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Govt mulls curbs on 'loose labor', nationality quotas

Cabinet to attend session to pass KD 3,000 grant to pensioners

Venezuela president arrives in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is welcomed by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah at Kuwait International Airport on June 13, 2022. — AFP

By A Saleh and B Izzak

KUWAIT: A technical memo prepared in cooperation with specialists from three government bodies said dealing with the population structure in Kuwait is still without clear vision or practical and carefully studied measures. It said every sector makes individual decisions alone, which has led to a shortage of labor in Kuwait and a rise in wages paid by citizens and residents.

This issue was placed on the new government's priority list, especially as the current caretaker government is unable to take any decision in this regard. The memo represents the views of the Public Authority of Manpower, Civil Service Commission and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Sources who saw the memo said the most notable criticism towards the current population structure is the abnormal inflation in the numbers of some

communities, which constitutes a burden on the state without any justification and poses a security risk. Moreover, the majority of these expats are unskilled laborers not wanted by the market because they are marginal and concentrated in certain sectors.

Sources said the majority of these expats work in areas they are not registered at PAM and not for their sponsors, demanding an inspection program be implemented to punish every expat working elsewhere than what is recorded in their residency permit and levy a hefty fine on their employer. Such action may control the labor market and lower wages, as was the case in Saudi Arabia, which was successful.

The memo recommends a halt in bringing in workers from these countries except for specialized and technical labor the government and private sectors need, which should be under the supervision of the Cabinet to prevent the return of visa

trading. It said completely stopping bringing in labor is a big mistake, as what is required is to open new markets and reduce workers from countries that have large communities in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the caretaker government will attend an emergency session of the National Assembly on Tuesday to debate and approve a draft law granting KD 3,000 to every retired Kuwaiti. But a number of opposition MPs said they will boycott the session, claiming the draft law involves clear constitutional violations.

The draft law stipulates to pay as a grant KD 3,000 to all retired Kuwaitis from the Public Institution for Social Security, the state establishment that handles payments for pensioners. The cost of the grant is estimated at KD 590 million. But the bill also stipulates to allow the government to withdraw at least KD 500 million every year from the budget in favor of the pension agency to cover

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Gulf Bank, ABK shareholders propose joint collaboration

KUWAIT: Major shareholders in Gulf Bank and Ahli Bank of Kuwait (Alghanim Trading Company and Behbehani Investment Company) proposed a joint collaboration, whereby both entities are maintained and one of the entities is converted into a sharia compliant bank.



Hajj visas go online; COVID curbs eased

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has required would-be hajj pilgrims from many Western countries to apply for visas via a government portal online, a move intended to crack down on "fake" travel agencies, officials told AFP on Monday. The new system was put in place as the kingdom prepares to welcome 850,000 Muslims from abroad for the annual hajj after two years during which pilgrims not already in Saudi Arabia were barred because of COVID pandemic restrictions.

It applies to the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe and Australia, said one of the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Previously, pilgrims could register via travel agencies that organized hajj trips, a system that sometimes led to scams, with "fake agencies" making off with victims' money, a second official said.

Saudi Arabia announced in April it would permit one million Muslims from inside and outside the country to participate in this year's hajj. State media announced the online portal a week ago, and the registration period ended Monday, the hajj ministry said on Twitter. Those who registered will be included in a lottery for hajj visas.

One official who spoke to AFP acknowledged that some Muslims in the affected countries may have already tried to register

via travel agencies, before the online portal was announced. He said they would also be included in the lottery - which has not been scheduled - provided they had booked via an agency accredited by the hajj ministry.

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. It 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. It is due to begin in early July, and the first batch of foreign pilgrims since before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived from Indonesia just over a week ago.

The pandemic has hugely disrupted Muslim pilgrimages, which are usually key revenue earners for Saudi Arabia, bringing

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News in brief

Eid holiday on July 10-14

KUWAIT: In commemoration of the Day of Arafat and Eid Al-Adha, an official holiday will begin on Sunday, July 10 and end on Thursday, July 14, the Cabinet said on Monday. It added public bodies will return to work on Sunday, July 17. — KUNA

Indian rupee hits record low

MUMBAI: The Indian rupee plunged to a record low against the dollar on Monday. The rupee hit 78.2825 per dollar for the first time, while the benchmark Sensex Index slid as much as 2.1 percent as foreigners took out about \$24 billion from local stocks. — AFP

'Lightyear' banned in UAE

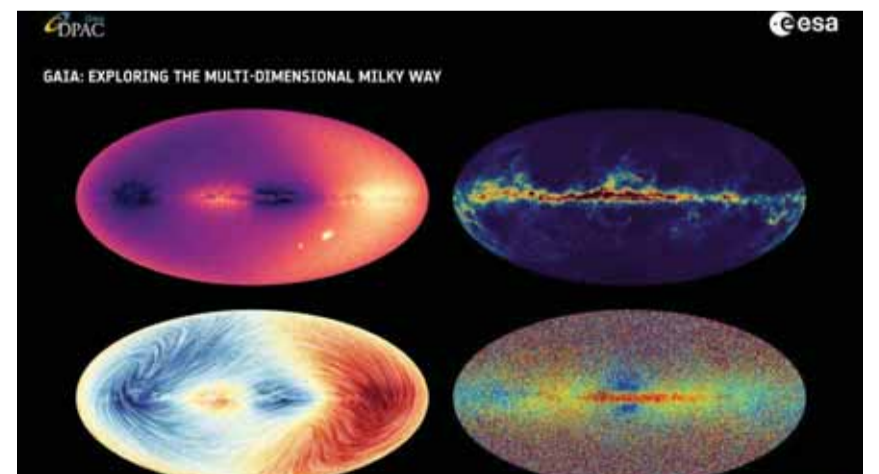
DUBAI: Disney's animated movie "Lightyear" has been banned from cinemas in the United Arab Emirates, officials said Monday. The film was banned for its "violation of the country's media content standards", the UAE's Media Regulatory Office tweeted. Kuwait is also expected to ban the film. — AFP

Space probe reveals secrets of Milky Way

PARIS: The Gaia space probe on Monday unveiled its latest discoveries in its quest to map the Milky Way in unprecedented detail, surveying nearly two million stars and revealing mysterious "starquakes" which sweep across the fiery giants like vast tsunamis. The mission's third data set, which was released to eagerly waiting astronomers around the world at 1000 GMT, "revolutionizes our understanding of the galaxy," the European Space Agency (ESA) said.

But Gaia also sees beyond the Milky Way, spotting 2.9 million other galaxies as well as 1.9 million quasars - the stunningly bright hearts of galaxies powered by supermassive black holes. The Gaia spacecraft is nestled in a strategically positioned orbit 1.5 million km from Earth, where it has been watching the skies since it was launched by the ESA in 2013.

The observation of starquakes, massive vibrations that change the shape of the distant stars, was "one of the most surprising discoveries coming out of the new data", the ESA said. Gaia was not built to observe starquakes but still detected the strange phenomenon on thousands of stars, including some that should not have any - at least according to our current understanding of the universe. —AFP (See Page 12)



This handout image released by the European Space Agency (ESA) on June 13, 2022 shows four maps of the Milky Way made with new data collected by the ESA space probe Gaia. — AFP

Iraq swept by 10th sandstorm since mid-April

BAGHDAD: Iraq temporarily closed Baghdad airport Monday as choking clouds of dust blanketed the capital, the latest crippling sandstorm in a country that has

warned climate change poses an "existential threat". It was the tenth such storm since mid-April to hit Iraq, which has been battered by intense droughts, soil degradation, high temperatures and low rainfall linked to climate change.

Earlier this month, to mark World Environment Day, President Barham Saleh warned that tackling climate change "must become a national priority for Iraq as it is an existential threat to the future of our generations to come". The sun eventually reappeared on Monday afternoon, after a thick white dust had covered

Baghdad and surrounding areas through the morning, with visibility slashed to a few hundred meters.

Officials at Baghdad airport announced the temporary suspension of flights, before they were restarted at around 10:30 am (0730 GMT). In Najaf, a Shiite holy city in central Iraq, the airport briefly suspended operations in the morning before reopening a few hours later when the dust passed. Airports have been forced to suspend flights several times due to sandstorms in recent weeks.

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Local

Kuwait Crown Prince receives Municipal Council members



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Municipal Affairs and State Minister for Communications and Information Technology Dr Rana Al-Fares, as well as the newly elected and appointed Municipal Council members. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Municipal Affairs and State Minister for Communications and Information Technology Dr Rana Al-Fares.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Monday Minister of Municipal Affairs and State

Minister for Communications and Information Technology Dr Rana Al-Fares. Minister Fares presented His Highness the Crown Prince with Head of

Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Mehri and the newly elected and appointed Municipal Council members. His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

congratulated them and encouraged them to put forth more efforts and work to achieve further development, wishing them success in their endeavors. — KUNA

GCC Financial, Economic Cooperation committee holds 116th meeting

RIYADH: Finance Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held the 116th meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee, with the participation of Kuwait Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Abdulwahab Al-Rasheed. The Secretariat General of GCC said in a statement Monday that Saudi Finance Minister Mohammad Al-Jadaan chaired the meeting with the participation of the Secretary General

of GCC Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf, at the headquarters of the Secretariat in Riyadh. During the meeting, the ministers reviewed many topics related to strengthening financial and economic cooperation between GCC countries, it mentioned. The committee reviewed recommendations submitted to it by the Governors of GCC Central Banks Committee, GCC Customs Union, the Committee of Heads and Directors of Tax Departments in the GCC States, and the Gulf Common



RIYADH: Finance Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council pose for a group photo on the sidelines of the 116th meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee. — KUNA

Market Committee, it pointed out. The committee was also briefed on the team that was looking into the initiatives of the Group of Twenty (G20),

taking note of the developments of signing the agreement on linking payment systems between GCC countries, it added. — KUNA

Top services offered to Al-Madinah's visitors: Ambassador

RIYADH: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah commended the top services experienced by visitors of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah that help them perform their worship. Speaking to the press, Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled said after his visit and his meeting with the Governor of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah Region Prince Faisal bin Salman that the region saw great development at all stages following the great efforts made by the prince. The ambassador extolled the ambitious and pioneering plans that the prince is

working on, which will contribute to increasing comfort to help the pilgrims of Al-Madinah, noting the care experienced by Kuwaiti visitors to the city in order for them to perform worship with ease. He also acclaimed the exhibition and the International Fair and Museum of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilization, which is a scientific and historical edifice that preserves Islamic history and presents it to its visitors. He pointed out the strong Kuwaiti-Saudi ties that is based on cooperation under the wise leadership of both sides. — KUNA

Kuwait partakes in anti-corruption convention in Vienna

VIENNA: Kuwait participated on Monday in the 13th session of the United Nations Convention against Corruption held in Vienna, from June 13-17. In a statement to the press, Head of the delegation from Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (NAZAH) Abdulhameed Al-Hamar said that the convention's agenda discusses several points: most important point is the follow-up to the Marrakech declaration on the prevention of corruption, resolution 6/6. "All decisions and initiatives would be revised, such as information technology and communication, and the showcase of the challenges in the fields of awareness, education, training and research, all related to combating corruption," he said. "This convention displays the mechanism of execution of the UN



VIENNA: Kuwait's representatives at the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Vienna. — KUNA

agreement to fight corruption, in addition to the technical assistance, information exchange and boosting cooperation to stand against corruption," he pointed out. — KUNA

Tenders worth nearly \$6bn awarded in Kuwait in 2021

KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Central Agency for Public Tenders of Kuwait (CAPT) Usama Al-Duaij said the agency awarded 235 tenders worth KD 1.8 billion (\$5.9 billion) in 2021. The number of the awarded tenders has been rising annually, but only 98 worth KD 303.4 million (\$1 billion) were awarded in 2020 due to the ramifications of the coronavirus. Duaij said in an exclusive interview with KUNA.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy won the lion's share of tenders last year, with 50 contracts awarded valued at KD 107.2 million (\$353.7 million). Coming second was the Ministry of Health, with 25 tenders worth KD 110.5 million (\$364.6 million), followed by the Ministry of

Education with 13 awards valued at KD 31.3 million (\$103.2 million). The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources was fourth in this respect with 13 offered contracts worth KD 20.5 million (\$67.6 million), and Kuwait University fifth with 11 tenders worth KD 5.5 million (\$18.1 million).

Sixth was Kuwait Ports Authority with 10 tenders worth KD 16 million (\$52.8 million); seventh was the Ministry of Public Works with nine tenders worth KD 20 million (\$66 million), eighth was Kuwait Fire Force with nine contracts worth KD 11.9 million (\$37.9 million), followed by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, also with nine contracts worth KD 8.5 million (\$28 million).

Duaij added in the interview with KUNA that Kuwait Oil Company was 10th in awarded tenders with eight worth KD 1.3 billion (\$3.9 billion), followed by the Civil Service Commission with eight tenders worth KD 3.9 million (\$12.8 million) and the Ministry of Information with a similar number of tenders worth KD 2.9 million (\$9.5 million). CAPT is a public authority tasked with dealing with issues related to tenders according to relevant laws. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Russia to Kuwait Nikolay V Makarov hosted a reception on Russia Day. Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhafeeri, diplomats and other dignitaries attended the event. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Embassy releases statement on Russia Day

KUWAIT: The Russian Embassy in Kuwait released a statement on the occasion of Russia Day. The following are excerpts from the statement:

"On June 12 we celebrate Russia Day - one of our most important public holidays. We honor our native country, our Russia, which we love and are proud of. Today we are happy to share our joy with our Kuwaiti friends again after two years of pandemic restrictions. Being in the hospitable land of Kuwait, we would like to emphasize that we greatly value the traditionally friendly relations between our countries. As we are going

to mark the seventh decade of diplomatic ties next year, we can state with confidence that these relations have evolved into a sustainable and enduring partnership which is time-proved and based on a solid foundation of mutually beneficial cooperation and respect, supported by regular political dialogue at the highest and high levels, strong cultural and humanitarian ties and promising potential in the trade and economic spheres. We are convinced that further development of multifaceted cooperation between Russia and Kuwait in bilateral and multi-lateral formats meets long-term interests of both countries, contributes to strengthening of mutual understanding and coordination on a wide range of issues pertaining to regional and international agenda.

"Political consultations at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers (the last round was held in Moscow in October 2021)

facilitate a trust-based exchange of views and strengthen practical coordination on a wide range of issues. Trade, economic, investment and financial agenda is discussed within the framework of the Intergovernmental Russian-Kuwaiti Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation.

"In this regard, the internationally recognized role of Kuwait as a global humanitarian leader and the country's substantial contribution to the settlement of conflicts and crisis situations in the region deserves the highest praise. This role has once again been proved by the success of Kuwait's mediation efforts under the guidance of the country's wise leadership - His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince - which helped heal a rift within the GCC, contributed to normalizing relations between the Gulf states and Lebanon and advancing the peace process in Yemen."



KUWAIT: Kuwait police carried out a crackdown in Hawally on Monday as part of its ongoing security campaign around the country. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Local

Bureau places murals around Kuwait to commemorate martyrs

Spreading awareness among future generations on martyrs' sacrifice



KUWAIT: A monument commemorating Kuwait's martyrs made by the Martyrs' Bureau. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah issued a decree to establish the Martyrs' Bureau in 1991 to provide support and special care for the families of martyrs. The bureau is also responsible to document the data of all martyrs and complete information about the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Manar Al-Fahad, Head of the Honoring Department, provided information about the bureau's role and activities related to martyrs. "Our department cooperates with various institutions to commemorate Kuwait's martyrs and their sacrifices. This includes creating murals with martyrs' names and naming private or public facilities after them. Our latest mural was placed at the T4 terminal at Kuwait International Airport. We are now also preparing to place a monument with the names and photos of martyrs at the T2 terminal that is still under construction," she told Kuwait Times.

"We also have the martyrs' cultural competition. This year we will hold the 18th edition on designing a monument that will be placed at the roundabout near this building. This competition is for the students of the Faculty of Architecture at Kuwait University. We are now choosing the best design," added Fahad.

The bureau is also working on renaming some public parks. "As a way of commemorating the martyrs, we aim to give some parks the name of the martyr according to the area where they used to live. We just signed a protocol agreement with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources to rename parks after martyrs and place



Manar Al-Fahad



Noura Al-Jasim

a mural with the names and photos of the martyrs of that area," concluded Fahad.

Future generations

Noura Al-Jasim, Head of the Moral Immortalization Department, said this department is in charge of commemorating martyrs and spreading awareness among future generations on the invasion and the role of the martyrs during the invasion. "We collect the stories of the martyrs and Kuwait's resistance and army during the invasion. We have already published 15 stories and are now preparing number 16. We also produce short stories for kids, all encouraging loving the country, sacrifice and bravery," she pointed out.

The bureau also focuses on children. "We are cooperating with schools to paint murals in their premises. We emphasize the role of martyrs and commemorate them. Also, our museum at the bureau

welcomes school fieldtrips. Here we show them documentaries on the martyred heroes and documentaries on the services provided by the bureau to the martyrs' families. At the museum, various documentaries are shown on the invasion and liberation," Jasim added.

"During national occasions, we visit schools and present lectures and hold competitions about Kuwait and the liberation to spread awareness on the role of this bureau and commemorate the martyrs. On February 25 and 26 every year, we hold a small cultural and entertainment festival for kids. Also, on August 2, we hold similar activities to provide information on the invasion and the sacrifices of the martyrs. Now we are preparing for the activity that will be held on August 2. We will also refurbish the museum here to be in line with modern technology, and it should be ready with the beginning of the new academic year," she explained.

"The bureau welcomes students four days a week, with a maximum of two visits per day. Only one class can visit at a time so the museum and cinema don't get crowded. We also welcome visitors other than the schools of the ministry of education, if we get a request directly from the school. We also participate in the book fair with various publications," Jasim stated.

The Martyrs' Bureau is currently welcoming visitors only in the mornings. "We are now considering opening the museum during the evenings for the public and not only groups from schools and delegations. But this needs more staff working here, as there should be employees operating the screens showing documentaries and giving explanations during the tours. This should also be ready by the new academic year," stressed Jasim.



NCCAL denies allegations of looting in Failaka

KUWAIT: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) General Secretary Dr Essa Al-Ansari affirmed Monday that the council is observing its duty in protecting the archeological sites of Kuwait, denying allegations of sites in Failaka being tampered with. This came in a press statement in response to social media claims about foreign visitors looting sites on Failaka Island. Ansari explained that the sites are surrounded by a fence, security checkpoints, and are equipped with surveillance cameras, adding that as a security measure, visitors' identities are checked prior to entry. He also indicated that the Kuwaiti-French and Kuwaiti-Danish excavating teams are working under the supervision of the council in certain sites while other locations are monitored round the clock with periodic



reports submitted if necessary. Ansari touched on the council's collaboration with the customs department and the ongoing coordination between the two to combat artifact smuggling, and maintain security of archeological sites. He added that one must seek precision prior to sharing news, and stated that NCCAL is looking forward to working with experts in what serves these national treasures and boosts their historical value. — KUNA

35 million people suffer from drug use disorders: Dr Saleh

KUWAIT: The General Secretariat of the Arab Federation for the Prevention of Drug Dr Khalid Al-Saleh said Monday that 35 million addicts around the world suffer from drugs use disorders. This came during a workshop organized by the General Secretariat, entitled "Obstacles and solutions for field studies of drugs in the State of Kuwait", attended by a number of experts and specialists from Kuwait. In a press statement, Dr Saleh, who chaired the workshop, said that "the United Nations statistics showed that drug misuse cases increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which drug abuse has spread using social media."

In Kuwait, about 75 percent of committed crimes

In my view

A message to every mother and father



By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.com

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published statistics about reading in the world, including that Americans read around 11 books a year. But for us Arabs, every 20 of us read one book a year, that means that every American reads what 220 Arabs read. This information and much more has been coming to us since decades, and was dealt with by many educated Arabs since the start of the last century, until it became part of the information Arab citizens of all cultural degrees keep and use for self-ridicule and masochism.

Reading is love and training, and those who were not trained on reading at a younger age rarely succeed in training themselves when they become older, so reading is a skill children gain to benefit from when they become adults. Fifty years ago, Arab children were suffering from a high illiteracy rate and difficulty in accessing books. Despite this, the reading rate among them was much higher than the reading rate among the children of today, despite the reduction of the illiteracy rate, especially in Gulf countries, and the ease of getting a book.

The educated failed during 100 years to convince decision makers to adopt a plan that encourages reading by Arab children. Actually, when did the educated succeed in convincing decision makers in our Arab world about any issue?! It became common among decision makers to say the educated consult them and disagree with them.

Free reading classes in 90 percent of schools have stopped, and 95 percent of libraries in Arab schools are abandoned. In foreign schools, the situation is worse, because they encourage reading, but in foreign languages and Western culture, so our children will learn a different culture. This Arab child grows up and lives among us, but actually is a foreign body from whom we do not benefit to support our culture.

The situation is much worse today, as we are not satisfied and do not encourage our children to read in their language and make them like our culture. Rather, we are encouraging them to disabuse their thinking by encouraging them, with ignorance many times, to sit in front of social media and television for long hours, and this is the new calamity.

In a scientific study by Michigan University in the US and Montreal University in Canada that included 1,300 children to gauge academic gains and its relation to sitting in front of TV screens and similar devices, researchers found a link between the number of hours of watching screens among children and their poor academics and learning harmful social rules.

In a study in a child health magazine about the impact of social media on the health of children and young people, researchers showed major negative effects of social media on mental health, particularly in the area of confidence. People of the West complain their children sit for two hours daily in front of the television and social media sites, so they present studies to not exceed this period and encourage its reduction.

Yet, with us, a field study by social consultant Taher Al-Nujaidi at the GCC level showed 90 percent of our children aged 3 to 7 years sit in front of the TV and other similar media for 5 to 6 hours daily. What does this mean? It simply means the falling-behind formula, which is: Not reading + sitting for hours in front of social media and television = backward generation.

For you fathers and mothers, there was not a nation that paid attention to reading like ours, and the first word that was revealed in the Holy Quran was "Read". Who does not believe studies and researchers that warn us about a worrisome future if we do not care for training our children to read? Who does not believe and respects what his religion calls for and urges reading?

Encourage your children to read, reduce the time they spend in front of social media, rely on yourselves and do not wait for a solution from our governments, as we waited for a long time to change education curricula in order to instill the love of reading, but to no avail.

are related directly to selling, using or promoting drugs, according to statistics issued by the Ministry of Interior, Saleh said. The situation is also worrying in the Arab countries, which are witnessing a significant increase in drug cases and an increase in their rate, he added. Saleh stressed on the importance of encouraging scientists and researchers in the region to collect and analyze data to help find solutions to overcome this problem.

The lack of research centers and specialized scientist in this field, in addition to weakness of grants and financial support, are major obstacles to scientific research on drug misuse, he pointed out, stressing the need for having administrative institutions to attract research and scientist. "In spite of studies carried out by the General Administration for Drug Control in the field of reducing drug demand, we need more encouragement and financial support to address the scourge of drugs, which has become the biggest obstacle to human and societal development," Saleh explained. — KUNA

Local

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Diwan releases statement on World Day Against Child Labor

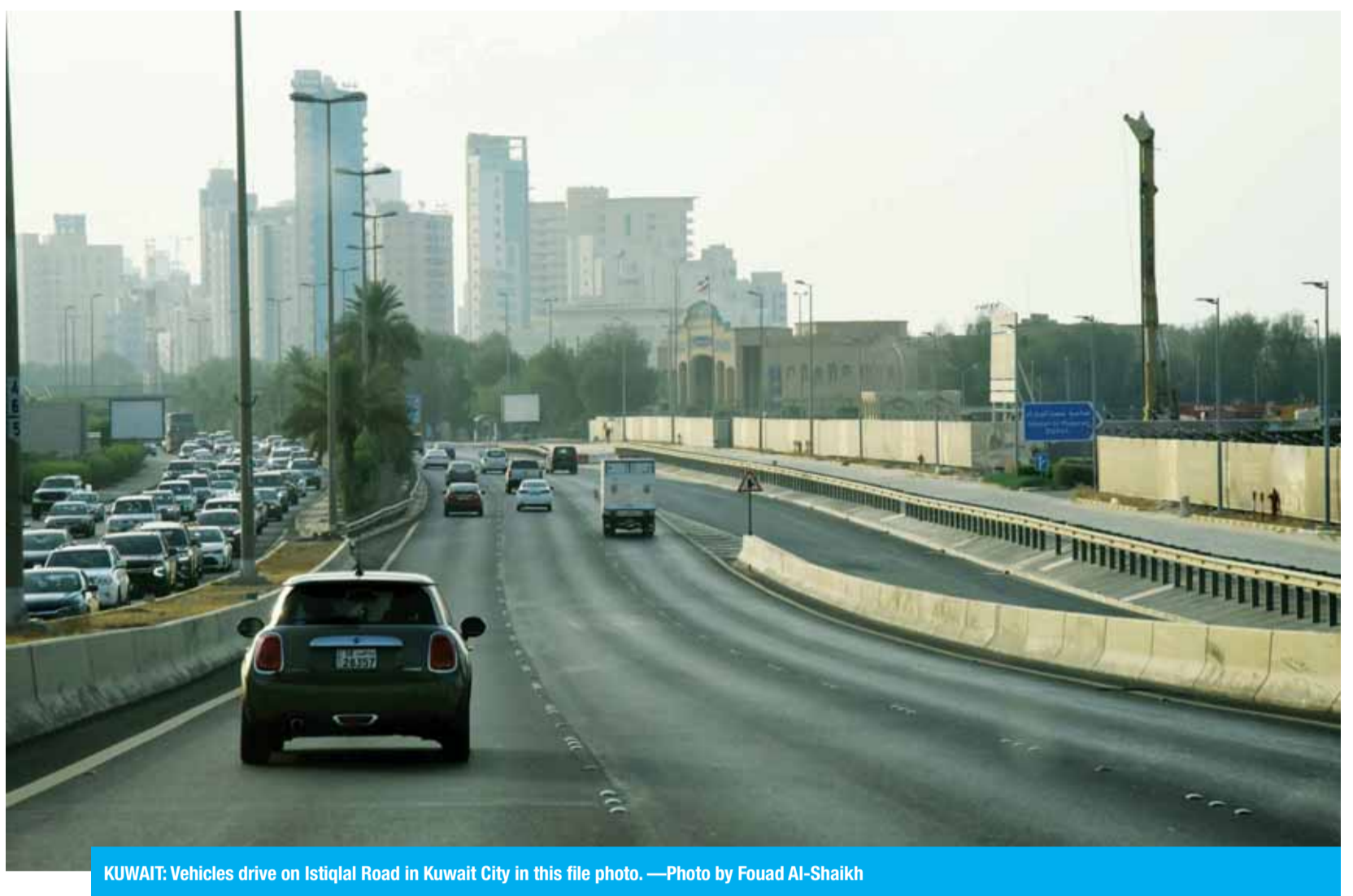
KUWAIT: Dr Siham Al-Furaih, Vice President of the National Diwan for Human Rights and Chairman of the Permanent Committee for Child Rights, stated on the World Day Against Child Labor, that it is a phenomenon many societies suffer from. What proves this is that the relevant international organizations indicated that there are 218 million working children and many of them work full time. It is a global fact that varies in strength from one society to another. In the past years, it was not an issue in Kuwait, but with the big change in the demographics it became a problem that affected the humanitarian face of Kuwait due to some cases of working children in car garages in Shuwaikh area and for years we have been asking to monitor these garages. Today another problem came to the surface: Children Street vendors for many reasons. Dr Furaih presented Child Law which the State agreed on in a legislation number 21 (year 2015). In its fifth chapter, it details an explanation about taking care of the working child, his age, working hours, rest hours, protection from dangers and study hours. In spite of all the laws the children will be denied of their educational and recreational rights.



Dr Siham Al-Furaih

Dr Furaih explained that our activities are not restricted to international occasions only, but it is extended all year long, for example the last campaign we arranged last October (Into Safe and Stable Childhood) about the children street vendors, cooperating with the National Society for Child Protection which sponsored the whole campaign and many representatives were invited from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information, Municipality and the Public Authority of Manpower. After we collected all the data and information, we arranged 3 workshops where speakers explained how to deal with this phenomenon.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive on Istiqial Road in Kuwait City in this file photo. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Tectonic plate movements behind Kuwait tremor: KOC

KUWAIT: State-owned Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) on Monday cited the movement of tectonic plates as the trigger of a magnitude 5 earthquake that struck the country earlier this month, ruling out that the tremor was man-made. Hydraulic fracturing to produce oil and gas has often been mentioned as a possible cause of the quake, said a KOC statement, underlining that such a production method is seldom linked to seismic activity.

Citing a preliminary analysis by the company's geological experts, it said the vast majority of tremors in the region, including the one that shook

Kuwait in the wee hours of June 4, occur when tectonic plates rub up against each other.

In the wake of the tremor, social media was abuzz with theories over what might have been behind the earthquake, added the statement, while the use of hydraulic fracturing has been closely associated with seismic activity, a notion KOC moved quick to dispel due to the method's rare nature. On June 4, Kuwait's national seismic network recorded an earthquake measuring 5 on the Richter scale, with no serious damage or injuries reported. —KUNA



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WTO meeting held amid unprecedented global events: Kuwait

GENEVA: Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Mutleg Al-Shuraian said on Monday that the current ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization is being held in the shadow of unprecedented global events and challenges facing the world trade order. In a statement to KUNA on margins of the event, due on June 12-15, he affirmed significance of holding of the convention to deal with emerging challenges and promoting the WTO role which plays a crucial role with respect of global trade systems, supply chains and shoring up the global economy.

This conference had been scheduled to convene in Kazakhstan in 2020, however, this was not possible due to difficulties emanating from the coronavirus crisis, he said, noting that it had been delayed twice for four years earlier in the past

since the last one, held in Argentina in December 2017. The State of Kuwait, since joining the organization in 1995, has been dedicating particular concern for boosting the WTO role as a basis of the multi-party commercial order. Regarding the agenda, the Kuwaiti official said that it addresses the organization's response to epidemics, WTO's reforms, issues related to fishing locations, food security, e-commerce and other topics related to global development and trade.

Shuraian, since his arrival in Geneva, had taken part in a series of meetings, two of them with his GCC and Arab counterparts, a third one with the WTO director general, in addition to several meetings with delegations' chairpersons. He chairs the Kuwaiti delegation that includes the State of Kuwait Permanent Representative at the UN and International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim, the assistant undersecretary for the international organizations and external trade Eid Khalaf Al-Rashidi, officials from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Public Authority for Industry and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources. —KUNA



KRCS launches campaign to provide water for workers

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched on Monday a project, which aims to distribute 13,000 packages of cold water to workers in several sites within the country and will continue until August 16. The director of Public Relations and Media at KRCS Khaled Al-Zaid said that the project at the beginning of its launch, distributed 2,400 cold water packages to workers in Al-Mutlaa area, where construction and transportation workers are spread widely. He noted that the project also aims to alleviate the heat pressure on people who work in an open area during the summer season, indicating that the association provided equipped refrigerated trucks to distribute cold water in many construction sites. Zaid added that the society would cover many sites in



the country's governorates so that the workers in work sites, construction, road workers, bus stations and other places can be benefited. He called on donors in Kuwait to support the association's humanitarian and charitable work so that it can implement many other projects in the future, pointing out that the donations are made through the association's website. —KUNA



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Ukraine forces pushed back from key city

Russian army 'gathering more and more equipment' to 'encircle' Severodonetsk



BAKHMUT, Ukraine: A local resident walks outside her building, partially destroyed as a result of a night airstrike, in the town of Bakhmut, Donetsk Oblast, on June 13, 2022, amid Russia's military invasion launched on Ukraine. — AFP

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine: Ukraine said Monday its forces had been pushed back from the centre of key industrial city Severodonetsk, where President Volodymyr Zelensky described a fight for "literally every metre". The cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk, which are separated by a river, have been targeted for weeks as the last areas still under Ukrainian control in the eastern Lugansk region.

Regional governor Sergiy Gaiday said Monday Russian forces were "gathering more and more equipment" to "encircle" Severodonetsk, and that they had "pushed our troops from the centre and continue to destroy our city".

The local Azot chemical plant, where hundreds of civilians have reportedly taken refuge, was being "heavily shelled", Gaiday said. In Lysychansk, bombardments killed three civilians, including a six-year-old boy, he said. Severodonetsk had been "de facto" blocked off after Russian forces blew up the "last" bridge connecting it to Lysychansk Sunday, Eduard Basurin, a representative for pro-Russian separatists, said Monday.

"The Ukrainian units that are there, they are there forever. They have two options: to surrender or die," Basurin said. On Sunday, Zelensky said the latest fighting in Severodonetsk was "very fierce", adding that Russia was deploying undertrained troops and using its young men as "cannon fodder".

Russia's massed artillery in that region gave it a tenfold advantage, the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian military, Valeriy Zaluzhny, said Sunday. "Every metre of Ukrainian land there is covered in blood-but not only ours, but also the occupier's."

The capture of Severodonetsk would open the road for Moscow to another major city, Kramatorsk, in their steps toward conquering the whole of Donbas, a mainly Russian-speaking region partly held by pro-Russian separatists since 2014.

'War crimes'

On Monday, Amnesty International accused Russia of war crimes in Ukraine, saying that attacks on the northeastern city of Kharkiv-many using banned cluster bombs-had killed hundreds of civil-



AI accuse Russia of war crimes

ians. "The repeated bombardments of residential neighbourhoods in Kharkiv are indiscriminate attacks which killed and injured hundreds of civilians, and as such constitute war crimes," the rights group said in a report on Ukraine's second biggest city.

Away from the battlefield, World Trade Organization members gathered in Geneva Sunday, with the threat posed to global food security by Russia's war in wheat-producing Ukraine top of the agenda.

Tensions ran high during a closed-door session, where several delegates took the floor to condemn Russia's war, including Kyiv's envoy who was met with a standing ovation, WTO spokesman Dan Pruzin told journalists.

Just before Russian Minister of Economic Development Maxim Reshetnikov spoke, around three dozen delegates "walked out", the spokesman said. On a farm near the city of Mykolaiv in the south, the harvest has been delayed by the need to undo the damage done by Russian troops that passed through the area in March.

"We planted really late because we needed to clear everything beforehand," including bombshells, Nadiia Ivanova, 42, told AFP. The farm's warehouses currently hold 2,000 tonnes of last season's grain but there are no takers. The railways have been partially destroyed by the Russian army, while any ship that sails faces the threat of being sunk.

'Out of it'

The war has prompted Finland and Sweden to give up decades of military non-alignment and seek to join the NATO alliance. But Turkey is blocking their bids and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said Sunday the issue may not be resolved in time for an alliance summit later this month.

Speaking to AFP, Mikhail Kasyanov, Russia's prime minister from 2000 to 2004, said he thought President Vladimir Putin was "out of it", after seeing the Russian leader summon the country's top brass for a theatrical meeting three days before the invasion on February 24.

"I knew a different Putin," said Kasyanov, 64, who served under Putin but has become one of the Kremlin's most vocal critics. Kasyanov predicted the war could last for up to two years and said it is imperative that Ukraine win. "If Ukraine falls, the Baltic states will be next," he said.

Chortkiv strike

The United States and Europe have sent weapons and cash to help Ukraine blunt Russia's advance, alongside punishing Moscow with unprecedented economic sanctions. Russian forces said Sunday they had struck a site in the town of Chortkiv in western Ukraine storing US- and EU-supplied weapons.

Russia's defence ministry said the strike destroyed a "large depot of anti-tank missile systems, portable air defence systems and shells provided to the Kyiv regime by the US and European countries".

The strike-a rare attack by Russia in the relatively calm west of Ukraine-left 22 people injured, regional governor Volodymyr Trush said.

Concerns eased Sunday over Ukraine's largest nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia. Captured months ago by Russian forces but still operated by Ukrainians, the station had ceased transmitting vital safeguards data two weeks ago.

But plant officials working with the International Atomic Energy Agency have succeeded in restoring transmission, the IAEA said. Rafael Grossi, director general of the UN agency, said it still wanted to send inspectors to the plant "as soon as possible". — AFP

France's left revives, power seen as unlikely

PARIS: As the results rolled in for the first round of France's parliamentary elections, the leader of France's new left-wing alliance sounded both hopeful and triumphant. Speaking from a trendy bar in northeast Paris serving as his election night headquarters, Jean-Luc Melenchon said the so-called NUPES-or New Ecological and Social Popular Union-alliance he heads had passed its first test in "magnificent fashion."

"Everyone should be thanked who made this alliance possible, which has ended up convincing our citizens that we are ready to govern with a programme and with unity that has never faltered," Melenchon

added on Sunday.

His red-green coalition of leftists, greens and Communists is the first such tie-up in 25 years and has given new hope to the left, which has been in the political wilderness since 2017. France's political map has been redrawn around three poles: one dominated by Melenchon, the centre ground occupied by Macron, and a right wing dominated by anti-immigration populist Marine Le Pen.

Yet despite the renewed optimism, in the decisive second round of the parliamentary election next Sunday, Melenchon and his allies are seen as falling well short of a majority. "We've confounded predictions. Now the challenge is to prove the projections wrong," said the head of the EELV green party, Julien Bayou, on Sunday.

Projections by polling firms suggest that NUPES is on track for 150-220 seats under France's parliamentary system, which sees MPs elected individually from 577 separate constituencies. That is a huge increase on the 60-odd seats its members hold in the outgo-

ing parliament.

Macron's "Ensemble" (Together) coalition is projected to remain the biggest party with 255-310 members, but possibly without the 289-seat majority. If the shortfall is modest, most analysts expect the president to be able to govern by tempting over defectors, broadening his alliance to new parties, or doing individual deals for legislation.

Some observers argued that the results should not be overestimated as proving the appeal of the new left-wing coalition. "There isn't a surge for the left, there isn't a surge for NUPES which scored around 26 percent," analyst Jerome Jaffre from the Cecop think-tank argued on Europe 1 radio.

He said Melenchon's France Unbowed party, the Socialists, Greens and Communists achieved roughly the same proportion of votes in the last elections in 2017. The gains were tactical: by fielding a single candidate in constituencies, the left was on track to increase its representation, not its share of ballots. — AFP

World headed for new era of nuclear rearmament: SIPRI

STOCKHOLM, Sweden: The number of nuclear weapons in the world is set to rise in the coming decade after 35 years of decline as global tensions flare amid Russia's war in Ukraine, researchers said Monday. The nine nuclear powers-Britain, China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, the United States and Russia-had 12,705 nuclear warheads in early 2022, or 375 fewer than in early 2021, according to estimates by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The number has come down from a high of

more than 70,000 in 1986, as the US and Russia have gradually reduced their massive arsenals built up during the Cold War. But this era of disarmament appears to be coming to an end and the risk of a nuclear escalation is now at its highest point in the post-Cold War period, SIPRI researchers said.

"Soon, we're going to get to the point where, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, the global number of nuclear weapons in the world could start increasing for the first time", Matt Korda, one of the co-authors of the report, told AFP.

"That is really kind of dangerous territory." After a "marginal" decrease seen last year, "nuclear arsenals are expected to grow over the coming decade", SIPRI said. During the war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has on several occasions made reference to the use of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile several countries, including China and Britain, are either officially or unof-

officially modernising or ramping up their arsenals, the research institute said. "It's going to be very difficult to make progress on disarmament over the coming years because of this war, and because of how Putin is talking about his nuclear weapons", Korda said. These worrying statements are pushing "a lot of other nuclear armed states to think about their own nuclear strategies", he added.

Despite the entry into force in early 2021 of the UN nuclear weapon ban treaty and a five-year extension of the US-Russian "New START" treaty, the situation has been deteriorating for some time, according to SIPRI.

Iran's nuclear programme and the development of increasingly advanced hypersonic missiles have, among other things, raised concern. The drop in the overall number of weapons is due to the US and Russia "dismantling retired warheads", SIPRI noted, while the number of operational weapons remains "relatively stable". — AFP



PARIS: France's Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, flanked by French Transformation and Civil Service Minister Stanislas Guerini, arrives to deliver a speech during the election evening on June 12, 2022. — AFP



File image released by Pakistan's Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) office on January 9, 2017 shows a Pakistani nuclear-capable cruise missile after being launched from a submarine during a test firing at an undisclosed location in Pakistan. — AFP

International

Ex-PM says Putin 'out of it', Ukraine war could last two years

Putin, has managed over the past 20 years to build a system based on impunity and fear

PARIS: He was Vladimir Putin's first prime minister but Mikhail Kasyanov never in his worst nightmares imagined that his former boss would unleash a full-scale war on Ukraine. Speaking to AFP in a video interview, Kasyanov, Russia's prime minister from 2000 to 2004, said he expected the war could last up to two years but he was convinced Russia could return to a democratic path. The 64-year-old, who championed close ties with the West as prime minister, said that, like many other Russians, he did not believe in the weeks ahead of the war that it would actually happen.

Kasyanov only understood that Putin was not bluffing when he saw him summon the country's top leadership for a theatrical meeting of the security council three days before the invasion on February 24. "When I saw the meeting of Russia's Security Council I realised, yes, there will be a war," Kasyanov said.

He added that he felt that Putin was already not thinking properly. "I just know these people and by looking at them I saw that Putin is already out of it. Not in a medical sense but in political terms," he said. "I knew a different Putin." After being sacked by Putin, Kasyanov joined Russia's opposition and became one of the Kremlin's most vocal critics. He is now the

leader of the opposition People's Freedom party, or Parnas.

'Complete lawlessness'

Kasyanov said Putin, a former KGB agent who turns 70 in October, has managed over the past 20 years to build a system based on impunity and fear. "These are the achievements of a system that, with the encouragement of Putin as head of state, has started operating even in a more cynical, cruel manner than in the final stages of the Soviet Union," he said.

"Essentially, this is a KGB system based on complete lawlessness. It is clear that they do not expect any punishment."

Kasyanov said he had left Russia because of the war and was living in Europe but he declined to disclose his location out of concern for his safety.

His close ally and fellow opposition politician Boris Nemtsov was gunned down near the Kremlin in 2015. Putin's best-known critic Alexei Navalny, 46, was poisoned with a nerve agent in 2020 and is now in prison.

Kasyanov predicted the war could last for up to two years and said it is imperative that Ukraine win. "If Ukraine falls, the Baltic states will be next," he said. The outcome of the war

will also determine Russia's future, he said. Kasyanov said he "categorically" disagreed with French President Emmanuel Macron's suggestion that Putin should not be humiliated.

He also rebuffed calls for Ukraine to cede territory to end the war. "What has Putin done to deserve this?" he said. "This is an overly pragmatic position. I believe this is wrong and hope that the West won't go down that path."

'Enormous tasks'

Kasyanov believes Putin will eventually be replaced by a "quasi-successor" controlled by the security services. But a successor would not be able to control the system for long and eventually Russia will stage free and fair elections, the former prime minister said.

"I am certain that Russia will return to the path of building a democratic state," he said. He estimated it would take about a decade to conduct "de-Communisation" and "de-Putinisation" of the country.

"This will be difficult, especially after this criminal war." He said trust would have to be re-established with European countries, which he called Russia's "natural partners". Critics have in the past accused the Russian opposition of being hopelessly divided but Kasyanov said



MOSCOW: File photo shows Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) talking to former Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov at his office in Moscow's Kremlin. —AFP

he was confident things would now be different.

"I have no doubt that now, after the tragedy that we are all witnessing, the opposition will unite." Russians will face a huge task rebuilding their country, he said. "Everything will have to be rebuilt anew. Essentially, an entire set of economic and social reforms should be started all over again. "These are enormous and difficult tasks and they will have to be done." —AFP

Iraqi MPs from cleric Moqtada Sadr's bloc resign

BAGHDAD: Iraqi lawmakers from firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr's bloc resigned Sunday, the parliamentary speaker said, in a move ostensibly designed to up pressure to end an eight-month political paralysis. Sadr on Thursday had urged the MPs from his bloc—the biggest in parliament—to ready resignation papers, in a bid, he said, to break the parliamentary logjam and create space for the establishment of a new government.

Parliament in Baghdad has been in turmoil since October's general election, and intense negotiations among political factions have failed to forge a majority in support of a new prime minister to succeed Mustafa al-Kadhemi.

"We have reluctantly accepted the requests of our brothers and sisters, representatives of the Sadr bloc, to resign," parliament's speaker Mohammed al-Halbussi said on Twitter after receiving resignation letters from the 73 lawmakers.

Iraqi lawmakers have already exceeded all deadlines for setting up a new government set down in the constitution, prolonging the war-scarred country's political crisis. "If the survival of the Sadr bloc is an obstacle to the formation of the government, then all representatives of the bloc are ready to resign from parliament," Sadr had said Thursday.

'Political theatre'

Parliamentary services were not available on Sunday evening for comment on the constitutional implications of the Sadr bloc's move. But Iraqi political analyst Hamzeh Hadad called the move "more political



Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr

theatre" from the Sadrism movement and Halbussi, an ally of the cleric.

"Although the speaker accepted the resignation, the Parliament has to vote with an absolute majority after reaching quorum" for the resignations to take effect, he said on Twitter. Parliamentary holidays began on Thursday and MPs are not scheduled to return until August.

The two Shiite groupings—a coalition led by Sadr, and its powerful rival, the Coordination Framework—have each claimed to hold a parliamentary majority, and with it the right to appoint the prime minister.

While he counts on the direct loyalty of 73 lawmakers, his wider bloc also includes Sunni lawmakers from Halbussi's party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). But the grand total of Sadr's bloc of 155 still falls short of the absolute majority needed in the 329-member parliament.

Sunday's move puts the onus for forming a government on the 83 lawmakers of the rival Coordination Framework, which draws lawmakers from former premier Nuri al-Maliki's party and the pro-Iran Fatah Alliance, the political arm of the Shiite-led former paramilitary group Hashed al-Shaabi. —AFP

Texas death row inmate 'optimistic' after 27 years

LIVINGSTON, United States: Hank Skinner, who has been on death row in Texas for nearly three decades, says he still remains hopeful. "I am optimistic I won't end up here. I should have never been here to start with. And it's been a long journey," he told AFP during an interview. Incarcerated in Livingston, a town some 80 miles (130 kilometers) north of Houston, Skinner has always maintained his innocence. He spoke to AFP via telephone from behind a glass window at the Allan B. Polunsky prison, wearing a white prisoner's uniform. In 1995, Skinner was sentenced to death for the murder of his girlfriend and her two adult sons in Pampa, a small town in the Texas panhandle.

He did not deny having been in the house where the three died, but said he had passed out from a combination of drugs and liquor. Skinner was found in a nearby house with blood on his clothing, but insists that DNA testing would prove his innocence. The father of three, who recently turned 60 and has a salt-and-pepper beard, Skinner has now been waiting for more than three years for a decision from the state's highest criminal court.

The Texas Court of Appeals will weigh in on whether it believes the jury that sentenced him would have made a different choice had it had access to DNA tests that are available today. Texas has 197 death row inmates. In 2020 and 2021, six were executed but 11 were taken off the list after their sentences were reviewed.

Some of those are still behind bars. One of them is Raymond Riles, who had his death sentence commuted to life in prison due to a history of mental illness.

Others are free: Cesar Fierro was returned to Mexico after 40 years on death row. If the court agrees with Skinner, he will remain in prison but will be able to appeal in an attempt to prove his innocence.



Hank Skinner

Five execution dates

On five different occasions Skinner's execution date was set. In March 2010, the US Supreme Court spared him 23 minutes before he was scheduled to receive a lethal injection, just after what was supposed to have been his last meal. It was his lawyer who told him the good news. "I dropped the phone and I just slid down the wall. And I didn't realize it but I had tears running out of both eyes," he said.

"I felt like somebody had picked up a 1,000-pound weight off of my chest. I felt so light. I thought I was gonna float away." Once the euphoria and shock wore off, he suffered a terrible low as he came to terms with the fact that he would have to return to death row and "all the suffering here."

Seeing fellow prisoners die, he said, is harder than being locked up in a small cell 22 to 23 hours a day, without television or physical contact with others except when guards handcuff or uncuff him. A total of 127 inmates have been put to death since 2010 in Texas, the state that executes the most people. Living in the detention center means Skinner's days are filled with noise, morning to evening.

"You have some people here who are mentally disturbed. They beat on the walls, they kick the doors, they scream and holler to the top of their lungs," he said. Others shout conversations with imaginary people. Still others engage in real dialogue, but noisily. —AFP

Iraq swept by 10th sandstorm...

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In May, sandstorms sent thousands of people to hospital with respiratory problems, and left one person dead. Iraq, which is entering the scorching summer season when temperatures at times surpass 50 degrees Celsius, is ranked by the United Nations as one of the world's five most vulnerable nations to climate change and desertification.

The environment ministry has warned that over the next two decades Iraq could endure an average of 272 days of sandstorms per year, rising to above 300 by 2050. The World Bank warned in November that Iraq could suffer a 20 percent drop in water resources by



BAGHDAD: Thick white dust covers the Iraqi capital and surrounding areas on June 13, 2022 for the tenth time since mid-April. —AFP

2050 due to climate change. Water shortages have been exacerbated by the building of upstream dams in neighboring Turkey and Iran. —AFP

said Monday it would no longer require masks in most enclosed spaces, citing progress in fighting the pandemic. However, masks will still be required in Makkah's Grand Mosque, which surrounds the Kaaba, towards which Muslims pray, and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is buried, according to a report published Monday by the official Saudi Press Agency, citing an interior ministry source.

Owners of establishments can also insist masks be worn if they wish, the report said, though mask-wearing has been sparsely enforced in recent months. The kingdom also no longer requires people to show proof of vaccination on an application when seeking entry to enclosed spaces. Since the start of the pandemic, Saudi Arabia has registered more than 778,000 coronavirus cases, more than 9,100 of them fatal, in a population of some 34 million. —AFP

boycott the session because the draft law that will be debated violates the constitution as it will allow the government to withdraw huge amounts of money in favor of the pension agency, which is illegal. Lawmakers supporting the session said they will attend in order to vote for the interests of the retired people. The bill also stipulates to increase monthly pensions by KD 30 this year and subsequently by KD 20 every year.

Zionists urged to leave Turkey over Iran attack threat

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid on Monday urged citizens in Turkey to leave "as soon as possible" over threats that Iranian operatives are actively planning attacks on Zionists in Istanbul. The stark warning comes amid the latest surge in tensions between bitter rivals Iran and the Zionist entity, with Tehran blaming the Zionist entity for a series of attacks on its nuclear and military infrastructure, inside Iran but also inside Syria.

Lapid made no mention of any alleged Zionist operations against Iranian targets. But, he said, Zionists in Turkey faced "a real and immediate danger" from Iranian agents, citing "several Iranian attempts at carrying out terror attacks against (Zionists) on holiday in Istanbul". "If you are already in Istanbul, return to (the Zionist entity) as soon as possible," Lapid said in a public warning.

"If you have planned a flight to Istanbul - cancel. No vacation is worth your life," he added, during a meeting with lawmakers from his Yesh Atid party. "Do not fly to Turkey at all," unless such travel is "essential", the foreign minister urged Zionists. Hours after his statement, the Zionist entity's National Security Council raised its travel warning for Istanbul to the highest level.

"Given the continuing nature of the threat and in light of the increased Iranian intentions to attack (Zionists) in Turkey, especially Istanbul, the National Security Council has raised the travel warning for Istanbul to the highest level, Level 4," NSC said in a statement. The NSC noted that other parts of Turkey remained at the intermediate threat Level 3, stressing there was no prohibition on using the Istanbul airport as a connecting hub for flights, "provided that one does not leave the airport".

Iran and the Zionist entity have been engaged

in a years-long shadow war but tensions have ratcheted up following a string of high-profile incidents Tehran has blamed on the Zionist entity. The Islamic republic claimed the Zionist entity was responsible for the killing of Revolutionary Guards Colonel Sayyad Khodai, who was shot dead outside his Tehran home on May 22.

The Guards described him as a "defender of the sanctuary", a term used for those who work on behalf of Iran in Syria or Iraq and vowed to avenge his assassination by "Zionists". The Zionist entity was also blamed for air strikes last week on the Damascus International Airport, which caused major damage to two runways. The airport is in a region south of Syria's capital where Iran-backed groups, including Lebanon's Hezbollah, regularly operate.

While the Zionist entity rarely comments on individual strikes, it has acknowledged carrying out hundreds in Syria, which the Jewish state's military says is necessary to prevent Iran from gaining a foothold on its doorstep. Lapid said some Zionists who recently travelled to Turkey had returned "without knowing their lives were saved". The alleged attackers were targeting Zionist citizens "in order to kidnap them or kill them", Lapid said.

Earlier Monday, the Zionist entity's public broadcaster Kan claimed that Iranian operatives had planned to kidnap Zionists in Turkey a month ago. The plot was thwarted after the Zionist entity alerted Ankara about the threat. Lapid thanked the Turkish government "for the effort they're putting into protecting the lives of (Zionist) citizens", without providing details.

Turkey has consistently been a popular holiday destination for Zionists, including through more than a decade of diplomatic rupture between the two countries. Ankara and the Zionist entity have mended ties in recent months, with senior Turkish leaders citing the importance of the Zionist entity to Turkey's tourism sector. On Monday, the Zionist Yedioth Ahronot newspaper quoted an unnamed security official as saying that there are several Iranian "cells" planning operations against Zionist tourists in Turkey. —AFP

Hajj visas go online; COVID...

Continued from Page 1

in some \$12 billion annually. In 2021, the coronavirus outbreak forced Saudi authorities to dramatically downsize the hajj for a second year, and just 60,000 fully vaccinated citizens and residents of the kingdom took part. This year's pilgrimage will be limited to vaccinated Muslims under the age of 65, the hajj ministry has said.

Those coming from outside Saudi Arabia are required to submit a negative COVID-19 PCR result from a test taken within 72 hours of travel. Saudi Arabia

Govt mulls curbs on 'loose...

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its estimated actuarial deficit based on calculations. Opposition MP Hamdan Al-Azemi said he will

International

Thaksin's daughter takes Shinawatra brand to new Thailand generation

To become prime minister a candidate must win a majority in 500-seat lower house

BANGKOK: She has half a million followers on Instagram, leads a glamorous lifestyle and describes herself as the "little girl" of former premier Thaksin Shinawatra—one of the most influential and controversial figures in modern Thai history. The 35-year-old Paetongtarn Shinawatra, youngest of billionaire tycoon Thaksin's three children, is now launching herself into the country's deeply divided political scene ahead of a national election due by March 2023.

The move brings the Shinawatras' influence to a new generation and sets the stage for the latest round in the ultra-rich clan's 20-year tussle with the kingdom's royalist-military elites. For now, Paetongtarn has a low-key role with the main opposition Pheu Thai party but she is widely tipped to be named its candidate for prime minister when an election is called.

The 72-year-old Thaksin, ousted as PM in a military coup in 2006, pops up regularly in Paetongtarn's social media posts hugging her baby or posing with his daughter over a bowl of noodles. Paetongtarn says she draws strength from her father's "unwavering support" and insists she will always be his "little girl".

It is a sentiment that endears her to the legion of supporters, many of them poor and rural, who swept Thaksin to election victories in 2001 and 2005. "We need you. We miss your father," a well-wisher told her during campaigning for Bangkok local elections last month.

But it will also raise the hackles of the powerful royalist and military elites who despise Thaksin and have long suspected him of manipulating the opposition to their political dominance from abroad. Parties linked to the tycoon have won the most seats at every Thai election since 2001, only to find themselves toppled by coups or court rulings pre-

ceded by massive street protests.

Thaksin, the former Manchester City owner who built a telecoms empire with a fortune estimated by Forbes at nearly \$1.9 billion, now lives in self-imposed exile in Dubai to avoid corruption charges he says are politically motivated. His sister Yingluck was elected PM in 2011, but was herself deposed by General Prayut Chan-O-Cha in a 2014 coup.

Proud daughter

Despite her current placeholder role with Pheu Thai's inclusion and innovation committee, Paetongtarn makes no secret of her ambitions. "We can transform Thailand from a country that is riddled with debt, filled with misery, with no future in sight, into a country filled with opportunity and hope for us and future generations," she told AFP at a party conference last month.

Prayut—who became PM in a controversial election in 2019 — is viewed as a poor economic manager and increasingly unpopular, particularly among the young, thousands of whom took to the streets in 2020 to demand democratic change.

In a further sign of his weakening grip, the candidate Prayut backed for Bangkok governor was thrashed in last month's election, won resoundingly by a former Pheu Thai minister. This was a first taste of campaigning for Paetongtarn, who manages the hotel branch of her family's real estate company. Thaksin's five years in power saw an economic upturn and a boost for the rural poor, but critics say the period was marked by graft, nepotism and authoritarianism. Paetongtarn insists Thailand improved under his rule, and says that like her father, she feeds off adversity.

"How could I not be proud of my dad after all he has done for our country?" she says. "Thanks to

over their roles in the murder," Alam said.

He said police did not directly hold ARSA responsible for the murder, but added that "those who opposed repatriation (of the Rohingya back to Myanmar) killed Mohib Ullah. Some of them (who are charged) are members of ARSA."

ARSA has denied any involvement in Ullah's killing. About 920,000 Rohingya refugees live in camps in Bangladesh, most of whom fled a military onslaught in Myanmar in 2017 that the United States has designated an act of genocide.

Working in the camps, Ullah and his colleagues quietly documented the crimes that his people suffered at the hands of the Myanmar military while pressing for better conditions. The former school-teacher shot to prominence in 2019 when he organised a protest of about 100,000 people to mark two years since their exodus.

He also met then US president Donald Trump in the White House that year and addressed a UN meeting in Geneva. After the murder, members of Ullah's family took shelter in a UN-run transit camp and in April they were relocated to Canada.

Meanwhile, a rebel group in Bangladesh has offered to hold peace talks, officials said Monday, raising hopes for an end to 25 years of violence that has killed hundreds of people. In 1997 the main rebel outfit in the restive Chittagong Hill Tracts region in southeast Bangladesh, the Jana

coronavirus, including sequestering hundreds of participants in quarantine.

Those reports have mostly cited unnamed sources, but one such order has been confirmed. Parents of students at Wong Cho Bao School, which is run by the pro-Beijing Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers (HKFEW), have been asked to sign their children up to greet visiting dignitaries.

The arrangement will require the pupils to undergo seven days of hotel quarantine away from their families with the government footing the bill, according to a notice shown to AFP by school principal Wong Kam-leung.

The notice encouraged parents to volunteer their kids for a "rare honourable mission" to greet unspecified visitors at the airport on June 30 and send them off a day later. The students involved will start hotel quarantine on June 23 under teacher supervision, and will attend classes via Zoom, the notice said, adding they must be double-vaccinated.

School principal Wong told AFP the notice was "internal administrative procedure" to gauge parent interest, and that the government had yet to finalise plans. Wong, who also chairs the HKFEW, said the notice went out to primary six students—usually aged 12 — but declined to say how many have

seized, a union leader and a security source said.

They were captured after one of their four vehicles broke down. "Thirty of our members were abducted yesterday while returning from the wedding of our colleague in Sokoto," Kabiru Garba Mukhtar, the head of mobile traders union in Zamfara said.

"The kidnapers called me on the phone belonging to one of the victims, confirming they are holding 30 of our colleagues." Heavily armed criminal gangs, known locally as bandits, are ravaging parts of northwest and central Nigeria, raiding villages and carrying out mass kidnappings for ransom despite military operations against them.

The convoy of 50 wedding guests had stopped at Lambar Bakura village after one of the four buses



BANGKOK, Thailand: File photo taken on May 12, 2022, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the youngest daughter of former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, attends a Pheu Thai Party (PTP) campaign event in Bangkok. —AFP

him, not only am I not afraid of criticism, but I see it as an opportunity for improvement."

Major obstacles

Given Prayut's unpopularity, and the lack of a charismatic alternative in the army-linked Palang Pracharat Party, Pheu Thai believe they can win the election. Paul Chambers, of the Center of ASEAN Community Studies at Naresuan University in Thailand, said the party was hoping to capitalise on the "perfect storm" facing the current government.

Victory for Paetongtarn might also mean a way back to Thailand for the 72-year-old Thaksin. Last year he vowed to return to the kingdom "through the front door". But despite the power of the

Shinawatra brand, Pheu Thai and Paetongtarn face formidable hurdles to winning power.

To become prime minister a candidate must win a majority in the 500-seat lower house and the 250-seat senate. But under the constitution drafted by the junta in 2017, the senate is full of handpicked military loyalists.

A similar scenario unfolded in the 2019 election-Pheu Thai won most seats in the lower house but the military-controlled senate allowed Prayut to form a coalition. "Whatever happens following the next election, the pro-military parties will do all they can to take office and try to legitimise why Pheu Thai should not form a coalition," Chambers says. —AFP

Bangladesh charges 29 Rohingya over activist's murder

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh: Bangladesh police on Monday charged at least 29 Rohingya over the murder of top community leader Mohib Ullah last September, a prosecutor said. Ullah, the head of a Rohingya rights group, was gunned down in one of several squalid camps in Bangladesh that together house almost a million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, sending shockwaves through the community.

His family blamed the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), an insurgent group in Myanmar's western state of Rakhine that has been accused of running narcotics, murdering political opponents and instilling a climate of fear in the camps.

Prosecutor Faridul Alam told AFP on Monday that police have completed their probe and filed a charge sheet against 29 Rohingya for the murder of the 48-year-old. "Out of the 29, police have arrested 15 people and the rest are absconding. At least four of those arrested have made confessional statements

HK school quarantine request hints at Xi handover visit

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong primary school is looking for pupils to spend a week in hotel quarantine ahead of next month's handover anniversary, fuelling speculation a strict "closed-loop" system will allow Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit.

The first day of July marks 25 years since Hong Kong was handed to China by colonial Britain, as well as the first day in office for the city's new Beijing-anointed leader John Lee. China's top leaders have attended the swearing-in of every Hong Kong chief executive since the 1997 handover, but Xi has not left the mainland since the coronavirus pandemic began.

With little over a fortnight to go, officials have yet to say whether Xi or any other state leader will attend the celebrations. But local media has been filled with reports suggesting extraordinary measures will be in place to protect dignitaries from the

Gunmen abduct 30 wedding guests in northwest Nigeria

KANO: Gunmen kidnapped 30 wedding guests in northwest Nigeria over the weekend, two sources told AFP Monday, the latest in a surge of mass abductions hitting the region. The victims, all mobile phone traders, were returning to Zamfara state capital Gusau late Saturday after the wedding of a colleague in neighbouring Sokoto state when they were

Samhati Samiti (JSS), signed a peace deal and laid down its arms.

But a splinter group of younger rebels in the mainly Buddhist region that is home to several ethnic tribal groups, the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), rejected the agreement. The deal failed to address key issues such as autonomy for the region and the presence of thousands of government troops and Bengali settlers, it said. Since then a turf war between the JSS and UPDF has left hundreds of people dead including senior UPDF figures and a small number of Bangladeshi soldiers.

According to local newspapers, nearly 60 people have been killed in clashes in the region bordering Myanmar and northeast India since late last year. Following several years of back-channel talks, last week the UPDF submitted a formal proposal for peace talks with a former army major, Emdadul Islam, a key architect of the 1997 agreement.

Islam called the move a "significant development." "We will now take the UPDF proposals to the government. We hope we can sign another landmark deal which will secure peace and development in the CHI," Islam told AFP. Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said the government was yet to receive the formal proposal. "We always want peace. We are doing everything we can to keep peace. We welcome if they come to peace talks," Khan told AFP. —AFP



HONG KONG, China: People walk past a billboard with a slogan celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover from Britain to China, in the Tsim Sha Tsui district of Hong Kong on June 12, 2022. —AFP

signed up so far.

China remains committed to a strict zero-Covid strategy that quashes outbreaks with social distancing, lockdowns and border controls. Hong Kong has its own version of zero-Covid, which has kept the international business hub isolated for much of the pandemic. —AFP

they were driving in broke down, which was when their captors attacked them, said a security source in the region.

"Twenty managed to escape while 30 were kidnapped," said the security officer, who asked not to be identified as he was not authorised to speak on the incident. Police in Sokoto and Zamfara did not immediately respond to AFP inquiries on the incident.

Northwest and central Nigeria is a hub of criminal gangs who attack villages and highways, killing and abducting residents and drivers and looting and burning homes. Last week, 58 residents were kidnapped when gunmen invaded Kwari village in nearby Katsina state, according to local officials. —AFP

News in brief

UN rights chief not seeking second term

GENEVA: UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet announced Monday that she will not seek a second term, ending months of speculation about her intentions amid growing criticism of her lax stance on rights abuses in China. "As my term as High Commissioner draws to a close, this Council's milestone fiftieth session will be the last which I brief," Bachelet told the UN Human Rights Council as it opened a four-week sitting. The 70-year-old former Chilean president, who will wrap up her four-year mandate at the end of August, had until now remained mum about whether she would seek to stay on for a second term. The post of High Commissioner for Human Rights typically faces heavy political pressure from countries around the world, and while it can be held for a maximum of two terms, nearly all of Bachelet's predecessors have avoided staying on for more than one term. —AFP

Turkey floods kill four

ANKARA: Strong rain, winds and flash floods are expected in northern and central Turkey on Monday, after a weekend of flooding that reportedly killed at least four people. Bad weather warnings were in place in 42 towns and cities in the north and centre, including the capital, Ankara. Schools were closed in Ankara and the central town of Gemerek. Last year, around 100 people died in violent weather events in Turkey, including flash floods, wildfires and droughts. The disasters pushed climate change up the political agenda, especially among younger voters. Torrential rains and hailstorms swept through the north and centre at the weekend, causing floods that killed three people near Ankara and another in the central province of Karaman, local media reported. —AFP

Judge quits to support strike

TUNIS: A judge serving on Tunisia's electoral board resigned on Monday in solidarity with a court strike after President Kais Saied sacked dozens of his colleagues. Habib Rebi, appointed by Saied to the ISIE electoral board on May 9, announced his resignation on Facebook. "I have handed in my resignation from ISIE in support of my fellow judges and to demand a basic judicial law that meets international standards," he wrote. Saied, who dissolved parliament following a power grab last July, had issued a decree extending his control over the judiciary in early June, as well as sacking 57 judges he accused of corruption. That prompted a nationwide judges' strike against his "continued interference in the judiciary", which entered its second week on Monday. Rebi's departure comes six weeks ahead of a referendum on a revised constitution, the centrepiece of Saied's programme for overhauling Tunisia's political system—the only democracy to emerge from the 2011 Arab uprisings. —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 2022

Zain Group enhancing Kuwait's position on the global ICT map

Zain successfully completes trial for 4G/5G Open and cRAN in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Zain, a leading mobile voice and data services operator in seven Middle Eastern and African markets, announces it has successfully completed the first live trial in the region of Open and Virtual Radio Access Network (Open cRAN) in Kuwait. This innovative achievement enhances Zain Kuwait's position on the global ICT map, and was implemented in collaboration with both Mavenir, a leading network software provider building the future of networks with cloud-native software that runs on any cloud and transforms the way the world connects, and with Masiya, a leading system integrator in the Middle East.

on Mavenir's Webscale Platform (MWP) acting as a CaaS/PaaS layer running on commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) hardware from Intel and Dell.

Nawaf Al Gharabally, Zain Group & Zain Kuwait Chief Technology Officer said, "As a pioneer of mobile telecommunications playing a leading role in the digital transformation vision of the region, Zain is consistently seeking technologies that contribute to building a strong sustainable future for Kuwait and the markets we proudly serve."

This Open cRAN trial empowers Zain with better understanding and practice experience on new technical

- Empowers Zain to offer future mobile technologies.
- In collaboration with Mavenir and Masiya, Open interface and Software based RAN technology will encourage Zain to capitalize on cloud infrastructure offerings and bring Artificial Intelligence (AI) based networks to the forefront

This successful live trial in Kuwait follows Zain Group's key contribution to the OpenRAN support MOU in 2021 with other leading regional mobile operators driving innovation across the Middle East. Mavenir, in partnership with Masiya, Intel and Dell successfully deployed Mavenir Radios Units (RU), fully containerised Distributed Units (DUs) and Central Units (CUs) software

trends for further development, that will enable us to continue offering distinct mobile services to our valued customers." "We are delighted to work with Zain Group on delivering Cloud Native Open cRAN in Kuwait City," said Dr Virtyt Koshi, SVP, GM EMEA, Mavenir.

"We have deployed open interface Radio Units, fully containerized 4G and 5G RAN software functions on



Nawaf Al Gharabally - Zain Group & Zain Kuwait Chief Technology Officer

Kubernetes based PaaS/CaaS and COTS hardware, connected through the existing Core network. Digital cloud-based solutions with open interfaces bring an opportunity for a more efficient and faster deployment, new consumer and enterprise offerings, while minimizing capex investment and opex in Radio networks going forward." Ibrahim AlZamel, Chief Operating Officer of Masiya said, "As a long-time selected partner of Zain for over 21 years, we are pleased to be part of this regional breakthrough."

Masiya launched the first MMSC back in 2001 in the Middle East and we are pleased to be a cornerstone in trialing the first Open cRAN in the region with Zain." The benefit of Open cRAN for Zain Group in Kuwait will be widespread, as they will receive the latest products and services at a faster time to market while using the latest mobile access networks. Moreover, this technology will enhance Zain's cloud offerings and bring Artificial Intelligence (AI) to the forefront.



KARACHI: A stockbroker monitors the latest share prices during a trading session at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) in Karachi on June 13, 2022. — AFP

Boursa Kuwait, ICMA provides training for asset managers

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait Group organized a training program in collaboration with the International Capital Market Association (ICMA), targeting asset management companies in an effort to further its commitment to contributing to the development and education of brokers and asset management firms through sharing the latest updates of financial instruments and products implemented across the world.

Boursa Kuwait has been a member of ICMA since 2017. The not-for-profit association has been working together with its members over the course of 50 years to promote the development of the international capital and securities markets, pioneering the rules, principles and recommendations which have laid the foundations for their successful operation. Currently, ICMA has around 600 members active in all segments of international debt capital markets in 64 jurisdictions globally.

Among their members are private and public sector issuers, banks and securities dealers, asset and fund managers, insurance companies, law firms, capital market infrastructure providers and central banks. The initiative forms part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities where it

operates as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy and ongoing efforts under its 'Education' pillar to equip all market participants with an in-depth understanding of the functioning of capital markets and various tools and techniques required to make informed investment decisions and effectively meet investors' needs.

It is also in line with Goal 4 - Quality Education - and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals - of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the National Development Plan for the State of Kuwait, "New Kuwait 2035". ICMA's mission is to support resilient well-functioning international and globally coherent cross-border debt securities markets. Through its training and education programs, designed and delivered by industry professionals, ICMA promotes high professional standards in the industry.

This course, delivered over the course of two weeks days from May 29 to June 9, covered several concepts associated with portfolio management, such as fixed income, equities, inflation, and portfolio construction and was taught by Neil Schofield, a freelance training consultant based in the United Kingdom with over twenty years of experience in financial markets.

From 2001 to 2008, Schofield was global head of financial markets training at Barclays Capital in London. He was responsible for the design and delivery of a large number of seminars in a variety of different asset classes to many different audiences. Previously, he was a director at Chisholm Roth training in London and has also held positions at Chase Manhattan Bank as well as Security Pacific Hoare

Govett (now trading as Bank of America).

Commenting on the occasion, Schofield said: "This is an intensive ten-day course that tries to explain a variety of concepts associated with portfolio management. We discussed several elements such as fixed income, equities, inflation, and portfolio construction as well as learning about the experiences of the participants. At the end of the day, this course is all about sharing knowledge. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for giving us this opportunity and look forward to building on this long-term strategic partnership in the future."

Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR), industry best practice standards and investor expectations, creating strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allow Boursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other companies or organizations that have experience in different fields, and integrating sustainability efforts with the company culture, in order to achieve longevity and an ongoing impact that is carried on and instilled in the day-to-day operations of the stock exchange.

As part of the strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched many initiatives in partnership with local and international organizations, focusing on support for non-governmental organizations and charity programs, financial literacy and capital market awareness, the empowerment of women, environmental protection as well as safety and preventive measures against COVID-19.

Major markets dive on heightened fears

LONDON: Global equities, oil prices and bitcoin plunged Monday on heightened recession fears triggered by runaway inflation. The dollar, however, gained versus major rivals, benefiting from its status as a haven investment and expectations of aggressive interest-rate hiking from the Federal Reserve. The US currency struck a 24-year peak against the yen, while it broke above 78 Indian rupees for the first time. It jumped one percent versus the pound.

"The hangover from a higher-than-expected US inflation reading is continuing to cause scissoring pain throughout the markets, as it extinguishes the hope the US Federal Reserve might be able to take its foot off the pedal on interest rate rises," noted AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. US and European stocks had already tumbled Friday following the inflation data, with Asia following suit Monday. European stock markets extended pre-weekend losses with falls of around two percent before Wall Street reopens.

London took a hit also from data showing the UK economy contracted in April for a second month in a row. World oil prices, whose surge has contributed massively to soaring inflation, slid about 1.5 percent as the high cost of living increases recession expectations. The possibility of more COVID restrictions in China's biggest cities also weighed on crude futures as the country is a major oil consumer. Fresh coronavirus outbreaks in Shanghai and Beijing have seen authorities reimpose containment measures.

Bitcoin crash

Bitcoin tumbled to an 18-month low under \$25,000 as investors shunned risky assets in the face of the vicious global markets selloff. The unit took a heavy knock also from news that cryptocurrency lending platform Celsius Network paused withdrawals, citing volatile conditions.

"It is not very surprising to see such a strong downturn as we have noticed an increased correlation over the last few years between traditional stocks, which have also tanked recently, and the cryptocurrency market," noted XTB chief market analyst Walid Koudmani. Investors were left surprised Friday when data showed US inflation jumped to 8.6 percent in May, the fastest pace in more than 40 years, as the Ukraine war further fuelled energy and food prices. The reading has led to fervent speculation that the Fed will now be contemplating a single interest-rate lift of 75 basis points. With the central bank forced to be more aggressive, there is a concern that the US economy could be sent into recession next year. —AFP

Bitcoin tumbles to 18-month low under \$25,000

LONDON: Bitcoin tumbled Monday to an 18-month low under \$25,000 as investors shunned risky assets in the face of a vicious global markets selloff, months after the cryptocurrency hit a record high. The unit took a heavy knock also from news that cryptocurrency lending platform Celsius Network paused withdrawals, citing volatile conditions. World stock markets have plunged since Friday when data showed US inflation at a fresh four-decade high, increasing recession fears and sending investors running for safer assets like the dollar.

"It is not very surprising to see such a strong

downturn as we have noticed an increased correlation over the last few years between traditional stocks, which have also tanked recently, and the cryptocurrency market," noted XTB chief market analyst Walid Koudmani. The world's most popular cryptocurrency dived about 10 percent to hit \$23,794 in morning London deals, striking a level last seen in December 2020. The virtual unit has collapsed by 65 percent in value since striking a record peak \$68,991.85 in November.

Investors on Monday sought safety with the US central bank seen likely to aggressively ramp up borrowing costs further to combat runaway inflation. Bitcoin's decline accelerated after the news from Celsius Network. "Today we are announcing that Celsius is pausing all withdrawals, swap, and transfers between accounts," the platform said in a statement. Celsius made the move "due to extreme market conditions", it added. The total value of customer deposits

had already shrunk by more than half to under \$12 billion in May compared with the end of last year.

\$1 trillion market

Koudmani said further falls for bitcoin "may trigger a cascading effect of liquidations of hedging positions" taken against the cryptocurrency. The global crypto market, comprising other virtual currencies which are tanking such as Ethereum, is worth about \$1 trillion, according to crypto data aggregator CoinGecko.

That is down from a level of more than \$3 trillion at its peak seven months ago, when the market rode a wave of massive investor demand amid growing acceptance from large financial institutions. In a sign of the growing importance of cryptocurrencies, two countries, El Salvador and the Central African Republic, have taken the gamble of adopting bitcoin as legal tender despite strong criticism from international financial institutions. —AFP



Business

WTO seeks shot in the arm with COVID-19 jab IP idea

Ministers seek a compromise to lift intellectual property rights



GENEVA: Nigerian Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, (left), and MC12 Chair, Timur Suleimenov, stand at the opening ceremony of the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) at the headquarters of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on June 12, 2022. — AFP

GENEVA: The WTO's search for a role in fighting the pandemic sharpened up on Monday as ministers seek a compromise to lift intellectual property (IP) rights on COVID-19 vaccines. The World Trade Organization's first ministerial meeting since December 2017 is wrestling with the wording of a text that would temporarily waive patents on coronavirus jabs. It is the main pandemic-combating idea being negotiated at MC12, the global trade body's 12th ministerial conference, being held from Sunday to Wednesday at its headquarters in Geneva.

But serious objections remain from some of the countries that host major pharmaceutical companies, like Britain and Switzerland – a problem at the WTO, where decisions are taken by consensus rather than by majority. The world's big pharma firms are dead set against the idea, insisting that stripping patents will cripple investment and innovation.

They also say the plan – first proposed in October 2020 when the pandemic was raging and before jabs were even rolled out – has gone past its sell-by date as the world now has a surplus of vaccine doses rather than a dearth. After Sunday's opening ceremony and countries settling out their positions, ministers from the 164 WTO members went into rooms at the organization's HQ – the grand 1920s, classical Florentine-style Centre William Rappard on Lake Geneva – to start talking it out face to face.

Birthdays present?

This week's conference is a crunch moment for WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who has staked her leadership on breathing new life into the crippled organization, where progress has been stumbling for years. The Nigerian former finance and foreign minister took over in March 2021 on a mission to make the WTO relevant again.

But on her 68th birthday Monday, there was no immediate sign of a breakthrough on vaccine patents. Public interest groups say the draft text falls far short of what is needed, by time-limiting and complicating the vaccine patents waiver – and by leaving out COVID treatments and diagnostics. Non-governmental organizations staged a protest in the WTO's central atrium, chanting slogans and unfurling banners reading: "No monopolies on Covid-19 medical tools" and "End vaccine apartheid".

"The WTO rules are contributing to exacerbating the pandemic, because it's the WTO that enforces IP rules," demonstration organizer Deborah James told AFP. "Folks have been campaigning on this for two years and it's been a complete wall by a few countries," she said. "It's an indictment of the WTO system: it's completely broken, it can't respond to a pandemic, it has no ability to put anything other than maximizing profits for corporations ahead of anything else."

'We are choosing death'

In October 2020, India and South Africa began pushing for the WTO to lift IP rights on COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments to help ensure more equitable access in poorer nations. After multiple rounds of talks, the United States, the European Union, India and South Africa hammered out a compromise.

The text would allow most developing countries, although not China, to produce COVID vaccines without authorisation from patent holders. Beijing has promised not to use the facilities granted to developing countries in the draft agreement, but, according to several diplomats, Washington wants this commitment in writing. "In a pandemic, sharing technology is life or death and we are choosing death," said the UNAIDS agency's executive director Winnie Byanyima.

Besides production, a second text being negotiated seeks to tackle some of the supply constraints faced by certain countries in getting hold of COVID-fighting tools. And beyond the pandemic, the WTO faces pressure to eke out long-sought trade deals on a range of issues and show unity amid an impending global hunger crisis. Okonjo-Iweala voiced cautious optimism on Sunday that ministers could reach agreement on food security threatened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, overfishing and on COVID vaccines. She said to expect a "rocky, bumpy road with a few landmines along the way". — AFP

Yen slides to 24-year low against dollar

TOKYO: The yen plunged to its lowest level against the dollar since 1998 on Monday as sky-high US inflation fuels a widening monetary policy gap between Japan and the world's largest economy. Japan's currency has been weakening for months, accelerated by the US Federal Reserve's aggressive monetary tightening to tackle soaring inflation caused by the war in Ukraine and other factors. But unlike the Fed, the Bank of Japan has said it will stick with its long-standing monetary easing program which it hopes will lead to stable growth.



TOKYO: This photo illustration shows a person counting out Japanese 10,000 yen banknotes (\$75) in Tokyo. — AFP

The increasingly polar policies have strengthened the greenback, and on Monday one dollar bought 135.19 yen. It's a level not seen since October 1998 during the Asian currency crisis, and marks a dramatic drop from January rates of around 115 yen per dollar. "The ongoing back-drop to the yen's fall is the growing gap between long-term interest rates in Japan and the United States," Takahide Kinouchi, executive economist at Nomura Research Institute, said in a recent commentary.

And as higher oil prices fuel US inflation, "expectations are growing stronger that aggressive US monetary tightening will continue for the time being, causing US yields to rise further." US consumer prices for May hit a

new four-decade high, rising 8.6 percent and topping what economists thought was the peak in March. In Japan however, inflation has only just hit the central bank's long-term target of two percent.

And while the figure represents a seven-year high, the BoJ sees current inflationary pressures as temporary, and believes its monetary policy is necessary to produce more long-lasting growth. Questioned in parliament on Monday, central bank Governor Haruhiko Kuroda acknowledged that the yen's rapid depreciation was "not desirable". "The recent rapid depreciation of the yen increases uncertainties and means companies face difficulties in drafting business plans, thus it is negative for the economy and not desirable," he said.

Benefits for tourism, exporters – But he has shown no inclination to adjust the bank's policy soon, saying last week that "monetary tightening is not at all a suitable measure" for Japan, whose economy is still recovering from the pandemic, according to Kyodo News.

He has pointed to the benefits of a weaker yen for Japanese exporters, whose overseas profits are inflated when they are repatriated and have seen their stock prices rise in recent months. On Monday, he urged companies that benefit from the exchange rate to "expand investment and raise wages, which will strengthen a virtuous cycle." The weaker yen could also be a boon for the tourism sector, with Japan cautiously reopening to foreign visitors now allowed in on group tours.

"The weak yen helps to support Japan's export sector directly, and a weaker exchange rate also contributes to looser monetary conditions domestically," said Alvin Tan, head of Asia forex strategy at RBC Capital Markets in Singapore. "These will help drive the economic recovery further," he told AFP. Although "higher import prices will negatively affect consumers" and the weaker yen will contribute to inflation, particularly given Japan's reliance on energy imports, this could also be "seen as a positive", he said.

"It could help to deepen more persistent inflation expectations in a country that has suffered under deflation for so many years." The yen's trajectory may depend on how the US Fed acts in its September meeting, with worse-than-expected inflation figures for May raising expectations of further rate hikes. But "there is still a lot of time left until then", said Kinouchi, and other factors may also be at play including energy prices rising further after a European Union ban on most Russian oil imports. — AFP



MOSCOW: Customers stand in a queue to get in the Russian version of a former McDonald's restaurant next day after its opening ceremony in Moscow on June 13, 2022. Former McDonald's restaurants in Russia have been renamed 'Vkusno i tochka' (Delicious. Full Stop), the new owner said ahead of their grand re-opening. — AFP

Russia earns \$98 bn from fuel exports in 100 days of war

PARIS: Russia earned 93 billion euros (\$98 billion) from fossil fuel exports during the first 100 days of its war in Ukraine, with most sent to the European Union, according to research published Monday. The report from the independent, Finland-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) comes as Kyiv urges the West to sever all trade with Russia in the hopes of cutting off the Kremlin's financial lifeline.

Earlier this month, the EU agreed to halt most Russian oil imports, on which the continent is heavily dependent. Though the bloc aims to reduce gas shipments by two-thirds this year, an embargo is not in the cards at present. According to the report, the EU took 61 percent of Russia's fossil fuel exports during the war's first 100 days, worth about 57 billion euros (\$60 billion). The top importers

were China at 12.6 billion euros, Germany (12.1 billion) and Italy (7.8 billion).

Russia's fossil fuel revenues come first from the sale of crude oil (46 billion), followed by pipeline gas, oil products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and coal. Even as Russia's exports plummeted in May, with countries and companies shunning its supplies over the Ukraine invasion, the global rise in fossil fuel prices continued to fill the Kremlin's coffers, with export revenues reaching record highs. Russia's average export prices were about 60 percent higher than last year, according to CREA.

Some countries have upped their purchases from Moscow, including China, India, the United Arab Emirates and France, the report added. "As the EU is considering stricter sanctions against Russia, France has increased its imports to become the largest buyer of LNG in the world," said CREA analyst Lauri Myllyvirta. Since most of these are spot purchases rather than long-term contracts, France is consciously deciding to use Russian energy in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Myllyvirta added. He called for an embargo on Russian fossil fuels to "align actions with words". — AFP



ABIDJAN: Attendees listen to speakers of the opening panel of the Africa CEO Forum in Abidjan on June 13, 2022. — AFP

I Coast sounds alarm over world inflation, grain crisis

ABIDJAN: Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara on Monday said the world trading system was being battered by an inflationary wave and the cascading impacts on the global economy from the Ukraine war. "We are concerned, that's the very least that I can say, by the slowdown in world growth and the availability for Africa of certain products such as wheat (and) fertilizer, and of course by the inflationary surge," Ouattara said at the opening of CEO Forum, a conference scheduled to gather 1,500 business and political leaders.

Ouattara gave the example of how India in mid-May slapped a ban on exports of its wheat. "An inflationary situation like this pushes governments and businesses into reassessing their dependence on international networks. It really calls into question globalization and the notion of world trade. This situation has been accentuated by the crisis in Ukraine," he said.

Experts have repeatedly warned that food insecurity in Africa inflicted by conflict, climate change and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been accentuated by the Ukraine war. Russia and Ukraine together account for 30 percent of the world trade in wheat. The war has also caused the price of oil and gas, fertilizer and metals to soar. Makhtar Diop, director-general of the International Finance Corporation, which is part of the World Bank group, told the two-day conference that Africa should seize the "convergence of crises" to carry out structural changes and set economies on a new footing. — AFP

Google pays \$118 m to settle gender suit

NEW YORK: Google said on Sunday that it was "very pleased" to be settling, without admission of wrongdoing, a class-action lawsuit that argued it underpaid female employees and assigned them lower-ranking positions. The \$118 million settlement covers about 15,500 female employees who have worked for the company in California since September 2013, the law firms Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP and Altshuler Berzon LLP said in a statement released Friday night. The company also agreed for a third party to analyze its hiring and compensation practices as part of the settlement.

In a statement to AFP, Google said that "while we strongly believe in the equity of our policies and practices, after nearly five years of litigation, both sides agreed that resolution of the matter, without any admission or findings, was in the best interest of everyone, and we're very pleased to reach this agreement." In 2017, several former Google employees sued the company in a San Francisco court, accusing it of paying women less than men for equivalent positions and assigning women lower positions than men with similar experiences because they had previously earned smaller salaries.

According to a copy of the agreement released by the law firms, "Google denies all of the allegations in the lawsuit and maintains that it has fully complied with all applicable laws, rules and regulations at all times." A judge must still approve the agreement, the two law firms for the plaintiffs said. Google previously agreed in 2021 to pay \$3.8 million to the US Department of Labor over accusations it had discriminated against women and Asians. — AFP



CHICAGO: Veterans get career coaching from Google employees at the company's office in Chicago, Illinois. The vets and company volunteers were participating in Google's 'Help a Hero Get Hired' program taking place at Google's Chicago office. — AFP

Business

UK economy shrinks for second month in a row

Economic output weighed down by decades-high inflation

LONDON: British economic output declined for a second month in a row in April, weighed down by decades-high inflation, official data showed Monday. Gross domestic product fell 0.3 percent in April after a drop of 0.1 percent in March, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

Output in the services, production and construction sectors fell—"the first time that all main sectors have contributed negatively to a monthly GDP estimate since January 2021", the ONS said, as the data

added to fears of recession. The ONS noted that "businesses continued to report the impact of price increases and supply chain shortages".

The data comes as the Bank of England is set to raise its main interest rate at a fifth straight meeting Thursday in a bid to cool the pace of price rises. "Despite weakening economic growth, the Bank of England this week is expected to raise rates further as it seeks to get inflation under control," said Paul Craig, portfolio manager at Quilter Investors.

"While a recession is still a while away, it is looming on the horizon and its effects will begin to be felt in the UK well before we are officially in one."

Inflation is being fuelled by soaring food and energy prices as economies reopen from pandemic lockdowns and following the invasion of Ukraine by major oil and gas producer Russia. "Businesses from all sectors are facing unprecedented rises in raw material costs, soaring energy bills, and wage pressures," David Bharier, head of research at the

British Chambers of Commerce, said following Monday's GDP data. UK annual inflation stands at nine percent, the highest level in 40 years, causing a cost-of-living crisis for millions of Britons. In the United States meanwhile, Friday's forecast-beating inflation print has triggered expectations that the Federal Reserve will ramp up the pace of its interest-rate increases. That has sent investors running for cover, with world stock markets tumbling since Friday. —AFP

CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 290 million for 3 months with Rate of Return 1.625%.

Ukraine's desperate farmers trapped by grain blockade

MYKOLAIV: Nadiia Ivanova should have been harvesting her crop soon. But so far on her farm in southern Ukraine, she has only managed to collect bombshells. "We planted really late because we needed to clear everything beforehand," the 42-year-old told AFP, standing in the middle of a field in a zebra print dress.

Russian troops bombarded her 4,000-hectare farm near the town of Mykolaiv as they tried to advance northwards in March. They only passed through, and the front has since retreated around 20 kilometers. Though the soldiers took some tools and left the odd crater, it seemed the only victims were a pair of barnyard peacocks killed in the fighting. But lasting damage was done. As the blockage of Ukrainian grain stokes fears of a global food crisis, the obstacles are piling up for Ivanova, who employs 76 people.

In peacetime, the farm's produce—more than 12,000 tons per year—would have been destined for the domestic market and for export to Europe, Africa and China. Today, its warehouses hold 2,000 tons of last season's grain. There are no takers. The railways have been partially destroyed by the Russian army, any ship that sails faces the threat of being sunk, and the port of Mykolaiv has been targeted by missiles. Other options have not come through fast enough. As a result, the price of grain per ton has plummeted to \$100 from more than three times that before the war.

Damage on the farm

Back on the farm, the grain cleaning machine won't start. It's not easy getting help from banks and insurance companies while the fighting rages so close by. And few cleaning machine specialists want to work under the threat of bombs, which could fall at any moment. Agricultural equipment remains riddled with shrapnel. With his hands stuffed into the bowels of a gleaming 300,000-euro (\$315,000) combine, Serhii Chernyshov, 47, is worried. The machine has never been used and it's already out of action. "I'll need another week to see if I can get it working again," he said.

A family to feed

On top of this, the cost of fertilizers and pesticides are soaring. Fuel oil, when it's in stock, has tripled in price. Drought is expected to wreak havoc again this year, and the ears of wheat are stunted. But Ivanova carries on at all costs. Not bringing in the harvest runs the risk of starting a fire—a danger multiplied by the fighting. She set up the farm in 2003 with her brother and parents on a former "kolkhoz", a collective farm that used to supply the Soviet Union.

Now, she's making changes to cope with the crisis caused by Russia's invasion. "We replaced the mustard, an early crop, with sunflowers and millet, which come later," she said. Sitting on a red tractor, one of the few still running, Oleksandr Khomenko is weeding a plot ready for sowing. "Fear or no fear, we have to go (to work): I have a family to feed," the 38-year-old said, missiles whistling in the distance. Most of Ivanova's employees continue to work on the farm and receive their pay. "I don't know how long I'll last," she said. "But at least there will always be food at my place. —AFP



ASEAN Festival opens at LuLu Hypermarket

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer and the shopping destination of choice for discerning shoppers in the region, launched the Amazing ASEAN Festival on 12 June with a colorful function at the Al Dajeej outlet of the hypermarket. The week-long festival that runs at all LuLu Hypermarket outlets till 18 June, was inaugurated by the 9 ambassadors of ASEAN countries accredited to Kuwait, in the presence of top management of LuLu Kuwait and a large gathering of shoppers and members

from the ASEAN community in Kuwait.

ASEAN ambassadors were then conducted on a tour of the Al Dajeej outlet by LuLu management officials, which allowed them to interact and address the large number of shoppers and community members gathered for the inaugural event. Several functions highlighting ASEAN countries' cuisines, tourism, culture, heritage and more, were also held as part of the inaugural event. Special stalls and sampling counters from each of the ten ASEAN countries, set up inside the hypermarket, offered displays of fresh fruit and vegetables, groceries, and non-food items. Shoppers were also able to sample and buy from the wide variety and range of hot-food items and other delicacies of the 10-nation bloc.

Meanwhile, large cutouts and creative



displays of iconic structures and monuments from the ten countries provided a glimpse into some of the tourism attractions available in these states. Adding further color and beat to the inauguration ceremony were traditional and contemporary dance performances, as well as music rendered on traditional instruments by ASEAN artists.

The week-long Amazing ASEAN Festival, highlights food products and other items from the 10 ASEAN countries of Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Amazing discounts, special offers and promotional prices are available on a wide range of ASEAN products throughout the festival period.

The festival is proving to be a major

draw among shoppers, as it allows them to view, sample and buy exotic food items and other products from all 10 ASEAN countries under one roof at the LuLu Hypermarket outlets in Kuwait. The promotion to be inaugurated by the following Ambassadors to Kuwait: Philippines Ambassador Mohd Noordin Pendsina N Lomondot; Indonesian Ambassador Lena Maryana; Thailand Ambassador Rooge Thammongkol; Vietnam Ambassador Thang Toan NGO; Cambodian Ambassador Hun Han; Laos Acting Deputy Chief Phisakhane Phongpadith; Brunei Deputy Ambassador Miss Nur Farahanah; Malaysian Ambassador Dato Mohamed Ali Selamat; Myanmar Ambassador Kyaw Nyunt Lwin and Charge d'Affaires of Myanmar.

HUAWEI nova Y70 launched

KUWAIT: Huawei nova Y series is reputed for bringing some solid features that are mostly seen on flagship or mid-range smartphones to the entry-level segment. These smartphones are designed to provide users with access to a powerful smartphone experience at a friendlier price point. The newest addition to the series, the HUAWEI nova Y70—Huawei's latest entry-level phone with the longest battery life; continues in the same tradition and brings to the table a 6000mAh battery with 22.5W HUAWEI SuperCharge, a large and gorgeous 6.75 HUAWEI FullView Display, a solid 48MP AI Triple Camera setup and ample storage with 128GB Storage.

From the strong battery life to the high screen ratio, the device boasts a mix of exciting and innovative features that heed to user needs, giving them a practical, high-quality device with room for endless entertainment. We got our hands on this new smartphone and this is why we think it is a beast of an entry-level smartphone.

HUAWEI nova Y70

The HUAWEI nova Y70 is available in three colors: Pearl White, Crystal Blue, and Midnight Black and will be available for sale in Kuwait on 02/06/2022 at a price of KD 54,900 from Huawei Official Website. When customers purchase HUAWEI nova Y70, they will receive earphone for free!

Long-lasting battery

The large 6000-mAh battery of

the HUAWEI nova Y70 gives 3 days of power on a single full charge. The strong battery life also allows for eight optimized consumption areas thanks to Huawei's unique AI smart power saving technology. Moreover, the HUAWEI nova Y70 supports 22.5W HUAWEI SuperCharge, which allows for three hours of continuous video playback on just a ten-minute charge. This saves users time, allows for more use of their devices, and keeps them from worrying over their battery life while out of the house. It also affords them extensive time for entertainment when traveling, commuting, or just lounging.

FullView Display

The HUAWEI nova Y70 features a 6.75-inch HUAWEI FullView Display, a larger screen than previous models. With the new display, you can easily watch content at a larger size, whether it be streaming videos, playing games, or scrolling through images. The design of the display itself is sleek and simple, with a narrow notch, to make the most of your mobile screen. In addition, the screen ratio of the display is quite high, at 90.26%, giving users a rich, immersive visual experience.

AI Triple Camera

The AI Triple Camera on the device allows for powerful, quality photography straight from your smartphone. The AI Triple Camera is comprised of a 48MP high-resolution Main Camera, a 120° 5MP Ultra-Wide Angle Camera and a 2MP Depth Camera. The Main Camera allows for more light in photos, which enhances the quality and setting of the photos. With this camera, a ray of



light will not mess up your photo, and it is great for capturing portraits and scenery.

The Ultra-Wide Angle Camera is perfect for squeezing all of your friends into a group picture, since the wide angle allows for more content in the frame. The Depth Camera blurs the background of a picture to keep the focus on the subject with 3D imaging and accurate depth. With the Triple Camera, you have multiple options of camera features on your phone to produce more dynamic, focused, higher quality photos.

Ample 128GB of storage

The HUAWEI nova Y70 comes with 128GB of storage, which can hold up to 170 episodes of television, 13,000 songs, and over 60 movies. If users need more storage for all of their favorite content, a MicroSD card will allow for up to 512GB of

storage. Moreover, the EROFTS super file compression technology will help to download content quickly and easily. With this large amount of storage, users do not have to worry about taking too many photos or downloading loads of music albums.

Trusted, innovative

The trusted, innovative, user-friendly and secure AppGallery is available on the HUAWEI nova Y70 where users can easily navigate, explore, find and download a wide range of high-quality apps. While all of these features are great on their own, they add to a great device with a reliable battery with HUAWEI SuperCharge, large display screen, impressive camera, and ample storage space. Together, these features make the HUAWEI nova Y70 one of the sleekest entry-level smartphones you can get today.

French president seeks bigger budget in 'war economy'

VILLEPINTE: French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday called for a boost to defense budgets following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, saying France was now on a "war economy" footing. Speaking at Eurosatory, a weapons industry fair, Macron said Europe needed "a much larger defense industry" to avoid relying on suppliers elsewhere for its equipment needs.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, France "has entered into a war economy in which I

believe we will find ourselves for a long time". Macron said he had asked the defense ministry and armed forces chiefs of staff to adjust a six-year framework defense spending plan running to 2025 to the new geopolitical situation, to "match the means to the threats".

Even before Ukraine, French military spending had gradually increased since Macron came to power in 2017 to reach 41 billion euros (\$43 billion) this year, and is currently scheduled to hit 50 billion euros in 2025. "We didn't wait for strategic changes to re-invest," Macron said, but Russia's war had created "an additional need to move faster and become stronger at a lower cost".

Macron said that "anybody doubting the urgency of these efforts only needs to look to Ukraine, where soldiers are asking for quality weaponry and they are entitled to a response from us". According

to Le Monde newspaper, the government's armament agency DGA is considering a draft law that would allow the requisitioning of civilian equipment or civilian factories to make weapons. As European governments bolster defense budgets, they need a larger EU-based defense industry to meet the new military needs, Macron said.

"Let's not repeat the errors of the past going forward," he said. "Spending large sums on purchases from elsewhere is not a good idea." Europe needs a defense industry that is "much stronger and much more ambitious" than now, he said, "or we will create our own future dependencies". A European fighter plan project is, according to experts, currently running about a decade late, while a new French-German battle tank project, MGCS, is not expected to be operational for nearly another two decades. —AFP

Australian University holds graduation ceremony for ACK graduates



Photo shows the audience.



Faculty members entering the ceremony venue.



Bachelor graduates

By Faten Omar

Australian University (AU) held on Sunday a graduation ceremony for the last batch of ACK graduates for the 2020/2021 academic year from various bachelor's and diploma programs. The event saw a concert by Kuwaiti singer Mutref Al-Mutref in celebration of the launch of Australian University.

In his opening remarks, Dr Saad Al-Omari, Chairman of AU's Board of Trustees, said: "We are here celebrating a new generation of our graduands who have persevered and triumphed over a historic challenge and succeeded. We are proud to introduce our graduands to the labor market equipped with the necessary professional and technical skills."

He indicated that the graduation ceremony marks the beginning of a new journey for graduates as they embark on their next successful endeavor and contribute to building Kuwait's vision. "We are certain of their ability to handle this next challenge with the required competence and confidence," he added. Omari mentioned the Australian University has designed its programs of study to meet international standards and elevate its administrative operations to keep pace with worldwide developments and cover the educational needs that resulted from the pandemic.

Professor Isam Zabalawi, President of Australian University, pointed out that this group of graduands has faced immense challenges and difficulties resulting from the pandemic. "Through it all, graduands have demonstrated incredible determination, confidence and resilience. Today, they follow in the footsteps of our alumni who are now working all over the country in various private and public institutions, building Kuwait's vision and future," he said.

Zabalawi said AU worked hard to expand its collaboration network locally and internationally, "in particular with our strategic partner CQ University in Australia, where we exchange knowledge and share best quality assurance practices, all while preserving the university's local identity".

"AU is very proud of its graduands for acquiring the skills, knowledge and competencies that will allow being distinguished and enable you to work successfully in an environment driven by change and uncertainty. Today marks the end of a chapter but the beginning of an exciting journey filled with new experiences. I urge you to continue on your path of success, excellence, and distinction as I have every confidence that you have what it takes to succeed and achieve your goals," Zabalawi said.

Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert congratulated the graduates. "Class of 2021, the future is bright. Today is not only an important day in your academic journey, but a significant moment for your personal life and family. Let this day



Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert.



Professor Isam Zabalawi, President of the Australian University.



Dr Saad Al-Omari, Chairman of AU's Board of Trustees.

be the foundation of many more accomplishments and milestones to celebrate and a way to help Kuwait to continue to prosper," he said.

The ambassador praised AU's role and hard work in being recognized as a university. "Tonight, we also celebrate the long-held dream of the founders of Australian College of Kuwait to become a fully-fledged university. I cannot say how pleased I am that this ambition has now been realized via the Amiri Decree issued earlier this year formally establishing the Australian University. It has taken many years of hard work by Dr Al-Omari, Professor Zabalawi, the board of trustees, senior management, faculty and staff to achieve this goal," Gilbert added.

Meanwhile, representative of bachelors degree holders Salma Al-Yazidi said graduates have harvested their hard work and efforts and accomplished one of the main milestones of their lives, and for this, they should be immensely proud and eternally grateful to all those who helped along the way.

"The Australian College opened all doors of opportunity for us. It was more than just studies. It taught us patience, perseverance, independence and commitment. It is the place where I shaped my personality and built on my experience. The hope of the future is education, so let's honor what we have learned and make the positive changes the world needs," she added.



Diploma graduates



Photo shows faculty members.



Grooms stand along with the gifts outside the wedding hall during a mass marriage ceremony in Kabul. — AFP photos



Grooms sit inside a wedding hall as they wait for the start of a mass marriage ceremony in Kabul.

SEVENTY AFGHAN COUPLES MARRY IN KABUL MASS WEDDING

Dozens of Afghan women concealed in thick green shawls were married off in an austere mass wedding in Kabul on Monday, in a ceremony attended by hundreds of guests and gun-toting Taliban fighters. Marriage is a costly affair in deeply impoverished Afghanistan, traditionally involving huge dowries, expensive gifts and lavish parties. Historically, couples from families unable to foot the bill have sometimes opted to pool their resources in low-cost large-scale marriages.

Monday's ceremony hitching 70 couples was one of the largest recently witnessed in Afghanistan, currently in economic freefall since the return of the Taliban. "Today, no young man wants to bear the burden of an expensive wedding," said groom Ebadullah Niazi, who had waited eight years to be married. "I have no job. We were short of money and so we decided to marry at a mass wedding ceremony," said 22-year-old groom Esmatullah Bashardost, who hails from the minority Shiite Hazara community.

Bashardost, sporting a traditional Afghan cap, said his wedding would likely be the most "happy day" of his life. However, celebrations were dramatically dampened by frigid restrictions the Taliban have imposed on social life. Before they seized power in August weddings were riotously colorful affairs marked with singing, dancing, and some



Brides stand inside a wedding hall as they wait for the start of a mass marriage ceremony in Kabul.

degree of mingling between men and women in the deeply conservative nation. On Monday the brides and grooms were kept separate throughout the ceremony. Guests of opposite sexes were separated by around a dozen Taliban fighters patrolling with weapons, and the only entertainment was poetry recitations and speeches by charity organizers of the event.

Journalists were not allowed to speak

to the brides, who wore crisp white gowns under their concealing shawls, but were permitted to photograph and film them. A red and white wedding cake was produced for each couple, but was placed in front of the men only, who wore traditional white shalwar kameez. The event ended as grooms—each sporting a plastic name badge—collected their brides and left the venue in cars decorated with flowers and ribbons.



A single day booking at a Kabul wedding hall costs between \$10,000 and \$20,000 and organizer Sayed Ahmad Selab said some betrothed couples were "waiting for years" because of the expense. During their first regime between 1996 and 2001 the Taliban barred showy weddings. After surging back to power on the heels of a hasty US withdrawal, the Islamists have yet to reinstate their previous ban but they have forbidden musical

entertainment. Meanwhile, they have also issued creeping restrictions on women, segregating them from men and rolling back marginal gains they made over the past two decades. In May women were told to stay at home as much as possible and to conceal themselves completely, including their faces, should they need to step out in public. — AFP

Space probe reveals secrets of 'restless' Milky Way

The Gaia space probe on Monday unveiled its latest discoveries in its quest to map the Milky Way in unprecedented detail, surveying nearly two million stars and revealing mysterious "starquakes" which sweep across the fiery giants like vast tsunamis. The mission's third data set, which was released to eagerly waiting astronomers around the world at 1000 GMT, "revolutionizes our understanding of the galaxy," the European Space Agency (ESA) said.

ESA Director-General Josef Aschbacher told a press conference that it was "a fantastic day for astronomy" because the data "will open the floodgates for new science, for new findings of our universe, of our Milky Way". Some of the map's new insights came close to home, such as a catalogue of more than 156,000 asteroids in our Solar System "whose orbits the instrument has calculated with incomparable precision," Francois Mignard, a member of the Gaia team, told AFP.

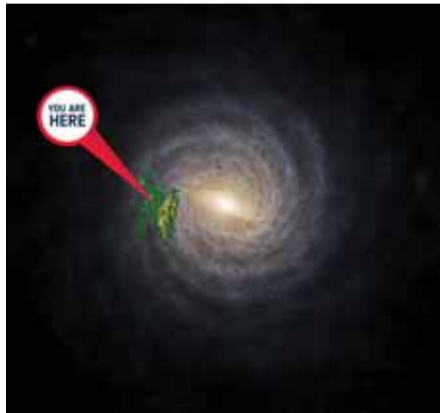
But Gaia also sees beyond the Milky Way, spotting 2.9 million other galaxies as well as 1.9 million quasars—the stunningly bright hearts of galaxies powered by super-massive black holes.

The Gaia spacecraft is nestled in a strategically positioned orbit 1.5 million kilometers (937,000 miles) from Earth, where it has been watching the skies since it was launched by the ESA in 2013. The observation of starquakes, massive vibrations that change the shape of the distant stars, was "one of the most surprising discoveries coming out of the new data", the ESA said. Gaia was not built to observe starquakes but still detected the strange phenomenon on thousands of stars, including some that should not have any—at least according to our current understanding of the universe.

'Turbulent' galaxy

"We have a fantastic new gold mine to do the asteroseismology of hundreds of

thousands of stars in our Milky Way galaxy," said Gaia team member Conny Aerts. Gaia has surveyed more than 1.8 billion stars but that only represents around one percent of the stars in the Milky Way, which is about 100,000 light years across. The probe is equipped with two telescopes as well as a billion-pixel camera, which captures images sharp enough to gauge the diameter of a single strand of human hair 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) away. It also has a range of



This handout image shows an artistic impression of the Milky Way, and on top of that an overlay showing the location and densities of a young star sample from Gaia's data release 3 (in yellow-green).

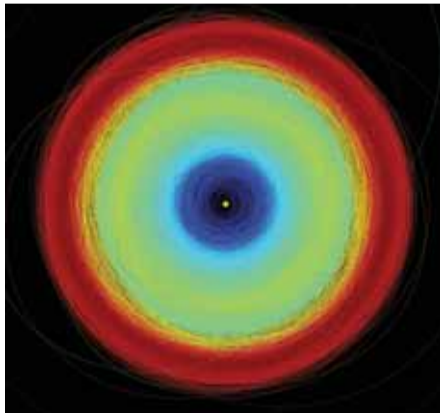
other instruments that allow it to not just map the stars, but measure their movements, chemical compositions and ages.

The incredibly precise data "allows us to look more than 10 billion years into the past history of our own Milky Way," said Anthony Brown, the chair of the Data Processing and Analysis Consortium which sifted through the massive amount of data. The results from Gaia are already "far beyond what we expected" at this point, Mignard said. They show that our galaxy is not moving smoothly through the universe as had been thought but is instead "turbulent" and "restless", he said. "It has had a lot of accidents in its life and still has them" as it interacts with other galaxies, he added. "Perhaps it will never be in a stationary state." "Our galaxy is indeed a living entity, where objects are born, where they die," Aerts said.

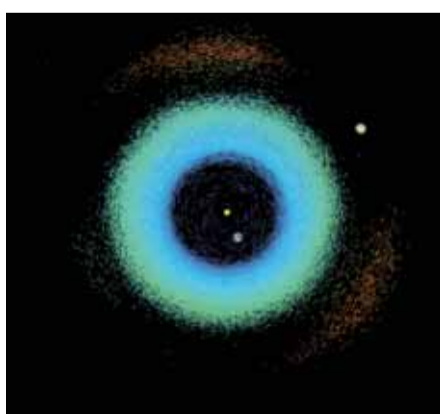
'Tens of thousands of exoplanets'

"The surrounding galaxies are continuously interacting with our galaxy and sometimes also falling inside it". Around 50 scientific papers were published alongside the new data, with many more expected in the coming years.

Gaia's observations have fueled thousands of studies since its first dataset was released in 2016. The second dataset in 2018 allowed astronomers to show that the Milky Way merged with another galaxy in a violent collision around 10 billion years ago. It took the team five years to deliver the latest data, which was observed from 2014 to 2017. The final dataset will be released in 2030, after Gaia finishes its mission surveying the skies in 2025.



This handout image shows the orbits of the more than 150,000 asteroids in the data, from the inner parts of the Solar System to the Trojan asteroids at the distance of Jupiter, with different color codes.



This handout image shows the plotted position of each asteroid at 12:00 CEST.

— AFP photos

Monday's release confirmed only two new exoplanets—and 200 other potential candidates—but far more are expected in the future. "In principle Gaia, especially when it goes on for the full 10 years, should be capable of detecting tens of thousands of exoplanets down to Jupiter's mass," Brown said. — AFP

French trial over murder of Australian music executive opens

The trial over the 2008 murder of an Australian music executive friendly with Elton John and Madonna opened in Paris on Monday, in a bizarre case that has riveted the entertainment world. Alexandre Despallieres was suspected of poisoning his ex-partner, the former Warner Music boss Peter Ikin, to inherit his fortune using a forged will, but died aged 53 this year in Paris before the case reached trial. Two suspected accomplices of the French man—known as "handsome Alex"—are being prosecuted 14 years later for their role in forging the will that sent millions of euros to Despallieres' account.

Ikin, who reportedly was once Madonna's producer and friends with Elton John—who called him "a fabulous person"—according to the Daily Mail, was found dead in a Paris hotel in November 2008 aged 62.

The autopsy determined that he died of natural causes, but the multimillionaire's nephew Gary Perritt suspected foul play. Perritt pressed charges for murder in December 2009, prompting new analyses that found a mortal dose of paracetamol in Ikin's blood that investigators believe was administered by Despallieres. Ikin and Despallieres had first met in 1988 and had a brief affair before going separate ways, but crossed paths again in Sydney seven months before Ikin's death. Despallieres is believed to have told Ikin that he had become extremely wealthy and that he wanted to bestow his fortune on him as he was dying of a brain tumour, two assertions that were in fact lies.

The pair signed a civil partnership in Britain in October 2008, making Despallieres the sole heir of Ikin's wealth estimated at 20 million euros (\$21 million). To seal the union, the couple exchanged cheques of £50,000 (\$61,000) and each promised the other not to cash them. Despallieres promptly broke his word, and when Ikin tried to cash the cheque in his possession, the bank refused due to a lack of funds in the French man's account.

'Sinister and malicious'

When Australian courts refused to

recognize him as Ikin's heir based on the British civil union, Despallieres produced a fake will—allegedly with the help of the two men, aged 40 and 37, on trial in Paris. One of the men told investigators that Despallieres tried to make the document seem authentic by putting it on a radiator and leaving it out in the sun. The men said that they were manipulated by Despallieres. One of them, a former partner of his known as Vincent, said he did not know what the document was and does not understand English.



English singer-songwriter, composer, pianist, and record producer Elton John performs during his last tour "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" at Paris La Defense Arena, in nanterre, on the outskirts of Paris. — AFP

"(Despallieres) was sinister and malicious," the other suspect Jeremy, who was also briefly Despallieres' lover, told the court Monday. In December 2009, the High Court of Justice in London said the only valid will was one drawn up by Ikin in 2002. The court ordered Despallieres to return the money and assets, which included a flat in the plush Chelsea district of London and several Porsche cars. Despallieres was charged with murder in 2010, but left jail in 2012 for medical reasons, as he was HIV positive. He was under judicial supervision, but a judge decided in May 2020 that he should stand trial. The proceedings are set to last two days. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Def Leppard: We'll still be rocking in 2035

Def Leppard have been rocking out for 45 years and have more than 100 million album sales under their belts, but they are adamant that no farewell tours are on the horizon. The band from Sheffield, England were one of the biggest players in the big-hair, big-ribs heyday of 1980s stadium rock. Their back-to-back albums "Pyromania" and "Hysteria" both sold more than 10 million copies in the United States alone—of only five rock bands in history to do so.

Now in their sixties, they have certainly earned their stripes in rock lore: surviving the loss of their guitarist Steve Clark to an overdose in the early 1990s, and drummer Rick Allen carrying on despite losing an arm in a car accident in 1984. "We always joked that farewell tours are a way of saying that your ticket sales suck. We're very fortunate that we haven't had to do that," singer Joe Elliott told AFP.

"The Scorpions have been on a farewell tour for, like, 14 years. Cher's been on one for about 20... Sinatra did five of them," he said with a laugh. "But we've never taken any time off—if we were off the road, we were making an album." The jovial singer, still rocking the long hair and sporting a pair of blue-tinted sunglasses, knows it can't last forever.

But he sees no reason the band's journey can't "stretch until 2035 when we're the same age as The Rolling Stones are

now." Def Leppard are back on the road this summer with fellow rock veterans Motley Crue, Poison and Joan Jett. They have also just released 12th studio album "Diamond Star Halos"—their first in seven years—which they pieced together during the pandemic despite the five members being spread across England, Ireland and the US.

we didn't block it this time." Elliott says the pandemic—which forced them to put their songs together remotely—was a gift.

"When you put four or five alpha males in one room with new songs it becomes a little competitive. This was psychologically completely different. "The pandemic opened our minds. We thought: 'We've got this time, let's do something creative



Roots

The new songs see the band try to step away from the "albatross" of Hysteria, said Elliott, experimenting with piano, flamenco guitar and glam rock. "We're back to the roots of what got us into music, not back to ourselves," Elliott said.

"On this record we were coming up with ideas that sounded like Bowie or Elton John, or Queen and Zeppelin. All the things that we listened to growing up are leaking in, which it always has, but

and put no blocks on anything."

The band had no record deal when they began the project (it was ultimately released by Universal) and found that open-ended process liberating. "For a band that made Hysteria 35 years ago, this is a fantastic statement. Any fans that bought that album—the ones that aren't dead! — are ready for the next stage of the journey. "We want to be able to expand our horizons. Nothing is off the table, everything is invited into the party." — AFP

Ramsay Hunt, the disorder paralyzing Justin Bieber's face

Ramsay Hunt syndrome (RHS), which has forced singer Justin Bieber to cancel his world tour, is a rare and painful complication of the virus that causes shingles and chickenpox.



In this file photo Canadian singer Justin Bieber arrives for the 2021 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. — AFP

What it is

RHS was discovered in 1907 by the neurologist of the same name. It is a rare neurological disorder that can inflame and then paralyze the facial nerve and cause a painful rash around the ear or mouth.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary from person to person but can cause severe discomfort or pain. Most sufferers become paralyzed on one side of the face and develop an ear rash, according to the US National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD). The affected facial muscles may become weak or feel stiff, preventing the sufferer from smiling, frowning or shutting the eye on their paralyzed side.

In certain cases, their speech may become slurred. In many instances, a reddish, painful blistering rash appears on the outer ear and external ear canal. "It's often diagnosed because of this ear rash," French infectious disease specialist, Benjamin Davido, told AFP. Sometimes the blisters spread to the mouth, soft palate and upper throat and ear pain spreads to the neck. Other possible symptoms include ringing in the ears (tinnitus), earache, hearing loss or hyperacusis—where sounds appear much louder than normal—nausea and vertigo.

Causes

RHS is caused by the varicella zoster virus, which also causes chickenpox in children and shingles in adults. The virus can remain dormant for decades in a person who has had chickenpox as a child. When it is reactivated, the carrier develops shingles and in some cases RHS. It is unclear why the virus reactivates and affects the facial nerve.

Frequency

RHS affects men and women in equal measure. Around five people in every 100,000 develop the syndrome in the United States every year, according to one estimate cited by NORD. However, some researchers believe cases go undiagnosed or are misdiagnosed, making it difficult to determine the disorder's true frequency in the general population. — AFP



In this file photo a helicopter flies past as the full moon rises behind the Statue of Liberty in New York City.



In this file photo a helicopter flies over Brooklyn, in New York City.

'My apartment vibrates': New Yorkers fight noisy helicopter rides

After a period of blissful silence overhead due to the Covid-19 pandemic, New Yorkers are dealing again with a familiar problem: noisy helicopters. "With the bigger helicopters, my apartment vibrates," said Melissa Elstein, who campaigns to ban non-essential chopper flights. "They pollute our air, creating noise pollution which has negative health impacts," the 56-year-old told AFP. New York regularly hums with the whirr of helicopters circling the skies as tourists eye the city from above during short, pricey, sightseeing tours.

They also transport wealthy residents keen to avoid traffic jams on their way to holiday homes by the beach in the plush Hamptons. Elstein is far from the only New Yorker unhappy at the near-constant din caused by the tens of thousands of flights every year. Last year, the city received 25,821 calls to its hotline complaining about helicopter noise, an increase from 10,359 in 2020. The vast majority of complaints — 21,620 — came from Manhattan. Some respite may be in the offing.

Earlier this month, the New York state legislature approved a bill that could see companies fined \$10,000 a day for generating "unreasonable" noise levels. If Governor Kathy Hochul signs it into law, it would be the first piece of state legislation to tackle noise pollution from the helicopters. Senator Brad Hoylman, who sponsored the bill, said that "many New Yorkers can no longer work from home comfortably, enjoy a walk along the waterfront, or keep a napping child asleep because of the incessant noise and vibrations from non-essential helicopter use."

He noted that one helicopter produces 43 times more carbon dioxide per hour than an average car. "Helicopter noise is not just annoying, it's detrimental to our health and our environment," Hoylman said in a statement. For Andy Rosenthal, president of Stop the Chop, an organization of volunteers seeking to ban non-essential helicopter flights—the legislation does not go far enough. "It's a good first step. (But) it is not what we had hoped for. The fight continues," he said.



In this file photo a helicopter flies past the Statue of Liberty as the sun sets in New York City.

'Background noise'

New York City has three active heliports: two in Midtown on the Hudson and East rivers, used for corporate and chartered flights, and another near Wall

Street in lower Manhattan, from which tourist flights depart. A 15-20-minute aerial view of New York costs a minimum of about \$200 per tourist. Amid complaints, the administration of then-mayor Bill de

Blasio agreed with the industry to reduce the number of tourist flights per year from 60,000 to 30,000, starting in 2017.

They also restricted tourist rides departing New York City to airspace over the rivers surrounding Manhattan, banning them from soaring above land. Sightseeing helicopters taking off from New Jersey are allowed to fly above Manhattan though, including Central Park. Commuter flights leaving New York City are also permitted to fly directly over buildings.

"This is an industry that doesn't have to exist, shouldn't exist. (Just) for the convenience of the very few," said Elstein. Some residents, though, have become used to the sound and accept it as a fact of living in America's bustling financial, cultural and tourism capital. "It's a background noise," said Mark Roberge, who lives near the heliport at the southern tip of Manhattan. "It seems to be part of the experience." — AFP



A helicopter flies above the city skyline of New York.



In this file photo a police helicopter flies over the scene where suspicious package was found in Midtown Manhattan in New York City.



In this file photo a helicopter flies past as the full moon rises behind the Statue of Liberty in New York City.

Sports

Djokovic slips to third as Medvedev tops rankings

PARIS: Daniil Medvedev returned to the top of the ATP rankings on Monday, ahead of Alexander Zverev, with Novak Djokovic slipping out of the top two for the first time in nearly four years. The 26-year-old Russian, who was surprisingly beaten by Tim van Rijthoven in the final at 's-Hertogenbosch on Sunday, briefly occupied the number one spot for two weeks at the end of February and the beginning of March. But with Djokovic losing in the quarter-finals at the French Open, where he was defending champion, the door opened for Medvedev to rise again to top spot.

Medvedev is unable to compete at Wimbledon as Russian and Belarusian players have been barred following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Rankings points, however, will not be awarded. Zverev climbs to number two for the first time since October 2018 that Djokovic is not in the top two. Rafael Nadal, who beat the Serb at Roland Garros and went on to take the title for the 14th time, stays at number four, now only 245 points behind his great rival.

Djokovic's grip on the number one ranking had already been weakened by his exclusion earlier in the year, because of COVID regulations, from the Australian Open where he was also the defending champion. It is the first time since October 2018 that Djokovic is not in the top two. Rafael Nadal, who beat the Serb at Roland Garros and went on to take the title for the 14th time, stays at number four, now only 245 points behind his great rival.

Casper Ruud, who was overwhelmed by Nadal in the Paris final, reached his best career ranking of fifth in the world, up one place ahead of Stefanos Tsitsipas. Former world number one Andy Murray climbed 21 places to 48 following his journey to the final in Stuttgart at the weekend while Medvedev's conqueror Van Rijthoven jumped 99 places from 205 to 106. ATP rankings as of June 13, 2022 (players representing



PARIS: Poland's Iga Swiatek poses with the Suzanne-Lenglen trophy during a photocall at the Pont de Bir-Hakeim in Paris after winning the 2022 Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament. — AFP

Russia and Belarus are banned from competing under the name or flag of Russia or Belarus until further notice).

Swiatek dominates

In another development, French Open champion Iga Swiatek remains firmly at the head of the new WTA rankings released on Monday, over 4000 points ahead of number two Anett Kontaveit. The 21-year-old Pole has held the top spot since the surprise retirement of

Australian Ashleigh Barty at the end of March.

The only change in the Top 20 sees Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka, beaten in Sunday's final at 's-Hertogenbosch by the Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova, take fifth place from Maria Sakkari. Neither Sabalenka nor Alexandrova will be at Wimbledon, the third Grand Slam event of the year, as Russian and Belarusian players have been barred from competing following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. No WTA rankings points, however, will be awarded for the event.— AFP

Newgarden wins the IndyCar Grand Prix

LOS ANGELES: Josef Newgarden grabbed his third victory of the IndyCar season on Sunday, his victory at Road America bringing the Penske driver part of a \$1 million bonus as the first to win on all three types of courses this year. Newgarden had already won on the Texas Motor Speedway oval and the Long Beach temporary street circuit before his win on the four-mile, 14-turn Road America layout in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin.

Newgarden and the Penske team will share \$500,000 of the bonus while another \$500,000 will go to two charities in the driver's native Nashville. The victory also helped expunge the bitter memory of last year's race at Road America, which Newgarden dominated only to come unstuck after a late-race caution bunched the field behind him with two laps remaining. On the restart, gearbox issues struck and he was unable to get up to speed, finally settling for a 21st-place finish instead of a victory.

This time, Newgarden held off charges from Alexander Rossi and Marcus Ericsson and was in front of them at the restart after Pato O'Ward's engine blew with eight laps to go. "You've got to be on your toes at all times (in this series)," Newgarden said. "You can go in with a plan, but you probably have to change your plan 90% of the time once the race starts to unfold. "To be able to hit all these disciplines with this team, for me it's the best series in the world." Sweden's Indianapolis 500 winner Ericsson finished second for Chip Ganassi, 3.3710sec behind Newgarden.

Rossi, who started from pole, finished third, his second straight podium finish this month continuing a surge that has seen him nab five top-10 finishes in his last six starts. Rossi was one of three Andretti Autosport drivers in the top five. Teammate Romain Grosjean of France was fourth ahead of Andretti's Colton Herta. Ericsson's runner-up finish was enough to move him to the top of the season standings, 27 points in front of the man he supplanted, Australian Will Power.— AFP



Gulf Handball Cup: Najma beat Mudhar

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The 38th Gulf Handball Cup Winners Championship ended on Sunday with Bahrain's Najma team beating Saudi Arabia's Mudhar 39-24 in the final match. Director General of Public Authority for Sport Dr Humoud Fulaitheh, Deputy Chairman of the International Handball Association, Treasurer of Asian Association Bader Al-Thiyab, Kuwait Club Chairman

Khalid Al-Ghanim, and heads of participating delegations were present at the finals.

This is the sixth title for Najma. Bahrain's Al-Ahli grabbed eight titles; Saudi Arabia's Ahli (seven); Bahrain's Najma (six); Kuwait's Salmiya (four); Qatar's Sadd (three); Qatar's Rayyan (two); Khaitan, Sulaibkhat, UAE's Ain, Iraq's Jaish, Saudi Arabia's Nour, Qatar's Ahli and Gharrafah and UAE's Ahli won title each.

Chairman of Kuwait Sports Club Khalid Al-Ghanim thanked all participants in the Gulf Handball Championship who had a major role in making the event a success. Al-Ghanim said Bahrain's Najma deserved the title and congratulated them. Chairman of the organization committee Bader Al-Osaimi lauded the role of the sub-committee before and during the tournament which added to the success and excellent organization of the championship.

Allen upsets Holloway in blistering hurdles

NEW YORK: Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver Devon Allen scorched to the third fastest 110m hurdles time in history on Sunday with an upset victory over world champion Grant Holloway at the USATF New York Grand Prix. The 27-year-old Allen, who signed with the Eagles in April after a successful career in college gridiron, produced a flawless race to surge home in a world-leading time of 12.84sec at New York's Icahn Stadium.

Holloway, the 2019 World Championships gold medalist, was second in 13.06 with Daniel Roberts third in 13.17. Allen's performance was made all the more remarkable given that he has recently been juggling both track and field commitments with off-season training with his Philadelphia Eagles team-mates.

Allen said he had thought a fast time was on the cards after recent results in training. Only two men-Holloway (12.81) and world record holder Aries Merritt (12.80) - have gone faster over the distance.

"It's been there," Allen said of his time. "We've been

doing it in training for probably the last six weeks. We just need some fresh legs. "I've been doing OTAs (organized team activities) in Philly having fun with the boys playing football. "But now I'm back in track mode for the next couple of weeks. Really the biggest thing is feeling fresh and now running fast, I'm really excited."

Allen, a finalist at the 2016 Olympics and pandemic-



NEW YORK: Grant Holloway of the USA competes against Devon Allen in the Men's 110m hurdle and coming in second during the New York Grand Prix at Icahn Stadium on June 12, 2022.— AFP

delayed Tokyo Games, plans to race in Europe before returning to the US for the World Championship trials in Eugene, Oregon, at the end of this month. Allen's performance was the highlight of Sunday's meeting in New York. In other events, reigning US 100m champion Sha'Carri Richardson had a mixed day. The flamboyant sprinter, competing in a striking fishnet bodysuit, was beaten in her preferred event, the 100m, finishing second behind Aleia Hobbs.

Hobbs took the tape in 10.83sec, with Richardson just behind in 10.85. Olympic finalist Teahna Daniels was third in 10.99. However Richardson bounced back later Sunday to win the 200m in 22.38sec ahead of Tamara Clark (22.62) and the Bahamas' Tynia Gaither 22.66. Richardson's winning time was well behind this year's world leading 200m mark of 21.80 set by Abby Steiner at the NCAA collegiate championships in Eugene on Saturday.

In the men's 100, world champion Christian Coleman's preparations in his comeback season following an anti-doping suspension continued with an encouraging victory. Coleman swept to the line in 9.92sec, his fastest time of the year, with Jamaica's Ackeem Blake second in 9.95. There was another brisk time in the 200m, where 2019 world champion Noah Lyles clocked his fastest time of 2022 to win in 19.61sec. Kyree King was second in 20.02 with Brandon Carnes third in 20.07.— AFP

Kuwait National Disabled Athletics team shines

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Disabled Athletics team returned home Sunday after participating in France International Championship - one of the Disabled Athletics Grand Prix events - with seven various medals. Runner Faisal Al-Rajhi won three gold and one silver medals, while his teammate Faisal Surour won the silver medal in shot put event. Abdallah Al-Enezi won silver and bronze medals in wheelchairs running.



Faisal Al-Rajhi with Mansour Al-Sarheed

Chairman of the Paralympic Athletics Committee Mansour Al-Sarheed lauded the disabled team's achievement in the international championship. The team has four players and won seven medals while competing with the best athletics players in the world. Al-Sarheed dedicated the victory to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwaitis.



Sports

Grant 'makes history' as first female winner on men's tour

22-year-old Swede claims her third title

HALMSTAD: Sweden's Linn Grant made history on Sunday when she became the first female winner of a European men's tour event with a nine-shot triumph at the Scandinavian Mixed. The tournament, featuring men from the DP World Tour circuit and women from the Ladies European Tour (LET) all playing the same course, saw the 22-year-old Swede claim her third title in just six starts this season.

"I just hope that people recognize women's golf, more sponsors go to the LET and hopefully this pumps up the women's game a little bit more," she said. Grant did not put a foot wrong at Halmstad

Golf Club, stretching her overnight lead from two shots to seven with five birdies in the first six holes. She kept her card clean with three successive pars despite pouring rain before making another birdie on the tenth.

Grant picked up further shots at the 11th and 14th to get to 24 under par and win by the biggest margin on the DP World Tour - the rebranded European Tour - so far this season. "It's huge. Just playing at home and having the crowds here, my family by my side, boyfriend on the bag - it's crazy and I'm proud of myself," Grant told

europentour.com. "Pontus (Grant's caddie and boyfriend) has been amazing, keeping me calm and doing everything right. The crowds are, like always, amazing. Swedish crowds!"

When asked if she particularly wanted to beat the men this week, Grant said: "For sure - the most important thing! It's a nice feeling. All week I just felt like it's the girls against the guys and whoever picks up that trophy represents the field." Henrik Stenson, the 2016 British Open champion, finished in a tie for second on 15 under alongside Marc Warren.

Tournament co-host Annika Sorenstam hailed Grant, who was born in Helsingborg where her grandfather settled after leaving Scotland. "What a performance. I'm so excited and so happy for Linn," 10-time women's major champion Sorenstam told Sky Sports. "She has played very well, running away from the field, but it has been nice to see her play really solid golf. This golf course is not as she has made it seem. "This shows that we can play against each other in a fair competition. I hope we can use this and people see the quality of women's golf - Linn couldn't prove it any other way." —AFP

Transfer to Man City a 'great move': Haaland

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland said his transfer to Manchester City from Borussia Dortmund is a "great move" for his career as the Norwegian aims to fire the Premier League champions to more silverware. City announced last month they had beaten off competition from Europe's top clubs to agree a deal with the German giants after triggering Haaland's reported £51 million (\$63 million) release clause.

The 21-year-old's move was officially completed on Monday with Haaland penning a five-year contract to follow in the footsteps of his father Alfie Inge Haaland, who played for City between 2000 and 2003. "This is a proud day for me and my family. I have always watched City and have loved doing so in recent seasons," said Haaland. "I want to score goals, win trophies, and improve as a footballer and I am confident I can do that here. This is a great move for me, and I can't wait to get started in pre-season."

The arrival of one of world foot-

ball's biggest talents end City's search for a specialist striker to succeed Sergio Aguero, who left the club last year. City's attempt to sign England captain Harry Kane from Tottenham fell short last summer, but Pep Guardiola's men still had enough to pip Liverpool by a point to win a fourth Premier League title in five seasons.

However, the English champions again failed in their bid to win the Champions League for the first time, losing a dramatic semi-final to Real Madrid 6-5 on aggregate. Haaland has scored 23 goals in 19 Champions League appearances for Dortmund and RB Salzburg and will be expected to get City over the line when it matters most in Europe. "There are so many world-class players in this squad and Pep is one of the greatest managers of all time, so I believe I am in the right place to fulfil my ambitions," he added.

"You can't help but admire their style of play, it's exciting and they create a lot of chances, which is perfect for a player like me," Haaland had almost his pick of Europe's top clubs thanks to a buyout clause below his market value and a stunning record of 86 goals in 89 games



OSLO: Norway's forward Erling Braut Haaland celebrates scoring the opening goal with his teammates during the UEFA Nations League football match Norway v Sweden on June 12, 2022. —AFP

for Dortmund. He rejected Manchester United's advances when moving from Salzburg to Dortmund in January 2020 and his decision to choose the Etihad as his destination is a coup for City's rising status.

"His rise has been remarkable, but he is still only 21. His best years are ahead of him, and we are confident he can get even better working with

Pep," said City's director of football Txiki Begiristain. "He is a huge talent and has been one of the best strikers in Europe over the last few seasons. "His goalscoring record is exceptional and his performances at Borussia Dortmund and in the Champions League in particular have proved he can succeed at the highest level." —AFP

Former British, Irish Lions, Wales captain Bennett dies at 73

CARDIFF: Former British and Irish Lions and Wales rugby captain Phil Bennett has died aged 73, it was announced on Sunday, as tributes poured in for a fly-half whose "magic" brought "spectators out of their seats." Bennett featured 29 times for his country, winning the Five Nations outright on three occasions and started eight Tests for the Lions against South Africa and New Zealand.

"It is with the deepest sadness that we announce the passing of club legend, former captain and Scarlets President Phil Bennett," the Welsh club said. "Phil passed away peacefully at his home on Sunday evening surrounded by his close family. "Our thoughts are with Phil's wife Pat, sons Steven and James, family and friends at this incredibly sad time."

Bennett was best known for his creative attacking skill and is remembered for a rousing pre-match speech made to his Wales teammates before 1977's Five Nations win over England at Twickenham. His Test debut made the history books as he was rugby's first replacement, substituting the injured Gerald Davies at centre for his international bow as a 20-year-old in the 1969 defeat to France in Paris.

"He was to rugby what Botham was to cricket, Cruyff to football and Nastase to tennis," Bennett's captain on the Lions' 1974 tour Willie John McBride told the Scarlets website. "He had a certain magic, an undefinable quality. He had the audacity to attempt the unusual and to lift spectators out of their seats," the ex-Ireland lock added. Bennett led the Lions on the 1977 tour to face the All Blacks following Mervyn Davies' injury but the travelling side lost the series 3-1. At club level his greatest result came in Llanelli's 9-3 victory over the touring All Blacks in 1972.

After retiring from all forms of the game in 1981 he became an after-dinner speaker, was a pundit for television and radio and was named president of Llanelli and the Scarlets. "Brought a tear to my eye," ex-Scarlets and Wales prop Rob Evans posted on Twitter. "Not only one of the greatest on the pitch but one the most supportive and genuine blokes I've ever met in the rugby world. "Rest easy up there Benny," he added.

A tribute also came from former Scotland scrum-half Andy Nicol. "So sad. Benny was some player and some man," Nicol said on Twitter. "So generous with his time and a brilliant storyteller. Thoughts with his family," he added. In 2005, Bennett was admitted into World Rugby's Hall of Fame, joining his former half-back partner Gareth Edwards, who had been inducted eight years earlier. —AFP

Jordan vs Kuwait preview



KUWAIT: Jordan will be aiming to make it three wins from three in the 2023 AFC Asia Cup qualifiers when they visit the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium to face Kuwait on Tuesday. The hosts, on the other hand, will be desperate to get one over the chivalrous, having failed to win any of the last six meetings between the sides since 2014.

AFC Asian Cup qualification - Tomorrow, 7:15 PM

Jordan VS Kuwait

Third round - Group A

STANDINGS												
GROUP A												
Club	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	Last 5			
1 Jordan	2	2	0	0	3	0	3	6				
2 Indonesia	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3				
3 Kuwait	2	1	0	1	5	3	2	3				
4 Nepal	2	0	0	2	1	6	-5	0				

Last 5 matches
 Win
 Loss
 Not played

Seuteni guides Bordeaux to Top 14 semis

PARIS: Samoa centre UJ Seuteni scored a try and set-up another to send Bordeaux-Begles into next weekend's French Top 14 semi-finals after Sunday's 36-16 home play-off win over Racing 92. Seuteni's key interventions came in the second-half as he crossed for his joint-leading 11th league try of the season before he assisted Romain Buros. Bordeaux-Begles will face Montpellier in next Sunday's last four, 24 hours after regular season table-toppers Castres play local rivals Toulouse, with both games in Nice.

After last weekend's defeat at Perpignan, which denied their automatic place in the semi-finals, Bordeaux-Begles' outspoken head coach Christophe Urios slammed many of his main players including France pair Matthieu Jalibert and Cameron Woki. "It was really tense in the week, the leaders stepped up and the best response we could give was what we did tonight," fly-half Jalibert told Canal+. "You saw the quotes from our manager in the press. I just wanted to say we don't play for Christophe, we're on a mission for the players," he added. Urios, who joined Bordeaux-Begles

from Castres a year after taking them to the Top 14, then responded.

"It wasn't easy, as I took a risk, I did from my heart, we had to wake up, to revolt," he told Canal+. "When you have great players, they have to play well, that's how you win titles. "The players and leaders put their hands up today, it's their success, not ours (the coaches)," he added. At Stade Chaban-Delmas, the scores were level after 20 minutes as the hosts' France scrum-half Maxime Lucu and Racing's youngster Nolann Le Garrec traded penalties after kick-off had been delayed for a little under a quarter of an hour due to an issue with the referee's microphone.

Woki's Urios celebration

The Parisians, 2016 champions, led 10-8 at the break as Max Spring's try, converted by 20-year-old Le Garrec, came in response to Argentina winger Santiago Cordero's effort for Urios' side. Le Garrec kicked another penalty to make it 13-8 on 43 minutes before the home side took firm hold of the fixture with three tries in the space of 11 minutes. Seuteni, 28, scored after a



BORDEAUX: Bordeaux's Fijian centre Ulupano Seuteni (center) scores a try during the French Top 14 playoff match between Bordeaux and Racing 92 at Stade Chaban-Delmas on June 12, 2022. —AFP

Yoram Moefana break, then provided the final touch for Buros. Les Bleus back-rower Cameron Woki then galloped over and celebrated with a finger over his mouth appearing to quieten Urios' criticism, with a little over a quarter of the game to play.

Bordeaux-Begles comfortably led 29-16 and with the 30,000-strong Chaban-Delmas crowd delirious former New Zealand Sevens winger Ben

Lam made sure of their place in the semi with a 79th effort. Earlier, France full-back Melvyn Jaminet scored 26 points to keep Perpignan in the Top 14 as the Catalans beat second-tier Mont-de-Marsan 41-16 in a play-off. Jaminet's club became the first top-flight side to win the fixture since it was introduced in 2018 before the Test goal-kicker joins French champions Toulouse next season. —AFP

Curry genius echoes Federer, Warriors coach says

SAN FRANCISCO: Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr says Stephen Curry's approach to basketball reminds him of tennis great Roger Federer. Curry wrote another gilded chapter to his glittering career on Friday, delivering a breathtaking 43-point display to haul the Warriors back into NBA Finals contention with a series-leveling victory over the Boston Celtics. It was the sort of iconic performance that will go down in NBA history, a dazzling reminder of why Curry is regarded as one of the greatest players of all time. For Kerr, Curry's latest masterpiece brought back memories of an encounter between the Warriors and 20-time grand slam champion Federer in Shanghai five years ago. "We actually met Federer a few years ago in China when he played in Shanghai. He came and spoke to our locker room, and Draymond (Green) asked him, he said, 'How have you been doing this for 20 years?'" Kerr recalled on Sunday.

"And his answer was just simple, yet profound. He said, 'I love my daily ritual.' He said, 'I get up, make my kids breakfast, drop them off at school, go train and I've figured out the right training methods to keep me in the best position at my age. I love competing.' He said, 'But every single day, I put my head on the pillow at the end of the day and think, man, what a great day.' "So I think of Steph a lot when I think of that story from Roger Federer. Very, very similar just sort of zest for life and just joy for the process." —AFP



KUWAIT: Kuwait players celebrate with the 2022 AFC Futsal Asian Cup after beating Saudi Arabia 5-3 at Al-Naser SC court on June 13, 2022.

Kuwait crowned 2022 Asian futsal champions

KUWAIT: Kuwait's national indoor football team won the 2022 AFC Futsal Asian Cup after beating Saudi Arabia 5-3 in the final held at Al-Naser SC court. The first half of the match witnessed four

goals, thrilling fans and concluding with a Saudi goal one minute before half time, levelling the score 2-2. The Saudi team managed to snatch the lead as they edged Al-Azraq early in the second

half, but that was countered with three goals for an outright victory. Making the tally sheet with a tremendous long shot, Abdul-Rahman Al-Mesbahi said he was very pleased with this

accomplishment with another gold medal not long after the 3rd GCC Games, and greatly appreciated the fans' support throughout the tournament. —KUNA

FIFA approves five substitutes

DOHA: Football's rules body on Monday said that five substitutes would be permanently introduced for all top games and that a 3D offside detector is closer to being introduced for this year's World Cup. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said the substitute change, which was started in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, followed "strong support from the entire football community".

He said after the annual meeting of the International Football Associations Board that experts would decide on whether "semi-automatic offside" detection would be used for the World Cup that starts November 21. FIFA's referees chief Pierluigi Collina said he was "confident" that the system would be introduced in time for the 32-nation tournament.

Tests were started to speed up decision making and reduce the scope for controversy in making offside calls at top games. The system monitors 29 data points

on the limbs of players to create a skeletal, three-dimensional model that is reviewed pitchside by the referee. English Football Association chief executive Mark Bullingham said that more than eight million data position points are recorded each match. The system has already been tried at the FIFA Arab Cup last year in Doha and the Club World Cup in February.

"We are very satisfied so far and our experts are looking into it before deciding whether it will be introduced for the World Cup," Infantino told a press conference. It is officially known as "semi-automatic" as it will still be the referee that makes a final decision on an offside ruling. FIFA is also looking into introducing a Video Assistant Referee 'light' with fewer cameras to a wider number of competitions. VAR is currently only used at international tournaments and major national championships.

Tests on the less-tech heavy, cheaper system have already been held at 100 matches in Europe and will now be extended. As well as making the five substitutes permanent, IFAB said that teams can now name 15 substitutes on a team sheet instead of 12. IFAB said that trials with body cameras on referees may be started in a bid to counter a growing number of attacks on

match officials. "Lack of respect for referees and their safety were identified as global problems," said an IFAB statement.

"The members agreed to establish initiatives to tackle these issues including potential trials with body cameras worn by referees in adult grassroots football." The English FA has particularly pressed for experiments to start. IFAB-made up of the game's founding national associations from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland with FIFA-also ordered more trials on the use of concussion substitutes. Growing concern has been raised about the impact of head injuries on players—with many suffering from dementia and Parkinson's disease in later.

Some 140 national championships and competitions are taking part in current trials and the board said these would continue until August 2023. "The members agreed that trials should continue to focus on permanently removing any player with actual or possible concussion to ensure this player does not continue taking part in the match," said the statement. "It was agreed that further education is needed to ensure that trial protocols are applied correctly." —AFP

US judge dismisses rape suit against Cristiano Ronaldo

LOS ANGELES: A US district judge has dismissed a rape lawsuit against football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, castigating the legal team behind the complaint. Judge Jennifer Dorsey threw out the case brought by Kathryn Mayorga, a former model and teacher, who alleged she was assaulted by the Portuguese soccer star in a Las Vegas hotel room in 2009. The 37-year-old Manchester United player has always denied the allegations and maintained that the relationship with Mayorga was completely consensual.

In a 42-page ruling released Friday, the judge accused Mayorga's attorneys of "abuses and flagrant circumvention of the proper litigation process" and said that as a result, "Mayorga loses her opportunity to pursue this case." Her attorneys had actually moved to dismiss the case voluntarily last month, US media said, but Dorsey decided that their repeated use of illicitly obtained confidential documents meant the case had to be dismissed "with prejudice"—meaning it cannot be revived.

"Nothing less than a with-prejudice dismissal will purge the taint that has permeated this case from its very inception and preserve the integrity of the litigation process," Dorsey wrote. A criminal case based on the rape allegation against the Manchester United forward was dropped in 2019, with a district attorney saying it "cannot be proven beyond a reasonable doubt" that a sexual assault occurred.

But Mayorga, who waived her right to anonymity, also took up a civil action seeking millions in damages. She filed a complaint in 2018 alleging she was



Manchester United's Portuguese striker Cristiano Ronaldo

sexually assaulted by Ronaldo, who strongly denied the accusations. Mayorga said that while she had agreed to a financial settlement with Ronaldo shortly after the alleged incident—reportedly for \$375,000—her emotional trauma at the time did not allow her to participate in the mediation process.

But in trying to revive the case, Dorsey found, Mayorga's lawyer Leslie Stovall made repeated use of "cyber-hacked attorney-client privileged documents." Those documents included "internal emails between Ronaldo's lawyers discussing settlement strategies and potential liability" and were "embla-

zoned with notices that their contents contain attorney-client communications," the judge wrote.

Stovall's use of the documents was "bad faith," the judge ruled, "and simply disqualifying Stovall will not cure the prejudice to Ronaldo, because the misappropriated documents and their confidential contents have been woven into the very fabric of Mayorga's claims." Ronaldo is one of the biggest stars of world football and is a five-time winner of the Ballon d'Or award for the world's best player. He told Portuguese television in 2019 that the allegations had led to "the most difficult year" he had known. —AFP



GALLOWAY: Brooke Henderson of Canada kisses the trophy after her victory at the ShopRite Classic at Seaview Bay Course on June 12, 2022. —AFP

Henderson wins ShopRite Classic

NEW YORK: Brooke Henderson eagled the first playoff hole to win the ShopRite LPGA Classic on Sunday as Lindsey Weaver-Wright remained in search of a first career title. Canada's Henderson, who captured her 11th LPGA title, charged to the top of the leaderboard with a seven-under-par 64 at Seaview Hotel and Golf Club in Galloway, New Jersey. She got off to a quick start with three birdies in the first six holes before an eagle at the par-five ninth. Henderson added birdies at 12 and 18 to grab the clubhouse lead. She was quickly joined by Weaver-Wright, whose six birdies included three in the last four holes. The American who joined the LPGA tour in 2018 poured in a long birdie putt at the 17th then after coming up short of the green at 18 she drained a testing birdie attempt to force the playoff.

When they returned to 18 for the playoff, Henderson was dialed in. She stuck her approach six feet from the cup as Weaver again came up short of the green. After Weaver needed two putts, Henderson had the luxury of knowing she could take two for the victory. The Canadian didn't need them, rapping in the eagle effort. "With playoffs you only really have one opportunity, so I just tried to hit really solid shots," Henderson, ranked 11th in the world, said. "To walk up that fairway and see that I only had a pretty short (putt) was a big relief. "And just needing two putts to win was also really clutch."

Henderson, who changed her putting grip before last week's US Women's Open, said she was "more comfortable" with the new style. "People are always telling me to work on my putting, so just trying to make slow progress and trying to get a little bit better and a little bit more consistent," Henderson said. "It's been working really well." England's Jodi Ewart Shadoff eagled the 18th hole to card a four-under par 67 that left her alone in third on 202. Former world number one Lydia Ko flirted with the lead but finished tied for fourth on 10-under with Switzerland's Albane Valenzuela. Both carded 67s. American Brittany Lincicome, expecting her second child in early September, was 10-under through 16 holes, but a three-putt bogey at the 17th slowed her down and she finished with a share of sixth alongside Japan's Nasa Hataoka and American Marina Alex. —AFP