

3 Sabah Hospital celebrates 60 yrs since inauguration



5 Jubilant Gustavo Petro elected Colombia's first leftist president



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15 Japan judo hits crisis point as bullied, burnt-out kids quit



MoCI mulls limiting property brokerage jobs for Kuwaitis

New fishermen recruited to maintain food security in the country

KUWAIT: Official sources at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said there are plans to issue a decision to limit the job of real estate brokers to Kuwaitis, after discovering expatriates are in control of this profession. The supervision and inspection department claimed these expats have caused a significant increase in prices deliberately without any justification, adding "prices can be reduced very easily if they put their personal greed aside".

The sources said prices at offices selling and leasing real estate suddenly increased significantly in a way that does not agree with natural and realistic prices and without having any links with local or international market variables. They are also not

linked with consumer needs and demands, which means the prices are artificial.

Studies and research revealed that following an exodus of expats who worked in real estate offices due to the coronavirus pandemic, it was found that the remaining employees - the majority of whom are from one nationality - agreed over certain prices and decided to never lower them, because the higher the price, the larger the commission for them.

The sources said the commerce ministry noticed that Kuwaiti office owners do not know about this situation because expat workers take care of buying and selling, adding this made the price of a house worth KD 220,000 in Ferdous, Ardiya,

Andalus, Dhaher, Sabah Al-Salem or Waha jump to KD 300,000 to KD 320,000, with this artificial increase in prices becoming a reality.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Fishermen Union is getting ready to receive a group of fishermen who were permitted to be hired by the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), in response to the union's demand to bring in workers due to the current labor shortage and food security needs, bearing in mind that many fishing boats are still idle due to a lack of workers.

Sources said the new workers are from Egypt and India, and the union will be allowed to bring in another group at the start of next year. Sources said the fishing sector represents an important part of

the ministerial committee's plans to ensure food security in Kuwait, and this will allow for bringing in expat labor in the animal husbandry sector (livestock and poultry).

They said the Cabinet will approve through the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources an increase in feed subsidies as well as boats operating for food security, after agreeing a government plan to increase animal and agricultural production. Those who do not comply will not receive any subsidies. The plan calls for having 100 sheep in a jakhour and 200 to 300 sheep at a farm. Some of them will be sent to the market for sale, and this will provide consumers meat at cheaper prices.

News in brief

Saudis can travel to Turkey

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Monday lifted a ban on citizens travelling to Turkey and three other countries, state media reported, as the kingdom continues to relax coronavirus prevention measures. At the beginning of the pandemic, Saudi Arabia imposed a rule against all foreign travel, and as of last month 16 countries including Turkey were still off-limits to Saudi citizens. "A decision has been made to lift the suspension of direct or indirect travel by citizens to Ethiopia, Turkey, Vietnam and India," the official Saudi Press Agency quoted an interior ministry official as saying on Monday. — AFP

Lebanon threatens to expel Syrians

BEIRUT: Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Monday said Lebanon was ready to expel Syrian refugees living in the country if the international community does not work to repatriate them. Lebanon, grappling with its worst ever economic crisis, has the world's highest proportion of refugees in its population, with the government estimating that Syrians account for almost a quarter of its more than six million residents. — AFP



Dubai to reopen world fair site

DUBAI: Dubai's vast Expo 2020 site is to reopen as Expo City Dubai, a "city of the future" with housing, businesses and leisure facilities, officials said on Monday. The development on Dubai's outskirts, purpose-built at \$7 billion for the six-month Expo that finished in March, will host offices for Dubai port operator DP World and German conglomerate Siemens. Eighty percent of the original infrastructure and buildings will remain, including the falcon-themed UAE pavilion and Al-Wasl Dome, the Expo centerpiece lit up by colorful projections. The site will also house "start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises", the announcement said. — AFP

Dust storms normal occurrence in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Recurring dust storms whipping Kuwait in the spring and summer are normal considering the country's location and the desert climate, said Dherar Al-Ali, the supervisor of stations at the

meteorological division of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Ali told KUNA that Kuwait's location in the northeast of the Arabian Peninsula puts it in close proximity with sources of dust, namely the Iraqi marshlands, Al-Rafidain plain, Iraq's Western Desert, Syria's rural regions, and the Al-Dahnaa and Al-Dabdaba deserts.

There are local sources of dust too such as Warba and Boubyan islands and the desert region

of Al-Habari in the northwest, sand dunes in Al-Huwaimlah and treeless empty spaces. The Saudi Al-Dahnaa desert brings in reddish dust, Ali said, indicating that some storms are as vast as 200 km - these are emerging ones coming mainly from the Western Desert in Iraq and Al-Rafidain plain. As to storms of a 150-km width, they usually rage at high speed and originate from the Iraqi marshes and Wadi Al-Batin. — KUNA

ConocoPhillips joins Qatar mega gas expansion

DOHA: ConocoPhillips on Monday became the first US energy giant to sign up to help Qatar's massive natural gas expansion that has drawn global bidders anxious to assure new supplies. ConocoPhillips' chunk of the North Field East project is half the size of France's TotalEnergies, which has a 6.25 percent share, but the same as Italy's ENI, announced on Sunday, Energy Minister Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi told a

press conference.

No figure for the value of the deal was given but TotalEnergies previously said it had paid \$2 billion for its joint venture. The expansion of the North Field, which has the world's biggest known natural gas reserves, is estimated to cost more than \$28 billion, and will see production increase from the current 77 million tons a year to 110 million tons by 2027.

The project has taken on growing international importance because of the fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Europe's energy supplies. The joint venture between ConocoPhillips and the state-owned Qatar Energy will last 27 years, but

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Prince William's influence grows as he hits 40

LONDON: Prince William's 40th birthday this week marks a significant milestone for the future king, who is rapidly stamping his authority on the British royal family by plotting a course between tradition and modernity. William's wife Catherine celebrated her landmark birthday in January and only Queen Elizabeth II is held in higher regard by the public than the close-knit couple, who are often held up as a model for the future of the monarchy.

According to pollsters YouGov, William, whose birthday is on Tuesday, is the most popular royal behind the queen, with a 66-percent approval rating, followed by Kate on 60 percent. "It's a very important milestone for him because, with his father Prince Charles, he's stepping up to support the queen, and also to continue to create an identity as the future king," royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams told AFP.

Such is William's popularity that many even want him to leapfrog his father and become king when his grandmother dies. Since the 96-year-old sovereign began winding down her duties due to ill health and old age last year, second-in-line to the throne William has been an increasingly

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Hopes fade for swift NATO accession for Finland, Sweden

STOCKHOLM: Finland and Sweden are to discuss their stalled NATO bids with Turkey in Brussels on Monday, but hopes are fading they will be able

resolve their dispute before an alliance summit next week, experts say. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was to meet with representatives from the three countries to try to make progress on the Nordic nations' membership applications, which have been blocked by Ankara.

"I think it is possible but it would be very difficult," Paul Levin, director of the Institute for Turkey Studies at Stockholm University, told AFP, adding it would require both parties to compromise. NATO and the two Nordic countries had expected the application

process to be quick. But Ankara's objections caught them all off-guard, at a time when NATO is keen to display a unified front against Russia.

Ankara has accused Finland and Sweden of providing a safe haven for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), listed as a "terrorist" group by Turkey and its Western allies. Ankara has also demanded they lift their weapons freezes on Turkey. Any NATO membership deal must be unanimously approved by all 30 members of the alliance, and fears are now mounting

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DOHA: Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs and President and CEO of Qatar Energy Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi and Ryan Lance, CEO of ConocoPhillips, attend a signing ceremony on June 20, 2022. — AFP



A handout picture released by Kensington Palace on June 18, 2022 shows Britain's Prince William posing for a photograph with his children, Prince Louis, Princess Charlotte and George, taken in Jordan in Autumn 2021 and released to mark Father's Day 2022. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Crown Prince receives Interior Minister

Amir congratulates Maha Al-Barjas on new position



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Monday at Bayan Palace the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable of congratulations to Secretary-General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Maha Al-Barjas on her election as vice-president of International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies (IFRC) for the Asia Pacific region. His Highness the Amir praised Barjas' achievement and wished her suc-

cess in the new position. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday addressed a cable of condolences to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud over the death of Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable of condolences to the King of Saudi Arabia. — KUNA



Amir offers condolences to Saudi King

Kuwait's chief lawmaker joins Turkey-hosted migration talks

ISTANBUL: Kuwait's top lawmaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem joined parliamentarians from across the world for talks in Turkey on Monday over a worsening migration crisis, as the European Union (EU) continues to grapple with an influx of asylum-seeking refugees.

"The real burden of the issue of migration and refugees does not fall on developed nations with a strong voice, but on countries like ours that are neighbors to the crisis regions," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told the Global Parliamentary Conference on migration via video link. He lashed out at some countries for "using the few hundred refugees they have accepted as advertising material," blaming these nations for "taking no responsibility in the face of the deepening humanitarian crises," state-run Anadolu news

agency quoted him as saying. Ankara's top lawmaker Mustafa Sentop said his country is home to some four million refugees, highlighting the enormous task of meeting their "humanitarian, social and educational needs."

"As the issue of migration is not Turkey's problem, it is a great injustice that the material and moral burden of this problem should be placed only on Turkey's shoulders," he added. The two-day talks bring together lawmakers from 54 countries, all of whom aim to find solutions to one of the world's most pressing problems.

Earlier Monday, Speaker Ghanem held talks with the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Sentop, discussing bilateral cooperation ties between the Kuwaiti and Turkish parliaments and the latest developments in the region. The talks came on the sidelines of the parliamentary conference on migration, organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in line with the Turkish Parliament, under the auspices of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The two sides discussed updates on the issues of Kuwaiti investors in Turkey, which Al-Ghanem previously discussed with Turkish officials in the past. Ghanem thanked the Turkish authorities for solving many of the real estate fraud issues suffered by some Kuwaiti investors and citizens,

while looking forward to solving the remaining similar issues. Ambassador of Kuwait to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi and Kuwait's Consul General in Istanbul Mohammad Al-Mohammad attended the meeting.

On the sidelines of the conference, Ghanem met the Head of the Iraqi parliamentary delegation Evan Faeq Jabro, where they discussed bilateral cooperation between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi parliaments. The Iraqi parliamentary delegation conveyed the greetings of the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Mohammad Al-Halbousi to Ghanem. Two Iraqi MPs, Vian Dakhil and Basima Basim, attended the meeting. Ghanem also met earlier Monday with IPU President Duarte Pacheco, discussing a range of topics including issues pertaining to refugees and migrants in the region. The two also touched on matters to be discussed at future IPU events in Indonesia and Rwanda in October. Ghanem's participation in the conference, which discusses the subject of international agreements on issues of migration and refugees, was a response to an official invitation from his Turkish counterpart. The Kuwaiti parliament's invitation to the conference also comes from the fact that Kuwait is one of the main donor countries in the world for refugee issues, especially the issue of Syrian refugees. — KUNA



ISTANBUL: Kuwait's Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attends the Global Parliamentary Conference in Istanbul. — KUNA

Kuwait keen on implementing Arab media strategy: Houti

CAIRO: Head of the Arab League affairs at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information Reem Al-Houti stressed on Monday the importance of the Arab media strategy and the Ministry of Information's great interest in implementing its multiple axes across its different sectors. This came in a statement by Houti to the press at the end of the second meeting of the media expert group concerned with formulating an action plan for the Arab media strategy.

Houti, who represented Kuwait at the meeting, pointed out that the different sectors of the Ministry of Information are implementing the plan through television coverage through news bulletins, cultural programs, radio programs and social media, and participating in presenting strategies, plans and media studies in this regard. She stated that the strategic plan includes several important issues, on top of which is the Palestinian cause, "which is Kuwait's top priority", in addition to the topics of combating terrorism and extremism, sustainable development, valuing the Arab personality and upgrading media work.

Houti stated that the meeting discussed the plan and the difficulties facing its implementation, in addition to the Saudi proposal (initiative) related to the COVID-19 crisis. She explained that the meeting decided to transform the mentioned proposal into an expanded project and an Arab strategy for dealing with crises in general. Houti also indicated that Kuwait presented its views regarding dealing with crises in the media, stressing the importance of the idea of a comprehensive Arab strategy to face and deal with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. — KUNA



Reem Al-Houti

EU delegation in Kuwait launches first European cookbook

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The European Union delegation to Kuwait launched the first European cookbook on Sunday at Four Seasons Hotel. The cookbook includes recipes from 27 European countries - Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

"In Europe, as in Kuwait, food is an expression of our cultural heritage, identities, social lives and traditions. Tonight, we are here celebrating the unity in diversity of our European culinary traditions, through the launch of the book 'A Union of European Flavors,'" Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait Cristian Tudor said.

He said EU diversity is best reflected by the richness of European cuisine, which is experienced by all foreigners traveling through Europe, where food provides a unique opportunity to harness human connections and develop new relations. "This cookbook is a celebration of community, friendship and diversity that make the European Union so unique. Kuwait is blessed with many high-quality restaurants serving European dishes. Such diversity of culinary options makes Kuwait an extraordinary and welcoming place," he added.

Tudor expressed his joy to launch the EU's first cookbook in Kuwait, which builds on the success the EU has here with. "To prepare this cookbook, we invited every EU member states' ambassador to Kuwait to share a recipe which they consider the most representative of their country or which they like the most," he said. He praised Kuwait, saying for the European Union, Kuwait stands out as a close and reliable friend.

"When you think about Kuwait, food is an important element of the society, and being a foodie myself, I thought this would be an opportunity to create bridges between Europe and Kuwait. We are doing this for the purpose of closeness between our people and societies; I strongly believe that while I do my best in building political-economical relations, you see the strength of EU rela-



Chef Thierry Papillier (center) shows Muguril Ioan Stancu, Ambassador of the Republic of Romania (left) and Esther Torda, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary (right) how to cook Bragioli.

tions with all Kuwaitis traveling to Europe for tourism, study and investments," Tudor said.

Tudor revealed that next year, EU will hold the European film festival for the first time in Kuwait. "The European Union is looking to engage more in cultural activities. We hope to partner with member states and Kuwait to organize cultural events." On the EU's announcement of waiving the visa requirement for Kuwait, he said: "I believe Kuwait will soon be added to the visa-free travel list, which will attract airlines and tourism companies. It will boost tourism and open the doors for more investments. If everything goes according to the plan after Kuwait is added to the visa-free travel list, I think there will be a lot of demand and a lot of Kuwaitis will be able to travel to Europe. Many companies will be involved more in the Kuwaiti market and more European airlines will have direct flights."

Thierry Papillier, Executive Chef at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya, said that today is a very special evening where several European ambassadors are sharing a selection of European dishes while participating in live cooking. "I am going to cook a taste of Europe. The menu has several dishes to serve today; we will start with a Cypriot salad which includes halloumi, watermelon and mint. As for the main course, I will prepare bragioli (beef olives) from Malta. The vegetarian option is from Italy (melanzane alla parmigiana) and the dessert is a German black forest cake. Lastly, we will finish with a cookie from Belgium called speculoos, a



Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait Cristian Tudor (right) with Italy's Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Balducci.

type of spiced shortcrust biscuit," he said. Kuwaiti Chef Hanouf Al-Balhan pointed out that the selected dishes that were served tonight were evaluated and voted on based on their closeness with European and Arab cuisines. "There will be a great turnout by Kuwaitis, who love to taste and explore. We expect them to download and read the European cookbook and try new flavors, especially as they are documented and approved," she said.

Civil aviation inks cooperation deal with UN program

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation, represented by the Meteorological Department, inked on Monday with the UN Human Settlement Programme a memorandum of understanding aimed at attaining objectives of the 2030 development agenda. Director General Yousef Al-Fozan and Dr Amira Al-Hassan of the UN program signed the MoU at a ceremony attended by ambassadors, officials representing authorities and government departments. Fozan said in a statement that the MoU is designed for achieving local development, tackling urban development issues and establishing cooperation for rendering residential areas in Kuwait sustainable. It stipulates exchange of studies on weather impact, namely dust storms, on the inhabited Kuwaiti areas. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a group picture after signing the agreement. — KUNA



Local

Al-Sabah Hospital celebrates 60 years since inauguration

Kuwait's second oldest hospital, a symbol of the modern urban renaissance

KUWAIT: Al-Sabah Hospital, the first grand hospital executed by the Ministry of Health, celebrated on Monday 60 years since its establishment in 1962. Kuwait's Amir at the time, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, inaugurated Al-Sabah Hospital, located 10 kilometers from Kuwait City, to be a symbol of the modern urban renaissance and a distinctive mark in the march of medical services witnessed over the years. The total area of land occupied by the hospital, including gardens, roads and parking lots, is approximately 400 acres, with construction period of two and a half years at a cost of KD 5,255,000 million. During first year of the operation of Al-Sabah Hospital, the number of patients admitted to the hospital for treatment reached 8,400 patients, with 4,871 surgeries, while visitors of outpatient clinics reached 43,850.

Quantum leap

Al-Sabah Hospital Director Dr Nayef Al-Harbi said that health sector in Kuwait witnessed quantum leap after inaugurating Al-Sabah Hospital, the largest medical edifice in Kuwait, and the second oldest hospital after Al-Amiri hospital, built in 1941. The hospital has several departments, including general surgery, intensive care, ear, nose and throat, internal diseases, a heart unit, and a children's department. While technical departments include diagnostic radiology, ultrasound, laboratories, histopathology unit, pharmacies, natural medicine, the mortuary, nutrition department, and kitchens. The bed capacity in the surgery department has 160 beds, including intensive care, the internal medicine department includes 140 beds, and the heart unit with seven beds, while the Ear, Nose and Throat Department includes 98 beds.

As for the pediatric department, Dr Harbi said that it has eight specialized units including accident clinics, blood diseases, leukemia, heart and kidney diseases, genetic diseases, developmental medicine, neurological diseases, brain planning, muscle and psychological diseases. He pointed out that the developmental medicine unit, opened in 1993, is unique in Kuwait and provides medical services to a large number of children. It evaluates and diagnoses children with disabilities, whether they are mental, physical, educational or behavioral. In 1995 Endocrinology unit was opened in addition to other clinics for asthma, kidney, orthopedics, nutrition, genetics, heart and psychiatry, Dr Harbi added.

In 2014, the surgical intensive care unit was rehabilitated according to the latest technical specifications and requirements for infection prevention and patient safety. It includes 14 beds and two sections, one for extended care and the other for intensive care after surgical operations. The new unit has been equipped with the latest vital function monitoring devices, artificial respiration, fluid infusion devices and medicines for patients whose care the new unit specializes in after surgery, Dr Al-Harbi explained. In recent years, the hospital expanded to become an integrated medical city, named Al Sabah Medical District, and includes many advanced centers and hospitals, mainly the New Al-Sabah Hospital.

New hospital

The new Al-Sabah Hospital project is considered



KUWAIT: Al-Sabah Hospital. — KUNA photos



The pediatric department of Al-Sabah Hospital.

one of the most important strategic projects in the development plan and Kuwait Vision 2035, said the Assistant Secretary-General for Planning and Follow-up at the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Nadia Al-Hamlan. She added that it would have a significant impact on global competitiveness indicators in the field of health. The project falls within the eighth program of promoting health and well-being, part of the Development Plan of 2020-2025, and serves the policy of reforming health care delivery systems and adopting modern treatment technology and techniques. She added that the project located on an area of 88,710 square meters, with a capacity of 771 beds, including 617 beds for inpatients, at a rate of 120 percent to the current bed capacity, pointing out that the total completion rate has reached 75 percent so far.

The project, equipped with the latest advanced technology and smart climate systems, aims to provide a high level of health and medical care services with the latest medical equipment and modern technology to reduce patient waiting times and cases of dispatch for treatment abroad, she pointed out. The hospital consists of a basement, ground floor, and 12 floors, and central services building in addition to a car parking building with a capacity of 1,257 spaces.

The new Al-Sabah Hospital project aims to expand the health service to match the population increase and to develop new services and treatment units to meet the needs and expectations of beneficiaries of the health service, Hamlan said. The hospital will include 105 intensive care beds, many specialized departments, as well as 72 outpatient clinics for various medical specialties, laboratories, pharmacies, reception and nutrition, storage spaces and an airstrip, and an integrated system to treat waste generated by the Nuclear Medicine Department, designed with the latest technology.

The new Al-Sabah Hospital project is an integrated project with a construction area of about 283,000 square meters and includes three buildings, two east and west towers, one for internal medicine and the other for surgery, and the main building designated for operations and emergency. Kuwait's Ministry of Health is keen to follow up on the implementation of construction and development projects according to the timetable within the state's development plan and the government's work program. In the meanwhile, it keeps providing health care to citizens and residents in accordance with the latest international standards for the quality of health care in various specialties. — KUNA

High prices make healthy foods luxury many can't afford in Kuwait

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: People recently have understood the importance of changing their eating habits by choosing a healthy option when they eat at restaurants or when they go grocery shopping. But this is easier said than done due to the high prices of "healthy food". The terms healthy, organic or diet have become a commercial means for some companies striving to attract people's attention to buy their products at high prices, claiming they use fresh or healthier ingredients.

Kuwait Times spoke to some people about the prices of healthy foods and the amount they spend monthly to eat healthily. "Healthy foods are overpriced, while companies justify this due to the calculated calories and organic ingredients. The small portions of the meals are not enough for one person. We can notice the big price difference between healthy and unhealthy food," Mai Kinawi said.

"I recently started doubting the nutritional information written on the products after I used them during my weight loss journey, as they did not give me the result I was looking for compared to homemade healthy food," she said. "I still spend around

KD 150 to KD 200 per month on healthy groceries for snacks and ingredients. Sometimes when I want to buy snacks, I can pay KD 1.5 for one protein bar. This is too high, especially since it is not the only thing we buy during the day," Kinawi added.

While fast-food restaurants are rushing to attract customers to buy their food, the prices for unhealthy options are much lower, which encourages people to focus on buying them at the better price. Recently, a fast-food restaurant offered customers a meal for 250 fils, which consists of two burgers saturated with fat, while another place offered 10 croissants for KD 1. Offers continue to be more tempting to eat and save money, not to mention the temptations in unhealthy kids' meals that contain toys, books and online games for only 950 fils to KD 1,250 per meal.

Expensive ingredients

Khlood Mahmoud, who spends KD 100 to KD 150 per month on healthier options, argued basic ingredients for healthy food are expensive, which automatically affects the final price. Nadeen Mahmoud said it is reasonable for prices for healthy food to be higher than regular food due to their better quality, stressing that the prices shouldn't be more than 10 to 20 percent higher than regular products, agreeing with others that healthy food is overpriced.



Dr Mohammad Al-Hayek



Regarding the reason people are tempted to eat unhealthy food, Dr Mohammad Al-Hayek, a nutritionist, told Kuwait Times "Unhealthy food is plentifully available and easy to get. The main idea of healthy food is based on the way it is cooked. Restaurants use preservatives in their food despite their harmful effects, which helps in reducing prices and preserving the food for a longer period of time, which is unhealthy but cheaper."

Hayek added: "Healthy food has become a marketing and commercial ploy for companies, even if the food is unhealthy. Some companies took advantage and doubled prices to earn more profits. For example, when it's written on a milk bottle that it is gluten-free, some companies are marketing the idea that it is healthier to drink this milk than the regular one, so the price is higher. In fact, the price is supposed to be lower due to the separation of protein, which will remove the actual benefit of the milk."

Hayek bemoaned that prices of healthy foods are very high compared to their nutritional value. "The idea of healthy food has turned into a commercial tactic for many companies."

its member states, said the Council, which met in Luxembourg Monday, in a statement. An enhanced and deep cooperation between the EU and Gulf partners is a key priority for the European Union and a shared interest in view of addressing a series of global and regional challenges jointly with our Gulf partners, it noted.

EU High Representative Josep Borrell and the European Commission released on May 18 the Joint Communication that provides an operational roadmap towards a strategic partnership with the GCC in a wide range of key policy

fields, such as climate change and green transition, energy security and a strong response to global humanitarian and development needs and global and regional security challenges. People to people contacts are a central part of the EU's strengthened partnership with the Gulf, while enhanced cooperation in the fields of education, research, culture, youth, women's empowerment, human rights and visa facilitation are key components of this cooperation.

In light of the recent increased political momentum, the Council stressed the need to

In my view

Exploitation of patients



By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.com

What makes me sad and angry the most is exploiting patients. This type of exploitation is the most heinous type of opportunism. The patient is in need, and his need is in the thing dearest to a human being - his health - so this type of exploitation cannot be ignored and can never be forgiven. The forms of patient exploitation varies, and the number of greedy people who only care about their interests has increased, and they are changing their methods and means.

Companies are lying about their research, others lie with their claims, while doctors discriminate between patients according to their social or financial status, or make the medical profession a commodity above humanity. Merchants sell harmful products, and decision makers are preoccupied with disputes away from patients. Legislators care about the votes of influential people at the expense of patients, and even those who attempt to help patients do so for money or fame without giving the patient his right. All these are forms of exploiting patients and images of opportunism.

I spent many years with cancer patients, and I did not see any other patients who are more exposed to exploitation. The reason for this is the danger of this illness and people's fear of it, despite the fact that recovery rates from cancers of some types are good, and those who recover return to their normal lives as if they were not sick at all. But those who do not recover become more representative of the general image of this illness, to a point that cancer became a fertile ground for those who want to help patients, and regretfully for those who want to exploit them.

There is not a month or two without someone claiming or hastening the announcement about a new discovery or innovative medicine, and the result is giving false hope to patients that makes them stop their medication, with the result of losing their lives. This phenomenon is on the increase, and the number of those who paid with their lives has increased, so there must be a stand towards it.

There was a news item in the papers a few days ago, and it was dealt with on social media, about the discovery of a cancer medicine. Not only that, some said there is no need for chemotherapy. The report was about research on gold particles that is still under study and is not clinically approved, but of course, as what happened many times, some patients will be confused and may stop their treatment, and the result is disappointment and a dangerous risk.

Scientific research is a long series of experiments and it goes through several stages. The results of each stage are discussed at international conferences, and then receive approvals by international supervisory agencies. The human being is not a cheap commodity that any adventurer can deal with. There are good values that are still solid among us and the rest of the world.

Yet the problem remains with the media that is used to promote such claims. The solution is in cooperation between the lawyers' society, medical association and cancer society to form a working group that monitors claims and takes them to court. The law protects our patients, and I hope Kuwaiti lawyers cooperate with us, as patients deserve all types of protection, as today we are in good health by the grace of Allah, but tomorrow we could be among them, also by the grace of Allah.

EU approves strategic partnership with GCC states

BRUSSELS: The European Union Foreign Affairs Council on Monday approved conclusions on a strategic partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The objective is to build a strategic partnership with the GCC and

further strengthen and enhance political dialogue and institutional cooperation between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council. The EU will use all its tools and instruments, including the Green Deal, the External Energy Engagement Strategy and the Global Gateway, to ensure the efficient, effective and swift implementation of this new strategic partnership with the Gulf, said the conclusions. The six-member GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. — KUNA

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GCC countries keen to help refugees: Hajraf

RIYAH: Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf stressed Monday that the GCC countries are always keen to rescue and help refugees according to humanitarian principles sanctioned by the relevant international conventions and treaties. This came in a press statement issued by the GCC General Secretariat on the occasion of the International Refugees Day. Hajraf said that this year's celebration is entitled 'The right to seek safety' calling on the international community to cooperate to protect refugees in all parts of the world and ease off their suffering due to wars, violence, persecution and disasters. He stressed that they can only be helped by unity, solidarity and in a manner that preserves their dignity and rights. He noted that the Gulf countries have their firm positions to provide health social, food, and relief care for refugees all around the world, through efforts made by the GCC's states with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. He expresses his concerns over the increase in the number of refugees around the world, and confirmed the sympathies of the Gulf States and their continuous support for any step that can alleviate the suffering of refugees and help them to live a decent life.—AFP

Boursa Kuwait lights up in blue in recognition of World Refugee Day 2022

Company aims to raise awareness of refugees' conditions

KUWAIT: In line with its efforts to support and shed light on life-changing humanitarian causes, Boursa Kuwait lit up its office premises in blue on June 20, 2022, in commemoration of World Refugee Day 2022, an initiative initiated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

The initiative forms part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities where it operates as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy and is in line with Goal 1 - No Poverty, Goal 2 - Zero Hunger, Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-Being, Goal 4 - Quality Education, Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation, Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals - of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

World Refugee Day is an international day designated by the United Nations to honor refugees around the globe, celebrating the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution. Falling on June 20 of every year, it is an occasion to build empathy and understanding for the plight of refugees and recognize their resilience in rebuilding their lives.

On World Refugee Day 2022, it is important to recognize that whoever they are, people forced to flee should be treated with dignity and that anyone can seek protection, regardless of who they are or what they believe. It is non-negotiable: seeking safety is a human right. This year's theme also aims to raise awareness to the fact that wherever they come from, people forced to flee should be welcomed. Refugees come from all over the globe. To get out of harm's way, they might take a plane, a boat, or travel on foot. What remains universal is the right to seek safety. World Refugee Day 2022 also sheds light on the fact that whenever people are forced to flee, they have a right to be protected, and that everyone deserves protection as well as a right to be safe.

Commenting on the eve of World Refugee Day, Naser Meshari Al-Sanousi, Senior Director of Marketing and Communication at Boursa Kuwait, said: "On World Refugee Day, Boursa Kuwait joins the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, supporting the agency's efforts to help over 100 million

refugees and internally displaced people across the globe, who have been forced to flee their homes because of violence and skirmishes in countries like Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and many other places around the world." On the occasion, the company also announced that it would continue to support initiatives launched by the UNHCR. Boursa Kuwait recently became the first private company in Kuwait to contribute to UNHCR's annual Winterization Assistance Program, which successfully benefited refugees and the internally displaced in the Levant region during 2021. For 2022, Boursa Kuwait will sponsor the UNHCR's initiative to protect refugee and IDP children in the Middle East and North Africa.

where to allocate the funding and strengthening results-based management and supporting the agency's core mandate and mission and gives it the ability to have a consistent approach to governments on international protection.

UNHCR Representative in Kuwait Nisreen Rubaia welcomed Boursa Kuwait's support of the agency and its mandate, saying, "On World Refugee Day, I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for partnering with the UNHCR and supporting the Commission's efforts to help refugees and internally displaced people - specifically children, who make up a large percentage of the refugees around the world - for the second consecutive year. I look forward to strengthening our long-term partnership further to continue to aid those in need and create a better world for all."

Boursa Kuwait's partnership with the UNHCR is the embodiment of the company's sincere desire to raise awareness to the importance of helping those who are in need and have been deprived of their right to live with dignity. This initiative will contribute to greater awareness of the importance of helping the victims of wars, conflicts and persecution build better futures for themselves.

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

As part of the strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched many initiatives in partnership with local and international organizations, focusing on support for nongovernmental organizations and charity programs, financial literacy and capital market awareness, the empowerment of women, as well as environmental protection.



Nisreen Rubaia



Naser Al-Sanousi

Sanousi added: "Boursa Kuwait believes that it can play an important role in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and create a lasting impact in the communities it operates in. I would like to take the opportunity today to announce our support of the UNHCR's initiative to protect refugee and IDP children, continuing our long-standing relationship with the UN's refugee agency."

Boursa Kuwait has been a staunch supporter of the UNHCR, which relies on the voluntary contributions of government donors, which make up 90 percent of the agency's overall income. The company has contributed unearmarked funding to the UNHCR for the second consecutive year, giving the UNHCR the choice of



Kuwaiti Architecture office Studio Toggle named 'Best Young Architecture Office in the World'

KUWAIT: Studio Toggle, an architecture office from Kuwait, has won big at the prestigious A+ International Architecture awards presented by the popular Architizer magazine. The office, led by Architects Hend Almatrouk and Gijo Paul George, won the coveted "Popular Choice Award" for the "Best Young Firm" category, edging out four other finalists from the UK and China, chosen out of 5000+ nominations from 100+ countries. Studio Toggle also won the prestigious "Juror's Choice Award" for the "Best Architecture Office in the Middle East and Africa" category.

Other winners include:

- Zaha Hadid Architects (Jurors' Choice, Best Large

- Architecture Firm)
- AGi Architects (Jurors' Choice, Cultural-Pavillion Design Category)
- Montalba Architects (Popular Choice, Best Architecture Firm in North America)
- NADAAA (Jurors' Choice, Best Public Projects Architecture Firm)
- Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) (Popular Choice, Best Sustainable Architecture Firm)
- Akira Koyama (Jurors' Choice, Best Architecture Firm in Asia)

Studio Toggle and AGi Architects are, so far, the only Kuwaiti architecture offices to win this prestigious award, Studio Toggle being the first to win one in 2020 for its Project Khat in Al Ula, Saudi Arabia.





Spain PM thrashed in Andalusia regional election

Pope's future sparks debate, resignation seems unlikely

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PARIS: Leader of left-wing coalition Nupes (Nouvelle Union Populaire Ecologique et Sociale - New Ecologic and Social People's Union) Jean-Luc Melenchon delivers a speech after the first results of the second round of the parliamentary elections in Paris. —AFP

Macron seeks to salvage power

Dozens of seats short of keeping parliamentary majority

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and his allies on Monday were scrambling for a way out of political deadlock after losing their parliamentary majority in a stunning blow for the president and his reform plans. Macron's Ensemble (Together) coalition emerged as the largest party in Sunday's National Assembly vote, but was dozens of seats short of keeping the parliamentary majority it had enjoyed for the last five years.

Surges on the left and the far-right destroyed the dominant position of Macron's deputies who, for the past five years, had backed the president's policies without fail. Turnout was low, with the abstention rate recorded at 53.77 percent. The left-leaning Liberation daily called the result a "slap in the face" for Macron, while the conservative Le Figaro said he was now "faced with an ungovernable France".

Macron's Together alliance won 244 seats, far short of the 289 needed for an overall majority. The election saw the new left-wing alliance NUPES make gains to become the main opposition force along with its allies on 137 seats, according to the Interior Ministry. But it is unclear if the coalition of Socialists, Communists, Greens and the hard-left France Unbowed will remain a united bloc in the National Assembly.

Meanwhile the far-right under Marine Le Pen posted the best legislative performance in its history, becoming

the strongest single opposition party with 89 seats, up from eight in the outgoing chamber. A confident Le Pen said her party would demand to chair the National Assembly's powerful finance commission, as is tradition for the biggest opposition party.

"The country is not ungovernable, but it's not going to be governed the way Emmanuel Macron wanted," Le Pen told reporters Monday. Le Pen said she would now give up her party's leadership and focus instead on running her parliamentary group.

'Cannot just continue'

Hard-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon, who leads the NUPES alliance, said he would bring a motion of no confidence against Macron's Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne as early as July. "The government formed by Emmanuel Macron cannot just continue as if nothing had happened," Melenchon ally Manuel Bompard said Monday.

Borne, who was elected to parliament in her first-ever political race, was seen as vulnerable as Macron faces a new cabinet shake-up after several of his top allies lost

their seats. His health and environment ministers lost their seats and by tradition will have to resign, as did the parliament speaker and the head of Macron's parliament group.

"For now the prime minister remains the prime minister," government spokeswoman Olivia Gregoire defiantly told France Inter radio Monday. "My fear is that the country is paralysed." The outcome tarnished Macron's April presidential election victory when he defeated Le Pen, becoming the first French president to win a second term in over two decades. "It's a turning point for his image of invincibility," said Bruno Cautres, a researcher at the Centre for Political Research of Sciences Po.

'Faced with an ungovernable France'

A lot of imagination'

The options available to Macron, who has yet to publicly comment on the result, range from seeking to form a new coalition alliance, passing legislation based on ad hoc agreements to even calling new elections. The most likely option would be an alliance with the Republicans, the traditional party of the French right, which has 61 MPs. LR president Christian Jacob

however said his party intended to "stay in opposition".

Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire admitted "a lot of imagination will be needed" from Macron's party in what Le Figaro said was "a jump into the unknown". "We are entering into a period that is unprecedented and uncertain," said Jean-Daniel Levy of Harris Interactive France. "There is no ready-made deal for a government," he told AFP. Macron had hoped to stamp his second term with an ambitious programme of tax cuts, welfare reform and raising the retirement age. All that is now in question. A prominent MP from Melenchon's party, Alexis Corbiere, said Macron's plan to raise the French retirement age to 65 had now been "sunk".

In a rare bit of good news for the president, Europe Minister Clement Beaune and Public Service Minister Stanislas Guerini—both young pillars of his party—won tight battles for their seats. On the left, Rachel Keke, a former cleaning lady who campaigned for better working conditions at her hotel, was also elected, defeating Macron's former sports minister Roxana Maracineanu. Financial markets took the news of the result in their stride, with little reaction seen Monday on stock or debt markets. "It's not a scenario that's excessively negative," said Xavier Chaphard, an analyst at Banque Postale. "The government will still be centrist, and it will still be pro-European." —AFP

Petro elected as Colombia's first leftist president

BOGOTA: Ex-guerrilla Gustavo Petro was elected the first ever left-wing president of Colombia on Sunday, after beating millionaire businessman Rodolfo Hernandez in a tense and unpredictable runoff election. With all votes counted, Petro - the 62-year-old former mayor of Bogota - won with 50.4 percent to Hernandez's 47.3 percent. "As of today, Colombia is changing, a real change that guides us to one of our aims: the politics of love... of understanding and dialogue," said Petro.

Hernandez, 77, accepted the result, in which he came up short by 700,000 votes, in a Facebook live broadcast. "I hope that Mr Gustavo Petro knows how to run the country and is faithful to his discourse against corruption," said the construction magnate, who had made fighting graft his main campaign pledge. Petro will succeed the deeply unpopular conservative Ivan Duque, who was barred by Colombia's constitution from standing for reelection, in a country saddled with widespread poverty,

a surge in violence and other woes.

Speaking to delirious supporters at his party headquarters in Bogota, Petro held out an olive branch to his opponents. "This is not a change to deepen sectarianism in Colombia. The change consists precisely of leaving hatred behind, leaving sectarianism behind." He added: "We want a Colombia that through its diversity is one Colombia." In another historic achievement for a country where 10 percent of the population identify as Afro-descendants, environmental activist and feminist Francia Marquez will become Colombia's first black woman vice president. "The great challenge that all of us Colombians have is reconciliation," said the 40-year-old, who was the target of threats during a fractious campaign. "The time has come to build peace, a peace that implies social justice." In central Bogota, thousands of Petro supporters - mostly young people - rejoiced. "I'm celebrating because finally we're going to have change ... this shows there is hope," academic Lusimar Asprilla, 25, told AFP.

'Joy for Latin America'

Leftist leaders in the Latin America region were quick to congratulate Petro. "Gustavo Petro's victory is historic. Colombia's conservatives have always been tenacious and tough," Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez

global supplier. "One cannot imagine that millions of tonnes of wheat remain blocked in Ukraine while in the rest of the world people are suffering hunger. This is a real war crime," the bloc's top diplomat Josep Borrell said. Moscow has denied responsibility for the food crisis, and blames Western sanctions for the disrupted deliveries that have pushed up cereal prices and fanned fears of famines in vulnerable regions.

Heavy bombardment

On the ground, Russia appeared to be making some battlefield advances in the east. In its daily update on Monday, Ukraine's presidency reported heavier Russian shelling in the Kharkiv region in the northeast. In the Donetsk region, the intensity of the attacks "is growing along the entire frontline" it said, leaving at least one person dead and injuring seven people, including a child.

Fighting also continued in the key industrial city of Severodonetsk in the east, with Ukraine saying it had lost control of the adjacent village of Metyolkine. "Unfortunately, we do not control Metyolkine anymore. And the enemy continues to build up its reserves," the Lugansk regional governor Sergiy Gaiday said in a



BOGOTA, Colombia: Colombian left-wing presidential candidate Gustavo Petro shows his ballot as he votes during the presidential runoff election in Bogota. —AFP

Obrador wrote on Twitter: "Joy for Latin America! We will work together for the unity of our continent in the challenges of a world changing rapidly," tweeted Chile President Gabriel Boric. "The will of the Colombian people has been heard, it went out to defend the path to democracy and peace," said Venezuela's authoritarian President Nicolas Maduro, who has been branded a dictator by the opposition in his own country. —AFP



AVDIIVKA, Ukraine: A Ukrainian serviceman mans a position in a trench on the front line near Avdiivka, Donetsk region amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

statement on social media.

Moscow's forces have for weeks been battling to seize the eastern Donbas region, after being repelled from other parts of the country following their February invasion. A chemical plant in Severodonetsk where hundreds of civilians are said to be sheltering was being shelled "constantly", Gaiday said. —AFP

South Africa euthanasia doctor released

CAPE TOWN, South Africa: A campaigner for the legalisation of euthanasia in South Africa, convicted of premeditated murders of three people he helped to die, was released Monday after three years of house arrest. Sean Davison was sentenced in 2019 to eight years under house arrest, five of which were suspended.

"I certainly do not regret what I did," Davison told AFP. "I helped three men suffering unbearably with no hope of recovery, who were determined to die and they were incapable of ending their own lives". He staged a press conference to mark his release on the steps of the Cape Town High Court on Monday.

The conditions of his house arrest meant he was allowed to go to work and to church, but remained under a three-year media ban. The biotechnology professor at the University of the Western Cape was arrested in September 2018 and charged with murder over three "right-to-die" cases, including of his friend, a quadriplegic man.

The other two were a man with motor-neuron disease and a triathlete who became paralysed after he was knocked off a bicycle while training. In 2011, Davison faced a similar conviction in New Zealand, his country of birth.

There he served a five-month house arrest for helping his 85-year-old mother commit suicide in the South Island city of Dunedin in 2006, by giving her a drink laced with crushed morphine tablets. The judge then said Davison's action was motivated by "compassion and love", rather than personal gain.

Davison, 59, who founded right-to-die charity Dignity SA, paid tribute to the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu for his support to the assisted dying movement. He said the three-year detention in South Africa had energised him to fight harder the legalisation of euthanasia. —AFP

Russia stepping up attacks

KYIV: Russian forces have stepped up their shelling in Ukraine's Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, Kyiv said Monday, after President Volodymyr Zelensky warned to expect greater hostilities ahead of a historic EU decision on Ukraine's bid for candidate status. Nearly four months after Russia launched a bloody invasion of his country, Zelensky said in his evening address on Sunday there had been "few such fateful decisions for Ukraine" as the one it expects from the European Union this week.

"Obviously, we expect Russia to intensify hostile activity this week ... We are preparing. We are ready," he said. Leaders of the EU's 27 member states will discuss at a summit on Thursday and Friday whether to add Ukraine to the list of countries vying for membership.

EU foreign ministers gathering in Luxembourg kicked off the week urging Moscow to stop blocking the export of vitally needed grain from Ukraine, a top

International

Pope's future sparks debate, resignation seems unlikely

Resignation of a pope was once almost unthinkable

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis has fuelled the rumour mill with a postponed Africa trip and the curious timing of an upcoming meeting of cardinals-but experts caution against assuming a resignation is nigh. Hobbled by pain in his knee and forced to use a wheelchair in recent weeks, the 85-year-old pontiff postponed a July trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan last week.

That move, along with an unusual decision to hold a consistory to name new cardinals during the vacation month of August, triggered intense speculation about his plans for the future, including the most radical-that he was planning to step down. Not so fast, many say.



"Rather than operate, I'll resign"

"In the pope's entourage, the majority of people don't really believe in the possibility of a resignation," a Vatican source told AFP. Rumours within the insular Roman Curia-the Catholic Church's powerful governing body-are nothing new, and often fuelled by those with an interest, said Italian Vatican expert Marco Politi. "These rumours are encouraged by the pope's opponents who are only eager to see

Francis leave," he told AFP.

Door to retired popes

The resignation of a pope was once almost unthinkable. But when Benedict XVI stood down in 2013, citing his declining physical and mental health, he set a precedent. In 2014, a year after being elected to replace Benedict, Francis himself told reporters that were his health to impede his functions as pope, he would consider stepping down too.

"He (Benedict) opened a door, the door to retired popes," the pontiff said then. More recently in May, as reported by various Italian media, Francis joked about his knee during a closed-door meeting with bishops: "Rather than operate, I'll resign."

However, a trip to Canada at the end of July is still on the pontiff's schedule, and the pope continues to receive injections in his knee and physical therapy, according to the Vatican. As a child, Francis had one of his lungs partially removed. Today, besides his knee issue, he suffers recurring sciatic nerve pain.

Rumours of a resignation also flared last year after Francis underwent colon surgery, prompting him to tell a Spanish radio station that the idea "hadn't even crossed my mind". But beyond his health, a series of calendared events in upcoming months have some Vatican watchers questioning whether Francis is laying the groundwork for retirement, while ensuring that his reforms stay intact.

Convening cardinals

First was his decision to call an extraordinary consistory for August 27, a slow summer month at the Vatican, to create 21 new cardinals — 16 of whom will be under the age of 80, thereby eligible to elect his successor in a future conclave. Since



VATICAN CITY: File photo shows Pope Francis kissing a baby from the popemobile car within a canonization mass at St Peter's Square in The Vatican. — AFP

becoming pope in 2013, the Argentine pontiff has created 83 cardinals in a move to shape the future of the Catholic Church, in part to counter Europe's historically dominant influence, and to reflect his values.

On August 28, Francis will pay a visit to L'Aquila and the tomb of Celestine V-the first pope to have resigned from the papacy, in the 13th century. He then joins the world's cardinals-many of them meet-

ing their peers for the first time-in two days of discussions over the reform of the Roman Curia, which Francis announced in March with the unveiling of a new constitution.

Francis' shake-up of the Roman Curia attempts to shift the Church back towards its pastoral roots, allows lay Catholics to head Vatican departments and creates a dicastery specifically for charity works among other reforms. — AFP

Offshore detention survivors decry UK's Rwanda scheme

SYDNEY: Britain's plan to send migrants and asylum seekers to Rwanda has left survivors of a similar scheme in Australia wondering why the "failed" policy that shattered their lives is being revived elsewhere. For more than six years, Sudan-born refugee Abdul Aziz Muhamat was detained by Australian authorities in a small tropical island camp off Papua New Guinea's mainland, hidden from full legal and public oversight.

"The simplest way to describe daily life on Manus Island is there's no life," Muhamat explained.

"It's worse than a prison," he told AFP. "If you cry, no one will listen. If you shout, no one will come."

Muhamat's detention was part of

Australia's "Pacific Solution", under which thousands of people who attempted to reach the country by boat were moved to offshore centres on Manus and the tiny nation of Nauru. There, they were processed, given identification numbers and barred from ever permanently settling in Australia. Many languished in the camps for years, in conditions described by rights groups as "hellish".

"They never could have got away with the conditions in those camps if they had been in Australia," said Nick McKim, a Greens senator who visited Manus five times before being refused entry.

"I have no hesitation in describing what happened in those camps as torture."

After vast taxpayer expense, 14

detainee deaths, a string of suicide attempts-some by detainees as young as five-and at least six referrals to the International Criminal Court, Australia's scheme has been scaled back piece-by-piece. As of last month there were about 100 people still on Nauru. Now the concept is being given new life by Britain, which plans to send asylum seekers to the land-locked African nation of Rwanda.

Manus-detainee-turned-author Behrouz Boochani has urged the British public to resist plans "to copy the deeply dehumanising asylum policies of Australia". But UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson-who has taken advice from a series of prominent Australian political strategists-has offered a familiar explanation for why it needs to go ahead: Deterrence. Like his Australian counterparts, Johnson has argued the policy will convince would-be migrants not to undertake perilous sea journeys on often rickety and overloaded vessels. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (C) chairs a cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street in London. The UK government defended its controversial policy of sending asylum seekers to Rwanda, even as the entire senior leadership of the Church of England branded it shameful and immoral. — AFP

IS Syria ambush kills pro-regime fighters: Monitor

BEIRUT: A jihadist ambush on a bus in remote eastern Syria left at least 15 pro-government fighters dead on Monday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The war monitoring group said it was not immediately clear if those killed were

from the regular army or allied militia.

The attack took place on the road linking the city of Raqa, which used to be a major IS hub and is under Kurdish control, to the government-controlled city of Homs. The Observatory said several other fighters were critically wounded. The official state-run agency SANA confirmed 13 casualties and quoted a military source saying that the ambush took place at around 6:30 am (0330 GMT).

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said the ambush was the deadliest of its kind since a similar attack in early March also killed 15 in the Palmyra region. Another 10 soldiers and allied pro-regime

forces were killed in an attack last month on an army bus by non-IS rebel forces in the northern province of Aleppo. This was the heaviest death toll reported in pro-government ranks from a rebel attack since a truce agreement brokered by Russia and Turkey in March 2020.

Before Russia intervened in the Syrian conflict, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad controlled barely a fifth of the national territory. With Russian and Iranian support, Damascus clawed back much of the ground lost in the early stages of the war, which erupted in 2011 when the government brutally repressed pro-democracy protests.

The Islamic State group has not yet issued any

statement claiming responsibility for Monday's attack. Its once sprawling self-proclaimed "caliphate" straddling Iraq and Syria was defeated in March 2019 by US-backed local forces. But it has continued to carry out attacks against regime and Kurdish-led forces in eastern Syria.

Raqa was once the de facto capital of the IS "caliphate", which covered territory the size of Britain, printed its own schoolbooks, minted its own currency and collected taxes. Analysts have long feared a resurgence of the jihadist organisation but it still has no fixed positions and the intensity of its attacks has remained largely unchanged since 2019. — AFP

ConocoPhillips joins Qatar mega...

Continued from Page 1

Kaabi said he expected gas from the North Field to last more than 50 years. ConocoPhillips chairman Ryan Lance hailed the deal, saying it would be the

"best in the world".

Qatar is expected to announce more partners in the coming days, with Chinese state energy firms among the names mentioned by industry sources as likely contenders. China is already one of the biggest customers for Qatari liquefied natural gas. Kaabi said there was "zero diplomatic element" in the decision on the companies taking part. He said the price paid, "competency" and ability to give access to new markets were the key elements determining the selection. — AFP

Hopes fade for swift NATO accession...

Continued from Page 1

that Turkey could delay the Nordic countries' bids indefinitely.

Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin recently expressed fears that unless the issues are resolved "before Madrid, there is a risk that the situation will freeze". Germany on Monday dampened hopes of a deal being reached that quickly. "I think this is about expectations management and to place this in its historical context," said a high-ranking German government source, while stressing a solution was still in sight. "It would not be a catastrophe if we need a few more weeks," the source said. "What is crucial is that in our view there are no insurmountable difficulties" between Sweden, Finland and Turkey.

Ankara's anger has primarily been directed at Sweden. "Sweden does view the PKK as a terrorist organization and has done so since 1984", Levin said, adding that it was "arguably the first country apart from Turkey" to do so. "So in that sense Sweden does not really stand out" from other European countries.

However, Sweden has expressed support for the YPG, a US-backed Syrian Kurdish group, and its political arm, the Democratic Union Party (PYD). Ankara views the YPG, which fought against the Islamic State group in Syria with Western support, as the PKK's Syria offshoot. In a bid to ease Ankara's concerns, Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson has stressed that Sweden has been beefing up its anti-terror laws in recent years, with new stricter legislation coming into force on July 1.

Sweden has also said that its independent weapons export agency would be prepared to review its policy once the country was a NATO member. Levin noted that one area where Sweden does stand out in Europe is that it is "generally more sympathetic to the broader Kurdish cause". The Scandinavian country is home to around 100,000 Kurds, which Levin described as "influential" and "successful in mobilizing". "In that sense, maybe Turkey is right to put the spotlight on Sweden", Levin said.

Sweden's government is also being squeezed on the home front, with its hands tied by an independent lawmaker with Kurdish roots. Amineh Kakabaveh is a former Left Party member of Iranian-Kurdish origin sitting in parliament as an independent since 2019. In November, she provided the deciding vote to bring the Social Democrats into power - in exchange for deeper cooperation with the PYD. — AFP

Prince William's influence grows...

Continued from Page 1

influential figure. The Duke of Cambridge, as he is officially known, accompanied his father when the queen missed the State Opening of Parliament in May and has also weighed in on important family decisions.

He was reportedly a prime mover in blocking the participation of Prince Andrew, his sex scandal-hit uncle, in the traditional Order of the Garter ceremony this month. "They (William and Kate) are the monarchy's future, that was underlined at the balcony appearance at the end of the Jubilee" celebrations to mark the queen's record-breaking 70-year reign, said Fitzwilliams.

William's time has been devoted to the family since giving up his role as a helicopter ambulance pilot in 2017. Significantly, he is reportedly planning to move out of London's Kensington Palace and into a four-bedroom cottage, described as modest, on the grounds of the queen's Windsor Castle home west of London where she spends most of her time. The move will allow him to get closer to the queen and strengthen his role in the family's inner sanctum, commentators said.

While he is becoming more committed to his royal duties, he is also determined to provide a normal life for his three children - Prince George, aged eight, Princess Charlotte, seven, and four-year-old Prince Louis. This is partly driven by his own childhood, which was marked by the trauma

of his parents' very public separation and divorce, and the death of his mother Diana in a car accident in 1997 when he was only 15.

His mother's example is evident in his more modern outlook, which saw him break with the traditions of royal fathers and get his hands dirty with nappy changing, and help the older two with homework. The tall, blond, partially bald prince is also keen to carry on his mother's legacy of helping society's most vulnerable members. He was spotted in London earlier this month selling The Big Issue, the UK's homeless magazine, and has spoken out frequently on other issues such as the environment and mental health.

William was "molded" by the "traditional" queen during Sunday lunches with her at Windsor when he was studying at the elite Eton College nearby, Marc Roche, author of several books on the monarchy, told AFP. But "among William's assets, there is... perhaps due to the influence of his mother, a great sensitivity to diversity and the environment", he added.

The prince has revealed little about what goes on behind palace walls but defended the family after his brother Harry and wife Meghan gave a shock interview on US television, in which they accused members of being racist. He vehemently denied the allegations and by all accounts, relations with Harry are strained.

But William recognizes the need to modernize the age-old institution to enable it to survive after Elizabeth II and fend off the forces of republicanism that are stronger among younger generations. This need was emphasized during a recent tour of the Caribbean in March, which was criticised for being a throwback to colonial times. "One of the things that William is particularly concerned with is the image of the monarchy and how it moves forward," said Fitzwilliams. — AFP

International

Spanish premier thrashed in Andalusia regional election

Popular Party (PP) win 58 seats in the 109-seat Andalusian regional parliament

SEVILLE, Spain: Spain's main opposition Popular Party secured a landslide win in a regional election in Andalusia on Sunday, dealing a blow to Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez ahead of a national vote expected at the end of 2023.

The conservative Popular Party (PP) won 58 seats in the 109-seat Andalusian regional parliament, which will allow it to govern alone in Spain's most populous region, near final results showed. That is more than double the 26 seats it won in the last election in 2018 when it ousted the Socialists from office from the southern region, a longtime stronghold for the party.

The Socialists captured 30 seats, its worst ever result in the region which is home to some 8.5 million people—almost a fifth of Spain's population. That is down from 33 in the last election in 2018 when they were ousted from power in the region by the PP in the wake of a scandal over the misuse of public funds.

The Socialists had governed Andalusia without interruption since 1982 when the region government was established. "This victory is that of moderation and of another way of doing politics," said the PP's number two, Cuca Gamarra.

This is the Socialists' third consecutive regional election loss to the PP after votes in Madrid in May 2021 and Castilla y Leon in February. Sanchez's leftist coalition government has been struggling to deal with the economic fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has fuelled inflation worldwide, especially through increasing energy prices.



'Severe blow'
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, Antonio Barroso, an analyst at political consultancy Teneo, said before of the election.

"The PP seems to be gaining increasing momentum, and voter concerns about inflation might only make it more 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, its highest level in decades. Sanchez's government has rolled out a swathe of measures to help consumers, including a subsidy on fuel prices at the pump, an increase in the minimum wage, direct grants to truck drivers and financial support for some farmers. The election outcome frees the PP from the need to govern in alliance with far-right party Vox, which won 14 seats. Until now, Vox has supported the PP in Andalusia but from outside government.

But it had warned during the campaign that if the PP once again needed its support to govern, it would demand that it enters into government this time around. The PP has governed Andalusia since 2018 in a coalition with smaller centre-right party Ciudadanos which did not win a single seat.

During the campaign the head of the PP in Andalusia, Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla, had urged voters to deliver him a "strong" government that is not "weighed down" by Vox. "This is a dream come true," he told reporters after the

President Joe Biden's administration. "That is extremely welcome news," she said, adding that she had not been able to see Assange since a British court last week cleared the path for his extradition to the United States.

"When I heard the news I just wanted to give him a hug," she said. Assange's long-running legal saga began in 2010 after WikiLeaks published more than 500,000 classified US documents about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has been held on remand at a top-security jail in southeast London since 2019 for jumping bail in a previous case accusing him of sexual assault in Sweden.

That case was dropped but he was not released on grounds he was a flight risk in the US extradition case. As Assange's potential US extradition looms, several high profile Australians, including former foreign minister Bob Carr, have called on Albanese to demand the US drop the prosecution.

"If Albanese asks, my guess is America will agree," Carr wrote Monday in an op-ed in the Sydney Morning Herald. Carr argued Assange's prosecution stood in sharp contrast to the US pardoning former military intelligence officer Chelsea Manning, who had leaked the secret files to WikiLeaks.

"Our new prime minister can say: 'We're not fans of the guy either, Mr President, but it's gone on long enough. We're good allies. Let this one drop.'" While campaigning for May elections that

The number of Sikhs and Hindus living in Afghanistan had dwindled to around 200 by late last year, compared with about half a million in the 1970s. Most of those who remained were traders involved in selling herbal medicines and electronic goods brought from India and Pakistan.

For Manmohan Singh Sethi, who was born in Afghanistan, the temple was not just a place of worship, but home to the entire Sikh community.

Meeting as family

"This used to be the main gurdwara (Sikh temple) where we all used to meet as a family," said Sethi, who is in his 70s. But the peace was shattered Saturday with one member of the community killed and seven others—including Singh—wounded in the early-morning raid. A Taliban fighter also died, in a counter-operation launched soon after.

Gunmen first fired at the main gate of the complex, killing a guard, before storming inside, shooting, and throwing grenades, survivors said. Minutes later a car bomb exploded outside the complex, shattering walls and windows of nearby buildings.

When the raid began, some escaped through a back door and took refuge in nearby buildings. In the ensuing chaos, Singh—who was on the fourth floor of the complex—fell to the ground, injuring his

flood waters, disaster management authorities said. In the eastern state of Bihar, lightning triggered by storms killed at least 17 people, according to local disaster management minister Renu Devi.

Assam continued to reel under severe flooding, with 5,140 villages across the state's 33 districts submerged by surging waters. More than 100,000 villagers are taking refuge in relief shelters. The state was first hit in April when pre-monsoon rains arrived, causing floods that killed 44 people.

The floodwaters receded after a few weeks, only to rise again in June at the start of the annual monsoon season and taking the state toll to 71 so far. In neighbouring Meghalaya state, at least 16 people have been killed since last Thursday after landslides and surging rivers that submerged roads.

Monsoon storms have also unleashed devastating floods in Bangladesh that have left millions



SEVILLE: Partido Popular (PP) candidate for the Andalusian regional election Juanma Moreno greets supporters during a meeting following the Andalusian regional elections, in Seville. —AFP

election results were announced.

Vox earlier this year entered a regional government for the first time since Spain returned to democracy in the 1970s in the Castilla and Leon region in a coalition with the PP. Any deal with Vox in Andalusia would have complicated efforts by the PP's new national leader, Alberto Nunez Feijoo, to project a more moderate image.

The PP has sought to present itself in Andalusia

as a centrist "sensible alternative, an effort to present itself as an option from the centre," University of Granada political science professor Oscar Garcia Luengo told AFP.

The strategy won the PP one million new voters, including 300,000 who voted for Sanchez in the last national election in 2019. Narciso Michavila, head of GAD3 pollsters, told daily ABC. —AFP

Australian PM hopes for progress in Assange legal saga

SYDNEY: Australia's prime minister said Monday he will engage "diplomatically" over the US prosecution of Julian Assange, but he is standing by earlier remarks questioning the purpose of further legal action.

As domestic pressure mounted on him to intervene in the WikiLeaks founder's case, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he is sticking to comments he made while in opposition last year that "enough is enough". "I do not see what purpose is served by the ongoing pursuit of Mr Assange," Albanese said at the time.

But the Australian leader took a swipe at "people who think that if you put things in capital letters on Twitter and put an exclamation mark, then that somehow makes it more important". Instead, he said: "I intend to lead a government that engages diplomatically and appropriately with our partners."

Assange's wife Stella Assange told ABC radio Monday that she understood the Albanese government was raising her husband's case with US

'No future for us,' say Afghan Sikhs after temple attack

KABUL: A dozen Afghan Sikhs gathered Monday in a room behind the charred ruins of their temple in Kabul, hoping to be swiftly evacuated having finally given up on the country of their birth. "There is no future for us here. I have lost all hope," said Ragbir Singh, who was wounded when gunmen stormed the temple Saturday in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group.

"Everywhere we are under threat." When the Taliban seized power in August, many Sikhs sought refuge at the complex, living communally or in family groups scattered around the building. The Sikh community had been a target before.

In March 2020, at least 25 people were killed when gunmen stormed a different temple in Kabul. And in 2018 at least 19 people, most of them Sikhs, were killed by a suicide bombing in the eastern city of Jalalabad. Both attacks were claimed by IS, which regularly targets members of Afghanistan's minority communities—including Shiites and Sufis.

26 more dead in India monsoon fury

GUWAHATI, India: At least 26 more people have died in monsoon flooding and lightning strikes in India, as millions remained marooned in the country and neighbouring Bangladesh, authorities said Monday. Floods are a regular menace in India and Bangladesh, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency, ferocity and unpredictability for the two countries' 1.6 billion people.

In India's northeastern state of Assam, three people were killed in landslides while six others died in



MELBOURNE: People walk past a mural of Julian Assange in a Melbourne inner-city laneway on June 20, 2022. Former Australian foreign minister Bob Carr called for his country to demand the United States drop its prosecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. —AFP

swept his Labor Party to power, Albanese said that Assange had "paid a big price for the publication of that information already".

Carr was serving as foreign minister in 2012 when Assange, who was facing sexual assault allegations, sought refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. For much of the past decade, Australia's previous conservative government did not publicly advocate for Assange's release. —AFP



KABUL: A general view shows fire department truck near a damaged building following a gun attack at a Sikh temple in Kabul. Gunmen stormed a Sikh temple in the Afghan capital on June 18 morning, killing at least one member of the community and wounding seven more. —AFP

legs and a hand.

Now, several rooms and the main prayer hall of the complex are heavily damaged by bullets, grenades and a fire that engulfed a section during the raid. The attack came days after a delegation from New Delhi visited Kabul to discuss the possibility of reopening the Indian embassy. —AFP

stranded and killed dozens so far. On Monday, flood water was gradually receding from the northeastern district of Sylhet, though millions are still marooned, said Mosharrif Hossain, the chief administrator of the district.

"The relief shelters are full of affected people. There's a huge crisis of food and drinking water. Many are scared to return home while many lost their houses in floodwater," he told AFP. But the receding water is flooding districts further downstream in Habiganj and Brahmanbaria, officials said.

In Jamalpur district, an eight-year-old girl was swept away by strong currents from her inundated backyard and later found dead, police officer Aminul Islam told AFP. Heavy rainfall also continued in the southeastern Chittagong Hills districts leading to waterlogging in the port city and exacerbating risks of landslides. —AFP

News in brief

UK PM operated for sinus

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has had a "very minor routine operation related to his sinuses", his official spokesman said on Monday. "He went to the hospital around 6:00 am (0500 GMT) and the operation was carried out first thing this morning," he told reporters. "He was back in Downing Street shortly after 10:00 am." The spokesman said the scheduled procedure was carried out on the state-run National Health Service under general anaesthetic. Johnson was resting and his return to work would depend on his health, but he planned to chair a Cabinet meeting of senior ministers on Tuesday. The prime minister, who turned 58 on Sunday, has appeared under the weather on occasions in recent week, sniffing as if he has had a cold. He spent several days in hospital intensive care in April 2020 after contracting COVID, calling it "a tough old moment" that "could have gone either way". —AFP

Strong quake hits Taiwan

TAIPEI: A 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck Monday in Taiwan's east, 38 kilometres south of Hualien city, the US Geological Survey said. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The quake had an estimated depth of 10 kilometres, according to USGS, and struck at 09:05 local time (0105 GMT). A clip of a tranquil lakeside scene suddenly beginning to violently judder as the ground moved was posted on Facebook by a national park in Hualien. "This is a really big earthquake!... Hope everyone stays safe!", the caption read, adding the clip had been taken from one of its camera feeds in the park. An AFP reporter in Taipei felt shaking, and local media said the quake was felt across the island. The Taipei Metro stopped briefly when it hit, according to one passenger, before continuing at reduced speed for several stops. A second smaller tremor hit about half an hour later, according to Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau. —AFP

Food security conference

BERLIN: Germany will host a meeting on the looming global food crisis caused by the war in Ukraine with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken among those attending, a government spokesman said Monday. The gathering on Friday under the title "Uniting for Global Food Security" will address looming shortages caused by the war, the spokesman told a press conference in Berlin. "The government is particularly committed in its presidency of the G7 to finding joint answers to the looming global hunger crisis triggered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine," he said. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock tweeted that the conference would aim to "stabilise food supplies worldwide". The West has demanded Moscow stop blockading Ukraine's Black Sea ports to allow vast stores of grain to be taken to world markets as fears rise of famines in vulnerable regions. Moscow has denied responsibility for the food crisis, and blames Western sanctions for the disrupted deliveries that have pushed up cereal prices and fanned fears of famines in vulnerable regions. The meeting in Berlin will take place as the leaders of the Group of Seven industrialised nations prepare to meet on June 26 to 28 in the German Alpine resort of Schloss Elmau. —AFP

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Business

Air industry recovery gathering pace despite uncertainty: IATA

Airlines seek government support for net-zero pledge

DOHA: Air passengers are expected to hit 83 percent of pre-pandemic levels this year and the aviation industry's return to profit is "within reach" in 2023 despite ongoing uncertainty, the International Air Transport Association said on Monday. Industry losses are expected to drop to \$9.7 billion this year, a "huge improvement" from \$137.7 billion in 2020 and \$42.1 billion in 2021, IATA said in an upgraded industry outlook ahead of its annual general meeting in Doha.

"Airlines are resilient. People are flying in ever greater numbers. And cargo is performing well against a backdrop of growing economic uncertainty," the document quoted IATA director general Willie Walsh as saying. The aviation industry was sent reeling by the pandemic, with passenger numbers plunging 60 percent in 2020 and remaining 50 percent down in 2021. Airlines lost nearly \$200 billion over two years.

While some firms in the sector went bankrupt, others-backed often by states-have emerged from the pandemic with profits intact. IATA said industry-wide profitability "appears within reach" in 2023, adding that North American airlines were expected to return an \$8.8 billion profit this year. More than 1,200 aircraft are expected to be delivered in 2022, while cargo volumes should reach a record 68.4 million tons "despite economic challenges", it added.

"Strong pent-up demand, the lifting of travel restrictions in most markets, low unemployment in most countries, and expanded personal savings are fueling a resurgence in demand that will see passenger numbers reach 83 percent of pre-pandemic levels in 2022," IATA said. Airlines, desperate to put the coronavirus pandemic behind them, go into the talks in Doha ahead of a potential summer of chaos with shortages and strikes that could threaten their recovery.

While trade is roaring back to life, representatives from the aviation sector meeting until Tuesday in Qatar



SINGAPORE: A Singapore Airlines passenger plane approaches for landing at Changi International Airport in Singapore on June 20, 2022.— AFP

have a packed agenda with multiple geopolitical crises including the war in Ukraine and the environment. Cracks are already showing in the sector's recovery, though industry figures are optimistic about the future despite the issues.

In the past few weeks, delays and cancellations caused by a lack of staff at airports and strikes for better pay have wreaked havoc upon travelers. The problems originate with the pandemic when airlines and airports laid off thousands of workers during its worst-ever crisis. Now, they are scrambling for employees. Also reflecting the enduring disruption, IATA was forced to move its annual general meeting from Shanghai to Qatar as China continues to grapple with the pandemic. The global association represents 290

airlines, accounting for 83 percent of air travel worldwide.

Net-zero pledge

Meanwhile, world airlines on Monday called on governments to support the industry's goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The plea at a meeting of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) came three months before a crucial gathering of the United Nations' intergovernmental agency supporting aviation. IATA, whose member airlines account for 83 percent of global air traffic, pledged in October to reach net-zero by mid-century, an enormous and costly technological challenge. "It is critical that the industry is supported by governments with policies that are focused on the same

decarbonisation goal," Willie Walsh, IATA's director general, said in a statement during the group's annual general meeting in the Gulf emirate of Qatar. IATA's 2050 target is in accordance with goals of the landmark 2015 Paris climate accord to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. "The decarbonisation of the global economy will require investment across countries and across decades, particularly in the transition away from fossil fuels," Walsh said.

"Stability of policy matters."

His appeal comes three months before the International Civil Aviation Organization meets at the end of September in Montreal, where it is to examine the issue of reducing emissions. Agreement is far from certain as Russia and China are among companies targeting decarbonisation 10 years later, in 2060. Chinese airlines voiced objections last year to the IATA target during the group's meeting in Boston. In an effort to counter such reluctance as the effects of climate change become increasingly apparent, France, holding the rotating EU presidency, in February published the Toulouse Declaration calling on the entire world to sign up to the goals.

In addition to 42 countries, airports, airlines and other industry players adopted the declaration. "The industry's determination to achieve net-zero by 2050 is firm. How would governments explain the failure to reach an agreement to their citizens?" said Walsh. The airline industry currently accounts for about three percent of environmentally-harmful CO2 emissions. To reach net-zero it will need a steady ramp-up of renewable jet fuel, other efficiency improvements and the use of carbon capture storage and offsets. IATA has estimated this would cost companies around \$1.55 trillion over 30 years.— AFP

Bankrupt Sri Lanka begins shutdown, opens IMF talks

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka closed schools and halted non-essential government services on Monday, starting a two-week shutdown to conserve fast-depleting fuel reserves as the IMF opened talks with Colombo on a possible bailout. The country of 22 million people is in the grip of its worst economic crisis after running out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports including food, fuel and medicines.



COLOMBO: A closed classroom is seen at a government school in Colombo on June 20, 2022, after Sri Lanka closed schools and halted all non-essential government services during a two-week shutdown to conserve fast-depleting fuel reserves as the International Monetary Fund opened talks with Colombo on a possible bailout.— AFP

On Monday schools were shut and state offices worked with skeleton staffing as part of government plans to reduce commuting and save precious petrol and diesel. Sri Lanka is facing record-high inflation and lengthy power blackouts that have contributed to months of protests - sometimes violent - calling on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down. Thousands of students marched through the streets of Colombo on Monday chanting "Gota go home" in reference to the president, who they accuse of corruption and mismanagement.

"The time for Gotabaya to bow down with dignity is

long gone," student leader Wasantha Mudalige told reporters. "Now we have to chase him out." Police arrested 21 student activists who blocked all gates to the presidential secretariat building while declaring Monday, Rajapaksa's 73rd birthday, a "day of mourning" for the nation. Officers said the students had blocked Sri Lanka's finance ministry secretary from attending a key meeting with officials from the International Monetary Fund.

But the office of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said talks with a visiting IMF delegation, the first in-person discussions since Sri Lanka asked for a bailout in April, went ahead as planned. Both sides said the talks would continue until the end of the month. A financial rescue plan is not expected until Colombo agrees with its creditors on restructuring its \$51 billion foreign debt, a process that could take months, according to both Sri Lankan and IMF officials.

The country defaulted on its debt in April and went cap-in-hand to the IMF which has asked Colombo to raise taxes and restructure loss-making state enterprises. Most offices in Sri Lanka were shut on Monday and all schools were closed but hospitals and the main sea and air ports in the capital were still operating. Hundreds of thousands of motorists waited in miles-long queues across the country for petrol and diesel despite the energy ministry announcing fresh stocks would not arrive for at least three days.

Australia chips in

Wickremesinghe's office said he met with visiting Australian home affairs minister Clare O'Neil to "deepen cooperation and assist Sri Lanka as the country faces very difficult economic times". Canberra announced \$35 million in emergency assistance to meet the urgent food and healthcare needs of the impoverished island.

"Not only do we want to help the people of Sri Lanka in its time of need, there are also deeper consequences for the region if this crisis continues," Australian foreign minister Penny Wong said in a statement. Australia is a member of the "Quad", a diplomatic grouping with India, Japan and the United States that has expressed concern over China's growing influence in the region. China owns more than 10 percent of Sri Lanka's external debt and has invested heavily in infrastructure across the strategically located island, which is positioned along the main east-west international shipping lane. The United Nations last week launched an emergency response effort to feed thousands of pregnant women facing food shortages in Sri Lanka.—AFP



LONDON: In this file photo, commuters wait on a platform to catch a train toward central London at Clapham Junction station after strike action by Southern Rail caused another morning of travel disruption in the British capital. Strikes are planned for June 21, June 23 and June 25, in the biggest dispute on Britain's railway network since 1989, according to the RMT.— AFP

Britain set for biggest rail strike in decades

LONDON: Britain's railway network this week faces its biggest strike action in more than three decades, in a row over pay as soaring inflation erodes earnings. Rail union the RMT has said that more than 50,000 workers will take part in a three-day national strike, coinciding with major events including the Glastonbury music festival. Schools are warning that thousands of teenagers taking national exams will also be affected.

The RMT argues that the strikes are necessary as wages have failed to keep pace with inflation, which has hit a 40-year high. Jobs are also at risk, with passenger traffic yet to fully recover after the lifting of coronavirus pandemic lockdowns. Countries around the world are being hit by decades-high inflation as the Ukraine war and the easing of COVID restrictions fuel energy and food price hikes. The strikes are planned for Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday in the biggest dispute on Britain's railway network since 1989, according to the RMT. The union has also announced a 24-hour walkout of its members on the Tube, London's underground railway network, planned for Tuesday. Rail operators, however, warn of disruption throughout the week - with lines not affected by strike action nevertheless reducing services. "Talks have not progressed as far as I had hoped and so we must prepare for a needless national rail strike and the damaging impact it will have," said Andrew Haines, chief executive of Network Rail, which looks after the country's rail tracks.

"We, and our train operating colleagues, are gearing up to run the best service we can for passengers and freight users next week, despite the actions of the RMT." The strikes are likely to compound travel chaos in the aviation sector, after airlines were forced to cut flights due to staff shortages, causing long delays and frustration for passengers. Thousands of workers were sacked in the aviation industry during the pandemic but the sector is now struggling to recruit workers as travel demand rebounds following the lifting of lockdowns.

War of words

The government and the RMT were engaged in a war of words over the weekend, after the union's general secretary Mick Lynch said strikes would go ahead as "no viable settlements" had been found to the disputes. But Transport Secretary Grant Shapps accused union bosses of refusing to meet for further talks on Saturday and instead attending a protest march against the rising cost of living.

Shapps said the disruption would cause "misery" and force hospital patients to cancel appointments. And pupils sitting exams would face extra pressures through having to change their travel plans. "By carrying out this action, the RMT is punishing millions of innocent people, instead of calmly discussing the sensible and necessary reforms we need to make in order to protect our rail network," he added.

Treasury minister Simon Clarke told Sky News on Monday, "We absolutely need to have an understanding across the wider public sector that we cannot have inflation-busting pay increases" as it will cause further price rises. Modernizing the rail network was necessary, as travel use changes, including after the pandemic, he said.

But Lynch accused Shapps of fabrication, insisting talks with train operating companies had broken up without agreement last Thursday night and no further negotiations had been scheduled. Contrary to government claims, no pay offer had been made and the union had received no response to its push for a pay increase of 7.1 percent in December, in line with inflation at the time, he said. "If there's not a settlement, we will continue our campaign," Lynch told Sky News on Sunday, predicting more strikes as other transport unions balloted their members.

The RMT was not looking for special treatment but a deal was needed as members had not had a pay rise for several years, he added. "If we don't play our hand, thousands of our members will lose their jobs" and safety on the network would be compromised, he said. The government was being "just as ruthless as P&O but they haven't got agency workers to step in", he added, referring to the mass sacking of staff at the ferry operator earlier this year.— AFP



COLOMBO: Auto-rickshaws are parked in a queue along a street to tank up petrol from a Ceylon petroleum corporation fuel station in Colombo on June 20, 2022.— AFP

Business

Sanctioned Russia becomes China's 'main source' of oil

West rains sanction on Moscow's energy exports

BEIJING: China ramped up crude oil imports from Russia in May, customs data showed Monday, helping to offset losses from Western nations scaling back Russian energy purchases over the invasion of Ukraine. The spike means Russia has now overtaken Saudi Arabia to become China's top oil provider as the West continues to sanction Moscow's energy exports.

The world's second-biggest economy imported around 8.42 million tons of oil from Russia last month—a 55 percent on-year rise—as Beijing continues to refuse to publicly condemn Moscow's war while exacting economic gains from its isolated neighbor. China imported 7.82 million tons of oil from Saudi Arabia in May. In total, China bought \$7.47 billion worth of Russian energy products last month, about \$1 billion more than April, according to Bloomberg News.

The new customs data comes four months into the war in Ukraine, with buyers from the US and Europe shunning Russian energy imports or pledging to slash them over the coming months. But while European powers are scaling back and Russia's energy exports are falling, Asian demand is helping to staunch some of those losses, especially in China and India. According to the International Energy Agency's latest global oil report, India has overtaken Germany as the second-largest importer of Russian crude in the last two months. China has been Russia's biggest market for crude oil since 2016.

'No limits'

Days before Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, China's President Xi Jinping greeted his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Beijing, with the two countries declaring a bilateral relationship of "no limits". Although demand in China remains muted, there has been some improvement in the past month as cities began to loosen virus restrictions after the country's worst COVID outbreak since the early days of the

pandemic. This has allowed some supply chain problems to ease and industrial production to pick up, official data showed. China's overall imports from Russia spiked 80 percent from a year ago in May to \$10.3 billion, customs data added.

Apart from oil, Beijing's purchases of liquefied natural gas from Russia also surged 54 percent on-year in May to 397,000 tons, even as overall imports of the fuel fell. Beijing—which has repeatedly refused to condemn Moscow's bloody invasion of Ukraine—has also been accused of providing a diplomatic shield for Russia by blasting Western sanctions and arms sales to Kyiv. Once bitter Cold War enemies, Beijing and Moscow have stepped up cooperation in recent years as a counterbalance to what they see as US global dominance.

Joint goals

Earlier this month they unveiled the first road bridge linking the two countries, connecting the far eastern Russian city of Blagoveshchensk with the northern Chinese city of Heihe. Last week, President Xi Jinping assured President Vladimir Putin of China's support on Russian "sovereignty and security" on a call between the two leaders.

The Kremlin said the pair had agreed to ramp up economic cooperation in the face of "unlawful" Western sanctions. The West has adopted unprecedented sanctions against Russia in retaliation for its war in Ukraine, and Moscow is looking for new markets and suppliers to replace the major foreign firms that left Russia following the invasion.

The 27-nation European Union agreed in late May to a package of sanctions that would halt the majority of Russian oil imports. While the United States had already banned Russian oil, European nations are much more dependent on those imports. Energy is a major source of income for Putin's government, and Western nations are trying to isolate Moscow and impede Moscow's ability to continue the war. —AFP



MOSCOW: Customers walk at GUM department store near Red Square in Moscow on June 20, 2022. — AFP

Germany sticks to 2030 coal exit target despite energy crisis

BERLIN: Germany said Monday it still aimed to close its coal power plants by 2030 despite reverting to the fossil fuel following an energy crisis provoked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "The 2030 coal exit date is not in doubt at all," economy ministry spokesman Stephan Gabriel Haufe said at a regular press conference. The target was "more important than ever" in light of the greater CO2 emissions that would be produced by the government's recent decision to rely more on coal for electricity generation. Germany's reliance on energy imports from Russia has made it particularly vulnerable as Moscow looks for leverages against the West.

Russia's invasion of its neighbor has sent global prices for energy soaring and raised the prospect of shortages if supplies were to be cut off. Since the outbreak of the conflict, Russian energy giant

Gazprom has already stopped deliveries to a number of European countries, including Poland, Bulgaria, Finland and the Netherlands. Germany's decision to power up its coal power plants came after Gazprom cut deliveries to Germany via the Nord Stream gas pipeline last week.

The move, presented by Gazprom as a technical issue, has been criticized as "political" by Berlin. In response, the German government announced emergency measures on Sunday under which reserve coal power generation capacity would be "used more". Economy Minister Robert Habeck, a Green party politician, described the decision as "bitter but indispensable for reducing gas consumption". The use of the surplus capacity was "limited to 2024", the economy ministry spokesman said.

The European Commission noted Monday that "some of the existing coal capacities might be used longer than initially expected" because of the new energy landscape in Europe. "We know that the energy mix and the plans of member states will adjust slightly because we are in an unexpected situation," Commission spokesman Tim McPhie said at a press briefing. Germany has set about weaning itself off Russian energy imports in response to the aggression in Ukraine. —AFP

CBK bonds and related tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 200 million for 3 months with Rate of Return (1.875%).

EasyJet cuts flights over staff shortages

LONDON: British no-frills airline EasyJet on Monday said it was reducing the number of its flights this summer, as the UK aviation sector struggles with severe staff shortages. Airlines and airports are struggling to recruit staff after the lifting of pandemic lockdowns, which saw the aviation sector slash thousands of posts. London's Gatwick airport last week said it would reduce summer flights owing to limited resources.

On Monday, EasyJet said it "is proactively consolidating a number of flights across affected airports", including Gatwick. The carrier added that it was seeking to "build additional resilience" also amid delays to air traffic control and passport checks. Despite the travel chaos, EasyJet stressed that its bookings remained "strong" for the peak-demand summer months of July and August.

Staff shortages across the aviation sector have sparked flight delays and cancellations in recent weeks. "We are sorry that for some customers we have not been able to deliver the service they have come to expect from us," said EasyJet chief executive Johan Lundgren. EasyJet said it expects the airline's capacity in the group's current third quarter to be 87 percent of the pre-pandemic 2019 level. It is expected to increase to 90 percent in the three months to the end of September, EasyJet's final quarter. Air passenger traffic on a global scale is expected to hit 83 percent of pre-pandemic levels this year and the aviation industry's return to profit is "within reach" in 2023, the International Air Transport Association said Monday. —AFP



TOKYO: An electronic quotation board displays the share prices of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (center) at a foreign exchange brokerage in Tokyo on June 20, 2022. — AFP

European stocks aim higher despite recession worries

LONDON: Europe's main stock markets rose on Monday after a mixed Asian session, as traders set aside recession fears and French political uncertainty. Bitcoin regained \$20,000 after sinking to an 18-month low of \$17,599 in weekend deals because risk-averse investors had shunned the world's most popular cryptocurrency. London equities rallied 1.0 percent in mid-day deals on Monday, with sentiment boosted by news of a blockbuster takeover offer for publisher Euromoney.

But the eurozone was more muted. Frankfurt stocks were up 0.5 percent and Paris gained just 0.3 percent, while oil prices languished on stubborn demand concerns. Markets were rocked last week by a fierce sell-off after the US Federal Reserve's sharp interest rate hike—the biggest in nearly 30 years—and a warning of more to come as inflation soars. "Stability often comes before recovery and markets being more composed would suggest investors are no longer panicking," said Russ Mould, investment director at broker AJ Bell.

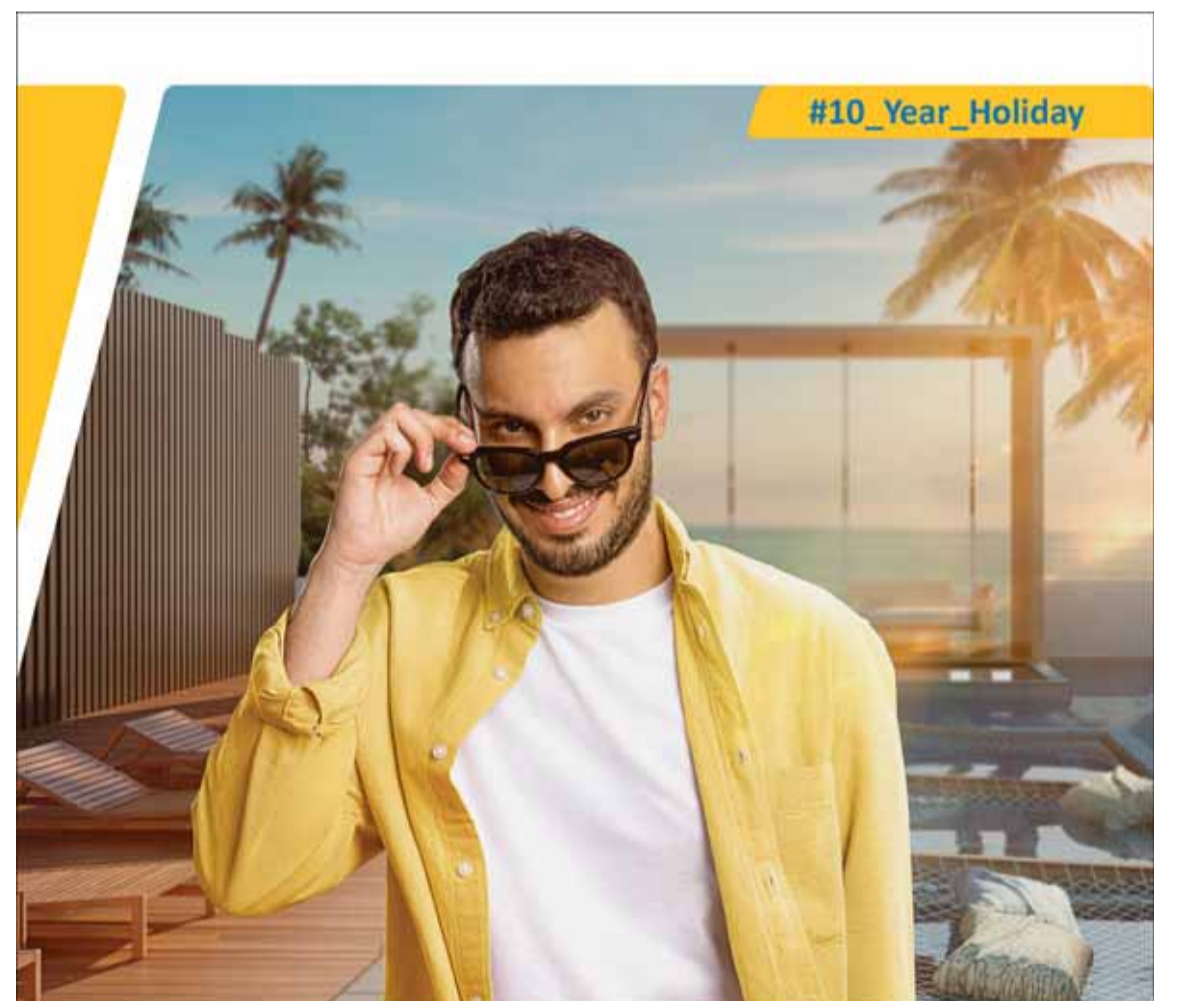
Investors digested news that French President Emmanuel Macron and his allies faced political deadlock after losing their parliamentary majority in a stunning blow for the president and his reform plans. Wall Street, shut on Monday for a US public holiday, had risen on Friday. There is a sense among traders, however, that stock markets still have some way down to go before they find a bottom, with data suggesting economies are beginning to feel the pinch.

Cleveland Fed chief Loretta Mester added to the worry. She said the risk of a recession in the United States was increasing and it would take several years to bring inflation down from four-decade highs to the bank's two percent target. She told CBS's "Face The Nation" on Sunday that while she was not predicting a contraction, the Fed's decision not to act sooner to fight rising prices was hurting the economy.

Analysts warned there was likely to be more pain ahead for traders as the Ukraine war drags on and uncertainty continues to reign. Oil prices slid on Monday, extending Friday's hefty losses on demand worries caused by the prospect of a world recession. However, US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said prices could continue to surge if the European Union cuts off imports of the commodity from Russia in response to the Ukraine war. —AFP



WEST SUSSEX: In this file photo, an EasyJet aircraft prepares to take off from the runway at London Gatwick Airport, south of London. — AFP



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Business

'Huge uncertainty' for EU firms over China's coronavirus curbs

Beijing remains committed to zero-COVID strategy

BEIJING: Many European firms are rethinking their investments in China because of its strict COVID controls, a top business group said Monday, warning that disruptions had pummeled operations. While the rest of the world has steadily removed coronavirus curbs, China has remained committed to its zero-COVID strategy, using lockdowns and mass testing to stamp out all infections.

But this strategy has hammered businesses and snarled supply chains - 60 percent of respondents in a survey of European businesses said it has become harder to do business in China, in large part due to COVID controls. "We hope that China is really waking up," Bettina Schoen-Behanzin, vice president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, told AFP.

"(We hope) that they find a way to get out of this zero-tolerance COVID strategy because it causes huge uncertainty and this is for sure not good for investment." The chamber conducted the survey on over 600 member firms in February and March just as strict lockdowns were imposed in several areas to control China's worst COVID outbreak in two years - from business hub Shanghai to the northern breadbasket province of Jilin. The body also did a follow-up in April to assess the impact of the lockdowns and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

It found that 92 percent of member companies were hit by supply chain problems, and three-quarters said their operations were negatively impacted by the COVID controls. Further, 60 per-

cent of respondents said in April that they had lowered their 2022 revenue projections. The Ukraine war also impacted confidence - a third of the firms surveyed cited geopolitical tensions as a reason for the Chinese market becoming less attractive. "The role China played over the last two years in bolstering European companies' global revenues looks set to diminish," the report released on Monday said.

"And recent events have led many to question just how many eggs they are willing to keep in their China basket." The COVID containment measures also hampered European firms' ability to recruit international and local talent, the chamber said. Its annual survey found that 58 percent of companies faced difficulties in recruiting international and local talent, pointing to the COVID controls and "a wealth of ever-changing visa and work permit procedures and extreme limitations on travel in and out of China".

'The world does not wait'

China is the world's second-biggest economy with a huge market, however, making it difficult for firms to walk away. "Companies, businesses are not leaving China, because the market is too big, the market is too important, and there are for sure many growth opportunities ahead," Schoen-Behanzin told AFP.

"But they are localizing, they are onshoring, and they are rethinking their footprint in China, in Asia," she added. "They are shifting, especially future investments." However, if the COVID



SHENYANG: This aerial photo shows tourists visiting a paddy with images created by growing different varieties of rice in Shenyang in China's northeastern Liaoning province. —AFP

restrictions drag on for another year, companies could start to feel even more pain. "The world does not wait for China," Schoen-Behanzin said.

"If there is no change, then definitely companies will start to think about backup plans and they obviously would go into other markets." —AFP

Euromoney shares surge on takeover bids

LONDON: Shares in Euromoney Institutional Investor rallied by a quarter on Monday after the business information group revealed a series of takeover bids from a private equity consortium. The publisher of Euromoney magazine as well as data and analysis provider Fastmarkets, said it was being pursued by Astorg Asset Management and Epiris.

A fifth offer was priced at nearly £1.6 billion (\$2.0 billion). The bid of £14.61 per share followed four lower offers. In reaction to the disclosure, the group's share price rallied to £13.68, just above the level of the fourth proposal. The "consortium clearly wants its hands on Euromoney given how five potential offers have been made for the business, starting at £11.75 per share", noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"Euromoney has a lot of attractions to private equity-services which are in demand-a strong balance sheet and the opportunity to make big improvements to profit margins." Mould added that the company has been "reaping the benefits of bolt-on acquisitions which have helped to strengthen its data intelligence capabilities", while seeing recovery for its events business after the end of pandemic lockdowns. Euromoney Institutional Investor employs more than 2,500 staff throughout the world. —AFP

Hong Kong floating restaurant sinks in South China Sea

HONG KONG: Jumbo floating restaurant, a once famed but financially struggling Hong Kong tourist attraction, sank in the South China Sea after being towed away from the city, its parent company said Monday. It capsized on Sunday near the Paracel Islands after it "encountered adverse conditions" and began to take on water, Aberdeen Restaurant Enterprises announced in a statement. "The water depth at the scene is over 1,000 meters, making it extremely difficult to carry out salvage works," it added. The company said it was "very saddened by the incident" but that no crew members were injured.

It said marine engineers had been hired to inspect the floating restaurant and install hoardings on the vessel before the trip, and that "all relevant approvals" had been obtained. The restaurant closed in March 2020, citing the COVID-19 pandemic as the final straw after almost a decade of financial woes. Operator Melco International Development said last month the business had not been profitable since 2013 and cumulative losses had exceeded HK\$100 million (\$12.7 million).

It was still costing millions in maintenance fees every year and around a dozen businesses and organizations had declined an invitation to take it over at no charge, Melco added. It announced last month that ahead of its licence expiration in June, Jumbo would leave Hong Kong and await a new operator at an undisclosed location. The restaurant set off shortly



HONG KONG: Photo shows an aerial view of Hong Kong's Jumbo Floating Restaurant, an iconic but ageing tourist attraction designed like a Chinese imperial palace, being towed out of Aberdeen Harbor. —AFP

before noon last Tuesday from the southern Hong Kong Island typhoon shelter where it had sat for nearly half a century.

Opened in 1976 by the late casino tycoon Stanley Ho, in its glory days it embodied the height of luxury, reportedly costing more than HK\$30 million to build. Designed like a Chinese imperial palace and once considered a must-see landmark, the restaurant drew visitors from Queen Elizabeth II to Tom Cruise. It also featured in several films — including Steven Soderbergh's "Contagion", about a

deadly global pandemic.

Jumbo's departure from Hong Kong was met with regret and nostalgia from many Hong Kong residents. Some online commentators described pictures of the floating palace sailing across a charcoal grey ocean towards the horizon as a metaphor for Hong Kong's future. The city has seen harsh pandemic restrictions put its status as an international hub at risk, while a national security law imposed by Beijing has stifled dissent, remoulding Hong Kong in China's authoritarian image. —AFP

Khat producers in Kenya eager to export to Somalia

MAUA: As the afternoon sun starts to dip over central Kenya, the town of Maua buzzes with activity as the khat harvest arrives. For decades, over half a million people in this region have lived by the rhythms of khat, a mildly narcotic native shrub also known as miraa. Trading here in khat is a well-established routine. Every day, young miraa shoots-instantly identifiable by their red stems-are bundled and wrapped in banana leaves, packed in bags and loaded onto pickup trucks.

Drivers then zip along roads at breakneck speed in an effort to ensure that the khat is fresh when it reaches consumers in northern and eastern Kenya, as well as the capital Nairobi, located 300 kilometers south. But for the last two years and counting, no air shipments of Kenyan khat have made it to Somalia. The country is notoriously poor and unstable yet is one of the biggest markets for khat, which is chewed to provide a stimulant and suppress the appetite. Mogadishu initially banned air cargo in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, but diplomatic tensions between Kenya and Somalia have kept the ban in place even as other Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted. The election of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Somalia last month raised hopes of a thaw in ties with Nairobi, and on June 10, Kenyan Agriculture Minister Peter Munya announced that Mogadishu had agreed to resume air shipments of khat. The news has sparked cautious excitement in Maua, where people are increasingly impatient for change.

'Like a rebirth'

Although Munya promised that air links would resume "within two weeks", Somalia's new government has main-

tained a conspicuous silence on the issue. "The resumption (of trade) would be like a rebirth" for the region, said Kimathi Munjuri, chairman of the Nyambene Miraa Traders Association in central Kenya.

But he remained circumspect, noting that similar announcements in the past never materialised into facts on the ground. Prior to the ban, around a third of the 150 tons of khat shipped daily went to Somalia, representing a loss of earnings of up to 16 million Kenyan shillings (\$136,000), he said. Somalia has been a crucial export market for Kenyan khat traders ever since the Netherlands and Britain imposed a ban in 2012 and 2014 respectively, joining the ranks of other Western nations which classify it as a drug.

'At a loss'

Khat grower David Muchoka is among those desperate to see the resumption of air links to Mogadishu. The ban saw his earnings plunge, he said, forcing the father-of-six to venture into dairy farming to pay the bills. "Back in the days we could make up to 100,000 shillings (\$850) in one month, but now we can only make around 6,000-10,000 a month," the 53-year-old told AFP. "We still sell miraa but at a loss, the returns can't sustain the effort of maintaining the farm and paying school fees." The income from the trade irrigated the whole region, locals told AFP. "Most of the shops here have closed, vehicles that used to transport khat are idle, most of the people can no longer send their children to school," said Alex Koome, a Maua resident.

'Like a monopoly'

Many here dream of a day when Maua will once again be in thrall to the frenzy of a trade which animated the town 24 hours a day. "Maua never slept... We want that vibrancy, that rush, that adrenaline again," Munjuri told AFP with a smile. From the early hours, traffic jams obstructed the city centre where khat farmers, dealers and transporters crossed paths. Dozens of pick-ups-car-



MAUA: Khat traders carrying shoots for transportation at an open air market in Maua, in Meru county. As evening approaches, the central Kenyan town of Maua is buzzing with activity, thanks to the bountiful harvest of khat, a mildly narcotic plant also known as miraa. —AFP

rying up to a tonne of cargo-honked their way across villages and towns as they hurtled down the road to their destination, sometimes travelling at speeds of up to 150 kilometers per hour.

For Joseph M'Eruiaki, former director of social development at the non-profit Caritas in Meru County, where Maua is located, the ban has revealed a dangerous dependence on khat. "We must diversify the livelihood sources if we don't want the people to remain vulnerable," he said, suggesting that farmers could instead grow crops like amaranth, sorghum, mango or avocados.

The entrepreneur, who is now running for MP in Kenya's August elections, is also battling for more regulatory oversight of a trade that boasts an unsavoury reputation at times. "Miraa is controlled by a few people who get the most benefits at the expense of farmers... They control the market, they control prices, they control the flow, it's like a monopoly," he said. "It is a legal crop, it needs to be organised. Like the tea sector or the coffee sector," he said. —AFP

Treasury secretary says US recession not 'inevitable'

WASHINGTON: A recession in the United States is not "inevitable" but the economy is likely to slow, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Sunday, days after the US Federal Reserve hiked interest rates, raising fears of a contraction. "I expect the economy to slow" as it transitions to stable growth, she said on ABC's "This Week," but "I don't think a recession is at all inevitable." The US economy has recovered strongly from the damage wrought by Covid-19, but soaring inflation and supply-chain snarls made worse by the war in Ukraine have increased pessimism.

Wall Street stocks tumbled after the US central bank, seeking to cool inflation, on Wednesday raised the benchmark borrowing rate by 0.75 percentage points, the sharpest rise in nearly 30 years. And economists see worrying signs that consumer confidence is weakening, with spending on services affected most sharply. People are beginning to hold off on vacation plans-domestic flight bookings were down 2.3 percent last month, Adobe Analytics reported-and are cutting back on restaurant visits, haircuts and home repairs.

Yellen conceded that "clearly inflation is unacceptably high," attributing it partly to the war in Ukraine, which has pushed up energy and food prices. But she said she did not believe "a dropoff in consumer spending is the likely cause of a recession." The US labor market is "arguably the strongest of the postwar period," Yellen said, and she predicted a slowing of inflation in coming months. —AFP

Men's fashion back to old normal in Paris

It is back to the old ways for men's fashion week, which kicks off in Paris on Tuesday, with the last pandemic-era restrictions cleared and the surprise return of Hedi Slimane of Celine, who had previously called official fashion shows "obsolete". Even during previous waves of infections, the fashion crowd was never particularly keen to see their make-up smudged by a mask or their partying constrained by social distancing.

But with the last restrictions on international travel dropped, this week will see the return of several big names, including US designers Tom Browne, known for his creative shows, and Matthew Williams of Givenchy. The biggest surprise, however, is the return of Slimane, creative director of Celine and one of the most influential figures in men's fashion of recent decades, who will close out the week on Sunday.

One of the key brands within the LVMH group, Celine last presented as part of the official fashion calendar in February 2020, before Slimane dramatically announced that the traditional timetable was "obsolete" and "archaic". "These days, creating a sense of event and rarity seems more essential than an obligatory exercise at a fixed time," he told *Le Monde* at the time, and has since been releasing collections for men and women at his own pace, often with films shot in luxurious settings around France. The house did



not respond to AFP's query about its change of heart.

'Rejoice'

In the lead-up to the pandemic, there had been a widespread sense that the fashion calendar's pace had gotten out of hand—both physically exhausting and environmentally unsound. But two years of pandemic left many eager to return to the festive atmosphere around fashion weeks. "We are very happy that Celine is back," said Pascal Morand, head of France's Federation for

Haute Couture and Fashion. "We don't have any other comment to make, other than to rejoice."

Meanwhile, in the ongoing debate about gendered shows, Paris finds itself as something of a halfway mark between London—which has removed the divide between men's and women's shows—and Milan, which has reaffirmed the split out of fear of undermining traditionally male-focused brands. "Paris will be a bit of both," said Morand.

"The trend for non-gendered clothing created by streetwear and sportswear is deep and societal—it's long-term. "But the male-female divide still makes a lot of sense," he added, especially since there is a real sense of "innovation and creativity" in men's fashion at the moment that warrants a dedicated showcase.

One example is the hotly tipped Ami Alexandre Mattiussi, who is expected to present a mixed men's and women's show on Thursday. The studio started off as a hip men's brand in Paris but also made its mark on the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival, dressing Spanish icon Rossy de Palma and France's Sophie Marceau.

Other highlights this week include Marine Serre, presenting for the first time in the men's week, having made a name for herself in womenswear with green-minded, up-cycled clothes and innovative shows. Louis Vuitton has yet to designate a successor to Virgil Abloh, who died from cancer at 41 in November, but will this week present a collection created by his staff. — AFP



Models present creation for Giorgio Armani's Men's Spring-Summer 2023 fashion collection on June 20, 2022 in Milan. — AFP photos



Men's Fashion week





A picture shows a view of Deir Mar Moussa Al-Habashi (St Moses the Ethiopian monastery), one of the ancient monasteries in Syria in the mountains near the desert in the Nabek area in Damascus countryside. — AFP photos



A picture shows Father Jihad Youssef at Deir Mar Moussa Al-Habashi (St Moses the Ethiopian monastery).



Monk Youssef Al-Halabi makes candles at Deir Mar Moussa Al-Habashi (St Moses the Ethiopian monastery).

SYRIAN DESERT MONASTERY SEEKS VISITORS AFTER YEARS OF WAR

A Syrian desert monastery that was once a hub for interfaith dialogue, attracting tens of thousands, has reopened to visitors after more than a decade of war and isolation. "We yearn for people to return. We want to see them pray and meditate with us once more, so that they may find here a space for calm, silence and contemplation," Father Jihad Youssef told AFP, his voice echoing through the dark, empty halls of the monastery he heads. In 2010, 30,000 people visited Deir Mar Moussa Al-Habashi (St Moses the Ethiopian), a 7th century monastery perched atop a barren, rocky hill about 100 kilometers (62 miles) north of Damascus.

But the onset of civil war in 2011 and the disappearance of Father Paolo Dall'Oglio, who had led and revived the community since 1982, scared away visitors for nearly a decade. With security having improved in surrounding areas, the monastery reopened its doors to visitors this month. They must climb 300 steps to reach the stone monastery, built on the ruins of a Roman tower and partly carved into the rock. It has an 11th century church adorned with icons, ancient murals and writing in Arabic, Syriac and Greek that says "God is love" and "in the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"—a phrase that serves as Muslim praise to God.

Symbol of coexistence

Dall'Oglio hosted interfaith seminars at the monastery, where the Christian

minority and Muslims used to pray side by side, turning it into a symbol of coexistence that attracted visitors and worshippers for three decades. The Italian Jesuit priest was expelled from Syria in 2012 for supporting a mass anti-government uprising, but returned a year later.

He disappeared in the summer of 2013, on his way to the headquarters of the group that later became known as the Islamic State in the city of Raqa, where he had gone to plead for the release of

kidnapped activists. Dall'Oglio's practice of inter-religious coexistence was the exact opposite of the intolerant, murderous extremism of IS.

He was reported to have been executed and his body dumped in a crevice soon after his capture, but his death was never confirmed by any party. "IS most likely kidnapped him. We do not know for sure whether he is alive or dead," Youssef said, adding that no one contacted the monastery to demand ransom.



Monks and nuns sit in prayer and contemplation at Deir Mar Moussa Al-Habashi (St Moses the Ethiopian monastery).

An escape

In 2015, the monastery came under IS gunfire after the jihadists began two years of control in the nearby Homs countryside. "We were scared we would be kidnapped or killed at any moment," especially after IS reached the nearby village of Al-Qaryatayn and kidnapped groups of Christians there, Youssef said. IS abducted the monastery's former chief Jacques Mourad from Al-Qaryatayn for several months in 2015.

The group razed a monastery in the nearby village and locked hundreds of Christians in a dungeon. They were later freed, but a Christian community which once numbered hundreds in Al-Qaryatayn has now fallen to fewer than two dozen.

"We experienced all kinds of fear," Youssef said, adding that they felt isolated in the desert monastery at the height of the fighting, and later because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

US-backed local forces defeated the IS "caliphate" in eastern Syria three years ago, while Syrian government troops, supported by Russia and Iran-linked forces, have recaptured much territory from rebels. "This is a simple monastery devoid of luxuries. There is no internet or cell coverage, making it easier to escape the hustle and bustle of the city," Youssef said. Two monks, a nun, and two postulants live in the three-storey monastery, which includes rooms for visitors, a bird farm, and an expansive library. They live off the land and drink from a nearby well.

In the early hours of the morning,

Youssef calls out to them for breakfast from a courtyard overlooking caves carved into the hill. The lonely hilltop refuge basks in unparalleled tranquility. Youssef Al-Halabi, 48, has been a monk for 16 years but he said the lack of visitors left him wondering what he could do to fill his spare time.



Monk Youssef Al-Halabi makes candles at Deir Mar Moussa Al-Habashi.

"I started looking for ways to fill these long hours... because sometimes we had zero yearly visitors," he said. After his morning prayer, the white-bearded monk usually heads to a nearby cave to make candles. Sometimes he occupies himself with farming. Halabi, who has devoted his life to worship and to serving visitors, said he hoped people would fill the monastery once more "to share our way of life". "This is a space to breathe, away from the noise and agitation," he said. — AFP

Yours sincerely: Singles charmed by Japan letter writing scheme

Sick of swiping and tired of Tinder? Old-fashioned love letters may be the answer, says one Japanese city whose unusual matchmaking scheme has been a surprising success. Singles in southern Japan's Miyazaki are being encouraged to put pen to paper in a low-tech search for their soulmate, part of municipal efforts to boost the low birth rate. The charm of handwritten correspondence has attracted so many young residents that organizers have decided to expand the program to people living farther afield.

Compared to online dating, "it takes longer, and inspires you to imagine the person you're in communication with," said Rie Miyata, head of a local consulting firm commissioned to run the scheme. "It's less about how good your penmanship is," she told AFP, "and more the fact that you write every single character sincerely and with care, thinking deeply about the person you're writing to."

"That's what makes letters so powerful," she said. Since 2020, when the project began, 450 people have signed up—more than double authorities' initial estimates—with around 70 percent in

their 20s and 30s. Applicants are screened by Miyata's team and paired with potential suitors based on information they submit about themselves like their favorite films, books and sports.

But unlike dating apps, the only thing revealed about each new pen pal is their age, with identifying details like their full name, job and address withheld—and of course, no profile pics on display. "Looks are often a decisive factor" when searching for a partner, "but in letters, you are judged by your personality," Miyata said.

Letters are posted to the organizers, who give them a quick read to make sure the note contains no obscenities or insults before sending it on to the eager recipient. So far, 32 pairs have set up face-to-face meetings, with romance blooming for 17 couples who have started a relationship. One participant, a 25-year-old Miyazaki resident, said the idea had brought back fond memories. "As a kid, I used to write letters to the girl I had a crush on," the man, who wished to remain anonymous, told AFP. "I like how old-fashioned letters are. That made me want to join the program."

Despite the city's original approach, it's not unusual for local governments to fund matchmaking programs in Japan, which has the world's oldest population and one of the lowest fertility rates. In 2021, the number of babies born hit a new record low of 811,604, and women are now expected to have an average of 1.3 children in their lifetime, far below the rate needed to maintain a population. — AFP

Paris ballet head Aurelie Dupont quit to 'live differently'

The resignation of Aurelie Dupont, ballet director at the Paris Opera for the past six years, was a surprise, but the former prima ballerina insists there was no controversy behind it. The 49-year-old replaced Benjamin Millepied in 2016 and succeeded in pulling in audiences and opening the famed French company to young choreographers. But there was also controversy, with a leaked internal survey in 2018 revealing widespread upset about her leadership style and the management of the fabled institution more broadly.

Q: Why this surprise resignation?

A: It's not a sudden decision. I've worked at the Paris Opera for 40 years. I'm very proud to leave the company in great shape, with a program set until July 2025. (Six years) is more than I spent at the Dance School as a "petit rat" (a nickname given to students). I had always told my team that I would leave at 50. There is also a desire to live differently.

Q: So nothing to do with rumors that you opposed the promotion of Francois Alu (the company's highest-profile dancer) to principal dancer?

A: This is not reality. I have a very good relationship with Francois. I have always been in favor of his appointment, but it is up to the general manager of the Opera.

Q: Do you think you have been unfairly criticized for your leadership style?

A: I ran the company with all my heart. I did the best I could, I questioned myself many times. I followed my artistic vision. That the media say things that are sometimes false, unfortunately I cannot escape it. Over the six years, there have been

many, many developments. I set up very regular meetings with the dancers. I feel I really introduced new things in terms of communication.

Q: What challenges were you not expecting?

A: I always felt legitimate because as an ex-star, when I program classical ballets, I take a lot of pleasure from passing on the roles (to a new generation).

But I realized there were pressures that I didn't worry about when I was a prima ballerina: the occupancy rate, sales... We were 98 percent full even after the pan-

demic. We went up to an average of 23 or 24 million ticket sales under my direction, against 17 million before.

Q: What are you most proud of?

A: To have succeeded in highlighting everyone's talent. There are dancers who are made to be stars, who excel in classical dance, others in contemporary. I'm quite proud of having taught them to highlight their qualities and not their faults.

During the pandemic, we did everything to keep them motivated, and psychologically supported. This is an extremely curious generation and open to the world. They inspired me, I wanted to make them independent by inviting choreographers who came from everywhere.

Q: What can you say about your projects?

A: I have a book project where I talk about my journey. I will lecture on resilience. I want to spend more time with my two boys aged 14 and 11. (And) a childhood dream: I'm going to take on the artistic direction of a musical. — AFP



Former director of dance for the Paris Opera Ballet Aurelie Dupont poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Congolese coach Rufolph Ngala (right) teaches a class at the Dojo for Hope in Alexandria, Johannesburg. — AFP photos



Italian coach Roberto Orlando, of the Dojo for Hope in Alexandria, Johannesburg, warms up.

Judo helps fight xenophobia in South Africa

In a newly renovated white building in a South African township about 20 children in judogi and others in school uniforms tumble around on a tatami under the watchful eye of a coach. They are from a nearby primary school and regularly gather for judo classes here in Alexandria township, north of the Johannesburg inner city and in the shadow of the financial hub of Sandton. The project aims to “use judo as a vehicle for ... refugees, migrants (and) South Africans to meet together”, said Judo for Peace coordinator Roberto Orlando. It’s a “platform to be all equal, to learn together and to develop skills and values all together”. Alexandria is one of the poorest, most densely populated black townships in South Africa. In 2008, more than 60 people—mostly migrant workers from other African countries—were killed in the country’s worst outbreak of xenophobic attacks since the end of apartheid.



Zimbabwean green belt judoka Denzel Shumba, 17 (right), competes with South African orange belt judoka Lesego Rikhoto, 15 (left) in Johannesburg.

Fourteen years on, the scourge of xenophobia, which mainly targets black Africans, has not left the township. From time to time, violent attacks against African immigrants still occur in Alexandria and other townships where crime and unemployment is rife. Such attacks are predom-

inantly staged by jobless black South Africans. This year has seen tensions rise again in Alexandria. For several months a vigilante group called Operation Dudula—“push back” in Zulu language—has staged marches demanding the expulsion of illegal immigrants.

Migrants especially from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zimbabwe have

borne the brunt of the anti-foreigner hostility. Orlando decided now, more than ever, was the best time to have a dojo in the township. It officially opened its doors last month. “Alexandra is one of the biggest, most densely populated areas in South Africa. It is an area where many xenophobic attacks happened and I think it is one of the areas that should be targeted when we talk about teaching people how to live together,” he said. At the heart of his teaching philosophy are the principles of self-control, discipline, respect, honor, courage and friendship.

‘Live together’

One of the coaches is Rudolph Ngala. He is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Having a migrant coach is strategic because “people can get used to seeing refugees as someone who brings skills to the country”, Orlando said.

Ngala, 21, arrived in South Africa from Kinshasa in 2017 and immediately took up judo with Orlando. He has graduated to become a coach. “Judo helped me a lot with (making) friends,” said Ngala. “In Alexandria, everybody who lives here is like my family. I am Congolese. I am black.

I am African. We are all African”.

Standing and cracking jokes with two South Africans after competing at a weekend event for World Refugee Day on Monday, Denzel Shumba, 17, who moved to South Africa with his family 10 years ago from Zimbabwe, also took up judo.

“South Africa (is) a difficult place sometimes because there’s xenophobia,” he said. Shumba said taking up judo has helped him to become a calmer, more respectful and peaceful person, learn a valuable skill and make new friends.

And that is exactly what Orlando wants to see. “South Africa is a bit of a showcase of what is happening in the world. We are all mixing up. People are migrating. More and more we need to learn from each other, to learn to live together, next to each other,” he said.

Orlando, athletic and with piercing blue eyes, is originally from Italy, but has worked in Ethiopia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and now South Africa, setting up judo dojos to empower the youth and integrating people in disadvantaged communities. — AFP



Congolese coach Rudolph Ngala, of the Dojo for Hope in Alexandria, Johannesburg, helps one of his young students to perform an exercise.



Italian coach Roberto Orlando demonstrates a technique to some of the children he trains.

Beverly Hills 9021... oh: Planning row pits new against old in ritzy US zip code

It’s a dispute that plays out in towns the world over: a new property owner wants to alter a much-loved landmark against the wishes of locals. It’s his money. It’s their community. So far, so familiar.

But this is Beverly Hills, where the perfectly manicured mansions of celebrities and socialites populate one of the world’s most desirable zip codes. Oh, and the property in question is worth \$40 million. “It is extremely beautiful,” said preservationist Alison Martino, who grew up four blocks away from the North Roxbury Drive house bought in 2020 by Eric Baker, the co-founder of internet-based ticket empire StubHub.

“It’s on a double lot, which makes it very stately and it’s pushed back from the street. It almost looks like a park. It’s the most beloved house in Beverly Hills.” To the visitor, the whole city looks a little like a park; lavish homes nestle on tree-lined streets that are peopled chiefly by Lululemon joggers and the occasional member of household staff.

Elvis, Sinatra, Madonna

The enclave of Beverly Hills began life a little over a century ago, and soon established itself as byword for luxury; an oasis for the well-heeled who made their money in the newly burgeoning film industry, but found nearby Hollywood a bit tawdry. Over the years, it has been home to a Who’s Who of entertainment, counting Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Madonna and Jennifer

Aniston as residents.

Today, minibuses ferrying star-spotting tourists whizz through the neighborhood, with guides pointing out the present and former homes of the famous. Roxbury Drive is a particularly rich vein, with lots once owned by Lucille Ball, Peter Faulk, Jack Benny, Jimmy Stewart, and Rosemary Clooney.



This aerial image shows the house on North Roxbury Drive in Beverly Hills, California owned by internet mogul Eric Baker is seen. —AFP

“When Lucille Ball moved to Beverly Hills, she wanted that house, but it wasn’t for sale, so she bought the house across the street so she could look at it,” said Martino.

\$39.1 million

The object of Ball’s desire is a Regency Revival home constructed 80 years ago by Beverly Hills master builder Carleton Burgess. The 9,000-square-foot spread sits among fabulous lawns and boasts its

own full-size tennis court, a pavilion and a swimming pool. Previous owners annually festooned the house with Christmas decorations, Martino says, welcoming the neighbors over to see.

But in 2020, Baker slapped down \$39.1 million for it—almost double its previous sale price—adding a glistening centerpiece to a property portfolio that reportedly already

he wants to take a wrecking ball to the place.

“They want to tear it down so they can build a bigger, more modern house with the latest architecture,” wrote one commentator on Martino’s Vintage Los Angeles Facebook page. “The thought of this impeccably well-maintained historical building and grounds being demolished sickens me.”

Others mutter darkly about not wanting something that “looks like an embassy compound” with a building that goes right up to the street. “Even with all the money in the world, you don’t get to do whatever you want,” said life-long Beverly Hills resident Rebecca Pynoos. “Our cultural heritage shouldn’t be sold to the highest bidder.”

2am meeting

Feelings are running so high that a recent planning meeting went on until 2am. After seven hours of back-and-forth, much of which hinged on whether or not the house was sufficiently well-known to merit preservation, councilors voted to bring the matter back for further consideration on June 21.

The discussion on Tuesday night looks set to be lengthy—councilors have been presented with a 727-page document that includes a missive from actor Diane Keaton. “I am pleading with you... This charming and historic home needs to be preserved for us and future generations,” she writes.

For campaigner Jill Tavelman Collins, the argument over the North Roxbury Drive house is emblematic of a larger issue in Beverly Hills. “We’ve lost Lucille Ball’s house, we’ve lost Jimmy Stewart’s house... there’s so little left on Roxbury that is from that time and I think it’s pulling at everyone’s heartstrings,” she said. “I think it’s like the straw that broke the camel’s back.” — AFP

Egypt’s El-Gouna film fest postponed due to ‘global challenges’

Egypt’s nascent El-Gouna Film Festival has postponed its sixth edition to 2023, organizers said citing “global challenges”, in a country hit hard by rising prices since the Ukraine war. Organizers did not specify a new date for the event, which was initially scheduled for October, only saying in an Instagram post that it would be next year.

Billionaire tycoon Samih Sawiris established the festival in 2017, hosting the Arab world’s glitterati every year in the Red Sea resort of El-Gouna, itself a creation of the Sawiris clan, Egypt’s richest family.

Previous editions have welcomed the likes of Forest Whitaker and Owen Wilson. Last year’s iteration saw controversy break out after the film “Feathers”—winner of the grand prize at the Cannes Critics Week—was accused of tarnishing Egypt’s reputation. —AFP



‘Jurassic’ is again top draw in N American theaters

“Jurassic World Dominion” again stomped to the top on North American movie screens this weekend, while new release “Lightyear” didn’t quite make it to infinity, or beyond. Universal’s latest dinosaur frightfest—the sixth in the “Jurassic Park” franchise—took in an estimated \$58.7 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported. It stars Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Laura Dern and Jeff Goldblum.

“Lightyear,” Pixar and Disney’s latest computer-animated offering from the “Toy Story” empire, earned \$51 million. David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research called that “a soft opening for a spinoff of one of the most successful animation series of all time.” Chris Evans voices title character Buzz Lightyear, who battles evil Emperor Zurg while trying to find his way home from a hostile planet. “Lightyear”, which features a same-sex kiss, has been denied release in more than a dozen mainly Muslim countries, a source close to Disney told AFP this week.



In this file photo Jeff Goldblum speaks as the cast and director of Jurassic World Dominion sit down for an interview with SiriusXM hosts Jess Cagle and Julia Cunningham at SiriusXM Studios in New York City. — AFP

Still soaring in third place was Paramount’s “Top Gun: Maverick,” with a \$44 million take that Variety called “mammoth” for a film in its fourth week. With total earnings of \$466 million domestically and \$419 million overseas, the action adventure sequel to the original 1986 film has become the biggest hit of Tom Cruise’s not-too-shabby career.

Fourth spot went to Disney’s “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness,” at \$4.2 million. Domestic earnings for the Benedict Cumberbatch sci-fi film are now just north of \$400 million. And in fifth place was “The Bob’s Burgers Movie” from 20th Century. Based on the popular TV series, it took in \$1.1 million. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- “The Bad Guys” (\$980,000)
- “Everything Everywhere All at Once” (\$960,000)
- “Downtown Abbey: A New Era” (\$830,000)
- “Sonic the Hedgehog 2” (\$228,000)
- “Brian and Charles” (\$198,000) —AFP



Sports

Scrappy Fitzpatrick hits the shot of his life to win Open

27-year-old captures first major title

BROOKLINE: Scrappy English underdog Matt Fitzpatrick, hardened in steel town Sheffield, endured epic pressure and hit the shot of his life when it mattered most on Sunday to win the US Open. The 27-year-old blasted a stunning 9-iron from a left fairway bunker onto the 18th green and two-putted for par from 18 feet to capture his first major title. "It's one of the best shots I ever hit. There's no doubt about it," he said. "That probably is such a huge shot in the moment."

"If I'm honest, I look back to my three approaches into 15, 16, and 17 as all really good shots - 18 was kind of just a bit of hit and hope. "It just all happened so fast. It was like just kind of natural ability took over... it was amazing. "The feeling is out of this world. It's stuff you dream of as a kid. To achieve it, I can retire a happy man tomorrow." Fitzpatrick credits his upbringing with developing the work ethic and discipline that paid off with a dream come true at The Country Club, where he had won the 2013 US Amateur.

"It's a steel town, but I love Sheffield. It's great. It's where I'm from. It's where my football team's from. It's where all my best pals are from," Fitzpatrick said. "I feel like I'm the same deal. Not expected to do well, not expected to succeed. I've won a major today. "I feel like I certainly work hard for it, and that's kind of where I've grown up from is that's the mentality of everyone around there. It's certainly like underdog mentality and you work for what you get."

For the past two years, part of that effort has been a fitness training program that has him hitting

longer off the tee. "Since I've been hard on it from the start this year, I've noticed an even bigger jump without really feeling like I'm going after it," Fitzpatrick said. "For me hitting driver and pitching it on the green, I didn't actually expect that this morning. That was kind of a real good indication of where I've got to."

Major for caddie Foster

Fitzpatrick's caddie, Billy Foster, is finally the bagman for a major champion after 40 years carrying clubs for such stars as Seve Ballesteros, Lee Westwood, Thomas Bjorn and Darren Clarke. "It means the world to Billy," said Fitzpatrick. "It's unbelievable. I know it's something he's wanted for a long, long time. To do it today is incredible. "We ended up working together. I was kind of in between caddies. He just split up with Lee, and just happened to work out."

"It's so funny. He kept telling me the first time on the job, I'll just do 25 weeks and maybe get a fill-in for the others. I think he's had about two weeks off in four years." It was Foster who recognized the improvements in Fitzpatrick's game and his knowledge of The Country Club could come together into a breakthrough major triumph. "Billy had been saying for a while, the time will come," Fitzpatrick said. "You're playing so well. Just keep doing what you're doing. It will come. It will happen."

"I put myself in position after two rounds and then played well yesterday. I just really believed this could be the time. Because of my success here before, it just felt like this was the time. "It all just



BROOKLINE: Matt Fitzpatrick of England poses with the US Open Championship trophy after winning during the final round of the 122nd US Open Championship at The Country Club on June 19, 2022. —AFP

fell into place that this was the place it was going to happen." Fitzpatrick says that it takes six major wins to be a legend. "I've got a bit of a way to go,

but it's a good start," he said. "I've just got to keep doing what I'm doing and hopefully more will come. "I'm delighted with one so far." —AFP

News in brief

Medvedev remains at top

PARIS: Russian Daniil Medvedev remained top of the ATP rankings released Monday despite his loss in the Halle final over the weekend to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz. Hurkacz's victory saw him jump two spots into 10th place while Italian Matteo Berrettini, who won on grass at Queen's, falls to 11th and Britain's Cameron Norrie to 12th. Serbia's Filip Krajinovic, the losing Queen's finalist, rose from 48th to 31st. In another development, World number one Medvedev screamed at his coach during an on-court outburst Sunday before going on to lose his second straight ATP grass-court final when he was brushed aside by Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in Halle. Medvedev had few answers as he crashed to a 6-1, 6-4 defeat inside 64 minutes. This was a second consecutive heavy defeat in a final for the Russian who also lost in straight sets to Tim van Rijthoven last Sunday at 's-Hertogenbosch. —AFP

Chelsea's Buck to step down

LONDON: Bruce Buck is stepping down as chairman of Chelsea after almost 20 years in the role, the Premier League club announced on Monday. The American, who will leave his post at the end of June, will continue to be involved in the club as a senior advisor. It follows the completion of the Todd Boehly-led consortium's takeover of Chelsea at the end of May. "I am proud to have helped Chelsea realise great success on the pitch and make a positive impact in the community," said Buck. "Now is the right time to step down and let new ownership build on the strong foundations we have in place." Buck has been chairman since 2003 after playing a key role in previous owner Roman Abramovich's acquisition of the club and has overseen huge success on the pitch for both the men's and women's teams and major development off it. —AFP

Papadakis, Cizeron take off

PARIS: Olympic ice dance champions Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron announced on Monday they are taking a year off from competition. The French couple, who won the Olympic title in Beijing in February, also won a fifth world title in March. They will now miss the 2023 world championships in Saitama, Japan. "We decided to take a little break from competition, to take the time to rest and to concentrate on shows and gala tours," Cizeron said in an interview with AFP and French sports daily L'Equipe. The announcement puts in doubt the couple's future involvement in high-level competition. "The only thing we're sure about is that we won't do next season. For everything else, all the doors are still open," Papadakis said. "It wasn't really a difficult decision to take. It was difficult to confirm it (in our minds) because we have never taken this sort of decision," Papadakis said. —AFP

West Ham sign Nayef Aguerd

LONDON: West Ham announced the signing of Rennes defender Nayef Aguerd on Monday in a deal worth a reported £30 million (\$37 million) once add-ons are included. The Morocco international, 26, who spent two seasons with the French Ligue 1 club, has signed a five-year contract with David Moyes' side. "I was really excited when I heard about West Ham United's interest," said the left-sided player. "When I heard about it, I knew I needed to go to the Premier League, because it's a dream for every player. "West Ham is a historic club. I saw a few of their games this year, and I saw the fans and the atmosphere were fantastic." Moyes, whose side finished seventh in the Premier League last season, said Aguerd had been on the club's radar for some time. —AFP

England power past plucky Netherlands in second ODI

AMSTELVEEN: England beat off a plucky attack by the Netherlands on Sunday to defeat the hosts by six wickets in a shortened second one-day international at VRA cricket ground outside Amsterdam. The win by the world champions gave them an unsailable 2-0 lead in the series, with the final match to be played at the same venue on Wednesday. The Netherlands won the toss and opted to bat, setting Eoin Morgan's men a target of 236-7 in 41 overs.

Heavy rain overnight delayed the start of the match with officials waiting for wet patches to dry next to the batting-friendly pitch and on the outfield. England opener Phil Salt slapped 77 off 54 balls before falling to Dutch youngster Arjan Dutt, who also claimed the scalp of fellow opener Jason Roy.

Roy, who scored a single run in England's record total of 498 on Friday, redeemed himself by hitting 73 off 60 balls. Unlike Friday's run-fest which was peppered with sixes, Sunday's match was a more demure affair, with England's first six only coming in the 15th over when Roy smacked Dutt over mid-wicket to clear the boundary. Salt survived an early scare when an attempted off-side cut sent the ball into the air, only to fall between two Dutch fielders - none of whom decisively nominated for the catch.

The Welsh-born Salt never really seemed trou-

bled after that, celebrating his half-century with a stylish four off the bowling of Bas de Leede. Dutt however had the last laugh when Salt attempted to play around the ball and was beaten, seeing the bails flying off the stumps behind him. England however scored freely, smacking 29 fours despite the fall of Morgan and Liam Livingstone's wickets in quick succession.

'Missed opportunity'

"I'm delighted," Morgan told Sky Sports after the match. "With the ball, Brydon Carse came into the game and hit the series with plenty of pace and with something we haven't seen before. "And with the bat again Phil Salt contributed for the second time doing what he does. Jason Roy did well in his 100th cap," Morgan said. The Netherlands earlier posted a solid 235-7 against a blistering England attack led by David Willey and Carse on a deck that mainly stayed low.

Newly-minted captain Scott Edwards' move paid far better dividends than Friday's first ODI, when England were sent in to bat and proceeded to set a new one-day world record of 498. Top-scoring Dutch batsman Edwards, with 78, played a skipper's innings which included three sixes and four fours. Former captain Pieter Seelaar, who has been plagued by a recurring back injury and did not play, announced his retirement from international cricket after the match.

Together with exciting rookie Teja Nidamanuru, who slugged 28 off 30 balls, Edwards put on the best partnership for the Dutch of 73 runs. Edwards was eventually run out after Willey removed the



AMSTELVEEN: Scott Edwards of the Netherlands looks on during the second one day international (ODI) ICC Cricket World Cup Super League cricket match between The Netherlands and England on June 19, 2022. —AFP

bails at the bowlers' end with a bull's-eye throw. "I was feeling good out there. Today was a missed opportunity to really get that score up to 260," said Edwards. "We need to improve our powerplay. That's where the game got away from us."

De Leede carved out a patient 34 including slog-ging a big six off the bowling of Adil Rashid in the 15th over, the ball flying over cow corner to break a window pane in the press box. A promising spell however came to an end when he mistimed another attempt at a slog off the bowling of Livingstone, popping the ball up into the air for an easy catch by Willey. A late flurry by Logan van Beek with 30 not out saw the hosts post a defendable total. —AFP

Kupcho captures Meijer LPGA Classic in playoff

WASHINGTON: Jennifer Kupcho survived a roller coaster of a round to win the Meijer LPGA Classic with a birdie at the second playoff hole, denying 2021 champion Nelly Korda and Irish Solheim Cup star Leona Maguire. After failing to clinch the playoff at the first hole - where she missed an eagle putt from inside four feet, Kupcho two-putted from the fringe at the second playoff hole, again the par-five 18th, to seal it.

Maguire had a chance to extend the playoff, but her two-foot birdie putt lipped out. Korda was eliminated with a par at the first playoff hole as both Kupcho and Maguire came up with birdies. "It's been really special," said Kupcho, who added a second LPGA victory to the major title she captured at

the Chevron Championship in April.

"I mean, this leaderboard was stacked. I think that's what I'm most proud of is the players that were up there with me - it was a very close battle to the end and I'm proud of it." Kupcho started the day one off Korda's lead and was in trouble early with a double bogey at the third and a bogey at the sixth. She regrouped to card a one-under-par 71 for an 18-under total of 270, where she was joined by Korda - who needed a birdie at the 72nd hole to cap an even par round and make the playoff - and Maguire, who stormed to the top with a seven-under par 65.

New Zealand's former world number one Lydia Ko was alone in fourth after a bogey-free 68 for 271. Kupcho, who opened the week with a career-best 63 and also led after the second round, rolled in a long eagle putt to start turning things around at the eighth. She added a birdie at the ninth then saw another long birdie putt curl just enough to drop into the side of the cup at 12.

She would add another birdie to take a one-shot lead, but a bogey at 16 dropped her back into a tie.

Korda had her own troubles early with bogeys at the fourth and ninth, but she bounced back with birdies at 10 and 12 before a bogey at 13 - where she was unable to get up and down from a greenside bunker. The American, who was playing her second tournament since a four-month absence to treat a blood clot in her left arm, forced her way into the playoff with a birdie at the 72nd hole, where she chipped to two feet.

But it was Maguire, who won her first LPGA title at the Drive On Championship in Miami in February, who went into the playoff with all the momentum after a superb round that featured eight birdies, the last one giving her the clubhouse lead. Her steady rise was a marked contrast to the fortunes of US star Lexi Thompson, who had the solo lead after her fourth birdie of the day on 10 but fell back with three bogeys coming in. —AFP



MICHIGAN: Jennifer Kupcho of the United States poses with the trophy after winning the Meijer LPGA Classic at Blythefield Country Club on June 19, 2022. —AFP

'Positives' for India as South Africa T20 series ends 2-2

BANGALORE: Skipper Rishabh Pant on Sunday said India's different approach to win matches has paid off after their Twenty20 series against South Africa ended 2-2 with the final game being washed out. The hosts bounced back from 2-0 down to level the series with convincing victories in the absence of top stars including regular captain Rohit Sharma and batting stalwart Virat Kohli. Rain played spoilsport in the series decider in Bangalore when persistent showers forced umpires to call off the match with just 3.3 overs bowled and India on 28-3 after being put into bat first.

"It might get a little bit frustrating (with the no result), but there are a lot of positives, especially the way the

whole team showed character after the series was 2-0 (in favour of South Africa)," said Pant. "We are just finding different ways to win the matches, we are trying to play different kind of cricket which we never used to play. There will be mistakes but as along we learn from our mistakes and keep improving it will be fine."

India won the third match by 48 runs and then hammered the hosts by 82 runs for their second successive win on Friday. Pace bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar was named player of the series for his six wickets. Indian opener Ishan Kishan topped the batting chart with 206 runs. Pant, who was made national captain for the first time ahead of the series when KL Rahul pulled out injured, had an ordinary outing with scores of 29, 5, 6 and 17.

"It is for you guys to decide on how I am doing as a player and captain," the wicketkeeper-batsman said on his first series as Indian leader. "I can only focus on giving my 100 per cent every time I go on the field and keep improving." India now head to Ireland for two T20 matches while a few players including Pant head straight to England for a rescheduled fifth Test starting



BANGALORE: South Africa's Keshav Maharaj (left) and India's Rishabh Pant pose for pictures as they share the trophy after rains interrupted the fifth Twenty20 international cricket match between India and South Africa on June 19, 2022. —AFP

July 1 in Birmingham. In the final T20, play started 50 minutes late, when rain forced the teams to head off the field just before the first ball was bowled. —AFP

Sports

Japan judo hits crisis point as bullied, burnt-out kids quit

Raising fears for sport's future in traditional powerhouse

FUKUROI: Japan is the home of judo but a brutal win-at-all-costs mentality, corporal punishment and pressure to lose weight are driving large numbers of children to quit, raising fears for the sport's future in its traditional powerhouse. Underlining the scale of the problem, the All Japan Judo Federation cancelled a prestigious nationwide tournament for children as young as 10, warning they were being pushed too hard. A pressure group dedicated to those injured or killed while practicing the martial art says that 121 judo-related deaths were reported in Japanese schools between 1983 and 2016.

Japan regularly dominates the Olympics judo medal table but federation president Yasuhiro Yamashita told AFP that the values of the sport are being lost as parents and coaches chase short-term glory. "Judo is a sport that emphasises humanity," said Yamashita, who is also the president of the Japanese Olympic Committee and won gold at the 1984 Los Angeles Games. "If you see no worth in anything but winning, and the result is all that matters, that gets distorted."

The number of people taking part in judo in Japan has plummeted by almost half since 2004 to about 120,000, according to the federation's figures. Children account for the steepest decline in numbers. Reports have emerged of primary school children being forced to lose weight-sometimes up to six kilogram - so they can compete in a lighter division. Young children are taught the same dangerous moves as Olympic athletes and intense training regimes can leave them injured or burnt out.

Parents and coaches have been known to berate referees during matches and corporal punishment still exists, despite reforms in a sport that has been plagued by abuse and bullying scandals over the years. The All Japan Judo Federation decided to take action in March by cancelling a national tournament for elite children aged between 10 and 12, planning to replace it with events such as lectures

and practice sessions. The backlash was fierce with angry parents and coaches accusing the federation of dashing children's dreams and jeopardizing Japan's status as the bastion of judo.

Violence, not words

Junior high school student Rion Fukuo, 13, a regional champion last year, told AFP at her judo club in the central Shizuoka region that she "feels sorry" for this year's primary school children who have no tournament to aim for. Kosuke Moroi, whose 12-year-old daughter attends the same club, said he was "disappointed" when he first heard the news but concluded it was "a good decision" after learning more about the reasons.

Yamashita said scrapping the competition had put a spotlight on "a problem that involves Japanese society". "It's been two-and-a-half months since we decided to cancel the competition and people are still debating it on TV and in newspapers," he said, adding that most opinions "have been in favor". Judo and other martial arts were used for military training in Japan before World War II and servicemen would visit schools to give lessons.

Martial arts were banned during the post-war US occupation but they later were recognized as sports, with judo making its Olympic debut at the 1964 Tokyo Games. Noriko Mizoguchi, a Japanese judoka who won silver at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, said a belief that corporal punishment makes children stronger was still common in Japan. "One thing that has stuck to coaching in Japanese sports is that it doesn't use words, it uses violence," she said. "There's a co-dependence, like with domestic violence, as if being hit is like being shown affection."

Problem parents

Coaches who use corporal punishment can be stripped of their licences but parents are harder to



FUKUROI: Children take part in a judo training session in Fukuroi, Shizuoka prefecture. Japan is the home of judo but a brutal win-at-all-costs mentality, corporal punishment and pressure to lose weight is driving large numbers of children to quit the sport. —AFP

control. Hisako Kurata, a representative of the Japan Judo Accident Victims Association, said most parents "don't think about the danger and just want their child to win". "Parents think that if their child wins a title, they'll be happy, they think they're doing it for their child," said Kurata, whose 15-year-old son died in 2011 as a result of a head injury sustained at his high-school judo club.

"The parents end up having the same win-at-all-costs mentality as the judo club and they con-

tribute to it." Mizoguchi, who has coached in France, said judo was "not fun" for Japanese children and that the "macho culture" surrounding the sport has had its day. "You have to treat each kid with care and have a long-term vision for the future, otherwise Japanese judo has reached its limit," she said. "Old-school coaches are scared that if we do away with the kids' competitions, Japanese judo will lose its strength. "I think it will actually become stronger." —AFP

Max Verstappen wins Canadian Grand Prix

MONTREAL: World champion Max Verstappen increased his lead in this year's Formula One title race on Sunday when he drove his Red Bull to a thrilling victory in a closely-fought Canadian Grand Prix. The 24-year-old Dutchman controlled a tactical race from pole position through three safety car interventions and resisted intense late pressure from Ferrari's Carlos Sainz to win by under a second. Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who on Friday declared his car as "undriveable", came home third for Mercedes to claim his second podium of a difficult season ahead of team-mate George Russell in fourth.

It was Verstappen's first Canadian victory in his 150th career start, his sixth this year and the 26th of his career, hoisting him 46 points clear of his rivals in the championship. "I was giving it everything," said Verstappen. "But so was Carlos. He was pushing, charging, pushing, charging. Naturally, it's easier to charge with DRS! I had fun today." Sainz said: "We were quicker, faster all race, but it's difficult to overtake round here. I'm particularly happy with the race pace and with the pressure we put on Max."

Hamilton, a record seven-time winner in Montreal, cheered the big crowd - part of a weekend attendance of 338,000 - and said he was

"overwhelmed to get third place. It's been quite a battle, but we've never given up. I've been inspired by my crew." Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who started at the back of the grid after taking a penalty for a new engine, finished fifth ahead of Esteban Ocon of Alpine. Valtteri Bottas and his Alfa Romeo team-mate Zhou Guanyu were later promoted to seventh and eighth after Fernando Alonso in an Alpine was penalised five seconds for his defending against Bottas.

The Spaniard slipped to ninth with Lance Stroll 10th for Aston Martin. After Saturday's deluge, the race began with a mixed-up 'wet' grid - with Leclerc, Perez and several others out of their normal race positions-as Verstappen made a clean start from his 15th pole position to take control. Behind him, Kevin Magnussen made a dazzling departure from fifth to challenge Hamilton, but the Briton resisted and retained fourth as the order settled, Russell making his move early to pass Mick Schumacher for seventh.

I've lost the engine

On lap three, Sainz passed Alonso, who had been unable to deliver the attacking start he promised, to take second and begin his pursuit of Verstappen. Perez suffered ill-luck on lap nine when, battling in midfield after starting 13th, his Red Bull lost drive at Turn 13. "I've lost the engine, man," he told the team as a Virtual Safety Car (VSC) was deployed and Verstappen and Hamilton pitted promptly to switch from mediums to hards. Seeking his first F1 victory, Sainz pulled clear at the front as Verstappen eased past Alonso, with a DRS move, to take second by



MONTREAL: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Canada Formula 1 Grand Prix on June 19, 2022, at Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve in Montreal. —AFP

lap 18. A second VSC on lap 20, when Schumacher pulled up and retired at Turn 13 after his highest ever grid position of sixth. It appeared his Haas car had suffered a power failure.

Sainz also pitted, re-joining third ahead of Hamilton - with Verstappen back in the lead ahead of Alonso, who did not pit. Alpine's reluctance to pit Alonso, still on his original mediums, resulted in Hamilton making an easy pass for third on lap 25. The two-time champion finally came in after 29 laps and re-joined eighth behind Leclerc, who was struggling on old tyres to pass Ocon. By mid-distance, Verstappen led Sainz by 7.5 seconds with Hamilton third, a further nine seconds adrift.

Dressel grabs 15th world gold; Santos sets age record

BUDAPEST: American Caeleb Dressel grabbed his 15th world championship gold medal and his second in two days as he won the 50m butterfly final in Budapest on Sunday. The other three winners on Sunday night were all collecting their first major-championship golds. Italian Nicolo Martinenghi won the 100m breaststroke, while American women Alex Walsh, in the 200m medley, and Torri Huske, in the 100m butterfly, took titles.

Dressel took just 18 strokes and 22.57sec for his latest gold. "In this sport nothing is given," said Dressel. "I knew my race plan: 18 strokes was my money number and it was exactly 18 strokes." Dressel, who said he "felt so lost" after winning five in Tokyo, believes the victory

"will definitely boost my confidence."

"It was good, it wasn't perfect, none of my races are. I'm excited to get that first individual one out of the way, day off tomorrow, then am excited to get 100 free, and then couple of relays." "I never come to these to count medals, it's just about swimming fast, that's all that's on my mind." At 42, runner-up Nicholas Santos broke his own record as oldest World Championship medalist. The Brazilian edged Andrew Michael of the United States by one hundredth of a second to claim silver.

"I'm 42 years old, it's not so easy to stay here competing with these guys," Santos said. "It's really painful to stay training hard to get to compete with these guys." Martinenghi made the most of the absence of Adam Peaty to grab the 100m breaststroke world title. "To win my first medal as a gold medal in my first final is every exciting," he said. Martinenghi, the bronze medalist in last year's Olympics, finished in 58.26sec to edge Dutchman Arno Kamminga, who repeated his Tokyo silver with American Nic Fink third.

Peaty has set the 17 fastest times in the history of the

event. He won the last two Olympic and last three world titles. "It's not the same without Adam, I know, but I am happy to sit in the throne that he left, I am happy to be the first guy that used this moment without him," said the 22-year-old Italian. "I am younger than him. I'm hungry but I think that he's hungry too. He wants to win a lot more and me too." Walsh collected her first gold medal at a major championships in style as she powered away from the field to win the 200 medley.

The American, the silver medalist in the Olympics last year, beat Australian Kaylee McKeown, winner of two backstroke golds in Tokyo, by 1.44sec. Another American, 16-year-old, Leah Hayes set a world junior record in third. Walsh said she was inspired by a full arena. "I forgot what it is like to have so many people in the crowd, I was shocked, looking up and seeing that the whole stadium was full of people," she said. "But it brought me a lot of adrenalin." Hungarian 33-year-old Katinka Hosszu, the defending world champion, was seventh, 4.24sec back, despite the support of her home crowd. —AFP

Mbappe accuses federation boss of ignoring racist abuse

PARIS: France international Kylian Mbappe on Sunday accused the president of the French Football Federation (FFF) of ignoring racist abuse after his penalty miss at Euro 2020. The Paris Saint-Germain star's decisive spot-kick against Switzerland was saved in the last-16 shootout, resulting in the world champions exiting the tournament. The 23-year-old was vilified on social media by furious fans, and even considered quitting the national team as a result.

In an interview with a Sunday newspaper, FFF president Noel Le Graet spoke of the lack of support Mbappe had felt after the Euro elimination, but failed to mention the racist abuse he had received, to the annoyance of the France striker. Le Graet said "he (Mbappe) considered that the federation had not defended him after his missed penalty and the criticism on social media networks".

"We saw each other for five minutes in my office," continued Le Graet, adding the striker "no longer wanted to play in the French team - which he obviously did not think". On Sunday, Mbappe responded on Twitter, regretting that Le Graet had not taken into account the "racism" of which had been a victim. "Yes finally I explained to him (Le Graet) above all that it was in relation to racism, and NOT to the penalty," Mbappe said. "But he considered that there had been no racism."

Le Graet later told French radio there was "no problem" between himself and Mbappe. "I agree with him. I understood everything and there is no problem with Kylian. I have always had a deep attachment to him." Le Graet had spoken last year about how the striker had "taken a knock" after the penalty miss.

"He came to the federation. He had taken a bit of a knock. The elimination had affected him, especially the articles and the comments," Le Graet told AFP. "My role was to show him affection, to tell him that the federation was counting on him to bounce back. It's not a defeat that can change a career." As for the racist insults, "maybe it affected him", continued Le Graet, "but it was settled very, very quickly. The proof: he is competitive at a very, very high level."

Le Graet had already come under fire last September after declaring that racism in football "does not exist or hardly exists". A few months before the Paris prosecutor's office announced it was investigating racist messages towards certain French international players after the Euros. On Saturday, FIFA published a report pointing to the increase in the number of insults against footballers on social media. According to this study, 38 percent of them were racist in nature. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075

Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265

Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

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)



DAMMAM: Moroccan player scores a goal during the 2022 Arab Futsal Cup in Dammam, Saudi Arabia on Monday June 20, 2022. Morocco beat Kuwait 6-4 in the opening match.

Morocco overpower Kuwait 6-4

2022 Arab Futsal Cup tournament kicks off

DAMMAM: The Moroccan National Futsal team beat Kuwait 6-4 in the opening match of the 2022 Arab Futsal Cup in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Morocco's Idris Rais scored a super Hat-Trick (4 goals) while Youssef Jawad and Abdellatif Fati scored the other goals. On the other hand, Kuwait's Abdul Rahman Al-Taweel scored two goals while Abdul Latif Al-Abbasi and Saleh Al-Fadhel scored one goal each.

The 2022 Arab Futsal Cup kicked off on Monday in Dammam, with 10 nations hoping to claim the sixth edition of the competition. The 10-

team tournament, organized by the Union of Arab Football Associations and hosted by the Saudi Arabia Football Federation, runs from June 20-28.

Group 1 includes Morocco, Kuwait, Mauritania and Somalia; group 2 Egypt, Iraq and Algeria; and group 3 sees hosts Saudi Arabia take on Palestine and Libya. The Arab Futsal Cup launches the UFAA's 2022-23 season, with the association keen to develop the sport of indoor football in the Arab world. The first edition of the tournament took place in Cairo in 1998, with hosts Egypt claiming the title after beating

Morocco 8-4 in the final.

Egypt, hosting the tournament again in 2005, retained the title with a 5-1 win over Morocco. Libya took the title on home soil in 2007, and won it again in Egypt a year later. There was a 13-year break before the fifth edition of the competition returned in 2021, with Morocco winning the title for the first time, defeating Egypt 4-0 in Cairo. In Monday's opening fixtures of the 2022 Arab Futsal Cup, Morocco took on Kuwait, after which Egypt met Iraq, and later Saudi Arabia played with Palestine. —Agencies

Ukrainian Romanchuk fastest in qualifying at world swimming

BUDAPEST: Ukrainian Mykhailo Romanchuk made a statement at the World Swimming Championships on Monday morning as he grabbed a narrow edge in the 800m men's freestyle heats. Romanchuk, twice a silver medalist in the worlds and once in the Olympics, is Ukraine's best hope of a gold in the worlds. He trailed in fourth early on in a high-powered third heat. He surged through late in the race to win in 7min 44.75sec, edging German Florian Wellbrock, the Tokyo open-water gold medalist, by 0.05sec.

Italian Gabriele Detti, who won the event when the championships were last in Budapest in 2017, was third. On a good morning for Italy, Gregorio Paltrinieri won the depleted final heat to qualify fourth. Elijah Winnington, who won the 400m free on Saturday, and Austrian Felix Auboeck, who was fourth in that race, were late scratches from the heats. The two men will race in the 200m freestyle final, which opens Monday evening's action.

One the 200m finalists who did race, but not very well, was German Lukas Martens. The silver medalist in 400 had a horrible swim, finished seventh in the last heat and failed to qualify. The morning opened with Nicolo Martinenghi showing no Monday morning hangover from his intoxicating 100m breaststroke victory the night before. A couple of minutes over 15 hours after his first major gold medal, the Italian was back in the pool and outpacing his breaststroke rivals.

He swam 26.68, 0.2sec ahead of American Michael Andrew with Brazilian Joao Gomes third and Sunday's bronze medalist American Nic Fink fourth. A small eddy of controversy continued to whirl round the breaststroke, as eight of the 66 entrants were disqualified. None



BUDAPEST: Ukraine's Mykhailo Romanchuk competes in a heat for the men's 800m freestyle event during the Budapest 2022 World Aquatics Championships at Duna Arena in Budapest on June 20, 2022. —AFP

were serious medal contenders. While no immediate reason was given, organizers announced that they would be hearing an appeal by American breaststroke swimmer Annie Lazor against her disqualification the day before for a "non-simultaneous" kick.

Unless over-turned, that decision will cost Lazor a place in the 100m final on Monday evening. Another of the young breakout swimmers of the opening weekend, French medley specialist Leon Marchand, also advanced to a semi-final on Monday morning, although in more low-key style. The 20-year-old, who won the 400m medley on Saturday, finished 11th best in the men's 200m butterfly heats. He was

2.28sec behind the fastest man, Kristof Milak, the hosts best hope of a gold in these championships. Milak only turned up the heat on the last lap as he burned off the opposition.

South African star Chad Le Clos was a late scratch. In the women's 200m freestyle, the leading contenders measured their efforts in the absence of the Olympic gold and silver medalist. Australian Ariarne Titmus is skipping the championships and Hong Kong's Siobhan Haughey, who has been struggling with an ankle injury, scratched on Monday morning. China's Yang Junxuan, who was quickest, and Australian Madison Wilson were the only two women to swim under 1min 57sec. —AFP



WOLVERHAMPTON: England's midfielder Bukayo Saka reacts during the UEFA Nations League, league A group 3 football match between England and Hungary at Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton. —AFP

More than 50% of footballers suffer online abuse

PARIS: More than half of footballers playing at the European Championship and African Cup of Nations suffered online abuse, a study published by FIFA revealed on Saturday. Much of abuse came from fans of the players' home nations. "Homophobic (40%) and racist (38%) comments provided the majority of the abuse," said the independent report published to coincide with the United Nations International Day for Countering Hate Speech.

Using artificial intelligence to track over 400,000 posts on social media platforms during the semi-finals and finals of Euro 2020 and 2021 African Cup of Nations 2021 "over 50% of players received some form of discriminatory abuse". FIFA said with the World Cup in Qatar just five months away, they will work with players union FIFPRO to implement a plan on how to protect players from abuse on social media. This will involve scanning recognized hate speech terms published to identified social media accounts, and once detected, prevent that comment from being seen by the recipient and their followers.

"Although the offending message remains visible to the person who originally made the comment, its visibility and reach will be significantly reduced," said FIFA. England's Marcus Rashford, Bukayo Saka and Jadon Sancho were all targeted online following their penalty misses in the Euro 2020 final, leading to widespread calls for a clampdown on racist abuse on social media. One teenager was given a six-week jail sentence for racially abusing Rashford on Twitter after the loss to Italy.

"Our duty is to protect football, and that starts with the players who bring so much joy and happiness to all of us by their exploits on the field of play," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino. "Unfortunately, there is a trend developing where a percentage of posts on social media channels directed towards players, coaches, match officials and the teams themselves is not acceptable, and this form of discrimination - like any form of discrimination - has no place in football." —AFP