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# Kuwait to witness severe heatwave in coming days

Longest day on Tuesday • Europe swelters in record-breaking June heatwave



PARIS: A man cools off in the Trocadero Fountains across from the Eiffel Tower on June 18, 2022 amid record high temperatures sweeping across France and western Europe. — AFP

By Faten Omar & Agencies

**KUWAIT/PARIS:** The meteorological department expects a massive heatwave in the coming days, with temperatures to exceed 50 degrees Celsius. Recently, Kuwait recorded the highest temperature on earth, as the mercury hit 52.7 degrees Celsius in the shade in Jahra governorate. "The Zagros Mountains in Iran prevent cold winds from coming to Kuwait and several countries, which causes Kuwait to have among the highest temperatures in the Gulf region," Kuwaiti astronomer Adel Al-Saadoun told Kuwait Times.

"Temperatures can be reduced by planting trees in the desert, but it is impossible to cover the entire area, and it is unreasonable to protect them from human and natural loss," he said. "The main cause of climate change is climatic astronomical cycles. The Earth revolves around the sun in three movements - once every 26,000 years, every 40,000 years, and once every 100,000 years," he explained.

Saadoun pointed out the Earth has experienced cold periods (ice ages) and warm periods in roughly 100,000-year cycles, which were

caused by the three movements in the past. "We are in the period that is the hottest for the entire world," he said, adding temperatures will start to drop in September. The Arabian Gulf region witnesses a significant rise in temperatures during summer, with severe heatwaves that last for several days.

Al-Ojairi Scientific Center announced on Sunday that on Tuesday, Kuwait will witness 14 hours and two minutes of daytime, as opposed to nine hours and 58 minutes of nighttime. Public Relations Director at Al-Ojairi Scientific Center Khaled Al-Jamaan said this phenomenon happens due to Kuwait's unique geographic location in the north of the Gulf region. "This happens every year because of the sunlight movement reaching its maximum extent in the northern half of the globe," he added. He pointed out that the sun is at its highest point these days and will gradually wane from July 5.

Meanwhile, Spain, France and other western European nations sweltered over the weekend under a blistering June heatwave, with some wildfires still blazing even as the weather began to ease. The soaring temperatures were in line with scientists' predictions that

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## News in brief

### Work permit data amendments

**KUWAIT:** The Public Authority for Manpower launched a new electronic service through the As-hal app that allows employers to change work permit data. Employers can modify the name, degree or certificate, passport number and other data of their employees through this new service. The profession to be modified should meet the 'need assessment' condition, and cannot be changed to 'driver'. (See Page 3)

### Public urged to report LGBTQIA+ colors

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry urged the public to report LGBTQIA+ flags, banners, slogans or any form of LGBTQIA+ products in stores and commercial establishments in Kuwait. The ministry explained that the LGBTQIA+ flag, which "goes against public morals", is different from the rainbow because it contains six colors instead of seven.

### Iraq confirms 13 cholera cases

**SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq:** A cholera outbreak in Iraq has infected at least 13 people and scores more suspected cases have been sent for analysis, most from the northern Kurdistan region, health officials said Sunday. Cholera is an acute diarrheal disease that is treatable with antibiotics and hydration but can kill within hours without medical attention. — AFP

### Indian jet makes safe landing

**PATNA:** A New Delhi-bound flight carrying 185 passengers made an emergency landing on Sunday in the eastern Indian city of Patna, after its left engine caught fire while in flight, officials said. The passengers aboard the domestic flight, operated by commercial carrier SpiceJet, were evacuated safely once the pilot returned to Patna airport shortly after take-off. — AFP

## Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan leaders discuss issues

**CAIRO:** Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi on Sunday held a meeting with visiting Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and Jordanian King Abdullah II in the Egyptian resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh on cooperation in various fields as well as regional and international issues. The three leaders discussed "mutual coordination

towards various issues of common concern, in addition to the latest developments on the regional and international arenas and the challenges facing the region," said the Egyptian presidency in a statement.

"They stressed it is important to bolster the "brotherly and strategic" relationship between the three countries to higher levels to achieve common goals and interests. They also welcomed the upcoming summit to be hosted by Saudi Arabia in July, comprising of leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and the United States, said the statement.

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## Eni joins Qatar gas project after Russian cuts

**DOHA:** Italian company Eni on Sunday joined Qatar Energy's \$28.75 billion project to expand production from the world's biggest natural gas field, days after Russia slashed supplies to Italy. Eni will own a stake of just over three percent in the North Field East project, Qatar Energy's CEO told a signing ceremony in Doha. Qatar announced last week that

France's TotalEnergies will be its first, and largest, foreign partner on the development, with a 6.25 percent share. An unknown number of companies are also set to be named. "Today I'm pleased... to announce the selection of Eni as a partner in this unique strategic project," said Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, who is also president and CEO of state-owned Qatar Energy.

The project's LNG - the cooled form of gas that makes it easier to transport - is expected to come online in 2026. It will expand Qatar's LNG production from 77 million tons a year to 110 million, Qatar Energy said.

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SHARM EL-SHEIKH: Jordanian King Abdullah II, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa met in this Egyptian Red Sea resort on June 19, 2022. — AFP



DOHA: Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs and President and CEO of Qatar Energy Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi greets CEO of ENI Claudio Descalzi during a signing ceremony on June 19, 2022. — AFP

## Tunisians slam reform plans, judicial purge

**TUNIS:** Hundreds demonstrated on Sunday in Tunisia's capital against a planned referendum on constitutional changes and President Kais Saied's recent firing of dozens of judges. Protesters in Tunis

responded to calls from opposition organizations, including Saied's nemesis the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, chanting "constitution, liberty and dignity" and "the people want an independent judiciary", an AFP correspondent said.

The new constitution is the centerpiece of reform plans by Saied and is set to go to referendum on July 25, exactly one year after he sacked the government and suspended parliament. He has steadily extended his power grab since then, including by dissolving parlia-

ment in March. Earlier this month he sacked 57 judges, after accusing many of corruption and other crimes.

"The referendum is just nothing but a fraud," said Ali Larayedh, a leader from Ennahdha, which was parliament's biggest party and a key player in the government fired by the president. "We are demonstrating against the exclusion of the judicial authority and against the coup d'etat that targets the constitution," he said.

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## Local

## Kuwait Crown Prince hosts senior officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem at Bayan Palace on Sunday. His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## Kuwait Amir receives letter from Saudi King



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah receives the letter from Saudi Ambassador Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khalid Al Saud. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday received a written letter from Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud about good bilateral bonds between both countries and the brotherly Kuwaiti and Saudi peoples and ways of promoting and developing these relations. Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah received the message during a reception of the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khalid Al Saud. — KUNA

## News in brief

## Kuwait's Amir offers condolences

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday addressed a cable of condolences to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud over the death of Prince Saud bin Mohammed bin Turki bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Saud, may his soul rest in peace. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable of condolences to the King of Saudi Arabia.

## Kuwait deplors deadly Afghanistan blasts

KUWAIT: Kuwait on Sunday condemned a pair of explosions that rocked Afghanistan's capital Kabul a day earlier, leaving scores of people dead or injured. The international community needs to take decisive action against "the menace of terrorism," said a foreign ministry statement, wishing a speedy recovery for those wounded in the attacks.

## Kuwait seeks investment in Mexico

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) said on Sunday that the country plans to explore investment opportunities across Mexico, with particular focus on the Latin American nation's gas and agriculture sectors. The plans also aim to open the door for Kuwait's private sector to seek lucrative investments in Mexico, chamber member Khaled Al-Khaled told the press after talks with a visiting Mexican delegation, citing an existential trade relationship between the two countries. The Mexican contingent primarily comprises infrastructure firms who are here to get acquainted with the investment opportunities that Kuwait has to offer, according to the delegation.

## GCC officials discuss food safety

RIYADH: GCC ministry undersecretaries discussed Sunday a number of tabled topics relating to food safety in Gulf area, including Gulf guide for monitoring imported foods. The general secretariat added in a statement that the meeting, held in its headquarters in Riyadh, handled discussion of a unifying food law for all Gulf countries and issuing certificates for traded foods.



ISTANBUL: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem is seen after arriving in Istanbul.

## Parliament Speaker in Turkey for IPU Conference

ISTANBUL: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem arrived on Sunday in the Turkish city of Istanbul to partake in Parliamentary International Conference, under the auspices of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, organized by the Inter-Parliamentary-Union (IPU) and in cooperation with the Turkish Parliament. Ghanem's participation will

focus on the international agreements regarding immigration, refugees, and in response to an invitation by the Turkish Parliament. Upon arrival, the Speaker was received by Kuwait Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zowawi, Kuwait General Consul in Istanbul Mohammad Al-Mohammad, and senior diplomats at Kuwait Embassy. —KUNA

## Renowned UK personalities praise Kuwait's outgoing envoy for cementing ties

LONDON: A number of British politicians and MPs have expressed deep appreciation toward the noticeable role played by the outgoing State of Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Khaled Al-Duwaisan in bolstering further the special relations between the two friendly countries, Kuwait and the UK. The renowned personalities manifested their admiration of the ambassador's role at this level at a reception marking end of his tenure, held in London. It was attended by Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Nigel Evans, a large number of legislators and eminent political personalities as well as heads of diplomatic missions in the UK.

Evans described the outgoing Kuwaiti envoy, who doubled as the head of the diplomatic corps in the UK and North Ireland, as a legendary character, an engineer of a bright diplomatic record. The leading British MP said he was elected as member of the House of Commons in 1992, simultaneously with the assignment of Duwaisan as the State of Kuwait Ambassador in London. Since then, Evans said he had seen him quite active at various levels, drawing great respect from all diplomatic quarters. Duwaisan had keenly defended his country's interests and succeeded in knitting a web of solid relations with decision makers, parliamentarians and cultural figures, Evans said, noting that his multiple ties enabled him to have

insight about various issues concerning the Middle East and relayed the State of Kuwait's voice to the British political quarters. Kuwait and Britain have ties with solid relations and cooperation in various realms, but ambassador Duwaisan added a humanitarian aspect to this relationship due to his sincerity and respect for others.

Evans has added that on this occasion, he has experienced a blend of somber and jubilant sentiments for getting acquainted with the outgoing ambassador and the end of his mandate. It is not easy to bid farewell to a personality that "you have known for 30 years," he said. Rehman Chiti, member of the British parliament and chairman of the British-Kuwaiti Friendship Society, also heaped praise upon Al-Duwaisan for playing a crucial role in boosting the British-Kuwaiti relations and robustly defending his country's interests. MP Chiti added in remarks to the Kuwaiti news agency that Al-Duwaisan employed his diplomatic shrewdness in building a network of relations of multiple dimensions during the three decades he had spent in Britain. Amanda Milling, the Minister of State for the Middle East, affirmed that it is a tough mission for a diplomat to spend up to 30 years in London, admiring his role as his country's envoy and dean of the diplomatic corp. London will miss a personality of such heavy diplomatic weight, she has affirmed. — KUNA

## Kuwait's Maha Al-Barjas becomes first Arab woman vice-president of IFRC

GENEVA: Secretary-General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Maha Al-Barjas became on Sunday the first Arab woman to be appointed as vice-president of International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies (IFRC) for the Asia Pacific region. This came as part of series of constitutional meetings held by Red Cross and Crescent international movement.

Barjas stated to the press that this reinforced the principles of women empowerment in positions of leadership, which goes in accordance with Kuwait's objectives of diversifying decision makers. She commented that it also bolsters efforts of KRCS in coordinating with national red cross and crescent soci-

eties, facilitates the exchange of expertise, and helps alleviate the burdens of those in need. Barjas underscored importance of such meetings, stressing that KRCS' participation highlights Kuwait's humanitarian efforts.

Meanwhile, head of KRCS board of directors Dr Hilal Al-Sayer underlined to KUNA the importance of the humanitarian partnership between the society and the international movement to help those affected by crises. Sayer elucidated the importance of developing humanitarian works, saying that the meetings will issue a number of recommendations to better serve those in need. He also indicated that KRCS delegation met with humanitarian work leaders to further boost bilateral relations. Heading the delega-

## Arab League says joint military exercises important to unify strategic plans

CAIRO: The Assistant Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ambassador Khalil Al-Thawadi, affirmed on Sunday that the joint military training between Arab countries was a base for enhancing cooperation and unifying military methods of strategic and operational planning. This came in a speech during the opening of the 26th symposium for the representatives of the head training bodies in the Arab armed forces. He pointed out the importance of joint training in benefiting from the human resources of the Arab armies and dealing with various modern and advanced weapons and equipment, in addition to the military cooperation by raising the development of military competencies for the armed forces in Arab countries. He noted that the main objective is to prepare a unified guiding study to raise the military efficiency, including members of the armed forces and students at military



CAIRO: Head of the Military Education Authority Colonel Abdullah Al-Fahad participates in the meeting. — KUNA

colleges, and enable them to develop their skills and deal well with various circumstances. He also stressed the need to work on raising the capabilities of the leader's responsibility in training to research and develop methods in all fields to unify the military doctrines in the Arab countries to work in a harmonious and integrated manner.



LONDON: UK's Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons Nigel Evans greets Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan. — KUNA photos



Amanda Milling, the UK Minister of State for the Middle East, greets Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan.



GENEVA: Maha Al-Barjas (second from left) and other members of the KRCS delegation participating at the event. — KUNA

tion is Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, and participating are Secretary-General Maha Al-Barjas, Dr Musaed Al-Enezi, the chair's counselor and Niven Yusri, head of projects and international relations department. — KUNA

Local

# Kuwait-based diver defies disability to become world's fastest scuba diver

Mosawi pursued different dream after accident ended hope of becoming footballer



Faisal Al-Mosawi



Faisal Al-Mosawi practices scuba diving.

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Faisal Al-Mosawi was a promising football player at Salmiya Sporting Club and a person who enjoyed a healthy lifestyle. But his life turned upside down in an instant after a major car accident that caused him to lose movement in the lower part of his body. The accident changed his life forever, and after a series of operations and bouts of frustration, Mosawi accepted his disability and decided to achieve exceptional success, becoming the fastest diver in the world.

Kuwait Times met Mosawi, an Iraqi resident of Kuwait, to talk to him about his inspirational story. "My kinetic disability is due to a car accident in 2005. Today, I am proud to say that I challenged myself and set a world record as the fastest 10-km scuba diver. I am also a motivational speaker with more than 500 trainees per month," Mosawi said.

**Turning point**

"I decided two years after the accident to join university and earned a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) diploma in 2007. I continued my studies and began my bachelor's degree in finance, which helped me get involved in social life again, but I was still feeling frustrated after I lost my dream of becoming a professional football player," he said. "After several operations in the hope to walk again, I realized it was a big mistake to link my happiness to things that may not come back, especially since it cost me time in which I could do something more useful," Mosawi added.

Regarding the turning point that made him accept his

disability and start accomplishing his impressive successes, Mosawi said: "Every year on my birthday, I was hoping I would be able to walk again. But every year nothing happened, which made me very disappointed. During one of my birthdays, I realized I wanted to change people's lives and become an inspiration for them, especially after I heard about many disabled people who tried to commit suicide due to their frustrations



## Mosawi's story inspires children with disabilities

in life."

"After two years, I decided to either be a new person looking for a new dream that could change my life, or forever remain a useless person, and this was my turning point in becoming a new person with new hopes and dreams," Mosawi said. "This changed my life in all aspects. In 2009, I decided to start learning to dive. I contacted the Swimming and Diving Center at Kuwait Science Club and obtained my first diving license from PADI (scuba diving certificate), while

overcoming my fears, one of which was phobia of the sea. After that I got several more diving licenses, such as an open-water license, adventure license, advanced license and night rock diver license," he said.

**Fastest diver**

Mosawi told Kuwait Times that after he managed to achieve his dream of diving, he decided to become the fastest diver in the world among both regular and disabled divers, and started working on this dream. "In 2018, I became a Guinness World Record holder as the fastest 10 km scuba diver in the world with a time of 5 hours and 24 minutes, breaking a record that was set in 2011 by a scuba diver with no disability," he said.

Regarding diving techniques, Mosawi explained he wears a diving glove and depends on the strength of the upper part of his body. The challenge was in training daily for more than five hours underwater to achieve his goal. He emphasized the social inclusion of people with disabilities is the most important message that he seeks to deliver to the world, stressing that with his achievements, he proved to the world that disabled people can succeed like normal people.

"The hope that I gave to parents of disabled children makes me more persistent and determined to spread the message to the world. After the accident, doctors told my parents that it will be impossible for me to get married and have kids, but with hope and prayers, I married a special girl. I now have a beautiful daughter, and she is the most precious gift I ever got," Mosawi said.

The sources said the commerce ministry was convinced by the justifications of the union, as the costs for bringing in labor including airline tickets is KD 1,200, compelling the consumer to pay more than KD 890, which is the current price.

Sources said commerce ministry's cancellation of the KD 890 fee is imminent and could be made next month at the latest, at the end of the summer break and return of travelers, when demand for domestic help increases. The new prices are expected to vary between KD 1,100 and KD 1,400.

Sources said Saudi Arabia stopped bringing in helpers from the Philippines, which made the workers available for Kuwait, but the demand will not be met if Filipino helpers return to Saudi Arabia. They said Riyadh's ban made offices in the Philippines send their workers to Kuwait at prices that agree with what the commerce ministry decided.

teachers to be laid off include those in specialties Kuwaitis were appointed in, while some work in support jobs such as social specialists and laboratory assistants.

The sources said a committee will travel to Jordan and Palestine next month to sign contracts with Jordanian and Palestinian teachers specialized in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. The visit will be first to Jordan, then to Palestine to interview teachers who expressed their wish to come to Kuwait following an advertisement by the Kuwait Embassy in Jordan.

The committee that will visit Jordan is the only one that will sign contracts with teachers from abroad. The education ministry will only sign contracts with Palestinian and Jordanian teachers only in certain specialties, and no applications will be accepted from teachers of other nationalities living in Jordan or Palestine.

## Domestic helpers' recruitment fee could reach up to KD 1,400

**KUWAIT:** A preliminary agreement was reached between the commerce ministry and labor offices to raise prices of bringing in domestic helpers, informed sources told Kuwait Times. "Domestic help offices' union's meetings with the commerce and industry ministry resulted in an agreement to raise fees, but the dispute now is over deregulating prices and canceling a previous decision that fixed the price at KD 890, or set a higher recruitment fee," the sources said.

## Kuwait to recruit more teachers from Jordan, Palestine

**KUWAIT:** As the academic year nears its conclusion with results of high school exams to be announced soon, the education ministry begins its preparations for the new school year, when students are expected to attend fulltime and not in the two-group system as the case is now, which was imposed during the coronavirus pandemic.

Informed sources said the education ministry has prepared its needs for teachers, and will inform 327 resident teachers that they are no longer needed. The

tions of workers in both the public and private sectors is an accurate and more sensitive challenge than managing an investment fund of the state, as the issue is not related to the role of the economic policy of the state; rather it follows opportunities for profits in the medium to long term.

There are two basics for the Public Institution for Social Security that must be paid attention to - the first is ensuring a dignified living for pensioners through linking the annual increase of their monthly allocations to equal the increase in the cost of living as the case is worldwide, and having a minimum level of pensions based on statistical studies of living in any country. The second basic is the presentation of creative initiatives and policies that ensure the country's ability to meet its commitments.

**Second:**

We are aware that proposals are presented in parliaments with the aim of gaining political loyalty and votes at the expense of their children and their future, but in all parliaments, there is a government that took the oath to protect the people's funds and interests and fight with all constitutional facets to protect public funds and keep it from becoming a tool in political strife.

**Third:**

The number of those insured reached nearly 382,000 by March 2019, while those on salaries number nearly

149,000. The number of those who inherit pensions is around 85,000, so the total is nearly 619,000 people who benefit from the social security system. The total funds paid to those eligible and pensioners during the last five years till Dec 2019 is nearly KD 8.44 billion.

The actuarial deficit is the negative result when deducting the value of all social security commitments towards pensioners and the insured from all financial data of social security - the true value of its assets and investments at the end of a certain day. From what we have in numbers, under a lack of transparency and scary cover up in Kuwait, the latest we learned from the former spokesman of the parliamentary budgets committee, former MP Riyadh Al-Adsani, that the deficit doubled in the previous years due to the reduction in investment returns, and the actuarial deficit is the difference between future commitments and the rates of current income. So, it increased from KD 9 billion to KD 17.4 billion in the three fiscal years up to March 2019.

**Fourth:**

The missing transparency leads to supervision weakness, and this brings bad legislation, so many reports by international bodies that carried out actuary studies gave us numbers with large variations in the actuary rates - from KD 2 billion to KD 19 billion in all open and closed evaluation cases. The action of PIFSS and the investment

Legalese

## Visa transfer regulations



By Fajer Ahmed

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I'm grateful for the opportunity to clarify the laws and regulations for the Kuwaiti society, providing both expats and Kuwaiti citizens with a better understanding of their rights and obligations in various daily scenarios they might encounter.

**Question:** I joined a company in February 2020 by local visa transfer (indefinite contract) and submitted my resignation with a 90-day notice period in the first week of March 2022 by email, but the company did not respond to the resignation email nor issued any written letter as an acknowledgment to my resignation email. I now have a few questions that I am hoping you will help me understand and get better clarification on the situation at hand.

1. Is the email resignation notification valid as per Kuwait Law?

**Fajer:** If the email was sent to an official company email address, then yes, it is considered official, unless your contract or company HR policy specifically states that you may not notify the company via email, and it has to be provided in written form.

2. Is it mandatory that the company needs to accept the resignation?

**Fajer:** The company may not accept your resignation with a three-month notice for a definite contract. As for an indefinite agreement, they have the right to expect you to complete your agreement period, unless they agree to the 90-day notice you have provided, or if your contract specifically states that you may terminate your agreement with the company with a 90-day notice.

3. Since the company forcefully relieved me from my duties early (before completing the notice period), can I get the remaining days' salary?

**Fajer:** Unfortunately, no, if the company has not asked you to come in to work, since the resignation was submitted by the employee and this is not a termination.

4. If the company files an absconding case at the shuoon, what will be the duration to sort out the issue and how long will it normally take to transfer the visa to the new company?

**Fajer:** This depends on the situation, and I cannot speculate. But it may take anywhere between a day to a few months.

5. If the company files an absconding case, how will I get notified about the complaint and the hearing date?

**Fajer:** You usually get notified through a text message on your mobile phone, or in written form to your registered address on your civil ID.

6. Do I need the presence of a lawyer during the hearing at shuoon?

**Fajer:** You do not, but it is recommended that you do have a lawyer present with you, or at least a translator.

7. Will shuoon help me to get my final settlement (pending salary and leave salary), or do I need to approach the court to get it?

**Fajer:** The shuoon is a medium for you to negotiate with your company, so it may be helpful, but if the company is not willing to cooperate, you will need to go to court.

authority a year ago was a good first step in transparency and was commended by many, and now we say that what you started with became a commitment out of the joint action, which is characterized with transparency.

**Fifth:**

When we speak about the quality of Kuwait's retirement system, opinions vary between those who think it is the best in the region and even the world, and those who think otherwise, and it is not possible to decide that the opinion of one side is correct in the absence of a comprehensive system of evaluation and the difficulty in getting trusted and updated information about Kuwait's retirement system, because it is not subject to international evaluation according to the Global Pension Index used in Saudi Arabia and UAE. This index has been issued annually since 2009 by Mercer.

**Finally:**

The government policy over the previous years was dealing with sensitive issues with "floatation" policies and the goal was to go through the grillings, so we do not blame the citizen who believes that distributions of social security profits and generations funds is a gained right, as he sees thefts of the country's wealth without true monitoring. So, we insist on economic reforms, especially those concerned with the sustainability of social security.

## Employers can change staff info in labor system online

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) launched a new electronic service through the As-hal app for employers. This service allows the employer to change work permit data. PR and Media Director and the Official Spokesperson of PAM Aseel Al-Mazyad said this service allows an employer to modify or correct the data of their employees. "The employer can modify the name, degree or certificate, passport number and other data of their employees through this new service," she pointed out.



Aseel Al-Mazyad

"In case the amended application is accepted, the data of the worker's visa will be modified through the e-link with the systems of the ministry of interior. It's necessary that the profession to be modified is in line with the 'need assessment', which is a condition. Also, it's not allowed to change the profession to driver," explained Mazyad. As-hal service is provided by PAM as part of the Kuwait Government Online.

## Kuwait Economic Society comments on pensioners' session

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Economic Society (KES) released the following statement on Sunday commenting on the current political situation in Kuwait, and the actuarial deficit at the social security body and the pensioners' session at the National Assembly. The following are excerpts of the statement:

First of all, and before presenting the issue professionally and away from political squabbles, we will emphasize the necessity for forming a Cabinet as soon as possible to create a consensual atmosphere that serves the country and preserves the constitution.

**First:**

Social security is only an advanced means in defense of the society and its prosperity against any deterioration in its standards of living. It is organized savings by law, and what makes the management of a pension fund different is that dealing with the savings of pensioners and the deduc-

## Alopecia areata medicine available soon: Official

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Chairwoman of Dermatology Departments Council at the Health Ministry Dr Atfal Al-Lafi said there will soon be an effective medicine available for the treatment of alopecia areata after it was approved by the US FDA. She said that Asaad Al-Hamad Dermatological Center received 485 alopecia cases in 2021, adding that there are around 3,000 cases of the disease recorded annually worldwide.

She said the medicine is taken orally and has passed the clinical tests of all three stages. She added that the medicine is considered "a quality move" in the treatment of this illness "which has always been very difficult, although many treatment choices are available but never received any approval from the FDA."

Lafi said she considers this medicine as good news for alopecia patients, adding that the medicine will be registered soon at the health ministry so patients can receive treatment. She said alopecia is a non-infectious immune disease that affects various age groups, but it is most common among people between 15-29 years, and causes loss of hair from the scalp.



Dr Atfal Al-Lafi



## First batch of nurses from Bangladesh arrive in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** The first batch of 50 nurses from Bangladesh arrived in Kuwait Sunday to perform their duties in different government hospitals of Kuwait under the Ministry of Health of Kuwait. Major General Md Ashikuzzaman, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait, along with officers of the Embassy and officers from the respective companies welcomed the newly appointed nurses at Kuwait International Airport with flowers and congratulated them on being selected as the first batch to serve in Kuwait.

Ashikuzzaman, said in his statement that, "Today is an important day in the history of Bangladesh's manpower market in Kuwait. Since my joining as Ambassador of Bangladesh in Kuwait, the Embassy has been in regular contact with high-ranking officials of local Ministries of Kuwait and leading companies involved in bringing manpower from Kuwait to increase Bangladesh's labor market and bring skilled manpower from Bangladesh."

As a result, after approval of the Ministry of Health of the State of Kuwait the City Group General Trading Company and the Advanced Technology Company of Kuwait submitted demand letters to the Embassy in December 2021 for recruitment of 998 nurses through Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL), which was sent to the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh for further approval after verification by the Embassy of Bangladesh in Kuwait.

Accordingly, in January 2022, a selection committee comprising of the Ministry of Health, Kuwait and representatives from respective company visited Bangladesh to recruit nurses

# Kuwait's New Maternity Hospital to be ready in first quarter of 2023

## Pandemic impact, labor shortage forced one-year project delay

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** The New Maternity Hospital is the first medical project in the Middle East that has one specialty, built at a cost of KD 220 million. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Public Works in Kuwait, the hospital is three times larger than the old one and is expected to be ready by the first quarter of 2023.

Kuwait Times spoke with Meshaal Al-Enezi, Project Engineer at the New Maternity Hospital, about the project's details.

**Kuwait Times:** Where is the project located and how many floors and departments does it have?

**Meshaal Al-Enezi:** The project is located in the Al-Sabah medical zone opposite the existing maternity hospital in a prime location on the Arabian Gulf coast, and comprises of four main buildings interlinked by air-conditioned bridges. The main hospital consists of a basement and a six-floor podium topped by three towers ranging from 13 to 17 floors. The outpatient building consists of two car parks, a basement, ground and five floors. The multistorey car park consists of two basements, ground, five floors and a shaded parking roof. The central utilities building houses all MEP equipment and is connected to the main hospital building through a 51-m-long services tunnel.

The New Maternity Hospital is a state-of-the-art specialized hospital having all clinical and non-clinical departments related to obstetrics and gynecology diagnostics and treatment including an emergency ward, laboratories, pharmacies, radiology, intensive care units for adults and neonatal patients, outpatient clinics and nutrition services, besides the administration, engineering and general services support departments.

**KT:** Going deeper into the details of the projects, who are the people involved in the construction, and why this design?

**Enezi:** The parties involved in the design and construction of this project are:

End-user/beneficiary: Ministry of Health  
Client: Ministry of Public Works  
Consultant for design review and full onsite supervision: Pan Arab Consulting Engineering  
Main Contractor and Designer: Impresa Pizzarotti Co, assisted by a consortium of international healthcare consultants, Studio Altery, local consultant S Al-Marzouk and AbilHanna SSH.

65 specialized subcontractors executing all kinds of works including medical equipment and medical and non-medical furnishings.

**KT:** What are the tasks and works of the projects? What are the phases involved?

**Enezi:** The project is a design and build project. It has six main phases, specifically concept design, schematic design, design development, final design, and then the ongoing construction phase, followed by completion of works and handing over to MoH in the operation and maintenance phase.

**KT:** What are the obstacles you faced during the project and how did you manage to overcome them?

**Enezi:** The COVID-19 pandemic had negative implications on the project's progress due to manpower issues, no new work visas, full and partial area closures, expats' entry restrictions and delays in air and sea freight.

**KT:** What about the number of MPW employees on the project site, the percentage of Kuwaitis, and the site's needs for new employees?

**Enezi:** The MPW supervision team consists of around 45 Kuwaiti engineers with different specializations and



Meshaal Al-Enezi



KUWAIT: The New Maternity Hospital Project in Al-Sabah medical zone.

years of experience, which are enough for the project.

**KT:** Why are such projects important for Kuwait? What does it mean for the New Kuwait 2035 vision?

**Enezi:** Healthcare projects, in general, are of prime importance for the wellbeing of the Kuwait population, and the NMH project is one of the projects registered in the five-year development plan. It is considered one of the basic components of the 2035 vision in the development of the healthcare infrastructure sector.

**KT:** What is the significance of the design? How many years did it take to build?

**Enezi:** The unique architectural concept design of this

is unique from other projects. The functional space planning, construction material and furnishings are in strict compliance with international special healthcare codes like FGI and MoH infection control codes.

**KT:** What stages the project has and what is the final stage for completion? Can you give a brief about them?

**Enezi:** As explained earlier, this is a design and build project where the contractor has to develop the contract's concept design into detailed designs through four design stages (concept, schematic, development and final designs), followed by the construction and furnishing stage, at the end of which the project is handed over to the Ministry of Health. The final contractual stage of the project after handing over is the two years of operational maintenance for all works and three years of maintenance for medical equipment.

**KT:** What are the security and safety rules in the project?

**Enezi:** A comprehensive program of security and safety procedures has been adopted for the project in accordance with the regulations and laws in force in Kuwait, as well as international regulations for security and safety procedures. The project is also provided with the latest security and safety systems, such as cameras that monitor entrances and exits around the clock, doors to suites that work with the magnetic card system, and a protection and tracking system for newborns.

**KT:** How were the infrastructure and international standards established in the project?

**Enezi:** By building a network of internal roads of all kinds and pedestrian paths, drinking water, irrigation and firefighting networks and the sewage network. The diversity of water treatments for the different types of polluted wastewater from laboratories, operating rooms, kitchens and others is taken into account before it is discharged into the main network.

We also built a rainwater and surface water drainage network, central networks for compressed air and medical gases and liquid oxygen, energy services for permanent and emergency electricity to all parts of the hospital from diesel and fuel generators, and communication services including Internet, telephone communications, surveillance cameras and security and safety systems.



### One of the five-year development plan's projects

project took good advantage of the prime location of the site on the Gulf coast, giving 80 percent of the 460 patients' private suites direct view of the Gulf's waters. The total duration to build the project is around five years, including a one-year extension for COVID-19 delays.

**KT:** What is the interior design style of the structure and the total area of the construction site?

**Enezi:** The project's interior has adopted a state-of-the-art contemporary design for healthcare facilities with a selective color scheme for each tower to meet the local culture and maternity needs. The total site area is around 60,000 sq m with a total built-up area of 237,000 sq m, making it a mega project.

**KT:** What makes the project different and unique from other current building projects?

**Enezi:** Healthcare projects are generally different from traditional buildings, and a specialized maternity hospital



The generator building of the hospital.



New Maternity Hospital overlooking the Arabian Gulf.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait Major General Md Ashikuzzaman welcomes the first batch of 50 nurses from Bangladesh who arrived in Kuwait Sunday.

for both of the companies and finalized a total number of 654 nurses. A delegation from the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL) visited Kuwait on 06-12 May, 2022 to monitor all the facilities including accommodation of nurses from Bangladesh and looked for new labor market.

The Bangladesh Ambassador also mentioned that visas have already been issued in favor of 299 nurses out of the finally selected nurses. Among them, 50 nurses of the first batch have arrived in Kuwait for the first time officially free of cost. The remaining nurses with visas are

expected to join the work by June 2022 and the remaining selected nurses are expected to join to their workplaces in Kuwait soon upon completion of the process of departure from Bangladesh.

In his speech Ambassador said that Kuwait is one of the important countries in the Middle East region. There is an immense potential for the export of skilled manpower. The Embassy of Bangladesh in Kuwait aims to increase the export of skilled manpower from Bangladesh to Kuwait. Ambassador hoped that the beginning of export of Bangladeshi skilled manpower to Kuwait through nurses would gradually pave the way for

skilled manpower in various sectors in Kuwait, which in turn would further strengthen Bangladesh-Kuwait bilateral relations.

The Ambassador of Bangladesh also thanked the relevant Ministries of Kuwait and the Embassy of Kuwait in Bangladesh and related companies for recruiting Bangladeshi skilled manpower to Kuwait. The Ambassador also thanked the Ministry of Health of Bangladesh, Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL) for their assistance in expediting the recruitment process of nurses in Kuwait.



Uncertainty reigns in Colombia vote

## New Hong Kong cabinet includes four senior officials under US sanctions



KYIV: Mourners pay their respects next to the coffin of killed Ukrainian serviceman Roman Ratushny during a farewell ceremony in Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

# Ukraine war could last 'years': NATO chief

## Ukraine repulsed fresh attacks by Russian forces on eastern front

KYIV: NATO's chief warned that the war in Ukraine could last "for years" as President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed Sunday that his forces would not give up the south of the country to Russia after his first visit to the frontline there. Ukraine said it had also repulsed fresh attacks by Russian forces on the eastern front, where there have been weeks of fierce battles as Moscow tries to seize the industrial Donbas region.

While Ukraine remained defiant, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned Western countries must be ready to offer long-term support to Kyiv during a grinding war. "We must be prepared for this to last for years," Stoltenberg told German daily newspaper Bild.

"We must not weaken in our support of Ukraine, even if the costs are high—not only in terms of military support but also because of rising energy and food prices." British Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued a similar warning, urging sustained support for Kyiv or risk "the greatest victory for aggression" since World War II.

"Time is now the vital factor," Johnson wrote in an article for the Sunday Times after making his second visit to Kyiv, calling for the West to ensure Ukraine has the "strategic endurance to survive and eventually prevail".

### 'Return everything'

Russian forces have directed their firepower at the east

and south of Ukraine in recent weeks since failing in their bid to take the capital Kyiv after the lightning February 24 invasion. Zelensky made a rare trip outside Kyiv Saturday to the hold-out Black Sea city of Mykolaiv, and visited troops nearby and in the neighbouring Odessa region for the first time since the Russian invasion. "We will not give away the south to anyone, we will return everything that's ours and the sea will be Ukrainian and safe," he said in a video posted on Telegram as he made his way back to Kyiv.

He said he talked with troops and police during his visit. "Their mood is confident, and looking into their eyes it is obvious that they all do not doubt our victory," he said. But Zelensky admitted that losses were "significant", adding: "Many houses were destroyed, civilian logistics were disrupted, there are many social issues."

Mykolaiv is a key target for Russia as it lies on the way to the strategic Black Sea port of Odessa. Blockaded by Russia, Odessa residents have turned their attention to rallying the home front effort.

hoping to spring a surprise, with the red-green collective promising to block Macron's agenda after uniting behind 70-year-old figurehead Jean-Luc Melancon.

"The vote is extremely open and it would be improper to say that things are settled one way or the other," Melancon told reporters Friday during a final campaign stop in Paris. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen is also eyeing major gains for her National Rally party, which had just eight seats in the outgoing parliament.

Macron was left disappointed last weekend after the first round placed Together and NUPES neck-and-neck at around 26 percent. Surging inflation, lacklustre campaigning from newly named Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, and Macron's abrasive personality were all blamed for the under-performance. "I really don't believe we'll get an overall majority," one worried minister told AFP last week. The first-round vote served to whittle down candidates in most of the country's 577 constituencies to two finalists who are going head-to-head Sunday.

The election caps an intense two-month sequence to elect a new president and parliament, with voter fatigue seen as one of the reasons for what is expected to be record-low turnout Sunday. Parts of France also remain under a fierce heatwave that reached its peak on Saturday but could yet keep voters at home.

The contest between Together and NUPES has turned

rife with illegal mining, fishing and logging, as well as drug trafficking.

Ten days later, a suspect took police to a place near the city of Atalaia do Norte in western Amazonas state, where he said he had buried bodies. Soon after, the suspect's brother was also detained. Police on Saturday said an additional suspect in the case, whom they identified as Jefferson da Silva Lima, also known as "Pelado da Dinha," had turned himself in at the police station in Atalaia do Norte. Commissioner Alex Perez Timoteo told news site G1 that evidence and testimony collected so far indicated that the suspect "was at the scene of the crime and actively participated in the double homicide that occurred."

Timoteo also told reporters it is "fairly likely" there could be further arrests in the case in the coming days. "We are going to try to understand whether there was a previous agreement (among the suspects), if they had been planning this situation," the commissioner said, adding that the third suspect was not related to the two brothers.

Police had said Friday they believed the perpetrators had "acted alone, without there being an intellectual author or criminal organization behind the

"Every day, including the weekend, I come to make camouflage netting for the army," said Natalia Pinchenkova, 49, behind a large Union flag, a show of thanks to Britain for its support for Ukraine since the conflict erupted.

Soldiers in Mykolaiv meanwhile were trying to keep their pre-war routines alive, with one saying he would not give up his vegan diet on the frontlines. Oleksandr Zhuhan said he had received a package from a network of volunteers to keep up his plant-based diet. "There was pate and vegan sausages, hummus, soya milk... and all this for free," the 37-year-old drama teacher said happily.

### 'Hero'

Back in Kyiv, with shockwaves from the war continuing to reverberate around the world, thousands gathered to pay tribute to one young man-Roman Ratushny, a leading figure in Ukraine's pro-European Maidan movement, who was killed fighting Russians in the country's east earlier this month aged just 24. In front of the coffin draped in a yellow and blue

Ukrainian flag at the foot of a monument that overlooks the sprawling Independence Square in the capital, people of all ages saluted his memory. "I think it is important to be here because he is a hero of Ukraine and we must remember him," Dmytro Ostrovsky, a 17-year-old high school student, told AFP. The loss put a human face on the shared grief of Ukrainians, as the bloodshed continues. The worst of the fighting continues to be in the eastern industrial Donbas region, with battles raging in villages outside the city of Severodonetsk, which Russia has been trying to seize for weeks.

"There's an expression: prepare for the worst and the best will come by itself," the governor of the eastern Lugansk region, Sergiy Gaiday, told AFP in an interview from the Ukrainian-controlled city of Lysychansk across the river from Severodonetsk.

"Of course, we need to prepare," he said, wearing a flak jacket and carrying gun cartridges and a tourniquet. Ukraine's armed forces said Sunday they had pushed back Russian attacks on villages near Severodonetsk.

"Our units repulsed the assault in the area of Toshkivka," the Ukrainian army said on Facebook. "The enemy has retreated and is regrouping." It said Russian forces were "storming" towards the village of Orikhove, but that it had "successfully repulsed" an assault near the village. —AFP

## Macron's second term on line in parliamentary polls

PARIS: France began voting Sunday in the final round of parliamentary elections, with centrist President Emmanuel Macron's coalition looking to hold off a challenge from a newly formed left-wing alliance. At almost 19 percent by midday according to interior ministry figures, turnout was slightly higher than in last week's first-round ballot, although forecasters suggest participation will remain below 50 percent by the time all polling stations close at 8:00 pm (1800 GMT). The vote will be decisive for Macron's second-term agenda following his re-election in April, with the 44-year-old needing a majority in order to push through promised tax cuts and welfare reform and raise the retirement age.

Projections from polling firms suggest his "Together" coalition is on course to be the biggest party in the next National Assembly, but possibly short of the 289 seats needed for a majority. New left-wing coalition NUPES is

## Police say guide, journalist shot in Amazon killings

ATALAIA DO NORTE, Brazil: British journalist Dom Phillips and his Brazilian guide, whose disappearance in the Amazon some two weeks ago sparked an international outcry, were killed by gunfire, Brazilian police said Saturday.

A day after investigators identified remains found buried in a remote part of the Amazon as those of Phillips, officials said a second set of remains belonged to his guide, Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira. Authorities said both men were gunshot victims—Phillips, 57, struck by a single shot to the chest, Pereira, 41, by three shots, one to the head—with ammunition typically used for hunting.

Pereira, an outspoken defender of Indigenous rights, had received multiple death threats. The two men went missing on June 5 in an isolated part of the rainforest



BASTIA, France: President of the executive council Gilles Simeoni casts his ballot during the second stage of French parliamentary elections at a polling station in Bastia on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica. —AFP

increasingly bitter over the last week, with Macron's allies seeking to paint their main opponents as dangerous far-leftists. Senior MP Christophe Castaner has accused Melancon of wanting a "Soviet revolution", while Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire called him a "French Chavez" in reference to the late Venezuelan autocrat Hugo Chavez. —AFP



ATALAIA DO NORTE, Brazil: Jefferson da Silva Lima (R), a third suspect in the killing of British journalist Dom Phillips and Brazilian indigenous Bruno Pereira, is escorted as he arrives for a hearing in Atalaia do Norte, Amazonas state, Brazil. —AFP

crime." Activists have blamed the killings on President Jair Bolsonaro for allowing commercial exploitation of the Amazon at the cost of the environment and law and order.

For his part, Bolsonaro sought to lay blame at the door of the men themselves for undertaking a "reckless" trip in an area where Phillips was "disliked." —AFP

## 120 party-goers arrested in north Iran: Media

TEHRAN: Police have arrested 120 people for breaking Iran's segregation and morality rules at a party in the forest in the northern province of Mazandaran, state media reported Sunday. "Members of this illegal tour... were arrested by the morality police and a lawsuit has been filed," provincial judiciary chief Mohammad Sadegh Akbari said, quoted by state broadcaster IRIB.

Akbari said the "criminal acts" conducted in a forest near the city of Neka included "drinking alcohol, having illicit relationships, mixed-sex dancing and uncovering the hijab". Iranians, seeking reprieve from the hustle and bustle of city life, often choose the north of the country as a destination for sightseeing and enjoying their free time.

Under Islamic law in force in Iran since its 1979 revolution, women must wear a hijab that covers the head and neck while concealing the hair. But many women have pushed the boundaries over the past two decades by allowing their veils to slide back and reveal more hair, especially in Tehran and other major cities.

Under Iranian law, only non-Muslim citizens are permitted to consume alcohol for religious purposes, while dancing with the opposite sex is forbidden. In April, Iranian police arrested three young women after a video online showed them dancing in a cemetery.

Single-sex dancing is not a crime in Iran, but legal experts say that if someone dances in public or on the internet in a manner seen as offending public decency, they can face prosecution. —AFP

## International

# Uncertainty reigns in Colombia vote between ex-guerrilla and maverick

## Tense campaign, with death threats against several candidates

**BOGOTA, Colombia:** Colombians will vote for a new president on Sunday in an election filled with uncertainty, as former guerrilla Gustavo Petro and millionaire businessman Rodolfo Hernandez vie for power in a country saddled with widespread poverty, violence and other woes. Abstention is expected to be high as voters face a stark choice between electing their first ever left-wing president or plumping for a maverick outsider dubbed the Colombian Donald Trump.

"What we have now in the country are questions, uncertainties," Patricia Ines Munoz, an expert at the Pontifical Javerian University, told AFP. It has been a tense campaign, with death threats against several candidates ahead of the first round last month, when Colombia's traditional conservative and liberal powers were dealt a chastening defeat.

There are fears a tight result on Sunday could spark post-election violence. The successor to conservative President Ivan Duque will have to deal with a country in crisis, reeling from the coronavirus pandemic, recession, a spike in drug-trafficking related violence and deep-rooted anger at the political establishment.

Almost 40 percent of the country lives in poverty while 11 percent are unemployed. That anger spilled

over into mass anti-government protests in April 2021 that were controversially crushed by the security forces.

Opinion polls in the lead up to the election have been inconclusive, although abstention is expected to be 45 percent with up to another five percent undecided. "I feel very bewildered ... I don't like either of the two options as president," Camila Araque, 29, a lawyer in Bogota, told AFP.

### 'Understandable hysteria'

Michael Shifter, from the Inter-American Dialogue think tank, says voters "are trying to figure out who is the lesser of two evils."

Petro comfortably topped the first round of voting with 40 percent, 12 points ahead of Hernandez.

But Petro's past as a radical leftist urban guerrilla in the 1980s—during which time he spent two years in prison on arms charges—has left many Colombians

fearful. He has been in politics since his M-19 group made peace with the state in 1990 and formed a political party.

"The worry comes from the experience of leftist governments in the region," said Munoz, "not just among citizens but also the business and economic sectors." Some believe the former Mayor of Bogota would turn Colombia into another authoritarian populist socialist state like neighboring Venezuela.

"It borders on hysteria," said Shifter, but "it's understandable because ... more than any other Latin American country, the Venezuela tragedy and nightmare has impacted Colombia", creating "terror ... that they're next."

Petro, 62, says the country needs social justice to build peace after a six-decade multi-faceted conflict involving leftist rebels, the state, right-wing paramili-



**40 percent of the country lives in poverty**



SUAREZ, Colombia: A young woman shows a ballot paper at the polling station where Colombian vice-presidential candidate Francia Marquez, running mate of left-wing presidential candidate Gustavo Petro, will vote during the presidential runoff election. —AFP

aries and drug cartels. "That is to say less poverty, less hunger, less inequality, more rights. If you don't do this, the violence proliferates," he told Caracol Radio on Friday. —AFP

## Spanish PM faces regional election test in Andalusia

**SEVILLE, Spain:** Andalusia votes Sunday in an early regional election that the incumbent conservative Popular Party is expected to win comfortably, dealing a blow to Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez ahead of a national vote expected at the end of 2023. Over six million people are eligible to vote in Spain's most populous region where scorching temperatures are expected to cool slightly after a week of extreme heat which officials feared would hurt turnout. Polling stations opened at 9:00 am (0700 GMT) and will close at 8:00 pm, with final results expected a few hours later. Surveys suggest the conservative Popular Party (PP) will win around 50 seats in the 109-seat Andalusian parliament, more than all leftist parties combined.

It has governed the southern region known for its white-walled villages and popular Costa del Sol beach resorts since 2018 in a coalition with smaller centre-right party Ciudadanos. The Socialists are predicted to win around 33 seats, the same number as at the last election in 2018 when they were ousted from power in Andalusia for the first time since the regional government was established in 1982.

A scandal over the misuse of public funds intended to fight unemployment was blamed for the party's drubbing in its longstanding stronghold which is home to

around 8.5 million people. "All social advances that have taken place in Andalusia and in Spain were initiated by the Socialists. Never by the right," Sanchez told a final campaign rally Friday in Seville, the region's capital.

While the PP appears set to win Sunday's election, it is not clear if it will secure an absolute majority which would allow it to govern alone. If it doesn't, the PP will likely need to seek support from the far-right Vox by bringing it into the regional government, as happened earlier this year in the northern region of Castilla y Leon. Until now, Vox has supported the PP in Andalusia but from outside government. Any deal with Vox would complicate efforts by the PP's new national leader, Alberto Nunez Feijoo, to project a more moderate image.

### 'Gaining momentum'

The head of the PP in Andalusia, Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla, has urged voters to deliver him a "strong" government that is not "weighed down" by Vox. After voting in Malaga Sunday, he appealed to voters to cast their ballot, saying a big turnout would "demonstrate we love our institutions" such as the regional government of Andalusia.

Vox has called for the abolition of Spain's regional governments. If the polls are right, this will be the Socialists' third consecutive regional election loss to the PP after votes in Madrid in May 2021 and Castilla y Leon in February.

Losing in Andalusia would be a "severe blow" for the Socialists and would mean "Sanchez might face an uphill battle to get re-elected" next year, said Antonio Barroso, an analyst at political consultancy Teneo. "The PP seems to be gaining increasing momentum, and voter concerns about inflation might only make it more

situation, local officials said.

Several roads reopened and a high-speed rail link between Madrid and the northwestern region of Galicia, which was closed Saturday due to the blaze, reopened, they added. Elsewhere in Spain, smaller wildfires were also raging in the northwestern region of Catalonia and the northern Navarra region, one of the few areas of Spain where temperatures remained unusually high Sunday.

The regional government of Navarra urged residents to avoid "unnecessary travel" to keep roads free for fire crews. "We have a very difficult few hours ahead of us," the director of Navarra's interior ministry, Amparo Lopez Antelo, told reporters.

The battle against the blaze was hindered by high temperatures and southerly wind gusts of over 30 kilometres (18 miles) an hour, she added. Temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) have been recorded in many cities and other areas throughout the week but they dropped Sunday in most of the country. —AFP



SEVILLE, Spain: An electoral poster of Far-right party Vox candidate for the Andalusian regional election Macarena Olona in Seville. Spanish Prime Minister's Socialists face a drubbing in a regional vote in Andalusia ahead of a national election. —AFP

challenging for Sanchez to sell his government's achievements in the next legislative election," he added.

Spain's inflation rate hit 8.7 percent in May as the economic fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine has fuelled inflation worldwide, especially through increasing energy prices. The PP has sought to present itself in Andalusia as a "sensible alternative" from the centre, University of Granada political science professor Oscar Garcia Luengo told AFP. The strategy appears to be working as the party is poised to win the support of nearly 17 percent of voters who cast their ballot for the Socialists in 2018, according to a Sigma dos survey for the El Mundo daily. —AFP

## Spain battles wildfires as heatwave eases

**MADRID, Spain:** Emergency services battled several wildfires Sunday in northern Spain as an unseasonable heatwave that gripped the country for the past week finally eased. The most alarming blaze in the northwestern Sierra de Culebra mountain range has already destroyed over 25,000 hectares (62,000 acres), the regional government said.

It started on Wednesday during a dry thunderstorm but firefighters said cooler overnight temperatures had helped them make gains in their battle against the flames. Residents of some 20 villages who were evacuated from their homes were allowed to return home Sunday morning due to the improved

situation, local officials said.

The regional government of Navarra urged residents to avoid "unnecessary travel" to keep roads free for fire crews. "We have a very difficult few hours ahead of us," the director of Navarra's interior ministry, Amparo Lopez Antelo, told reporters.

The battle against the blaze was hindered by high temperatures and southerly wind gusts of over 30 kilometres (18 miles) an hour, she added. Temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) have been recorded in many cities and other areas throughout the week but they dropped Sunday in most of the country. —AFP



PUMAREJO DE TERA, Spain: Firefighters operate at the site of a wildfire in Pumarejo de Tera near Zamora, northern Spain. —AFP

## Kuwait to witness severe heatwave...

Continued from Page 1

such phenomena will now strike earlier in the year thanks to global warming.

Emergency services battled several wildfires Sunday in northern Spain. The most alarming blaze in the northwestern Sierra de Culebra mountain range has destroyed more than 25,000 hectares, the regional government said. Firefighters said cooler temperatures overnight had helped them make progress in their battle against the flames. Residents of some 20 villages evacuated from their homes were allowed to return home Sunday morning, local officials said.

Temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius have been recorded in parts of Spain throughout the week, but they had dipped by Sunday in most of the country. The mercury was only expected to hit 29C in Madrid on Sunday and 25C in the province of Zamora where the Sierra de Culebra mountain range is located. There have also been fires in Germany, where temperatures reached 38C in the eastern regions of Brandenburg, Thuringia and Saxony with the eastern city of Cottbus setting a new German record for June of 38.7C.

One fire in the Brandenburg region outside Berlin saw 700 people evacuated, local authorities said, as the blaze threatened "three quarters" of the town of Treuenbrietzen. In contrast, several northern regions were shivering in temperatures of 12C. Austria's western Vorarlberg region hit a seasonal record of 36.5C at Feldkirch on the Swiss border, with the country's ZAMG meteorological institute indicating this June has already seen twice as many days surpassing 30C as normal.

Much of neighboring Switzerland was also labor-

ing under a heatwave with meteorological authorities indicating Sunday would see more records broken after a slew of hitherto unseen seasonal peaks the previous day. As Geneva sweltered under 35C, several other towns were not far behind, Neuchatel and Fahy beating previous records topping 34C.

In southern France, a blaze triggered by the firing of an artillery shell in military training burnt around 200 hectares of vegetation, authorities in the Var region said. "There is no threat to anyone except 2,500 sheep who are being evacuated and taken to safety," the local fire brigade chief said. The popular French southwestern seaside resort of Biarritz saw its highest all-time temperature Saturday afternoon of 42.9C, state forecaster Meteo France said as authorities urged caution from the central western coast down to the Spanish border.

Many parts of the region surpassed 40C, although storms were expected on the Atlantic coast on Sunday evening. With the River Seine off limits to bathing, scorched Parisians took refuge in the city's fountains. And at Vincennes Zoo on the outskirts of the capital, shaggy-haired lions licked at frozen blood fed to them by zookeepers, who monitored the enclosure's animals for signs of dehydration. "This is the earliest heatwave ever recorded in France" since 1947, said Matthieu Sorel, a climatologist at Meteo France calling the weather a "marker of climate change".

The UK recorded its hottest day of the year on Friday, with early afternoon temperatures reaching over 30C. Several towns in northern Italy announced water rationing. The country's dairy cows were putting out 10 percent less milk as a result of the heat, the main agricultural association Coldiretti said Saturday. Experts warned the high temperatures were caused by worrying climate change trends. "As a result of climate change, heatwaves are starting earlier," said Clare Nullis, a spokeswoman for the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva. "What we're witnessing today is unfortunately a foretaste of the future."

## Eni joins Qatar gas project after...

Continued from Page 1

The Qatari company estimates that the North Field, which extends under the Gulf sea into Iranian territory, holds about 10 percent of the world's known gas reserves.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has injected urgency into efforts around the world to develop new energy sources as Western countries try to reduce their reliance on Russia. On Friday, Eni said it would receive only 50 percent of the gas requested from Russia's Gazprom, the third day running of reduced supplies. Rome has accused Gazprom of peddling

## Tunisians slam reform plans...

Continued from Page 1

The 2014 constitution, a hard-won compromise between Ennahdha and its secular rivals, created a system where both the president and parliament had executive powers. It was adopted three years

## Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan leaders...

Continued from Page 1

Sisi said that he looks forward to strengthening

### News in brief

#### Refugees face food cuts

**ROME:** The UN's World Food Programme warned Sunday that refugees in East and West Africa faced smaller food rations due to a surge in demand and insufficient funding. Three-quarters of refugees in East Africa supported by the United Nations' programme have seen their rations reduced by up to 50 percent, WFP said, with those in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda the worst affected. "We are being forced to make the heartbreaking decision to cut food rations for refugees who rely on us for their survival," said WFP executive director David Beasley. Available resources could not keep up with the soaring demand for food around the globe, he said. In West Africa—specifically Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—WFP had "significantly" reduced rations. It warned of imminent disruptions in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. —AFP

#### More than 100 migrants rescued

**ATHENS:** More than 100 migrants were rescued early Sunday off the island of Mykonos in the Aegean Sea and four are missing, the Greek coastguard said. "A large-scale rescue operation of migrants is under way from late Saturday two miles south of the island of Delos. So far 108 migrants have been rescued, while according to those rescued, four people are missing", a coastguard statement said. Among the rescued, there were 24 women and 21 children, while three people have been taken to a health centre on Mykonos. Port police responded to a distress call sending three boats and a tugboat to help the stricken vessel which came from Turkey, the coastguard told AFP. According to the coastguard statement, the tugboat reached the sailing boat carrying the migrants but did not pull it to safety because it was taking on water and there were high winds. The migrants were initially taken to a rocky islet nearby with other boats and were transported to Mykonos early Sunday. Search and rescue efforts continue. —AFP

"lies" over the cuts. "We have a lot of things to learn from your leadership and also from your standards and from your ability to adapt to very difficult circumstances," Eni CEO Claudio Descalzi told his Qatari counterpart.

Kaabi refused to divulge how many more partners will be announced. "We signed with everybody. We're just not telling you," he told reporters. More announcements are due this week. Industry sources have discussed ExxonMobil, Shell and ConocoPhillips, while Bloomberg has reported that Chinese companies are in talks.

Qatar, which is one of the world's biggest LNG exporters, is "sharing the risks of commercialization" by bringing partners on board, said Thierry Bros, a professor at Paris's Sciences Po and an expert on energy and climate. "There could also be a geopolitical vision," he added. —AFP

after the North African country's 2011 revolution. Rights groups have condemned Saied's firing earlier this month of the 57 judges as a "deep blow to judicial independence".

Saied is a former law professor elected in 2019 amid public anger against the political class in the North African nation. He has organized a "national dialogue" around the constitutional reforms, but opponents including the powerful UGTT trade union confederation have boycotted it, on the grounds that it excludes key civil society actors and political parties. —AFP

relations with Bahrain and Jordan, and the kings of Bahrain and Jordan said that they are keen to cooperate with Egypt on a strategic level to help the three countries achieve their common goals. Regional security and restoring the region's balance depend on these relations, considering the importance of Egypt, Bahrain and Jordan regionally and internationally, the statement added. — Agencies

International

# New Hong Kong cabinet includes four senior officials under US sanctions

## Lam was forced to receive her salary in cash due to banking restrictions

HONG KONG: Beijing on Sunday appointed a new Hong Kong administration that includes four senior officials under US sanctions its incoming leader has decried as an attempt to "bully" China. The United States hit 11 Hong Kong and Beijing officials with sanctions two years ago after a sweeping national security law was imposed to snuff out dissent in the semi-autonomous city following the massive, sometimes violent democracy protests of 2019.



**New govt assumes office on July 1**

Seven were members of the Hong Kong government, and four will continue in the new administration, including leader-in-waiting John Lee, security minister Chris Tang, mainland affairs minister Erick Tsang and newly appointed chief secretary for administration Eric Chan. The other three sanctioned were retired police chief Steven Lo, outgoing city leader Carrie Lam and Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng, who will be replaced.

Under the sanctions, Lam has said she was forced to receive her salary in cash due to banking restrictions. Introducing his new cabinet to reporters Sunday, Lee said he "scoffed at the so-called sanctions" and paid them no attention.

"Some countries of bullies tried to intimidate (Hong Kong) officials with measures like sanctions, especially after their plots to sabotage our national security failed because of the measures we

deployed," Lee said. "This made us more determined in continuing to discharge our duties of defending national security."

Sunday's appointment of 26 principal officials comes less than two weeks before the new government assumes office on July 1, the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's transfer from British to Chinese rule and halfway point of the "One Country, Two Systems" political model.

While speculation has been rampant that Xi will visit Hong Kong for the anniversary celebrations in what would be a symbolic endorsement of Lee's new administration, the trip has yet to be confirmed. Such a visit would mark the first time Xi has travelled outside the Chinese mainland since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

John Lee, 64, a former security chief who oversaw the crackdown on Hong Kong's democracy movement, was chosen as the next chief executive by a small committee of Beijing loyalists in early May. During Lee's visit to Beijing for his formal appointment last month, Xi said Lee had the "courage to take responsibility" and "had made contributions to safeguarding national security and Hong Kong's prosperity and stability".

Lee was the sole candidate in the race and received 99 percent of the vote after China over-



HONG KONG: Hong Kong's Chief Executive-elect John Lee (front 3rd R) poses for a photo with his newly-appointed cabinet at the central government headquarters in Hong Kong on June 19, 2022. —AFP

hauled Hong Kong's electoral system in 2021 to ensure anyone deemed unpatriotic would be ineligible to run. Under a restructuring plan proposed by the outgoing Lam, Lee's administration

will be expanded, including the addition of two new policy bureaus and creation of three deputy secretary positions for administration, finance and justice. —AFP

## Sri Lanka troops open fire to contain fuel riots

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka's military opened fire to contain rioting at a fuel station, officials said Sunday as unprecedented queues for petrol and diesel were seen across the bankrupt country. Troops fired in Visuvamadu, 365 kilometres (228 miles) north of Colombo, on Saturday night as their guard point was pelted with stones, army spokesman Nilantha Premaratne said.

"A group of 20 to 30 people pelted stones and damaged an army truck," Premaratne told AFP. Police said four civilians and three soldiers were wounded when the army opened fire for the first time to quell unrest linked to the worsening economic crisis.

As the pump ran out of petrol, motorists began to protest and the situation escalated into a clash with troops, police said. Sri Lanka is suffering its worst economic crisis since independence, with the

country unable to find dollars to import essentials, including food, fuel and medicines.

The nation's 22 million population has been enduring acute shortages and long queues for scarce supplies while President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has for months resisted calls to step down over mismanagement. Sri Lanka has deployed armed police and troops to guard fuel stations. A motorist was shot dead by police in April at the central town of Rambukkana when a clash erupted over the distribution of rationed petrol and diesel.

Police said clashes involving motorists erupted at three locations over the weekend. At least six constables were wounded in one clash while seven motorists were arrested. The government declared a two-week shutdown of state institutions and schools in a bid to reduce commuting and conserve depleting fuel stocks in the impoverished nation.

The country is also facing record high inflation and lengthy power blackouts, all of which have contributed to months of protests. Four out of five people in Sri Lanka have started skipping meals as they cannot afford to eat, the UN has said, warning of a looming "dire humanitarian crisis" with millions in need of aid.

The World Food Programme (WFP) began dis-



COLOMBO: People queue up to buy kerosene for domestic use at a supply station in Colombo. —AFP

tributing food vouchers to about 2,000 pregnant women in Colombo's "underserved" areas as part of "life-saving assistance" on Thursday. The WFP is trying to raise \$60 million for a food relief effort between June and December. Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in April, and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout. —AFP

## Nigeria's ruling party wins key local election

ABUJA, Nigeria: Nigeria's ruling party has won a key governorship election in the bellwether state of Ekiti, the country's electoral commission said Sunday. Ekiti, in southwest Nigeria, is among eight of 36 states where governorship elections are not being held at the same time as the rest of the country because of legal challenges to previous results.

It is also considered a swing state, key to winning next year's presidential elections in the multi-ethnic West African country of some 200 million people. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said the candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) won the most votes out of 988,923 registered voters.

"Biodun Abayomi Oyejobi of APC, having satisfied the requirements of the law, is hereby declared winner," INEC official Kayode Oyejobode Adebowale said at a press conference. Oyejobi won with 187,057 votes, largely ahead of his two main opponents Segun Oni of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) who came in second with 82,211 votes and Otonba Bisi Kolawole of the Peoples Democratic

Party (PDP) who got 67,457 votes.

President Muhammadu Buhari congratulated Oyejobi on his victory. "The APC is getting stronger and more united. The victory of our party in Ekiti is an indication of the confidence of Nigerians in the ability of our great party to deliver quality governance to all," the president said in a statement.

In preliminary reports about the election, observers said the vote was largely peaceful and without major incidents. Vote buying however was reported at several polling stations, they said. In one location, "party agents from APC were reportedly sharing N7,000 (\$15) to voters who showed how their ballot paper was marked," civil society group Yiaga Africa said in a statement.

In another location it added, "party agents from PDP and SDP were seen bribing voters." Observers of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) noted that the "general atmosphere of the election was peaceful" but "documented 41 instances of vote buying and selling."

The parties have not yet commented on the allegations. In most cases where the electronic registration system, known as BVAS, malfunctioned, they were fixed within an hour, CDD said. But in 11 cases, observers saw voters being allowed to cast their ballot without being authenticated electronically.

Nigeria has a long history of election-related unrest and malpractice, including the last govern-



ABUJA: This combination of file pictures shows Nigeria's ruling party (All Progressive Congress) presidential flagbearer, Bola Tinubu (L) delivering a speech and Nigerian former Vice President Atiku Abubakar (R) speaking during the opposition Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) primaries in Abuja. —AFP

ment vote in Ekiti in 2018 that was marred by violence and claims of electoral fraud. Saturday's election was seen as a test run for the 2023 presidential vote.

Buhari, a former army general, is stepping down after completing his two terms allowed by the constitution. The two main candidates vying to replace him are Bola Tinubu of the APC and Atiku Abubakar of the PDP. —AFP

## Uyghur candidate urges Japan to embrace diversity

TOKYO: Arfiya Eri is a young, female, multilingual former United Nations official, all of which would already help her stand out as a Japanese political candidate, but she is also of Uyghur heritage. While her campaign is not centred around her ethnic background, it is attracting attention — positive and negative — in a country where politics is still a largely homogenous affair.

Ethnic Uyghurs generally hail from China's Xinjiang province, where the government is accused of detaining more than one million of them and other Muslim minorities in a years-long crackdown that rights groups say includes widespread "crimes against humanity".

Eri, 33, is running for parliament's upper house with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, on a platform that emphasises bread-and-butter issues and her identity as a proud Japanese citizen. As the first person of Uyghur origin to run as a major party candidate in Japan, Eri acknowledges her campaign is viewed by some through the prism of her family history.

"Instead of my vision and policies as a Japanese politician, people ask me about the Uyghur issue because of my ethnic background," she told AFP. "I can understand why this happens, but it feels a bit strange."

That does not mean, however, that diversity is not a concern for a woman who speaks seven languages and was educated between Japan, China and the United States.

In fact, it helped inspire her to run, after she watched an election in her native Fukuoka region in southern Japan and observed the uniformity of the candidates. "I see more and more people like myself visibly represented in Japan, with names that are not traditionally Japanese," said Eri, whose family name is sometimes mistaken for her first name. "Women are also more visibly active and successful... But when you look at the world of politics, that diversity is still not being represented, it's not reflected."

**'Unspeakable oppression'**

Japan's July 10 election will see more than 500 candidates running for half of the 248-seat upper house, known as the House of Councillors. The LDP is expected to win, though Eri's chances will be partly dictated by where she is eventually placed on the party list. She plans to campaign for better work-life balance, gender equality and amending the pacifist constitution, which bars the use of force to settle international disputes and is interpreted by

some as prohibiting the country from having any military force.

Eri endorses the LDP's mainstream conservative politics, and insists Japan must "stand firm on our national security". Eri also declines to use the name Xinjiang for China's Uyghur-majority region, and said her familiarity with alleged human rights abuses has shaped her views. The candidate described "human rights violations at an unspeakable scale in places like the Uyghur region", and said she believes even a minor rights violation "opens the door" to worse abuses.

Eri's family moved from Japan to China when she was a teenager, after her father, an engineer, was transferred by his employer. She graduated from an American international school before studying in the United States, and joined the United Nations in 2016 after a stint at the Bank of Japan. Her international resume sets her apart from many election candidates, but "rather than my actual experiences and expertise or who I really am, my background has drawn more attention". —AFP



Arfiya Eri

## Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh rally to 'go home'

KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh: Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh staged demonstrations on Sunday demanding repatriation back to Myanmar, where they fled a brutal military crackdown five years ago.

Almost a million Rohingya are confined to bamboo and tarpaulin shacks in 34 squalid camps in southeast Bangladesh, with no work, poor sanitation and little access to education. Their increasingly restrictive host country has banned them from holding rallies since they staged a massive 100,000-strong protest in August 2019.

But authorities allowed several groups of Rohingya to hold simultaneous "Go Home" marches and rallies ahead of World Refugee Day on Monday. "We don't want to stay in the camps. Being refugees is not easy. It's hell. Enough is enough. Let's go home," top Rohingya community leader Sayed Ullah said in a speech at one rally.

In 2018, investigators from a United Nations fact-finding mission into the killings and forced mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar concluded that a criminal investigation and prosecution was warranted of top Myanmar generals for crimes against humanity and genocide.

Sunday's demonstrations come after the foreign secretaries of Bangladesh and Myanmar last week held a meeting—their first in nearly three years—by video conference. A Bangladesh foreign ministry official told AFP that during the meeting Dhaka pressed Naypyidaw for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to start this year.

"We are hopeful the repatriation will start after the monsoon this year at least in a limited scale," he said on condition of anonymity. Police said thousands of refugees, including young children, joined the marches and rallies, standing on roads and alleys with placards that read "Enough is Enough! Let's Go Home".

"Over 10,000 Rohingya took part in the rally in the camps under my jurisdiction," police official Naimul Haque told AFP, referring to Kutupalong, the largest refugee settlement in the world. Police and organisers said more than 1,000 Rohingya took part in each of the rallies in at least 29 camps.

Authorities deployed extra security in the camps to prevent any violence, Haque said, adding that the demonstrations "passed off peacefully".

**No guarantees**

Previous repatriation attempts have failed, with Rohingya refusing to go home until Myanmar gives the largely Muslim minority guarantees of rights and security. With a dialect similar to that spoken in Chittagong in southeast Bangladesh, the Rohingya are seen by many in Myanmar as "illegal immigrants", a characterisation the community does not agree with.

Rohingya leaders say they want to go back to their original villages in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, not to camps that Myanmar's government has built for internally displaced people. Refugee Rahmat Ullah, 69, said he wants to go back home. "We are Rohingya, not Bengalis. We want repatriation with full rights restored," he told AFP.

Young refugee Mohammad Haris said he does not want to "die a refugee". "I want my rights. I want to go home where I can study and think of a future," he said. —AFP

MONDAY, JUNE 20, 2022

# Business

## Inflation and subsidy reform hit stomachs in isolated Iran

'I am a butcher, but sometimes I don't eat meat for a week'

**TEHRAN:** Outside his butchery in the south of Iran's capital, Ali cuts up a sheep carcass for customers who, like him, have seen inflation and subsidy reform devour their purchasing power. "My sales have fallen significantly—almost by half," Ali, 50, told AFP. "What can I say? I am a butcher and you may not believe me, but sometimes I don't eat meat for a week," he added. "Everything has gone up in price." Inflation is making an unwelcome comeback globally-stoked by high energy and food prices, driven largely by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a major wheat producer, and by related sanctions on Moscow.

But Iran has been wrestling with rampant price growth for years, exceeding 30 percent annually every year since 2018, according to the International Monetary Fund. That was the year US president Donald Trump yanked Washington out of a nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and began reimposing biting sanctions, sending the currency into a tailspin even before he unilaterally banned Iran's oil exports.

Negotiations over the last year or so have sought to bring the US under Trump's successor Joe Biden back inside the deal and convince Tehran to re-adhere to nuclear commitments it has progressively walked away from. But those ever-delicate efforts have been deadlocked since March, and an escalating spat between Iran and the UN's nuclear watchdog could reduce chances of reviving the agreement.

### Subsidy cuts compound misery

After dividing the cuts of meat, Ali hands Asghar, a retired government employee, a plastic bag containing enough for him and his wife. "The price of everything has gone up, including meat," lamented Asghar, 63.

"We used to buy more. Now everyone is buying less—everyone is under pressure." Economic analyst Saeed Laylaz believes price growth in Iran has exceeded 40 percent annually since 2018 - higher than that calculated by the IMF.

It has lately been fuelled further, he says, by "the



TEHRAN: A woman shops at a butcher on June 15, 2022. — AFP

sharp increase in global inflation" driven by fallout from the war in Ukraine and by Iran's cash-strapped government in mid-May enacting the "radical reform" of slashing subsidies. The expert, who has in the past advised Iranian presidents, said the main policy shift by the government of President Ebrahim Raisi was to abolish a subsidized exchange rate for imports of household essentials—wheat, cooking oil and medicine.

Introduced in mid-2018, this "preferential" rate was fixed at 42,000 rials to the dollar, cushioning citizens

its benchmark rate for the 11th straight time. More hikes are looming in the United States and Europe. But it is the Swiss National Bank that caused the biggest shock on Thursday when it announced a rate increase of 0.5 percentage points, the first since 2007.

The SNB had focused on keeping the Swiss franc from being too strong until now. "The actions of the SNB are notable in that they mark a significant shift in policy (away) from a very dovish position," said Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK. The European Central Bank has been slower to act than its peers. It is putting an end to its massive bond-buying scheme and will finally raise rates next month for the first time in a decade.

The eurozone faces another problem: The yields paid by its governments to borrow money have surged, with indebted countries such as Italy being charged a premium compared to Germany, a safer bet for investors. This "spread" revived memories of the eurozone's debt crisis, prompting the ECB to hold an emergency meeting on Thursday after which it said it would design a tool to prevent further stress in the bond market.

The Bank of Japan bucked the global trend on Friday as it stood by its decision not to raise its rate, sending the yen close to the lowest level against the dollar since 1998. But even the Bank of Japan could adjust its policy, said Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management. "BoJ members are considering public dissatisfaction with inflation and the rapid depreciation of the yen," Innes said. "While they plan to maintain the current easing policy, they may look to make some tweaks to support the currency," he said.

### No immediate fix

Consumers will have to be patient before they see the rate hikes have an effect on prices. ECB chief Christine Lagarde said it bluntly when announcing plans for a rate increase next month: "Do we expect that July interest rate hikes will have an immediate effect on inflation? The answer to that is no." Central banks do not have control over some of the problems that are lifting inflation, such as soaring energy and food prices, and the supply chain snarls. Capital Economics said energy and food prices accounted for 4.1 percentage points of the 7.9 percent rise in consumer prices in major advanced economies over the past year. It expects oil, gas, and agricultural commodity prices to start falling later this year, which would bring inflation down sharply, but core inflation rates will remain elevated.—AFP

## Lunch with Buffett goes for whopping \$19 million

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Talk about an expensive date: a mystery bidder will be spending a record \$19 million for the right to have lunch with legendary American investment guru Warren Buffett. That whopping bid, announced by eBay, came in the 21st—and last—such charity luncheon with the aging multimillionaire, who is chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway. Bidding on



NEW YORK: A Bitcoin ATM is seen at the Clark Street subway station in the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn in New York City. Bitcoin fell below \$24,000 this morning to its lowest level since December 2020. — AFP

## Bitcoin plunges below \$20,000

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Bitcoin plunged below \$20,000 on Saturday, shedding nine percent from the previous day to fall to \$18,740, its lowest level since December 13, 2020. With investors increasingly wary of risk, the world's most popular crypto asset has lost more than 72 percent of its value since reaching a high of \$68,991 on November 10, 2021. After sinking to \$18,740 on Saturday, Bitcoin rose to \$18,941 at 1550 GMT, down eight percent from Friday. Other major digital currencies were also down on Saturday, including ether, which lost nearly 10 percent of its value.

World stock markets plunged this week amid fears that inflation-fighting interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve and other central banks could trigger a recession. Cryptocurrencies have paid the biggest

the eBay website opened last Sunday at a modest \$25,000. But it shot up rapidly as rival bidders tried to outdo one another, finally ending Friday at a total of just over \$19 million. The auction—held annually, though canceled by COVID-19 concerns for the past two years—raises funds for Glide, which fights poverty in San Francisco. It distributes food to the homeless and helps them find shelter, medical assistance and training. San Francisco, a place of income extremes, has struggled for years with a large homeless population.

This year's still-anonymous winner of the charity auction "has not only made history, but will spend an unforgettable afternoon with American legend Warren Buffett at a private lunch with up to seven guests at Smith & Wollensky Steakhouse in New York City," said an announcement posted by eBay. The last pre-pan-

ernment had no choice but to cancel the preferential rate," he added. Red meat prices have risen 50 percent, chicken and milk prices have doubled, spaghetti has tripled and cooking oil prices have quadrupled since early May, according to figures published by Iranian media.

### Protests over prices

Hundreds of Iranians have taken to the streets of several cities to protest against the spiralling prices, on top of months-long demonstrations by professionals and pensioners demanding wages and pensions be adjusted for inflation.

On Tuesday, Labour Minister Hojjatollah Abdolmaleki stepped down in the hope of "strengthening cooperation within the government and improving the provision of services to the people," according to government spokesman Ali Bahadori-Jahromi. But reformist newspaper Etemad linked his resignation to "heavy criticism" from the protesting pensioners. In Tehran's marketplaces, attention is focused on the consequences and effects of inflation, rather than its causes.

President Raisi, an ultra-conservative who took office last August, pledged from the outset that the painful subsidy reform would not affect bread, fuel and medicine prices. Demand for bread is therefore increasing. "The queues at the bakeries have become longer because the price of rice has risen, and people are resorting to bread," Shadi, a housewife wearing the Islamic chador told AFP near a traditional bakery in southern Tehran.

Inside, the baker Mujtaba agrees. "People... are no longer able to buy rice, cooking oil, spaghetti and tomato paste," said the 29-year-old, his face drenched in sweat as he took a break from preparing dough. The subsidy reform has so far done little to steady the black market exchange rate, which slipped to an all-time low of more than 330,000 to the dollar on June 12, and hopes for a restoration of the nuclear deal have receded.—AFP

## Central banks walk inflation-recession tightrope

**PARIS:** Central banks have ramped up their battle against runaway inflation, a necessary remedy that could have the adverse side effect of tipping countries into recession, analysts say. Just this past week, the US Federal Reserve announced its biggest interest rate hike in almost 30 years, followed by the fifth straight increase by the Bank of England and the first in 15 years in Switzerland. "This week was a first. The craziest in my experience," said Frederick Ducrozet, chief economist at Pictet Wealth Management.

The moves rattled stock markets as investors fear that while the rate increases are needed, they could put the brakes on economic growth if the tightening of monetary policy becomes too aggressive. "Recessions are increasingly likely as central banks race to dramatically raise rates before inflation spirals out of control," said Craig Erlam, an analyst at online trading platform OANDA.

Capital Economics, a research group, said it does not anticipate a recession in the United States. "But the Fed is deliberately tempering demand in order to reduce price pressures. This is a difficult line to tread and there is clearly a risk that it goes too far and the economy tips into recession," it said in a note. Emerging countries could be collateral victims from rate hikes. The dollar rises when the US Fed raises its rates. "A strong dollar will complicate (debt repayments) of countries with deficits, which borrow often in that currency," Ducrozet said.

### Swiss surprise

Central banks had insisted last year that inflation was only "transitory" as prices were driven up by bottlenecks in supply chains after governments emerged from lockdowns. But energy and food prices have soared in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, pushing inflation higher and prompting economists to lower the world's growth prospects for this year. This has left central banks with no other choice but to move more aggressively than planned.

Australia's central bank raised rates more than expected earlier this month while Brazil last week lifted



Warren Buffett

demic auction was won by Justin Sun, an American entrepreneur active in cryptocurrencies, who spent \$4.6 million for the right to dine with Buffett, an outspoken critic of bitcoin.

The eBay statement quoted the 91-year-old Buffett—revered throughout the investment community as the "Oracle of Omaha"—as saying he had "met a lot of interesting people all over the world" through the auctions. "The one universal characteristic," he added, "is that they feel the money is going to be put to very good uses." Buffett's net worth was estimated in March at \$117 billion, according to Forbes.com. He joined Bill and Melinda Gates in forming a group of the ultra-wealthy who have vowed to give away half their fortunes. Buffett is estimated to have already donated some \$48 billion.—AFP



Business

# Climate's promise meets Australia mining reality

## Drought-battered Australia trying to clean up

SYDNEY: Flood, fire and drought-battered Australia is trying to clean up its act on climate change, but dependence on fossil fuel riches could stymie the national makeover. Centre-left Prime Minister Anthony Albanese swept to power in May promising weary Australians that he would tackle climate change. He followed through on a key plank of that promise Thursday, nearly doubling the country's 2030 emissions reduction target to 43 percent.

Albanese faces a thorny dilemma: Australians want real steps to slow global heating, but they live in a country that depends on exporting the fossil fuels that cause it. Australia's emissions-while high per person-account for just over one percent of global emissions. Much more significant are the fossil fuels dug up in Australia and burned overseas.

Estimates differ, but these could account for anywhere between three and five percent of global emissions, making Australia one of the world's largest carbon polluters. Another beneficiary of the May election wants to put an end to that. "You don't end the climate wars by opening up new coal and gas mines," said Australian Greens leader Adam Bandt, whose party now holds the balance of power in the Senate and wants radical energy reform in return for working with the government.

The sticking point for the Greens, Bandt told AFP, was that the government had pledged support for 114 new coal and gas projects already in Australia's investment pipeline. Modeling by the Greens found these projects would more than double Australia's emissions. "None of these new projects the government wants to open are factored into their climate modeling," Bandt said.

### Wildier climate

First discovered in 1791, Australia's vast coal deposits make it the world's second-largest exporter. It is also one of the top exporters of gas-mostly natural gas and gas exploited from coal seams. Fossil fuels account for about a quarter of Australian exports, with most destined for Japan, China and South Korea, according to Reserve Bank of Australia analysis. Domestically, about 70 percent of electricity comes from coal and gas, according to official figures.

Given the economic sensitivities, the Albanese government has so far dodged calls to set a deadline for withdrawal from the sector, arguing international markets will decide when coal is no longer viable. The approach may quell dissent from the coal and gas

industry, used to getting its way after a decade of conservative governments. But it could cause economic turmoil, with central bank analysts warning coal demand could fall by up to 80 percent by the middle of the century, leaving "stranded assets" that cannot be sold.

Already the strains are starting to show. Mining giant BHP on Thursday announced it had been unable to sell its coal assets in the populous state of New South Wales. The country's largest energy producer and carbon emitter AGL is also facing an uncertain future. When AGL tried to split off the most polluting parts of its business, green-minded tech billionaire Mike Cannon-Brookes sought to buy the company to stop the plan.

His bid was rejected, but Cannon-Brookes successfully lobbied fellow investors to block the demerger, arguing it would hurt shareholders and delay coal-fired power station closures. Greenpeace Australia's chief executive David Ritter said AGL's experience was a lesson to listen to the call for climate action. "Every corporation that makes the same mistakes can expect to also run into real turbulence very, very quickly," he told AFP. This turbulence will come from activists, but also from the Australian public who have seen first-hand how a wildier climate can turn on them.

### After the 'Black Summer'

Australia's 2019-20 "Black Summer" bushfires scorched 24 million hectares of land, cloaked cities in smoke, and killed more than 30 people along with an estimated tens of millions of wild animals. In the two subsequent years, dramatic floods swamped Australia's east coast, this year killing more than 20 people as waters reached rooftops and torrents swept cars off roads. Before the bushfires, veteran firefighter Greg Mullins tried to warn the government it was not prepared for the infernos to come.

For 14 years, Mullins had led the fire service in Australia's largest state, New South Wales, and he was joined by other retired emergency services leaders in sounding the alarm that climate change had dramatically escalated the fire threat. "It was all political. Because we mentioned climate change, they just locked us out," he told AFP. He and fellow members of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action are calling for far more ambitious emissions cuts - 75 percent by 2030. "We've lost the last decade of climate action, they've got to do a lot of catching up," he said.—AFP



NEW YORK: In this file photo, new iPhones are displayed inside the newly renovated Apple Store at Fifth Avenue in New York City. A majority of employees at a US Apple store have voted to form a union on June 18, 2022, a first for the tech giant, which has so far tried to discourage unionizing attempts.— AFP

## Apple store workers vote to form a union

SAN FRANCISCO: A majority of employees at a US Apple store have voted to form a union, a first for the tech giant, which has so far tried to discourage unionizing attempts. Of the 110 employees at the Towson, Maryland shop, 65 voted in favor and 33 against, according to a live count broadcast Saturday by the federal agency overseeing the vote. The vote comes after a group of employees called AppleCORE (Coalition of Organized Retail Employees) campaigned for unionization.

"We did it Towson! We won our union vote! Thanks to all who worked so hard and all who supported! Now we celebrate... Tomorrow we keep organizing," AppleCORE tweeted. They are demanding a say in deciding on wages, hours and safety measures. Saturday's result means that the shop's employees, who have been voting since Wednesday, should form their own branch of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) union, once the agency

has certified the results. IAM International President Robert Martinez Jr said he applauded the workers' "courage." "They made a huge sacrifice for thousands of Apple employees across the nation who had all eyes on this election. I ask Apple CEO Tim Cook to respect the election results and fast-track a first contract for the dedicated IAM CORE Apple employees in Towson," he said in a statement.

"This victory shows the growing demand for unions at Apple stores and different industries across our nation." It was not the first time employees at an Apple store have tried to unionize, but it was the first attempt that resulted in a vote. Apple's director of distribution and human resources, Deirdre O'Brien, visited the shop in May to address employees.

"I want to start out by saying it's your right to join a union, but it's equally your right not to join a union," O'Brien said, according to audio published by Vice. "If you're faced with that decision, I want to encourage you to consult a wide range of people and sources to understand what it could be like to work at Apple under a collective bargaining agreement." She said that the presence of an intermediary would complicate relations between Apple and its employees. The Silicon Valley giant told AFP it was "declining to comment" on the news.—AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

# KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 16 JUN 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	34,369	8,218.04	-2.6%	-5.3%	7.6%	502,959,725	260,586,583	36,432	29.3	2.7	78.1%
Main Market	9,646	5,761.90	-2.5%	-5.1%	-2.1%	418,779,764	51,047,548	22,262	13.8	1.4	21.9%
All Share	44,015	7,413.83	-2.6%	-5.2%	5.3%	921,739,489	311,634,130	58,694	25.1	2.4	100%

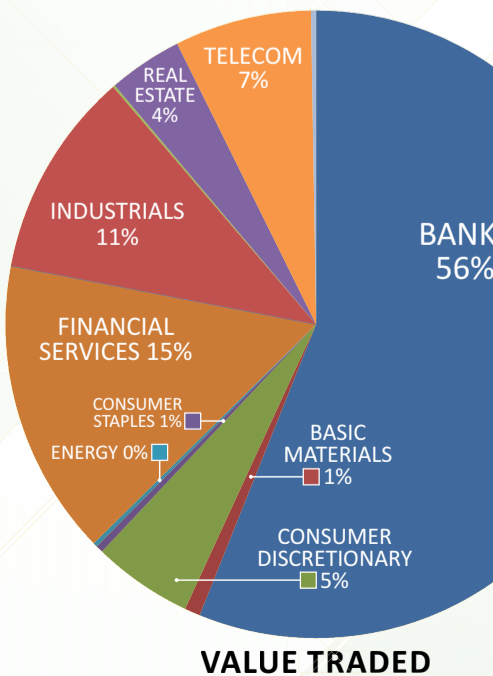
Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	26,164	1,746.89	-2.0%	-4.3%	7.6%	335,461,146	174,890,148	19,952	28.0	2.6	59.00%
BASIC MATERIALS	927	1,041.34	-9.2%	-13.7%	1.6%	3,890,163	2,517,981	797	13.1	1.4	2.09%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	771	1,503.52	-1.7%	-5.1%	12.5%	31,948,699	16,147,874	3,998	19.1	8.9	1.74%
CONSUMER STAPLES	171	561.31	-7.1%	-13.9%	-23.2%	2,569,800	1,180,663	340	18.3	1.2	0.39%
ENERGY	236	1,137.50	1.8%	-2.5%	-20.4%	15,682,535	667,360	642	14.2	1.2	0.53%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,073	1,393.48	-5.7%	-9.5%	-2.1%	332,344,074	47,628,688	15,840	17.0	2.1	9.19%
HEALTH CARE	238	480.10	0.0%	0.0%	-39.8%	0	0	0	16.1	2.3	0.54%
INDUSTRIALS	4,423	1,242.43	-3.5%	-6.0%	8.8%	50,921,080	33,278,666	7,276	40.6	1.5	9.97%
INSURANCE	638	1,530.58	-2.4%	1.8%	-0.2%	1,269,178	340,582	153	7.3	1.0	1.44%
REAL ESTATE	2,655	1,234.20	-3.7%	-6.5%	-7.0%	106,898,249	11,979,526	5,624	13.4	1.3	5.99%
TECHNOLOGY	9	654.75	#DIV/0!	-2.2%	-4.3%	12,313	1,105	3	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,812	1,245.31	0.2%	-3.8%	14.3%	36,829,307	22,175,180	3,637	15.4	2.3	8.60%
UTILITIES	227	544.74	-4.2%	-3.7%	-9.2%	3,912,945	826,358	432	16.0	2.6	0.51%

Top Gainers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
EDU	3,200	10.80	316	1,005	5
IPG	440	8.64	157,703	69,770	14
INIAZZAT	81	8.00	959,346	71,865	53
ENERGYH	50.2	7.73	412,585	18,708	66
HAYATCOMM	76	7.04	376,810	27,967	24

Top Losers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
WETHAQ	28.4	-24.27	176,777	5,297	42
JIYAD	27	-21.74	3,937,381	117,408	272
LAND	54	-21.46	2,483,816	144,681	239
ALSAFAT	124	-17.88	13,039,946	1,763,750	1,042
GFC	69.3	-17.50	1,850	144	6

Top Volume					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AUB	253	-5.95	94,797,569	24,403,147	2,366
GFH	88	-6.68	84,315,603	7,576,147	2,492
KFH	830	-2.92	83,618,955	69,302,811	7,123
GBK	315	1.29	67,736,305	21,357,579	1,896
KINV	128	-13.51	60,710,037	8,110,247	2,689

Top Value					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	830	-2.92	83,618,955	69,302,811	7,123
NBK	1,035	0.58	39,790,110	40,806,512	3,474
AUB	253	-5.95	94,797,569	24,403,147	2,366
GBK	315	1.29	67,736,305	21,357,579	1,896
ZAIN	614	0.99	34,603,788	20,888,247	2,858



**Market Summary:**

- Premier market volume and value increased 38% and 51%, respectively. Main market volume and value decreased by 16% and 31%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indices are in a downtrend due to global inflation, and recently to the FED interest rate rise.
- Technically, the All-Share index closed at 7413, with support levels at 7379, 7318, 490, and 7214, while resistance at 7461. Premier index closed at 8218, support levels at 8148, 8116, 8044, and 8005, while resistance at 8273. The Main index closed at 5761, with support levels at 5750, 5723, 5675, and 5641, while resistance at 5780.

## Business

## Layoffs and exits as firms in China teeter under zero-COVID pressure

## China's strict virus controls hammer businesses

BEIJING: Fiona Shi lost her job twice during the pandemic-first, in 2020 when COVID ravaged the travel industry, and then this year as China's strict virus controls hammered businesses in the world's number two economy. China is the last major economy welded to a zero-COVID strategy-putting firms and workers at risk of snap lockdowns, freezing activity in the services sector and tangling supply chains crucial for factories to sell their goods.

As the country battles its worst outbreak since 2020, its urban jobless rate has surged to the highest level in two years and the pain is being felt by both blue- and white-collar workers. "Many places say they are not recruiting people aged above 35," said Shi, 38, who pointed to the difficulty of returning to entry-level positions after managerial roles. She worked in a management role in the hospitality industry in 2020 when the coronavirus brought nearly all travel to a halt as governments imposed social distancing and movement restrictions.

Two years later, the Beijinger found herself in the same position after losing her job at a multinational firm. "The pandemic has also made it harder... many places have frozen headcounts," she told AFP. "I'm really anxious." Months of unpredictable COVID restrictions-including snap lockdowns and severe travel curbs-have hit dozens of cities from business hub Shanghai to the northern breadbasket province of Jilin.

An American Chamber of Commerce survey released this week showed that almost all respondents cut their revenue projections, while in a separate study 11 percent of European firms said they would downsize their China operations because of COVID measures. Domestic firms have also been tightening their purse strings. Ride-hailing platform Caocao Chuxing has let go of staff, with Chinese

media reports pegging the proportion at 40 percent. Some staff at e-commerce giant Alibaba were also reportedly asked to leave, according to state outlet Legal Daily.

## 'The situation is grim'

The imposition of restrictions to stamp out COVID outbreaks this year has intensified pressure on firms already grappling with a slowdown in the economy and regulatory crackdowns on sectors including property and tech. Bai, 27, told AFP she was laid off by a US tech company that was preparing to end its business in China. "In some ways, we saw it coming," she said, only giving her surname. "Its China operations have been losing money." "It's not the first to leave the China market and won't be the last." Beijing-based Bai said it was the second time she lost her job because of the pandemic. In 2020, as the virus raged in China, she was let go by a cruise line operator over fears tied to her nationality, she said.

Andrea Zhang, 24, who handled events planning, said his employer shuttered its clothing shops in March and April when outbreaks flared this year. "Our bosses wanted to understand the situation at various stores (across the country) but realized they could not due to quarantine requirements," said Zhang. The company eventually closed its offline operations, and Zhang left. Around 1.3 million entities cancelled their business registrations in China in March alone, a 24 percent spike on-year, according to official numbers.

With President Xi Jinping repeatedly backing the government's zero-COVID strategy, observers do not expect authorities to pivot away from it even as the economy suffers. But the restrictions have made life unbearable for some. "Working from home, espe-



BEIJING: A man pedals a bicycle past the Heaven Supermarket bar where a COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak emerged in the Chaoyang district of Beijing.—AFP

cially in an industry such as ours known for overtime practices, has made work-life boundaries even more blurred," said Ning, who works in marketing at a tech firm in Beijing and only gave his surname.

The 26-year-old typically left work around 11 pm. But his hours stretched past midnight and into weekends after the capital ordered people in

his district to stay home last month as COVID cases surged. "I was too exhausted, and left my job," Ning said. He has since submitted more than 200 job applications. Only three of these translated into job interviews. "The situation is grim," Ning told AFP. "But we will have to find a way to survive." —AFP

## Warehouse business catches fire, boosted by COVID, e-commerce

NEW YORK: The rise of e-commerce and the logistical nightmare created by the COVID-19 pandemic have caused a surge in demand for warehouse space in the United States, and big investment funds have taken note. "It's been a tremendous struggle to find the appropriate location for clients," said Michael Schipper of Blau & Berg, a commercial real estate specialist in New Jersey and New York.

Available space has been dwindling steadily for a year and a half, and the vacancy rate is now 3.4 percent, although developers delivered 90 million square feet of new warehouse space in the first three months of the year, according to commercial real estate firm Jones Lang LaSalle. Demand is so strong that purchase prices have tripled or quadrupled in just six years in northern New Jersey. Nationally, average rental costs have jumped 22 percent in two years, according to analytics firm Beroe.

"Demand for space from logistics and distribution activities driven by e-commerce industry" is the major factor in the US market, according to Beroe, which notes that demand has exceeded supply for 18 months. In addition, unlike traditional storage sites, fulfilling online orders requires technologically advanced warehouses, said Mark Manduca, chief investment officer at GXO, a supply chain management company.

Beroe said this equipment, which requires massive investments, allows firms "to improve warehouse efficiency and to speed up warehouse activities to meet the same-day delivery demands." Pioneered by Amazon, other retailers were obliged to scramble to catch up to the new standard of immediate delivery set by the Seattle-based online sales giant.

In recent years, a lot of those companies have been rapidly ramping up their own e-commerce efforts, Manduca said. "Those are the people that are really driving that demand for last mile warehousing," he said. The demands of instant delivery have forced many sellers to acquire multiple storage locations to get closer to customers, especially in urban areas where real estate was already expensive. The coronavirus pandemic accelerated that trend, as e-commerce sales surged by 56 percent between early 2020 and early 2022.

## A correction coming?

Another pandemic effect was the logistical mess caused by COVID-lockdowns and health restrictions. That revealed storage capacity "in the wrong place, supply chain issues, and more recently, inventory rebuilds that have kind of almost overshoot to a certain degree," Manduca said. To address those issues, he says, many companies are "now looking at facilities closer to home, which is naturally increasing the demand for warehousing," he said.

Amid the rise in demand, private equity firm Blackstone has invested heavily in the sector, and currently owns \$170 billion worth of warehouses. It now rivals Prologis, the world's number one. "We're also now seeing a surge in corporations increasing inventory holdings to mitigate supply chain issues" and are therefore looking for additional storage space, Blackstone President Jon Gray said in April.

Other private equity giants, such as KKR, Carlyle, Apollo or Sweden's EQT have all bought sites to ride the wave. But Schipper cautions that while the warehousing industry "has a long term positive trajectory, ... I think that there needs to be a pause." "You cannot run up in parabolic fashion forever," he said, noting that the current tightening of credit conditions also could play a role. One sign of a possible correction coming: Amazon's decision to sublet or renegotiate the rent for 30 million square feet of warehouse space. —AFP

## All about new HUAWEI P50

KUWAIT: Heard the latest talk of the town? If you said the Huawei's newly launched HUAWEI P50, then you are right; at least, when it comes to smartphones. Dubbed as the ultimate camera phone with aesthetic design, the phone has everything that you would want in a flagship phone in 2022: a fantastic camera system, stylish design, long battery life, exceptional charging speeds, intriguing features and more. You might have many questions about the latest flagship from Huawei and this article will tell you everything you need to know.

## HUAWEI P50

What is so special about the HUAWEI P50 camera? Huawei's P-series is known to have fantastic cameras with ground-breaking improvements with each and every iteration. Moreover, with the HUAWEI P50, the cameras have reached a new level of sophistication. The True-Form Dual-Matrix Camera system on this phone consists of the powerful Main Camera Matrix and SuperZoom Matrix. The camera hardware takes advantage of impressive image processing engines as well. The integration of the camera hardware with the HUAWEI XD Optics results in brighter high-resolution images, shot with more light taken in,

and cleaner with more details.

You will notice huge improvements in colors in the pictures shot with the HUAWEI P50. The True-Chroma Image Engine delivers the highest possible color accuracy, creating images that reflect what is seen by the human eye. The HUAWEI P50 supports 4K video recording across the full focal range. The all-new AIS Pro image stabilisation solution helps users easily capture stablehand held videos, even when zoomed-in 4K time-lapse mode allows users to distil the beauty of time, while AI cinematograph is great for creative shots that showcase minor movements.

## User's overall experience

You do not only take beautiful photos with the HUAWEI P50, but the phone itself is a beauty to behold. The big and powerful camera system on the phone is turned into an iconic dual ring design that is instantly recognizable. Everything else besides the Dual-Matrix Camera Design is stunning and eye-catching as well. Huawei has long been the industry leader in design and manufacturing, with every generation of the HUAWEI P Series debuting a unique signature colourway. The HUAWEI P50 is available in two beautiful finishes: Cocoa Gold and Golden Black. The HUAWEI P50 6.5-inch display supports 1.07 billion colors and True-Chroma display technology, allowing it to produce colors with accuracy comparable to professional reference displays. The HUAWEI P50 is



IP68 certified for dust and water resistance, and it sports dual stereo speakers for an immersive audio experience.

Is the battery life of the HUAWEI P50 good enough for intense use? Yes, the HUAWEI P50 does have a pretty good battery life. The smartphone packs a 4100 mAh battery into a compact design with a thickness of 7.92 mm only and it supports 66W HUAWEI SuperCharge for swift recharging.

## Simplify your life

EMUI 12 with an innovative UI and a clean and elegant look powers the HUAWEI P50. Controlling multiple

devices at once is as easy as controlling one single device, thanks to the Super Device features. The Device+ tab in Control Panel enables users to easily control or set up multi-device collaboration with other devices, such as FreeBuds, MatePad and MateBook.

With the Distributed File System, the HUAWEI P50 can also function as a wirelessly connected external storage unit for the PC, meaning you can access the files you want more easily than ever before. The trusted, innovative and secure AppGallery is available on the HUAWEI P50 where users can download a wide range of high-quality apps.

## KFH announces Hesabi winners

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced 20 winners of KD 500 each in the first monthly draw of (Your Student Allowance with Us) campaign designated for Hesabi youth customers. The campaign provides the largest exclusive draw for Hesabi youth customers totaling KD 100,000 throughout the campaign until year end, in addition to a chance for 4 Hesabi customers to win the grand prize totaling KD 5,000 throughout the campaign.

The draw was held in KFH Headquarters under the supervision of MOCI representative. The winners are Hamad Al-Humaidi, Dalal Al-Mane', Abdullah Al-Baqer, Haya Al-Hajery, Qadah Rimal, Adel Rouz, Asma Al-Yahyouth, Fatima Rashid, Abdullaziz Al-Hajery, Fay Al-Athari, Safiyah Al-Merri, Abrar Al-Mutairi, Mudhawi Al-Azmi,

Sabikah Al-Shayji, Musa'ab Al-Khamees, Jassim Al-Kendery, Muneera Ujaieem, Shahad Ali, Abdullah Al-Enizi, Nora Al-Enizi.

The launch of the campaign with its additional benefits is part of KFH's strategy that focuses on its young customers. The Bank offers different benefits for Hesabi account holders including special campaigns, exclusive discounts and rewards. In addition to the largest exclusive draw totaling KD 100,000, (Your Student Allowance with Us) campaign provides other advantages and offers including free prepaid card for the first year, subscription in Baitak Rewards Points and earning 1K points upon activation, distinguished offers, weekend offers, and banking services round the clock.

Customers who obtain their student allowance via their KFH account will have a chance to win prizes in the monthly draw, or at the end of the campaign as soon as they transfer their student allowance through their KFH account. They will have the chance to win and enter the draw one month after allowance transfer to their KFH

account. Upon winning, the prize value will be credited in the winner's account directly.

Through this campaign, KFH extends its care and appreciation to Hesabi customers and youth segment. It also confirms the Bank's endeavor towards achieving financial inclusivity and customer motivation to perform more banking and financial transactions under unified framework, therefore achieving service excellence and understanding of customers' requirements and needs. The Bank is also keen to promote positive values among all its customers segments such as the value of saving while offering the appropriate benefits and motivating offers.

KFH offers qualitative benefits for young Hesabi customers as part of the constant care provided by the Bank to different customer segments. Hesabi is also an opportunity to innovate new products and services with which the Bank is able to meet the needs of each segment and age group to receive an outstanding service equivalent to the global criteria and practices in terms of

quality, accuracy and speed.

The major benefits offered under Hesabi for youth customers includes obtaining an ATM Hesabi card with a distinguished modern design, a Hesabi Prepaid card which will enable young customers to use it in online hotel and flight bookings in accordance with KFH's credit regulations, as well as paying through (POS) in commercial stores. In addition to many offers provided constantly and in different areas and major discounts in a selection of famous stores and brands for youngsters, KFH continues to launch marketing campaigns to reward its young customers holding Hesabi accounts, most notably the (Put it on My Account) campaign which was largely praised and welcomed by customers for providing exclusive and distinguished offers. Hesabi meets the aspirations of this young segment and corresponds to KFH's direction to attract the largest number of young customers, in which they make a large percentage of the Kuwaiti society. Hesabi is also an initiative by KFH to diversify the banking products and services.

## Sudan wheat harvest waits to rot as hunger crisis looms

AL-LAOTA: Looking at the sacks of wheat stacked in Imad Abdullah's small home, no one would guess that Sudan's food security is hanging by a thread after an October coup and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But the wheat farmer fears that the grain will soon rot, after his country's cash-strapped government backed out of promises to purchase it at incentivising prices.

"It has been two months since I harvested the wheat and I can't store it in the house anymore," said Abdullah, pointing to the large sacks filled with ripened wheat crammed into his

small house in Al-Laota, in Gezira state, south of Sudan's capital. He is one of thousands of farmers who have cultivated the grain as part of Sudan's largest agricultural scheme, named Al-Gezira.

When Abdullah harvested in March, he was promised 43,000 Sudanese pounds (\$75) per sack - a price set by the government to encourage farmers to cultivate the grain. "We used to sell the government our entire harvest. We never had to bring it home. We don't even have adequate storage places," Sudanese officials have however declared in recent weeks that they will not be able to buy this season's entire harvest due to lack of funds.

Impoverished Sudan has for years been grappling with a grinding economic crisis, which deepened after last year's military coup prompted Western governments to cut crucial aid. The October coup derailed a fragile transition put in place following the 2019 ouster of president Omar Al-Bashir. Over 18 million people, nearly half the Sudanese population, are

expected to be pushed into extreme hunger by September, according to United Nations estimates. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, both key grain suppliers, threatens to compound Sudan's existing food security troubles. Wheat imports from both nations make up between 70 and 80 percent of Sudan's local market needs, according to a 2021 UN report.

Last month, dozens of wheat farmers from Sudan's Northern State staged a protest outside the agricultural bank after it refused to take their harvest. "I grew 16 acres of wheat this season, filling some 120 sacks amounting to a total of 12 tons," farmer Modawi Ahmed told AFP. He said the bank only agreed to buy less than half of his harvest, and he now fears the rest will spoil. Farmers working the fields as part of the Al-Gezira scheme have over the years contributed only a small portion of Sudan's annual wheat needs of 2.2 million tons. This year, local wheat production was forecast to cover only a quarter of the country's needs, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). —AFP



Food engineer Roberto Lemus (left) and food engineering students Marcelo Bertran (center) and Alonso Vasquez work in the lab of Chile's University in Santiago. — AFP photos



Food engineer Roberto Lemus shows samples of candies for children made with rice flour, at the lab of Chile's University in Santiago.

# Seaweed and 3D printers: Chile's innovative approach to feeding kids



Food engineering student Marcelo Beltran shows how to load food in a 3D printer at the lab of Chile's University in Santiago.

Some dehydrated "cochayuyo" seaweed, some instant mashed potatoes and hot water: these are the ingredients for a nutritious menu of 3D printed food that nutritional experts in Chile hope will revolutionize the food market, particularly for children. With a 3D food printer and a modern twist on the traditional use of cochayuyo, an algae typically found in Chile, New Zealand and the South Atlantic, Roberto Lemus, a professor at the University of Chile and several students, have managed to create nutritious and edible figures that they hope kids will love to eat. Pokemon figures, or any type of animal imaginable, are all fed into the 3D printer, together with the gelatinous mixture, and the food is "printed" out seven minutes later. "We looking for different figures, fun figures...visual, colors, taste, flavors, smells," Lemus told AFP.

But, he stressed, the main focus is on

nutritional content. "The product has to be highly nutritious for people, but it also has to be tasty," he said. 3D food printers are expensive, costing from \$4,000 to more than \$10,000, but Lemus hopes that as technology advances, their cost will come down and reach more people. The technology is developing in the culinary field in dozens of countries, and 3D food printers are used to design sweets, pasta and other foods. NASA already tested it in 2013 with the idea of expanding the variety of foods that astronauts dine on in space.

### Superpower algae

Chile is making progress with cochayuyo seaweed, one of the typical ingredients of the coastal nation's cuisine, and which is rich amino acids, minerals and iodine, according to Alonso Vasquez, a 25-year-old postgraduate student who is writing his thesis on the subject. The young

researcher takes dehydrated cochayuyo, cuts it and grinds it to create cochayuyo flour which he then mixes with instant mashed potato powder.

He then adds hot water to the mixture to create a gelatinous and slimy substance that he feeds into the printer. "It occurred to me to use potatoes, rice flour, all of which have a lot of starch. The starch of these raw materials combined with the cochayuyo alginate is what generates stabilization within the 3D printing," he says, waiting for the printer to finish creating a Pikachu figure of about two centimeters (just under one inch) and a taste of mashed potatoes and the sea. The project has been underway for two years and is still in its infancy, but the idea is to apply ingredients such as edible flowers or edible dyes to the menu to make them more attractive to children. — AFP



Food engineer Roberto Lemus shows a sample of a candy for children made with cochayuyo seaweed and rice flour, at the lab of Chile's University in Santiago.



Food engineer Roberto Lemus shows a portion of food before putting it into a 3D printer at the lab of Chile's University in Santiago.



Food engineering student Alonso Vasquez cuts cochayuyo seaweed to process it before putting it into a 3D printer at the lab of Chile's University in Santiago.

## Street art in Montreal is writ large

A mysterious creature playing piano, a white tiger baring its fangs, and a huge Batgirl: dozens of artists are busy this June painting giant frescoes for the tenth edition of Montreal's Mural festival. Started in 2012, the street art event is looking to be crowned the "leader in urban art" in North America, organizer Pierre-Alain Benoit told AFP.

Visitors can view more than 100 past and new murals in central neighborhoods of the French-speaking metropolis painted by artists from Canada and around the

world. Twenty-one artists painted new murals this year. Among them is Caroline Monnet, an Indigenous artist who traces her ancestry to the Great Lakes region of Canada and the US.

The first-timer here chose to paint geometric patterns of repeating triangles or lozenges common in Ashininaabe textiles, that have been "passed from generation to generation." This celebration of her culture, she said, is also a political statement of sorts, admonishing the nation's colonial past.

"We have been excluded from any cultural expression for a very long time," she explained. "So to be able to have my art on a platform as large as this one, and to have it accessible to a wide audience as well... I think that's great." "I think we're taking a step forward," she said, cans of spray paint in hand.

For others, such as Kata Hull, a painter from Boston visiting Montreal with her husband, the open-air exhibition poses an opportunity to reach a wider art

audience. "I like seeing art anywhere, so outside feels more accessible to more people. And not everybody's interested in gallery," she said.

Natalie Capuano, who snapped more than 500 photos of the murals, expressed pride at seeing so many of them, saying "it changes the look of the city." "It's such a pleasure to come and discover new murals every year, we are often surprised and it's much more beautiful than bare walls," says the local resident.

Among the more famous murals in Montreal are two massive portraits of its most famous singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, who died in 2016. The festival is also showcasing 25 hip-hop artists including American rapper Lil Yachty and French rapper Kaaris. And passersby who download the festival's app can check out augmented reality installations at two nearby parks. — AFP



An assistant of mural artist Caroline Monnet, paints during the Mural festival in Montreal.



A viewer watches an artwork being painted during the Mural festival in Montreal.



A man watches an artist paint a mural from a scissor lift during the MURAL festival in Montreal. — AFP photos



Aerial view of people taking part in a massive boxing class at the Zocalo square in Mexico City. — AFP photos



People take part in a massive boxing class at the Zocalo square in Mexico City.

## MEXICO CITY PUNCHES ITS WAY TO A NEW GUINNESS RECORD

Mexico City has set a world record for hosting the largest boxing class ever, with 14,299 people taking part in a massive lesson in the capital's central plaza, Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum announced Saturday. That huge turnout easily surpassed the previous record, set in Moscow in 2017 when 3,000 people showed up for boxing class.

After Saturday's attendance figure was certified by a Guinness World Records

team, Sheinbaum posted a video thanking "the champions and those who made this great triumph possible." Hundreds of people had gathered early for the enormous class in Zocalo plaza, which began with a tai-chi warmup, followed by a review of basic boxing movements and then practice in various combinations of blows.

Among the professional boxers who led the session were Mariana "La Barby"

Juarez, a three-time World Boxing Council (WBC) champion in the flyweight, super flyweight and bantamweight categories; Ana Maria "Guerrera" Torres, a two-time WBC super flyweight champion, and David Picasso, a two-time junior champion.

The turnout Saturday impressed many attendees. "I didn't think many people would show up," 52-year-old Araceli Salazar told AFP. "I'm pleasantly sur-

prised." Carmen Perez, 16, an urban dance devotee, said she was thrilled to take part. "There is a very beautiful energy—very joyful, a lot of joy," she said.

The event was organized by the Mexico City government, which had recruited such prominent figures as American actor Sylvester Stallone-Rocky Balboa on the big screen—and boxer Saul "Canelo" Alvarez to promote it. Afterward, dozens of people swarmed the many pro-

fessionals present to seek autographs. Mexico City, with nine million residents, holds several Guinness records. They include the biggest serving of packaged tacos (2,712 pounds or 1,230 kilograms), the largest number of free Wi-Fi hotspots in an urban area (21,500), and the largest number of people playing foosball simultaneously (1,080). —AFP



Volunteer Masha prepares a vegan meal made of bulgur wheat for civilians in Kyiv, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine.



Two volunteers help Tamara Human (left), head of the "Every Animal" foundation, to pack vegan products for Ukrainian soldiers who maintain their strictly plant-based diet while serving on the front lines, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

## Hummus on the front: Volunteers feeding Ukraine's vegan troops

Ukrainian soldier Oleksandr Zhuhan has no intention of giving up on his veganism while fighting invading Russian forces. The 37-year-old drama teacher, who enlisted with the army the day after Moscow attacked Ukraine on February 24, maintains his strictly plant-based diet while serving on the front lines.

"At the beginning, it was very complicated," Zhuhan, who is fighting in the southern Mykolaiv region, told AFP. "People told me that I would not hold out" because a special menu is not available, he said via video call from his barracks, with his rifle on his shoulder. But the soldier was adamant his diet would not prevent him from serving his country. He found a network of activists on the internet helping vegan soldiers. "I wrote to them and in April the first package arrived, like a miracle," Zhuhan said.

"There was pate and vegan sausages, hummus, soya milk... and all this for free," he said happily.

### 'Deliveries under bombs'

Zhuhan has Tamara Human to thank for the nutritious provisions. The former top model heads the "Every Animal" foundation in Kyiv, bringing together around a hundred people promoting veganism. This way of life combines a strictly vegan diet and the refusal to consume any clothing or cosmetic products derived from animals or their exploitation. Human's organization helps around 200 vegan soldiers reconcile their convictions while serving their country. "We deliver even under bombs," she told AFP, as she prepared bulgur and dumplings for civilians with two other volunteers.

Her 13th floor apartment in the residential Rusanivka area has become a

surprising logistics center for the movement.

Human has long been involved in animal protection, and dog Misha reins in the flat. There's even a beige rat rescued from a lab who's partial to a little meat and would gladly bite an unsuspecting finger. Economic patriotism is strong here and most of the food used by Human's team comes from Ukraine—mainly from the western city of Lviv, where it is easiest to find. "The packages we send them allow the soldiers to supplement for two or three weeks what they receive from the army so that they have a balanced diet," she said. She sees no contradiction between veganism and fighting on the front. "I also wanted to go kill Russians, but I don't know how to use a weapon, so I am more useful here," she said. — AFP

## Something fishy: Dutch celebrate raw herring festival

Heads tilted far back, Dutch revelers hold the raw, onion-coated fish by their tails and drop them down their open gullets. Welcome to the port of Scheveningen, where the Netherlands is marking the arrival of the season's first catch of new herring. Cancelled for two years because of Covid, this year's festival drew tens of thousands of fans of the divisive delicacy. Former fisherman Simon Pronk, 72, said the oily fish were the "most important thing" for Scheveningen. Every year from around mid-June, the Dutch consume millions of herring, and people can be seen all round the country swallowing the slippery snack.

Some prefer it in a soft white bun, although purists say it detracts from the fishy flavor. The first barrel of herring sparks a yearly bidding war, with this year's raising a record 113,500 euros (\$119,130) for charity. But it hasn't all been going so swimmingly for this fishing port near The Hague.

Scheveningen has been battered in recent years by dwindling stocks, Brexit rows over fishing grounds, and the pandemic. This year the festival, known as "Vlaggetjesdag" (day of the little flags), returned to its former glory, with ships lining the harbor and dozens of stalls selling herring and fishing-related trinkets on Saturday.

A Dutch navy submarine even docked at the harbor to mark the occasion. The popularity of eating raw fish, prepared only by freezing and salting, can baffle foreigners. But German tourist Thilo was lapping up the festival, especially after two years of Covid curbs.

"It's great," the 47-year-old said. "We enjoy it because it's a sunny day and (we can) go out without any mask or anything." Most of the Netherlands' catch is exported. Less than half of the roughly 180 million herring landed each year stay in the country, while 90 million go to Germany and 14 million to Belgium, the Dutch Fish Agency said. At the herring festival, workers prepare a steady stream of the fish, served headless and split open with a pile of chopped onions on the side. "It's a nice day and people are happy," said fish market worker Arthem, 51. "The fun is that a lot of people who come here have never tasted it before and they like it. So then we have a good day also." — AFP



Lifestyle | Features

The battle to build a child-friendly metaverse



As a young woman straps on her vest and headset and becomes immersed in a virtual world, Mainak Chaudhuri talks excitedly about the potential of the technology. "This is the first step towards the metaverse," Chaudhuri of French start-up Actronika told AFP at this week's VivaTech trade show in Paris.

The vest can give users the sensation of being buffeted by the wind or even feel a monster's breath on their back, and it can be used to enhance movie watching, education or gaming. It is a family-friendly vision of the 3D immersive internet, now widely known as the metaverse, and sits well with some interactive experiences already widely available for children-like virtual trips to museums.

But campaigners and experts are increasingly warning that the wider ecosystem needs to start acting on child safety to ensure the benign vision is realized. "The biggest challenge is kids are getting exposed to content that is not intended for them," said Kavya Pearlman, whose NGO XR Safety Initiative campaigns to ensure immersive technology will be safe for everyone.

The problems she envisages range from children being exposed to sexual and violent material, to worries over young people being used as content creators or having inappropriate contact with adults. Even though the metaverse has not yet been widely adopted and the technology is still in development, early users have already brought to light serious issues.

One woman's allegation that her avatar was sexually assaulted in the metaverse sparked global outrage. Worries about the future of the technology have only grown as the economic opportunities have become clearer.

'Colossal' money

Metaverse-linked investments topped \$50 billion last year, according to research firm McKinsey, which predicts the figure could more than double this year. "We're talking about absolutely colossal amounts of money, that's three times more than the investment in artificial intelligence in 2017," McKinsey partner Eric Hazan told AFP.

Chief among the investors is tech giant Meta, which owns the likes of Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. The firm has already rolled out measures to give parents more control over the content their children interact with while

using VR headsets. Meta and many of its competitors market immersive products with a lower age limit of 13 — though it is widely accepted that younger children will use the tech.

Pearlman raises a broader concern that very little is known about the possible effects on young people's development. "Organisations have not yet validated these experiences from a scientific perspective," she said. "Yet they are allowing kids to be exposed to these new technologies, practically experimenting on children's developing brains."

The metaverse has shifted the paradigm, according to Valentino Megale, a neuropharmacologist who researches the issue. While the public has so far merely consumed what others have created, in the metaverse "we are going to be part of the digital content", he said.

"This makes everything that we experience in that world more compelling," he told the RightsCon digital rights conference last week, adding that it was particularly true for children. Experts worry that the industry needs scrutiny before the rot sets in.

'Ethical basis'

The solution, they argue, is to make sure the builders of these new virtual worlds instil child protection measures into the ethos of their work. In other words, each piece of software and hardware should be constructed on the understanding that children might use it and will need safeguarding. "We are potentially going to have a huge impact on their behavior, their identity, their emotions, their psychology in the exact moment when they are forming their personality," said Megale.

"You need to provide an ethical basis and safety by design from the beginning." One of the most controversial areas of product design is the kind of suit that will allow users to feel all sorts of sensations—even pain. Such suits are already being manufactured, simulating pain through electric shocks.

The products are intended for military or other professional training. Chaudhuri said the products developed by his firm Actronika use vibrations rather than electric shocks and were perfectly safe for anyone to use. "We're about engaging the audience and not necessarily doing a real-time firefighting scenario or a battlefield scenario," he said. "We don't cause pain." — AFP

Moon sculptures, NFTs at futuristic Art Basel fair

The world's leading contemporary art fair has taken a futuristic turn this year, offering buyers the chance to see their sculptures placed on the moon. Non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, are all the rage at the Art Basel fair in Switzerland, where the world of digital assets is taking off. Artist Jeff Koons plans to send 125 miniature sculptures to the moon with multi-billionaire Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

The sculptures—set to be installed 384,400 kilometers (238,855 miles) apart from their owners—will be sold as NFTs, which work like certificates of ownership. The "Moon Phases" statues come with a photo of their lunar location, and buyers will also be able to take home a sculpture with a gemstone marking their extra-terrestrial counterpart's place on the moon.

"We're also seeing it for the first time," said Pace gallery director Marc Glimcher as he unveiled a moon-shaped statue about the size of a beach ball at his stand in Basel. Elsewhere at Art Basel, Turkish artist Ozgur Kar's LCD display of a man surrounded by skeletons is being sold by the French gallery Edouard Montassut. The Vive Arts platform, meanwhile, offers a dive into digital art with the help of augmented reality glasses, presenting an avatar of the German artist Albert Oehlen in a 3D universe.

The fair, which runs from June 16-19, also features a host of non-digital works-

from an installation by Franco-Chinese artist Huang Yong Ping depicting a kitchen strewn with giant cockroaches, to a series of portraits carved in wood by Franco-Cameroonian artist Barthelemy Toguo. A spider sculpture by the French-American sculptor Louise Bourgeois

Pace is one of the few major galleries to have ventured into the field of NFTs. According to Clare McAndrew, author of an art market report for Art Basel, only six percent of galleries sold NFTs in 2021. Since peaking in August 2021, NFTs have plummeted. While art-related NFT sales vol-

Visitors pass by a Jeff Koons artwork 'moon-faces, Leonardo da Vinci' during a preview day of Art Basel, the world's premier modern and contemporary art fair in Basel.



fetched \$40 million.

Along with sales of yachts, luxury cars, watches and jewelry, the art market recovered strongly in 2021 after the shock of the pandemic in 2020. The stock market rebounded sharply last year, swelling the coffers of the ultra-rich and inflation is giving wealthy collectors yet another reason to splash out on a multi-million-dollar painting.

umes soared to \$945 million in August, they fell to \$366 million in January and then to \$101 million in May, according to McAndrew's records. These ups and downs don't faze the owner of the Pace gallery though, who believes that NFTs represent a "new methodology for distributing digital art". —AFP



A visitor holds a cell phone displaying a virtual art piece sells by NFT during a preview day of Art Basel, the world's premier modern and contemporary art fair in Basel.



Visitors pass by a Folkert de Jong's artwork 'The shooting... 1st July 2006' during a preview day of Art Basel, the world's premier modern and contemporary art fair in Basel.



A visitor walks past Leonardo Drew's artwork 'number 341' during a preview day of Art Basel, the world's premier modern and contemporary art fair in Basel.

Rock-around-Bangkok: Thai air guitar contestants give their all



"Pboy Devi" performing during the 2022 Thailand Air Guitar Championships in Bangkok.

What happens when Donald Trump, a Bangkok moto-taxi driver, and a Squid Games contestant take the stage in a Bangkok bar late on a Saturday night? It can only mean one thing: an air guitar battle for peace. The cosplaying individuals were gathered at the second annual Thai air guitar championship for the chance to represent Thailand in the beloved World Championships in Finland later this year.

The hallowed international event, founded in Finland in 1996 to promote world peace - "hold air guitars, not guns" is the tongue-in-cheek motto-has given rise to good-natured and over-the-top competitions around the world.

"This is going to be the greatest thing you have never seen," roared co-host and organizer Jacob "Airlectric Eel" Conga, bouncing across Brownstone venue's stage following his exuberant performance to warm up the crowd. For the first

round, each of the nine contestants gave a 60-second performance marked by three judges with the top five progressing to the second and final round.

Contestants were marked on technical ability, stage presence and "airness" - "the 'je ne sais quoi' of air guitar, when it transcends a performance and becomes a true piece of art," said Conga. The eccentric and electric sets, performed to a medley of genres and tastes from Rihanna's "Shut Up And Drive" to self-composed Thai rock-pop, eventually saw the strutting and pouting "Trump" win the night, despite fierce competition.

"He made Thailand great again, for sure," judge and comedian Charles the French said. Rob "Donald Trump" Palmer, who when not performing air guitar solos has lived and worked in Thailand for the past eight years, said the evening was "fantastic".

"It's a great idea, completely stupid but

also totally awesome," said the 61-year-old following his Trump-imbued performance of Green Day's "American Idiot". Explaining his costume, most of which was chaotically thrown to the crowd during the final round, he said: "if you have to do this, you got to do something crazy, so let's do the craziest man on the planet, to do Trump."

Having won the 5,000 baht (\$141) prize, and a trip to Finland to represent Thailand, Palmer grinned and said: "For most of us, it's probably the only chance you have of becoming a national champion or even a world champion-so you got to do it." France, a 22-year-old spectator who gave only his nickname, had come along to support his friend but was totally unprepared for the "crazy" spectacle. "I played guitar before and I do some air guitar, but I've never seen air guitar like this." —AFP



"Death Hon" performing during the 2022 Thailand Air Guitar Championships.



Rob "Donald Trump" Palmer performing during the 2022 Thailand Air Guitar Championships.



This photograph shows participants Pule "Hail Pulecfair" Mapacpac (left), "O-Face" (center) and Steve "Francis Chopin" Ruggiero (right) preparing backstage during the 2022 Thailand Air Guitar Championships in Bangkok.



Spectators during the 2022 Thailand Air Guitar Championships in Bangkok. — AFP photos

## Sports

# Kharkiv to Jakarta: Badminton's duo shed light on Ukraine plight

## Zharka, Stoliarenko raise awareness on living under bombardment

**JAKARTA:** In the smog of Indonesia's capital Jakarta with the Istora Stadium as their backdrop, Ukraine's top badminton doubles team are not focused on their early exits from back-to-back events on the world tour, but on the Russian invasion of their homeland. Yelyzaveta Zharka and Mariia Stoliarenko were the only Ukrainians to compete at the prestigious Indonesia Open, which concluded on Sunday-one of only three Badminton World Federation (BWF) Super 1000 top-ranked tournaments on the 2022 calendar. Zharka and Stoliarenko bowed out in Tuesday's first round after a similar early exit at the Super 500 Indonesia Masters the previous week at the same venue.

But they said being able to raise awareness on a global stage for their compatriots living under Russian bombardment was a victory for them. "We want that people don't forget about our situation which is now still going on in Ukraine," 30-year-old Zharka told AFP. "Also, that people know that Ukraine needs support, needs attention in our fight for freedom." The pair, ranked 68th in the world, said giving the Ukrainian people a moment of pride and motivation was "the first reason" they continue to compete at global tournaments as the war rages back home.

The pair have directly felt the impact of the conflict, having in March been forced to flee their home city of Kharkiv, where Ukrainian forces have suffered painful losses and Russian troops have been accused of atrocities including using cluster munitions on civilians. They briefly took refuge in Poland before Zharka left for France where her former club in Strasbourg

allowed her to stay and practise before she invited Stoliarenko to join her. A string of tournaments across Europe followed, including the Orleans Masters in France and the European Championships in Spain.

### No way home

The pair, who started playing together last year, were able to set off for Asia in May after Ukraine's badminton federation contacted their Thai counterparts and the BWF. "They helped us to book a ticket but now it's only a one-way ticket to Asia because we don't know yet when we will (go) home," said Zharka. While mired in uncertainty and seeing scenes of destruction back home, Zharka and Stoliarenko took part in the Thailand Open last month, losing to the world number ones from China-Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan.

Zharka said it had been difficult to maintain their concentration on badminton, with their days usually starting with anxious calls to family members stuck in Kharkiv. "We had some plans for the future, we had some dreams and visions of how our lives will go on, but after the war it's on pause because we don't know when it will end," she said. Despite the difficult situation, Stoliarenko said the pair are trying to take "all the positive parts of the game" with them after playing in front of Indonesia's raucous, fanatical badminton crowds for the first time in their career.

"It was something new for us because, in Ukraine, badminton is not a super popular sport," said 18-year-old Stoliarenko. "But in Indonesia, it was amazing, all



**JAKARTA:** Ukraine's women's doubles badminton players Yelyzaveta Zharka (right) and Mariia Stoliarenko walk back to their hotel after competing in the Indonesia Open badminton tournament in Jakarta. — AFP

people know badminton, all people like badminton players and it's so cool." After the Indonesia Open, the pair head to Kuala Lumpur to participate in the Malaysia Open beginning June 28, where they are drawn to play Bulgarian sisters Gabriela and Stefani Stoeva.

Zharka and Stoliarenko's determination to keep Ukraine on top of the news agenda is driving them to

carry on competing at the highest level, even without a place to call home. Their target is to break into the world's top 40 and qualify for next year's European Games in Poland. "We will continue to play badminton with this message so that people around the world don't forget," said Zharka. "We will try to do our best for our country." — AFP

## O'Brien sweeps to another notable racing landmark

**ASCOT:** Record-breaking Irish trainer Aidan O'Brien brought up another milestone on Saturday as he celebrated his 900th Group or Graded winner with Broome's victory in the Hardwicke Stakes on the last day of Royal Ascot. O'Brien's great rival these days Charlie Appleby—who started out training a while after the 52-year-old Irishman did—is racking up group races at a rate of knots and added another couple on Saturday.

There was to be no winner for Queen Elizabeth II, who missed the meeting she is so closely associated with for the first time since her coronation in 1953 — the meeting was held behind closed doors due to Covid-19 in 2020. However, as a reminder of her influence over the meeting 70 school children donned her colours to form a guard of honour for the Royal party as they rolled into the parade ring in their carriages pre-racing.

Ryan Moore rode a brilliant and bold tactical race on Broome leading for the majority of the contest. O'Brien never one to blow his own trumpet brushed aside taking credit for his latest landmark. "In this life and world we take one day at a time and try to appreciate every day," said O'Brien. "We're so grateful to do what we do every day. It's incredible really." Moore's broad grin after he completed a double when Roohan won the Wokingham Stakes for a second successive year-only the fifth horse to do so—replaced the frown when he and O'Brien drew a blank in the opening race.

Their runner Alfred Munnings entered the Chesham Stakes as 16/1 favourite for next year's Derby but ran like a drain as after coming with a challenge he ran up the white flag almost as quickly. Instead it was the debutant 40/1 shot Holloway Boy who came with a storming late run to overhaul another outsider 80/1 chance Pearling Path and give jockey Danny Tudhope his fourth and most surprising win of the week. "It is a bit of a surprise to be honest," said Tudhope. "Karl (Burke the trainer) said just go out and enjoy yourselves." — AFP

## Roach puts Windies on verge of victory

**NORTH SOUND:** Veteran pacer Kemar Roach's enduring quality and consistency put the West Indies within 35 runs of victory over Bangladesh going into the fourth day of the first Test. His five for 53 from 24.5 overs in the Bangladesh second innings total of 245 looked, briefly, as if it would be overshadowed though by a stunning West Indies collapse in pursuit of a modest target of 84

## Beterbiev batters Smith to unify light-heavy belts

**NEW YORK:** Light-heavyweight world champion Artur Beterbiev knocked out American rival Joe Smith Jr. inside two rounds on Saturday to add the WBO title to his WBC and IBF belts. The unbeaten 37-year-old Canada-based Russian scored three knockdowns and had Smith in deep trouble with just under a minute remaining in round two before the fight was stopped.

Beterbiev improves to 18-0 — all by knockout — and can now set his sights on a possible unification fight against Russia's WBA champion Dmitry Bivol for the undisputed light-heavyweight crown. "Joe is a little bit open, and it was more easy for me to get him," Beterbiev said afterwards, before turning his attention to the prospect of a fight with Bivol. "I've had two unification fights and unification fights are more

interesting," Beterbiev said. "I prefer to unify. I want to be undisputed."

Smith, who was reportedly taken to hospital immediately after the bout and did not speak to media, meanwhile fell to 28-4 after the fourth defeat of his career. The 32-year-old American underdog, who also has 22 knockouts on his record, started aggressively but was quickly overwhelmed by his hard-hitting and skilful opponent. Beterbiev had Smith wobbling in the first round, connecting with a series of overhand rights. He had the American on the canvas early in what was ruled a slip rather than a knockdown.

But he did not have long to wait for the first legitimate knockdown of the contest, once again a clubbing overhand right forcing Smith to take a standing count at the end of the first. After starting the second round in similar fashion, it was only a question of how long Smith would be able to cling on. Beterbiev scored two more knockdowns early in the round, almost sending Smith through the ropes with a flurry of vicious shots. He then uncorked a deadly combination of left uppercuts and a right to scramble Smith's senses further, leaving referee Harvey Dock no option but to call it off. — AFP



**NEW YORK:** Artur Beterbiev hits Joe Smith Jr during the light heavyweight title bout at The Hulu Theater at Madison Square Garden on June 18, 2022 in New York City. — AFP

as the hosts slipped to nine for three late on the third day Saturday. Those three wickets by seamer Khaled Ahmed — he removed captain Kraigg Brathwaite, Raymon Reifer and Nkrumah Bonner in quick succession — lit a fire under the Bangladeshis. Although opener John Campbell and fellow-Jamaican Jermaine Blackwood avoided any further alarms in taking the score to 49 at the close, the visitors will still be clinging to hopes of more miraculous events on Sunday morning.

Their spirit and energy in that final passage of play was probably sparked by a 123-run seventh-wicket partnership between captain Shakib Al Hasan (63) and wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan (64) just a couple

hours earlier which saved the tourists from the ignominy of an innings defeat. They had come together just before lunch at 109 for six and proceeded to frustrate the West Indies through the entire afternoon session.

It took the new ball and the persistence of Roach to separate them after tea with the Barbadian taking three of the last four wickets for his 10th five-wicket innings haul in Test cricket. His dismissal of Ebadot Hossain, uprooting the tailender's middle-stump, to end the innings was also his 50th Test wicket at the venue, the most by any bowler. He also drew level with Michael Holding on 249 wickets for joint-sixth position on the list of all-time leading West Indies wicket-takers in Tests.

### 'Role model' Roach

Roach had bowled an opening spell without success however at the start of the day when Bangladesh resumed their innings at 50 for two and it took the clever variations of seam bowling all-rounder Kyle Mayers to effect the first strikes in having Najmul Hossain caught at first slip and struggling former captain Mominul Haque trapped leg-before. "Trying to make the batsmen play at every delivery and utilizing the conditions are really strong points for me and those tactics worked again today," said Mayers. "Kemar is a role model for me and the rest of the guys. He gives 100 percent every time he goes onto the park and he is always looking to perform. I wish him all continued success and hope he goes on to get 300 Test wickets."

Roach added to those early successes by Mayers in dismissing Liton Das and opening batsman Mahmudul Hasan for a hard-fought 42 and it seemed the match would all be over by mid-afternoon with a comprehensive innings victory for the home side. However Shakib, even though he remained prone to indiscretion, and Nurul displayed the sort of character and effort that has been missing from most of their team's efforts in this Test with the captain completing his 29th Test half-century and the wicketkeeper-batsman notching his second. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Doyle wins French classic

**PARIS:** Hollie Doyle became the first female jockey to win a French classic race when she rode favourite Nashwa to victory in the French Oaks (Prix de Diane) at Chantilly on Sunday. The 25-year-old English jockey had finished third on Nashwa in the Epsom Oaks earlier this month but made no mistake this time riding a brilliant race to prevail. She was congratulated by her fellow jockey and husband Tom Marquand on passing the post but Doyle refused to get swept up in what she had achieved. "I am just privileged to be in this position," she said. "I would not be sitting on this classy filly but for Imad al Sagar (the owner) asking me to ride for him in 2020." Doyle grinned when it was suggested that she was as much a star as Nashwa. "I don't know about that!" It was left to Nashwa's trainer John Gosden to lavish praise on her. — AFP

#### Korda grabs LPGA lead

**WASHINGTON:** Defending champion Nelly Korda curled in an eagle putt at the 18th hole on Saturday to grab a one-shot lead over Jennifer Kupcho heading into the final round of the Meijer LPGA Classic in Michigan. Former world number one Korda started the day two off Kupcho's lead and carded a six-under par 66 that featured two eagles to edge ahead on 18-under par 198. Kupcho had four birdies and a bogey in her three-under 68 at Blythefield Country Club near Grand Rapids, and on 199 was two strokes in front of Canadian Brooke Henderson, who carded a bogey-free five-under 67 for 201. Korda, playing her second tournament since a blood clot in her left arm caused her to miss four months, applied some early pressure on Kupcho with a birdie at the seventh and an eagle at the eighth. She added another birdie at the 12th, but after a bogey at 13 she was still two shots behind Kupcho, who had picked up strokes with birdies at the fourth, eighth and 10th. — AFP

#### Verstappen takes pole position

**MONTREAL:** World champion and series leader Max Verstappen drove expertly in difficult wet conditions in his Red Bull on Saturday to secure pole position for the Canadian Grand Prix. In an intriguing and entertaining qualifying session, the 24-year-old Dutchman clocked a best lap in one minute and 21.299 seconds, beating nearest rival two-time world champion Fernando Alonso of Alpine by seven-tenths of a second. Verstappen will start his 150th race from the prime start place after claiming his 15th pole in pursuit of a 26th career victory. His pole ends a run of four in a row by title rival Charles Leclerc who starts Sunday's race from the back of the grid after taking a new power unit on his Ferrari. — AFP

#### Stormers dominate 2nd half

**JOHANNESBURG:** A much improved second half performance from the Stormers earned an 18-13 victory over the Bulls at Cape Town Stadium on Saturday in an all-South Africa maiden United Rugby Championship (URC) final. The Cape Town outfit were fortunate to be only 7-3 behind at half-time after a timid first-half from them before a crowd restricted to 31,000 — half the capacity — by coronavirus protocols. It took the Stormers 31 minutes to get inside the Bulls' 22 and their first points, from a Manie Libbok penalty, came in the third minute of added time at the end of the opening half. But the only similarity between the Stormers of the first half and the second was their dark blue outfit as they took control, greatly reduced handling errors and sued tactical kicking to good effect. — AFP



**NORTH SOUND:** Kemar Roach (left) and Kraigg Brathwaite (center), of West Indies, celebrate the dismissal of Ebadot Hossain Chowdhury of Bangladesh, during the third day of the 1st Test between Bangladesh and West Indies at Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium in North Sound. — AFP

Sports

# Rahm, McIlroy and Scheffler grind to stay in US Open hunt

World's three top-ranked players remain in contention

**BROOKLINE:** Defending champion Jon Rahm, Masters champion Scottie Scheffler and four-time major winner Rory McIlroy—the world's three top-ranked players—grinded out rounds Saturday to stay in contention at the US Open. Second-ranked Spaniard Rahm birdied three of the last five holes but hit into bunkers on his first three shots at 18 for a double bogey to shoot one-over par 71 and stand on three-under 207, one stroke behind co-leaders Will Zalatoris of the United States and England's Matt Fitzpatrick after 54 holes at The Country Club.

"I'm very content. I'm not going to lie. I have to consider that I have 18 holes and I'm only one shot back. That's the important thing," Rahm said. "I know somebody behind is going to come out hot and is going to post a score, and I know I'm going to have to play good and probably shoot in the red numbers. That's my job." Third-ranked McIlroy, with three bogeys and a short birdie putt miss in the first six holes, salvaged a 73 to stand on 209, three adrift but within reach.

"I'm sort of going home thinking that I held this round together when it could have got away from me quickly," McIlroy said. "I certainly thought I was going to be a few shots further back than I was at the end of the day, but Jon struggled there coming in. Even though it was such a tough day and I feel like I battled well, to still only be three back going into tomorrow I feel is a good thing for me."

World number one Scheffler, chasing his fifth title and second major of the year, is primed for the mental and physical challenge of Sunday's final round. "The US Open is very taxing, mentally and physically. I think that's all part of what makes this

tournament so fun," he said. "You're going to get tested all different kinds of ways, whether it be physically, mentally, whatever it is. I think that's kind of the fun of it."

"If every golf tournament was like this, it would be in for a long season for all of us. A few times a year I think it's a ton of fun." Scheffler, trying to match Tiger Woods as the only world number ones to win the US Open, would be the first to manage the US Open-Masters double since Jordan Spieth in 2015 and just the seventh ever on a list that includes Tiger Woods, Arnold Palmer, Ben Hogan and Jack Nicklaus.

**'I just have to do me'**

Rahm could become only the second non-US player to win consecutive US Opens after Scotsman Willie Anderson took three from 1903-1905. He can't be worried about his rivals. "I just have to do me," Rahm said. "I can't control what the guys ahead or behind me are doing. I just have to focus on myself and play my golf, shot by shot, try to be as committed as possible to each shot." The second you get too caught up in what others are doing at a US Open is when you start making bogeys and double-bogeys in a row." McIlroy seeks his first major title since 2014. He won last week's PGA Canadian Open and could become the first player since 1934 to win the week before and then capture the US Open.

He found Saturday's windy conditions playing havoc with his putting. "I started to play the wind a little bit on the putts, and the wind was definitely affecting them," McIlroy said. "I just haven't putted in this much wind in a while. "Then you're in two



**BROOKLINE:** Jon Rahm of Spain plays a second shot from a fairway bunker on the 18th hole during the third round of the 122nd US Open Championship at The Country Club on June 18, 2022. —AFP

minds: Is this next putt going to be hit by the wind, or is it not? It was hard." It made him dig in fiercely at the end, with one birdie, one bogey and 10 pars in the last 12 holes. "In situations like this where the

run could have got away from me, I just dig in there a little bit more," McIlroy said. "Just keep hanging around. I did well to get it in under par for the tournament." —AFP

## Fraser-Pryce storms to impressive 100m victory in Paris

**PARIS:** Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce hammered home her status as world championship favorite on Saturday by equaling her world best time this year to win the 100m at the Paris Diamond League meeting. The veteran Jamaican sprinter triumphed in 10.67sec, shrugging off the crushing 30-degree heat at the city's Charlety stadium.

A two-time Olympic champion over 100m, the 35-year-old Fraser-Pryce equalled the 2022 best time she set in Nairobi in May. The nine-time world champion's win illustrated her threat to reigning Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah at next month's world championships in Eugene, Oregon. Both will meet next week at the Jamaican trials. "I feel very good, technically it was very good. The goal is always to be on top technically, then the lap times follow," said Fraser-Pryce.

"Physically I was good too. Running 10.6, only a few sprinters can achieve that," she added. Britain's Daryll Neita was second Saturday in 10.99sec with Marie-Josée Ta Lou of Ivory Coast third in 11.01sec.

Fraser-Pryce has already qualified for the 100m in Eugene as she is the defending champion. However, she said she has "not decided yet" on whether she will attempt the sprint double in Oregon. "We'll see if I'm ready to do it physically and mentally," she had said on Friday.

After racing to 10.05 seconds over the 100m in Oslo on Thursday, Andre De Grasse returned to his favored 200m in the French capital. But the Canadian Olympic gold medalist was only fourth on Saturday in a race won by Luxolo Adams of South Africa in 19.82sec. Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh, silver medalist at the 2019 world championships and bronze medal winner at the 2020 Olympics, won the high jump with a season-best 2.01m.

Mahuchikh won on her second attempt, improving on her previous season-leading 2.0m at the Eugene Diamond League meet. She tried and failed three times at 2.05m, a centimeter above her career best. Mahuchikh topped an all-Ukraine podium in the event ahead of Iryna Gerashchenko (1.98m) and Yuliya Levchenko (1.95m). There was also a season best in the 3,000m steeplechase for Bahrain's Winfred Mutile Yavi.

The 22-year-old won in a time of 8min 56.55sec, making her the fourth best performer in the history of the discipline. Behind her, Ethiopia's Sembo Alemayehu, only 17 years old, ran in 9min 09.19sec.



**PARIS:** Jamaica's Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce celebrates after winning and breaking a new record in the women's 100 meter event during the IAAF Wanda Diamond League athletics meeting at the Charlety Stadium in Paris on June 18, 2022. —AFP

Close to a world record in the 110m hurdles last week, Devon Allen of the United States, who plans to juggle his sporting career between American football and athletics, won in 13.16sec. His performance came just 48 hours after his 13.22sec run in Oslo. In the 100m hurdles, Nigeria's Tobi Amusan broke the African record in 12.41sec, the third best run of the season. —AFP

## Georgia's Aprasidze sends Montpellier to Top 14 final

**PARIS:** Georgia's Gela Aprasidze kicked two late long-range penalties to take Montpellier to next weekend's Top 14 final with a 19-10 win over Bordeaux-Begles on Saturday. Substitute scrum-half Aprasidze's contribution came in the final 11 minutes and his club will meet Castres, who beat champions Toulouse 24 hours earlier, next Friday at the Stade de France in a re-run of their 2018 meeting. "The essential was to win, in a pretty way or not, we don't care," Montpellier full-back Anthon Bouthier told reporters.

"With Gela, we knew he had it in his legs. The day before he kicked some from 60 meters. "He came on, he was fresh, knock-out rugby is about knowing taking the points when on offer," he added. Montpellier head coach Philippe Saint-Andre handed France three-quarter Arthur Vincent his first start since October after he recovered from a serious knee injury. Argentina forward Guido Petti returned to Bordeaux-Begles' side following a knee injury sustained against Perpignan on June 5. —AFP

## AU team wins first place in UAAK Futsal League

**KUWAIT:** The Futsal team of the Australian University (AU) were crowned champions of the Universities Athletic Association in Kuwait (UAAK) Futsal League. The League brought together seven teams from various private universities in Kuwait, taking place over the course of 2 months, until the final championship game on 9 June, 2022, which ensued in AU team winning.

Concluding the league, AU face-off GUST at their Field for the championship title. After a Tie score, the final game ran to penalty kicks, and resulted in the big win of AU team 4-3. Following the game, the goalkeeper of AU team, Student Fawaz Al Ayoubi, was crowned (Man of the Match)

by the Student Life department for his extraordinary performance.

Abdullah Khaledi, Student Life Staff at AU, coached the AU futsal team composed of Abdullah Mubarak, Ali Mohammed, Fawaz Al Ayoubi, Abdulwahhab Hassan, Fahad Al Fraij, Sulaiman Al Attar, Hamad Al Rashed, Saleh Al Kanderi, Haider Jasim, Abdullah Al Mahboub, Hussain Al Shemali, Mohammed Akbar and Bashar Al Zaabi.

Commenting on this notable achievement, Hussain Al Haddad, Manager of the Student Affairs Department at AU said, "On behalf of AU, I would like to congratulate our Futsal team for the well-deserved win of the University Athletic Association of Kuwait Tournament, all the hard work has paid off. It is indeed an amazing accomplishment for us especially after the long break due to the pandemic. I would like to thank the organizers, the participating teams and everyone who supported this tournament and I wish continued success to our hard-working champions."



# Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics		Clinics		Industrial Shuwaikh	
Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaizen center	25716707	Qadsiya	24814764
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Rawda	22517733	Dasmah	22515088
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Adaliya	22517144	Bneid Al-Gar	22532265
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Khalidiya	24848075	Shaab	22518752
Chest Hospital	24849400	Kaifan	24849807	Qibla	22459381
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Shamiya	24848913	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Adan Hospital	23940620	Shuwaikh	24814507	Mirqab	22456536
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Abdullah Salem	22549134	Sharq	22465401
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Nuzha	22526804	Salmiya	25746401
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9				

**CHANGE OF NAME**

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)

.....

I, Marshal Tioph Fernandes, Resident of Bhatir Vaddo, Morjim, Pernem, Goa - India, has done correction in my name from Marsal Tioph Fernandes to Marshal Tioph Fernandes, which is wrongly typed in my passport bearing No. T4012610, for all purposes. sd/- Marshal Tioph Fernandes (C 2013)

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TASHKENT: Players celebrate as Saudi Arabia become Asian U-23 champions on Sunday after defeating hosts Uzbekistan 2-0 in Tashkent.

# Saudi win first-ever AFC U-23 Cup

## Saudi Arabia beat hosts Uzbekistan 2-0

TASHKENT: Saudi Arabia became Asian U-23 champions on Sunday after defeating hosts Uzbekistan 2-0 in Tashkent, thanks to superb second half-strikes from Ahmed Al-Ghamdi and Firas Al-Buraikan. It is the first time the young Green Falcons have won the AFC U-23 Asian Cup after final defeats in 2013 and 2020, and it also marks the first major continental trophy for coach Saad Al-Shehri who also lost two continental finals in his career.

Al-Ghamdi gave Saudi Arabia the lead early in the second half with a strike worthy of winning any prize, with Al-Buraikan adding an equally impressive second with 16 minutes remaining. As the team's defense had failed to concede a single goal at any time in the tournament, the size of Uzbekistan's task was apparent as they were going to have to do something that five teams had failed to do this month. Roared on by 34,000 fans at the Milliy Stadium, the men in blue tried their utmost but were unable to find a way past goalkeeper Nawaf Al-Aqidi.

While the final minutes were understandably frantic, the opening period was a cagey one with Saudi Arabia keeping the ball well and Uzbekistan looking to break forward quickly when they won possession. The first half was at the midway point before there was any danger of a goal. It was Saudi Arabia who came close, Hamad Al-Ghamdi, inside the area, got to the byline on the left and pulled the ball back for Al-Buraikan, but the striker's low shot from close range was well-blocked by Alibek Davronov.

The hosts, with their fans filling the stadium two hours before the kick-off, had their first clear chance after 32 minutes. Hojimat Erginov ran on to a through ball but, from the edge of the area, shot high and wide with just the goalkeeper to beat. Moments later, Hamad Al-Yami unleashed a powerful shot from 25 meters, which had goalkeeper Vladimir Nazarov scrambling to his left to tip the ball away from his corner.

Then, seven minutes before the break Al-Ghamdi was bundled over by Davranov in the area and the ref-

eree pointed to the spot. VAR had a good look and a five-minute wait decided there had been a marginal offside in the build-up. That episode got the Tashkent temperature rising, but the last action of the first half saw the Saudis almost take the lead. A long ball from inside their half was headed back by Al-Buraikan to Ayman Yahya, whose looping header hit the outside of the post with the goalkeeper scrambling back from no man's land.

Then just three minutes into the second half, Saudi Arabia took the lead in stunning fashion. Al-Yami found Al-Ghamdi on the edge of the area, but the 20-year-old player still had work to do. The Eltiq evaded the attentions of two defenders and then fired an unstoppable left-footed shot into the top corner.

Uzbekistan were understandably eager to get back on level terms as soon as possible and, around the hour mark, were starting to push Saudi Arabia more onto the back foot, although the much-vaunted defense held firm. There were some hearts in mouths, however, as the man in form for the Central Asians,

Jasurbek Jaloliddinov, almost repeated his spectacular semi-final strike against Japan but his long-range shot just went over the bar.

The hosts had the ball in the net with 20 minutes remaining. Jaloliddinov sent Ruslanbek Jiyonov through on goal and while his low shot from the right across Al-Aqidi beat the goalkeeper, the forward received the ball in a clear offside position. Soon after, it was 2-0. Uzbekistan had been leaving gaps at the back, but Saudi Arabia couldn't take advantage until Al-Buraikan scored another memorable goal. The striker was outside the box on the left side and unleashed a deadly shot into the far corner, past Nazarov's despairing dive.

It knocked the wind out of the hosts' sails and there was no way back for the 2018 champions, who grew increasingly frustrated. There was a major bust-up toward the end as Uzbekistan felt their opponents were time-wasting, which led to plenty of pushing and even a few water bottles thrown from the stands onto the pitch. — Agencies

## Berrettini retains ATP Queen's title

LONDON: Italy's Matteo Berrettini served notice of his intention to mount another strong challenge at Wimbledon after joining an elite group of players by retaining his ATP Queen's Club title on Sunday. Berrettini defeated Serbia's Filip Krajinovic 7-5, 6-4 in the final of the Wimbledon warm-up event. He will now be aiming to go one better at Wimbledon, the only one of tennis's four majors still played on grass, after losing to Novak Djokovic in last year's final.

Berrettini's victory meant he joined John McEnroe, Jimmy Connors, Boris Becker, Ivan Lendl, Lleyton Hewitt, Andy Roddick and Andy Murray as the only players in the Open era to win back-to-back Queen's titles. The

world number 10 has been in superb grass-court form this season following a return from hand surgery.

Berrettini, 26, has now won two tournaments in a row, after beating Murray in Stuttgart last weekend, and Sunday's success was a further boost to his confidence just eight days before the start of Wimbledon. Krajinovic, who prior to this week had never won a match on grass, was the first player in Sunday's final to lose serve.

But the world number 48 commendably broke straight back to level at 3-3. Berrettini, however, edged ahead at 6-5 and then held serve to take the first set. Krajinovic's chance had gone and Berrettini broke midway through the second set before finishing off the match with an ace. "There are too many emotions," Berrettini said soon after his latest victory. "The last thing I expected after a surgery was two titles in a row and to defend my title here. I just cannot believe it.

"Every time I walk in the hallways here and see all the names of the champions from the past, and now knowing it's

me, twice, on the same wall gives me goosebumps." Krajinovic, meanwhile, was buoyed by a performance that gave him hope of improving on a woeful record at Wimbledon, where he has suffered four first-round defeats.

### Jabeur wins WTA final

In another development, top seed Ons Jabeur won the final of the WTA tournament in Berlin on Sunday after Olympic champion Belinda Bencic was forced to retire after twisting her left ankle. Bencic slipped at the end of the first set and despite receiving treatment, she eventually retired with Jabeur leading 6-3, 2-1. Jabeur had raced into a 3-0 lead after just nine minutes before going on to win the third WTA title of her career after wins on grass last year in Birmingham and on clay in Madrid last month. "From what I know of Belinda, she would have taken me to three sets today," said Jabeur, who wished her opponent a speedy recovery with Wimbledon due to start in a week's time. — AFP



LONDON: Italy's Matteo Berrettini poses for a photograph as he celebrates with the trophy. — AFP

## Quartararo shakes off illness to win German MotoGP

SACHSENRING: Reigning world champion Fabio Quartararo extended his lead in the overall standings with a commanding performance despite feeling unwell to win the German MotoGP on Sunday. The Yamaha rider dominated in scorching temperatures at the Sachsenring with fellow Frenchman Johann Zarco finishing second and Australia's Jack Miller third.

Quartararo snatched the lead at the first corner away from Francesco Bagnaia, who started in pole position, and never looked back, but later revealed he had suffered with illness all weekend. "I'm tired, I was sick most of the weekend and was coughing during the race, but I am super happy," said Quartararo,

whose gamble paid off to use a medium rear tyre rather than a hard one.

This is his third win this season and Quartararo claimed back-to-back victories having also won the Catalan MotoGP at the start of June. The Frenchman extended his lead at the top of the overall championships to 34 points over Spanish rider Aleix Espargaro as the Yamaha rider earned the 11th MotoGP victory of his career. Victory in Saxony means that whatever happens at the Dutch MotoGP at Assen next weekend, Quartararo will keep his lead going into the summer break before the season resumes at Silverstone in August.

"I am not thinking of the championship," Quartararo insisted. "I am here to win as many races as possible, maybe by the time it comes to Japan and Thailand (in September and October), I will think about the title itself. "We are going to a track I love at Assen (the Dutch MotoGP) next week." At the halfway point of the season, Quartararo remains on course to win the overall world title for the second straight year as he again left his rivals in his wake in sweltering temperatures. "It was

a nightmare," said second-placed Zarco of the conditions, "but I ensured my runners-up spot when I decided to chase down Fabio after Bagnaia crashed.

"I battled hard for it, and was exhausted at the end, but it is never easy for me and I just have to tough these races out." Bagnaia, who dominated free practice, crashed out with 27 laps to go, when his rear wheel slid out from under him, ending his hopes of winning the overall world title to his obvious fury. This was the third time the Italian has failed to finish in his last four MotoGP races. Miller put in a brilliant ride to finish third, having nearly crashed on the same bend where Bagnaia exited.

"I had an eventful race and nearly crashed," said the Australian. "I was happy with the job I did, I put everything out there." In Moto 2, Augusto Fernandez claimed victory to move up to third overall with Spanish compatriot Pedro Acosta second and Britain's Sam Lowes third after current leader Celestino Vietti crashed. Spain's Izan Guevara won the Moto 3 race with Italy's Dennis Foggia second as overall leader Sergio Garcia finished back in third. — AFP



SACHSENRING: Monster Energy Yamaha's French rider Fabio Quartararo celebrates on the podium after winning the German MotoGP Grand Prix. — AFP