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# Mol arrests 328 violators amid ongoing crackdown

## Liquor breweries also busted as traffic, security campaigns continue

### 60+ expat decision remains in place

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** A decision by the Public Authority of Manpower on renewing or transferring work permits of expat residents aged 60 years and above without degrees will remain in place at least till next year, because the decision was to be implemented for a year and then reviewed according to the market situation and studies to be conducted in this regard.

PAM's decision included allowing the renewal or transfer of work permits for private sector employees for this category of expat workers provided they pay an annual fee of KD 250 in addition to full private health insurance and other charges, amounting to nearly KD 850. Sources said PAM said a technical team

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KUWAIT: Violators are rounded up by security forces on Friday.

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry announced Friday that public security arrested 328 law offenders and busted two breweries manufacturing local liquor during security campaigns, in an effort to pursue wanted people and law violators.

Ahmadi governorate's security forces carried out a campaign in Wafra and Mina Abdullah and arrested 162 people, including 145 persons for not having IDs, 11 absconders and six people who were in an abnormal condition, the ministry's security media and public relations department said in a statement. Sixty bottles of what is suspected to be liquor were confiscated, four traffic citations were issued and two local liquor breweries were busted.

In Farwaniyah governorate, security forces arrested 166 people, including 109 for expired residencies, 49 absconders, three people with drugs, four who were drunk and one person sentenced in a felony case for 13 years. Residency

detectives also arrested 80 people of various nationalities in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Salmiya and Salhiya in violation of the residency law, including 48 absconders, 13 with expired residency permits, two with expired visas, five who do not work for their sponsors and 12 people who do not have IDs.

The campaigns carried out by the ministry come upon the directives of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to impose security nationwide and arrest outlaws and residence violators, the statement noted.

Traffic and security campaigns are ongoing nationwide with the aim of arresting law offenders to maintain the security and safety of both citizens and expats, it made clear. Earlier in the week, Ahmadi security directorate carried out a surprise campaign in Mahboula, resulting in the arrest of 308 residency violators. Two cases of drugs and liquor were also filed.

### News in brief

#### Bieber suffers facial paralysis

**NEW YORK:** Justin Bieber on Friday told fans in a video posted to Instagram that he's been diagnosed with Ramsay Hunt Syndrome, which is causing him partial facial paralysis. The 28-year-old pop singer recently announced he was pausing his Justice World Tour due to illness, hours before his first slated concert in Toronto. — AFP (See Page 13)

#### US drops arrival COVID tests

**WASHINGTON:** The US announced Friday that COVID-19 tests would no longer be required for international travelers arriving by air, a major step in the country's gradual lifting of pandemic restrictions. White House Assistant Press Secretary Kevin Munoz confirmed the news on Twitter, with US media saying the measure would end this weekend after strong lobbying from the travel industry. — AFP

#### Canada suspends COVID tests

**MONTREAL:** Canada is suspending random COVID tests at airports until the end of June in a bid to reduce chronic delays to travelers in recent weeks, the government said Friday. The tests will be put on hold from Saturday and will resume "off site" on July 1, according to a government statement. Numerous aviation officials have spoken out against the tests in recent weeks, saying they have worsened wait times at airports, already hit by understaffing. — AFP

#### Musharraf gravely ill

**ISLAMABAD:** Former Pakistan military strongman Pervez Musharraf was gravely ill in Dubai, his office said Friday, warning that the 78-year-old was unlikely to recover. "Going through a difficult stage where recovery is not possible and organs are malfunctioning," a message on his official Twitter page said, adding the news came from his family. Musharraf seized power in 1999 in a bloodless coup after the then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif tried to dismiss him as army chief. — AFP

## Two killed in India protests over Prophet

**PATNA:** Indian police shot dead two protesters and arrested more than 130 others during street rallies sparked by a ruling party official's remarks about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), authorities told AFP Saturday. There have been widespread protests in the Muslim world since last week, when a spokeswoman for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party made the comments on a TV debate show.

In India and neighboring countries, Muslims took to the streets in huge

numbers after Friday prayers to condemn the remarks, with police firing on a crowd in the eastern Indian city of Ranchi. "Police were forced to open fire to disperse protesters... resulting in the death of two," a police officer in Ranchi told AFP.

Officers said that the crowd had defied their orders not to march from a mosque to a market and had thrown broken bottles and stones when police attempted to disperse the rally with a baton charge. Authorities cut Internet connections in the city and imposed a curfew, with local resident Shabnam Ara telling AFP the atmosphere remained tense on Saturday. "We are praying for peace and harmony," she said.

Police in Uttar Pradesh fired tear gas to disperse at least one rally after

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## Iraq is still exhuming mass graves

**NAJAF:** A noisy backhoe digs up earth to uncover yet another mass grave in Iraq, human remains are exhumed and the forensics experts get to work on their grim task. A skull is freed from a layer of clay, a tibia is placed in a body bag - all bound for a laboratory to be genetically checked against blood samples from relatives of the disappeared.

The site near the central shrine city of Najaf is one of many in a country that suffered through more than four

decades of bloody conflict and turmoil. Dictator Saddam Hussein went to war with Iran from 1980 to 1988. Next came the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait, then the 2003 US-led invasion, years of sectarian bloodletting and most recently the Islamic State group's reign of terror until 2017.

The years of violence have made Iraq one of the countries with the highest number of missing persons in the world, says the International Committee of the Red Cross. In Najaf, work began in May to dig up a 1,500-sq-m plot to exhume the bones of around 100 victims of a 1991 uprising against Saddam. The mass grave was discovered by chance when property developers wanted to prepare the land for construction.

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## Iran nuke tactics leave Biden with tough choices

**WASHINGTON:** A flare-up in tensions between the UN nuclear monitor and Iran has left US President Joe

Biden in an increasingly tight jam. The US leader opened his presidency with a pledge to return to the 2015 international agreement that aimed to prevent Tehran from building nuclear weapons, after predecessor Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it.

Negotiations to restore that agreement have been at an impasse for three months over the very last details.



NEW DELHI: Students from Delhi University brandish placards and shout slogans during a demonstration to condemn police firing on a crowd in the eastern Indian city of Ranchi on June 11, 2022. — AFP



NAJAF: Forensics experts work at the site of a mass grave, discovered by chance when property developers wanted to prepare the land for construction, on May 18, 2022. — AFP

Without a deal - and Iran ever closer to nuclear "breakout" - Biden has a tough choice: To make more concessions to Tehran, and be accused of weakness by Republican opponents ahead of midterm elections, or declare the talks dead, which could spark a new Middle East crisis.

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency,

said Thursday that Tehran's removal this week of 27 cameras monitoring its nuclear sites could deal a "fatal blow" to negotiations. "At this stage, things can go either way," said Ali Vaez of the International Crisis Group. "The tension of the past few days could potentially stir leadership in Tehran and Washington to take the deal that is on the table."

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## Local

# Kuwait prepares pilgrims, sets measures for hajj in Saudi

## COVID-19 vaccine, PCR test required prior to departure

**KUWAIT:** As the hajj season nears with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aiming to host around one million pilgrims this year after easing COVID-19 restrictions, the Kuwaiti authority is working on necessary preparations to facilitate hajj for those embarking to complete this pillar of the Islamic faith. Kuwait's hajj pilgrims this year amount to 3,622 with conditions being set that only nationals were allowed to head to Saudi Arabia. The pilgrims must have taken two jabs of the COVID-19 vaccine, should not be over 65 of age and must provide a negative PCR test 72 hours prior to departure in line with Saudi authority guidelines.

Speaking to the press regarding this hajj season, Assistant at the Ministry of Awqaf (Endowment) and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Mutairi revealed that a joint committee consisting of the Ministries of Awqaf and Health as well as the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) was established to look into preparations for Kuwaiti hajj pilgrims. He added that the committee was coordinating with Saudi hajj authorities to make sure that pilgrims from Kuwait attend to their rituals during this special journey. In a similar statement, head of the Ministry's hajj and Umrah affairs Sattam Al-Mezyan affirmed that the ministry was working on several measures to facilitate hajj for pilgrims. He revealed that Umrah and hajj tour providers obtain necessary permits to be able to organize their campaigns and offer services.

Several steps must be taken to allow both pil-

grims and the officials running tours to attend hajj and this includes registration in the state's official hajj website, he indicated, noting that various states' entities were working together to facilitate hajj pilgrimage. On Thursday, the Kuwaiti supreme committee for hajj had assigned its members and teams to put the final touches and prepare pilgrims for this great ritual.

Saudi Arabia welcomed last week its first batch of hajj pilgrims since before the coronavirus pandemic, which prompted authorities to sharply restrict the annual ritual. One of the five pillars of Islam, the hajj must be undertaken by all Muslims who have the means at least once in their lives. Usually one of the world's largest religious gatherings, about 2.5 million people participated in 2019. But after the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Saudi authorities announced they would only let 1,000 pilgrims to take part. The following year, they increased the total to 60,000 fully vaccinated Saudi citizens and residents chosen through a lottery. Barring overseas pilgrims caused deep disappointment among Muslims worldwide, who typically save for years to take part.

In April, the kingdom announced it would permit one million Muslims from inside and outside the country to participate in this year's hajj, which will take place in July. The hajj consists of a series of religious rites that are completed over five days in Islam's holiest city, Makkah, and surrounding areas of western Saudi Arabia. — Agencies



**JEDDAH:** Muslim pilgrims arrive at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah on June 5, 2022, prior to the annual hajj pilgrimage in the holy city of Makkah. — AFP

## Kuwaiti, British officials discuss regional, int'l issues



**LONDON:** Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhefeeri meets British Minister of State for Europe and North America James Cleverly. — KUNA

**LONDON:** Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhefeeri met British Minister of State for Europe and North America James Cleverly on Thursday to discuss a range of regional and international issues of common concern. The meeting, held at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, dealt with the historical cooperation and exemplary relationship that kept growing steadily over the past 123 years, according to a statement from Kuwait Embassy in London. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the level of partnership in all areas and stressed the need to continue building on the distinguished ties to serve the common interests of both countries and promote their roles in the regional affairs. — KUNA

## Dr Mahdi: Kuwait keen on supporting IFAD

**ROME:** The State of Kuwait is keen on supporting efforts by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) to feed the poor and aid progress worldwide, said a Kuwaiti official on Friday. Speaking to KUNA in an exclusive interview, Dr Khaled Mahdi — Kuwait's candidate for the IFAD's Presidency — said that his country in addition to Saudi Arabia had helped establish the fund in 1977 with the aim of developing rural areas as well as aiding the most impoverished and

hunger-stricken regions in the world. Over the course of 45 years, the State of Kuwait had a key role in supporting the fund in all its efforts, recounting the Kuwaiti presidency of the fund in 1993 through compatriot Fawzi Al-Sultan. Regarding his bid to lead the fund, Mahdi said that he would work on facing challenges facing the fund and finding solutions to urgent matters facing those most unfortunate.

He revealed that his campaign would focus on developing human resource via helping people to help themselves and achieving the items set by the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

IFAD's first special session of the Governing Council on July 7 will appoint the new President of the Fund. IFAD consists of 177 country members. Since 1978, the fund offered \$2.23 billion in low



**ROME:** Kuwait's candidate for the IFAD's Presidency Dr Khaled Mahdi. — KUNA

interest loans to fund projects benefiting 518 million people around the globe. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Firemen battled a blaze reported Saturday evening at two warehouses that belong to the farmers' union in Abdali. No injuries were reported in the incident, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement, adding that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.



**KUWAIT:** Indian Ambassador Sibi George with resident ambassadors and members of the diplomatic community in Kuwait.

## India Environment Week ends with a grand finale

**KUWAIT:** The weeklong 'India Environment Week,' hosted by Indian embassy, Kuwait concluded with a grand finale on June 9. The event sought to highlight India's contribution to climate action and generate awareness on climate change which is one of the most crucial challenges the world faces today.

In his opening remarks, Indian Ambassador Sibi George underscored India government's commitments to combat climate change through its several programs and schemes including National

Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC), National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change to support the areas that are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change etc. He underlined the significant progress India has made in its efforts to save the planet, a press release issued by the embassy said.

During the week, the embassy organized a series of activities which commenced on 5 June with the symbolic planting of a mango tree at India House. The embassy highlighted the rich flora and fauna of India, shared information on Indian Ocean, India's rivers and islands and its herbs. Daily online quizzes, painting and drawing competition and presentations on India's successful climate action were also held during the week.

An exhibition on Indian herbal medici-

nal plants was inaugurated by the ambassador along with the resident ambassadors present at the celebrations. During the event, a speech by Prime Minister of India at the launch of LiFE movement was shown to the audience. The ambassador felicitated the winners of painting and drawing competition and daily online quiz conducted during the week.

Indian dance school Anjali School of Dance presented classical dance items in Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi styles in addition to a few semi-classical items. The event was attended by many resident ambassadors and members of diplomatic community in Kuwait, media persons and members of the Indian community. The event witnessed enthusiastic response with people from different walks of life in Kuwait participating virtually as well as physically, the release added.



**KUWAIT:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspectors closed down a jewelry shop in Salmiya Saturday after detecting various violations related to gold sale, including selling counterfeit items.

Local

# ICRC regional chief praises Kuwait's humanitarian work

## Odeh thanks Amir for neutral role of Kuwait

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) held a media roundtable on Thursday with Omar Odeh, Regional Head of Delegation for GCC Countries and Kuwait, to mark the end of his mission. Odeh discussed bilateral cooperation on various issues during his tenure with Kuwaiti authorities and partners, praising Kuwait for its keenness in humanitarian work, which is an effective and important role. "Kuwait was one of the countries that made efforts to resolve disputes in all countries. We thank the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the neutral role of Kuwait," he said.

Odeh discussed the top achievements of ICRC during his mission in Kuwait. "For the first time in decades, we were finally able to bring answers to hundreds of missing persons' families from the 1990-1991 Gulf War. ICRC is very pleased about the continued positive outcomes, driven by cooperation between Kuwaiti and Iraqi authorities in the framework of the tripartite commission," Odeh said.

"The mission was not easy and resolving these cases takes time, patience and cooperation between governments and humanitarian organizations. It can take years of work to uncover answers. Despite the epidemic, cooperation between countries continued and we were fortunate to find the remains and even identify them after years of searching," he said.

### New sites

Odeh revealed that two weeks ago, the tripartite commission met in Riyadh, hoping new sites of the remains will be found. After the end of the 1990-1991 Gulf War, ICRC, Iraq, Kuwait and members of the coalition (Saudi Arabia, France, United Kingdom and the United States) established a tripartite commission to



**KUWAIT:** The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Regional Head of Delegation for GCC Countries and Kuwait Omar Odeh poses for a group picture with journalists. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

search for missing persons. In 2021, the tripartite committee was able to officially close 60 files of missing persons and return the remains of two people from Kuwait to Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

During the 52nd meeting of the tri-

He noted that the joint venture with KRCS and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development links to strategic discussions to address the evolving humanitarian needs of communities affected by the consequences of conflict. "Also, to spread awareness on international law, there is a plan to educate and train local cadres in international humanitarian law."

### Humanitarian situation

Odeh highlighted the humanitarian situation and priorities of thousands of people facing conflict in the Middle East and beyond, pointing out that ICRC helps people affected by conflict and armed violence and promotes laws that protect victims of war. Regarding Yemen, he said: "The Yemen situation is different from other conflict areas, as one of our responsibilities is to engage in dialogue and discussion regarding the conflict itself, and not just distribute aid. ICRC engages in sustained dialogue with the parties to the conflict in Yemen on the conduct of their troops during armed hostilities and promotes respect for the rules enshrined in the international humanitarian law, which protects civilians and others. There is an ongoing secret talk with the coalition, along with regular coordination and aid."

## Cases of 30 missing persons formally closed

partite committee in December, it was announced that the cases of 30 missing persons and prisoners of war from the 1990-1991 Gulf War were formally closed, based on DNA analyses conducted at the Kuwaiti Department of Forensic Evidence. "For the first time, ICRC Regional Delegation in Kuwait signed a grant agreement with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to support humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh, and this makes Kuwait a real model due to its important local and international role. In addition, there was cooperation with the Kuwait Fund and policy discussions to enhance cooperation," Odeh said.



Omar Odeh speaks during the media roundtable.

Concerning the criticism of the amount of help victims of the Ukraine-Russia war received compared to victims of other countries, Odeh said that any armed conflict is a disaster. "We wish no harm to civilians, and this applies to all armed conflicts. It was important to try to host talks and discussions with Russia and to educate it about the international humanitarian law and find a way to evacuate affected civilians. This communication took another turn, and what was provided was criticized and compared with other aid," he said.

Odeh affirmed ICRC always tries to find a balanced way to deliver help to all countries, but one of the most difficult things is that their needs are greater than any organization can handle.



## Kuwait Airways launches flights to Madrid, Malaga

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Airways launched on Saturday its first commercial flights to Madrid and Malaga, three days per week, on Saturdays, Tuesdays and

Thursdays. The company's CEO, Maen Razouqi, said in a press statement that the cities of Madrid and Malaga were among the most important destinations for Kuwait Airways customers, and their launch comes in response to the remarkable and growing demand for travelers in Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC). He added that Airbus A330neo was chosen for these two destinations, as the aircraft contained technological features and superior technologies, in addition to the spaciousness of its seats in line with the latest air trans-



## Kuwait's Ambassador holds reception for UN panel candidate

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi held a reception at the Permanent Mission's headquarters in New York in honor of Rehab Boresli, the country's candidate for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Addressing the reception, the Kuwaiti diplomat said Rehab Boresli has the

required qualifications and professional experience to become member of this UN committee, calling on member states to vote for her in the elections due on June 14-16. Speaking to the press following the event on Friday, he elaborated that the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) comprises independent experts and monitors the implementation by the party states of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He hoped that the Kuwaiti permanent mission's efforts to rally up support for the country's candidate Boresli over the last couple of years would come to fruition during the committee's elections. Some 13 candidates from different countries are vying for nine seats in this committee. — KUNA



**NEW YORK:** Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks at the reception with Rehab Boresli. — KUNA

## Kuwait to host pediatric bone marrow transplant conference

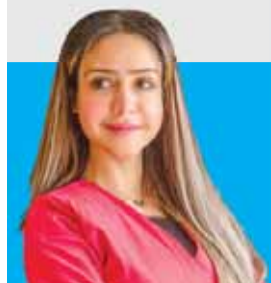
**KUWAIT:** The inaugural pediatric bone marrow transplant conference is due to kick off in Kuwait

on Wednesday, the health ministry said on Saturday, hailing the initiative as a measure aiming to raise awareness about the health of children. The talks, a collaborative effort between Kuwait's pediatric association and a local medical body, aim to show how advanced the procedure has become in the country, thanks to the use of cutting-edge science, said Dr Sundus Al-Sheriada, the head of the National Bank of Kuwait's Pediatric Hospital's bone marrow transplant center

told a press conference. The talks will feature a slew of workshops covering various branches of pediatric health, according to Kuwait pediatric association deputy chief Dr Maha Boroulsi, saying that this particular field has seen major progress over the years. On the local pediatric body's main objectives, she added it was formed with the aim of providing support to Kuwaiti pediatricians, given the critical medical field they oversee, the physician underlined. — KUNA

local spotlight

## Freedom of religion



By Atyab Al-Shatti

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**M**any religious campaigns are ongoing nationally and internationally to defend every human being's right to fundamentally exercise their religious beliefs without being abused or insulted, after incidents that took place lately oppressing individuals for their beliefs.

But looking into freedom of religion in a micro area of research, basically Kuwait, we stress the importance of pointing out the difference between how governing laws work as a protective umbrella for religions and rights practiced under this umbrella. The importance of such differentiation should work to amend the gaps between laws and actual practice and help build a more protective system.

According to article 35 of the constitution of Kuwait, freedom of belief is unrestricted, where the state shall protect freedom in the observance of religious rites established by custom, provided such observance does not conflict with morals or disturb public order. It is understood that every individual, regardless of their nationality, shall practice their beliefs keeping in consideration public orderliness and morals, yet some incidents related to officers applying the law revealed how the law is misunderstood.

Before the pandemic, an incident went viral on social media of an expatriate who took a statue to dip into the sea as one of his religious rituals which he was obliged to do, but ended up surrounded by verbal attacks by others, which later led to deportation. The individuals committing the verbal attacks were not deported, but the expatriate who was minding his own business was the one who was deported!

By presenting the incident in the manner mentioned above and searching for a legal area of accusation according to the national law that should present him as guilty, it basically shows that the misdemeanor of defamation of religions is punishable under article 111 of penal code no. 16 of 1960, which does not apply to what this person did.

This is a crime of contempt of religion, and in order for it to rise against the law it is attributed to, it requires some main pillars: The act of transgression, that is broadcasting an opinion that includes ridicule, contempt or belittlement of a religion or sect; the second is publicity, that is that the act of transgression and broadcast of opinion in one of the means of publicity stipulated by law, which does not apply in his case too.

The third pillar is an attack on religion or religious sect - the attack must take place against a religion, while what this individual did was simply practicing rituals. This person did not do anything insulting to any religion, but rather practiced rituals calmly without compromising public security or public order, which reveals that the deportation is not justified.

Within this ambiguity, it is clear enough that the understanding of the law should start with the law applicators, as they are the guide for all people here. It is highly essential to clarify the definition of religious beliefs and the importance of the protection of freedom of belief and granting it to everyone. It is also important to raise awareness among law applicators regarding religious rituals that do not violate public order and morals.

## KU advances in six of QS World Rankings indicators

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait University announced that it had made advances on six indicators of the recently announced QS World University Rankings of 2023. In a press statement on Friday, the national university admitted that its overall ranking remained unchanged in the category (1001-1200), but it had made strides in six of the QS eight indicators. The university scored 62.7 points in the employment outcomes indicator which assesses the ability to provide the employment market with highly-qualified graduates, the KU pointed out. KU added that its score in the international research indicator edged up to 52 points. This indicator gauges the diversification of the international research network and increasing of collaboration and knowledge transfer with other international educational institutions. The Kuwait University's score on the international faculty ratio indicator, which measures the university internationalization ability or the ability to attract high-quality international staff, rose to 25.8 points. The KU academic reputation also improved on the QS relevant indicator, as it scored 13.3 points. It progressed on the employer reputation indicator after scoring 7.7 points. QS employer reputation indicator assesses how universities prepare students for successful careers, and which institutions provide the most competent, innovative, and effective graduates. On faculty student ratio indicator, the Kuwait University ameliorated after securing 6.3 points. This indicator gauges how institutions provide students with meaningful access to lecturers and tutors. It recognizes that a high number of academics per student reduces the teaching burden and creates a more supportive student experience. The Kuwait University vowed to spare no effort to improve its ranking and offer world-quality educational services that meet international standards. — KUNA

Local

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News in brief

**Kuwait oil at \$123.38 pb**

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwait oil went up by 21 cents to \$123.38 per barrel on Friday in contrast with \$123.17 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Saturday. Globally, the Brent crude went down by \$3.00 to \$120.07 per barrel, and the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose by \$2.96 to \$118.55 pb.

**Kuwait decries attack**

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly denounced on Thursday the drone attack that targeted Irbil city, the provincial capital of Kurdistan region, north Iraq, and injured several people late last night. The Ministry stressed in a statement Kuwait's solidarity with sisterly Iraq and full support to the measures Iraq might take to protect its security and stability. It wished the injured quick recovery.

**Kuwait envoy honored**

**KHARTOUM:** Sudan's Sovereign Council Chairman Abdelfattah Al-Burhan decorated Kuwait's Ambassador in Khartoum Bassam Al-Qabandi on Thursday with a prestigious order, in appreciation of his role in strengthening bilateral relations. Qabandi was given the Order of the Two Niles of the first class as he met the Sudanese leader on the occasion of the end of his tenure.

Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait City high rise buildings seen at sunset. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

**Firemen battle sewer treatment plant fire; operations unaffected**

**KUWAIT:** Mangaf, Fahaheel and hazmat personnel put out a fire that broke out at Egaila sewer treatment plant. The fire was in the basement, and investigations are underway to determine the cause. The ministry of public works ensured operations of Egaila sewer treatment plant were not affected by the fire that broke out

Friday in the plant's basement. Official sources at the ministry said operations were not affected and the plant resumed activities at dawn Saturday. They said the fire was controlled quickly and did not spread, adding the onsite team intervened quickly to save the equipment and called the fire force.



**Shops shut down for violating fire safety regulations**

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Force personnel closed down 11 sites in the Capital, Hawally and Farwaniya governorates due to violations of safety and fire prevention rules and social security risks. Meanwhile, firemen closed down a popular market in Qurain Thursday for violating fire safety and prevention rules. Firemen urged citizens and residents to comply with rules and conditions to safeguard social security and warned violators that their businesses will be shut down amid legal action.



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**KUWAIT:** Coastguards carried out a campaign after receiving information about a heavy presence of jet skis in some areas with some riders behaving recklessly and endangering seagoers' safety. Five boats and 10 jet skis were confiscated.



First Russian passports handed to Ukrainians

## Iran convicts facing 'abhorrent' finger amputation

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DAMASCUS: The Syrian flag flies at Damascus International Airport outside Syria's capital. All flights to and from Syria's capital were halted on June 10, 2022 after the Zionist entity's air strikes wounded at least one civilian and reportedly caused damage to an airport runway. — AFP

# Syria landmine explosion kills 11

## Runways unusable after Zionists hit Damascus airport

BEIRUT: Eleven people were killed and dozens wounded when their pick-up truck ran over a landmine near Syria's southern city of Daraa, a war monitor said Saturday. "Eleven people, including five children under 16 and three women, were killed and around 34 people were injured" in the explosion, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, adding that some were in critical condition. Most of the victims were laborers harvesting wheat, Syria's official SANA news agency said.

The latest toll brings to 124 the total number of people killed by explosive remnants since the beginning of 2022, according to the Britain-based Observatory, which relies on a wide network of sources in Syria. Explosives left by all sides in fields, along roads or even in buildings in Syria's decade-long conflict have wounded thousands of civilians and killed hundreds of others. Across the country, about half the population is estimated to be living in areas contaminated by unexploded ordnance, according to the United Nations.

In 2020, Syria overtook Afghanistan as the country with the highest number of recorded casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war, with 2,729 people killed or wounded, according to the Landmine Monitor. In 2021, 241 civilians were killed and 128 wounded by explosive remnants across Syria, the Observatory said. Syria's war is estimated to have killed nearly half a million people and displaced millions more since it began with a brutal crackdown of anti-government protests in 2011.

Meanwhile, Syria has confirmed major damage including to runways at Damascus International Airport, which was closed for a second day Saturday for repairs after Zionist air strikes. The transport ministry said in a statement that runways were out of service. Since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, Zionists have carried out hundreds of air strikes against its neighbor, targeting government troops as well as allied Iran-backed forces and fighters from Lebanon's Shiite militant group Hezbollah.

But rarely have such attacks caused major flight disruptions. "Civil aviation and national companies are working... to repair the sizeable damage at the airport," the ministry said, adding a terminal building was also hit. The official SANA news agency said the Zionist bombardment wounded a civilian. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said the missile strike before dawn on Friday hit one of the runways as well as three arms depots near the airport belonging to Hezbollah, and other Iran-backed groups.

The Observatory, which relies on a network of sources within Syria, said the strikes wounded an undetermined number of people. Satellite images posted on Twitter by the Zionist firm ISI showed three separate areas of what it said was "extensive damage to both military and civilian runways" caused by the strikes. According to the Observatory, the damaged runway was the only one still operational after a Zionist strike last year put another one out of service.

### Russian condemnation

The 2021 bombardment had targeted weapons shipments and arms depots operated by Iran-backed groups, said the Observatory, a Britain-based monitor. The airport is in a region south of Damascus where Iran-backed groups, including Lebanon's Hezbollah, regularly operate. The vicinity of the facility is favorite target for Zionists which has launched 15 aerial attacks on Syria this year alone and regularly accuses Iran of using Damascus airport to send weapons shipments to its allies.

Syrian state media had reported that a volley of missiles was fired from the occupied Golan Heights at around 4:20 am on Friday. Syria's ally Russia strongly condemned "the provocative Zionist attack against essential civilian infrastructure". A spokesperson for Russia's foreign ministry called such attacks "an absolutely unacceptable violation of international norms."

Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian spoke by phone and also condemned the attack, SANA reported. Syria "will defend itself by all legitimate means" against Zionist attacks, Mekdad said. While Zionists rarely comments on individual strikes, they have acknowledged carrying out hundreds in Syria, in what the Jewish state's military says is necessary to prevent its arch foe Iran from gaining a foothold on its doorstep.

The conflict in Syria started with the brutal repression of peaceful protests and escalated to



DAMASCUS: This handout satellite image shows damage to runways at Damascus International Airport on the southeastern outskirts of Syria's capital. — AFP

pull in foreign powers and global jihadists. The war has killed nearly half a million people and forced around half of the country's pre-war population from their homes. Russia's military intervention in 2015 helped turn the war in favor of Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad. Moscow maintains military bases in the country. — AFP

## Militias battle in Libya capital

TRIPOLI: A night of clashes between militias in the heart of a residential district of the Libyan capital Tripoli raised fears on Saturday of escalating violence in the conflict-riven country. The intense fighting that erupted late Friday between two influential militias left at least one person dead and caused significant material damage, a security source told AFP. Gunfire and explosions rang out across Tripoli during the fighting, described by one resident as possibly the "heaviest" seen in the city for more than a decade.

It was the latest violence to rock the country as two rival prime ministers vie for power—the most recent episode of political infighting to fill the power vacuum left after the toppling of longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Footage aired by Libyan media

showed civilians, including women pushing children in prams, fleeing on busy streets in a built-up area after being caught in the crossfire. The fighting broke out in Souk Talat neighborhood and pitted two militias, Al-Nawasi and the Stability Support Apparatus, against one another, said the security source.

It came amid tensions following the arrest of fighters from both militias, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The clashes stopped after mediation by a neutral military force (Brigade 444), which deployed a number of its armoured vehicles" in the area of the fighting, he added. A video released overnight showed Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah ordering members of the force to intervene to secure the area and protect civilians. The source said there had been no civilian casualties, but cited "material damage".

By Saturday, normality had largely been restored to the area, but the violence sparked renewed outrage among residents. "This situation is unacceptable and it is unbearable for civilians to be caught in an ambush that puts their lives at risk because of the settling of

scores by criminal militias," 25-year-old student Maha Mokhtar told AFP.

"What is the fault of these families who fled their homes?" she added. Rida Said, another resident, said he had seen the fighting from his own balcony, describing the clashes as "perhaps the heaviest in our area since 2011". "It was clear that they were firing randomly at civilian areas with a lot of buildings," the 67-year-old said. "I was struck by panic and I feared for my children, who went out with their friends as they do every weekend... but thankfully they returned safely."

### 'Shocking & shameful'

The European Union's envoy to Libya, Jose Sabadell, on Saturday condemned the fighting as "shocking and shameful". "Arms were fired at a park where children run and play. Public spaces in Tripoli belong to families, not to men with guns," he wrote on Twitter. Last month, politician Fathi Bashagha attempted to seize power by force, sparking pre-dawn clashes between armed groups supporting him and those backing interim premier Abdulhamid Dbeibah. — AFP



TRIPOLI: Vehicles drive along a road at the Souk Al-Thalath (Tuesday market) district in the centre of Libya's capital Tripoli on June 11, 2022, after clashes between two influential militias had occurred there the previous night. — AFP

## Australia agrees payout, ending submarine spat

SYDNEY: Australia unveiled a substantial compensation deal with French submarine maker Naval Group Saturday, ending a contract dispute that soured relations between Canberra and Paris for almost a year. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said

the French firm had agreed to a "fair and an equitable settlement" of 555 million euros (US\$584 million) for Australia ending a decade-old multi-billion-dollar submarine contract.

The agreement drew a line under a spat that caused leader-level recriminations and threatened to torpedo talks on an EU-Australia trade agreement. "It permits us to turn a page in our bilateral relations with Australia and look to the future," said French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu. Albanese said he would travel to France soon to "reset" a relationship beset by "pretty obvious" tensions.

The tussle began in September 2021, when Australia's then-prime minister Scott Morrison

abruptly ripped up a long-standing contact with the French state-backed Naval to build a dozen diesel-powered submarines. He also stunned Paris by revealing secret talks to buy US or British nuclear-powered submarines, a major shift for a country with little domestic nuclear capability. The decision drew fury from French President Emmanuel Macron, who publicly accused Morrison of lying and recalled his ambassador from Australia in protest.

Relations were on ice until this May when Australia elected centre-left leader Albanese. Since coming to office, he has rushed to fix strained relations with France, New Zealand, and Pacific Island nations, who objected to the previous conservative

government's foot-dragging on climate change. "We are re-establishing a better relationship between Australia and France," Albanese said, after speaking to Macron about the settlement.

"I'm looking forward to taking up President Macron's invitation to me to visit Paris at the earliest opportunity." Speaking on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore, Lecornu said France valued its "friendship" with Australia. "Just because a government in the past did not keep its word, it does not mean we have to forget our strategic relationship," he said. "Australia has a new team in power, we are happy to be able to work with them." — AFP

## International

# Albinism: Lack of pigment plagued by deadly myths

## Albinos stigmatized, targeted over supposed magical powers

**PARIS:** Albinism, caused by a lack of melanin, the pigment that colors skin, hair and eyes, is a genetic anomaly that concerns hundreds of thousands of people across the globe, particularly in Africa. Ahead of International Albinism Awareness Day on Monday, AFP looks at the specificities of a very visible condition which is shrouded in prejudice, leading to discrimination and even violence against those affected.

### What is albinism?

Albinism is a hereditary genetic anomaly resulting from mutations in genes which affect how much melanin the body produces and therefore the pigmentation, or color, of a person's skin and hair which is very pale or almost white in the case of sufferers.

For those whose eyes are affected, known as ocular albinism, the blood vessels can show through the iris, making the eyes appear red. The absence of melanin leaves the skin extremely sensitive to sunlight, making people with albinism at greater risk of developing skin cancer. It also

affects the development of the optic nerve, which means that many sufferers' vision is impaired.

### Is it an illness?

Albinism is an inherited disorder that is often wrongly assumed to be an illness, a factor that contributes to the discrimination those affected can face in society. Under The Same Sun (UTSS), an association working to combat discrimination describes albinism as a "rare genetic condition". People with albinism require maximum protection from sunlight with strong sunscreen, hat, sunglasses and protective clothing.

They generally need glasses, contact lenses or hand-held magnifiers to see properly but the condition does not prevent them from developing normally. Health organizations refer to "persons living with albinism" rather than "albinos" but some associations prefer to limit use of the term "albinism," which comes from the Latin word "albus" for white. They instead use "amelanism" or "amelanistic"-lacking melanin.

### How many people are affected?

Albinism occurs in all ethnic groups worldwide. According to the US National Institute of Health (NIH), around one in 20,000 persons is born with albinism, which would equate to some 400,000 people out of a global population of 7.9 billion. Africa has a slightly higher incidence, estimated at somewhere between one in 5,000 and one in 15,000 inhabitants. One of the largest populations of people with albinism is believed to be in Tanzania, with as many as one in 1,400 people born with the disorder.

### Why the discrimination?

People with albinism are often stigmatized due to their appearance but it is in Africa where they suffer the worst discrimination and violence due to their supposed magical powers. In a 2013 study, UTSS found the myths about albinism were being driven by traditional healers, with one of the most dangerous being the belief that using the body parts of people with albinism in a potion can bring the user good luck or fortune. "Witchcraft taps

into the supernatural to explain human phenomena ... this white child born to visibly black parents," UTSS noted.

### Who is targeted?

In July 2021, the United Nations' expert on albinism, Nigerian lawyer Ikponwosa Ero, expressed alarm over "the notable increase" in cases of people with albinism being killed or attacked for body parts. "More tragically still the majority of victims are children," she added. A UNHCR report found evidence of "more than 200 cases of ritual aggressions against sufferers of albinism between 2000 and 2013". UTSS, which has been logging cases of violence across Africa, ranks Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania as the countries where such attacks are most prevalent. In a shocking recent case, the dismembered body of a four-year-old child was found in February in northeastern Burundi in a case believed to be linked to the illegal trade in body parts with neighboring Tanzania. —AFP

## US Capitol probe skewers Trump

**WASHINGTON:** Americans were served up an engrossing night of television as a congressional panel laid out damning evidence of Donald Trump's culpability in last year's US Capitol insurrection. Yet 17 months after the mayhem, the biggest challenge for the House of Representatives committee investigating the riot could be ensuring the brutal images of violence it played in prime time will pack the intended political punch.

Thursday's presentation was devastating for Trump, who has been characterized as an ongoing threat to US democracy-bidding to carry a campaign to steal the last election into the next. "It's important the American people understand what truly happened, and to understand that the same forces that led to January 6 remain at work today," President Joe Biden said Friday as he was discussing the hearing—a reference in part, at least, to Trump's transgressions.

The committee's footage of hand-to-hand combat between police and the mob Trump sent to the Capitol to stop the 2020 vote being certified in Biden's favor, made for gut-wrenching viewing. Capitol Police officer Caroline Edwards was shown being knocked unconscious and gave evidence in person about "slipping in people's blood" as the assault turned to "carnage." The hearing concluded with video of several members of the mob saying they marched on the Capitol simply because Trump had asked them to.

Liz Cheney—a rising Republican star until she refused to accept Trump's false claims of a stolen election-carefully filleted every aspect of the former president's so-called "Big Lie." She repeatedly referred to the "illegality" of his "sophisticated seven-point plan" to overturn the election. Testimony from Trump's closest allies—including his attorney general Bill Barr and daughter Ivanka—underscored that he had been made aware again and again how dangerous his conspiracy theories were.



**WASHINGTON:** A tweet from former President Donald Trump is shown on a screen during the House Select Committee hearing to investigate the January 6th Attack on the US Capitol, in the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. —AFP

The night got progressively worse for Trump, who didn't lift a finger for hours to help quell the insurrection, according to the committee. And there were gasps in the room when Cheney quoted a witness claiming that Trump had said vice president Mike Pence deserved to be hanged by the mob storming the Capitol. The challenge for Democrats-burned by the lukewarm public reaction to Trump's two impeachments and numerous other revelations of misconduct—will be to ensure that his latest calumny registers with voters. While powerful images of the riot may have jogged memories, much of the outrage appears to have dissipated since January last year, with voters increasingly focused on pocketbook issues such as soaring inflation.

In a YouGov/University of Massachusetts poll in May, just 42 percent of respondents backed the drive to hold the insurrectionists accountable—a drop of 10 points in a year. "Trump is still doing well with his followers at the grassroots level," Ahmed Zohny, a political science professor at Coppin State University in Baltimore, told AFP. "So unless the congressional committee on January 6 comes up with criminal evidence that prevents him from running again, it is unlikely that the (Republicans) in both the House and Senate will go against him." —AFP

## Senegal forces nab Casamance rebels

**DAKAR:** The Senegalese government said it had arrested members of a rebel group campaigning for the independence of the southern Casamance region, a claim refuted by a leading opposition figure as tensions heat up before an upcoming vote. According to the government, the arrests took place during a demonstration in the capital Dakar on Wednesday that was staged by the opposition coalition Yewwi Askan Wi.

Several opposition leaders have been banned from contesting the July 31 legislative elections, prompting protesters to threaten to prevent the polls from taking place if Yewwi Askan Wi is barred. "There were indeed rebels who were arrested during the latest demonstrations," government spokesman Oumar Gueye said. "Those who seek to destabilise our country are going to get cold feet," he added.

Gueye gave no details about those arrested, but social media reports identified them as members of the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) who had come to attend the protests. Ousmane Sonko, mayor of Casamance's main town Ziguinchor and a leading figure in Yewwi Askan Wi, accused the government of spreading "unfounded information". "These are lies," he wrote in Wolof on his Facebook page, saying the government aimed "to demobilize the militants".

"They are now talking about the MFDC after other lies," he added. Casamance, Senegal's southernmost region, is almost separated from the rest of the country by the tiny state of The Gambia. It has a distinct culture and language derived from its past as a former Portuguese colony. The MFDC has led a low-intensity separatist campaign since 1982 that has claimed several thousand lives.

But the conflict was mostly dormant until Senegal launched a major offensive last year to drive out the rebels. In a clash on January 24, four Senegalese soldiers were killed and seven were captured alive and taken across the border to The Gambia. The rebels released the hostages the following month. In March, the army launched a new operation in which it claimed to have destroyed several rebel bases for the loss of



**DAKAR:** Mayor of Dakar and Senegalese opponent Barthelemy Dias arrives in a car to attend a rally of the Senegalese opposition at the Place de l'Obelisque in Dakar. —AFP

one soldier and eight wounded.

### Lawmaker held

In another development, a Senegalese opposition politician was on Friday charged and imprisoned in Dakar for offending the head of state and spreading false news over remarks targeting President Macky Sall, one of his lawyers said. Sheikh Abdou Mbacke Bara Dolly is a member of an opposition coalition that is allied to another led by the main Senegalese opposition Ousmane Sonko.

The member of parliament had made critical remarks about Sall during a demonstration by the two coalitions on Wednesday in Dakar. Police took him into custody on Thursday evening. He "publicly made outrageous remarks against the president of the republic", the justice minister said in a press release published on Friday. The ministry later "gave instructions" for the lawmaker "to be prosecuted". Mbacke Bara Dolly had been "charged with offending the head of state, spreading false news (and) remarks contrary to morality and imprisoned", Ibrahim Diaw, one of his lawyers said. Tension is high in Senegal ahead of legislative elections due to take place on July 31. Anti-government protests were staged on Wednesday by an opposition coalition called Yewwi Askan Wi, in which Sonko is a leading figure. The Constitutional Court has banned him along with other opposition figures from taking part in the elections. —AFP

## Iraq is still exhuming...

Continued from Page 1

Intissar Mohammed was summoned to provide a drop of her blood as a sample because the authorities suspect her brother's remains could be found in the mass grave. Hamid disappeared in 1980 under Saddam's iron-fisted regime. At the time, Intissar and the rest of the family had moved to neighboring Syria but Hamid had stayed in Iraq for his studies, planning to join his family later.

"We waited for him, but he never came," recalled a tearful Intissar. The young man was reportedly kidnapped, she said, "and we never heard from him again". Intissar, who returned to Iraq in 2011, remains hopeful that she will find out more. Her DNA will be "compared with the bones found in situ", said Wissam Radi, a technician at the forensic medicine department in Najaf.

The identification process takes time and wears down the patience of relatives, who often complain that they feel abandoned. Opening a mass grave is a mammoth task and "the biggest obstacles are financial", said

Dergham Kamel of the Martyrs' Foundation, a state body in charge of managing mass graves. He said another government institution, the Directorate for the Protection of Mass Graves, had received "no funding from the government" between 2016 and 2021.

The centralization of the Iraqi system is another hurdle as genetic comparisons are conducted exclusively in the capital Baghdad. In the former IS bastion Mosul and elsewhere in northern Iraq, forensic scientists are making slow progress in analyzing the 200 or so mass graves left behind by the jihadists.

Hassan Al-Anazi, director of forensic medicine in the north's Nineveh province, has asked for the missing person database to include all the region's IS victims, but so far to no avail. "There are thousands of missing people," he said. "Every day, about 30 families come to us to ask for news of their loved ones." However, he said, "due to a lack of political will" the Khasfa mass grave in Mosul, one of the largest, has still not been opened. It contains the remains of officers, doctors and academics killed by the IS, with a total of around 4,000 victims. Bereaved Mosul mother Umm Ahmed is seeking information about the fate of her sons, police officers Ahmed and Faris, who were abducted by the IS when it took over the city. "I knocked on every door," she said. "I even went to Baghdad. But I got no answer." —AFP

received proposals and ideas from the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and private sector institutions to introduce changes, but the study recommended not changing anything.

Meanwhile, sources said there are plans to withdraw a proposal to naturalize foreign wives of Kuwaitis by the parliamentary interior and defense committee to restudy it and introduce many amendments that call for not naturalizing them and instead grant other advantages to them. The sources said the proposed law was not passed by the National Assembly, which includes amendments to the current law including that the wife of the Kuwaiti can get citizenship after 18 years of marriage if she has at least one child.

The sources said the interior ministry has been asked to prepare a new proposal and submit it to the government, which includes permanent residency for non-Kuwaiti wives of Kuwaitis, priority in employment and medical treatment and free education, without naturalization.

## Iran nuke tactics leave Biden with...

Continued from Page 1

Or, he said, "It's the first step in another cycle of escalation, and from this point on it would only get worse." "Worse" could mean Tehran moving ahead to build a nuclear weapon, and its opponents like the Zionist entity and US hardliners demanding hard action to prevent that. The talks in Vienna between Iran and the major powers resumed last year at Biden's impetus, with the US willing to rescind sanctions in exchange for Tehran returning to full implementation of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

But at the edge of a deal three months ago, the talks stalled, due - according to US officials - to final demands by Iran unrelated to nuclear issues. Meanwhile, officials say, Iran has pushed ahead with uranium enrichment operations that take it close to a weapons capability. The situa-

tion deteriorated this week when members of the IAEA censured Iran for not cooperating. A day later Iran removed the 27 cameras.

Supporters say the deal is the only thing that has prevented Iran from building nuclear weapons, and that saving it is worth Biden giving Tehran some concessions. But opponents - Republicans, and strong supporters of Iran's nemesis the Zionist entity - say Iran's lack of cooperation shows the agreement is not worth pursuing.

If Tehran's accelerated uranium enrichment operations "are not sufficient to get the Biden administration to change course, what will?" asked Behnam Ben Taleblu of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think-tank, which has opposed the JCPOA. "The time has come for a multilateral version of maximum pressure," he said, referring to Trump's approach. Even among Biden's Democratic Party, some voices are growing impatient. "At what point will the administration acknowledge that Iran's nuclear advances make a return to the 2015 JCPOA not in the United States' strategic interest?" said Senator Bob Menendez. Vazquez says that the Biden administration has settled into the situation of having neither an agreement nor a crisis over it. —AFP

## 60+ expat decision remains...

Continued from Page 1

followed the processing of work permits of this segment of workers and prepared a preliminary report that confirms there is no need for new amendments to the decision due to the fact that it achieved the goals it was issued for and gained PAM's acceptance as well as that of the concerned labor workers.

Sources said new categories will not be added to those exempt from this decision, which include husbands and children of Kuwaiti women, foreign wives of Kuwaitis and those holding Palestinian travel documents, in addition to residents who have comprehensive non-revokable insurance policies from a company listed on the bourse. They said PAM

## Two killed in India protests...

Continued from Page 1

several demonstrations were staged across the northern Indian state. Most protests ended peacefully but demonstrators in some cities threw stones at police and injured at least one officer, said Avani Ashwathi, a senior government secretary in the state. "We will take strict action against those indulging in stone pelting and violence," Ashwathi told reporters. "Those working behind the scenes, instigating violence, will not be spared at all."

Prashant Kumar, a senior police officer in the state, told AFP that up to "136 protesting miscreants" had been arrested from six districts around Uttar Pradesh. Cities around India saw sizable demonstrations on Friday, with some crowds burning effigies of Nupur Sharma - the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokeswoman whose comments set off the furor. Authorities also cut Internet services for the weekend in several districts near the eastern megacity of Kolkata, after protesters blocked a railway

line and mobbed a police station.

Sharma's remarks have embroiled India in a diplomatic storm, with the governments of nearly 20 countries calling in Indian envoys for an explanation. Since coming to power nationally in 2014, Modi's government and the BJP have been accused of championing discriminatory policies towards followers of the Islamic faith. His government proposed a controversial law that granted citizenship to refugees in India, but not if they are Muslim, while state BJP governments have passed laws making it harder for Muslims to marry outside their religion.

The foreign ministry last week rebuked US officials for what India termed "ill-informed" and "biased" comments made during the release of a religious freedom report that accused Indian officials of supporting attacks on minority worshippers. Sharma's comments sent the BJP into damage control, with the party suspending her from its ranks and issuing a statement saying it respected all religions.

Friday saw the biggest South Asian street rallies yet in response to the remarks, with police estimating more than 100,000 people mobilized across Bangladesh after midday prayers. Another 5,000 people took to the streets in the Pakistani city of Lahore at the call of a radical religious party, demanding that their government take stronger action against India over the comments. —AFP

## International

# First Russian passports handed out to Ukrainians in the south

## Zelensky warns of food crisis, urges end to Russian blockade

**MOSCOW:** Authorities in the Moscow-occupied city of Kherson in southern Ukraine handed out Russian passports to local residents for the first time on Saturday, news agencies reported. Russia's TASS agency said 23 Kherson residents received a Russian passport at a ceremony through a "simplified procedure" facilitated by a decree signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin in May.

"All our Kherson residents want to obtain a passport and (Russian) citizenship as soon as possible," the regional administration's pro-Moscow chief Vladimir Saldo was quoted as saying by TASS. "It's a new era that is beginning for us... It's the most important document a person can possess in their life," Saldo told the RIA Novosti agency. The Kherson authorities said the timing of the passport distribution was chosen with Russia Day in mind.

It falls on Sunday and is a public holiday to mark Russia's independence from the former Soviet Union. It is an occasion for many Russians to display national pride. The Russian army conquered most of the Kherson region at the start of its February 24 offensive. The Kremlin decree authorizing the local authorities to grant Russian passports to local residents also concerned the nearby Zaporizhzhia region partly controlled by Moscow's forces. Ukraine denounced the move as a "flagrant violation" of its territorial integrity, saying Putin's decree was "legally void".

### End blockade

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on

Saturday urged international pressure to end a Russian naval blockade of Black Sea ports that has choked off his country's grain exports, threatening a global food crisis. Before the Russian invasion, Ukraine was the world's top producer of sunflower oil and a major wheat exporter, but millions of tons of grain exports remain trapped due to the blockade. The United Nations and some countries are pushing for a maritime corridor to be opened up to allow exports to resume.

"The world will face an acute and severe food crisis and famine, in many countries of Asia and Africa," Zelensky said in a video address to the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore. "The shortage of foodstuffs will inexorably lead to political chaos, which can result in the (collapse) of many governments and the ousting of many politicians," he told delegates, including Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin and China's defense minister.

"This looming threat is plain to see by just looking at the skyrocketing prices of basic products in the world markets and in certain countries. This is the direct consequence of the acts of the Russian state," Zelensky urged the international community to "restore the full might of the international law" that existed before the February 24 invasion. Kyiv is in discussion with the UN, Turkey and other countries to open a way to allow the grain exports, and Zelensky said the talks are focused on the "format" of the corridor.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Turkish counterpart held talks this week in Ankara on securing safe passage for Ukrainian grain



**LYSYCHANSK:** A house burns after being shelled during an artillery duel between Ukrainian and Russian troops in the city of Lysychansk, eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas, on June 11, 2022. —AFP

exports, but the discussions made little headway. Zelensky said Ukraine was currently exporting more than two million tons of grain a month via rail but this was not enough. He accused Russia of seeking to push up grain prices higher, adding it

had done the same with energy. Russia's invasion sparked worldwide condemnation and a barrage of sanctions. After being repelled from Kyiv and other parts of the country, it is focusing its offensive on the eastern Donbas region. —AFP

## Attack sparks outcry over violence against women in China

**BEIJING:** Nine people have been arrested for a vicious attack on a group of women at a restaurant in China, police said Saturday, in a case that has sparked outrage over predatory sexual behavior. Footage of the incident widely circulated online shows a man placing his hand on a woman's back as she shares a meal with two companions at a barbecue restaurant in northern China's Hebei province. After the woman pushes him away, the man strikes her before others drag her outside and deal a barrage of blows as she lies on the ground. Another woman is also knocked to the floor.

The video renewed an online debate about sexual harassment and gender-based violence in China where the conversation around women's rights has grown in recent years despite pressure from a patriarchal society, internet censorship and patchy legal support. Campaigners say domestic abuse remains pervasive and under-reported while

prominent feminists also face regular police harassment and detention. Web censors blocked keywords linked to the #MeToo movement after a wave of women accused university professors of sexual harassment in 2018.

Police in Tangshan city on Saturday said they had arrested nine people on suspicion of violent assault and "provoking trouble", adding that "the case is being further investigated". Two women treated at hospital following the incident were "in stable condition and not in mortal danger", while two others sustained minor injuries, authorities said Friday.

The attack generated hundreds of millions of comments on social media, where users slammed predatory behavior and urged authorities to crack down on violence against women. "All of this could happen to me, could happen to any of us," said one commenter in a post liked over 100,000 times. "How is this sort of thing still happening in 2022?" wrote another. "Please give them criminal sentences, and don't let any of them get away." Last year, a Chinese man was sentenced to death for murdering his ex-wife as she livestreamed on social media, in a case that shocked the nation. —AFP

## US blasts China for 'provocative' military activity

**SINGAPORE:** US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday blasted China's "provocative, destabilizing" military activity near Taiwan, as well as Beijing's growing aggression across the wider Asia-Pacific region. Tensions between Washington and Beijing are soaring over democratic, self-ruled Taiwan, which China views as its territory and has vowed to seize one day, by force if necessary. Beijing has conducted dozens of incursions into Taiwan's air defense zone this year, and on Friday, Defense Minister Wei Fenghe warned Austin that China was prepared to go to war if the island declares independence.

In an address to the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore, Austin took aim at Beijing's "growing coercion" towards Taiwan, a day after holding his first face-to-face talks with Wei. "We've witnessed a steady increase in provocative and destabilizing military activity near Taiwan," he told the forum, which is attended by defense ministers from Asia and around the world. "That includes (Chinese military) aircraft flying near Taiwan in record numbers in recent months, and nearly on a daily basis," he said.

## Beijing delays school reopenings after new coronavirus outbreak

**BEIJING:** Most children in Beijing will not return to school next week as originally planned, Chinese officials said on Saturday, after an emerging COVID-19 outbreak prompted authorities to partly reverse a decision to resume in-person teaching. China is the last major economy still committed to a zero-COVID strategy, stamping out new cases with a combination of targeted lockdowns, mass testing and lengthy quarantines. But virus clusters in recent months have put that approach under strain. The megacity of Shanghai was forced into a gruelling months-long lockdown and in the capital Beijing, schools were shuttered and residents were ordered to work from home.

Authorities in Beijing eased many curbs earlier

this week, but dozens of infections linked to a bar have led authorities to tighten some restrictions again. Most primary and middle school students will "continue to study online at home" from Monday, city government spokesperson Xu Hejian said at a press briefing on Saturday.

The announcement partly walked back a previous decision to send younger pupils back to school in phases, starting next week. Some 115 cases have been linked to the bar cluster so far, municipal health official Liu Xiaofeng said at the briefing. The new outbreak was "at a rapidly developing stage ... and at a relatively high risk of spreading", Liu said. More than 20 million people in Shanghai began a mass testing drive on Saturday that local governments said would take place under temporary lockdown conditions.

The move comes less than two weeks after the eastern economic hub lurched out of a harsh lockdown that was punctuated by food shortages and isolated protests from irate residents. Officials have maintained a shifting patchwork of restrictions in Shanghai, wary of a virus resurgence after finally



**SHANGHAI:** People rest and eat take-away food at an open-air area of a shopping mall in Pudong district of Shanghai on June 11, 2022. —AFP

Taiwan militarily if it is attacked by China.

The White House has since insisted its policy of "strategic ambiguity" over whether or not it would intervene has not changed. In Saturday's address, the Pentagon chief reiterated US criticism of China's increasingly "coercive and aggressive approach to its territorial claims". China claims almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually, with competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Beijing has been accused of deploying a range of military hardware including anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles there, and has ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared its historical claim over most of the waters to be without basis. "Indo-Pacific countries shouldn't face political intimidation, economic coercion," said Austin, using an alternative name for the Asia-Pacific. He also criticized Russia's invasion of Ukraine, at the same time taking a veiled swipe at China's growing aggression.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine is what happens when oppressors trample the rules that protect us all," he said. The United States and China have been at loggerheads over the invasion, with Washington accusing Beijing of providing tacit support for Moscow. China has called for talks to end the war, but has stopped short of condemning Russia's actions and has repeatedly criticized American arms donations to Ukraine. China's defense minister will address the summit on Sunday, its final day. —AFP



**BEIJING:** A health worker takes a swab sample from a boy to be tested for COVID-19 coronavirus at a nucleic acid testing station in Beijing on June 11, 2022. —AFP

containing the country's worst outbreak in two years. China recorded 138 domestic infections on Saturday, including 61 in Beijing and 16 in Shanghai, according to the National Health Commission. —AFP

## Iran convicts facing 'abhorrent' finger amputation

**PARIS:** Eight Iranian men convicted of theft are in imminent risk of having their fingers cut off, campaign groups warned on Friday, urging global action to halt the "inhuman" punishment. All eight men are being held in the Greater Tehran prison waiting for their fingers on one hand to be amputated, the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran (ABC) and Amnesty International said in separate statements. Three of them had been transferred from Orumiyyeh prison in northwestern Iran in May specifically for the amputation, they said.

According to Amnesty International, the authorities have informed the men that they will be transferred to another prison in the coming days for the sentence to be implemented with a guillotine machine. All eight were convicted of robbery and sentenced to amputation of their fingers, with the verdict upheld by the supreme court, Amnesty said. On June 8, all eight were summoned for transfer for the amputation which was postponed for unknown reasons.

In a joint statement with the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN), the ABC said it was concerned by "credible reports" that the device had now been installed in a clinic in Tehran's Evin prison and had already been used for at least one amputation in recent days. "Carrying out such a cruel and inhuman punishment violates the minimum standards of humanity and decency," said ABC executive director Roya Boroumand. "The international community can and should react urgently to stop the implementation of these amputations," she added. Finger amputations are permitted in the Islamic republic under sharia law, but have been rarely carried out in recent years. The ABC said it had collected reports on at least 356 sentences of amputation issued since the Islamic revolution in 1979, but added the real number is believed to be much higher. If the sentences are carried out, the men will have four fingers of their right hand cut off so only the palm of their hands and thumbs are left, according to Iran's penal code.

### 'Urgent intervention needed'

Diana Elkahawy, Amnesty International's deputy regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, said that the punishments represented an "abhorrent assault on human dignity." "We call on the international community to urgently intervene to stop these sentences from being carried out."

Amnesty cited reports by Iranian activists that a guillotine machine was brought to the medical clinic of Evin prison last month and on May 31, authorities amputated four fingers from a prisoner moved there from Kermanshah province in southwestern Iran. It said that punishments such as amputation amount to torture and are prohibited under international law noting that Iran's penal code allows other corporal punishments including flogging, blinding and stoning. Both Amnesty and ABC said one of the convicts, named as Hadi Rostami, had been flogged 60 times after protesting against his sentence and had attempted suicide twice in prison. The concern over the pending punishment comes as rights groups raise alarm over surging numbers of executions in Iran at a time of protests over price rises. According to Norway-based Iran Human Rights, at least 168 people were executed by Iran authorities in the first five months of 2022, 50 percent more than in the same period last year. —AFP

# Business

SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 2022

## Sanctions-hit Iran, Venezuela sign 20-year cooperation deal

### Direct flights between Tehran and Caracas to promote tourism

**TEHRAN:** Iran and Venezuela signed a 20-year deal on cooperation between the two allies subject to US sanctions during a visit Saturday to the Islamic republic by Venezuela's President Nicholas Maduro. The inking of the agreement "shows the determination of the high-level officials of the two countries for development of relations in different fields," Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said.

Maduro, speaking at a joint news conference in the Iranian capital, said the cooperation covered the energy and financial sectors as well as "work together on defense projects". Alongside the likes of Russia, China, Cuba and Turkey, Iran is one of Venezuela's main allies. And like Venezuela it is subject to tough US sanctions.

"Venezuela has passed hard years but the determination of the people, the officials and the president of the country was that they should resist the sanctions," Raisi said during the news conference, quoted by state television. "This is a good sign that proves to everyone that resistance will work and will force the enemy to retreat," the Iranian president added. In addition to the 20-year accord inked by the two countries' foreign ministers, "Iran and Venezuela signed documents on cooperation in the political, cultural, tourism, economic, oil and petrochemical fields," state news agency IRNA said. "We have important projects of cooperation between Iran and Venezuela in the fields of energy, petrochemical, oil, gas and refineries," Maduro said.

#### Direct flights

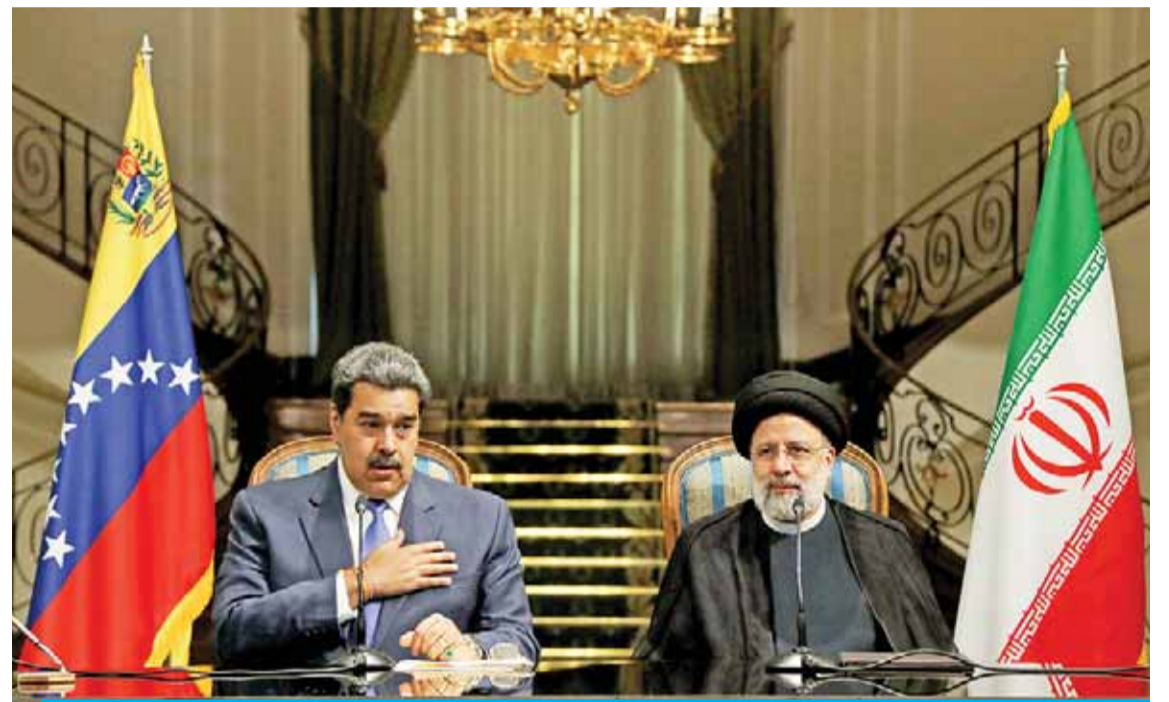
From July 18, direct flights would operate between

Caracas and Tehran "in order to promote tourism and the union between our countries," he said, adding that "Venezuela is open to receive tourists from Iran". Iran's president also emphasized the importance of direct flights between the two capitals, saying it could pave the way for the enhancement of "trade and economic relations as well as bringing the two nations closer together". Bilateral ties between the two oil producers were strong under late Venezuelan socialist leader Hugo Chavez and have been further bolstered under his successor Maduro.

In May, Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji met with Maduro during an official visit to Venezuela, which sits on the world's largest proven crude reserves. Owji also met his Venezuelan counterpart Tareck El Aissami for talks on finding ways to deal with the economic sanctions imposed on both countries by the United States.

Owji's visit to Venezuela, which sits on the world's largest proven reserves of crude, came just weeks after a visit by United States officials in the midst of rising global oil prices due to the war on Ukraine. In March, a US delegation held a hushed meeting with Maduro, whose very legitimacy as president Washington disputes. Iran is a major oil producer and said in April that output capacity was back to levels before the reimposition of US sanctions under then president Donald Trump in 2018.

In 2020, Venezuela received two shiploads of fuel and derivatives from Iran to help address crippling domestic shortages. Iran is the third country that Maduro has visited this week after trips to Turkey and Algeria. — AFP



**TEHRAN:** A handout picture provided by the Iranian presidency shows Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi (right) and Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (left) giving a joint statement after their meeting in the capital Tehran on June 11, 2022. —AFP



## Toxic cocktail darkens outlook for British pound

**LONDON:** A toxic cocktail of sluggish growth and high inflation, plus Brexit and fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, is set to weigh on the pound in the coming months, economists warned. Since the start of the year, sterling has fallen by more than seven percent against the dollar, which is benefiting from rises in US interest rates. The pound has also fallen by 1.7 percent against the euro since the beginning of 2022.

This comes despite the Bank of England having raised UK borrowing costs four times this year to fight inflation. By contrast, the European Central Bank is waiting until July to raise its key interest rates for the first time in more than a decade. BoE rate rises have "been insufficient to offset the headwinds weighing on the pound", said Rabobank analyst Jane Foley.

"Concerns about growth have been central to the poor performance of the pound," she said.

Fears of recession in the UK and elsewhere are gaining momentum as soaring inflation-fuelled by rocketing energy prices-hits investment and consumer spending. Oil and gas demand has surged as economies emerge from pandemic lockdowns, while supplies have been hit by the invasion of Ukraine by major producer Russia. Britain's annual inflation rate stands at nine percent, a 40-year high, while the Bank of England is forecasting the UK economy to contract at the end of the year. The Bank of England's next rate decision is due June 16 when it is expected to take its main borrowing cost above one percent. "Hiking rates against a sharply slowing economy is never a good look for any currency," said Bank of America currency strategist, Kamal Sharma.

#### Brexit cost

The pound has dropped to around \$1.25 compared with \$1.40 before the 2016 vote in favor of Brexit, or Britain's departure from the European Union. After the UK entered its first pandemic lockdown in March 2020, sterling sank to \$1.14, the lowest level since 1985. And the pound took a knock this week after embattled British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced a vote of no confidence from his own Conservative MPs. Although Johnson survived, 41 percent of those who voted failed to back him as their leader.

Another big factor affecting the pound is that the BoE "remains wholly unwilling to discuss" the full consequences of Brexit on the UK economy, according to Sharma. This could partly be due to the fact that it is difficult to pin down the exact financial fallout, with Britain's departure from the European Union formalized only during the economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, political paralysis in Northern Ireland, a direct consequence of Brexit, poses further problems for the pound, according to economists. "The added risk is that there is another Brexit bust-up, perhaps over the Northern Ireland Protocol," Capital Economics analyst Paul Dales told AFP.

"The latter could result in the pound weakening below \$1.22." —AFP

## US inflation skyrockets, piling pressure on Biden

**LOS ANGELES:** US inflation surged to a new four-decade high in May, defying hopes that price pressures had peaked and deepening President Joe Biden's political troubles as Americans struggle to meet the cost of essentials like food and gas. Government data released Friday put inflation at 8.6 percent, extending increases not seen for a generation, with gas prices hitting daily records fueled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and supply chain challenges related to the pandemic.

Biden, whose popularity has taken a hit as prices surge just months before November's midterm elections, has made fighting inflation his top domestic priority but is finding he has few tools to directly affect prices. "I'm doing everything in my power to blunt Putin's price hike and bring down the price of gas and food," he said Friday while speaking at the Port of Los Angeles. "We're better positioned (than) just about any country in the world to overcome the global inflation we're seeing and to take the next step towards forming a historic recovery."

The president has tried to hammer home his optimistic message about economic progress in the wake of the pandemic, including rapid GDP growth and record job creation, while pressing Congress to take action to lower costs on specific products. Biden cited releasing 30 million barrels of reserve oil and repeated his call to approve legislation to go after firms such as shipping companies that are taking advantage of limited competition to impose steep price hikes.

But he acknowledged the rising inflation was a severe problem, saying in an earlier statement the United States "must do more — and quickly — to get prices down." The new data dealt a crushing blow to Biden's efforts, as the consumer price index (CPI) jumped 8.6 percent compared to May 2021, up from 8.3 percent in the 12 months ending in April and topping what most economists thought was the peak of 8.5 percent in March.

Prices continued to rise last month for goods including housing, groceries, airline fares and used and new vehicles, setting new records in multiple categories, according to the Labor Department report.

"The headline inflation numbers are dreadful. Strip away some special factors & they're merely bad," Harvard economist and former White House advisor Jason Furman said on Twitter. Some economists expected the easing of pandemic restrictions to cause a shift of US consumer demand towards services and away from goods, which they said would ease inflation pressures, but prices for services increased as well.

#### Soaring energy costs

CPI rose one percent compared to April, after the modest 0.3 percent gain in the prior month, the Labor Department reported, far higher than expected by analysts. Energy has soared 34.6 percent over the past year, the fastest since September 2005, while food jumped 10.1 percent — the first increase of more than 10 percent since March 1981, the report said. Fuel oil more than doubled, jumping 106.7 percent, the largest increase in the history of CPI, which dates to 1935.

"The price of fuel oil and natural gas is working its way through the economy," Biden economic advisor Brian Deese told CNBC. "The issue now is how can we actually make progress... that would improve that?" "We're calling on Congress to move on shipping legislation that would bring down the cost of moving goods overseas." The United States has come roaring back from the economic damage inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic, helped by bargain borrowing costs and massive government stimulus measures.

But with the pandemic still gripping other parts of the world, global supply chain snarls have caused demand to far outstrip resources.

Food and fuel prices have accelerated in recent weeks since the Russian invasion of Ukraine sent global oil and grain prices up, and American drivers are facing daily record gas prices, with the national average hitting \$4.99 a gallon on Friday, according to AAA.

The University of Michigan consumer sentiment index — which measures how American consumers feel about the economy, personal finance and business and buying conditions — fell sharply Friday from 58.4 to 50.2, its lowest recorded value.

The Federal Reserve has begun raising interest rates aggressively, with another big hike expected next week, and more ahead in coming months as policymakers attempt to combat inflationary pressures without triggering a recession. The CPI surge "raises the probability of even more aggressive Fed rate hikes to tamp down on inflationary expectations," said Mickey Levy of Berenberg Capital Markets, adding that a pause in rate hikes in September is "looking increasingly unlikely." — AFP



**LOS ANGELES:** US President Joe Biden (center) walks on the deck of the USS Iowa as he arrives to speak about the economy and inflation at the Port of Los Angeles on June 10, 2022. — AFP

## ExxonMobil 'made more money this year': Biden

**LOS ANGELES:** President Joe Biden on Friday slammed ExxonMobil for not producing more oil, as soaring gas prices deplete Americans' wallets and the US leader's popularity ahead of midterm elections. "Exxon made more money this year," he said, advocating increasing taxes on oil companies. ExxonMobil reported massive profits in the first three months of the year despite lower oil and natural gas volumes, as crude prices rose after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Oil companies "have 9,000 permits to drill. They're not drilling. Why aren't they drilling? Because they make more money not producing more oil," Biden said in comments at the Port of Los Angeles hours after the government released a devastating inflation report reflecting soaring energy prices. And with the higher profits, "they're buying back their own stock, which should be taxed quite frankly. Buying back their own stock and making no new investments." After a dreadful 2020 amid Covid-19 lockdowns that devastated petroleum demand, oil companies returned to profitability in 2021 and have continued to see earnings skyrocket this year. ExxonMobil's first-quarter profits more than doubled to \$5.5 billion, and revenues rose 52.4 percent to \$87.7 billion. —AFP

## Nothing to suggest US will have a recession: Yellen

**WASHINGTON:** The United States is unlikely to suffer an economic downturn, despite sky-high inflation, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said. "There's nothing to suggest that there's a recession in the works," she said during an interview at The New York Times' economic forum.

The US economy has recovered strongly from the COVID-19 damage, but the highest inflation in four decades and supply chain snarls exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine are increasing pessimism.

The US Labor Department is set to release the May consumer price index (CPI) report on Friday, and analysts expect the data could potentially show a modest slowdown in the torrid 8.3 percent annual pace. The Federal Reserve has begun raising interest rates aggressively, with another big hike expected next week, as policymakers attempt to combat inflationary pressures without triggering a recession. Yellen expressed confidence they will be successful.

"I believe there is a path through this that entails a soft landing," she said. But the swiftness of the Fed's planned moves has increased fears of a recession, generally defined as two consecutive quarters of negative growth. At the forum, Yellen was asked to respond to rapper Cardi B's tweet about a possible downturn.

"Is there a recession risk? Of course there's a recession risk," the Treasury secretary said. "But is it likely? I don't think so." When asked if she knew who Cardi B was, Yellen quipped: "I don't have a lot of time for her, but I am alive." —AFP





Abdulwahab Al-Rushood, Ahmed Al-Sumait and Youssef Al-Ruwaih



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood receiving the awards from EMEA Finance



Ahmed Al-Sumait receiving the award from EMEA Finance

# KFH wins three prestigious awards from EMEA Finance

## Awards rank KFH as a leader in shaping Islamic finance sector

**KUWAIT:** In the 14th edition of the EMEA Finance Middle East Awards 2021, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) won three prestigious awards in a new achievement that ranks KFH as a leader in shaping the Islamic finance sector.

KFH was named "Best Financial Institution Sukuk" for Kuwait Finance House's debut \$750 million Perpetual NC6 Sukuk, "Best Financial Institution Sukuk" for KFH-Turkey's \$350 million sustainability Tier 2 Sukuk and "Best Green Sukuk" for KFH-Turkey's \$350 million sustainability Tier 2 Sukuk.

EMEA Finance awards are one of the most prestigious recognitions in the banking sector which aim to honor banking institutions for their financial performance, quality of services and banking excellence. The Magazine uses fundamental criteria in its selection process, which include the bank's market share, products growth, profits, innovative services and products, as well as the quality of KFH's business strategy.

KFH's Group Acting CEO, Abdulwahab Essa Al-Rushood, stated that the recent

awards are a remarkable addition to the previous honoring awards the bank has received. He indicated that the awards are a recognition of KFH's prominent position achieved on local and international levels.

He added that KFH has an impressive record of achievements in Islamic finance, in addition to the bank's high efficiency which enabled it to be a player in develop-

ing sukuk market, stressing that this win is due to the trust of KFH's shareholders and customers, as well as the continuous efforts of KFH's competent employees.

Al-Rushood reaffirmed that KFH employs all its abilities and efforts in developing innovation in the Islamic finance, positively influencing the markets where it operates and enhances economies, which is reflected in the bank's recent shift towards

supporting sustainability by issuing Green Sukuk.

EMEA Finance stated that the high ratings of KFH support its plans to access international capital markets. In 2021, KFH-Turkey succeeded in issuing Green Sukuk worth \$350 million under the leadership of KFH as a result to its extensive experience in the Sukuk market and contributions in

developing the thriving area of Islamic finance.

The magazine added that the awards are a recognition of KFH's leadership and innovative abilities in the Sukuk market, pointing out that the Green Sukuk is the "first of-its-kind" to be issued by an Islamic financial institution and the first international debut for Tier2 sustainable Sukuk.

### Market-maker

KFH has been in so many circumstances the market-player in financing of sukuk, and a lead arranger for more than \$5 billion in sukuk. Many of the sukuk, for which KFH was a lead manager, or a bookrunner, were for the benefit of commercial and development banks in the Middle East. The bank's most outstanding

primary and secondary capital markets. Due to being the most active market player in the secondary market, KFH Group Treasury executed Sukuk deals worth over \$16 billion. In addition, KFH topped the main dealers' list in the issuance of the International Islamic Liquidity Management (IILM) of the primary sukuk market. The bank also topped the second-

role was being the Joint Lead Manager and the bookrunner for Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector "IsDP" (\$600 million), Islamic Bank of Dubai (\$1 billion), Boubyan Bank (\$750 million) and First Abu Dhabi Bank (\$500 million).

In 2021, KFH's Group Treasury and Financial Institutions Department expanded investment and trading activities in the

ary market dealers list in 2021. It is worth noting that this is the first achievement whereby a financial institution tops the two lists in the Sukuk primary and secondary markets.

It is worth noting that the British magazine "EMEA" covers all dynamic financial markets in Europe, Middle East, and Africa through highly specialized analyses by a team of experts.

**Al-Rushood: KFH's high efficiency enabled the Bank to be a market player in developing the sukuk market**

**EMEA Finance: The high ratings of KFH support its plans to access international capital markets**

بيت التمويل الكويتي  
Kuwait Finance House



## Your Trust.. First Award



Best financial institution Sukuk:  
Kuwait Finance House  
Kuwait-Perpetual NC6  
Sukuk.



Best financial institution Sukuk:  
Kuveyt Turk Katilim  
Bankasi-Sustainability  
Tier 2 Sukuk.



Best green Sukuk:  
Kuveyt Turk Katilim  
Bankasi-Sustainability  
Tier 2 Sukuk.

## Business

# Textile industry set to unravel under Pakistan's power crisis

## Pakistan allocates 40% of budget to tackle debt

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's textile exports are set to dramatically dip as the sector is hobbled by a nationwide energy crisis forcing daily power cuts on factories, with an industry leader warning about "a state of emergency" for the manufacturing hub. The South Asian nation is in the midst of a dire economic crisis, with runaway inflation, a depleted rupee and dwindling foreign exchange reserves hampering energy imports.

Meanwhile a heatwave has caused a surge in electricity demand, leaving a shortfall of over 7,000 megawatts—one-fifth of Pakistan's generation capacity—on some days this month, according to government figures. The energy shortage has hit Pakistan's vital textile industry, which supplies everything from denim to bed linen towards markets in the US and Europe, and accounts for 60 percent of the country's exports.

"The textile industry is in a state of emergency," Qasim Malik, the vice president of the Chamber of Commerce in the manufacturing hub of Sialkot, told AFP. With authorities forced to ration the power supply with staggered blackouts, Malik said the "unannounced and unscheduled" outages disrupt the textile supply chain, which is "causing millions of rupees of losses".

"Should the power cuts persist there could be a decline of more than 20 percent in exports," warned Sheikh Luqman Amin of the Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Larger factories tend to have independent power plants, leaving small- and medium-sized factories in cities such as Lahore, Faisalabad and Sialkot most exposed. Owners have complained of power cuts of eight to 12 hours on a daily basis and face the dilemma of lower production or installing generators powered by petrol, which is also sharply rising in cost.

"We can't accept new orders because we are already behind on previous ones," said Sialkot gar-

ment factory owner Usman Arshad. "Things can't continue to go on this way."

Despite the nation's economic woes, textile exports surged 28 percent to a record \$17.67 billion in the fiscal year July-May 2021/22, the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association reported this week.

The Pakistani industry was buoyed by the tail end of the coronavirus pandemic, when it was freed of restrictions earlier than regional rivals India and Bangladesh. The new government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to announce a budget on Friday attempting to turn around Pakistan's dire finances. It is expected the ledger will include a raft of measures to convince the International Monetary Fund to revive a stalled \$6 billion bailout package.

Meanwhile, Pakistan allocates 40 percent of budget to tackle debt Pakistan's new government, grappling with soaring inflation and political unrest, unveiled a 9.5 trillion rupee (\$47 billion) budget Friday, earmarking more than 40 percent to service the country's massive foreign and domestic debt.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif blames Pakistan's economic woes on his predecessor Imran Khan, who was ousted by a parliamentary vote of no confidence in April and is fomenting a national campaign to press for early elections.

Analysts, however, say the problems stem from decades of poor economic management by successive governments and military rulers who have failed to tackle endemic corruption and widespread tax avoidance.

The budget unveiled by Finance Minister Miftah Ismail Friday earmarks 3.95 trillion rupees just to service the country's whopping debt of \$128 billion.

"Because of the lack of farsightedness of (the previous government), social structure was destroyed, economic growth stalled, and national



Pakistan's textile exports are set to dramatically dip as the vital sector is hobbled by a nationwide energy crisis forcing daily power cuts on factories. —AFP

integration withered," he told the national assembly.

A \$6 billion IMF bailout package signed by former prime minister Khan in 2019 has never been fully implemented because his government reneged on agreements to cut or end some subsidies and to improve revenue and tax collection. Islamabad has so far received \$3 billion, with the program due to end later this year.

Officials are seeking an extension to the program through to June 2023, as well as the release of the next tranche of \$1 billion. Sharif has vowed to jumpstart the moribund economy, but analysts say his fragile government has failed to take tough decisions.

The new budget allocated 1.523 trillion rupees to the country's defense forces, who regularly swallow huge amounts as a result of permanent tensions with neighboring India. About 800 billion rupees were lined up for development projects with the aim of attaining growth of five percent in the fiscal year beginning July 1.

For the outgoing fiscal year, economic growth is projected to be around six percent. "Theoretically this is a contraction budget aimed at checking the rising inflation," said Rashid Alam, an independent economist.

"But practically that reflects our national priorities that tilt towards the security of the state instead of welfare of the people," he added. —AFP

## Bundesbank: High inflation warrants 'resolute' ECB action

**FRANKFURT:** The head of Germany's Bundesbank on Friday said the European Central Bank should take "resolute action" to rein in soaring prices, as he unveiled sharply higher inflation forecasts for the EU's biggest economy. "Euro area inflation rates won't fall by themselves," Joachim Nagel said in a statement.

"Monetary policy is called upon to reduce inflation through resolute action."

The Bundesbank's newest projections see Germany's annual inflation rate jump to 7.1 percent in 2022, up from 3.6 percent in a previous estimate in December. "Inflation this year will be even stronger than it was at the beginning of the 1980s," Nagel said.

Looking further ahead, German inflation should reach 4.5 percent in 2023 and 2.6 percent in 2024 — compared with earlier estimates of 2.2 percent for both years. As in other countries around the world, German consumer prices have been pushed higher by Russia's war in Ukraine and supply chain bottlenecks in Asia. Energy costs especially have soared.

The ECB on Thursday announced plans for a series of interest rate hikes in the coming months, joining other central banks in the battle to tame inflation. The ECB intends to raise its key rates by 25 basis points on July 21, its first hike in more than a decade, and left the door open to an even larger rate increase in September. The Frankfurt institution also cut its forecasts for economic growth in the 19-nation eurozone, while once again raising the inflation outlook.

The Bundesbank meanwhile said it now expects the German economy to grow by just 1.9 percent this year, compared with 4.2 percent earlier. —AFP

## South Korea truck driver strike disrupts key industries

**SEOUL:** Thousands of South Korean truck drivers staged a fourth day of strikes Friday, causing widespread disruption and straining already-tight supply chains in an early test for new President Yoon Suk-yeol. The drivers stopped work Tuesday and have disrupted ports and factories in Asia's fourth-largest economy as they protest against the ending of a minimum wage guarantee and rising costs.

"There have been disruptions in auto, cement, and steel production," the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport said in a statement Friday. South Korea is the world's largest memory chip exporter and home to global chip powerhouse Samsung Electronics, as well as large car companies including Kia and Hyundai Motors.

"The government is trying to minimize the fallout by mobilizing alternative transport," the ministry added. About 7,800 truckers are involved in the action, it said, representing about 35 percent of members in the Cargo Truckers Solidarity Union. —AFP

## Stocks tumble worldwide as US inflation soars

**NEW YORK:** Stock markets plunged deeper into the red on Friday after data showed US inflation soared to the highest level in more than 40 years in May, far outpacing analysts' expectations.

In Europe, all of the major stock indices ended the week sharply lower. Paris's blue-chip CAC 40 lost 2.7 percent on Friday, Frankfurt's DAX index was down 3.1 percent, Milan's FTSE MIB shed 5.1 percent, Madrid's IBEX tumbled 3.7 percent and London's FTSE dropped by 2.1 percent.

On Wall Street, stocks also were deep in negative territory after US government data showed inflation reached 8.6 percent in the 12 months ended in May, the steepest rise in consumer prices since December 1981, on the back of surging energy and food prices. The data had been eagerly anticipated as investors hungrily look for clues as to the direction of US interest rates at next week's meeting of the Federal Reserve.

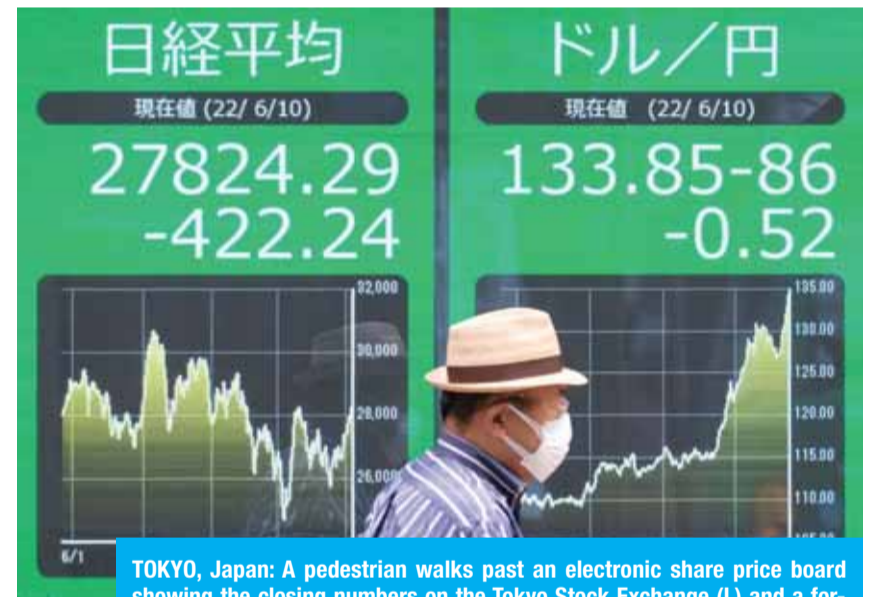
"The market had expected that

we'd see at least a plateauing or flattening out of inflation but it seems that inflation pressures continue to build and we've seen a further broadening of price pressures," said Shaun Osborne, a foreign exchange specialist at Scotiabank. "So it seems more entrenched, stickier kind of price or inflation situation."

Osborne said the report will encourage investor debate on whether the US central bank will shift to a 75 basis point interest rate hike next week instead of the planned half-point increase.

But Osborne believes the Fed will go with its original plan, considering a bigger increase would look "panicky." Adding to the unease was news that officials in China had once again locked down millions of people for COVID testing owing to another flare-up in cases, dealing a blow to hopes for an economic reopening.

"Warning signs about the economy are emerging as weekly (US) jobless claims are starting to rise, China's



TOKYO, Japan: A pedestrian walks past an electronic share price board showing the closing numbers on the Tokyo Stock Exchange (L) and a foreign exchange board showing the yen's rate against the US dollar (right) in Tokyo on June 10, 2022. —AFP

COVID situation will prove troublesome for supply chains over the next couple of quarters, and as inflationary pressures broaden and show no sign of easing," said Edward Moya, analyst at OANDA trading group. "It seems reductions in global growth forecasts will become a steady theme over the

next few months and that should complicate how much more tightening we see from central banks," he said.

The World Bank and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development this week each lowered their global economic growth forecasts for 2022. —AFP

## Thyssenkrupp comes to rescue of German shipyard

**FRANKFURT:** German submarine and ship builder, Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems, said Friday it has agreed to buy the Asian-owned MV Werften shipyard on Germany's Baltic coast which filed for bankruptcy at the start of the year.

The German company, TKMS, said in a statement that the two sides had agreed confidentiality on the purchase price. MV Werften ran into dire straits after the Covid-19 pandemic hit demand for cruise ships, putting thousands of jobs at risk and dealing a blow to the local economy.

TKMS said the takeover of MV Werften would give "one of the most tradition-rich shipyards in Germany a long-term perspective" for its operations.

It said it expected to produce submarines at the facility from 2024 if the German government ordered further vessels "and the resulting investment in

the upgrading of the shipyard". The German government has announced plans for a massive increase in military spending in the wake of the war in Ukraine, which could lead to a boost in orders at MV Werften. Reinhard Meyer, economy minister of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania state, home of the shipyard, welcomed the takeover, saying it offered the chance for "as many jobs as possible to be maintained in the maritime industry".

Trade union IG Metall said it had agreed with TKMS on the basic outlines of a future employment plan at the shipyard. An initial 800 staff are to be hired, with personnel levels reaching up to 1,500 depending on future business.

MV Werften had declared insolvency in January after it said its talks with the federal and state government on a rescue package ran aground. —AFP



## IKEA announces winner of its third raffle draw

**KUWAIT:** IKEA Al-Homaizi is excited to announce the lucky winner of IKEA's third raffle draw, Naser Al-Antari. The draw has been conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Al-Antari was granted the KD 10,000 home makeover prize by Mersad El Aji, the store manager of

IKEA The Avenues during a special ceremony in IKEA The Avenues. The prize consists of IKEA products and services, including planning service and delivery and assembly. Everyone still has a chance to win the fourth and last grand prize of KD 10,000.

You only need to spend KD 10 at any IKEA in Kuwait. Every KD10 you spend will give you one entry to the raffle draw to win KD 10,000. The more you shop the more chances to win! What are you waiting for to be the last winner! Shop at IKEA The Avenues, IKEA 360, The Assima Mall, or online through IKEA.com.kw and the IKEA App. Good luck!



## Business

# Biden leads Americas pledge on migration after contested summit

## The weeklong Summit of the Americas fails to set new migration policy

LOS ANGELES: US President Joe Biden on Friday led a pledge by 20 nations in the Americas to work together on migration, seeking to step up action on a growing political priority at a summit beset by disputes. The weeklong Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles wound down with promises by Biden to do more, and a joint declaration on migration that largely formalized existing arrangements rather than setting new policy.

The declaration called for "safety and dignity of all migrants" but also greater cooperation by law enforcement. Biden—who has promised a more humane approach than his predecessor Donald Trump—announced a \$65 million effort to support documented seasonal work on US farms. "But we need to halt the dangerous and unlawful ways people are migrating," Biden said with regional leaders by his side. "Unlawful migration is not acceptable and we will secure our borders including through innovative, coordinated actions with our regional partners."

The effort was met by praise by the top diplomat of Mexico, the critical US partner on migration due to the 3,145-kilometer (1,954-mile) shared border, even though Mexico's president conspicuously boycotted the summit. Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said the summit's results were "very positive," including Biden's calls for economic cooperation and the "regional approach on migration."

Extreme poverty, rising violence and natural disasters worsened by climate change have triggered a sharp rise in Central Americans and Haitians seeking to enter the United States. Trump's Republican Party has seized on the issue ahead of congressional elections, denouncing migrants from developing countries and accusing Biden of failing to act effectively.

The State Department announced that the United States would resettle 20,000 verified refugees from the Americas over the next two years—a threefold increase but a far cry from the 100,000 Ukrainian refugees that Biden, mostly with Republican support, has pledged to take in. The United States also announced \$314 million in new funding to support some of the more than six million Venezuelans who have fled their country, whose economy has been in freefall.

### Discord over attendance

Biden called the summit in the face of rising Chinese



LOS ANGELES: Leaders pose for a family photo during the 9th Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, California, June 10, 2022. — AFP

influence in a region that the United States has long considered its home turf. The summit was marked from the start by discord, largely over Biden's refusal to invite the leftist leaders of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela on the grounds that they are authoritarians. The row was why Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador refused to attend and several leaders directly challenged Biden. The prime minister of tiny Belize also pointedly questioned if Biden would follow up on lofty promises, noting the \$40 billion package from the United States to support Ukraine in its war. "We know that money is not the problem," Prime Minister John Briceño told him Thursday.

At a concluding news conference, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the summit—which also discussed cooperation on health care, climate

change and job creation—addressed the "practical needs" of the hemisphere. "It's hard to do that with governments that reject the basic principle that they're accountable to their people and repress their citizens' rights to speak up about the challenges they face," Blinken said.

### Movement on Venezuela, Brazil

Blinken voiced hope for progress in Venezuela, saying he understood that talks would resume between the government and opposition—which was not invited to Los Angeles despite US support.

He held out the prospect of easing sanctions on President Nicolas Maduro, whom Washington considers illegitimate, if he compromises in the talks in Mexico. "Sanctions are not an end in themselves. They are an

effort to incentivize those who are on the receiving end to engage in different conduct," Blinken said.

Biden at the summit met for the first time with Brazil's far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, who has questioned not only the legitimacy of upcoming elections at home but also of the US polls in which Biden defeated Trump. Bolsonaro, who was one of Trump's closest international allies, told the summit that his meeting with Biden was "simply fantastic."

He also said he believed he could support agribusiness without destroying the Amazon, a long source of contention due to the rainforest's vital role in mopping up carbon emissions. Blinken called the meeting "constructive" and said that Biden offered to help on forest preservation, acknowledging the US historical responsibility for climate change. — AFP

## British banks no longer 'too big to fail' in future shocks: BoE

LONDON: Britain's biggest banks are no longer "too big to fail" in any future financial shocks, with shareholders rather than taxpayers ready to bear the cost, the Bank of England said Friday.

Following a major review of eight lenders—including Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds and NatWest—the BoE concluded "that if a major UK bank failed today it could do so safely: remaining open and continuing to provide vital banking services to the economy. "Shareholders and investors, not taxpayers, will be first in line to bear the costs, overcoming the 'too big to fail' problem," the central bank added.

Following the financial global crisis more than a decade ago, the UK taxpayer pumped £137 billion (\$171 billion) into the country's banks, while also being able to benefit from significant BoE support.

wasting billions of pounds," John Glen, a junior Treasury minister working for finance minister Rishi Sunak, wrote on Twitter. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research said Sunak had not insured against the recent rate hikes on £900 billion of cash stimulus created by the Bank of England to prop up the UK economy before and after the pandemic. The BoE and other central banks worldwide are raising interest rates to try to rein in soaring inflation.

NIESR director Jagjit Chadha said the Treasury had been left "with an enormous bill and heavy continuing exposure to interest rate risk", as the BoE prepares to raise its key interest rate again next week. The institute pointed out that the interest-rate insurance that the government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson could have bought in July last year had become much more expensive.

"We estimate the loss over the past year at around £11 billion. Such a lost opportunity is an unnecessary cost to the public finances at a very difficult time."

With UK inflation at a 40-year high—eroding workers' wages—millions of Britons are suffering from a cost-of-living crisis. The government argues it is limited in the financial assistance it can now offer after spending billions of pounds helping people through the pandemic. Consumer prices of goods, in particular energy and food, have surged worldwide as economies reopen from lockdowns and following the invasion of Ukraine by major oil and gas producer Russia. —AFP

## Russian central bank cuts key rate as inflation eases

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank cut its key interest rate on Friday as the country's economy recovers faster than expected following sanctions imposed on Moscow over its military action in Ukraine.

The Bank of Russia cut the rate to 9.5 percent from 11 percent, saying in a statement that "inflation is slowing faster and the decline in economic activity is of a smaller magnitude" than expected in April. It said, however, that the "external environment for the Russian economy remains challenging and significantly constrains economic activity". The next rate review meeting will take place on July 22.

The central bank had already cut its key rate by three percentage points at an emergency meeting just two weeks ago.

Russia's economy faces deep recession and consumer demand is weakening. Days after President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine and the West pummeled Moscow with sanctions in response, the central bank more than doubled its key interest rate to 20 percent to prop up the plunging ruble.

Since then, the ruble has staged a spectacular rebound and strengthened by around 30 percent against the dollar, leading the central bank to cut its key rate three times. A strong ruble is not desirable for the Russian government, which fears it can hit budget revenues and exports.

Generally, lower interest rates are unattractive for foreign investment and decrease the value of a country's currency. — AFP

## Hungary defends petrol price cap against EU criticism

BUDAPEST: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Friday defended a cap on petrol prices that the EU has described as discriminatory, saying that runaway inflation and economic fallout from the war in Ukraine justified it. "We hope the EU sees that there is an extraordinary situation," Orban said during a radio interview. With inflation in Hungary reaching a 20-year-high in May and the war in Ukraine impacting the country's economy, such "extraordinary measures" were necessary, the leader argued.

Orban—who imposed a state of emergency in Hungary late last month citing the challenges posed by the war—has frequently clashed with Brussels. Orban said that without the cap—introduced last November—of 480 forints (\$1.30) per liter, petrol prices would be

between 700 and 800 forints, as elsewhere in Europe. Budapest said last month that the price cap would only apply to cars with Hungarian license plates in order to prevent cross-border "fuel tourism".

But "the difference in treatment seems to amount to indirect indiscriminate," Thierry Breton, the EU's internal markets commissioner, said in a letter sent to Budapest this week and seen by AFP.

Breton suggested that the measure "might constitute a violation of EU law" and lead to infringement proceedings against Hungary. To fund a range of price caps on energy and foodstuffs, Hungary has also imposed a windfall tax on companies' "extra profits", mainly targeting the banking and energy sectors, but also airlines. Irish no-frills carrier Ryanair has called the tax "beyond stupid" and urged Budapest to scrap it. The tax of between 10 and 25 euros (\$10.50 and \$26.30) per departing passenger from July 1 "will irreparably damage Hungarian tourism, connectivity, traffic and jobs," it said. On Thursday, the airline said it would charge passengers even on bookings prior to that date, and that unhappy passengers could cancel and receive a refund.—AFP



FUYANG, China: A customer buys vegetables at a supermarket in Fuyang, in China's eastern Anhui province on June 10, 2022. — AFP

## China factory inflation eases to lowest in a year

BEIJING: China's factory-gate inflation dropped to its lowest in a year in May, official data showed Friday, while consumer prices were stable despite COVID-linked transport disruptions. The producer price index (PPI) — measuring the cost of goods at the factory gate—rose 6.4 percent on-year, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) figures showed, in line with analyst expectations.

The figure was down from an 8.0 percent rise in April and the lowest since April last year, according to official data. "Regions and departments efficiently coordinated epidemic prevention and control in May... ensuring smooth and stable supply chains in

key industrial areas," NBS senior statistician Dong Lijuan said in a statement.

International crude oil prices fluctuated upwards, however, driving up costs in related industries, Dong said. China's consumer price index (CPI), a key gauge of retail inflation, rose 2.1 percent on-year in May, the same level as last month and just below analyst expectations.

Domestic prices of flour, grain products and vegetable oil rose "due to high international grain prices", but Dong said consumer prices remained stable overall, with fresh vegetable costs falling while logistics problems eased. World food prices hit record highs in March after Russia invaded agricultural powerhouse Ukraine. Both countries are major exporters of key commodities such as wheat, vegetable oil and corn. Capital Economics' chief Asia economist Mark Williams cautioned in a recent note that "there is growing evidence that the disinflationary demand-sapping impact of lockdowns (in China) has outweighed the inflationary impact of supply side disruption". —AFP



The government also took control of Royal Bank of Scotland—rebranded as NatWest ahead of its recent return to the private sector. Despite the bailouts, "the disruption to the financial system contributed to the UK and global recession that followed. We cannot forget these lessons", the BoE added Friday. The central bank was publishing its first assessment of the eight major UK banks' preparations for resolution under the Resolvability Assessment Framework.

RAF "is a core part of the UK's response to the global financial crisis, and demonstrates how the UK has overcome the problem of 'too big to fail'", said Dave Ramsden, deputy governor for markets and banking at the BoE. "The UK authorities have developed a resolution regime that successfully reduces risks to depositors and the financial system and better protects the UK's public funds." The other four banks assessed were Nationwide, Santander UK, Standard Chartered and Virgin Money UK.

A British minister on Friday denied a claim that the Treasury's decision not to insure against Bank of England interest-rate rises had cost taxpayers £11 billion (\$13.7 billion) during a cost-of-living crisis.

"The Treasury has inaccurately been accused of



Pillars at the archaeological site of Gobekli Tepe in Sanliurfa, Turkey.



A pillar at the archaeological site of Gobekli Tepe in Sanliurfa, Turkey.



A stone found and displayed at the archaeological site of Gobekli Tepe bears a feminine figure giving birth in Sanliurfa.

## Turkish hilltop where civilization began

On a sun-blasted hillside in south-east Turkey, the world's oldest known religious sanctuary is slowly giving up its secrets. "When we open a new trench, we never know what to expect," said Lee Clare of the German Archaeology Institute, who has been excavating there since 2013. "It is always a big surprise." Gobekli Tepe, which means "Potbelly Hill" in Turkish, is arguably the most important archaeological site on Earth. Thousands of our prehistoric ancestors gathered around its highly-decorated T-shaped megalith pillars to worship more 7,000 years before Stonehenge or the earliest Egyptian pyramids.

"Its significance is hard to overstate," Sean Lawrence, assistant professor of history at West Virginia University, told AFP. Academics believe the history of human settlement began in these hills close to the Syrian border some 12,000 years ago when groups of Stone Age hunter gatherers came together to construct these sites. Gobekli Tepe-which some experts believe was never actually inhabited-may be part of a vast sacred landscape that encompasses other nearby hilltop sites that archaeologists believe may be even older.

### Endless mystery

None of which anyone would have guessed before the German archeologist and pre-historian Klaus Schmidt began to bring the first discoveries to the surface in 1995. German and Turkish archaeologists have been labouring in the sun there since, with lengthening queues of tourists now joining them to ponder its many mysteries. When exactly it all began is even unclear. "Exact years



A view of the archaeological site of Gobekli Tepe in Sanliurfa, Turkey. — AFP photos

are nearly impossible to verify," Lawrence said. "However, the oldest Egyptian monument, the Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, was built around 2700 BCE," more than seven millennia after Gobekli Tepe.

"This was the end of what is often thought of as Stone Age hunter gatherer societies and the beginning of settled societies," Lawrence added. "There remain endless mysteries surrounding the site, including how labor was organized and how the sites were used," he said.

Gobekli Tepe has even inspired the Netflix sci-fi psychological thriller series "The Gift", which turns on one of the ancient inscriptions on its pillars. Schmidt-who often wore a white traditional turban on the dig-puzzled over the megaliths carved with the images of fox-

es, boars, ducks, lizards and a leopard for over two decades until his early death at the age of 61 in 2014.

### 'Zero point in time'

The site was initially believed to be purely ritual in nature. But according to Clare, there is now "good evidence" for the beginning of settled life with some buildings similar to those of the same age found in northern Syria. Turkey-which in the past has not been renowned for making the best of its vast archaeological heritage-has wholeheartedly embraced the discoveries. The items excavated from Gobekli Tepe are shown in the impressive archaeological museum in the nearest city, Sanliurfa, which is itself so ancient that Abraham is believed to have been born there.

Indeed its new museum built in 2015



Pillars at the archaeological site of Gobekli Tepe in Sanliurfa, Turkey.

boasts "the most extensive collection of the neolithic era in the world," according to its director Celal Uludag. "All of the portable artifacts from Gobekli Tepe are exhibited here." "This is a journey to civilization, (to the) zero point in time," said Aydin Aslan, head of Sanliurfa Culture and Tourism Directorate. "Gobekli Tepe sheds light on pre-history, that's why it's so ancient that Abraham is believed to have been born there."

### 'Go deeper'

Last year Turkey's culture ministry boosted funding for further excavations in the region as a part of its "Stone Hills" project, including cash for the Karahan Tepe hilltop site-around 35 kilometers from Gobekli Tepe-which some suspect is even older. "We will now go deeper because Gobekli Tepe is not the one and

only," Culture Minister Nuri Ersoy said last year.

The extra funding "gives us a fantastic opportunity to compare our results from Gobekli Tepe with new sites in the Sanliurfa region of the same age," Clare said. Gobekli Tepe has also breathed life back into a poor and long neglected region, which has been further hit by the civil war just across the border. Syrian refugees now make up a quarter of Sanliurfa's population. Over one million tourists visited Sanliurfa in 2019 and the city expects to reach pre-pandemic levels this year. "Today Gobekli Tepe has started directly touching the economy of the city," Aslan said, who hopes that its glorious past could be a key part of the city's future.—AFP



Ugears CEO, Oleksiy Lysiani, presents models in an office at the facilities of wooden models manufacturing company Ugears, in Gorenka village, north of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. — AFP photos



Picture shows a model during an interview with Ugears CEO, Oleksiy Lysiani, in an office at the facilities of wooden models manufacturing company Ugears, in Gorenka village.



Ugears CEO, Oleksiy Lysiani, shows a model in an office at the facilities of wooden models manufacturing company Ugears.

## Hit by war, Ukraine toy maker back in business

Sweet-smelling wood chips cover the factory floor again at the toy manufacturer where Robert Milayev works now that production has restarted after the withdrawal of Russian troops. Thanks to donations, the factory outside Kyiv is back making wooden toys following a three-month hiatus that started when fighting with Moscow's army left the factory damaged.

"When the electricity came back on and the sound of the machines came back, we were crazy with joy," says Milayev, the chief engineer. Like the rest of the village of Gorenka, the Ugears factory still bears the scars of Russia's invasion. Windows at the factory are still being replaced. On May 18, after Russian troops pulled back, employees put on overalls again and production of laser-cut models from birch, alder and poplar has been running at full speed ever since.

"Before the war, the wood came from Belarus, but now we buy it mainly from Ukraine," says CEO Oleksiy Lysiani, referring to his country's northern neighbor which hosts Russian forces. Nearly five

million jobs have been lost in Ukraine since Russia attacked on February 24, according to the International Labor Organization. But Lysiani has managed to keep all his staff. The Ugears factory has even launched a fundraising campaign that has so far collected around 800,000 euros (\$860,000) to help other Ukrainians affected by the war.

No employees were hurt when fighting was raging around the factory and Russian forces were still trying to advance towards Kyiv. Storage units at a separate location that was occupied by Russian troops were lost. Now, each online purchase on the company website includes a five-euro donation to the war effort. Customers in 85 countries on five continents have already made their donations.

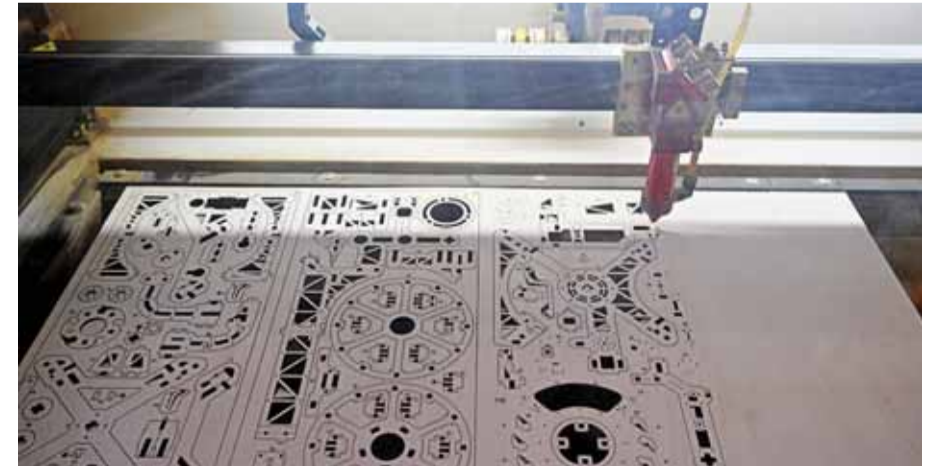
### Toys for adults

"When we say we deliver to China, people are surprised because we usually buy from there," says Lysiani. The Ukrainian flag is everywhere on the factory roof, plastered on its walls. Thirty-three-year-old manager of the packaging line Iryna Denysyuk says she is "very proud" to con-

tinue the work even during war. The hundreds of models of games and puzzles being produced in Gorenka aren't even meant for children. These toys are for grown-ups, people fourteen years or older.

"Still I test them with my children. This helps us get some family time in an age where many young people are glued to their cell phones," says Lyssiani to the sounds of building work. Before the war, over 100,000 units rolled off the production lines every month. "It takes ten minutes to build the simplest ones, but at least twelve hours to build the 450-piece train," Lysiani told AFP.

They are designed to be assembled without glue and the packaging mirrors the puzzles' complex computer designs. As the war-time economy obliges, nothing is wasted. Leftover wood from the laser-cut plates are given to a company that uses them as fuel. The cut-outs are carefully checked for quality. Milayev says he is thinking up new designs to give preoccupied minds in his country a distraction. — AFP



A laser machine making parts of models in the workshop of wooden models manufacturing company Ugears.



An employee packs parts of models in the workshop of wooden models manufacturing company Ugears, in Gorenka village, north of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv.

Lifestyle | Features

## Rare Stradivarius sells for near-record \$15.3 million

A rare Stradivarius violin that belonged to a Russian-American virtuoso and was used in the "Wizard of Oz" soundtrack sold at auction in New York Thursday for \$15.3 million, just below the record for such an instrument, according to auction house Tarisio. The violin, made in 1714 by mas-

Einstein. "This violin has set side by side with the great mathematician scientist as they played quartets in Albert's home in Princeton, New Jersey," said Jason Price, founder of Tarisio, which specializes in stringed instruments. Seidel, who immigrated to the United States in the 1930s, and Einstein, who fled the Nazi regime in Europe, participated in a New York concert in 1933 in support of fleeing German Jewish scientists. Of the thousands of instruments made by Stradivari, there are still around 600 known today.

"Of those, many are in museums, many are in foundations and are in situations where they won't be sold," Price said. "There's a select few which are known as the Golden Period examples, which is approximately between 1710 and 1720," he said. "And these, for the most part, are those which are most desired and most highly valued." The violin had previously belonged to the Munetsugu collection in Japan. Tarisio did not reveal who the buyer was.

The record for a Stradivarius at auction was set in 2011, when a violin baptized "Lady Blunt," said to have belonged to Lady Anne Blunt, granddaughter of the poet Lord Byron, was sold for \$15.9 million. In 2014, another Stradivarius whose auction price was set at a minimum of \$45 million did not sell. — AFP



This photograph courtesy of Tarisio shows the "da Vinci, Ex-Seidel" Stradivarius violin. — AFP

ter craftsman Antonio Stradivari, belonged to virtuoso Toscha Seidel, who not only used it on the score for the 1939 Hollywood classic, but also no doubt while teaching his famous student Albert



In this file photo Canadian singer-songwriter Justin Bieber arrives for the 64th Annual Grammy Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. — AFP photos



In this file photo Canadian singer Justin Bieber arrives for YouTube Originals' "Justin Bieber: Seasons" premiere at the Regency Bruin Theatre in Los Angeles.

## Justin Bieber says suffering from facial paralysis

Justin Bieber on Friday told fans in a video posted to Instagram that he's been diagnosed with Ramsay Hunt Syndrome, which is causing him partial facial paralysis. The 28-year-old pop singer recently announced he was pausing his Justice World Tour due to illness, hours before his first slated concert in Toronto.

Ramsay Hunt Syndrome is a complication of shingles that occurs when an outbreak impacts the facial nerve near one ear. In addition to facial paralysis, it can cause hearing loss. "As you can see, this eye is not blinking, I can't smile on this side of my face, this nostril will not move," Bieber explained in a video.

"So, there's full paralysis on this side of my face. So for those who are frustrated by my cancellations of the next shows, I'm just physically, obviously, not capable of doing them. This is pretty serious, as you can see." The "Peaches" singer said he was doing facial exercises and taking time to "rest and relax and get back to 100 percent so I can do what I was born to do." He did not give an estimated timeline for his recovery. It's the third instance Bieber's tour has been postponed, the first two due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

## Bob Marley brings common cause at Americas summit

Bob Marley famously sang "Africa Unite" but on Friday he was bringing unity to an Americas summit that was marked by disputes. Taking the podium at the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados quoted the late reggae legend as she said, "There is so much trouble in the world." Mottley explained that she was not "an apostle of Bob" but shared his message of action.



Bob Marley

"He reminds us of the day-to-day reality of our people and of our citizens," she said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was chairing the session and is known for his love of music, replied with an impromptu medley of Marley lyrics. "In the words of Bob, no woman, no cry," Blinken said with a smile. "Don't shed no tears. Let's act. We can sing a redemption song together."

Marley sang frequently of political unity and is credited by some with helping quell a low-level civil war in his native Jamaica through his 1978 "One Love Peace" concert. The Summit of the Americas was led by US President Joe Biden who has sought greater economic ties and cooperation on migration. But he also faced open criticism and a boycott from Mexico's president over his refusal to invite the leftist leaders of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela on the grounds that they are authoritarian. — AFP

## 'Most significant' shipwreck since Mary Rose found off UK coast

A British warship that sank in 1682 while carrying a future king has been located off eastern England, in a find described as the "most significant historic maritime discovery since the raising of the Mary Rose in 1982". The announcement follows 15 years of secret verification work due to the need to protect the wreck.

The Gloucester had lain half-buried on the seabed undetected until brothers Julian and Lincoln Barnwell and friend James Little discovered it in 2007 after a four-year search of the Norfolk coastline. The Royal Navy vessel was carrying the future King of England, James Stuart—then the Duke of York—when it ran aground on a sandbank on May 6, 1682.

It sank following a dispute between the future King James II of England, a former Lord High Admiral, and the pilot for control over the ship's course as it navigated the treacherous Norfolk sandbanks. University of East Anglia maritime history expert Claire Jowitt noted that the age and prestige of the ship, the condition of the wreck, the finds already rescued, and the accident's political con-



text all contributed to the importance of the find. "The discovery promises to fundamentally change understanding of 17th-century social, maritime and political history."

Hundreds of the crew and passengers perished, but Stuart barely survived, having delayed abandoning ship until the last minute. "Because of the cir-

cumstances of its sinking, this can be claimed as the single most significant historic maritime discovery since the raising of the Mary Rose in 1982," Jowitt added.

The Mary Rose, one of Henry VIII's warships which sank in 1545, was salvaged in 1982 in a feat of maritime archaeology that provided a wealth of

detail about life in Tudor times. Following years of painstaking work, it was finally raised 40 years ago in a spectacular operation watched live by millions on television. Around a third of the wooden warship, which was almost completely buried under the sea bed, had survived, the exposed parts having eroded away.

Wooden gun carriages, cooking pots, scalpels, leather book covers, syringes, fiddles, whistles, weapons, navigation devices and furniture were all among the items retrieved from the Mary Rose providing historians with the largest ever collection of genuine Tudor artefacts. "The Gloucester represents an important 'almost' moment in British political history: a royal shipwreck causing the very near-death of the Catholic heir to the Protestant throne at a time of great political and religious tension," the university added. An exhibition is planned for 2023 at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery which will feature objects found in the wreck, including the bell that helped identify the ship. — AFP

## Prosecutor seeks jail terms over Banksy work theft from Paris attack site

French prosecutors on Friday sought prison terms for eight men accused of stealing a Banksy artwork painted on the door of the Bataclan concert venue in Paris to honor 90 people killed in the 2015 terror attacks. The seven French defendants and one Italian are suspected of removing the metal door from the building before dawn in January 2019 and transporting it to Italy. It was decorated in 2018 with the stencil of a mournful young woman by the anonymous British street artist, giving it an estimated value of up to one million euros (\$1.1 million).

Prosecutor Valerie Cadignan told the court Friday that the three men who had confessed to the theft should be given three or four years. She said the suspected mastermind of the heist, Mehdi Meftah, should be sentenced to three years in prison with an additional three-year suspended sentence, and fined 150,000 euros. The prosecutor recom-

mended 18-month prison sentences or more for the others.

"The theft of the door sparked much emotion and great disruption of public order," the prosecutor told the court. She acknowledged that the perpetrators had not sought to debase the memory of the attack victims, but "being aware of the priceless value of the door were looking to make a profit". She said the thieves "acted like vultures, like people who steal objects without any respect for what they might represent".

A white van with concealed numberplates was seen stopping on January 26 in an alleyway running alongside the Bataclan in central Paris. Many concertgoers fled via the same alley when the Bataclan became the focal point of France's worst ever attacks since World War II, as Islamic State group jihadists in November 2015 killed 130 people at a string of sites across the capital. — AFP



In this file photo a policeman stands guard near a piece of art attributed to Banksy, that was stolen at the Bataclan in Paris in 2019, and found in Italy, ahead of a press conference in L'Aquila. — AFP

## Seductive rubbish: Swedish dustbins scream with pleasure

"Aaah that was really good", "come back soon and do it again" and "Mmmm, thank you". It's not what you think. They are audio messages broadcast by rubbish bins in the southern Swedish city of Malmo, where authorities recently changed the voice from a man's to that of a sensual female, hoping it would be more soothing. Previously the voice thanking people for disposing their garbage was a male, barking out no-nonsense messages from the public bins.

But in a bid to make the experience of throwing out garbage more pleasant, the voice is now a husky timbre delivering double entendres. It's part of an awareness campaign in the city to clean up public spaces by discouraging littering. Located near the main shopping street on the David Hall bridge, the dustbins were installed a few years ago in Sweden's third largest city. A detector triggers the messages every time someone opens a dustbin. — AFP



A speaking garbage can is seen at the David Hall bridge in Malmo, Sweden. — AFP



## Slovenia museum cancels exhibition over alleged fakes

An exhibition in Slovenia claiming to feature works by Picasso, Van Gogh and Matisse was abruptly cancelled this week over fears some works were forged, prompting a police probe on Friday. The National Museum in Slovenia planned to officially open the show on Wednesday this week, entitled "Travels" and featuring 160 paintings owned by the little-known Boljkovac family.

But hours before planned opening, museum director Pavel Car said the show was cancelled after several art experts warned that, having seen the exhibition catalogue, they believed the

works were most likely fakes. "These are clear forgeries... you don't need to be an art history expert to notice it," Slovenian art expert Brane Kovic told news website N1.

The show promised works by Pablo Picasso, Vincent Van Gogh, Henri Matisse and Marc Chagall, apparently owned by the Boljkovac family. But Kovic said it was highly unlikely that so many masterpieces were among a private collection in Slovenia. The Boljkovac family has so far not commented. Ljubljana police said Friday they had launched an investigation into the incident, "with the collaboration of pertinent institutions".

Car insisted he personally had seen the paintings' authenticity certificates, but nonetheless resigned Thursday, admitting he had been "naive" about the works. The museum's website removed all references to the cancelled exhibition on Friday. — AFP

## Sports

# Blues narrowly beat Brumbies, book Super Rugby Pacific final

## Crusaders overpower Chiefs 20-7

AUCKLAND: Attacking brilliance from Beauden Barrett carried the Auckland Blues to a desperate 20-19 semi-final win over the ACT Brumbies on Saturday, setting up an all-New Zealand Super Rugby Pacific decider against the Canterbury Crusaders. After conceding an early try to the Australian visitors, the Blues dominated the middle stages of the game before barely holding on over the closing minutes to record a 15th successive victory.

The top-qualifying Blues will return to Eden Park next week chasing their first full Super Rugby title since 2003 but they must overcome the competition's most decorated team in the final, after the Crusaders beat the Chiefs 20-7 in Christchurch on Friday. Blues captain and All Blacks Test playmaker Barrett was comfortably the game's standout performer, defying slippery conditions to unleash his full array of skills, whether it was running, offloading or kicking. He played a key hand in both his team's tries, to Hoskins Sotutu and Mark Telea, as they turned a 0-7 deficit into a 20-7 halftime lead.

He also pulled off a try-saving tackle on Brumbies fullback Tom Banks and nearly sealed victory near the end when he scythed through the defense and slid across the tryline, only narrowly failing to ground the ball. It gave a lifeline to the Brumbies, who lifted considerably in the second spell, creating two tries off lineout drives to reserve hooker Lachlan Loneragan. On both occasions they took advantage of the Blues having been reduced to 14 men through yellow cards-to Kurt Eklund and Adrian Choat-for dangerous tackles.

### Late push foiled

A late push for victory was foiled when a dropped

goal attempt from Noah Lolesio was charged down by Blues prop Ofa Tu'ungafasi with a minute remaining on the clock. Barrett said Tu'ungafasi's desperation typified the spirit of his team, who have won a number of close encounters this year.

"Huge. It's those sort of moments you've just got to be alive for and live for. We needed the big fella to stand up at that moment. "You've got to give it to them (Brumbies), we could have easily run away with that one. But we had to fight hard and work hard to close it out," said Barrett, who will go head-to-head against brother and Crusaders captain Scott Barrett next week.

"We're stoked we'll be back here again. We've given ourselves a chance and that's all we can ask for." The result means Australian teams are still without a Super Rugby playoff win on New Zealand soil, having failed in all 13 attempts. After a brilliant individual try to Irae Simone in the third minute, the Brumbies were dominated for a long period in the set pieces, and found themselves dominated at numerous breakdown collisions.

Captain Allan Alaalatoa was pleased with the fightback but disappointed his team couldn't become the first Australian outfit to reach the final since the NSW Waratahs won the 2014 crown. "We knew it would take a hell of an effort to come over here and get the job done," he said. "We showed a lot of heart in the second half. Our maul really brought us back into the game and gave us an opportunity to win but we didn't quite ice it in the end." The game marked the end of a five-year head coaching tenure for Dan McKellar, who first signed with the Brumbies in 2014.—AFP



AUCKLAND: Bluesi Akira Ioane (center) is tackled by Brumbiesi Andy Muirhead (left) and Pete Samu during the Super Rugby Pacific semifinal match between Australia's Brumbies and New Zealand's Blues at Eden Park in Auckland on June 11, 2022. — AFP



BAKU: Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz steers his car during the third practice session ahead of the Formula One Azerbaijan Grand Prix at the Baku City Circuit in Baku on June 11, 2022. — AFP

## Bumpy Baku gives drivers headache

BAKU: Baku's bumpy street circuit, venue for Sunday's Azerbaijan Grand Prix, has left drivers shaken from all the bouncing they are subjected to in this season's radically redesigned cars. The so-called 'porpoising' issue has dogged teams like Mercedes more than most with Lewis Hamilton saying he was left "a bit sore" after Friday's two practice sessions. "It's bouncing a lot" the seven-time world champion reported after posting only the 12th fastest time behind Charles Leclerc.

Pierre Gasly, who enjoyed his two sessions in the AlphaTauri, complained over the team radio: "The ride is pretty shocking, I have never felt that much bottoming". Ferrari's Carlos Sainz described the undesirable consequence of new rules to promote closer racing as "really annoying around here". Hamilton's teammate George Russell even suggested to the BBC that the problem was so profound the rules required a rethink. "I don't think it's right to run like this for the next four years or whatever we've got."

"Conversations are going to be needed because everybody is in the same boat." Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff, tackled on 'porpoising' at Saturday's pre-qualifying press conference said: "Some cars don't have the issue, others have it worse, I can talk for our two drivers, they are having issues sometimes not even a physio can fix it." He said the two Silver Arrows were "bottoming out badly" at certain sectors of the track.

"We're losing a second on all straights to Ferrari and Red Bull".

### 'It's a challenge'

His Ferrari counterpart Mattia Binotto said that while they had also experienced "bouncing and bottoming" in Friday practice "it was not a limitation to our performance". Binotto did not go along with Russell's call for a change in the 2022 car's design. "A Formula One car is not the most comfortable car to drive, it's a challenge for drivers no doubt. "I'm pretty sure we can make progress and find a solution medium to long term." Haas boss Gunther Steiner insisted it was "a bit early to think about doing something dramatic".

"At the moment we need to stick with this regulation, in general it's not working badly," he added. Leclerc edged Monaco winner Sergio Perez in Friday's opening practice sessions and the Ferrari driver will fancy his chances of securing his sixth pole out of eight later Saturday after third and final practice. While the two Ferraris and Red Bulls fight out the title race Mercedes can only hope all their efforts to find a solution to their 2022 car's problems comes sooner rather than later.

"Our problem is not the engine, between the dragging and the bottoming it's like we seem to have a parachute behind the car," said Wolff. "When you are doing work as normal but it doesn't produce results then a feeling of frustration creeps in for sure, that's a normal consequence after success over many years then you find yourself in such a dip. "But there's lots to look forward to. We know there's inherent performance in car, but (at the moment) we are unable to unlock it. It's science, it's physics, sometimes it takes time." — AFP

## Aussie rookie Kyriacou leads ShopRite Classic

NEW YORK: Stephanie Kyriacou, buoyed by some advice from Hall-of-Famer Karrie Webb, fired a six-under-par 65 on Friday to grab the first-round lead at the ShopRite LPGA Classic. Australia's Kyriacou, 21 and ranked 117th in the world, had six birdies on the Bay Course at Seaview Hotel and Golf Club in Galloway, New Jersey, and was one shot in front of fellow rookie Frida Kinhult. Kyriacou was in the first group off the first tee and set a target that no one could match.

World number one Ko Jin-young and 10-time LPGA winner Brooke Henderson—who were tied for second behind Celine Boutier in last year's tournament—shared third place on four-under par 67, along with Marina Alex and Dottie Ardina. Kyriacou has already stamped herself a precocious talent with two



GALLOWAY: Stephanie Kyriacou of Australia reads a putt on the 12th green during the first round of the ShopRite LPGA Classic at Seaview Bay Course on June 10, 2022 in Galloway, New Jersey. — AFP

## McIlroy charges but Clark clings to lead

TORONTO: Rory McIlroy charged into contention but American Wyndham Clark fired a level par 70 to maintain a one-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the US PGA Tour's Canadian Open. World number 293 Clark, who led by one stroke after day one, made bogeys on two of the last four holes to stand on seven-under 133 after 36 holes at St George's Golf and Country Club in suburban Toronto. "Overall I played really good. I felt really confident with my game," Clark said. "I had some little mishaps coming in, but other than that I played some great golf for 36 holes. If I do that again, I'll have a great chance come Sunday." Northern Ireland's eighth-ranked McIlroy - the 2019 winner and defending champion after COVID-19 caused a two-year hiatus - birdied two of the last four holes to shoot 68 and share second on 134 with England's Matthew Fitzpatrick and Americans Keith Mitchell, Jim Knous and Alex Smalley.

Four-time major winner McIlroy sank an eight-foot birdie putt at the par-5 15th and rolled in a 23-foot birdie putt at 17 before paring the last with a clutch four-foot putt. "Overall it was a good score," McIlroy said. "I scrambled well when I needed to. I didn't really take advantage of how well I hit it off the tee. But overall I felt a couple under was a fair reflection of how the day went." Fitzpatrick, ranked 17th, led by two but made double bogey at the 14th and bogeys on the last three holes.

"Just didn't hole the putts I needed to on the last three," Fitzpatrick said. "Just pathetic. Yeah, just pathetic. Finish really with the putter. "Disappointing finish, but definitely not out of it." The seven-time DP World Tour winner seeks her first PGA victory after sharing fifth at last month's PGA Championship for his best major finish. Clark, 28, chases his first US PGA victory as well, his best finish a runner-up effort at the 2020 Bermuda Championship. Clark hit only eight greens in regulation, but backed his "great" short game and putting.

Fitzpatrick reeled off three birdies in a row thanks to five-foot putts at the par-5 ninth and par-5 11th sandwiched around a 15-footer at the par-4 10th, reaching 10-under par. But Fitzpatrick needed four shots to reach the fringe at the par-4 14th on the way to a double bogey, then followed an 11-foot birdie putt at the par-5 15th with three bogeys. His troubles left the lead to Clark, who made birdie putts from just inside five feet at the par-3 eighth and 11, but missed the green at 12 and made his first bogey of the week.—AFP

Ladies European Tour victories—as an amateur at the Australian Ladies Classic in 2020 and as a pro at last year's Green Egg Open in the Netherlands.

After playing 21 tournaments in 13 countries in 2021 she earned her LPGA card through the Q-Series, but she has struggled in her first LPGA season. She said a three-week break, during which she began working with coach Grant Waite of New Zealand, had boosted her confidence. And some advice from compatriot Webb this week has also helped. The two chatted on the putting green, and Kyriacou said she asked Webb how she controlled her nerves.

"I just asked how she coped with it and she gave me a few tips, and looks like it worked out there," Kyriacou said. "She kind of just said between shots to just close your eyes and breathe and listen to birds and stuff. "Just to get your mind off it. It's so simple but it's very helpful. "She's such a legend, and for her to take the time out of her day to play practice rounds with us and just talk to us, it's so nice." Kyriacou said she "didn't really make a mistake" in a round that was "just fun to play." She had four birdies on the front nine and added two more coming in to put herself in contention in the 54-hole event.—AFP

## Azam, Haq, Nawaz star in Pakistan's 10th series win

MULTAN: Skipper Babar Azam and opener Imam-ul-Haq hit steady half centuries before spinner Mohammad Nawaz recorded his best figures as Pakistan beat the West Indies by 120 runs in the second day-night international in Multan on Friday. Azam scored a 93-ball 77 and Haq a run-a-ball 72 - both hitting their sixth consecutive half-centuries in successive one-day internationals - as Pakistan made 275-8 in their 50 overs. Left-arm spinner Nawaz then achieved career best bowling figures of 4-19 as the visitors were shot out for 155 in 32.2 overs. The win gives Pakistan an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series and their 10th consecutive ODI series win over the West Indies.

Pakistan's last ODI series defeat to the West Indies was back in 1991. The two wins give Pakistan 20 valuable points in the ODI Super League, a qualification round for 2023 World Cup in India. Chasing 276, West Indies lost first-match century maker Shai Hope for just four in the first over to Shaheen Shah Afridi but Shamari Brooks (42) and Kyle Mayers (33) added a brisk 67 for the second wicket. Once Mayers, who hit four fours and two sixes off 25 balls, was bowled by pacer Mohammad Wasim, the innings fell away. Nawaz dismissed Brandon King (nought), Brooks, Rovman Powell (10) and Nicholas Pooran (25) as West Indies lost five wickets for just 48 runs, including four off just 18. Brooks hit four boundaries and a six as he faced 56 balls. Nawaz's previous best figures of 4-42 were against the same opponents in Sharjah six years ago.

Fast bowler Wasim finished with 3-34 while Shadab Khan took 2-40. Pakistan won the first match by five wickets on Wednesday. The last match is on Sunday. All three are in Multan. "I think we were 10-15 short because we lost back-to-back wickets," said Azam. "But there was spin so we were confident at the break that we could defend this and Nawaz took wickets at crucial junctures and brought us back in the game."

### Pooran praised Nawaz

"It was a tough day for us," said Pooran. "I thought we bowled well in the first 45 overs but conceded 20 too many. Credit must be given to Nawaz who bowled really well." Earlier, Azam, who on Wednesday became the first batter in ODI cricket to twice score three hundreds in as many matches, set the tempo after Pakistan won the toss and batted. He built the innings during a 120-run second wicket stand with Haq - their fourth successive 100 plus stand - before Haq was run out, without watching his static partner while going for a single. Haq hit six fours. Pakistan were cruising along at 187-2 with Azam set for fourth hundred in as many ODIs when spinner Akeal Hosein dismissed the skipper in the 36th over. Azam, who hit five fours and a six, failed to equal Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara's record of four hundreds in as many ODIs set in the 2015 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. Azam's wicket started a collapse as the West Indies grabbed five wickets in 23 balls for 20 runs, with Hosein (3-52) and Alzarri Joseph (2-33) sharing the spoils.—AFP



MULTAN: Pakistan's Mohammad Wasim (left) falls after playing a shot during the second one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies at the Multan International Cricket Stadium.—AFP

## Sports

# Nations League: Mbappe salvages draw for France

## France settle for a 1-1 draw with Austria

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe came off the bench to score a late equalizer as France settled for a 1-1 draw with Austria in their Nations League encounter in Vienna on Friday. Mbappe appeared as a second-half replacement for Antoine Griezmann at the Ernst-Happel Stadium and burst through in characteristic fashion to smash in the 83rd-minute leveller, cancelling out Andreas Weimann's opener. The result leaves France, who won last year's edition of the Nations League, still without a win three games into the new campaign.

They are bottom of League A, Group 1 with two points after losing 2-1 at home to Denmark last weekend and then drawing 1-1 in Croatia on Monday. The Danes remain top of the group despite losing 1-0 at home to Croatia in Copenhagen on Friday, with Mario Pasalic scoring the only goal of the game midway through the second half. France will play their final match of the June international break at home to Croatia on Monday before the group campaign concludes in September.

"There is never any need to worry. We should always be proud and just try to improve," Mbappe told broadcaster TF1 before admitting that he had still not fully recovered from the injury that forced him off against Denmark. "No but if

the coach needs me I will be there. There is just one game left before the holidays so I can force it a little bit." The match in Vienna went ahead despite concern about a huge hole that opened up on the same pitch during Austria's 2-1 loss to Denmark on Monday.

Playing their third game under new coach Ralf Rangnick, Austria took the lead eight minutes before half-time when Konrad Laimer's low ball in from the right was converted by the Bristol City forward Weimann. France coach Didier Deschamps sent on Mbappe for Griezmann in the 63rd minute and RB Leipzig's Christopher Nkunku came on for Kingsley Coman 11 minutes from time as they stepped up their search for the leveller.

Mbappe had not played against Croatia after coming off with a knee knock at half-time against Denmark, and he was fresh enough to make the difference for the visitors. A quick exchange of passes with Nkunku led to the Paris Saint-Germain star breaking through to fire past goalkeeper Patrick Pentz and score his 10th goal for his country this season. Mbappe could then have won the game three minutes from the end, but this time his shot from close range was turned onto the crossbar by the goalkeeper. —AFP



VIENNA: France's forward Kylian Mbappe falls as he scores the 1-1 during the UEFA Nations League football match Austria v France at the Ernst Happel stadium in Vienna, Austria on June 10, 2022. —AFP

## Swimming federation to organize course in Gaza



KUWAIT: President of Palestinian Swimming Federation and Aquatic Sports (PSFAS) Fawaz Zalloum said the federation has decided to organize a refereeing course under the supervision and support of International Swimming Federation (Federation Internationale de Natation - FINA) in Gaza next month and will continue for six days. Zalloum said Oman's international refer-

ee Abdelmonem Alawi will lecture during the program.

The course is a continuation of the previous one which is considered one of the most important courses supported by FINA, and has an exceptional importance because it will be held in Gaza Strip with 28 referees of both genders participating. The course will be on how to run local and

regional championships and the role of the swimming referee in addition to informing them about the latest rules by FINA. PSFAS President Fawaz Zalloum thanked FINA President Hussein Al-Mussalam (from Kuwait) and the members for their exceptional interest in Palestinian Swimming and their support of the Palestinian Federation activities.

## Handball Teams Cup concludes today

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The 38th Handball Teams Cup will conclude on Sunday with the final match between Saudi Arabia's Mudhar and Bahrain's Najma teams. The Saudi team reached the final after beating Kuwait Club in the semifinal match 25-23 while Najma booked semi-final by beating Qatar's Ahli team 28-21 on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Sports Club Chairman Khalid Al-Ghanim held a dinner in honor of heads of participating delegations in the Gulf Clubs tournament. The dinner was attended by Deputy Chairman of the International Federation Bader Al-Thiyab, Asian Federation Treasurer, Chairman of Sharqa Sport Council Essa Al-Huzami, President of Saudi and Arab Federations Fadhel Al-Nimer, UAE Federation President Nabil Ashour and Chairman of the Gulf Higher Organizing Committee Bader Al-Osaimi.

Al-Ghanim thanked Gulf delegations. He said winning and losing is part of the game. He then thanked Kuwait fans for being behind the team. President of Arab and Saudi Arabia Handball Federation Fadhel Al-Nimer lauded the organization and its hospitality. He thanked Kuwait's sports officials for all what they have done during the tournament.



If Chile had been successful, they would have leapfrogged Ecuador into direct World Cup qualification. The Chilean football federation (FFCh) said it would appeal the decision all the way to the Court of Arbitration for Sport if need be. "The eloquent and substantiated evidence we showed was not enough. Surprisingly the ruling was not in our favor," FFCh president Pablo Milad told reporters in Santiago. "We are 1-0 down, but there is still the second half."

The FFCh last month lodged a complaint with FIFA against Ecuador over what it claimed was the "use of a fake birth certificate, false declaration of age and false nationality" in the case of Castillo. It claims to have evidence that the player

is actually Colombian. Under FIFA rules, a player cannot represent a country of which they do not hold nationality. Castillo, 23, played in both Ecuador's World Cup qualifying matches against Chile: a 2-0 victory in Quito in September 2021 and a 0-0 draw in November.

Chile finished seventh in the single South American World Cup qualification table, seven points behind Ecuador in the fourth and final automatic berth for Qatar. FEF president Francisco Egas said Chile's allegations had "hurt us a lot" and did not rule out legal action. "This is a subject to be analyzed by our lawyers," he told reporters. Ecuador are in Group A with Qatar, the Netherlands and Senegal at the World Cup finals later this year. —AFP

## Medvedev beats Ivashka in battle of the banned

'S-HERTOGENBOSCH: Daniil Medvedev defeated Ilya Ivashka in a battle of banned Wimbledon players on Friday to reach the 's-Hertogenbosch semi-finals and move closer to regaining the world top ranking. The top-seeded Russian downed his 41st-ranked Belarusian rival 7-6 (10/8), 6-4 in one hour and 51 minutes at the Wimbledon warm-up event.

Medvedev will reclaim the world number one ranking from Novak Djokovic on Monday for the first time since March. Medvedev and Ivashka, as well as a host of other Russian and Belarusian players, have been banned from Wimbledon following the invasion of Ukraine. "I don't have many points to defend on grass and I have some to win, so hopefully I can play well, starting here," said Medvedev.

"Every round is points and the higher you get, the more you need to step up." In Saturday's semi-final, Medvedev will take on France's Adrian Mannarino who won the most recent edition of the event in the Netherlands in 2019. Mannarino saw off Brandon Nakashima of the United States 6-7 (5/7), 6-1, 6-4 in his quarter-final.

### Murray faces Kyrgios

In another development, Andy Murray upset top seed Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 on Friday for a place in the Stuttgart semi-finals as the former world number one claimed his first top five win since 2016. Next up for the three-time major winner is an intriguing clash with Australian firebrand Nick Kyrgios. The 35-year-old Murray said the strong winds, which featured in his first two wins this week, were missing as he put on a top serving performance to defeat world number five Tsitsipas who won their only previous match at the US Open last year.

"We had good conditions," the 68th-ranked Murray said after victory on his third match point. "We both served very well for most of the match. There were very few chances either way, neither of us created many opportunities." He added: "I had momentum going into the second set. It was important for me to try and dictate when possible. "It was much easier to play today... with very little wind I did well. I was consistent for the whole match. This was my best serving performance of the week."

Murray last reached an ATP semi-final in January in Sydney on his way to the final. On Saturday, he will take on Kyrgios after Marton Fucsovics had to quit with back pain when trailing 7-6 (7/3), 3-0. "I didn't take him lightly, he knows how to play on grass," said world number 78 Kyrgios. "I was not feeling it today from the back of the court, but I was serving well. Hopefully I'll bring that tomorrow against Andy."

Kyrgios stands 1-5 against Murray but won their last meeting on grass at Queen's Club in 2018. "I know what to expect against Andy, he's a veteran of the grass," Kyrgios said. "I'll try to look after my serve and see what I can do on his return games." German Oscar Otte advanced to the last four when French opponent Benjamin Bonzi was unable to take to the court due to stomach pains.

Matteo Berrettini moved into the final four with a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over fellow Italian Lorenzo Sonego. Berrettini, only just back after three months out due to hand surgery, said he would have preferred to go through in straight sets. "He played well and I'm still not back to my best shape," the world number 10 said. "I was not serving or returning that well. "But I expected my first tournament would be tough. I told myself to fight in the second and third sets and hope that something good comes from it." —AFP

## Ecuador still in World Cup as FIFA rejects Chile complaint

SANTIAGO: Ecuador kept their place in the Qatar World Cup after football governing body FIFA on Friday closed an inquiry sought by non-qualifying Chile into the eligibility of a key player. The FIFA disciplinary committee said in a statement it had decided to "close the proceedings" against the Ecuador Football Federation (FEF) after Chile disputed the nationality of full-back Byron Castillo.

# Kuwait thrash Nepal 4-1

Asian Cup qualifiers: Kuwait national team revive hopes



KUWAIT: The Kuwait national football team players celebrate after beating Nepal 4-1 on Saturday in the first group competitions of the Asian Cup qualifiers. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Chidi Emmanuel

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait national football team beat Nepal 4-1 on Saturday in the first group competitions of the Asian Cup qualifiers to revive their hopes. In the match that was held at Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium, the Kuwait national team dominated the match in the first and second half. Kuwait's Fahd Hammoud scored the first goal in the 28th minute.

In the second half, Kuwait's Youssef Nasser scored in the 48th and 70th minutes while Mubarak Al-Fenini sealed it in the 73rd minute. With this victory, the Kuwait team have grabbed their first three points, while Nepal remained without any point. Kuwait and Nepal are in the same group (Group A) while Indonesia and Jordan played in another match on Saturday.

Reacting to the match, Ahmed Khaled praised Kuwait's team for their wonderful performance. "They played very well today. It was very wonderful. I am proud of our team," he told Kuwait

Times with all smiles. Meanwhile, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium - a multi-purpose stadium - was packed with Kuwait fans who were singing and cheering their team. "We are very happy. It would have been humiliating if Nepal won in our country. Although they (Nepal team) tried their best, Kuwait team played better," Reem, a Kuwaiti lady said.

Some of the few Nepali fans expressed their disappointment. "I was expecting Nepal to beat Kuwait. I feel it would be easier to beat Kuwait than Indonesia and Jordan. Actually, Kuwait team played very well today, they deserved to win, Nepal expat, Abhinav said. "We still have hope. We will try and beat Indonesia, for us to qualify. I would have loved Nepal to beat Kuwait here (in Kuwait). That would have been better," another Nepalese expat Anish Badal told Kuwait Times.

In another development, Nepal's national coach Abdullah Al-Shalahi suffered a heart attack during the match. He was later rushed to Farwaniya Hospital for medical treatment.



KUWAIT: Paramedics attend to Nepal's coach Abdullah Al-Shalahi who collapsed during the Asian Cup qualifiers on Saturday.

## Warriors' Curry cooks up career masterpiece

**BOSTON:** Stephen Curry has built up an extensive catalog of accolades, honors, scoring records and personal milestones during his glittering NBA Finals career. But as the stardust settled on his virtuoso 43-point display on Friday, many were left convinced they'd just witnessed the greatest performance of them all by the Golden State Warriors superstar.

The 34-year-old shrugged off a sore foot to carry the Warriors to a 107-97 victory on the road against the Boston Celtics, squaring the best-of-seven series at 2-2 and yanking precious momentum back to Golden State, who host two of the three remaining games in San Francisco. Klay Thompson, Curry's fellow sharpshooting "Splash Brother" who has shared a court with the Warriors star for most of his career, had no doubt about where Friday's masterpiece deserved to be ranked.

"Probably No. 1," Thompson said. "This was nearly a must-win game, and to go out there and shoot as efficiently as he did, and grab 10 rebounds and they were attacking him on defense. "His conditioning is second-to-none in this league." The Warriors' Draymond Green was similarly effusive, hailing Curry's white-hot competitive nature. "Put us on his back. Willed us to win. Came out and showed why he's one of the best players to ever play this game and why this organization has been able to ride him to so much success," Green said. "Absolutely incredible."

Thompson said Curry was "one of the most resilient, toughest guys I've ever played with." "The

way defenses guard him, they are constantly grabbing, and he just continues to play. He don't make much of it. He just continues to do what he does. "It just says a lot about his toughness and his competitive nature and what it truly means to be a winner." Curry, the NBA's all-time leader for three-point shooting, made 7-of-14 from beyond the arc on Friday during what was the second 40-point NBA Finals game of his career.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr, meanwhile, paid tribute to Curry's physical conditioning. "Just stunning," Kerr said afterwards. "The physicality out there is pretty dramatic. I mean, Boston's got the best defense in the league. "Huge and powerful at every position, and for Steph to take that — that kind of pressure all game long and still be able to defend at the other end when they are coming at him ... "I think this is the strongest physically he's ever been in his career, and it's allowing him to do what he's doing."

Stars across the NBA lined up to lavish praise on Curry on Friday. "Chef is insane!!!" wrote LeBron James on Twitter, referring to Curry by his popular nickname. Philadelphia 76ers star Joel Embiid said simply: "AMAZING." Curry meanwhile declined to comment on where he ranked Friday's masterclass in his collection of signature performances. "I don't rank my performances," he said. "Just win the game. "It means everything knowing the sense of urgency we had to have tonight to win on the road and keep some life in the series, get home-court advantage back and try to create some momentum our way."

Green, meanwhile, said he could sense Curry was quietly girding himself for an epic performance in the days since the Warriors' game three defeat in Boston on Wednesday. "He wasn't letting us lose. That's what it boils down to," Green said. "You hear all the noise for a day or so, and I could tell in his demeanor the last couple of days, even after game three, that he was going to come out with that type of fire. "And he did, and we were all able to follow it." — AFP



BOSTON: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors drives to the basket against Derrick White #9 and Al Horford #42 of the Boston Celtics in the first half during Game Four of the 2022 NBA Finals on June 10, 2022. — AFP