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MPs demand action against India for insults to Prophet

Budgets panel fails to meet for second time • Opposition lawmakers continue sit-in

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti MPs called on their government on Thursday to apply all forms of pressure against India following insults against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by government, party and media officials in the South Asian nation that sparked protests by millions of Muslims around the world. A statement signed by 30 MPs of the 50-member National Assembly also condemned what it called atrocities by Indian police against "our Indian Muslim brethren" who protested peacefully against the insults.

Meanwhile, thousands of social media activists have demanded that all Arab countries, and especially Gulf states, where some eight million Indians live and work, deport Hindutva supporters in retaliation for the insults to Islam and the Prophet (PBUH) and atrocities against peaceful Muslim demonstrators.

"Members of the Kuwait National Assembly express their rejection of insults made by the Indian government, party and media officials against the Prophet (PBUH), Islamic religion and Islamic holy sites," the statement said. The statement also condemned violent actions by the Indian government

against Indian Muslims and their properties and called for providing protection to them.

The lawmakers also urged the government of Kuwait and world governments to apply diplomatic, economic and media pressure and other means of pressure in a bid to stop insults against the Prophet (PBUH) and attacks against Indian Muslims.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's budgets committee failed to meet for the second time in three days due to a lack of quorum, head of the panel MP Annan Abdulsamad said. He said the meeting is necessary to vote on the state budget for the 2022/2023 fiscal year,

which started on April 1, and also approve some 45 independent budgets of state-run agencies and departments.

Abdulsamad warned that if the committee fails to meet next week, the Assembly will likely do what it did last year and withdraw the budgets from the committee and approve them in the Assembly without the need for the panel's report. Also on Thursday, 17 opposition MPs continued their sit-in protest at the National Assembly to press for an end to what they claimed are violations to the country's constitution and preventing the Assembly from holding sessions.



AL-HUMAYRAH, Syria: This picture taken on June 16, 2022 shows a view of a building where US coalition forces conducted an overnight airborne operation in this village in the Ghandoura district of Aleppo province. — AFP

US captures top IS leader in Syria raid

AL-HUMAYRAH, Syria: US coalition forces said they captured a senior Islamic State group bombmaker in a pre-dawn raid Thursday that, witnesses said, saw troops in helicopters swoop down on an isolated house in rebel-held northwestern Syria. A war monitor and AFP correspondents said two military helicopters touched down for only a few minutes, and several shots were fired, in a village in an area controlled by Turkish-backed rebel groups.

"The captured individual is an experienced bombmaker and operational facilitator who became one of the top leaders of Daesh's Syrian branch," said the US-led coalition battling the jihadist group in Syria and Iraq, using another name for IS. The coalition did not name the target in the statement, but a coalition official told AFP the man captured was Hani Ahmed Al-Kurdi, who was the IS leader of Raqqa when it was the de facto capital of IS in Syria.

Such operations by US forces are rare in parts of northwestern Syria that are under the control of Turkish-backed rebels and non-IS jihadist groups. A previous special forces raid in early February led to the death of the group's leader Abu Ibrahim Al-Qurashi, who detonated a bomb vest to avoid capture. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitoring group with a vast network of sources on the ground, could not confirm the identity of the IS operative captured on Thursday.

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP that two military helicopters landed in Al-Humayrah and took off seven minutes later, adding that only a few shots were fired. "The US operation was quick and smooth," he said, adding it took place in the village of Al-Humayrah, northeast of Aleppo and four kilometers from the Turkish border.

The coalition said that "the mission was meticulously planned to minimize the risk of collateral damage, particularly any potential harm to civilians. "There were no civilians harmed during the operation nor any damage to coalition aircraft or assets." Mohamed Youssef, a local witness to the raid, said it

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Kuwait returns five pharaonic relics to Egypt

KUWAIT: Kuwait handed on Thursday five pharaonic artifacts to Egypt, confiscated by the customs department at Kuwait airport in 2019. Director of Artifacts and Museums at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Sultan Al-Duwaish told KUNA that these invaluable artifacts, smuggled from Luxor, were closely examined by experts from Kuwait University, Poland and Egypt, who concluded that three were original pieces dating back to 1400 BC, while two were of

questionable origins.

Duwaish said a number of Kuwaiti entities including the foreign ministry, the customs department and NCCAL cooperated with the Egyptian Embassy in Kuwait to examine and return these relics to their rightful place as stipulated in international treaties. He indicated that this is the second handover of historical artifacts by Kuwait to Egypt, the first being in 2018 of a wooden casket cover.

Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout commended the role of Kuwaiti entities and their tireless efforts in returning the artifacts to their original place. He added that this cooperation includes investigating those involved in the smuggling, adding a delegation from the Egyptian public prosecution came to

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Director of Artifacts and Museums at NCCAL Sultan Al-Duwaish stands with Egyptian Ambassador Osama Shaltout during the handover of five smuggled artifacts on June 16, 2022. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (More pics on Page 2)

Top EU leaders back Ukraine in visit to Kyiv

KYIV: The European Union's most powerful leaders on Thursday embraced Ukraine's bid to be accepted as a candidate for EU membership, in a powerful symbol of support in Kyiv's battle against Russia's invasion. French President Emmanuel Macron, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Italian premier Mario Draghi arrived in Ukraine by train and headed to the Kyiv suburb of Irpin, scene of fierce battles early in the brutal war.

They were later joined in Kyiv by Romania's President Klaus Iohannis

and met their Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, who has been lobbying his western allies for most and faster weapons deliveries and the promise of a European future. "All four of us support the status of immediate candidate for accession," Macron told a joint press conference with his EU colleagues. Draghi agreed: "The most important message of our visit is that Italy wants Ukraine in the EU."

Scholz said Ukraine "belongs in the European family" and vowed: "We are supporting Ukraine with the deliveries of weapons. We will keep doing that for as long as it is needed." Zelensky promised Ukraine was ready to put in the work to become a fully-fledged EU member, and said Ukrainians has already proved themselves worthy of candidate status.

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KYIV: President of France Emmanuel Macron shakes hands with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, flanked by Prime Minister of Italy Mario Draghi and Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz at Mariinsky Palace on June 16, 2022. — AFP

Tunisia grinds to a halt as unions strike

TUNIS: Flights were cancelled, public transport ground to a halt and government offices were closed in a nationwide strike by Tunisia's main trade union confederation Thursday, that piled pressure on a president already facing a string of crises. The powerful UGTT confederation had called on up to three million public sector workers to strike, halting work

at 159 state agencies and public companies to demand concessions on salaries and threatened reforms.

The action appeared to be widely observed. A strike by public sector workers at Tunis airport saw dozens of flights cancelled, while public utilities and post offices were closed. Around 1,000 strike supporters gathered outside UGTT headquarters in central Tunis, singing the national anthem and waving flags. In a fiery speech, UGTT chief Nouredine Taboubi said the action had been over 96 percent successful, and blamed the government for the collapse of salary negotiations.

Continued on Page 6



TUNIS: Supporters of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) gather with national flags during a rally outside its headquarters on June 16, 2022 amidst a general strike. — AFP

Local



KUWAIT: Osama Shaltout (background), Egypt's ambassador to Kuwait, signs documents certifying the handover of five artifacts, including a fragment of a statue showing the head of the ancient Egyptian god Amun (foreground), smuggled from Egypt to Kuwait and returned back during a ceremony at the Egyptian embassy in Kuwait City on June 16, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Public Authority recommends ban on food imports from some states

Kuwait stresses on coordinating regional efforts on food safety

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition on Thursday recommended a ban on imports of all kinds of poultry except for thermally treated products from the Republic of Guinea due to outbreak of the bird flu. Adel Al-Swait, the secretary general of the supreme committee for food safety, said in a statement on Thursday that the commission advised during its latest meeting that a ban be enforced on the imports of all cattle from

Burundi where the rift valley fever spread in the country.

Moreover, it recommended barring all poultry except for thermally treated products from 14 US states where the bird flu was also reported. Furthermore, it recommended lifting prohibition poultry's imports from Kentucky, the US, where the bird flu disease dissipated.

In another development, acting Director-General

of Kuwait's Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Dr Zekra Behbehani said that coordinating regional efforts aiming at harmonizing food safety systems in the Arab region is important. Behbehani made the statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the 12th Arab meeting on food safety that runs over two days.

The meeting discussed some key topics listed on the agenda, she said, pointing to the follow-up on

the developments of activating the platform of the Arab team for food safety. Meanwhile, Bahjat Abu El-Nasr, head of the economic integration department at the Arab League, said the Arab team for food safety reviews the reference draft which is a document regulating the team's duty, specialty and strategy. He underlined the importance of benefiting from the five technical outcomes of the team and other results achieved in 2016-2021. — KUNA

News in brief

Goodwill messages, calls

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, on Thursday, a call from Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council President Dr Rashad Al-Alimi, to reassure about his health condition. During the call, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to him for these sincere brotherly feelings, praising this kind gesture, wishing him good health and continued wellness and the brotherly Yemeni people all progress and prosperity. Also, His Highness the Crown Prince on Thursday received a call from Iraqi President Barham Salih, checking on his health condition and wishing him perpetual wellbeing. His Highness the Crown Prince voiced much thanks and appreciation to the Iraqi President for his sincere fraternal sentiments, commending this good gesture and wishing him good health and prosperity for the Iraqi people. — KUNA

Foundation awards poets

KUWAIT: Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation has declared the winners of its award for poetic creativity - the 18th edition. The foundation president, Abdul Aziz Al-Babtain said in a statement that the Moroccan critic Mustafa Rajwan won half the award for the best book, while the other half was awarded to his Egyptian fellow, Ahmad Darweesh. Sudanese poet Roda Al-Hajj won the award for the top poetic divan. From Jordan, Abdullah Abu Shmais took the prize for poetry. The Palestinian poet, Alaa Al-Qatrawi, won the award in the young poets' category. Zaher Al-Habib (from Yemen) was also a winner for poetry while Saudi poet Abdulaziz Khoja joined the ranks of winners.

Legal, judicial cooperation

CAIRO: Kuwait Justice Minister, Minister of State for Integrity Enhancement Jamal Al-Jalawi has stressed on the importance of examining Arab and international legal and judicial cooperation, especially in the context of combating terrorism, money laundering and terrorist financing. This came during a speech delivered by Minister Al-Jalawi, who chaired the Kuwaiti delegation at the 69th meeting of the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice. Al-Jalawi affirmed importance to strengthen pan-Arab cooperation to combat human and drug trafficking. He pointed out that "topics included in the draft agenda for today's meeting are so important," expressing hope that the meeting will reach the desired objectives and enhance cooperation and integration between the Arab states.

'Smart Gulf investor' award

RIYADH: The Gulf Investment Awareness Program, dubbed "Mulem," on Thursday started receiving names of participants in the first competition session of the award, "the smart Gulf investor." The GCC Secretariat General said in a statement that the initiative competition features three categories: video, photographing and painting. A panel has been set up to oversee the award and examine the participants' contributions. The award has been created to stimulate GCC citizens and expatriates to contribute to dissemination of an investment culture and boost awareness of the necessity of saving and engaging in businesses. Registration is due this month and July. Applications can be posted online. — KUNA

'Initiators for Palestine' initiative honors Kuwaitis

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The "Initiators for Palestine" initiative held a ceremony on Wednesday at the Kuwait Society of Lawyers to honor a group of Kuwaitis for their support of the Palestinian cause and their refusal to normalize ties with the Zionist occupiers. In his speech, the media coordinator of the initiative, Youssef Al-Kandari, said this initiative is to honor Kuwaiti individuals and institutions who announced their support for Palestine and oppose the process of normalizing relations with the Zionist entity. "The honoring ceremony aims to praise the Kuwaiti initiators of anti-normalization and highlight their role while presenting them to the Arab and Islamic nations as role models," he said.

Kandari affirmed that civil society institutions seek to create aware generations that are responsible for defending the Palestinian cause, pointing out that many of the honorees apologized for not attending because they believe that their action was a duty and an obligation toward the Palestinian cause. Kandari added heroic Kuwaitis are honored on an ongoing basis, but individually, so this initiative was made to honor all of them at once for their position that con-



KUWAIT: The 'Initiators for Palestine' initiative held a ceremony on Wednesday at the Kuwait Society of Lawyers to honor a group of Kuwaitis.

veys the voice of the Palestinian people.

At the ceremony, a short film was played to show Zionist violations against Al-Aqsa Mosque, and images of Kuwaitis who withdrew from several sports, cultural and academic events in rejection of normalization. The "Initiators for Palestine" initiative was launched by the Kuwaiti Lawyers Association, Social Culture Association, Kuwait's Social Reform Society, Jerusalem Forum, Jerusalem Secretariat Team, Popular

Conference for Palestinians Abroad (PCPA), Youth League for Jerusalem, Teachers' Association and Kuwaitis Against Normalization.

Recently, multiple Kuwaiti athletes withdrew from various international tournaments after being pitted against Zionist opponents. They say their actions are in support of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and rejection of normalizing with the Zionist occupation.

2,235 nurses trained on how to communicate with cancer patients

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN), Oncologist Dr Khalid Al-Saleh, said 2,235 nurses, both male and female, were trained on communicating with cancer patients from Feb 2016 to June 2022. Saleh said the 86th course for nurses was concluded in cooperation with the nursing department at the health ministry. He added this course is in line with CAN's program of continued training on communicating skills with patients and their families, and cancer patients in particular.

Dr Saleh said CAN will continue its courses for nurses to explain informa-

tion in full about cancers, its causes, how to avoid carcinogens, reduce burdens, encourage recovery percentages from this disease and the importance of early detection. He said nurses are trained on communicating skills to become part of the awareness process and give correct information.

Dr Saleh said the courses receive praise from participants, according to a survey to seek their opinions and suggestions on the courses. Demands were made to continue the courses to refresh their knowledge. Dr Saleh thanked the nursing department for its interest in training its members on cancer information and dealing with patients.



KUWAIT: Nurses receive lectures on how to communicate with cancer patients.

Kuwait coping with rapid developments on protecting consumers

CAIRO: Kuwait is keeping pace with the quick happenings related to consumer protection, a Kuwaiti official said on Wednesday. Faisal Al-Ansari, head of the Department of Technical Authority for Commodity Supervision in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, made the statement to KUNA, on the sidelines of a meeting on protecting consumer in the Arab countries. Kuwait has laws and legislations used in this matter during the COVID-19 pandemic to face growing prices, he added.

Kuwait and GCC states are coordinating with the Arab countries to set regulations regarding e-trade through protecting Kuwait, Gulf and Arab consumers, he elaborated. There is a consensus amongst the Arabs to launch a platform and a database pertaining to protecting consumers, he said. "A guideline of consumer protection has been approved within the framework of the major Arab free zone," he stated. Meanwhile, Bahjat Abu El-



The director of the technical division of the consultancy oversight committee at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Commerce and Industry Faisal Al-Ansari is pictured during the meeting. — KUNA

Nasr, head of the economic integration department at the Arab League, said a team of experts and specialists discuss on how to implement an action plan for the next period. — KUNA

Meteorologist predicts extremely hot weather

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Meteorological Department said that the country's weather on the weekend will be hot during the day and night, with northwesterly moderate winds. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi said that the weather is expected to be hot, with northwesterly moderate to brisk winds, with speeds ranging between 20 and 60 kilometers per hour, causing dust, and expected maximum temperatures between 45 and 47 degrees Celsius. The sea will be moderate to high. The waves are between 3 and 6 feet. Al-Qarawi said that the weather tonight will be hot and dusty with northwesterly light to moderate winds - active at intervals on coastal areas, ranging between 15 and 45 km at a time. — KUNA

Local

Vision to push Kuwait sports into the world

Kuwait Economic Society, Sahheh Initiative Group hold seminar

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwait Economic Society held on Wednesday a seminar in cooperation with Sahheh Initiative Group under the title "A new vision to push Kuwait sports into the world", which aims to implement a development plan by launching a national sports fund. The government sector will have a stake of 55 percent in the investment fund, while the other 45 percent will be offered in a public subscription to local and foreign companies and funds.

The Sahheh Initiative Group is proposing a capital of KD 1 billion for the Kuwaiti sports fund to develop local sports, similar to investments in international sports and football clubs. "Sports has become an industry in which huge investments and funds are involved," President of Kuwait Economic Society Khalid Al-Mutairi said, pointing out the society believes investment in the sports field has become one of the important issues in Kuwait in order to keep pace with the global technological development in this field, in addition to encouraging the participation of the private sector to invest in the sports industry.

"Foreign investments in the sports field, whether in sports facilities, sports medicine, technology, or players, especially in football, play a vital role in the development of clubs," Mutairi pointed out, adding the world has witnessed many examples of clubs that have effectively contributed to the local economy of their countries. He stressed such investments, whether in Kuwait or foreign clubs, are considered key to the process of



President of the Kuwait Economic Society Khalid Al-Mutairi

economic development in Kuwait.

Former economist and banker Nader Al-Obaid said sport is an important issue that lacks a new approach from a development perspective that differs from sports 50 years ago. "The players and technical and administrative staff cannot be marketed in a commercial way while we go to international tournaments with empty hands," he said. Obaid noted that the Kuwaiti government allocates KD 250 million annually to support sports, but the results are modest. "A new perspective for sports will help us revive sport ideas to keep pace with international developments."

Obaid pointed out that there are 16 clubs spread over an estimated 1.5 million sq m, and nine youth centers that need to be redeveloped. Regarding the sports fund and if it is officially submitted, Obaid said discussion is current-



KUWAIT: (From left) Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizeem, Nader Al-Obaid, Nabil Al-Obaidi are pictured during a seminar in cooperation with Sahheh Initiative Group under the title 'A new vision to push Kuwaiti sport into the world'.

ly underway to put forward and promote the idea as an initiative of the Sahheh Group, which includes 70 participants and initiators with diverse experiences. "The vision is currently being discussed with some official parties, while it will be officially submitted in the last quarter of this year," he said.

Sports investment expert Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizeem stressed there is a decline in sports in Kuwait, which requires quick reconsideration in adopting the current economic vision, especially since the world

has begun to look at sports in a different way than before. He pointed out 130 countries around the world achieve returns in sports that may exceed the returns of national income.

Researcher and consultant in the digital economy Nabil Al-Obaidi said Kuwait lagged behind regional and international countries in several aspects as a result of legislative challenges, stressing the time has come to move to global development in accordance with a technical system managed away from the government.

Kuwait trade surplus with Japan 'more than tripled'

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan more than tripled from a year earlier to JPY 112.9 billion (\$841 million) in May, buoyed by high export bills, government data showed Thursday. The surplus swelled by 202.7 percent, up for the 14th consecu-

tive month, and Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 14 years and four months, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Kuwait's overall exports to Japan soared 177.8 percent year-on-year to JPY 127.3 billion (\$948 million), for the 14th straight month of expansion. Imports from Japan also jumped 69.0 percent to JPY 14.4 billion (\$107 million) for the first increase in two months. Middle East's trade surplus with Japan inflated 155.8 percent to 1.1 trillion (\$8.0 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region jumping 129.7 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which account-

ed for 94.6 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, grew 136.7 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan also expanded 43.4 percent on demand for automobiles, manufactured goods, machinery and electrical machinery.

The world's third-biggest economy logged a global trade deficit of JPY 2.4 trillion (\$17.8 billion) in May for the 10th straight month, as surging energy bills and a weaker yen continued to push up the value of its imports. Exports rose 15.8 percent from the year before, thanks to robust shipments of steel, mineral fuels and semiconductor components. Imports jumped 48.9 percent on higher energy prices, especially crude oil, coal and

LNG. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

Kuwait oil price down

Meanwhile, the price of Kuwait oil went down by \$2.35 to \$120.68 per barrel on Wednesday in comparison with \$123.03 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday. In the international market, the price of the Brent crude went down by \$2.7 to \$118.51 per barrel, the same with the West Texas Intermediate, which went down by \$3.62 to \$114.60 pb. — KUNA

Al-Rai appoints Rashed Ali Al-Ameeri as CEO

KUWAIT: Al-Rai Media Group's board of directors announced the appointment of Rashed Ali Al-Ameeri as Chief Executive Officer effective June 19. Ameeri, who joined the group in April 2015, has vast experience in the media field. Keeping pace with the sector's developments qualified him to

become the CEO due to his outstanding performance and achievements in various posts since joining the group. Ameeri will be responsible for the development and implementation of the group's strategy at the level of all its operations and products, as well as the media platforms of the group.



Rashed Ali Al-Ameeri

Food security committee focuses on food availability

KUWAIT: The food security committee, which was formed by the Cabinet, held a meeting chaired by Deputy Premier, Oil Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Fares, where responsibilities of each ministry were distributed to implement the necessary procedures to maintain availability of food for citizens and residents in all markets while preventing price hikes and punishing those who abuse the current situation for illegal gains.

The Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies carried out its role, based on official instructions by the Social Affairs Ministry, which is a member of the food security committee and the political and administrative supervisor of co-ops, as it asked co-

op boards to make available a strategic stock of long-term consumer goods to face the global crisis and conflicts between countries. The union said the basic goods required to be in stock are mineral water, canned vegetables, canned meats and canned fish, in addition to dry batteries, candles and flashlights.

On the other hand, the Commerce and Industry Ministry did not take a final decision on the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry's request to cancel a decision to restrict prices made two years ago during the coronavirus pandemic, due to it being suitable for the current circumstances as prices are increasing worldwide, and this will negatively reflect on citizens and residents.

Informed sources said the commerce ministry postponed its decision in this regard until the end of October in anticipation of circumstances improving, adding the ministry will increase the budget of subsidized goods and make them available for citizens at ration centers, the latest of which is frozen chicken, which it agreed with companies to supply at reasonable prices.

index in Kuwait," he explained. The CBK decision also considered the open nature of the Kuwaiti economy that imports most of its commodities.

"The decisions taken by the Central Bank of Kuwait are informed by thorough assessments of the latest local and global economic data and considerations of the monetary policy that is intended to provide an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth and considers Kuwait's relations with the world. It monitors the movements on global interest rates to determine the appropriate rate for Kuwait," he added.

The governor further explained that the decision considered inter alia, the factors affecting the Consumer Price Index to assess the pressure on such prices. The CBK also considers the local factors affecting the inflation rates including the monetary factors stimulating the overall local demand. The governor concluded that CBK shall continue to closely monitor the local and international economic, monetary, and banking developments, and, whenever appropriate, shall use the available monetary policy instruments to safeguard financial and monetary stability. — KUNA

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
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Crescent
distributes clothes

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society has distributed clothes for 2,200 limited income families on the occasion of the forthcoming Eid Al-Adha. The KRCS Secretary General, Maha Al-Barjas, said in a statement on Wednesday that the clothes were given to families registered by the society. She has indicated that some companies have been contributing to the humanitarian allocations for the needy, locally.

'Limitless' endeavors

Kuwait has set a "limitless" precedent in the multilateral humanitarian arena, the chief of the International Committee for the Red Cross' (ICRC) delegation for Gulf Arab states Dr Omar Ouda said on Wednesday. Heaping praise on Kuwait's "humanitarian devotion," the ICRC official said ties with Kuwait are characterized by amity and solidity, adding that the ICRC and Kuwait have formed an effective tandem to meet the needs of humanity.

Amid talks with the outgoing ICRC official, Kuwait Red Crescent Society chief Dr Maha Al-Barjas highlighted the two sides' shared viewpoints on an array of matters dealing with humanitarian work. She went on to thank ICRC for its commitment and diligence in serving humanity across some of the world's most impoverished areas. —KUNA



Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People relax at a beach during sunset in Kuwait City, Kuwait. —Xinhua

Defense Ministry encourages Holy
Quran competition, honors winners

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday stressed the Ministry's keenness to provide the competition of memorizing and reciting the Holy Quran. This approach is in line with instructions by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to support and encourage those who memorize the Holy Quran through organizing the Annual Kuwait International Prize for Memorizing the Holy Quran.

According to a press statement by the Ministry, Sheikh Talal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sponsored the Awards Ceremony to honor the winners of the Holy Quran competition for the serving and retired soldiers of the Ministries of Defense, Interior, the National Guard and the General Fire Force.

He congratulated the winners in the competition. He expressed gratitude to the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations and the organizing committees of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs for their efforts and urged them to continue these efforts.

In his speech, Director of the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations Captain Mohammad Al-Awadhi expressed his gratitude



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is pictured with other officials during the honoring ceremony. —KUNA

for the great care that this year's Holy Quran competition received from Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled and the follow-up of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army Lieutenant-General Khaled

Saleh Al-Sabah. Chief of the General Staff of the Army Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah and several leading officers of the Kuwaiti Army attended the ceremony. —KUNA

KU marks CBA
golden jubilee

KUWAIT: Kuwait University on Wednesday celebrated the golden jubilee marking the graduation in 1971 of the first batch of the then faculty of commerce, economy and politics, now called College of Business Administration (CBA). The celebration, hosted by Sabah Al-Salem University City in Al-Shaddadiya neighborhood under patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, was opened by Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Ali Al-Modhaf.

The event attracted the presence of Kuwait University Rector Dr Yousef Al-Roumi, CBA Dean Mohammad Zenil, as well as a large number of academics, alumni and members of the Students Association of College of Business Administration. Dr Al-Modhaf, while speaking on behalf of the sponsor of the celebration, told the gathering that this occasion signals the prestige of higher education in Kuwait and is aimed at honoring the alumni of the college.

He cited the establishment of Sabah Al-Salem

University City as an example of the state's recognition of the noble message of higher education and its care for academic research at Kuwait University. He appreciated the CBA initiative to organize the celebration, and congratulated the college leaders on renewal of the international accreditation of the bachelor and master programs of the CBA.

The minister noted that the selection of the College's Dean as member of the consultative council of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, also known as AACSB International, is a deserved recognition of the CBA status. On his part, Dr Al-Roumi said the College has been a beacon of higher education that helped provide Kuwait with talented cadres since 1966. He noted that the celebration aims to maintain channels of contact with the CBA alumni, recognize their sacrifices for the homeland, and encourage them to continue serving the society. —KUNA



Dr Ali Al-Modhaf

India embassy honors blood
donor heroes, associations

KUWAIT: Embassy of India organized an event on 14 June to honor the Indian blood donor heroes and Indian community associations who have been organizing blood donation camps in Kuwait. Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George while delivering his remarks highlighted the critical contribution voluntary blood donors make to national health systems.

Ambassador expressed his happiness on the fact that Indians are the largest donors of blood in Kuwait. He appreciated the role of our blood donor heroes who like the doctors, nurses and other medical professionals are silently helping in saving many lives without seeking any fame or glory. He addressed them as unsung heroes.

He further said that a blood donation is truly a gift of life that a healthy individual can give to others in their community who are sick or injured. "Our blood can give a random stranger or a loved one another day in life, which is probably one of the best feelings one can ever have," he added.

Ambassador thanked the Indian community associations in Kuwait for organizing several blood donation camps - generating awareness among the youth and giving them opportunity to participate in these drives. He also thanked the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) for being one of the most reliable partners of embassy in its efforts to generate awareness within the community on topics of crucial relevance.



Meanwhile, a symposium captioned 'The Science Behind Blood Donation' was also organized by India Doctors Forum highlighting the benefits of blood donation both for the donor and the recipient. Dr Sajna Mohammed, Vice President spoke on behalf of the IDF. The Symposium was coordinated by Dr Lovy Agarwal and attended by Dr Mohan Ram, Dr Sunny Vargese, Dr Shameema Sharfuddin and Dr Satyanarayan Rajganesan.

There were musical performances and flash dance performance to raise awareness about blood donation. The event witnessed enthusiastic response with people from different walks of life in Kuwait participating virtually as well as physically. For more details about the event, please visit the website and social media handles of the Embassy.





Fresh protest in Bangladesh over India prophet remarks

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COLMAR, France: Children cool off in a fountain in Colmar, eastern France. The heat wave that arrived from Spain is starting in the south of the country with temperatures often exceeding 30°C in most regions. — AFP

France braces for early heatwave

Hottest month of May as Spain battles forest fires

PARIS, France: French officials warned Thursday that a record pre-summer heatwave was spreading north from Spain, where authorities were fighting several forest fires as the country sizzles under a sixth day of sweltering temperatures. The Meteo France weather service said it was the earliest hot spell to hit the country since at least 2005, worsening a drought caused by an unusually dry winter and spring and raising the risk of forest fires.

Spain, which had already seen its hottest month of May since the beginning of this century, was sweating under temperatures forecast as high as 43 degrees Celsius (109 Fahrenheit) and no relief is expected before Sunday, the Aemet weather service said. At least three blazes had erupted in Catalonia, including one near Baldomar, around 140 kilometres northeast of Barcelona, that had already burned 500 hectares but could grow to 20,000 hectares before it is contained, the regional government said.

No evacuations have yet been ordered but people are being urged to remain in their homes. In neighbouring Portugal, last month was the hottest

May since 1931, with most scientists attributing the early season heat to global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

The heat crossed the Pyrenees into southern France on Tuesday and was set to hit most of the country by Saturday, when thermometers could

reach 38 Celsius in Paris. Authorities have already warned of increased wildfire risks in forests surrounding the capital, and Paris and other areas have

issued alerts over ozone pollution, which occurs when intense sunlight transforms carbon emissions into smog.

"I'm 86 years old, I was born here, but I think this is the worst heat wave I've ever seen," Jacqueline Bonnaud told AFP at a shaded park in the southern city of Toulouse.

Electricity, rail hit

A surge in the use of air-conditioners and fans was forcing France to import electricity from neighbouring countries, grid operator RTE said Thursday, since many of the country's nuclear reactors are offline to evaluate potential corrosion risks or for maintenance. The intense heat is also lowering river levels, meaning some nuclear plants must reduce output because water used for cooling reactors is too hot to be returned to waterways without endangering plants and wildlife.

Spain, Italy and other countries have recently limited the use of air-conditioners to save energy, and French Energy Minister Agnes Pannier-

Runacher told France 2 television that she was considering the same.

Meteo France issued heatwave alerts covering half the country in the south and west Thursday and said more departments would be impacted in the coming days. "Saturday will be the peak, with temperatures of 35 to 39 degrees across most of the country," said Tristan Amm, a forecaster at the agency.

Schools have stocked up on water and several have moved end-of-year exams to north-facing rooms, while some departments in the south have said classes will be cancelled on Friday afternoon. Cities such as Bordeaux have also installed misting devices on the hottest squares and streets.

Rail operator SNCF has warned of potential delays as trains are forced to slow because the heat has deformed tracks or damaged electrical equipment. "Our infrastructure suffers" in the heat, said SNCF regional director Thierry Rose, noting that track-level temperatures in Bordeaux had hit 52 Celsius (126 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday. — AFP



No evacuations have yet been ordered

Hariri killers sentenced to life imprisonment

BEIRUT: A UN-backed court sentenced two Hezbollah members in their absence to life imprisonment on Thursday for a huge Beirut bombing in 2005 that killed Lebanon's ex-premier Rafic Hariri. Habib Merhi and Hussein Oneissi were found guilty on appeal in March by the Dutch-based Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) over the attack, which killed 21 other people and injured 226.

The court found Merhi and Oneissi distributed a video in which a fictitious group claimed responsibility for the attack, in a bid to protect the "real perpetrators" from a covert network in the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah. But the pair are unlikely to ever spend time behind bars as Hezbollah has refused to hand them over, as it has refused to surrender a third man, Salim Ayyash, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2020.

Presiding judge Ivana Hrdlickova said both Merhi and Oneissi were aware that Hariri would be killed in the attack, adding that the sentences reflected the "evil nature of terrorism". "The appeals chamber therefore unanimously decides to sentence Mr Merhi and Mr Oneissi to life imprisonment, the heaviest sentence under the statute and the rules for each of the five counts on which they were convicted," she said.

The men were found guilty of conspiracy to commit a terrorist act, and of being accomplices to commit a terrorist act, accomplices in the intentional homicide of Hariri and of the 21 other people, and accomplices in the attempted homicide of the 226 injured. The attack on Sunni billionaire Hariri, who had stepped down as Lebanon's prime minister in October 2004, triggered protests that drove Syria out of Lebanon after a 29-year military deployment. — AFP

Indian protesters burn trains over military jobs plan

PATNA: Angry mobs in India set fire to several trains and clashed with police on Thursday during rallies against a new short-term military recruitment scheme. This week the government announced a temporary recruitment plan to induct young adults into the armed forces for four years—a major break from the past as non-commissioned ranks are seen as lifetime jobs.

Macron allies trade barbs ahead of polls

PARIS: France's left-wing forces and allies of centrist President Emmanuel Macron exchanged bitter accusations Thursday ahead of the final round of tightly-contested parliamentary elections, where the French leader risks losing his overall majority. Losing a majority in the 577-seat National Assembly lower house in Sunday's vote could be a heavy blow to Macron's hopes of reform, just two months after he triumphed against far-right leader Marine Le Pen in presidential elections.

Macron has endured a tricky start to his second term—against a background of rising prices and Russia's invasion of Ukraine—while the French left has finally united its disparate forces into a coalition.

The final campaigning is taking place with Macron out of the country as he visits Ukraine at the end of a three-day trip that has seen him travel to Romania and Moldova. The first round on June 12 painted an inconclusive picture, with Macron's centrist Ensemble (Together) coalition and the left-wing Nupes alliance led by hard-leftist Jean-Luc Melenchon neck-and-neck on around 26 percent of the popular vote each.

Just five MPs—four from Nupes and one from Ensemble—were elected outright in the first round, leaving all to play for in Sunday's final stage of voting. Polls project a range between either a slim majority for Ensemble or falling short by several dozen seats of the

new recruits will miss out on entitlements enjoyed by existing personnel, including government pensions, unless they are retained after the four-year programme. Police in the eastern state of Bihar fired tear gas to disperse unruly crowds who set four train carriages alight and tried to storm government buildings.

The protests were "initially peaceful but turned violent at a few places", a senior officer in the state capital Patna told AFP. Riot police "acted carefully to avoid opening fire at the protesters. There have been no casualties or serious injuries so far," he added.

Authorities cancelled nearly two dozen passenger train services and deployed additional police to railway stations in an effort to prevent further destruction. Bihar has some of India's highest unemployment and

poverty rates and has earned a reputation as a state left behind by the country's runaway economic growth of the past few decades.

In January crowds of angry job applicants in Bihar set fire to train carriages, blocked railway tracks and burned effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They had claimed that entrance exams for the government-run rail sector were being conducted unfairly.

Unemployment has long been a millstone around the Indian economy's neck, with joblessness figures at their worst since the 1970s even before the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on local commerce. Modi's government pitched the new military recruitment plan as a pathway to modernise the armed forces with a younger and leaner soldier corps while also creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs. — AFP



HAYANGE, France: France's far-right Rassemblement National (RN) leader and parliamentary candidate Marine Le Pen (C), flanked by RN mayor of Hayange Fabien Engelmann (L), leaves the townhall during a campaign visit to support RN's regional councillor and candidate Laurent Jacobelli (R). — AFP

289 MPs needed for an overall majority.

The nightmare outcome for Macron—seen as unlikely but not totally excluded—would be a majority for Nupes that would see Melenchon become prime minister in an uncomfortable "cohabitation".

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne told French television late Wednesday in a prime-time interview that the "seriousness" of the international situation meant it was vital to hold a "strong majority in the National Assembly to continue to hold our place in Europe and in the world". — AFP

Italian commits medically assisted suicide

ROME: A tetraplegic Italian committed medically assisted suicide Thursday, campaigners said, after winning approval from an ethics committee in the first case of its kind in Italy. Federico Carboni, 44, from Senigallia in the Marche region, "died this morning at 11:05 am... after self-administering the lethal drug through a special machine", the Luca Coscioni Association that helped with his case announced.

Helping someone take their own life is technically illegal in Italy, punishable with between five and 12 years behind bars. But the Constitutional Court ruled in 2019 that it was not always a crime to help someone in "intolerable" suffering, who is capable of making their own decision.

Until his death, Carboni had been known to the public as "Mario", a truck driver who had been receiving 24-hour care since an accident fractured his spine and left him completely immobilised 10 years ago.

"I do not deny that I am sorry to take leave of life, I would not be true to myself, and a liar, if I said otherwise, because life is great and we only have one," he was quoted as saying before he died. "But unfortunately, that's how it is." — AFP

International

Watergate: A scandal for the ages that could yet be eclipsed

'Nixon did not need to order a break-in to win that election'

WASHINGTON: Fifty years since it ignited Washington, the Watergate affair remains a cautionary tale on the threat of untrammelled presidential power and the yardstick against which all other political scandals are judged. Yet some historians believe its architect, Richard Nixon, risks being displaced as the norm-breaking exemplar of presidential corruption by Donald Trump and the firestorm over his role in the 2021 US Capitol assault.

Nixon's underlying crime was covering up a break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington's Watergate complex to steal documents that might have helped him in an election he would ultimately win by a landslide anyway.

The accusations against Trump—that he incited a deadly riot to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power as part of a conspiracy to overturn an election—appear “far more serious,” says history professor Michael Green. Nixon “already has been knocked off his perch, frankly,” Green, of the University of Nevada Las Vegas, told AFP.

“One of the ironies is that Nixon did not need to order a break-in to win that election,” he said. “And there is no evidence, even with all of the tapes, that there was ever a discussion or thought of overturning the result if it went against him.”

Five Watergate burglars were caught red-handed on June 17, 1972 and it quickly emerged that some were linked to the Nixon campaign and the White House. The ensuing probe eventually opened a Pandora's box of abus-

es and dirty tricks that included political spying, the forgery of correspondence and even the theft of a pair of shoes to intimidate a Nixon rival.

But the cover-up was initially so successful that Nixon won 49 of the 50 states in his landslide victory over Democrat George McGovern in that year's presidential election.

'The first seditious president'

The whitewash might have succeeded were it not for the chance discovery in the summer of 1973 that the president had secretly recorded all of his White House meetings. They included a “smoking gun” tape in which Nixon could be heard ordering that the FBI, which was set to investigate the Watergate break-in, be told to “stay the hell out of this.” Nixon resigned after a delegation of Republican elders, led by ultra-conservative Barry Goldwater, came to the White House in 1974 to tell him he was likely to be impeached and the jig was up. He was ultimately pardoned but many of his top aides went to jail.

Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, the reporters who played a pivotal role in bringing down Nixon, have written a new foreword for their iconic book “All the President's Men” drawing parallels to Trump.

Their comparison offers an insight into a pair of outsiders who felt besieged by enemies in the media and institutions of state. But they suggest that Trump's incitement of a mob to march on the Capitol constituted “a deception

that exceeded even Nixon's imagination.”

“By legal definition this is clearly seditious... thus Trump became the first seditious president in our history,” they say. Analysts interviewed by AFP pointed to the vastly different political and media landscape Nixon and Trump faced when it came to consequences for their actions.

The Goldwater intervention, for example, would be inconceivable among the vast majority of today's serving Republicans, who have stuck by Trump through two impeachments and numerous other controversies.

'Just another story'

And while the Senate voted unanimously to set up a cross-party investigative committee on Watergate, the Republicans of the 2020s vetoed a bipartisan commission and punished two members who joined the Democratic-led House committee investigating January 6.

Some 80 million Americans—considerably more than a third of the population—tuned in to White House counsel John Dean's televised testimony against Nixon at the Watergate hearings. Around 20 million—just six percent of Americans—watched the blockbuster first hearing put on by the January 6 panel.

For David Greenberg, author of “Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image,” the Watergate hearings were “instrumental” in bringing down a president attempting to subvert democracy. “The difference, however, is that in 1973 and 1974 a great many Republican congressmen



WASHINGTON: File photo shows US president Richard Nixon, visits US troops in Vietnam. Fifty years since it ignited Washington, the Watergate affair remains a cautionary tale on the threat of untrammelled presidential power and the yardstick against which all other political scandals are judged. —AFP

and senators loyal to Nixon ended up admitting that he was engaged in criminal activity,” he told AFP.

“Today, only a few... have been willing to acknowledge Trump's complicity. Our polarized, partisan environment may prevent the January 6 hearings from achieving all they should.” Meanwhile Trump's impeachment for inciting the insurrection—and the apparent cover up of almost eight hours of his phone calls on January 6 — have not significantly eroded his support base. —AFP

US Capitol riot probe to address Trump pressure on VP Pence

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers were set to focus Thursday on the pressure campaign mounted by Donald Trump against his vice president to help the defeated Republican leader overturn his 2020 presidential election defeat.

Liz Cheney, vice chair of the House committee investigating the Capitol riot, said its third June hearing would address Trump's “relentless effort” on January 6 2021 and in the days beforehand to cajole Mike Pence into rejecting Joe Biden's victory.

“As a federal judge has indicated, this likely violated two federal criminal statutes. President Trump had no factual basis for what he was doing and he had been told it was illegal,” Cheney said on Twitter.

“Despite this, President Trump plotted with a lawyer named John Eastman and others to overturn the outcome of the election on January 6.” An aide to the committee said the hearing would look at Eastman's role in developing a plot for Trump to pressure Pence into subverting the election, backed by a bogus legal theory that represented a “grave danger to American democracy.”

Cheney's tweet featured a clip of testimony from Trump White House attorney Eric Herschmann who told Eastman the day after the insurrection: “Get a great offing criminal defense lawyer. You're going to need it.”

The committee is in the middle of a run of televised hearings on the insurrection mounted by a pro-Trump mob to overturn the results of the 2020 election. It has already revealed testimony from many of Trump's closest allies who said he was told repeatedly he'd lost a fair fight to Biden but declared victory and pushed his election fraud narrative anyway.

As dozens of legal challenges dismissed as inept and ethically suspect failed in courts across the land, a desperate Trump turned to Pence for illegal help. Trump



WASHINGTON: Vice Chairwoman Rep. Liz Cheney (R-WY), speaks during a hearing by the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the US Capitol in the Cannon House Office Building on June 13, 2022 in Washington. —AFP

used rally speeches and Twitter to exert intense pressure on Pence to abuse his position as president of the Senate to reject the election results as they were being ratified on January 6.

“We're going to show that that pressure campaign directly contributed to the attack on the Capitol, and it puts the vice president's life in danger,” a select committee aide said.

'Hang Mike Pence'

During his “Stop the Steal” rally ahead of the joint session of the House and Senate to ratify the election, Trump mentioned Pence numerous times as he told his supporters to march on the Capitol and “fight like hell.”

But Pence wrote to Congress that the Founding Fathers never intended the vice president to have “unilateral authority” to overturn election counts, adding that “no vice president in American history has ever asserted such authority.” The mob whipped up by Trump threatened to hang Pence for failing to cooperate as they stormed the Capitol, and even erected a gallows in front of the building.

Cheney said last week that when the subject of the “hang Mike Pence” chants came up at the White House, Trump responded: “Maybe our supporters have the right idea” and that Pence “deserves” it. —AFP

Disgraced surgeon found guilty of harming patient

STOCKHOLM: A Swedish court on Thursday found an Italian surgeon, once hailed for pioneering wind-pipe surgery, guilty of causing bodily harm to a patient, but cleared him of assault charges brought by prosecutors.

Paolo Macchiarini won praise in 2011 after claiming to have performed the world's first synthetic trachea transplants using stem cells, while he was a surgeon at Stockholm's Karolinska University Hospital. The experimental procedure was hailed as a breakthrough in regenerative medicine.

But allegations soon emerged that the procedure had been carried out on at least one person who had not been critically ill at the time of the surgery. During the May trial held in the Solna district court, prosecutors argued that the surgeries on three patients in Sweden constituted assault, or alternatively bodily harm due to negligence, as Macchiarini disregarded “science and proven experience.”

The district court agreed with the prosecutors that the procedures were not consistent with “science and proven experience,” but cleared Macchiarini on two counts as the patients' health were in such a dire state.

“Given the patients' condition the district court finds that the procedures on the first two patients were justifiable,” it said in a statement. However in the case of the third patient, the court found him guilty of “causing bodily harm.”

“At the time of the procedure of the third patient, the experience from the first procedures was such that the surgeon should have refrained from letting yet another patient go through the operation,” the court said. Macchiarini was handed a suspended sentence, which in Sweden means that if he were to commit another crime during a two-year probation peri-



Paolo Macchiarini seen with a patient.

od, the court would re-evaluate his sentence.

'Plan B'

Together with his colleagues, Macchiarini, 63, performed a total of eight such transplants between 2011 and 2014 — three in Sweden in 2011 and 2012, and five in Russia. The three patients in Sweden died, though the deaths have not been directly linked to the surgeries. Four of the five Russian patients have also died, according to Swedish media reports.

Macchiarini himself insisted in court that the transplants were an alternative decided upon after all other options had been excluded—what he referred to as a “Plan B.” His lawyer, Bjorn Hurtig, meanwhile insisted that the surgeries were the result of “teamwork” and had been discussed with other senior colleagues.

Macchiarini was also employed by the Karolinska Institute research facility, which awards the Nobel Medicine Prize. An external review in 2015 found Macchiarini guilty of research misconduct. Even though the Institute sacked him in 2016, it repeatedly defended him until 2018, when its own review found him and several other researchers guilty of scientific misconduct. —AFP

Top EU leaders back Ukraine...

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The European Commission will meet Friday to give its official opinion on Ukraine's formal bid for EU candidacy, which must be approved by all 27 member states.

Once a candidate, it may take several years for Ukraine — already a poor country with a reputation for corruption before Russia's assault — to meet membership criteria. The NATO alliance will also meet in Madrid before the end of the month — with Zelensky attending as a guest by videoconference. Members will discuss weapons and training for Ukrainian forces and shoring up their own eastern flank against the Russian threat.

“I explained our essential needs in the field of defense,” Zelensky said after meeting the visiting leaders. “We are expecting new deliveries, above all heavy weapons, modern artillery, anti-aircraft defence systems,” he said, even as Macron said France would send six Caesar self-propelled howitzers to add to the 12 already deployed on Ukraine's eastern front. “Every batch of these deliveries saves Ukrainians. Every day of delayed or postponed decisions is an opportunity for the Russian military to kill Ukrainians or ruin our cities,” Zelensky said.

Earlier, on a tour of Irpin, Macron had declared: “France has been alongside Ukraine since day one. We stand with the Ukrainians without ambiguity. Ukraine must resist and win.” Surrounded by the wreckage left by Ukraine's successful but hard-

fought defense of its capital in the early stages of the 113-day-old conflict, Draghi said: “We will rebuild everything. They destroyed kindergartens, they destroyed playgrounds. Everything will be rebuilt.”

It is the first time the three have visited Kyiv since Russia's Feb 24 invasion. Germany, especially, has been criticized for slow weapons deliveries, but western defense ministers met in Brussels to discuss what more they can do and on Wednesday, US President Joe Biden announced \$1 billion worth of new arms for Ukrainian forces. Moscow was dismissive of the European visit, and of the arms supplies. “Supporting Ukraine by further pumping Ukraine with weapons,” warned Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov would be “absolutely useless and will cause further damage to the country.”

Zelensky countered: “Russia does not want peace, it never wants anything but war.” The new US support package includes howitzers, ammunition, anti-ship missile systems, and additional rockets for new artillery systems that Ukraine will soon put in the field. Fighting in eastern Ukraine is focused on the industrial city of Severodonetsk, and Russians forces appear close to consolidating control after weeks of intense battles.

Sergiy Gaidar — the governor of the Lugansk region, which includes the city — said Thursday around 10,000 civilians remain trapped in the city, out of a pre-war population of some 100,000. Kyiv's army is “holding back the enemy as much as possible,” he said on Telegram. “For almost four months they have dreamt of controlling Severodonetsk... and they do not count the victims.”

Elsewhere, Russia launched a missile strike on Ukraine's northeast Sumy region, killing four people and injuring six others, governor Dmytro Zhyvytsky said on Telegram. —AFP

said this stems from Egypt's quest to recover missing pieces, adding that France has already returned hundreds of items, while tens came from Italy and Spain. Four of the items confiscated in Kuwait were statues of Egyptian pharaohs including Amenhotep III and Amun-Ra, and the ancient Egyptian god Horus, as well as an ornate stone mural. —KUNA

Tunisia grinds to a halt as...

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“This is a stubborn government which sows discord and spreads false information,” Taboubi told the demonstrators. “We won't stop campaigning, no matter the cost, until our demands are met.” The strike comes as Tunisia prepares to enter formal talks with the International Monetary Fund on a new bailout plan for its debt-laden economy.

Tunisians are facing soaring inflation, which hit 7.8 percent in May, and the UGTT has demanded a new deal to raise public sector salaries, including retroactively for last year. While its opponents say the UGTT is ignoring the country's deep financial woes, the IMF has made a bailout deal conditional on the trade unions' support. The government has presented a reform plan to the global lender which includes a

freeze on the public sector wage bill, progressive cuts to some subsidies and a restructuring of publicly owned companies.

But the UGTT has warned against “painful reforms” aimed at pleasing the IMF. “We're not demanding a pay rise, but a reset to workers' purchasing power to take inflation into account,” as well as the scrapping of a one-percent social security tax introduced in 2018, Taboubi said. The union has also demanded guarantees that state sector firms, including some monopolies and flag carrier Tunisair, remain publicly owned.

Tunisian economist Fadel Kaboub said the strike was “the culmination of a collective failure by more than 10 Tunisian governments, the UGTT, the IMF and Tunisia's international partners” to restructure the economy. “It will serve as a reminder to the IMF that working people in Tunisia can only sustain so much economic pain.” While the UGTT insists the strike is not political, it comes as President Kais Saied faces intense criticism for excluding opposition forces from his “national dialogue” — part of a push to overhaul the Tunisian state and consolidate an ongoing power grab. —AFP

US captures top IS leader in...

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targeted a house on the outskirts of the village where displaced people from the Syrian city of Aleppo were living.

He reported busy activity in the skies during the nighttime operation. “About eight aircraft flew for more than an hour and a half,” he said. “When they left, we headed to the house and found the women tied up and the children in a nearby field.” He said the women told them that coalition forces had arrested “a man named Fawaz”.

Other residents told AFP that about four men and six women had lived in the house, but that they did not know whether they were a family, and that they did not mix with the rest of the village. Other eyewitnesses told AFP that a pro-Turkish Syrian group arrested the two other men after the opera-

tion. After IS lost its last territory following a military onslaught backed by the US-led coalition in March 2019, its remnants in Syria mostly retreated into desert hideouts.

IS cells have since ambushed Kurdish-led forces and Syrian government or allied forces, also carrying out similar attacks in Iraq. The group's top leaders however often take cover in areas controlled by other forces. Qurashi's notorious predecessor, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was killed in a US special forces raid in northwestern Syria, far from IS' area of operations.

Little is known about new leader Abu Hasan Al-Hashemi Al-Qurashi, the jihadist group's third chief since its inception. Media reports that he was captured in Istanbul last month were never confirmed, with a Turkish official only telling AFP that a senior but unidentified IS member had been detained.

Observers have long feared a resurgence of IS in the badlands that straddle the Iraqi-Syrian border and formed the heart of the group's once sprawling proto-state. Yet with constant coalition pressure on its leadership and its sources of financing, the jihadist group still has no fixed positions in either country and the intensity of its attacks has remained largely unchanged since 2019. —AFP

Kuwait returns five pharaonic...

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Kuwait in March to follow up the case. Shaltout

International

Fresh protest in Bangladesh over India prophet remarks

India heightens security in several regions for coming Friday prayers

DHAKA: Around 10,000 Muslims demonstrated in the Bangladeshi capital on Thursday in the second protest in a week over remarks about the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) by an Indian official that sparked anger across the Islamic world. Authorities in India have meanwhile ordered heightened security in several regions for coming Friday prayers after two people were shot dead in protests there last week, local media reported.

Last Friday Muslims took to the streets in huge numbers across Asia following the comments by a spokeswoman for India's ruling party on May 26. The governments of nearly 20 countries summoned Indian envoys for an explanation of Nupur Sharma's remarks about the prophet and his youngest wife.

Shouting slogans such as "Muslims of the world unite", the Bangladeshi protesters on Thursday rallied in front of Dhaka's biggest mosque and tried to march to the Indian embassy before being blocked by police.

"There were around 10,000 marchers. They were peaceful," senior police official Enamul Haq told AFP. The protest was organised by Islami Andolan Bangladesh, one of the largest Islamist political parties in Bangladesh, which is home to the world's fourth-largest Muslim population.

Around 150,000 people demonstrated last Friday in major Bangladeshi cities including 20,000

in the capital Dhaka and thousands more in towns and at universities. Speakers at the Dhaka rally on Thursday called for a boycott of Indian products and demanded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally lodge a protest with India.

Hasina, who has been in power for 13 years, is a close ally of India and has stopped short of condemning Sharma's remarks. Derogatory comments about Islam and the prophet on social media often trigger violent protests in Bangladesh. They often also spark riots targeting minorities.

Last year at least six people were killed when widespread anti-Hindu riots swept the southeast of Bangladesh after an alleged desecration of a Quran, Islam's holy book, in a Hindu temple.

Bulldozers

Since coming to power in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government and his Bharatiya Janata Party have been accused of championing discriminatory policies towards India's Muslim minority. Sharma's comments sent the BJP into damage control, with the party suspending her from its ranks and insisting it respected all religions.

As largely peaceful protests raged in several Indian cities last Friday, police opened fire in eastern Ranchi, killing two people after demonstrators threw stones and bottles. Since then the homes of several people arrested or identified as protesters



DHAKA: Activists and supporters gather outside the Baitul Mukarram National mosque before marching towards the Indian embassy in Dhaka on June 16, 2022, to protest against the remarks on the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) by an India's ruling party official. —AFP

have been demolished with bulldozers in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which is governed for the BJP by hardline Hindu monk Yogi Adityanath. Amnesty International called for an immediate end to what the rights group called a "vicious" crackdown and "excessive use of force, arbitrary detention and punitive house demolitions".

Authorities in several Indian regions including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Muslim-majority Kashmir have told security personnel to tighten security around mosques on Friday, local media reported. The Hindustan Times newspaper said a few districts in these states had banned congregations of more than four people. —AFP



'Muslims of the world unite'

Thousands flock to Indonesian volcano for Hindu ritual

PROBOLINGGO, Indonesia: Thousands of Hindu worshippers climbed an active volcano in Indonesia on Thursday to throw offerings from crops to livestock down its smouldering crater in a centuries-old religious ceremony.

Every year people from the Tengger tribe gather from villages in the highlands around Mount Bromo to trek to its peak to cast goats, chickens, fruit, flowers and vegetables into its crater as part of the Yadnya Kasada festival.

A chain of worshippers, some lugging goats on their backs, trekked to the edge of the crater in hope of pleasing their Hindu gods while bringing prosperity and good fortune to the communities of the Tenggerese, an Indigenous group in eastern Java.

"Despite the pandemic, I still come up here every year bringing crops (to be thrown into the crater) to express gratitude to the gods and the ancestors," Wawan, one of the worshippers, told AFP. Wawan had earlier launched offerings of chicken and crops into the volcanic cauldron while

wishing for good health and fortune on top of the mountain famed for its stunning sunrise views.

Some villagers not part of the Tengger tribe stood on the crater's steep slopes armed with nets in a bid to snatch the offerings out of the air before they disappeared into the smoky void. It is not part of the ritual, but some members of the local population have the frugal urge not to let the offerings go to waste.

Thursday's ritual was the third Yadnya Kasada ceremony since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Indonesia, but it did not deter worshippers from again carrying out their yearly sacrifice. Bambang Suprpto, head of the area's Hindu community association, said the annual ritual had to continue as it "cannot be held in another place" or virtually.

But access to the crater during the ritual was limited to worshippers and tourists were barred in line with the government's COVID-19 guidance, he added. The festival dates back to the 15th-century legends of the Javanese Hindu Majapahit kingdom's princess Roro Anteng and her husband.

Unable to bear children after years of marriage, the couple begged the gods for help.

Their prayers were answered and they were promised 25 children, as long as they agreed to sacrifice their youngest child by throwing him into Mount Bromo.

Legend has it their son willingly jumped into



PROBOLINGGO, Indonesia: Villagers use nets to catch offerings thrown by members of the Tengger sub-ethnic group in the crater of the active Mount Bromo volcano as part of the Yadnya Kasada festival in Probolinggo, East Java province on June 16, 2022. —AFP

the volcano to guarantee the prosperity of the Tengger people. The sacrifice tradition continues to this day, although the Tengger tribe sacrifices their harvest and farm animals instead of humans. As local community chief Bambang lobbed his batch of crops into the volcanic crater, he prayed for harmonious relations between humans and God, nature, and their fellow human beings. "If we take care of nature, it will take care of us as well," he said. —AFP

Women not wearing hijab 'trying to look like animals'

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan: The Taliban's religious police have put up posters across the southern Afghan city of Kandahar saying that Muslim women who do not wear an Islamic hijab that fully covers their bodies are "trying to look like animals", an official confirmed on Thursday.

Since seizing power in August, the Taliban have imposed harsh restrictions on Afghan women, rolling back the marginal gains they made during the two decades since the US invaded the country and ousted the group's previous regime. In May, the country's supreme leader and Taliban chief Hibatullah Akhundzada approved a decree saying women should generally stay at home. They were ordered to cover themselves completely, including their faces, should they need to go out in public.

This week, the Taliban's feared Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which enforces the group's strict interpretation of Islam, put up posters across Kandahar city showing images of burqas, a type of

garment that covers a woman's body from head to toe.

"Muslim women who do not wear the hijab are trying to look like animals", say the posters, which have been slapped on many cafes and shops as well as on advertising hoardings across Kandahar — the de facto power centre of the Taliban.

Wearing short, tight and transparent clothes was also against Akhundzada's decree, the posters say. The ministry's spokesman in the capital Kabul was not reachable for comment, but a top local official confirmed that the posters were put up.

"We have put up these posters and those women whose faces are not covered (in public) we will inform their families and take steps according to the decree," Abdul Rahman Tayebi, head of the ministry in Kandahar, told AFP. Akhundzada's decree orders authorities to warn and even suspend from government jobs male relatives of women who do not comply.

Outside of Kabul, the burqa, the wearing of which was mandatory for



KANDAHAR: A burqa-clad woman walks past a banner placed by Taliban authorities asking women to wear a hijab, in Kandahar on June 16, 2022. —AFP

women under the Taliban's first stint in power, is common.

On Wednesday, United Nations rights chief Michelle Bachelet slammed the hardline Islamist government for its "institutionalised systematic oppression" of women. "Their situation is critical," she said.

After returning to power, the Taliban had promised a softer version of their previous harsh system of gov-

ernance, enforced from 1996 to 2001.

But since August, many restrictions have been imposed on women. Tens of thousands of girls have been shut out of secondary schools, while women have been barred from returning to many government jobs.

Women have also been banned from travelling alone and can only visit public parks in the capital on days when men are not allowed. —AFP

Thai influencers charged with royal insult over adverts

BANGKOK, Thailand: Thai police charged three social media influencers with lese majeste Thursday over controversial social media advertisements for an e-commerce firm that monarchists said mocked a member of the royal family.

The TikTok clips promoting Lazada-owned by China's Alibaba Group-enraged ultra-royalists who called for it to be banned in the kingdom, and led to the Thai military barring the firm's delivery

vehicles from its premises.

Criticism of the monarchy is taboo in Thailand, where King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his close family are protected by some of the world's toughest royal insult laws, with each charge carrying a prison term of up to 15 years.

Police Colonel Siriwat Deepto from the Technology Crime Suppression Division confirmed to AFP the arrest of the three people acting in the clips: Anuwat Pratumklin, Kittikhun Thamakitirat and Thidaporn Chaokovieng. Their lawyer Duangrat Srinaunt told AFP the trio had been freed on bail and that they denied the charges.

In the clips Thidaporn, wearing a traditional Thai silk costume, sits in a wheelchair playing an influencer's mother—which angry monarchists said

was an insulting allusion to a member of the royal family. The material also attracted criticism from disability campaigners who described it as distasteful and disrespectful to wheelchair users.

Lazada—one of Southeast Asia's biggest online shopping platforms—and the advertising firm which produced the clips have issued apologies. "We understand the content has traumatised the public and reduced human dignity," the retailer said in May, adding the adverts had been taken down.

Thailand's lese majeste laws have long drawn criticism from human rights activists, who say they are overly broad and misused to suppress debate. Use of the legislation slowed for several years but picked up again when youth-led street protests sprung up in 2020 calling for democratic change and reforms to the monarchy. —AFP

News in brief

Nigeria police rescue 35 teens

LAGOS: Nigerian police say they have rescued 35 teenage girls from a hotel where they were used as sex slaves and then forced to give birth and sell their babies. Nigerian police have previously freed dozens of under-aged women and babies from illegal maternity homes known as "baby factories" where women are forced to have children for sale on the black market. The teenagers were rescued from the Gally Gally hotel on Monday in the south-eastern state of Anambra, where they were used "for sex slaves, prostitution and baby factory," state police spokesman Tochukwu Ikenga said late Wednesday. Four of the girls were pregnant, he said, while some weapons and cash were recovered from the hotel. Ikenga said investigations were ongoing while the girls would be handed over to the government agencies for rehabilitation. —AFP

New permits for Gaza workers

JERUSALEM: Zionist entity announced an extra 2,000 entry permits for Palestinians in Gaza Thursday, bringing the total number of permits for workers from the blockaded enclave to 14,000. "Following a security assessment, the minister of defence has decided to raise the quota of entry permits for work and commerce in the Zionist entity by an additional 2,000," COGAT, the Zionist defence ministry body responsible for civil affairs in the Palestinian territories, said. "All the latest civil measures regarding the Gaza Strip are dependent on the continued maintenance of stable security over time, and their expansion will be considered in light of the situation as evaluated," it said in a statement. Zionist entity has maintained a strict blockade on the Gaza Strip since 2007, when the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas seized power. Only the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt is outside Zionist control and it too has remained largely closed. —AFP

Slovakia donates choppers to Ukraine

BRATISLAVA: Slovakia has donated one Mi-2 and four Mi-17 helicopters and thousands of Grad rockets to Ukraine, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad said on his Facebook account on Thursday. "This assistance to Ukraine, as well as all previous supplies, will be reimbursed from the European Peace Facility, which is a strong expression of the European Union's solidarity with Ukraine," Nad said. The defence minister said Ukraine was already using the donated helicopters and ammunition and that the helicopters donated had been replaced by UH-60M Black Hawks. Slovakia has donated military equipment to Ukraine worth 154 million euros (\$160 million) since the beginning of the war, the defence ministry said. Ukraine has pleaded for allies to send more weapons to help it repel Russia's invasion, with officials saying only a fraction of what they have asked for has so far been delivered. —AFP

FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2022

Business

Fed announces biggest rate hike since 1994

Soaring gas, food prices have left Americans struggling to make ends meet

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve announced the most aggressive interest rate increase in nearly 30 years on Wednesday, and said it is prepared to do so again next month in an all-out battle to drive down surging inflation. The super-sized 0.75-percentage-point hike came with the Fed under intense pressure to curb soaring gas and food prices that have left millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet and sent President Joe Biden's approval ratings plunging.



WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference on interest rates, the economy and monetary policy actions, at the Federal Reserve Building on June 15, 2022. — AFP

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said it was "essential" to lower inflation, and policymakers "have both the tools we need and the resolve it will take to restore price stability on behalf of American families". He stressed that the goal is to achieve that without derailing the US economy, but acknowledged there is always a risk of going too far.

The Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee raised the benchmark borrowing rate to a range of 1.5-1.75 percent, up from zero at the start of the year. It was the first 75-basis-point increase since Nov 1994. Powell told reporters the move was "an unusually large one," but he does not expect "moves of

this size to be common." However, "from the perspective of today, either a 50-basis-point or a 75-basis-point increase seems most likely at our next meeting," he said. "It is essential that we bring inflation down if we are to have a sustained period of strong labor market conditions that benefit all."

Biden has endorsed the Fed's effort and is hoping for success as his Democrats face the possibility of losing control of Congress in key midterm elections in November. He has blamed opposition Republicans for blocking bills meant to help lower costs and ease supply constraints. White House economic adviser Brian Deese told Fox News "the most constructive steps that Congress and the executive branch can take to help support what the Fed is trying to do are to lower the cost that families face directly and to lower the federal deficit."

'Brace yourself'

Wall Street loved the aggressive posture, closing sharply higher following Powell's comments. But Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank President Esther George, a noted inflation hawk, dissented from the committee vote, preferring a smaller, half-point increase. Until recently, the central bank seemed set to approve a 0.5-percentage-point increase, but economists say the rapid surge in inflation put the Fed behind the curve, meaning it needed to react strongly to prove its resolve to combat scorching price increases.

Committee members now see the federal funds rate ending the year at 3.4 percent, up from the 1.9 percent projection in March, according to the median quarterly forecast. They also expect growth slowing to 1.7 percent in 2022 from the previous 2.8 percent forecast. However, Powell stressed that "we are not trying to induce a recession now."

But Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton, a long-time Fed watcher, said, "It is not clear the economy will be as resilient as the Fed expects." She called the central bank's outlook "fanciful" and compared the current



NEW YORK: People shop at a store along a busy shopping street in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn on June 15, 2022. — AFP

situation to the early 1980s when then-Fed chief Paul Volcker drove interest rates up to 20 percent to choke off inflation, tumbling the economy into recession. "Brace yourself for what comes next. This is a Volcker-Esque Fed. That means the Fed is willing to take a rise in unemployment and a recession to avert a repeat of mistakes of the 1970s," she said on Twitter. "Growing up in Detroit, I remember that period well. It was ugly with deep scars."

Caught off guard

US central bankers began raising interest rates off zero in March as buoyant demand from American consumers for homes, cars and other goods clashed with transportation and supply chain snarls in parts of the

firm wrote. "The web has evolved and so have browsers. Incremental improvements to Internet Explorer couldn't match the general improvements to the web at large, so we started fresh," it added.

Antitrust battle

Internet Explorer's first version came out in 1995, in a challenge to the then rising early internet star Netscape Navigator. The ubiquity of Microsoft's operating system became a route also for Explorer to steadily become the default for many users. In 1997 US authorities contended Microsoft, by incorporating its Internet Explorer in the Windows operating system for the first time, was trying to crush competition from Netscape.

The case was concluded with a settlement in November 2001 that imposed no financial penalty, but forced billionaire Bill Gates's software giant to disclose more technical information and barred anti-competitive agreements on Microsoft products. However, users gradually got more alternatives to the browser many loved to hate for its slowness and tech glitches. Microsoft's market share in the browser business plunged from more than 90 percent in the 2000s to the low single digits this year. Google's Chrome, with nearly 65 percent, is the market leader, according to Statcounter, a web traffic analysis site. — AFP



YouTube Shorts touts 1.5bn users, taking on TikTok

SAN FRANCISCO: YouTube on Wednesday said that more than 1.5 billion people monthly tune into its Shorts video service, which competes with global sensation TikTok. Alphabet-owned YouTube and Facebook-parent Meta both added short-form video sharing formats to their services after TikTok - which late last year said it topped a billion users - became the rage.



YouTube Shorts went live less than two years ago, adding videos of no longer than 60 seconds to the mix of offerings on the platform. "Shorts has really taken off and are now being watched by over 1.5 billion logged-in users every month," said YouTube chief product officer Neal Mohan. "We know the product will continue to be an integral part of the YouTube experience moving forward."

YouTube last year launched a \$100 million fund to "reward creators" whose video clips attract audiences to the online stage. YouTube has also put the Silicon Valley tech titan's advertising skills to work helping creators generate income from content on the platform, which brought in billions of dollars in revenue in 2021. Creators are taking advantage of podcasting, shorts, and live streaming at YouTube in a "multi-platform approach," said vice president of the Americas Tara Walpert Levy. — AFP

Ferrari counts on new models, SUV to boost revenue

MARANELLO, Italy: Italian luxury carmaker Ferrari set Thursday an ambitious target for revenues in a four-year strategic plan based on a raft of new models, including a long-awaited SUV. The 6.7-billion (\$7-billion) goal for 2026 is well above this year's estimated revenue of around 4.8 billion euros. The 2022-2026 strategic plan will be driven by the launch of new products, including Ferrari's first SUV "Purosangue" (Thoroughbred), which will be unveiled in September, with deliveries from 2023.

Another 15 new launches are expected between 2023 and 2026, new chief executive Benedetto Vigna revealed at the brand's historic Maranello site in northern Italy. Ferrari, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, broke records in 2021, delivering 11,155 cars - up 22.3 percent - and generating revenue of \$4.3 billion (up 23.4 percent).

Vigna did not give many details of the new Purosangue, other than that it will be a sports car and will have a V12 engine, a trademark of the mythical brand. But he said: "I am confident it will exceed all expectations." He emphasized its exclusivity, saying it would make up on average fewer than 20 percent of total deliveries. — AFP

RIP Explorer: Microsoft's web browser retired

WASHINGTON: Internet Explorer, Microsoft's once dominant web browser that some users love to hate, was retired Wednesday after 27 years on the world's computer screens. The tech giant will no longer offer fixes or updates to the existing version of Explorer and users will be directed to its replacement, Microsoft Edge.

It was a moment marked with some genuine nostalgia - and plenty of jokes at the expense of what was many people's first gateway to the Internet. "You took long to download stuff, you kept freezing, and you got replaced pretty easily by other browsers," tweeted @Zytrux_1, under the hashtag #ripinternetexplorer. "But there goes one of the first browsers I've ever used, and got plenty of good memories thanks to it."

Twitter was flooded with Explorer memes, including tombstones or coffins bearing the browser's signature blue "e", and the occasional screenshot of error messages saying the app had stopped working. Microsoft announced the change last year, and in a blog post Wednesday explained the need to start fresh with a different browser - Microsoft Edge. "Internet Explorer (IE) is officially retired and out of support as of today,"



Women shop at a Revlon store in this file photo.

Cosmetics giant Revlon files for bankruptcy

NEW YORK: US cosmetics giant Revlon has filed for bankruptcy after years of stiff competition from rivals focused on online sales and supply chain problems. In a court filing late Wednesday, the company initiated Chapter 11 proceedings to manage its debt, which it said stood between \$1 billion and \$10 billion. Revlon, known for its signature nail polish and lipstick, reported long-term liabilities of \$3.3 billion in the first quarter.

"Today's filing will allow Revlon to offer our consumers the iconic products we have delivered for decades, while providing a clearer path for our future growth," CEO Debra Perelman said in a statement. In the United States, Chapter 11, known as reorganization

bankruptcy, allows firms to restructure themselves while being protected from creditors and continuing to operate.

The company said it expects to receive \$575 million in financing from its lenders if its bankruptcy is approved in court. Owned by billionaire investor Ronald Perelman and run by his daughter, Debra Perelman, Revlon reported a net loss of \$67 million from January to March. The company, which lists Elizabeth Arden, Almay, and Britney Spears Fragrances among its brands and has operations in more than 150 countries, has suffered from the global supply chain crisis and high inflation.

Revlon also has also faced increasingly tough competition, which has hurt revenue in recent years. The company was embroiled in controversy in August 2020 when Citibank revealed that it had accidentally transferred \$900 million to several of Revlon's creditors. The bank then filed a complaint against an investment fund that refused to pay part of the sum, but the complaint was dismissed in court. — AFP

world where COVID-19 remained - and remains - a challenge. That fueled inflation, which got dramatically worse after Russia invaded Ukraine in late February and Western nations imposed steep sanctions on Moscow, sending food and fuel prices up at a blistering rate.

US gasoline prices have topped \$5.00 a gallon for the first time ever and are setting new records daily. Economists thought March was the peak for consumer price hikes, but the rate spiked again in May, jumping 8.6 percent in the latest 12 months. The Fed was caught off guard with the speed of the price increases, and while policymakers usually prefer to clearly telegraph any policy shift to financial markets, the latest data changed the calculus. — AFP

BoE unveils fifth rate hike in row as inflation soars

LONDON: The Bank of England on Thursday hiked its main interest rate for a fifth straight time, as it forecast British inflation to soar further this year to above 11 percent. BoE policymakers agreed at a regular meeting to increase the cost of borrowing by a quarter-point to 1.25 percent, the highest level since the global financial crisis in 2009.

The pound slumped one percent against the dollar following the announcement, one day after the Federal Reserve hiked US interest rates far more aggressively to fight runaway consumer prices in the world's biggest economy. The BoE's latest rise was in response to "continuing signs of robust cost and price pressures... and the risk that those pressures become more persistent", said minutes of the UK meeting. A minority of BoE policymakers had voted for an increase to 1.5 percent.

BoE lags Fed

The Bank of England is avoiding "shock and awe tactics being employed across the Atlantic", said Laith Khalaf, head of investment analysis at AJ Bell. "Despite the UK starting to tighten monetary policy first, interest rates are now higher in the US." The US Federal Reserve on Wednesday announced the most aggressive interest rate increase in nearly 30 years - and said it is prepared to do so again next month in an all-out battle to drive down surging consumer prices.

The Fed's rate hike of 0.75 percentage points comes after US inflation rocketed to 8.6 percent in May, the highest level in more than four decades. In the UK, inflation stands at nine percent, the highest level in 40 years. Prices are soaring worldwide as economies reopen from pandemic lockdowns and amid the Ukraine war that is pushing already high energy costs even higher.

'Slow poison'

British economic output declined for a second month in a row in April, weighed down by rocketing prices that are causing a cost-of-living crisis for millions of Britons, while increasing the risk of a UK recession this year. The BoE on Thursday forecast the UK economy to contract by 0.3 percent in the second quarter that ends on June 30 and after growth in the first three months of the year. A recession is two quarters in a row of negative growth. "Inflation risks being a slow poison for the economy, so the Bank of England is trying to take an antidote now by raising interest rates," said Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. "However, it can only take a small dose at a time given the ailing nature of the economy... with more hikes to follow."

Higher interest rates, while boosting returns for savers, ramps up loan repayments for businesses and households. Data this week also revealed the first rise in the UK unemployment rate since the end of 2020 - although at 3.8 percent it remains at a near 50-year low point amid record-high job vacancies. At the same time, the value of average UK wages is falling at the fastest pace in more than a decade. Fearing fallout from surging inflation, the BoE began to raise its key interest rate in December, from a record-low level of 0.1 percent. Almost two years earlier, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold, the BoE slashed the rate to just above zero and decided to pump massive sums of new cash into the economy. — AFP

Business

Small gun makers boom as demand soars in US

Gun and ammunition industry added an estimated \$70bn to US economy

GOFFSTOWN, New Hampshire: Tony Hook flipped through cell phone pictures of finished work by his New Hampshire shop, explaining how one customer wanted mementos of major life events: A gun to mark each of his children's births. Smaller gun makers like him are booming in the United States, thanks to ravenous and sometimes specialized demand for pricey limited-production pistols and custom rifles, engraved with bible passages or the American flag.

"He had us build a gun for every newborn he had," explained Hook, the owner of RTD Arms & Sport. "So this is his son's name and his date of birth," he said, showing the engraving on a rifle. The millions of guns produced annually in the United States are primarily made by the nation's biggest manufacturers, yet smaller operators have poured into a market that saw production nearly triple from 2000 to 2020. The smaller makers can churn out parts destined for major firms like Sig Sauer or Smith & Wesson and for enthusiasts and gun shops, or they can be manufacturers themselves of specialized or customized weapons. "It's just like maybe stitching your name onto your baseball glove or having custom pinstriping put on your car," said Hook. "People do the same with their guns. It's a piece of them."

\$1,700 guns

The United States has a deep culture of gun ownership centered around a constitutional guarantee for Americans to keep and bear arms, and as a result has a sprawling market of weapons, gear and accessories. America also sees roughly 40,000 gun deaths a year, about half of which are suicides, though homicides increased at historic rates during the pandemic.

In this context, the gun and ammunition industry added an estimated \$70 billion to the US economy in 2021 according to industry group NSSF - perhaps not surprising when a single rifle from a smaller workshop like Hook's can sell between \$1,295-\$1,695. "Seeing that the gun doesn't have to look so generic, it's attracting people in that never considered it before," he added.

The boom in gun making is illuminated in US federal firearms license statistics, with the number of so-called "type 7" permits that allow production as well as sales increasing by over 694 percent from 2000 to 2020. Getting one of those permits requires paperwork from applicants that includes their photo, fingerprints and other information, while the government also does a background check and in-person interview.

Big states like Texas and Florida each had hundreds of manufacturers of all sizes that reported, as required



GOFFSTOWN, New Hampshire: A customer browses guns at RTD Arms & Sport on June 2, 2022. — AFP

by law, their production to federal authorities for 2020, the most recent figures available. Matrix Arms in New Hampshire is one of those makers and its CEO and owner Allen Farris said so many manufacturers have joined the industry that the market has been saturated for at least the past six years now.

'People are the problem'

Yet his company appeared to be staying busy, with a row of machines the size of shipping containers churning out gun parts on a recent weekday. He noted that each week they produce 4,300-5,300 rifle receivers - key central components to making a gun. "Our state motto in New Hampshire is 'Live free or die' and I think the firearm industry kind of goes hand in hand with that," he added. Hook and Farris emphasized they did not want their guns to be used in crime or mass murder and said they followed the law - with Hook also citing his own instinct, if a would-be buyer sets off alarm bells - to try to prevent that.

Inevitably, as the gun making industry has grown, more people face the risk the firearms they produce could be used in a crime, mass shooting or suicide. "We don't look at it as guns are the problem. People are the problem. Whether it's a gun, a knife or a rock - Cain didn't kill Abel with a gun. He killed him with a rock," Hook said. Farris added: "If somebody has the motivation to go out and try to kill people, first of all they could choose a million different ways." "Obviously I don't want my guns being used in that way, but there's nothing I can do to prevent it at that point." — AFP

Forlorn fight to stop America's gun factories

NEWINGTON, New Hampshire: Clai Lasher-Sommers alternates between tears and fury over the flow of guns from the factories in her home state of New Hampshire, a top producer in America's multi-billion dollar firearms industry. Speaking just miles from the house where an abusive stepfather shot her with a hunting rifle when she was 13, the survivor-turned-activist said she thinks about moving - just to get away from the gun makers.

"I don't want to be anywhere near them, and the damage that they perpetuate every day," she said. "I want them to close, but that's not going to happen." The American state that produced and shipped out the most firearms since 2015, New Hampshire has funneled millions of weapons into the already-flooded domestic market of a nation beset by a gun death epidemic.

Recent tragedies were unlikely to disrupt the flow from the small northeastern state, where a lawmaker can walk the legislature's halls with his pistol, guns aren't necessarily blamed in deadly shootings and firearms firms provide thousands of jobs. "It's definitely a David vs. Goliath situation," Melissa Rigazio, another state anti-gun violence activist, says of efforts to confront the industry. "It simply equals more death by guns... The gun manufacturers are very responsible for what's going on."

One of the biggest producers is Sig Sauer, which operates a factory surrounded by a green lawn, flapping American flag and "no trespassing" signs in the town of Newington. The other local heavyweight is Ruger, about two hours' drive away in Newport. Neither company granted AFP requests for an interview or a factory visit. Between them, the two firms produced over 1.7 million rifles and handguns in New Hampshire in 2020, a year that saw firearms purchases explode in a nation rattled by the pandemic, a bruising election and mass social justice protests.

Lack of gun restrictions

Just over eight million handguns and rifles for domestic sale were produced in the state from 2015-2020 or about 17 percent of the national total, according to the most recent government figures. While giants like Texas have more gun-linked business - with constellations of suppliers for firearms, parts and ammunition - New Hampshire dominates in per capita number of gun industry jobs, economic output and federal excise taxes, according to industry group NSSF.

The state with a motto of "Live free or die" has long been home to gun makers, as have other manufacturing hubs on America's eastern seaboard. A key factor that sets New Hampshire apart from neighbors New York or Massachusetts is a lack of gun restrictions. It's among half of America's 50 states with rules that generally allow people legally able to buy guns to also carry them in many public places without a special license.

States that have tightened gun rules have in turn seen gun makers take their operations - and jobs - to friendlier places. Mike Hammond, legislative counsel for hardline advocacy group Gun Owners of America, pointed to events after the mass shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in the eastern state of Connecticut that killed 20 children in 2012. "Connecticut, after Newtown, basically outlawed certain types of firearms that were made in Connecticut. Guess what?" he asked. "The firearms manufacturer left Connecticut."

Advocates like Hammond note that although New Hampshire has made millions of guns, firearm violence mostly happens elsewhere in America. But homicides take lives in the state too - one of them was Amy Innarelli's 22-year-old son Chandler, who was shot dead in 2020 while waiting for his girlfriend and young child.

Innarelli wore an orange t-shirt with her son's smiling picture for an anti-gun violence vigil in New Hampshire's largest city Manchester. She sees the problem as complex, and requiring a multi-fronted response to tackle broader social ills - a sentiment echoed by others at the rally. "The gun didn't murder my son, a person did," she said afterwards. "We have systematically broken down family dynamics, they are missing humanity in a lot of these kids." — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 16 JUNE 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,022	1,035	1,035	1,002	33	39,790,110	6	0.58%	9.00%	1,024	1,038	21.3	2.04	2.8%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	309	315	321	306	15	67,736,305	4	1.29%	18.55%	310	316	22.4	1.50	2.1%	1.13
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	215	212	218	212	6	11,346,458	-6	-2.75%	1.14%	212	217	31.2	0.64	1.8%	1.12
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	272	250	272	250	22	10,874,975	-25	-9.09%	4.58%	248	257	17.7	0.92	1.9%	1.32
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	840	830	840	817	23	83,618,955	-25	-2.92%	9.74%	815	840	29.8	4.04	1.3%	1.25
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	795	787	795	773	22	12,418,593	-16	-1.99%	10.48%	773	793	62.9	3.89	0.6%	1.07
204	National Investments	Financial Services	289	276	292	273	19	14,064,157	-18	-6.12%	26.03%	274	289	6.1	0.88	16.1%	1.78
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	160	144	162	144	18	10,727,259	-21	-12.73%	1.41%	140	147	26.2	0.76	3.2%	0.93
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	105	99.6	105	100	5	8,549,225	-4.4	-4.23%	-15.59%	98	102	98.6	0.58	9.0%	1.15
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	150	134	152	129	23	16,224,632	-18	-11.84%	-22.89%	124	137	19.6	0.97	2.2%	1.07
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	775	772	789	765	24	2,050,927	-22	-2.77%	3.19%	765	787	16.9	1.82	1.7%	1.10
501	National Industries	Financial Services	296	286	296	284	12	27,200,127	-14	-4.67%	9.90%	275	287	4.1	1.26	4.2%	1.42
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,459	1,399	1,480	1,355	125	881,501	-101	-6.73%	60.62%	1,390	1,450	13.9	1.13	4.3%	0.84
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	1,054	932	1,054	925	129	1,924,243	-124	-11.74%	9.39%	915	943	12.5	1.75	6.4%	0.93
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	358	334	359	334	25	1,907,570	-25	-6.96%	-3.75%	335	352	15.3	0.80	4.7%	0.99
603	Agility	Industrials	1,109	1,088	1,115	1,087	28	18,499,448	-41	-3.63%	15.13%	1,087	1,111	63.7	1.26	1.8%	1.38
605	Zain	Telecommunications	600	614	614	596	18	34,603,788	6	0.99%	3.19%	613	626	15.3	2.35	5.5%	0.87
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,110	3,146	3,172	3,060	112	1,009,790	18	0.58%	-2.42%	3,100	3,160	6.6	3.90	12.9%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	200	192	203	192	11	8,062,893	-13	-6.34%	-11.93%	184	195	NULL	0.67	0.0%	1.17
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,898	1,887	1,900	1,800	100	553,697	-12	-0.63%	46.28%	1,880	1,939	25.2	15.44	1.7%	1.39
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	262	253	267	252	15	94,797,569	-16	-5.95%	0.11%	247	258	16.2	1.69	3.2%	1.75
821	Warba Bank	Banking	260	249	261	249	12	10,326,652	-14	-5.32%	-9.12%	243	258	29.1	1.35	0.0%	1.04
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	488	454	488	452	36	2,558,891	-36	-7.35%	-21.38%	453	475	22.1	1.25	3.4%	0.37
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	414	400	414	390	24	2,588,317	-20	-4.76%	2.30%	400	415	34.3	1.60	2.5%	0.74
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	216	207	216	205	11	3,912,945	-9	-4.17%	-9.21%	205	213	16.0	2.60	8.8%	0.55
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,495	2,381	2,505	2,366	139	746,974	-148	-5.85%	17.87%	2,350	2,439	26.7	9.05	2.7%	0.77
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	840	843	856	805	51	15,983,724	-4	-0.47%	NULL	830	860	6.3	1.88	NULL	NULL

* As of end of week closing

Business

Hectic horse-trading as WTO talks enter overtime

India all but sinks sustainable fishing deal

GENEVA: Talks at the World Trade Organization were going deep into overtime on Thursday with countries trying to thrash out an over-arching deal encompassing food security, fishing and combating COVID-19. With ministers struggling to conclude agreements on each separate topic, countries were going round the clock making tit-for-tat trade-offs which, they hope, could see several measures go through as one package.

Ministers from the global trade body's 164 members have been talking since Sunday at the WTO's headquarters in Geneva, in their first conference since Dec 2017. They added a fifth day of talks to try to break the deadlock - and prove the organization has a role in tackling big global challenges. But despite working on through Wednesday night, even Thursday's negotiations were going past their scheduled deadline.

All the delegation chiefs were set to meet from 5:00 pm (1500 GMT) to try and finalize a conclusion based on progress made in Thursday's frantic talks. "We are still optimistic that we can have some really positive outcomes," New Zealand's trade minister Damien O'Connor told AFP as the daytime sessions started. "There is a lot of commitment to try and move things forward and it's encouraging."



Body only takes decisions by consensus

remain committed to seeing what we can deliver from this." The WTO only takes decisions by consensus among all its members, making deals all the harder to hammer out. Ministers have been trying to secure deals on curbing harmful fishing subsidies; temporarily waiving COVID-19 vaccine patents; food security; agriculture; e-commerce; the WTO's response to pandemics; and reform of the organization itself. Countries hit a brick wall late Wednesday trying to secure each separate deal on its own merits, so they spent the night horse-trading to try to keep them all afloat in some format. US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and others tweeted pictures of first light emerging over Lake Geneva. Giant trays of sandwiches kept delegates going through the night after they finished all the fruit juice in the building. "They're looking at a broad package: what can be achieved, trade-offs in different areas," a Geneva trade official told reporters. "We're into the real bargaining part of the meeting. This is where all the action is happening."

Fisheries exemption

WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who took over in March 2021, has hinged her leadership on breathing new life into the sclerotic organization. The former foreign and finance minister of Nigeria is hoping to pull off a coup by finalizing a long-sought deal on curbing harmful fishing subsidies. Negotiations towards banning subsidies that encourage overfishing and threaten the sustainability of the planet's fish stocks have been going on at the WTO for more than two decades.

But India has been pushing for a 25-year exemption - far longer than many countries are



GENEVA: Non-governmental organization members shout slogans and hold banners as they stage a protest in the World Trade Organization headquarters' central atrium during the closing day of a WTO ministerial conference on June 16, 2022. - AFP

comfortable with. Some diplomats have accused India of being intransigent across the board. "India has always been a reluctant trading partner," said Harsh V Pant, an international relations professor at King's College London university's India Institute. "India feels that it has more room today than it had in the past. It has a greater future potential and feels that it is in a geopolitical sweet spot where everyone wants to befriend it - and it can use that as leverage," he told AFP.

E-commerce wrangle

Ministers have been arguing over whether to

extend the moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transactions, in place since 1998. But India and South Africa say it has a negative impact, with Pakistan, Indonesia and Sri Lanka also skeptical. WTO deputy director-general Anabel Gonzalez said there were "intense negotiations" going on in a packed room.

"It's difficult, but I am hopeful," she said. The United States told an earlier e-commerce meeting that the moratorium had supported the growth of digital commerce, which had provided an "economic lifeline" during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a Geneva trade official. —AFP

Migrants sent \$605bn in 2021, more by mobile

ROME: Migrant workers sent home an estimated \$605 billion to low- and middle-income countries last year, a UN study said Thursday, boosted by an increase in payments sent via mobile phones. Global remittances rose 8.6 percent compared to 2020 and are projected to grow to \$630 billion in 2022, according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Such payments are a major source of income for many low-income households, with around 800 million family members expected to benefit in 2022. Between now and 2030, global remittances will amount to \$5.4 trillion, the equivalent of twice the GDP of Africa in 2021, IFAD has estimated. "Remittances lift people out of poverty, put food on the table, pay for education, cover health expenses, allow housing investments and many other family goals beyond consumption," IFAD president Gilbert Houngbo said.

However, the report warned that the upward trend would likely slow this year as inflation erodes wages, and as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Many countries in central Asia depend on remittances from Russia, with payments accounting for as much as 30 percent of their GDP, said the report. But the decline in the value of the ruble and the economic impact of sanctions has triggered a "sharp decline in transfers", IFAD said. —AFP

McDonald's to pay €1.25bn to settle French tax case

PARIS: McDonald's will pay €1.25 billion (\$1.3 billion) in France to avoid a legal case over tax evasion between 2009 and 2020, under an agreement approved Thursday by a Paris court. Judge Stephane Noel confirmed the second-biggest tax settlement in French history, made up of a €508-million fine and €737 million in back taxes already agreed in May, years after McDonald's was accused of reporting artificially low profits to reduce its tax bill.

"On condition of payment of the fine, the validation of the agreement means the end of the prosecution," chief financial prosecutor Jean-Francois Bohnert said in a statement. Hailing the fine as the "maximum amount possible" under such a deal, he added that McDonald's would pay "2.5 times the amount of tax avoided".

Investigators had since 2014 been probing whether fees paid by McDonald's French operation to its European parent company in Luxembourg for use of the chain's brand in fact served to artificially slash its profits. These let the company "soak up a large amount of the profits made by restaurants in France," judge Noel said. —AFP

Biden chastises oil industry over fuel costs

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Wednesday chastised the oil industry over soaring fuel prices at the heart of 40-year-high inflation, warning of unspecified emergency measures. In a letter to seven major oil corporations, Biden delivered his most direct salvo yet in a campaign to blame the industry for stoking price increases. Average fuel prices are now \$5 a gallon for drivers in the United States, up from \$3 a year ago, and the spike is reverberating through the entire economy, helping to sink Biden's approval ratings to below 40 percent.

"Refinery profit margins well above normal being passed directly onto American families are not acceptable," Biden wrote in the letter to executives from Shell, Marathon Petroleum Corp, Valero Energy Corp, ExxonMobil, Phillips 66, Chevron and BP. Biden said the economy is in "a time of war," referring to the global fallout from President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and subsequent sanctions against energy exporter Russia.

Hunger crisis could swell already record global displacement

GENEVA: Russia's war in Ukraine has pushed global displacement numbers above 100 million for the first time, and the UN warns the resulting hunger crisis could force many more to flee their homes. Efforts to address the global food insecurity crisis, which has been dramatically aggravated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is "of paramount importance... to prevent a larger number of people moving," the United Nations refugee chief Filippo Grandi told reporters. "If you ask me how many... I don't know, but it will be pretty big numbers."

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, traditionally a breadbasket to the world, has sparked dramatic grain and fertiliser shortages, sent global prices soaring and put hundreds of millions of people at risk from hunger. "The impact, if this is not resolved quickly, would be devastating," Grandi said. "It is already devastating."

His comments came as he presented the UNHCR refugee agency's annual report on global displacement, showing that a record 89.3 million people were displaced at the end of 2021 - more than doubling in a decade. But since Russia launched its full-scale invasion on Feb 24, as many as 14 million Ukrainians may have fled within their own war-ravaged country or across borders as refugees, pushing global displacement past the grim 100-million mark for the first time.

'Terrible trend'

"Every year of the last decade, the numbers have

climbed," Grandi said. "Either the international community comes together to take action to address this human tragedy, resolve conflicts and find lasting solutions, or this terrible trend will continue." The UN agency found that at the end of 2021, a record 27.1 million people were living as refugees, while the number of asylum seekers rose 11 percent to 4.6 million.

And for the 15th straight year, the number of people living displaced within their own country due to conflict swelled, hitting 53.2 million. The UNHCR report said last year was notable for the number of protracted conflicts in places like Afghanistan that escalated, even as new ones flared. At the same time, growing food scarcity, inflation and the climate crisis were adding to hardship and stretching the humanitarian response, threatening to weaken already dire funding levels for many crises, UNHCR warned. That has not been the case for Ukraine, with an enormous outpouring of solidarity, and fleeing Ukrainians welcomed with open arms across Europe.

"The crunch that families are facing deserves immediate action. Your companies need to work with my Administration to bring forward concrete, near-term solutions that address the crisis," he wrote. Biden's Democratic Party risks a heavy defeat, losing control of Congress, in November elections and polls show that fears over the economy dominate.

In a fiery speech Tuesday, Biden blamed Republican obstruction in Congress and Russia's war in Ukraine for price increases that he said are



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo taken on Feb 17, 2022 gasoline and diesel fuel prices above \$6 a gallon are displayed at a Chevron gas station at North Alameda and West Cesar Chavez Ave near Union Station. —AFP

Administration to bring forward concrete, near-term solutions that address the crisis," he wrote. Biden's Democratic Party risks a heavy defeat, losing control of Congress, in November elections and polls show that fears over the economy dominate.

In a fiery speech Tuesday, Biden blamed Republican obstruction in Congress and Russia's war in Ukraine for price increases that he said are

"sapping the strength of a lot of families." The US Federal Reserve announced the most aggressive interest rate increase in nearly 30 years Wednesday, raising the benchmark borrowing rate by 0.75 percentage points. The goal is to tamp down inflation, but Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said the central bank was "not trying to induce a recession". —AFP



Filippo Grandi

Countries have vowed the aid provided for Ukraine would come on top of amounts pledged for other crises, but Grandi cautioned that so far "the mathematics doesn't show that."

'Not unmanageable'

Grandi hailed the generous response to this crisis, but highlighted the contrast to how refugees fleeing wars in places like Syria and Afghanistan have been met. The UN refugee chief recalled how European leaders had insisted "it's full" when asked to take in more refugees from those conflicts. "I'm not naive. I fully understand the context," he said, adding though that the generous response to fleeing Ukrainians "proves an important point... The arrival of desperate people on the shores or at the borders of rich countries is not unmanageable."

Grandi also pointed to how massive sums of money had been made immediately available to respond to the Ukraine crisis, despite countries' insistence their coffers were empty when met with appeals for more aid for other situations. "There cannot be inequity in the response," he said.

'Vicious circle'

It would be disastrous if already underfunded responses were cut further, he warned. He voiced particular concern for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, where massive displacement is being driven by a macabre combination of conflict, insecurity, poor governance and devastating effects of climate change. "It's a very vicious circle of many factors," he said.

Grandi warned that beyond the immediate impact, the war in Ukraine was also complicating the response to displacement crises since it had "dealt a terrible blow to international cooperation." Even if the war were to end within months - which he thought unlikely - "the scars on international cooperation of those fractures between the West and Russia... will take a long time to heal." And, he warned, "if that is not healed, I don't know how we will deal with this global crisis." —AFP



Jordan's Irbid ... city of history and heritage

Picked recently as Arab Capital of Culture for 2022, Jordan's Irbid City is home to historic and traditional landmarks, along with a group of museums that reflect the city's popular and human heritage. Located in northern Jordan and overlooking the Golan Heights, the city also embraces several universities, mainly Yarmouk University and Jordan University of Science and

Technology, making it important and attractive to large numbers of students. The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) on Sunday chose Irbid as the Arab Capital of Culture for 2022 in an official ceremony that was attended by many Arab officials and intellectuals. — KUNA



Thai influencers charged with royal insult over adverts

Thai police charged three social media influencers with lese majeste Thursday over controversial social media advertisements for an e-commerce firm that monarchists said mocked a member of the royal family. The TikTok clips promoting Lazada-owned by China's Alibaba Group-enraged ultra-royalists who called for it to be banned in the kingdom, and led to the Thai military barring the firm's delivery vehicles from its premises.

Criticism of the monarchy is taboo in Thailand, where King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his close family are protected by some of the world's toughest royal insult laws, with each charge carrying a prison term of up to 15 years. Police Colonel Siriwat Deepo from the Technology Crime Suppression Division confirmed to AFP the arrest of the three people acting in the clips: Anuwat Pratumklin, Kittikhun Thamakitirat and Thidaporn Chaokovieng.

Their lawyer Duangrat Srinaunt told AFP the trio had been freed on bail and that they denied the charges. In the clips Thidaporn, wearing a traditional Thai silk costume, sits in a wheelchair playing an influencer's mother-which angry monarchists said was an insulting allusion to a member of the royal family.

The material also attracted criticism from disability campaigners who described it as distasteful and disrespectful to wheelchair users. Lazada-one of Southeast Asia's biggest online shopping platforms-and the advertising firm which produced the clips have issued apologies.

"We understand the content has traumatized the public and reduced human dignity," the retailer said in May, adding the adverts had been taken down. Thailand's lese majeste laws have long drawn criticism from human rights activists, who say they are overly broad and misused to suppress debate. Use of the legislation slowed for several years but picked up again when youth-led street protests sprung up in 2020 calling for democratic change and reforms to the monarchy. — AFP



Ice skating at the Kuwait Winter Games Club

Whether a person fancies ice hockey, figure or speed skating, they can find what they desire at the Bayan ice skating rink, the home of the Kuwait Winter Games Club. The club-operating under the umbrella of the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) — welcomes all between the ages of 5-15 all year long. — KUNA



Lifestyle | Features

It's a small world: Disney to fly guests round all 12 parks for \$110,000



Not sure which Disney resort to visit next summer? Disney chiefs have a solution for its most obsessive-and deep-pocketed-fans, offering a round-the-world package trip to all 12 parks, starting at a hefty \$110,000 per person.

"Disney Parks Around The World-A Private Jet Adventure" will fly 75 megafans around the world in July 2023, with VIP visits to Disney resorts in California, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Paris and Florida. Across 24 days, there will also be stops at countries which do not have Disney parks, including tours of the Taj Mahal in Agra, India and Egypt's Pyramids of Giza.

According to its brochure, the "bucket list adventure" also includes a "rare opportunity to be a guest at Summit Skywalker Ranch," founded by "Star Wars" creator George Lucas outside San Francisco. "You'll travel in luxury via a VIP-configured Boeing 757, operated by Icelandair, with long-range capabilities

that allows for direct flights to maximize your time in each destination," it says.

Guests will be joined on board by "experts and staff, who use an audiovisual system for informative briefings and lectures," while Disney "leaders" and "Imagineers" will be on hand at various points. As well as the movies, TV shows and theme parks it is best known for, the Walt Disney Company has long offered travel packages, including cruises.

With theme park attendances and tourism more generally recovering from the pandemic, Disney's latest offering is its most luxurious yet. The \$109,995 per person price tag is based on two people sharing, with those who travel solo facing an additional surcharge of at least \$10,995. No discount is offered for children, who must be at least 12, and airfare to Los Angeles and from Orlando for the first and last legs is excluded. — AFP



Dua Lipa

Dua Lipa festival moves to Albania

British pop star of Kosovo descent Dua Lipa said Wednesday her August festival in Pristina would now take place in Tirana after government failed to approve a land lease for the event. "The same date, the same wonderful experiences, different locations. Sunny Hill Festival will move to Tirana," Lipa said on Instagram. Kosovo's largest music festival was launched in 2018 by the singer and her father Dukagjin Lipa, who is also her manager.

In 2018 and 2019 it was held at the Pristina site, but wanted a place with greater capacity. The leasing of 17 hectares (42 acres) for the festival was approved by the Pristina municipality, but also need government backing. In a letter to Kosovo leaders, Lipa's father said the event will not be held in Pristina "due to numerous delays", notably the lack of a final government decision.

The festival needs a "permanent house in its own city", he said in the letter published on the event's website. Meanwhile, Tirana mayor Eriod Veliaj hailed the change in venue. "Dua Lipa and her invitees will illuminate the nights of the capital in the first week of August," he said on Facebook.

Leading Kosovo online daily paper Koha Ditore blamed the authorities for the loss of the festival which, it said, had "put Kosovo on the world cultural map with the seal of Dua Lipa". Pristina mayor Perparim Rama slammed the government for interfering in municipal affairs, saying it had damaged the capital's image. — AFP

Nipsey Hussle died in hail of bullets

Grammy-winning rapper Nipsey Hussle was shot at least 10 times after telling his attacker there was talk that the assailant was "snitching," a murder trial in Los Angeles heard Wednesday. After a conversation with the gang member-turned-community-activist that included allegations that the shooter was talking to the police, alleged assailant Eric Holder pulled out two guns-one in each hand-and repeatedly shot Hussle in March 2019, a prosecutor said.

The violent daytime killing of the "Racks in the Middle" artist triggered an outpouring of grief in his native Los Angeles and among his superstar peers, who hailed both his musical talents and tireless community organizing. Raised in the city's Crenshaw district, Hussle, who was 33 at the time of his death, had transformed the block he used to hustle on into a retail, job-creating hub for his Marathon Clothing company.



Nipsey Hussle

But he remained linked to the gang-ridden world he grew up in. During opening statements in the trial on Wednesday, prosecutor John McKinney said Hussle had told Holder there were rumors Holder had been "snitching," but that there was "no hostility" before Holder left the parking lot where the two were talking. McKinney did not say what this "snitching" involved.

However, when he returned a short time later, Holder "pulls out not one but two guns and starts shooting." "You can see him shoot from the left hand and the right hand," McKinney said, referencing surveillance camera footage. Hussle was hit by at least 10 bullets in an "explosion of violence," in which he was "shot from literally the bottom of his feet to the top of his head." Holder, 32, then kicked the fallen rapper in the head and told him: "You're through," before running from the scene, the prosecutor told the jury.

Holder, an aspiring rapper, is charged with murder, two counts each of attempted murder and assault with a firearm and one count of possession of a firearm by a felon. Defense attorney Aaron Jansen said his client acknowledged killing Hussle, but denied it was premeditated. "This is a case about heat of passion," he told jurors. Jansen conceded that bullets that Holder fired not only killed Hussle, but also hit another man and may have injured a third. He noted that Holder surrendered at a mental health clinic three days after the shooting.

Thousands of people gathered in April 2019 for a service in Hussle's honor, with Stevie Wonder and Snoop Dogg among those paying tribute. In a letter that was read during the service, former president Barack Obama wrote, "While most folks look at the Crenshaw neighborhood where he grew up and see only gangs, bullets and despair, Nipsey saw potential. He saw hope. He saw a community that, even through its flaws, taught him to always keep going." Hussle was posthumously honored with two Grammy Awards in 2020 for best rap performance for "Racks in the Middle" and for best rap/sung performance for "Higher." The trial continues. — AFP



Passengers wait to disembark a ferry bound from Tarifa as it docks at the Moroccan port of Tangiers.

Europe's Moroccans start returning home via Spain for holidays again

"Finally!" said 20-year-old Reda as he arrived at the port of Algeciras in southern Spain Wednesday on the first day of an operation to ease the return home of Moroccans living in Europe for their summer holidays. Millions of Moroccans like him have waited three years to once again be able to drive to a port in Spain and then catch a ferry to Morocco to see loved ones during the summer break. The short 14-kilometre (nine-mile) route across the Strait of Gibraltar had originally been shut in March 2020 when Morocco severed transport links with Europe over the COVID-19 pandemic.

But while Rabat reopened its maritime borders last summer to other European nations, connections between Morocco and Spain remained shut until April due to a diplomatic dispute between the two nations. "I couldn't sleep last night, I was too excited," said Reda, who drove 4,500 kilometers with his girlfriend to Algeciras from Helsinki, where he is studying, to catch a ferry to visit his family in Agadir, in southwestern Morocco.

Some 3.3 million people and over 760,000 vehicles made the crossing in

2019 during the last "Operation Crossing the Strait", which runs this year from June 15-September 15. Spain's government has called the seasonal migration "one of the biggest flows of people across continents" in such a short time. Driving home for the summer holidays "is almost like a tradition for us", said Reda, wearing flip-flops and a bucket hat and surrounded by cars loaded with bags. Nearby families looked for shady spots to eat within view of imposing red ferries. The biggest flow of passengers is expected at the end of the month and the first weekend of July after schools close across Europe.

'Shameful'

The resumption of maritime traffic comes after Spain in March supported Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara—a disputed territory mostly controlled by Rabat, but claimed by the Polisario Front—ending a year-long diplomatic crisis. While ferries run to Morocco from Italy and France, these routes are longer and more expensive. "It's shameful... with these disputes between politicians, it is regular people who foot the bill," said Abdel Ghani, a 67-year-old

Spanish-Moroccan pensioner who came to Algeciras to buy a ferry ticket.

Spanish and Moroccan authorities expect the number of people making the crossing this year will surpass that of 2019 due to pent up demand. Several thousand police officers, social workers and volunteers have been mobilized in both nations to assist travelers on the roads and in ports and ensure traffic flows smoothly.

Steep losses

The dearth of passengers in recent years has meant a loss in revenues for shipping companies, ports and service stations and hotels along the route. Direct and indirect losses amounted to nearly 500 million euros (\$520 million) in the last two years, according to the Association of Service Companies of the Bay of Algeciras (Aeseba), which represents 90 local firms. "Unfortunately, the money lost can't be recovered," the president of the association, Manuel Piedra, told AFP.

The association is "pleased" with Spain's diplomatic reversal "and that the political situation has been resolved", he added. The port authority of Algeciras, which is responsible for 75 percent of the sea traffic between Spain and Morocco, estimates it lost 40 million euros. Reda said his parents "went mad" last summer when Morocco resumed its maritime links with other nations but not Spain. "When I was a child, I used to travel by car every summer" to Morocco, he said as he waited for his ferry in Algeciras. "It's awesome," he said, breaking into a smile. — AFP



A ferry bound from Tarifa arrives at the Moroccan port of Tangiers. — AFP photos



Passengers leave a ferry from Tarifa after their arrival at the Moroccan port of Tangiers.



Police inspect the car of Moroccan footballer Noureddine Amrabat after disembarking from a ferry that arrived from Tarifa, in the Moroccan port of Tangiers.



This file photo shows director of dance for the Paris Opera Ballet Aurelie Dupont at the Opera in Paris. — AFP

Controversial Paris Opera dance chief quits

The director of dance at the Paris Opera, Aurelie Dupont, who faced criticism in the past over her leadership, announced her surprise resignation on Thursday. The 49-year-old ex-star dancer said she was devoting herself to new projects including a book and documentary. Dupont took over in 2016 from Benjamin Millepied, the renowned choreographer and husband of Natalie Portman, who quit the post after only a year.

Less than two years later, an internal survey revealed a shocking level of dysfunction within one of the world's most prestigious companies. A large majority of the anonymous respondents said the team was poorly led, while a quarter said they had been a victim of, or witness to, sexual harassment.

Many criticized Dupont's lack of support and poor communication, and she responded by setting up regular meetings, though it remained unclear to what extent the atmosphere had improved in the aftermath. But her work remained highly successful. A statement by the Opera said she had enjoyed a wide freedom of action and it had paid off with big ticket sales, including a 2021-22 ballet season that sold 98 percent of places. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Kim Kardashian accused of damaging Marilyn Monroe dress at Met gala

The private museum that owns an iconic dress worn by Marilyn Monroe allowed it to be "permanently damaged" when it lent it to reality star Kim Kardashian for her appearance at the Met Gala extravaganza last month, a Monroe memorabilia collector alleged Wednesday. A platinum blonde Kardashian shined but also stirred controversy when she donned the stunning skintight gown Monroe wore in 1962 to sing "Happy Birthday, Mr President" to John F Kennedy.

Scott Fortner, a collector who runs a website dedicated entirely to Monroe, released before and after photos this week of the crystal-studded cream gown. The after shots were taken by a friend of Fortner, who saw the dress on display Sunday at curiosity museum Ripley's Believe It or Not! in Los Angeles, which owns the dress and had allowed Kardashian to wear it.

The comparison shots seem to show small tears in the fabric near hooks that



fastened the dress together as well as missing crystals and others hanging by a thread. The alleged damage to the gown, which Ripley's bought at auction for a record \$4.8 million, has drawn widespread criticism on social media in



recent days. In an update published to his Instagram account on Wednesday, Fortner specified that "I blame Ripley's, as they allowed the dress to be worn." "I feel that any and every celebrity offered

a chance to wear this garment very likely would jump at the opportunity," he said. "There's a reason someone would want to wear it. Kim K. just happened to be the one who got to do it." "It's now permanently damaged, and likely would have been damaged regardless of who wore it," Fortner said.

Asked by AFP about the accusations, Ripley's did not respond Wednesday afternoon. In early May, Ripley's trumpeted the opportunity for Kardashian to wear the dress.

"Great care was taken to preserve this piece of history. With input from garment conservationists, appraisers, archivists, and insurance, the garment's condition was top priority," the company said. Kardashian, who reportedly went on a major diet to be able to squeeze into the legendary garment, did not respond to the allegations on her social networks. — AFP



Beyonce

Beyonce returns with new album 'Renaissance'

Beyonce is back with a new album, "Renaissance", due on July 29 — her first since 2016. The singer's website showed what appeared to a new solo album available for pre-order, with further details to be published soon. Her social media profiles were also updated to read "act I ... RENAISSANCE", suggesting there may be multiple releases.

Beyonce has not given much away ahead of previous launches, dropping her self-titled album in December 2013 out of the blue, and giving a teaser trailer for 2016's "Lemonade" just one week before it appeared. The 40-year-old has kept busy in the intervening years, collaborating with her husband Jay-Z on 2018's "Everything is Love" and releasing a live album and film, "Homecoming" the following year.

The latter featured her already-mythic performance at Coachella in 2018, considered one of the greatest festival performances ever. She also contributed a song, "Black Parade", to the live-action remake of "The Lion King", which won her 28th Grammy-breaking the record for a female artist. — AFP



US actor Kevin Spacey leaves the Westminster Magistrates' Court, in London after attending the opening of his trial. —AFP

Kevin Spacey denies sexual assault charges in UK court

Hollywood actor Kevin Spacey on Thursday "strenuously" denied claims that he sexually assaulted three men, as the US star appeared in a London court to face charges. Deputy Chief Magistrate Tan Ikram granted him unconditional bail until the next hearing, set for 9:30 am (0830 GMT) on July 14 at Southwark Crown Court in south London.

Spacey, 62, smiled but made no comment to a scrum of waiting reporters, photographers and television cameras as he arrived and left Westminster Magistrates Court in bright sunshine. Inside the courtroom, the actor, wearing a light blue suit, stood in the dock to give his full name as Kevin Spacey Fowler, his date of birth and an address in London.

No formal pleas were given at the hearing, which lasted 28 minutes. But his lawyer Patrick Gibbs told the court: "Mr Spacey strenuously denies any and all criminality in this case. "He needs to answer these charges if he is to proceed with his life."

The court was told that Spacey lives in the United States, where he has family and a nine-year-old dog. The judge formally withdrew an arrest warrant issued two weeks ago after hearing that the two-time Oscar winner had arrived in London on Monday to appear in person. "You have cooperated, I am told, with the authorities in New York and you have vol-

untarily attended these proceedings here today," the judge told him. In England and Wales, first appearances at magistrates' courts are largely procedural, with prosecutors sketching out the charges and the judge setting bail. Defendants are typically not obliged to enter a formal plea. More serious cases are sent to the crown court, where judges have greater sentencing powers in the event of a conviction.

Charges

The Crown Prosecution Service, which is responsible for bringing prosecutions in England and Wales, said last month it had authorized charges against Spacey. The first two charges of sexual assault date from March 2005 in London and concern the same man, who is now in his 40s. The third is alleged to have happened in London in August 2008 against a man who is now in his 30s.

Spacey has also been charged "with causing a person to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent" against the same man. The fourth sexual assault charge is alleged to have occurred in Gloucestershire, western England, in April 2013 against a third man, who is now in his 30s. None of the alleged victims can be identified under English law. —AFP

Dublin celebrates 'Bloomsday' as Joyce's 'Ulysses' hits 100

One hundred years ago, a wandering Irish writer emerged from the ashes of World War I with a reworking of Greek myth that still retains the power to shock, to confound and to intrigue. James Joyce's "Ulysses" was first published in February 1922 in Paris after printers in Britain had refused to handle the "obscene" novel. It remained banned there and in the United States for years. The anniversary four months ago was duly observed by Joyceans around the world. But this week fans will don period dress to celebrate their annual commemoration of the novel with more than usual gusto.

"Ulysses" plays out entirely on one day—June 16, 1904 — and follows the emphatically unheroic Leopold Bloom around British-ruled Dublin, obliquely tracking the adventures of Homer's protagonist Odysseus on his epic return home from the Trojan War. For "Bloomsday" this Thursday, performers in costumes from the turn of the 20th century—straw boater hats and bonnets—will re-enact scenes from the book across the Irish capital. Sweny's Pharmacy, where Bloom buys lemon soap for his wife Molly, will become a stage for re-enactments of the book's "Lotus Eaters" scene, while a funeral procession for another character, Paddy Dignam, will be held in the city's Glasnevin Cemetery.

'Bit of craic'

Events for the centenary have been held throughout Dublin this week. On Tuesday an audience crammed into the first-floor room of a Napoleonic era fort in Sandycove, where Joyce once stayed, to watch a performance of an imagined second meeting between the Irish author and his French contemporary Marcel Proust. Now a museum and place of pilgrimage for "Ulysses" enthusiasts as the setting for the novel's opening scene, the two titans of

20th century literature debate Joyce's legacy and sip wine-apple juice for the matinee performance-in the tower's living quarters.

"It's just been fantastic to get down here and immerse ourselves in a bit of craic (fun)," Tom Fitzgerald, a volunteer with the museum who played Joyce in the performance, told AFP. "Some people take it very seriously. I always say at Sandycove we do the eating, drinking and singing part of 'Ulysses' and if Joyce was around, he'd be here. He wouldn't be at some symposium." Irish embassies around the globe will be marking the day with events including a Zulu performance of Molly Bloom's closing soliloquy in Johannesburg and a Vietnamese rendering of Joyce's "Dubliners" collection of short stories in Hanoi. Elsewhere, grassroots festivals organized by fans in places ranging from Toronto to Melbourne and Shanghai are also taking place.

Incisive questions

A totemic work of early 20th century modernist literature, "Ulysses" is densely allusive and hard to categorize. It dismantles genres as Joyce responds in revolutionary style to Irish nationalism, religious dogma and sexual politics, among a host of other themes. Bloom himself is Jewish, an outsider in Catholic Ireland. The novel is sometimes smutty, sometimes scatological, and sometimes impossible to decipher. But it is often bitingly funny, and never less than thought-provoking, as Joyce answers Homer with his own modernist take on myth.

For Darina Gallagher, the director of James Joyce Centre in Dublin, "Ulysses", which was published in the same year as the Irish state was formed, raises questions that Ireland still contends with. "We haven't really been able to talk about gender and politics, identity and nationalism. And we're still only growing up as a society to confront issues of the Catholic Church that we can't believe Joyce is writing about," she said. "Ulysses" was written in self-imposed exile away from Dublin as Joyce spent War I on his own odyssey around Europe, from Trieste to Zurich and Paris. The Bloomsday tributes carry a certain irony: Ireland, then in the grip of Catholic orthodoxy, refused to repatriate Joyce's body when he died in 1941, aged only 58. He was buried in Zurich. —AFP



Media awards highlight human stories of climate crisis

Rising ice melt in Greenland, the impact of relentless heat waves in California, and the precarious future of coastal cities were among subjects featured at the annual Covering Climate Now Journalism Awards unveiled Wednesday. The winning entries were hailed by judges for capturing the urgency of the global climate crisis, bringing to light "abundant solutions," and inspiring people and policymakers to act.

Among work honored was an HBO Max documentary on two pre-teen sisters as their sixth-generation family farm in Iowa is battered by cycles of drought and flooding. The judges said the film succeeded in showing how "a small story becomes a large, important one" with the sisters and their parents taking joy in farm chores but recognizing climate change is rendering their way of life unsustainable.

Justin Worland of Time was named journalist of the year, while AFP won an award for a "globe-spanning" video project on how rising seas will rewrite maps, doom some major cities and impact the world's poorest. "Better news coverage is an essential climate solution, a catalyst that makes progress on every part of the problem—from politics to business, lifestyle change to systems change—more likely," said Mark Hertsgaard, executive director of Covering Climate Now. The 23 winners were selected from over 900 entries from 65 countries for the awards' second year.

Other winners included Al Jazeera on a UNESCO World Heritage site in Senegal crumbling beneath rising seas, PBS coverage of the COP26 summit in Scotland, and a Guardian podcast series on Pacific Island nations. Covering Climate Now is a global media project devoted to reporting on global warming. — AFP



An orphan baby manatee (trichechus manatus manatus) named Tasajerito is being fed by a marine biologist at the Marine Fauna Attention, Assessment and Rehabilitation Center and the Rodadero Aquarium in Santa Marta, Colombia.



An orphan baby manatee (trichechus manatus manatus) named Tasajerito swims.



An orphan baby manatee (trichechus manatus manatus) named Tasajerito swims.—AFP photos

Working 24/7 to save baby manatee orphaned in Colombia

Last September, Tasajerito the manatee was found lost in a Colombian swamp, just three days old and separated from his mother. Nine months later, the baby sea cow weighs as much as an adult woman and is bottle fed round the clock by dotting aquarium staff. Though much stronger now, Tasajerito's prognosis is still touch-and-go, said Angela Davila, a veterinarian at the Rodadero Aquarium in Santa Marta in northern Colombia, near where he was found.

"Tasajerito is... still considered critical,"

Davila told AFP. "He appears strong, he appears lively and to be feeding well, but things can change in a heartbeat." Rescued by fishermen, Tasajerito was brought to the aquarium with little hope of survival. A search for his mother proved fruitless. Now safely ensconced in a dedicated pool at the aquarium, he has clung to life-increasing his consumption of a special vitamin-boosted milk formula sixfold in a few months. Today, Tasajerito measures over 1.5 meters (4.9 feet) in length and weighs 53 kilograms (117 pounds). Yet, he is still "a newborn," said Rodadero marine biologist Julieth Prieto, who noted that manatees are raised by their mothers for five years and suckle for half that time. "This makes the rehabilitation process... a challenge because we have to meet those needs that the mother usually provides," she said.

'Vulnerable' species

Tasajerito's human foster parents are also teaching him to float, dive and swim. To be released into the wild one day—hopefully in about two years' time—he will have to grow to between three and four meters in length and weigh some 600 kg.

The American Manatee species (Trichechus manatus), to which Tasajerito belongs, is listed as "vulnerable" to extinction on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, its population of some 10,000 individuals on the decline. Threats include residential and commercial development, aquaculture and shipping lanes, with watercraft strikes responsible for a large number of deaths, according to the IUCN.

In Colombia, hunting by humans is a major threat, as are hippos—a foreign

species introduced by drug trafficker Pablo Escobar, who imported some as pets in the 1980s. The hippos now number more than 100, competing for food and space with manatees.

The manatee is one of the world's largest aquatic mammals, and according to Prieto, fulfills "irreplaceable ecological functions" in its population area that stretches from Brazil's east coast all the way to the southeastern United States. Seasonal migrants, they help keep rivers and water channels clear, devouring as much as 50 kg of aquatic plants each every day. "If this species were to become extinct, we would have to dredge to restore water flow between rivers, swamps and the sea," Prieto said. — AFP

Sports

Shakib looks to past glory as Bangladesh take on Windies

All-rounder seeks to recapture glory of his captaincy

DHAKA: All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan leads an unsettled Bangladesh side into the first Test against the West Indies on Thursday seeking to recapture the glory of his captaincy debut 13 years ago. In 2009 Shakib replaced the injured Mashrafe Mortaza as skipper for the second Test in Grenada and played a critical role in taking his team to 2-0 series sweep against a depleted West Indies side. Now it is the Bangladeshis who appear ill at ease and Shakib's rehabilitation as Test captain was complete once Mominul Haque's slump in batting form meant he could no longer continue in the role and veteran wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim opted out of the Caribbean campaign. The West Indies have been inconsistent since coming away from Bangladesh at the start of 2021 with an unexpected 2-0 series triumph, but go into the series as favourites having beaten England earlier this year.

They will be buoyed by memories of Bangladesh's last visit to Antigua in 2018 when the visitors were routed for just 53 on the first morning on the way to innings defeats in both Tests of the series. The West Indies captain then was Jason Holder who was replaced by Kraigg Brathwaite for the campaign in Bangladesh 17 months ago after Holder opted out citing fatigue and Covid 19 concerns.

Holder is again absent having been granted leave by Cricket West Indies which paves the way for Raymon Reifer to get another Test opportunity. West Indies are certain to field at least two debutants as



NORTH SOUND: Kraigg Brathwaite of West Indies tosses the coin as Shakib Al Hasan of Bangladesh watches during the 1st day of the 1st Test between Bangladesh and West Indies at Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium in North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda, on June 16, 2022. — AFP

their 12-man squad features three uncapped players-fast-medium bowler Anderson Phillip, left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie and wicketkeeper-batsman Devon Thomas.

Phillip is one of four players in the squad returning from the three-match one-day international tour of

Pakistan which ended on Sunday, along with fellow pace bowlers Jayden Seales and Alzarri Joseph, and all-rounder Kyle Mayers. It remains to be seen if they can recover in time from playing in 45-degree Celsius heat and their long journey back to the Caribbean—the West Indies only assembled a full squad on Tuesday.

Roach 'inspiration'

Bangladesh drew their warm-up fixture against a CWI President's XI where they lost Yasir Ali to a back injury, but were lifted by seamer Mustafizur Rahman taking three wickets in six overs to show his readiness to return to the Test scene after 12 months. West Indies were boosted Wednesday when fast bowler Kemar Roach was added to the squad after recovering from an injury sustained at Surrey in the English county championship. Roach has 242 wickets in 72 Tests and is also the leading wicket-taker at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium with 43 victims.

His career best figures of 6-48 came against Bangladesh in 2009, while his best figures at the venue are 5-8 which also came against Bangladesh in 2018. "It's brilliant that he's fit for the Test match," said West Indies coach Phil Simmons. "He's always an inspiration for the younger players we have here and he's ready to go. With 250 wickets around the corner, we're happy with what he brings to the table, not just on the field but in the dressing room as well."

"I'm glad he's fit and looking forward to seeing him getting out there and doing what he does so well. The home side will look to build on the spirit and energy of their 10-wicket trouncing of England in Grenada two months ago. Bangladesh also have recent success to inspire them, having recorded a stunning triumph over World Test champions New Zealand in Mount Maunganui at the start of the year.—AFP



BAKU: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (left) and Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen steer their cars during the Formula One Azerbaijan Grand Prix at the Baku City Circuit in Baku.— AFP

Leclerc and Ferrari braced for another bumpy ride

MONTREAL: Charles Leclerc is expecting another bumpy ride this weekend as he bids to put Ferrari's reliability problems behind him and re-boot his title challenge at the Canadian Grand Prix. As Formula One returns to the challenging Circuit Gilles Villeneuve for the first time in three years, it will be the 24-year-old Monegasque under most pressure - and probably with much sympathy from a knowledgeable crowd - as he seeks to end a recent run of cruel luck.

Despite taking pole position at the last four races, Leclerc has not won since the third race of the season in Melbourne, six races ago. Engine failures and strategy mistakes have seen his early lead in the championship become a 34-point deficit. World champion Max Verstappen, who led Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez home in a commanding one-two in Baku last Sunday, has five wins and 150 points.

He leads Perez, who won in Monaco, on 129 and the luckless Leclerc, winner of the two other races this year, on 116. Leclerc is set to take a new power unit this Sunday. After eight successive points finishes, Mercedes new boy George Russell is fourth ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz, who has also endured the Italian team's reliability difficulties.

Another successful weekend for Red Bull could put them in a dominant position in both championships, but team chief Christian Horner warned against complacency and forecast that Ferrari will bounce back into contention. "They have a very fast car," he said. "Certainly on a Saturday. On Sundays, we have been their equal this year, at most races. And they will sort their problems out - I've no doubt about that. "There is a long way to go and we've seen big swings in points over the last four or five races. It shows how quickly things can turn."

'Sore and bruised'

Like Leclerc, Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton will also be seeking a revival at a circuit where he has won a record seven times, having claimed his maiden race victory at the Canadian Grand Prix in 2007. He confirmed this week that despite the acute back pain he suffered on his way to fourth Sunday, he is ready to race again on another notoriously fast and often bumpy circuit. The seven-time champion is sixth behind Sainz in the title race on 62 points and without a win this season, but has pledged to battle on. "Sunday was tough and I had some problems sleeping, but have woken up feeling positive," he said in a social media post. "Back is a little sore and bruised, but nothing serious, thankfully."

He added that he had acupuncture and physio to ease the problem, exacerbated by the violent 'porpoising' and bouncing of his car. "We have to keep

fighting," he added. "I'll be there this weekend - I wouldn't miss it for the world." Hamilton's complaints about 'porpoising' were supported by many drivers following last Sunday's contest, including Leclerc, Verstappen, Sainz, Pierre Gasly of AlphaTauri, Russell and Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas. All want to see action taken to reform the radical aerodynamic rules on health and safety grounds.

Horner risked much wrath and controversy by suggesting that Mercedes had sought to make a big issue of the problems as "part of the game" as quoted by The Race. Russell responded by rejecting Horner's claims. "You've either got porpoising and the car is hitting the ground or you have to run the car millimeters above the ground and you're smashing the bumps. "So, whichever way you've got it, it's not great for anyone. Something will happen. There's no doubt about it."—AFP

Morocco face Zionists for first time in quiet basketball diplomacy

RABAT: The Moroccan women's basketball team hosted their Zionist counterparts for the first time on Wednesday in a quiet slice of sporting diplomacy played out in front of invited guests only. The friendly game, a first in the framework of sports cooperation since the normalization of ties between the two countries at the end of 2020, took place in a gymnasium in Sale, near Rabat. There were no spectators at the invitation only event, said an AFP journalist.

According to the Zionist Basketball Federation (IBBA) website, it was the first time that Arab female players had faced a Zionist national team in their country. The Moroccans came out on top, 62-58, in a match organized on the sidelines of a framework cooperation agreement signed Tuesday in Rabat between the Royal Moroccan Basketball Federation (FRMBB) and the IBBA in order to develop sports exchanges, according to a press release.

"Through this cooperation, the Moroccan party aims, among other things, to benefit from the experience of the Federation which was founded in 1934 and which has accumulated a great deal of experience in terms of supervision, training and financial management," the statement said. The agreement provides in particular for the organization of tournaments and friendly matches at all levels and the participation of Moroccan coaches in advanced training courses.—AFP

Matsuyama, Scott Morikawa among US Open leaders

BROOKLINE: Reigning British Open champion Collin Morikawa and past Masters winners Hideki Matsuyama and Adam Scott were among eight players sharing the early lead at the 122nd US Open on Thursday. Americans Russell Henley, Hayden Buckley, Patrick Rodgers, Matthew NeSmith and Travis Vick were also at 1-under with seventh-ranked compatriot Morikawa plus Japan's Matsuyama, the 2021 Masters champion, and Australian Scott, who grabbed the green jacket in 2013.

Golf's great divide was a major sub-plot as rebels of Saudi-backed upstart LIV Golf Series and stars of the established US PGA Tour were both in the field of 156 at The Country Club. The US Golf Association chose not to follow a PGA Tour ban of 17 golfers who played in last week's LIV Golf debut in England, staying faithful to this year's US Open qualifying standards.

LIV Golf offers the largest purses in the sport's history at \$25 million per regular-season event, \$7.5 million more than this week's US Open prize money total. Morikawa rolled in a birdie putt from just over 50 feet at the par-3 second hole while amateur Vick made a birdie putt from just inside 18 feet at the par-4 third and Scott sank a 13-foot birdie putt at the second.

Defending champion Jon Rahm and four-time major winner Rory McIlroy each opened with back-to-back pars, but Rahm stumbled with a bogey at the third. LIV Golf's breakout big names like Phil Mickelson and



BROOKLINE: Hideki Matsuyama of Japan lines up a putt on the 12th green during round one of the 122nd US Open Championship on June 16, 2022.— AFP

Dustin Johnson had afternoon tee times. The 7,254-yard course was set to deliver headaches aplenty with dense rough and hard-to-hold greens. World number two Rahm captured his first major crown at Torrey Pines in last year's US Open and won his first title since then at last month's PGA Mexico Open.

"Getting the first major is a big weight off my shoulders," Rahm said. "I feel like I can enjoy it a little bit more and know that you don't need to do anything special to get it done." McIlroy, who won last week's PGA Canadian Open, has not captured a major title since the 2014 PGA Championship. The 33-year-old Northern Ireland star will try to become the first player since 1934 to win the US Open after a victory in the prior week. "Everything is certainly trending in the right direction," McIlroy said. "I'm happy with where the game is at."—AFP



BROOKLINE: A general view is seen as Sebastian Munoz of Colombia, Harold Varner III of the United States and Alex Noren of Sweden walk the eighth hole during round one of the 122nd US Open Championship at The Country Club on June 16, 2022.— AFP

USGA boss can see LIV players having harder path to US

BROOKLINE: US Golf Association chief executive Mike Whan said Wednesday he could foresee Saudi-backed LIV Golf players having a harder time getting into future US Opens, but nothing has been decided. On the eve of the 122nd US Open at The Country Club in Brookline, where stars from both the US PGA Tour and upstart LIV Golf will compete, Whan said he was sad over the sport's split but wouldn't be drawn into possible future major bans.

"The question was could you envision a day where it would be harder for some folks doing different things to get into a US Open? I could," Whan said. "Do I know what that day looks like? No, I don't." The PGA Tour imposed an indefinite suspension on 17 current or former members who played the LIV Golf opener last week in England, including US stars Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson. "It got our attention," Whan said of the bans.

But the USGA, without speaking to PGA commissioner Jay Monahan, decided last week to stay with pre-determined qualifying standards for this week's US Open, choosing not to ban rebels chasing record prize money in the LIV Golf series. "We had to make some tough decisions that not everybody agrees with," Whan

said. "I understand if people want to play a heck of a lot less golf and get paid more money, and that's a choice and that's great. What that means to the future of the game? I think to be determined."

In justifying not banning LIV Golf players, Whan noted 30 PGA players were allowed to compete at an DP World Tour event with the same Saudi backers earlier this year. "We did sit down and have a long conversation," Whan said. "Did where somebody else play and what promoter they played it with disqualify them for this event? We decided no." Even if majors allow LIV players, there are no world ranking points for LIV events, so LIV players figure to fade from eligibility without access from prior triumphs.

Whan, a member of the world rankings board, said LIV Golf has made no submission seeking such points, but notes how it has evolved over time. "What we're talking about was different two years ago and it was different two months ago than it is today," he said. "Everybody... we work with need to take a long-term view of this and see where these things go." The USGA will re-examine its qualifying criteria for next year as well.

"I'm saddened by what's happening in the professional game, mostly as a fan because I like watching the best players in the world come together and play, and this is going to fracture that," Whan said. "It looks like it's good for a few folks playing the game, but I'm struggling with how this is good for the game. "What concerns me the most is we could get to the point where a couple of people hold those (control) strings and how they act may or may not be great for the game."—AFP

Sports

No sweat as impressive Kyrgios sees off Tsitsipas

Former Wimbledon finalist Cilic into Queen's last eight

HALLE WESTFALEN: Nick Kyrgios impressively rallied past Stefanos Tsitsipas at the Halle grass court tournament on Wednesday to hammer home his status as a Wimbledon threat but only after a spat with the chair umpire over sweating. Kyrgios defeated world number six Tsitsipas 5-7, 6-2, 6-4 to reach a second successive quarter-final after also making the last eight in Stuttgart five days ago.

The 27-year-old smashed his racquet after losing the opener after saving three set points. He then got into a minor spat with the chair umpire in the third game of the second set, landing himself with a warning for time-wasting. "He said I was playing too slow - statistically I'm one of the fastest," Kyrgios said. "I had to walk to the sidelines to get my towel, there is this thing called sweat in 30 Celsius heat that runs down onto your hands."

"I needed to wipe my hands and he gave me a warning," Kyrgios immediately sat down mid-game on his bench and thrashed the point out with the chair before returning to the court amid cheers. "The support I get from crowds around the world is amazing. They want me to go out and put on a show," he said. Kyrgios called what he judged a frivolous warning "an unnecessary part of the game. It's not needed in a stadium full of people." "I later hit two aces just to prove my point."

Kyrgios, who has played only five events this season outside of Australia, said he is proud of winning on his own terms - without a coach and playing only when it suits him - while still keeping his ranking at its current 65th. "There needs to be more grass events for sure, I've been talking about it for ages," he said after defeating the second seeded Greek while saving seven of eight break points in

just over two hours. "If we had six grass court tournaments in Australia, I'd never leave the country."

Kyrgios will play a Friday quarter-final against Pablo Carreno Busta after the Spanish sixth seed beat Sebastian Korda 6-4, 0-6, 6-3. The Australian said that his lack of a massive tennis work ethic is actually a help to his game. "If I can beat some of the best players in the world and play at this level with as few events as I play, I'm pretty happy. "I've got a lot of people whom I'm playing for back home and they all want me to keep winning matches like this. This just proves that you can do it all your own way."

Queen's last eight

In another development, Marin Cilic made it into the last eight of the Queen's grass-court tournament on Wednesday, with a 7-6 (8/6) 7-5 win over Alexander Bublik. This event acts as a warm-up for Wimbledon where Croatia's Cilic went all the way to the final in 2017 before losing to Roger Federer in straight sets. The 33-year-old Cilic has been in good form of late, advancing to the last four of this season's French Open before losing to Casper Ruud.

But Denis Shapovalov, a Wimbledon semi-finalist last year, was beaten in the first round at Queen's on Wednesday, the sixth seed going down in three sets to Tommy Paul of the United States. Paul took the first set 6-4 only for Shapovalov to draw level by taking the second set 6-2. But Paul held his nerve to win the decider 6-4. Finnish qualifier Emil Ruusuvuori beat Britain's Jack Draper 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) to advance into the quarter-finals. World number 56 Ruusuvuori was in fine form, hitting 29 winners while forcing nine break points.

Defending champion Matteo Berrettini and



MIAMI GARDENS, FLORIDA: John Isner returns a shot to Nick Kyrgios and Thanasi Kokkinakis of Australia while playing with Hubert Hurkacz of Poland during the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on March 31, 2022 in Miami Gardens, Florida. —AFP

three-time Grand Slam title winner Stan Wawrinka will try to join Cilic and Ruusuvuori in the last eight when they face Denis Kudla and world number 35 Paul on Thursday. With no points on offer at Wimbledon this summer, due to the decision by the

All England Club to ban Russian and Belarusian competitors following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Queen's Club event is one of last opportunities for players to boost their rankings ahead of the hard-court season. —AFP

Mbappe 'confused' by 'economic and political pressure'

MADRID: Real Madrid president Florentino Perez has claimed Kylian Mbappe decided to stay at Paris Saint-Germain because he was "confused" after being put under intense "political and economic pressure". But when asked about the possibility of Mbappe joining Real Madrid in the future, Perez kept the door open to the 23-year-old. "This Mbappe is not my Mbappe," Perez said. "But if he changes, who knows? Life takes a thousand turns."

Mbappe stunned Real Madrid last month by rejecting a move to the Santiago Bernabeu in favor of signing a new three-year contract at PSG, with a reported salary of between 40 to 50 million euros (\$41.6 million to \$52 million). "They practically offered him the chance to be the leader, not only of a football team, but the management," Perez told the Spanish television program El Chiringuito on Wednesday. "We saw that it was not the Mbappe that we wanted to bring - but it was a result of the pressure he was under that he changed his dreams."

"If a kid is called by the president of a country, of course it affects him... that influenced him a lot.

But you can succeed at Real Madrid, like Zidane did, and also be a source of pride for the president of your country." Perez believes Mbappe was influenced most by French and Qatari political pressure, due to the reported involvement of French president Emmanuel Macron, as well as PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi, who is chairman of Qatar Sports Investments. "I think the pressure that might have affected him the most was the politics," Perez said.

"That, plus the money and the offer of leadership have made him change his mind. He had a hard time. When you get into a panic, you try to get out of that as quickly as possible, I can understand that. But what I can't understand is the King of Spain calling a Spanish club to tell him a player should stay. "There are two states involved there, one is Qatar and the other is France," Perez continued. "I have been here since 2000 and I have never seen that before, that a president of a state calls a player. You can be a world-class player and not play in France, like (Zinedine) Zidane or (Karim) Benzema."

Asked for a second time about Mbappe joining in the future, Perez said: "I tell you calmly, that life is not over yet." Real Madrid had also been linked with a move for Erling Haaland at Borussia Dortmund but by the time Mbappe chose to stay at PSG, Haaland had joined Manchester City. "It had nothing to do with it. We already have the best centre-forward in the world (Benzema) so this situation was incompatible with Haaland," Perez said. —AFP



SAINT-DENIS: France's forward Kylian Mbappe (right) fights for the ball with Croatia's defender Martin Erlic (left) during the UEFA Nations League - League A Group 1 football match between France and Croatia at the Stade de France. —AFP

moving forward with great strides," while Sky Sport believed that "a deal could be concluded in the coming days."

She indicated that the president of the Sicilian club, businessman Dario Meri, could keep a small stake in the acquisition project, which has been discussed for several months. Meri was one of a group of investors who bought the club in 2019 after filing for bankruptcy and relegation to the fourth division. The club did not express its reaction to this news, having contacted Agence France-Presse.

Palermo, a club that played in the first division

until 2017 and defended its colors, especially Argentines Javier Pastore, Paulo Dybala and Uruguayan Edinson Cavani, moved up to the third division in 2020 before reserving a ticket to the second division this season by defeating Padua in the playoffs. City Football Group Foundation, an Emirati foundation, has full or partial control over 11 clubs, according to its website, including Manchester City, France's Troyes, Spain's Sporting Gijon, Belgium's Lommel, New York City, Australian Melbourne City, Japanese Yokohama Marinos, and Chinese Sichuan Junio. —Agencies

Man City to launch Premier League title defense at West Ham

LONDON: Manchester City will begin the defense of their Premier League title at West Ham while Liverpool travel to Fulham on the opening weekend of the season. The 2022/23 fixtures, published on Thursday, give new Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag an opening test at Old Trafford against Brighton, who hammered United 4-0 last month.

Nottingham Forest's first match in the top flight for 23 years will be at Newcastle. Pep Guardiola's City will start their bid for a fifth title in six seasons at the London Stadium on Sunday, August 7, after all their rivals have begun their campaigns. Frank Lampard, whose Everton side narrowly escaped relegation, comes up against his former employers Chelsea on the previous evening.

For the second season running Arsenal have the honor of kicking-off the new campaign with a short trip to Crystal Palace on Friday, August 5. Liverpool and City renew their rivalry at Anfield in mid-October, after a midweek Champions League tie, with the return fixture scheduled for the start of April. Reds boss Jurgen Klopp is unlikely to be impressed with their fixture allocation in conjunction with their European commitments.

Their three away matches following Champions League group games are against Chelsea, Arsenal and Tottenham. The traditional "Big Six" have been kept apart on the final weekend before the mid-season break for the World Cup in Qatar, the weekend of November 12/13. Following the resumption of the campaign on December 26, Leeds host City and United welcome Forest. City head to Brentford on the final day of the season, with Liverpool away at Southampton. —AFP

Man City target Italian Palermo

MANCHESTER: Several Italian media outlets reported on Thursday that the City Football Group, which owns dozens of clubs including Manchester City, is looking to acquire Palermo, who have just returned to the second division. And Gazzetta dello Sport wrote that "negotiations for the sale of Palermo to the City Football Group are

Brown defiant as Celtics face Warriors clash

BOSTON: Boston's backs are against the wall heading into game six of the NBA Finals, but Celtics star Jaylen Brown vowed they won't back down against the Golden State Warriors. "We're looking forward to the challenge," Brown said Wednesday. "We've got to

embrace it. Ain't no other way around it. Last game on our home floor to kind of embody our whole season. "We're looking to give it everything we've got. We are not scared. We do not fear the Golden State Warriors. We want to come out and play the best version of basketball that we can." The Warriors moved one win away from their fourth title in eight years with a 104-94 victory in game five in San Francisco on Monday. Warriors star Stephen Curry had a rare off-night but former No. 1 draft pick Andrew Wiggins came up big on both ends of the court, pouring in 26 points, grabbing 13 rebounds and coming up with two steals and a block as Golden State took a 3-2 series lead.

The Celtics, meanwhile coughed up 18 turnovers,

something they can't afford to do on Thursday if they want to force a decisive game seven back in California. Brown said Boston's rocky start to the season will stand the team in good stead now as they try to bounce back from two straight defeats. "Everything has been a learning experience," Brown said of a season that saw the Celtics languishing under .500 at the halfway point.

"We wear everything that we learned this year as a badge of honor," Brown said. "We don't let it hang over our heads. We bounce back. We've been able to respond well all year." Teammate Marcus Smart, the defensive player of the year, echoed those sentiments. "We've kind of been forced to play with our backs against the wall," Smart said. "We got real used to it

where it's kind of part of us, in our nature now. It's nothing new to us. It's another game. It's another tough game." Smart said it won't take a revolutionary plan to stop Curry and Co, but an attention to detail.

"We all know deep in this run and in this game when you are going up against some of the greats, the margin of error is very small," he said. While the Celtics are chasing a record-setting 18th NBA title for the franchise, none of the current players had appeared in the Finals before. Nevertheless, Brown said there's no doubt among the Celtics that they can force game seven. "We have all the belief in ourselves," he said. "We're going to come out and leave it all out there. That's the whole intent." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

Khaldiya	24848075	Dasmah	22532265
Kaifan	24849807	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shamiya	24848913	Shaab	22518752
Shuwaikh	24814507	Qibla	22459381
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Nuzha	22526804	Mirqab	22456536
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Sharq	22465401
Qadsiya	22515088	Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

I have changed my name from SAIFUDDIN RAJAB ALI to SAIFUDDIN RAJAB ALI TAKDIR. In future I should be known by my new name. My Passport No. L3441234 & Civil ID No. 275010184475. Address: SAIFUDDIN RAJAB ALI TAKDIR P/O Saifypura, Nai Abadi.

Banswara (Raj.) (C 0870)

My son Vemula Jesse Aarush S/O Vemula Sagar House No. 1-3/1, Rudraram, Ramadagu, Karimnagar, Telangana, India, pincode: 505531. We have changed my son name to Vemula Aarush for future use as per birth certificate. Hawally, Kuwait. (C 2011)



President of Kuwait Football Association explaining the strategy.

Kuwait football's 2030 vision

KFA vows to take Kuwait football to new level

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association (KFA) held a press conference on Thursday during which KFA President Abdullah Al-Shaheen spoke about the plans of the new board, which took over in May, to take Kuwait football to a new level and return to their winning ways. Shaheen presented the strategy of developing Kuwait football's 2030 vision, and the goal behind this is to qualify for the 2030 World Cup.

He said reform starts from the bottom and by preparing generations, adding there should be development programs and effective infrastructure, in addition to having a clear mechanism for competitions. Shaheen said there should be a new professionalism era that allows total dedication to the game, adding there must be partnerships with media and sponsors.

Shaheen insisted the role of KFA is not of supervision, but rather of building teams and clubs. He said it will be of importance to have partnerships with ministries, academies and schools, and strengthen the partnership with FIFA to create income. "We should study the experiences of other countries," he said, adding the strategy has a timeline, and there will be a thorough review of the association in the short term.

Shaheen said the strategy includes: Unification of the football system with related parties; Evaluate the current situation and decide the problems; Governance, management and having an advisory committee made up of foreign-

ers; Technical issues; Refereeing; Competitions; Revenue; Infrastructure (must increase the number of stadiums, as current ones are not enough).

Shaheen mentioned a FIFA report, which it included in the strategy. He said the report mentions that the technical management in Kuwait has 3.8 individuals, while the global average is 7.4. The report said there is no clear philosophy to develop football in Kuwait. One thing the report mentioned is that there are enough coaches, but they are not active. There are 800 coaches, 50 percent of whom are not Kuwaiti, and 50 percent of them are computer illiterate. There will not be any Kuwaiti referee at the 2022 World Cup, while there will be seven from other Gulf countries.

Shaheen was very clear when he said the current board is not responsible for the failures as it just took over, adding that development needs comprehensive solutions, most importantly patience, long-term solutions, and being frank and realistic. He said Kuwait will enter international organizations administratively and will not merely be a follower.

Shaheen concluded with what he described as standards for success: Increase the rate of practicing the game; Promote football development philosophy; Qualify for all Asian championships; Create new competitions; Totally professional clubs; Increase KFA revenues; Have stadiums 50 percent full; Develop and improve professional stadiums; Increase the number of qualified referees; Exceed one million followers on social media; Having clubs relying on their academies; Having pro Kuwaiti players abroad.

Women Futsal Championship: Kuwait overpower Saudi 3-1



Kuwait Women team

KUWAIT: Kuwait beat Saudi Arabia 3-1 in the 3rd WAFF Women Futsal Championship on Thursday. The West Asian Futsal Championship for women kicked off at King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah, with the participation of six teams. The 2022 West Asian Football Federation Women's Futsal Championship is the third edition of the competition and the first time it has been held in Saudi Arabia. The previous two tournaments were both won by Iran, in 2008 and 2012. The competition includes six national teams. Group A hosts

Palestine, Iraq and Bahrain, with Group B including Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait.

The tournament will feature 11 matches starting with Thursday's clash between Bahrain and Palestine, which was followed by Saudi Arabia taking on Kuwait. The top two teams from each group will progress to the semifinals, to be played on June 22, while the third-placed teams will face each other for the fifth-place playoff on the same day. The tournament will conclude on June 24 with the final and the third-place playoff.

Kuwait marks 40th anniversary of FIFA World Cup appearance

KUWAIT: Some 40 years ago, the Kuwait national team made their mark on the biggest football event in the world, partaking in the 1982 FIFA World Cup in Spain as the first GCC and Arab Asian country to compete in this prestigious tournament. Kuwait qualified to the FIFA World Cup after topping their group, which included New Zealand. Afterwards, Kuwaiti national team competed against top teams such as England, France and what was known then as Czechoslovakia.

The "blues" drew with the Czechoslovakia 1-1, lost to France by 1-4, and gave the English team the run for their money losing by a sole goal. "I felt proud of our achievement while setting foot on the pitch and hearing the national anthem," Saad Al-Houti, the skipper of the Kuwaiti squad in the 1982 FIFA World Cup, told KUNA in an interview.

Al-Houti added that the World Cup appearance was the pinnacle of their football career, which began with winning the Gulf Cup and Asian championship titles. This was followed by the Kuwaiti national team participation in the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, which saw them compete against the

Soviet Union in the quarterfinals, he pointed out.

While remembering the achievements was important, the Kuwaiti former national footballer stressed that the current generation of managements and athletes should set plans to bring back the Kuwaiti national team back in the forefront of football nations. The Kuwaiti achievement in 1982 was a result of meticulous planning and available talent, said Abdullah Al-Mayouf, another Kuwaiti football legend and member of the squad.

Numerous training camps were organized for the team in Portugal and Morocco and various encounters were scheduled to sharpen out skills for the biggest football tournament held every four years, he noted, indicating that Kuwait and the Arab world was proud to see the blues amongst the 24 best squads in the world. Al-Mayouf remembered the strong support from top government executives who provided the team with all they need to focus on the FIFA World Cup, but felt a bit disappointed that the team did not return to the tournament since then.

Reflecting similar sentiments, foot-



File photo shows Kuwait's football team ahead of their game vs France during 1982 World Cup.— KUNA photos

baller Nasser Al-Ghanim affirmed that the golden generation of Kuwaiti footballers were very proud of their achievements during their fantastic tenure. "I was 21 of age when I took part in the tournament," Al-Ghanim stated, saying that it was an unfathomable honor to be part of the greatest football generation that Kuwait had produced and an unmatched until now.

The golden age of Kuwaiti football

could be remembered with the mention of one man's name, the late Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, said manager of the Kuwaiti football squad in Spain, said Yousef Al-Shamlan. Al-Shamlan also attributed the success of the team to head coaches like Brazilian legends Mario Zagallo and Carlos Alberto Parreira who guided the young Kuwaiti talents and brought out the best from them.

Assistant coach of the Kuwaiti team Jawad Maqseed also reminisced about the national team participation in the tournament, saying that players were highly efficient and acted as one both on the pitch and outside. He summed the Kuwaiti success in the golden era to the availability of talent, well planned training sessions and camps as well as the presence of tremendous top management and staff.— KUNA