoke at the US PGA Tour's Canadian Open, which starts Thursday in competition LIV Golf's debut event outside London. "It's a shame that it's going to fracture the game," McIlroy said. "The professional game is the window shop into golf. If the general public are confused about who is playing where and what tournament's on this week and oh, he plays there and he doesn't get into these events, it just becomes so confusing."

"Everything needs to try to become more cohesive and I think it was on a pretty good trajectory until this happened." The upstart series, offering a combined \$255 million total prize money for its eight events, has lured such stars as Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson and Sergio Garcia. Multiple reports Wednesday said that US major winners Patrick Reed and Bryson DeChambeau will join LIV Golf next month for its first US event.

In the meantime, the PGA has said there will be consequences for those who play in England since the tour refused releases for PGA players to compete in an event opposite this week's stop at par-70 St. George's Golf and Country Club in Toronto. "It's a bummer," said Thomas, an American who won his second PGA Championship last month. "The decision is theirs, but I just wish it wouldn't be taking away from the great story lines and things that are going on, on a tour that has been around for a very long time and is in one of the best places it has ever been.

It's just a bummer those guys won't be a part of it."

Five of the world's top 10 are set to tee off at the Canadian Open, which was wiped out the past two years due to Covid-19 issues. "I would say stuff here's pretty unaffected," Scheffler said. "We got the best players in the world. I'm looking forward to competing against them. I don't really know what's going on over there." Eighth-ranked McIlroy, a four-time major winner, repeated his US PGA support and warned that choices made only for money tend not to work out.

"It's not something I want to participate in," he said. "There's nothing about my schedule or my life or earning or anything I would change. "Any decision you make in your life purely for money usually doesn't end up going the right way. "It's a weird time in professional golf. We're just going to have to see how this season plays out and if any other guys decide to go another direction than the established tours and see what the consequences are."

### 'I'm disappointed'

Thomas, ranked sixth, said he was disappointed in the players who have chosen the new tour. "I don't dislike DJ now. I don't think he's a bad dude. I'm not going to treat him any differently. He's entitled to choose as he wishes," Thomas said. "It doesn't make him a bad person. Now I'm disappointed and I wish that he and others wouldn't have done it, but that's their decision." McIlroy wasn't upset either at the players who will be his rivals in next week's US Open, the US Golf Association having said Tuesday all LIV Golf players qualified for the Open can play as planned. "I certainly understand the guys that went. I understand what their goals and ambitions are," McIlroy said. "I'm certainly not knocking anyone for going. It's their life. It's their decision. They can live it the way they want to. But for me, I want to play on the PGA Tour against the best players in the world." — AFP



## Sports

# Summer transfer window opens but it's the era of player power

## English clubs to splash more than £1 billion on transfers

PARIS: The summer transfer window officially opens in England on Friday with Premier League clubs again set to splash the cash while the futures of a selection of out-of-contract stars dominate headlines on the continent. Clubs in England will have a period of almost 12 weeks, until September 1, to strengthen their squads, although one of the biggest moves has already been announced, with Erling Haaland heading to Manchester City from Borussia Dortmund.

There will be the usual headlines of Premier League sides flexing their financial muscle, with a huge increase in income from overseas rights deals reportedly taking broadcast revenue for the three-year cycle to 2025 over £10 billion (\$12.5bn). With the financial rewards only getting greater, the chances are English clubs will again collectively splash more than £1 billion on transfers, as they have done in the last six summer windows.

Haaland's move will cost City what might be considered a modest sum of £51 million (60 million euros, \$63 million) due to the release clause in his contract at Dortmund. The prolific Norwegian is unlikely to be the most expensive new arrival in England's top flight - Liverpool and Manchester United are being linked with moves for Uruguayan striker Darwin Nunez, valued at 100 million euros by Benfica. Yet it is often the transfers happening beyond the Premier League's biggest clubs that confirm just how powerful England's elite have become.

A prime example is Aston Villa, who finished 14th in the season just ended but have already announced the signings of Diego Carlos from Sevilla and Boubacar Kamara from Marseille. Brazilian defender Diego Carlos will move for a

reported £26 million while holding midfielder Kamara - who has just broken into the France squad - is a free agent with his contract at Marseille expiring. Both turned down Champions League football next season to head to Villa Park. Kamara's move, meanwhile, is indicative of something else.

### Free agents

This is the era of player power, with more and more of the biggest stars happy to let their contracts run down - that way the huge transfer fees that might be paid between clubs are more likely to end up in the pockets of the players themselves as signing-on bonuses. Kylian Mbappe allowed his contract at Paris Saint-Germain to come to an end before opting to stay in the French capital rather than sign for Real Madrid. Paul Pogba leaves Manchester United for the second time in his career and, having moved to Old Trafford from Juventus for a world-record fee in 2016, the France midfielder is now being tipped to return to Turin as a free agent.

Paulo Dybala is on his way out of Juventus and expected to join Inter Milan, while Ousmane Dembele could depart Barcelona for free as well. Others like Sadio Mane at Liverpool and Robert Lewandowski at Bayern Munich are ready to move on and know their clubs must sell now if they don't want to lose them for free when their contracts expire next year. Dembele has been linked with a move to PSG, who will again be busy in the market with the transfer window also opening in France on Friday.

### French renaissance?

The Ligue 1 champions dominated headlines last year with the acquisition of Lionel Messi after his



BELGRADE: Norway's Erling Haaland (left) fights for the ball with Serbia's Milos Veljkovic during the UEFA Nations League - League B Group B4 football match between Serbia and Norway at the Rajko Mitic stadium in Belgrade. — AFP

contract at Barcelona expired. This time expect fewer glitzy new arrivals at the Parc des Princes, where the main priority was keeping Mbappe. After two years of enforced belt-tightening due to the pandemic and the collapse of a lucrative broadcasting deal with Mediapro, the outlook is now brighter for French clubs in general. Private equity

firm CVC Capital Partners, who have previously bought a stake in La Liga, are investing 1.5 billion euros for a 13 percent stake in Ligue 1's newly-created trading company. That means an immediate significant cash injection for clubs, at a time when more and more foreign investors are being attracted to French teams. — AFP

## Senegal coach wants AFCON games delayed

JOHANNESBURG: Senegal coach Aliou Cisse wants the September Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifiers postponed to allow the five countries representing the continent at the World Cup to play friendly matches. Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia have qualified for the November 21-December 18 Qatar tournament and the African sides have only a September 19-27 window and one week before the World Cup kick-off to prepare.

The withdrawal of Zimbabwe from Group K means Morocco are free to play warm-up games in September, but the other four teams face two African qualifiers each. Cameroon are scheduled to play Namibia, Ghana to meet Angola, Senegal to tackle Mozambique and Tunisia to face Libya home and away. Speaking to the media in Dakar after Senegal snatched a last-gasp 1-0 victory over Rwanda on Tuesday, Cisse called on the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to delay the next two rounds of qualifying.

"The best thing (to) help the five (African) selections that have qualified (for the World Cup) is to stop the (qualifiers) in September," said the former

Paris Saint-Germain midfielder-cum-defender. "(This would) give the opportunity to the countries (qualified for the World Cup) to do their preparations. I think we can find a solution to postpone the (qualifiers) scheduled for September." The challenge for CAF will be to find new dates if they postpone the 44 September fixtures as there is only one other window, next March, before the June-July 2023 finals in the Ivory Coast.

CAF plan to stage matchdays five and six of Cup of Nations qualifying between March 20-28, with the finals set for June and July 2023. What the Cairo-based body may consider is cancelling only the eight September matches involving the World Cup qualifiers and asking them to play catch-up during the World Cup window once eliminated. African pundits are extremely pessimistic about the chances of the five, giving only Senegal, who face the Netherlands, Qatar and Ecuador in Group A, a realistic chance of reaching the second round.

### Algeria take control

Tunisia are in Group D with defending champions France, Denmark and Australia or Peru and Morocco in Group F beside Belgium, Canada and Croatia. Cameroon face Brazil, Serbia and Switzerland in Group G and Ghana meet Portugal, Uruguay and South Korea in Group H. Meanwhile, there were six Cup of Nations qualifiers on Wednesday and fallen African giants Algeria took control of Group F after an impressive 2-0 victory in Tanzania. A clever free-kick drill late in the first



Senegal coach Aliou Cisse

half culminated in centre-back Ramy Bensebaini nodding the Desert Foxes ahead.

Tanzania rarely threatened to equalize before substitute Mohamed Amoura sealed success with a thunderous close-range shot a minute from time. Algeria boasted a 35-match unbeaten record before the wheels came off this year in a Cup of Nations title defense and World Cup play-off. After drawing with Sierra Leone in the African tournament, they fell to Equatorial Guinea and the Ivory Coast to make a stunning first-round exit having travelled to Cameroon as one of the title favorites. — AFP

## Ukraine beat Republic of Ireland after WCup heartbreak

DUBLIN: Viktor Tsygankov lifted Ukraine's spirits after their painful failure to qualify for the World Cup as the midfielder clinched a 1-0 Nations League victory over the Republic of Ireland on Wednesday. Tsygankov struck with a fine free-kick early in the second at Dublin's Aviva Stadium.

Ukraine held on to that slender lead as they bounced back from the 1-0 defeat against Wales on Sunday that ended the war-torn nation's bid to qualify for this year's World Cup. While Ukraine won't be going to Qatar for the World Cup, their impressive response to such a devastating loss epitomized the spirit in Oleksandr Petrakov's side. Of course Petrakov's players have far greater concerns as the Russian invasion continues in their homeland.

The Irish FA had handed out 3,500 tickets to Ukrainian refugees and there were other pockets of blue and yellow around the Aviva Stadium. "This is a very difficult time. The Ukrainians who came to see us play in Ireland were accepted by the incredible Irish hospitality and people," Petrakov said. "You took our women and children who were basically risking their lives back in Ukraine. I want to thank the whole island."

"Those Ukrainians in the stand just wanted to see some positivity from the team but they are really longing to go home to Ukraine. We made them a little bit happier tonight. That is the major achievement in my view," Petrakov had admitted the emotional and physical impact of the events in Cardiff combined with the ongoing war had taken its toll on his players. He made 10 changes after the Wales game and the understudies were good enough to extend Ireland's winless run in the Nations League to 12 games. "Overall I'm happy with the result and with the attitude and performance. It is a very positive thing for the team especially after such a bitter result in Wales. We turn the page and we look forward to our future," Petrakov said. — AFP



DUBLIN: Republic of Ireland's defender Seamus Coleman (left) vies with Ukraine's midfielder Viktor Tsygankov during the UEFA Nations League, league B group 1 football match between Republic of Ireland and Ukraine at Aviva stadium in Dublin, Ireland on June 8, 2022. — AFP

## Police acknowledge 'failure' at Champions League final

PARIS: The head of Paris police acknowledged on Thursday the "failure" of security operations for the Champions League final last month and apologized for tear-gassing supporters as they tried to enter the stadium. The football showpiece hosted by Paris on May 28 was marred by scenes of mayhem as Liverpool fans struggled to enter the stadium for the match against Real Madrid, raising questions over the capacity of the French capital to host the 2024 Olympics.

"It is obviously a failure," Didier Lallement told a commission investigating the fiasco at the French Senate. "It was a failure because people were pushed around and attacked. It's a failure because the image of the country was undermined." He said he was "sorry" for authorizing the use of tear gas to move supporters away from the stadium before the match, but added that there was "no other means" of relieving the growing pressure at the gates.

"We needed to get people to move back," Lallement explained. "We asked people to move back, then we used tear-gas... it's the only way to our knowledge of moving a crowd back, except for a baton charge." He encouraged supporters from Liverpool and Real Madrid to file complaints if they were victims of counterfeited tickets or street crime outside the stadium "so that we can find the guilty parties and prosecute them."

Lallement was also pressed on controversial figures given by Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin who blamed the presence of 30-40,000 supporters without tickets or with fake tickets for the disorder at the stadium and delays to the game. The police chief said he was responsible for the figure and he based it on numbers given by Paris transport operators and "feedback" from officers on the ground. "Perhaps I made a mistake with the figure I gave to the minister," he said. "I never claimed that it was absolutely accurate." He acknowledged that there were not 30-40,000 "at the gates of the stadium" but maintained that many thousands were in the vicinity. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: Crusaders' Sevu Reece (center) is tackled by Red's Matt Faessler (2nd left) during the Super Rugby Pacific quarterfinal match between the Canterbury Crusaders and Queensland Reds at Orangetheory Stadium. — AFP

## Crusaders' impeccable record at stake in Super Rugby semi showdown

CHRISTCHURCH: The Waikato Chiefs must defy history if they are to beat the Canterbury Crusaders in Christchurch in the opening Super Rugby semi-final on Friday. The Crusaders are the most successful team ever in the southern hemisphere club competition and have been invincible playing sudden-death matches on home turf. In 27 years of Super Rugby, the 12-times champions have played 26 knockout games at home and never been defeated.

The second semi-final, on Saturday, features the Auckland Blues and ACT Brumbies, two sides looking to revive their glory days when they dominated the championship in its formative years. The Chiefs have also had past Super Rugby success, winning the competition in 2012 and 2013, and showed ominous signs of a revival when they edged the Crusaders 24-21 in Christchurch this year. But that was during the regular season and Crusaders coach Scott Robertson said that scoreline has loomed

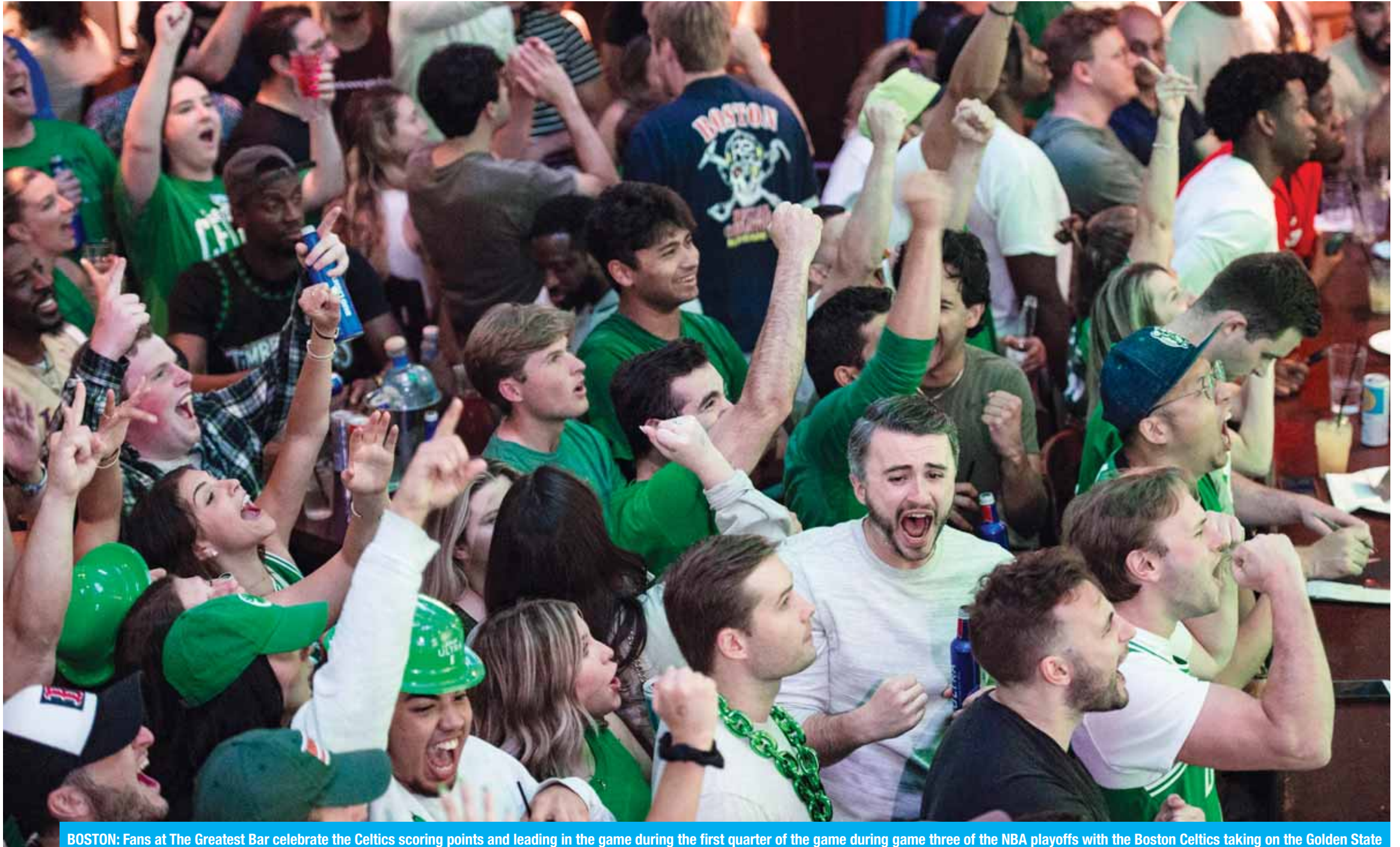
large in talk this week.

"It's a firm reminder that a team like that on their day can test anyone," said Robertson, who will be marking his 100th game in charge of the Crusaders. "Any Kiwi team can effectively have their moments that can change games. We've reminded each other from the last game." The two teams feature 21 All Blacks between them, including Crusaders locks Sam Whitelock and Scott Barrett against the Waikato pair Brodie Retallick and Tupou Vaa'i.

Barrett said there will be no love lost between the Test teammates. "It's two (sets of) All Blacks against each other, so it's a huge battle," he said. "We're both competitive teams. Often in the heat of the moment a few words might be added, hopefully with a smile." The Brumbies, seeking their first Super Rugby title since 2004, head to Auckland hoping to erase the memory of their heartbreaking loss to the Blues in the regular season when Beauden Barrett snatched victory with a drop goal after the final hooter.

"We took a lot of lessons from that. Obviously we've got to be more disciplined," Brumbies fly-half Noah Lolesio said. "We're definitely full of confidence but we know we've got a hard task." The Blues, with a star-studded side headlined by a backline combination of Barrett, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck and Rieko Ioane, are favoured by bookmakers to go all the way. — AFP





**BOSTON:** Fans at The Greatest Bar celebrate the Celtics scoring points and leading in the game during the first quarter of the game during game three of the NBA playoffs with the Boston Celtics taking on the Golden State Warriors on June 8, 2022. —AFP

## Celtics outmuscle Warriors 116-100

### Tatum, Brown spark Celtics for NBA Finals lead

**BOSTON:** Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown combined for 53 points as the Boston Celtics outmuscle the Golden State Warriors 116-100 to take a 2-1 lead in the NBA Finals on Wednesday. Boston, bullied by the Warriors in a game two blowout in San Francisco on Sunday, bounced back with a dominant physical performance to regain the initiative in the best-of-seven series in a pulsating clash at the Celtics' TD Garden.

Brown led Boston scoring with 27 points, while Tatum had 26 points and Marcus Smart 24 as the Celtics moved to within two wins of a record 18th NBA crown. Robert Williams III was the star of a rejuvenated Boston defensive performance, hauling in 10 rebounds, blocking four shots and pilfering three steals to frustrate the Warriors. Stephen Curry led Golden State with 31 points while Klay Thompson rediscovered his scoring touch with 25, but it was not enough for Steve Kerr's side.

Celtics coach Ime Udoka pinpointed the rugged physical displays of Williams and Al Horford as a key to the win. "We want to try to impose our will

and size in this series," Udoka said. "It's going to be a back-and-forth battle as far as that, but when we get nights like this from (Williams and Horford), obviously it pays dividends for us." Warriors coach Kerr meanwhile said his team had been "plugging holes" throughout.

"They did a good job. They earned the win. They put a lot of pressure on us and felt like we were kind of swimming upstream most of the night," Kerr said. It looked as if a Warriors comeback was on the cards after a Curry three-pointer late in the third quarter gave Golden State their first lead since the opening seconds of the game at 83-82. But Boston refused to buckle and regained the initiative to lead by four points heading into the final quarter.

The Celtics then surged clear with a 9-2 run at the start of the fourth to jump out to an 11-point lead before closing out a deserved victory. A miserable night for Golden State was capped by defensive talisman Draymond Green fouling out in the fourth quarter to a cacophony of jeers from the Boston crowd. "He had a tough game, but I trust

Draymond as much as I trust anybody," Kerr said. "He always bounces back from losses and from tough nights individually. He'll be back on Friday."

#### Fast start

Earlier, the Celtics had jumped on the Warriors in the first quarter, racing into a 10-4 lead. With Boston's defense swarming all over Golden State, the Warriors were never able to generate any scoring momentum. Instead it was Boston who kept the scoreline ticking over with Brown leading the way as the Celtics moved into a 15-point lead before finishing the first 11 points clear. The Warriors improved their shooting markedly in the second quarter but a determined Boston maintained their double-digit advantage, outscoring the Warriors 35-34.

There were signs of a Warriors revival after the Celtics had stretched into an 18-point lead midway through the quarter, with Thompson and Curry both knocking down threes to help reduce the deficit to seven points at 56-49. But whenever the Warriors

seemed poised to close the gap further, Boston responded with a big play. Al Horford's steal set up a dunk for Brown, who finished the half with 22 points as the Celtics took a 68-56 half-time lead.

Boston started the third quarter in the same manner, managing to re-establish a double-digit cushion whenever Golden State made a dent in the Celtics lead. Eventually, though, the Warriors' offensive pressure told and the momentum shifted in a matter of seconds when Curry's three-pointer cut the Boston lead to six points at 82-76 with just over five minutes in the period remaining.

A flagrant foul by Horford turned it into a four-point play and Otto Porter Jr's three-pointer from 26ft made it a two-point game. But Boston powered back with Grant Williams draining a three-pointer to put the Celtics seven points clear at 93-86 before Thompson hit back from beyond the arc to make it a four-point game heading into the fourth. Any hopes of a Warriors recovery were snuffed out in the Celtics decisive burst of scoring in the final period. —AFP

### Belgium bounce back to crush Poland 6-1

**PARIS:** Belgium tore Poland apart to win their Nations League match 6-1 in Brussels on Wednesday. Belgium lost their opening game to neighbours Netherlands but responded with an increasingly dominant performance and finished the game with five goals in just over 30 minutes. "It brings extra emotion when you lose against your rivals so that was definitely a motivator tonight," said Belgium coach Roberto Martinez. "Against The Netherlands we were passive, waiting, insecure. Now we are a team instead of individuals."

Belgium suffered another early setback on Wednesday as the visitors took the lead after 28 minutes as star striker Robert Lewandowski struck with his 22nd goal for club and country in 2022. The Bayern Munich attacker controlled a pass from Piotr Zielinski in mid-air and then poked it past the on-rushing Simon Mignolet with the outside of his left boot. The hosts leveled three minutes before half time. Kevin de Bruyne cut through the Polish defense. After his drive was parried, Timothy Castagne rolled the ball back to Axel Witsel who swerved a drive inside the post.

Belgium took the lead after 59 minutes on the counter-attack. Captain Eden Hazard found De Bruyne free in the box and he slid a shot past Bartlomiej Dragowski. Hazard, who struggled with injury at Real Madrid this season and was an unused substitute in the Champions League final, came off after 66 minutes. "I am extremely happy that I could be important to the team, especially after my season," he said. Leandro Trossard replaced Hazard and scored twice in seven minutes. Defender Leander Dendoncker then struck his first international goal from long range.

Lois Openda, who came off the bench to make his international debut with six minutes left, rounded off



**BRUSSELS:** Belgium's midfielder Eden Hazard (2nd left) kicks the ball during the UEFA Nations League - League A - Group 4 football match between Belgium and Poland on June 8, 2022. —AFP

the rout in added time. "It was a match that will give us a lot to think about, a lot of question marks in various parts of our game plan and overall strategy, but also a lesson on how to play against such teams," said Lewandowski. Belgium, who lost their Group 4 opener to the Netherlands, sit second behind their neighbours and ahead of Poland on goal difference.

"Nobody should be worried about the future of Belgian football. We have immense talent but we have to be patient," said Martinez. "We finally have the structure in place. The rest will follow, but the talent is definitely there." In the World Cup in Qatar in November, Belgium have been drawn in a group with Canada, Morocco and the 2018 losing finalists Croatia. Poland face Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Argentina. "I told the players that they should use it as a reminder of how opponents play at the very highest levels in the world," said Poland coach Czeslaw Michniewicz. —AFP

### Platini was worth a million: Blatter

**BELLINZONA:** Michel Platini "was worth his million" Swiss francs a year, former FIFA president Sepp Blatter insisted Thursday, telling a Swiss court he could not understand why the pair were answering fraud charges. The former world football chief and French football legend Platini are being tried at Switzerland's Federal Criminal Court in the southern city of Bellinzona, following an investigation that began in 2015 and lasted six years. The pair are being tried over a two million Swiss franc (\$2.08 million) payment in 2011 to Platini, who was then in charge of European football's governing body UEFA. Blatter spoke for the first time in the two-week trial, which opened on Wednesday.

"I just had this man on my team and he was worth his million," said the 86-year-old retired Swiss football administrator. Platini was employed as an adviser to Blatter between 1998 and 2002. They signed a contract in 1999 for an annual remuneration of 300,000 Swiss francs, which was paid in full by FIFA. The men insist that they had, from the outset, orally agreed to an annual salary of one million francs. Blatter joined FIFA in 1975 and became the president of world football's governing body in 1998.

He told the court he turned to former France captain Platini for advice. Platini is regarded

among world football's greatest-ever players. He won the Ballon d'Or, considered the most prestigious individual award, three times in the mid-1980s. "When I was elected as president of FIFA, we had a bad record. But I thought that a man who had been in football could help us - FIFA and myself," Blatter told the court. Platini "told me: 'I'm worth a million'. I told him: 'So you'll be with me for a million,'" he added.

#### 'Gentlemen's agreement'

The prosecution accuses Blatter of having signed off an invoice for two million Swiss francs presented to FIFA by Platini in 2011, almost nine years after the end of his work as Blatter's adviser. But the two men had never signed a contract providing for such a salary. Blatter insisted that he had agreed with Platini a "balance" to be settled "later" when FIFA's finances would allow it, in a "gentlemen's agreement" concluded orally and without witnesses.

"It's a salary that was due," he insisted. "I don't know why we are in a criminal hearing for an administrative procedure," he said in a strained voice, repeating that the investigation had put him through "seven years of punishment - an eternity". Both are accused of fraud and forgery of a document. Blatter is accused of misappropriation and criminal mismanagement, while Platini, 66, is accused of participating in those offences. The trial will conclude on June 22, with the three judges expected to deliver their verdict on July 8. If convicted, the pair could face up to five years in jail or a fine. —AFP