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Assembly remains active until dissolution decree

New Cabinet needs to be formed before parliament is dissolved

Visit visa issuance to resume in weeks

KUWAIT: A study of new laws to regulate issuance of family and tourist visas is expected to finish within a week or two, a senior interior ministry official said. A decision to reopen the visas will be announced once the study is complete, the ministry's Media and Relations Department's Deputy Director Nasser Buslaib said. Kuwait stopped issuing visit visas, including family and tourist

visas, from Monday, June 27, 2022 until further notice, the interior ministry earlier announced. The decision, made upon instructions of First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, aims to allow the Residency Affairs Department to prepare a new mechanism with regulations to organize and improve the visa issuing process, the ministry explained in a statement.

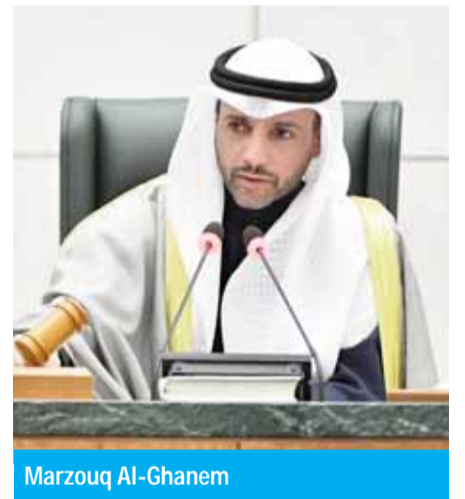
By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Tuesday that the Assembly remains active and functional until HH the Amir issues its dissolution decree as promised. HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said last week he has decided to dissolve the National Assembly to end lingering political disputes between the parliament and the government.

In a national address read by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Amir said that the dissolution decree will be issued "within months" after legal procedures are taken. He did not give a timeframe for the dissolution.

HH the Amir also vowed to call for snap polls. Under the constitution, fresh elections must be held within 60 days of issuing the decree.

Asked about the legal position of the Assembly, Ghanem said the house remains functional and all MPs, the speaker and committees should continue to operate as usual until the decree is issued. Unofficial reports said part of the procedures needed ahead of dissolving the Assembly is forming a new Cabinet, because the existing Cabinet is a caretaker one after HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah resigned in early April following a grilling. The resignation was accepted and the premier was asked to continue to lead a caretaker Cabinet.



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

News in brief

Egypt sentences killer to death

CAIRO: An Egyptian court on Tuesday sentenced a man to death for the murder of a student after she rejected his advances, a judicial source said, in a case that sparked widespread outrage. The court found the defendant Mohamed Adel guilty of the "premeditated murder" of university student Nayera Ashraf after he confessed to the crime in court, according to the source. — AFP



MUMBAI: Policemen walk past a collapsed building on June 28, 2022. — AFP

14 dead in Mumbai bldg collapse

MUMBAI: At least 14 people were killed after monsoon rains caused a four-storey building to collapse in the megacity of Mumbai, authorities said Tuesday. City officials said the structure, located next to a slum in a central city district, collapsed just before midnight on Monday, trapping more than 20 residents. — AFP

Ex-student kills 2 Iraq professors

ARBIL, Iraq: Two Iraqi university professors were gunned down in the Kurdish regional capital Arbil on Tuesday prompting the arrest of a disgruntled former student, authorities said. A Soran University engineering professor was shot dead in his home in the early hours, and the dean of the Salaheddin University law faculty, Kawan Ismail, was killed on campus shortly afterwards. —AFP

'Record' level of labor abuses

PARIS: Workers faced record abuse of their labor rights in the past year, from union bans to violence and murder, the International Trade Union Confederation said on Tuesday. The Middle East and North Africa remains the worst region for workers in the world. —AFP (See Page 8)

50 migrants dead in Texas truck tragedy

SAN ANTONIO, Texas: US police Tuesday were investigating the grim discovery of about 50 bodies in and around a trailer truck abandoned in sweltering heat near the Texas city of San Antonio, with victims identified as from Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. The shocking finding was one of the worst disasters involving migrants in the United States in recent years - and came five years after a similar deadly incident in the same Texas city, a few hours from the Mexican border.

The White House - facing intense pressure over its immigration policies - called the tragedy "absolutely horrific and heartbreaking," and said President Joe Biden, flying to a NATO summit in Madrid, has been briefed on the incident. San Antonio Fire Chief Charles Hood told reporters that at least 46 victims had died and 16 people had been transported to the hospital alive and conscious — 12 adults and four children.

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SAN ANTONIO, Texas: In this aerial view, members of law enforcement investigate a tractor trailer on June 27, 2022. —AFP

Modi in UAE as critic held, posts censored

DUBAI/NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, just weeks after a top official's remarks about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set off anger in the Gulf. Modi shared an embrace with UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, who met the Indian leader at Abu Dhabi airport, according to a tweet by India's foreign ministry spokesperson. "I am touched by the special ges-

ture of my brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, of coming to welcome me at Abu Dhabi airport. My gratitude to him," Modi tweeted. The one-day visit by Modi, who is heading back to India after attending the G7 summit in Germany, follows protests by Gulf states earlier this month after a spokesperson for his party made disparaging remarks about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on TV.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia condemned the comments, while Qatar and Kuwait summoned their Indian ambassadors. One Kuwaiti supermarket took Indian goods off its shelves. Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party suspended spokesperson

Continued on Page 6



ABU DHABI: UAE President and Ruler of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan receives India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the presidential airport on June 28, 2022. — AFP

US, Iran chief negotiators to talk in Qatar

DOHA: Chief negotiators from the United States and Iran were due to start indirect talks in Qatar on Tuesday, bidding to remove obstacles that have stalled attempts to revive a landmark nuclear deal.

US special envoy Robert Malley and Iran's Ali Bagheri have landed in Doha and met officials after more than a year of European Union-mediated talks in Vienna on a return to the 2015 agreement.

The Doha talks come just two weeks before US President Joe Biden visits the region for the first time since taking office, when efforts to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions will be high on the agenda. They are the start of a process to "unblock" the long-running Vienna talks, European Union foreign affairs spokesman Peter Stano said. "We managed to unblock the process and we are going to move

forward, and as a first step at this stage we have these proximity talks," he said in Brussels.

The deal has been hanging by a thread since 2018, when then US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it and began reimposing harsh economic sanctions on America's arch-enemy. US President Joe Biden's administration has sought to return to the agreement, saying it would be the best path ahead with the Islamic republic, although it has voiced growing pessimism in recent weeks.

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Local

Kuwait govt's hold over lands spurs real estate price increases: Unionist

Property price 15.8 times higher than a citizen's average annual income

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A recent study indicated that the average citizen in Kuwait needs around 16 years to repay the amount of financing granted to buy a house in Kuwait in monthly installments to the government, according to Marmore Mena Intelligence, part of Kuwait Financial Center Company (Markaz).

The housing issue has become a deep and complicated one, especially with the presence of around 140,000 housing requests in Kuwait in 2021, which require around KD 28 billion to realize, according to former housing minister Adel Al-Sabeeh.



Qais Al-Ghanim



"Govt not interested in resolving housing issue"

Kuwait Times spoke to former secretary of the Real Estate Union Qais Al-Ghanim to discuss the housing issue in Kuwait. "The housing issue is facing several problems in Kuwait, the most important being the government not passing a law that supports the 'release' of residential land to prevent the continuous rise in real estate prices," he explained.

"Prices are rising as there is no upgrading of laws to match the current situation, such as the real estate development law and real estate financing law, especially with the lack of lands," Ghanim pointed out. "The government is not interested in resolving the housing issue and does not consider it

a priority," he added.

The study indicated the average price of residential properties in Kuwait is 15.8 times the average annual income of a citizen, higher than the average price of housing in Dubai (4.4), Abu Dhabi (4.5) and Riyadh (2.8), and even higher than the most famous and desirable locations in the world such as London (14.5) and New York (9.9).

Ghanim commented about the reasons for the difference in real estate prices compared to other countries. "These countries have legislation and laws that support providing land to the private

sector to develop and build projects, while in Kuwait such laws did not pass," he said.

Ghanim spoke about solutions to the housing issue. "In order to resolve the housing issue, the only solution will be through the government 'releasing' housing land and passing laws to organize the process to increase supply," he said.

"The National Assembly has also restricted the role of the private sector in the private housing business by issuing laws that limit private companies dealing with housing land or building houses in private housing areas under the pretext of lim-

iting speculation or monopolies and controlling prices. But these laws achieved nothing, and the current prices confirm this," Ghanim said. "These laws have failed the housing issue due to the lack of specialized studies and research."

Ghanim pointed out the government has not conducted extensive studies and research that provide real solutions for the housing issue, adding the government has no intention to resolve the housing issue due to the spending pressure and providing streets, buildings and services to the new areas.



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing landmarks of Kuwait City and its residential suburbs.

China reiterates need to boost ties with Kuwait

BEIJING: A senior Chinese official on Tuesday underscored necessity of pursuing efforts for bolstering the Kuwaiti-Chinese relations at various levels. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the Deputy Foreign Minister, Deng Li, affirmed the need for carrying on with these efforts during a meeting, held in the Chinese capital Beijing, with the outgoing State of Kuwait's Ambassador Samih Johar Hayat. Li lauded the departing Kuwaiti envoy for his efforts in strengthening the relations and cooperation, affirming that the two countries have been bonded with friendly

and amicable ties as well as a robust partnership. Moreover, Kuwait and China have been steadily coordinating for addressing various regional and international issues. He reaffirmed Beijing's readiness to bolster the mutual political confidence, expand scope of interests' exchange and advance the strategic partnership with the State of Kuwait. Meanwhile, Hayat expressed deep gratitude for the Chinese leadership's support for him during his service in the Asian nation, adding that Kuwait would continue to stand firmly on China's side vis-a-vis core issues that concern the two sides. — KUNA



BEIJING: Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Deng Li meets Kuwait's Ambassador Samih Johar Hayat. — KUNA



KUWAIT: KISR acting director general Dr Mane Al-Sdairawi and EPA chief Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah sign the agreement. — KUNA photos



KISR acting director general Dr Mane Al-Sdairawi and EPA chief Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah shake hands after signing the deal.

Kuwait environment, research bodies join forces to prevent fish kill

KUWAIT: Kuwait's environment protection body and a local research center signed a deal on Tuesday to activate an early warning system aiming to prevent clumps of dead fish washing ashore in territorial waters, often caused by a toxic algae bloom. The agreement between the Environment Public Authority (EPA)

and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) is a significant environment conservation initiative, according to EPA chief Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah, saying the deal mainly comprises an "early warning system" for any increases in algae populations on Kuwait waters. The deal is the latest in a long list of joint endeavors linking the two Kuwaiti bodies, all of which aim to protect Kuwait's environment from any potential threats, said KISR acting director general Dr Mane Al-Sdairawi, hailing the endeavor as a measure to preserve the country's marine ecosystem. On the environmental factors largely responsible for fish kill, Dr Qusai Kareem, the KISR architect behind the project, cited algae bloom and rising water temperatures as the primary causes, hoping the deal would go a long way in protecting marine life.— KUNA

Kuwait's interior minister praises fire department's tech staff

KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah on Tuesday lauded the efforts of the national fire department's technology and maintenance workers, saying their prowess has "served the nation well." Surveying daily operations at Kuwait Fire Force's technology and maintenance depart-

ment, he said the national workforce there are the backbone of the fire department, remembering their profound contributions during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, said an interior ministry statement. He went on to acknowledge their dedication and skill in "serving the best interests of the nation," added the statement. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah is seen during a tour at Kuwait Fire Force's technology and maintenance department. — Kuwait Fire Force photos

GlobE network launches second meeting with Kuwaiti participation

VIENNA: The second meeting of the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities' (GlobE Network) general assembly started Tuesday in Austrian capital of Vienna, with participation of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha). Participants in the three-day meeting discuss modes of boosting cooperation and joint coordination via a comprehensive virtual platform to facilitate data exchange between anti-corruption authorities across the world, equip with resources and necessary tools to follow up on border-crossing corruption cases. A work plan for the upcoming period of time will be devised through three sessions, one moderated by Kuwaiti Nazaha. On the sidelines of a meeting attended by Nazaha's Vice-President, Counselor Nawaf Al-Muhmel, secondary meetings with experts and specialists from GlobE network will be taking place. The operational network was established during Saudi presidency of the group of 20 and was officially launched in June 2021. The Kuwaiti anti-corruption authority took part in discussion and editing process of the establishment charter, as it is considered a founding authority of the network and a supporter to its aims. — KUNA



Local

Kuwaiti artist addresses social, other topics through webcomics

‘My drawing is like a diary - a journal that people can relate to’

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Artist Hashem Behbehani is turning to alternative methods such as webcomics as a medium to express his ideas about politics and spread awareness where news stories have failed. Behbehani, 32, who works in IT healthcare at Dasman Diabetes Institute, creates extraordinary drawings to tell the story of Kuwait and be the voice of Kuwait. Kuwait Times spoke to Behbehani to learn more about his comic art. Some excerpts.



Hashem Behbehani

Kuwait Times: Growing up, did you draw? When did you start your comic journal?

Hashem Behbehani: Early on in school, I enjoyed art. In art class, I was one of the few interested male students. Back then, I was doing a lot of still-life art and focusing on shadows. I did that until I graduated from school. After that I went into IT and lost my way when it comes to art due to a lack of guidance and motivation to do art.

At that time in 2006, there was no social media, and there was not as much appreciation for art as much as today. Today, you can see the new generation has it better in terms of the way they normalize art, but back then, art was a hobby and not a career. I started with my comic journal as an idea before COVID in 2020. Later, due to the lockdown and busy life gone, I focused more on comics and wanted to express myself. I wanted to discuss politics and culture, and felt the need to have a wide-spread voice and share my experiences.

KT: Where do you get inspiration for your posts? Who influenced you?

Behbehani: My inspiration came from a person that I came across on YouTube. The advice he received as an artist was that we are always trying many different things at once, which makes us distracted. Following this advice made me focus on a character and not random unfinished art. The one character that is basically me is called ‘HB’. One of the comics I did is inspired by the idea of me questioning myself: HB is holding an opportunity in his hand, and he is excited about it. Then a question comes up, after that he throws the opportunity away. I posted this one specifically to be a reason for me to continue.

Inspiration comes from everything I see, hear and take in. Sometimes it could be something very personal to me or big political or international events. My drawing is like a diary - a journal that people can relate to.

KT: Can you tell us more about your philosophy in this type of art?

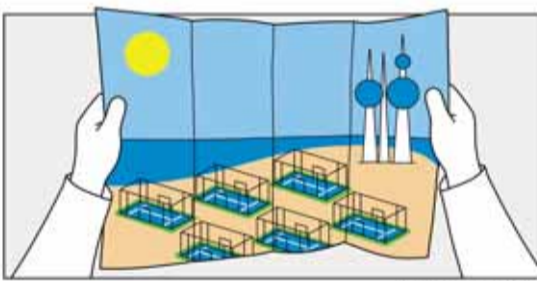
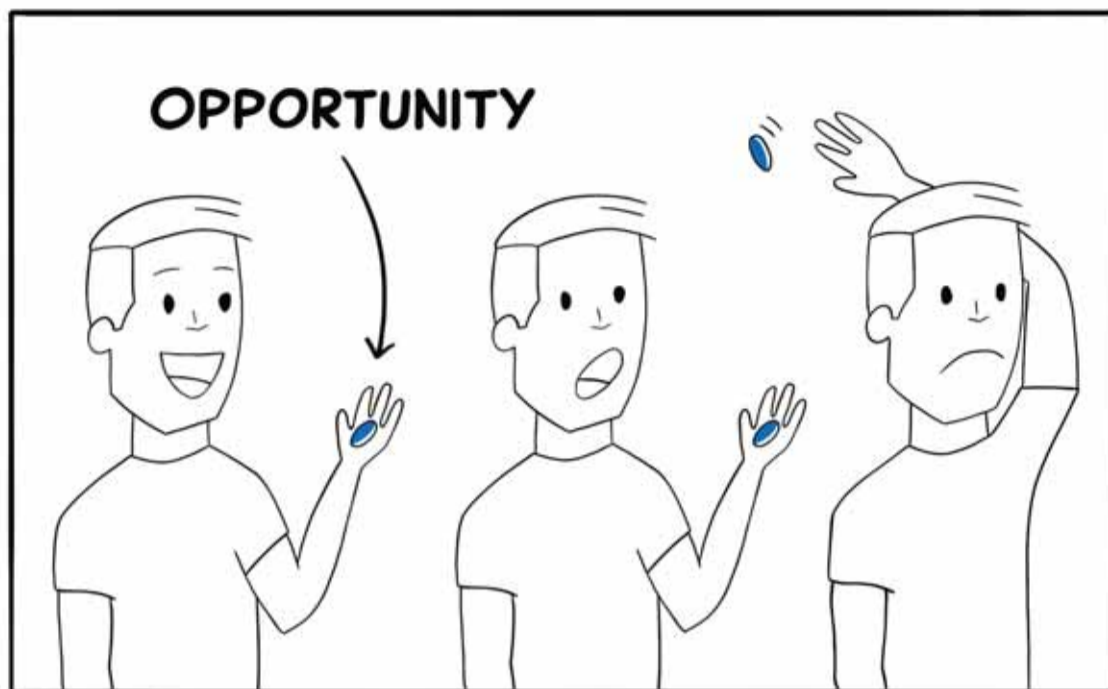
Behbehani: Politics is not my main focus, but this may change. There is a voice that needs to be heard. My philosophy comes down to experience. I don't target things on purpose. If Kuwait is going through a tough time and I feel like I want to express my opinion or just showcase something, then I feel art is the right way to do it. Sometimes art is stronger than words. The comic could put forward an idea and make people think without triggering anger.

On Twitter, I can see a lot of people speak about politics. They are always angry, but with cartoons, they are not. My goal is not to trigger people, but to show the other side, although the yoga post generated a lot of negative comments. This pushes me further to voice my opinion on anything that happens.

I never grew up in a place that was 100 percent Kuwaiti - I studied in a mixed school, then went to study abroad. Being someone who was not American studying in the US, I immediately felt I was in expats' shoes. We are all human. I saw how you should welcome people that are not from your country. I can relate to foreigners in Kuwait and hate it when Kuwaitis blame them for their problems. I know that foreigners are afraid to speak up because of the consequences.

KT: What was the first comic you ever worked on?

Behbehani: I started my first comic in September 2012 when I got back from the US after I graduated. I made seven comic works and posted them on my private personal Instagram account, describing my experience of coming back to Kuwait and suffering reverse culture shock. I made comics



on the driving situation in Kuwait and the difference between hiring interviews in Kuwait and US. Then I stopped. I thought people are not interested in digital art. I was predicting people will not care about my art, but I stopped too soon.

KT: How would you describe your style?

Behbehani: My thought was that I do not want to limit my audience. I want to keep it as wide as possible, and that is why the HB character always used to wear a t-shirt and jeans, but with time, some ideas required him to be in a dishdasha. I saw the positive reaction and people loved it. So I alternate between Arabian and Western styles.

KT: Have you considered making a comic book or animated film?

Behbehani: For now, I think my focus is on my comic journal on Instagram. Kuwait is going through a lot right now - I want to discuss everything that happens. Maybe after a few years, I can publish a book of all my comic posts. Our life is the story.

KT: Tell us more about the stages of your artwork?

Behbehani: I like to observe things and take notes. Throughout my day, if something happens, I put the ideas down in my notes, and then I think about how to translate the idea into a visual. I

sketch and draw it digitally on my iPad multiple times with a digital pencil. One comic takes at least seven hours and a maximum of 31. The longest drawing period was two weeks.

I always write down my ideas. I have more than 100 written ideas. If the idea is time sensitive, I draw it immediately and put it out; if not, I will save it for later. I post less because I want to focus on the quality and the more important message.

KT: Do you have any quick advice for aspiring comic illustrators out there?

Behbehani: My advice is to not think too much about the future. Think about the present - if you have something, just do it. Focus on one thing, one style, or one medium, and keep on doing it. You have to practice. You are going to be good at multiple things, but not great at one. Do not worry about people judging and negative comments. Things are much worse in your head than in real life.

KT: A last word.

Behbehani: Kuwait is going through a lot of tough times, a time when we are losing hope for a bright future, and I do not want us to lose hope. I feel that Kuwait is filled with people who are intelligent, motivated and smart, and we can do it. Even though it is good to point out flaws, at the end of the day, we want solutions, and we should be the solution to the problem.

New Cabinet soon to deal with budgets, parliament dissolution

KUWAIT: A new Cabinet will be formed soon to deal with the budgets and dissolution of the parliament, a source told Kuwait Times. To deal with the constitutional procedures with regards to plans by the political leadership to dissolve the National Assembly, a ministerial source said the intention is to announce the appointment of a new prime minister, who could be HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah or someone else, to form a new Cabinet within a week after the assignment decree, and this government will attend Assembly sessions and start discussions over the general budget and financial status of the state. The current parliamentary term will conclude following the Eid Al-Adha break.

“A new government formation is the best constitutional choice to avoid contesting the legality of the current government's attendance while being a caretaker Cabinet, as constitutional experts say a resigned government does not have the right to discuss major matters such as budgets,” the source argued.

The new government will be short-lived, no longer than the year's end, the source said, adding that its duty is to prepare for the new National Assembly elections, as it is expected the Assembly will be dissolved in October and elections will be held in December, adding the constitutional dissolution of the National Assembly stipulates that new elections must be held within two months from the date of the dissolution decree, otherwise the Assembly that was dissolved returns under the constitution as if it was not dissolved.

Employment policies

Separately, the government postponed the creation of a government body specialized in implementing employment policies that suit actual market needs until a new Cabinet is formed, after a ministerial committee completed the study of the issue and decided on the official entities that will handle this issue.

Follow-up of the current employment policy by the Civil Service Commission revealed that ministerial compliance with recommendations and instructions by CSC is not adequate, ministerial sources told Kuwait Times. This caused a shakeup in the appointment mechanism of Kuwaitis and expatriates, adding that appointment of expats on the reward system for example, or appointment of Kuwaitis in jobs other than their specialties, are among the biggest criticisms.

Sources said the government agreed to form a higher body headed by the deputy premier and state minister for Cabinet affairs and includes all ministry undersecretaries, in addition to CSC and Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), along with members of the private sector. This body will redirect appointments in a way that meets actual market needs and employs Kuwaitis in the private sector.

Sources said this committee will work on setting appointment policies in cooperation with higher education institutions such as Kuwait University, Ministry of Higher Education, PAAET and the Private Universities Council. These entities will accept high school graduates according to market needs in Kuwait, with the goal to provide new job opportunities for Kuwaitis to replace 50,000 expats within five years at various government entities.

In my view

Do we deserve democracy?



By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi

local@kuwaittimes.com

“We ask all to realize the magnitude of the national responsibility that lies on your shoulders in the positive participation in the election process and be keen on selecting the strong and honest.” - HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

I listened to the extraordinary speech of HH the Crown Prince (May Allah protect him), which is considered unprecedented in its frankness and being to the point, as he diagnosed the political situation like a skilled doctor who placed the scalpel in the right place.

There is no doubt Kuwait suffered domestically due to the rift that hit relations between the legislative and executive authorities, which hampered many proposed laws that are in the interest of the country, and the differences consumed many facilities that could have used in the service of the country. The start was with unfortunate events that took place on the day of the National Assembly's opening, which were not dealt with the required seriousness. Also, the government was not open enough with the opposition, so parliamentary life suffered. Away from blaming one party over another, or accusing this side and lauding the other, we must be cautious that democracy in emerging nations need to be reviewed constantly to address and solve the negative things that emerge during the democratic practice.

We must take into consideration that the founders, who brought the constitution into existence, set a grace period for several years, after which the constitution can be amended for more freedoms. This means the constitution is not sacred to a point that it cannot be improved or amended for more rights. For sure it has a dear status among Kuwaitis because it is the regulator between the ruler and the ruled, but it was approved and passed in 1962! Is it not better to reconsider it in 2022 for more development and freedoms?

There are laws that are not dealt with seriously, like for by-elections, due to their social depth. Yet it was possible to set rules that are more flexible to keep people away from such illegal elections. There is the lists system and readjustment of constituencies in a just manner that allows all to have equal opportunities.

Kuwait, domestically, needs to take a breath, and the speech of HH the Crown Prince was historic and put the scalpel on the wound. I hope people return the greeting with something better, and vote for qualified MPs to serve the country. Their aim should be development and future vision that achieve progress and prosperity.

The people today face a major responsibility after the extraordinary and historic speech of HH the Crown Prince, who placed the ball in the citizens' court, and the responsibility is now theirs. So it is important to deal with the election in Kuwait's general interests and stay away from voting for those under clouds of suspicion or those who do not have a realistic developmental project. It is not suitable to continue voting for people who do not have any project for the country's development.

News in brief

Energy bills on 'Sahel' app

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy added and activated a new service that allows people to pay other consumers' electricity and water bills easily via the 'Sahel' app, said Yousef Kazem, spokesperson of the unified government smartphone application. To activate this new service, the user must put in the customer's civil ID number and ministry website account's user details on the app, then specify the amount wanted for payment. The 'Sahel' app was launched mid-September 2021 and is aimed at efficiently finishing government transactions.

Thulhijja starts Thursday

KUWAIT: Al-Ojairi Scientific Centre confirmed that Thursday June 30th will officially be the start of the Thulhijja month of the Islamic calendar, while the start of Eid Al-Adha would fall on Saturday July 9th. The Centre also stated that Arafah Day would fall on Friday, July 8th. Eid Prayers is set at 5:10 am. The Centre sent greetings on this occasion to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the people of Kuwait.

Kuwait condoles with Jordan

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tuesday expressed compassion with Jordan on the gas tank explosion in Aqaba that killed and injured dozens. The ministry expressed its deepest condolences to the Jordanian government and people, wishing those injured a quick recovery.

GCC laments victims

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council stands by Jordan at this difficult time, Secretary General Nayef Al-Hajraf said on Monday, expressing his heartfelt condolences to Amman after a toxic gas leak at Aqaba Port earlier killed 10 people and injured 251. The leak occurred after a tank filled with toxic gas fell as it was being transported at the Red Sea port, a government spokesman had earlier said.

Envoy to Iraq's tenure ends

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi expressed on Monday his country's aspiration to develop cooperation with Kuwait "in a manner that enhances the interests of the peoples of the two countries." Kazemi's remarks came during a meeting with Kuwait's ambassador to Iraq, Salem Al-Zamanan, marking the end of his duties as an ambassador to Baghdad. Kazemi praised the strong relations that unite the two countries and aspire to perpetuate them and overcome all obstacles that arise. Zamanan expressed his thanks to the Iraqi government and the Prime Minister for the efforts to strengthen relations between the two countries in a way that serves common interests.



Kuwait oil at \$114.48 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait crude oil gained \$3.62 during Monday's trading session to reach \$114.48 per barrel (pb), compared with \$110.86 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Tuesday. Benchmark Brent futures edged \$1.97 higher to reach \$115.09 pb and West Texas Intermediate rose \$1.95 to \$109.57 pb.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A picture showing a fishing pier at one of Kuwait's beaches. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

SAP launches initiative to train national cadres and digitize government services

Supporting initiatives to empower national IT cadres

KUWAIT: In collaboration with the Federation of Kuwait Engineering Offices, Consultant Houses, and other private sector institutions, SAP submitted an initiative to the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares. The initiative aims to develop local programs, provide the Kuwaiti youth with SAP skills and methodologies, and share the necessary knowledge. These will help convert selected government services into electronic services, such as the Permits system in Kuwait Municipality.

The initiative represents a road map for the beginning of close cooperation between SAP, government agencies, and private sector institutions in Kuwait to provide Kuwait with advanced technologies and methodologies and government service automation capabilities to support Kuwait's digital transformation. The initiative was presented to Minister Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares by Ahmed Al-Faifi, Senior Vice President for SAP Middle East North. Eng Badr Al-Salman, the President of the Federation of Kuwait Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses, attended the meeting.

Commenting on the initiative, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs, Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares, said that by supporting and adopting this initiative, we aspire to qualify Kuwait's young men and women in the technology and digital transformation field. We want to empower them with the latest technological means that come in line with the implementation of the government's program to push forward the digitization of services, making it easier for citizens and residents of the country to complete their services.

Minister Fares also confirmed that this initiative aims to hold a range of free courses periodically for Kuwaiti youth in the field of information technology to develop their skills and keep them informed of the latest developments.

Private sector's role

Commenting on the initiative, Eng Bader Al-Salman said, "We look forward to achieving Kuwait's political leadership ambitions in seeing an influential role for the private sector as an initiator and supporter of Kuwait's development plans. We realize that automation, digital transformation, and eGovernment programs are key success factors in our time. Dr Rana Al-Fares, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs, will lead cooperation with global technology companies in achieving the aspirations of growth and development in Kuwait. I want to thank SAP's management and technical teams in Kuwait and the region for their initiative."

Engineer Badr Al-Salman confirmed that during his meeting with Minister Rana Al-Fares, Ahmed Al-Faifi highlighted SAP's experience in waste management in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as one of the successful environmental experiences in the region.

On this occasion, Faifi said, "SAP works closely with the region's governments, especially the GCC countries, to increase the productivity and competitiveness of its institutions by improving its services in various fields. As well, SAP plays an active role in upgrading the level of private sector companies and institutions in those coun-



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a group picture after the initiative is submitted to Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares.

tries. SAP has prepared its solutions and technologies to suit the requirements of the countries and institutions of the region and has designed the necessary skill sets for administrators, technicians, and project managers to implement public and private sector plans as efficiently as possible. We look forward to working closely with Kuwait stakeholders to activate the terms of this initiative. We also look forward to contributing to promoting government services and the Kuwaiti economy to new frontiers."

Faifi continued that the initiative focuses on transferring advanced technological expertise from SAP to the Kuwaiti youth in one of its key aspects. SAP believes that Kuwaiti youth are best able to understand the business requirements of

entity individually and issue the Permit in the shortest possible time.

Faifi concluded his statement by saying that SAP looks forward to activating the initiative under the supervision of Dr Rana Al-Fares. SAP intends to study the best options to train Kuwaiti youth on modern technologies and methodologies and qualify them professionally and systematically according to international standards. SAP also wants to help local resources develop electronic systems and services within Kuwait's digital transformation initiatives, including smart-city plans and other activities that contribute to Kuwait's ambitions, as it does in many other countries.

Sharing info on smart cities

Smart cities occupy an important aspect of the initiative. SAP is one of the leading international companies in helping countries implement their smart-city initiatives that have a significant economic and social impact on the lives of citizens on the one hand and the development of services and attraction of investments on the other hand. Discussing this area with the stakeholders in the State of Kuwait will contribute to supporting Kuwait's smart-city initiatives that increase their competitiveness with its counterparts regionally and globally.

Eng Magdy Sabry, Executive Manager of NoufEXPO, said that SAP's initiative comes as one of the fruits of the 8th eGovernment Forum (EGOV8) organized by NoufEXPO in cooperation with the Federation of Kuwait Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses on March 30 and 31, 2021. EGOV8 convened, at the time, under the auspices of Dr Rana Al-Fares, in which SAP participated and expressed its desire to contribute to supporting Kuwait's directions and plans related to the automation of government services.

Sabry added, "NoufEXPO continues to focus on its role as a generator and supporter of initiatives that best serve Kuwait's economic and social growth through state-of-art technologies. We believe this is the value proposition NoufEXPO delivers through its events."



Formulating influential role for private sector

their country and are keen to do the work required to the fullest.

He added that SAP would study the possibility of automating the Permits system in Kuwait Municipality, which is a crucial topic of the initiative. The Permits system, as stated earlier, was discussed extensively during the first EGOV8 panel. More than twenty government agencies contribute to this system. Kuwait Municipality, however, plays a key role by being the interface that connects all of these entities. The system aims to automate the process of issuing Permits by the relevant authorities according to their competence and eliminates the need of the licensee, an individual or institution, to deal with each government



Duterte unlikely to face court over drug war killings

German court gives 101-year-old ex-Nazi guard five years in jail

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KREMENCHUK, Ukraine: People walk by the Amstor mall, the day after it was hit by a Russian missile strike according to Ukrainian authorities in Kremenchuk. — AFP

16 killed in missile strike on Ukrainian mall

One of the most brazen terrorist acts in European history: Zelensky

KYIV: A Russian missile strike on a crowded mall in the central Ukrainian city of Kremenchuk killed at least 16 people, the head of emergency services said early Tuesday, sparking international outrage. "The Russian strike today on the shopping centre in Kremenchuk is one of the most brazen terrorist acts in European history," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his evening broadcast posted on Telegram.

Emergency services chief Sergiy Kruk said the main tasks were "rescue work, debris removal and the elimination of fires" following Monday's strike on the shopping centre. "As of now, we know of 16 dead and 59 wounded, 25 of them hospitalised. The information is being updated," Kruk said on Telegram.

"All response groups are working in intense mode," he said. "The work will go on around the clock." "I would like to stress once again: do not neglect air alerts!" Earlier, Zelensky had said "over a thousand civilians" were in the mall when the missiles struck the city, which had a pre-war population of 220,000 people.

"The mall is on fire, rescuers are fighting the fire. The number of victims is impossible to imagine," Zelensky wrote on Facebook. A video he shared



'Work will go on around the clock'

showed the mall engulfed in flames, with dozens of rescuers and a fire truck outside.

Emergency services also published images showing firefighters and rescuers trying to clear debris from the smouldering remains of the building. The Ukrainian defence ministry said the strike was deliberately timed to coincide with the mall's busiest hours and cause the maximum number of casualties.

Growing international outrage

The Ukrainian air force said the mall was hit by Kh-22 anti-ship missiles fired from Tu-22 bombers in western Russia's Kursk region. "The missile fire on Kremenchuk struck a very busy area which had no link

might only lift its objections after the summit concludes on Thursday. "We have made progress. That is definitely the case," said Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde. "We are prepared for something positive to happen today, but also for it to take more time," she added. "We must be patient and continue discussions even after the summit." Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said that he was neither "optimistic nor pessimistic at this stage". "We will go into this afternoon's discussion with Erdogan with an open mind," he told Finnish media.—AFP

At least 49 inmates die in Colombia prison riot and fire

BOGOTA, Colombia: At least 49 inmates were killed and dozens more injured early Tuesday after a fire broke out during a prison riot in southwestern Colombia, the national prisons agency said. The tragedy occurred when rioting inmates set a fire to try to prevent police entering their enclosure at the prison in the city of Tulua, said Tito Castellanos, director of the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute (INPEC). "Unfortunately there was a riot in the pavilion number eight of the Tulua prison, where there are 1,267 prisoners, with the unfortunate result that 49 people died," Castellanos told La W Radio. He said another 30 people were "injured and affected by the blaze and the smoke."

Castellanos said authorities were investigating whether prisoners had lit their mattresses as part of an "escape attempt" or whether the riot was provoked "to cover some other situation." He made no mention of whether any prisoners actually escaped.

A spokesperson for INPEC earlier told AFP that the death toll "may change." A report by Caracol Radio said more than 40 people had been injured. There were 180 inmates in the prison section affected by fire. Castellanos praised the efforts of prison guards, some of whom were injured, to control the blaze and help prisoners to safety. He said that without their intervention "the result would have been worse." Outgoing President Ivan Duque sent a tweet offering his solidarity with relatives of the victims.

"We regret the events that occurred in the prison in Tulua, Valle del Cauca," Duque said. "I have given instructions to clarify this terrible situation. My solidarity is with the families of the victims." Fatal prison riots are not uncommon in Latin America. In Colombia's neighbor Ecuador, nearly 400 prisoners have been killed in six riots since early 2021. Colombia's prison system has a capacity for 97,000 inmates but is overpopulated by some 16,000, according to INPEC.—AFP

Erdogan to meet Biden for NATO expansion talks

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday he would meet US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Madrid for talks on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the bloc's expansion into two Nordic states. Analysts believe the meeting could play a crucial role in breaking down Turkey's resistance to bids by Sweden and Finland to join the Western defence alliance in response to the war. The two leaders have had a chilly relationship since Biden's election because of US concerns about human rights under Erdogan. Biden and Erdogan last met briefly in October on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Rome. "We spoke with Mr Biden this morning



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan


and he expressed his desire to get together tonight or tomorrow. We said it was possible," Erdogan said.

He was speaking to reporters before flying to Madrid for talks that will start with his meeting with the leaders of the two Nordic countries and the NATO secretary general. Erdogan said he wanted to see the results of preparatory talks held on Monday in Brussels before deciding whether Sweden and Finland had done enough to lift his objections to their membership of the military alliance.

Turkey is a NATO member and could veto both countries' applications at the summit. "We are a 70-year-old member of NATO. Turkey is not a country that randomly joined NATO," Erdogan said. "We will see what point they (Finland and Sweden) have reached," he added. "We do not want empty words. We want results."

'Open mind'

Ankara has accused Finland and more particularly Sweden of offering a safe haven to Kurdish militants who have been waging decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. The Turkish leader has also called on the two countries to lift arms embargoes imposed on Turkey in 2019 over Ankara's military offensive in Syria. The two countries went into the NATO meeting open to the possibility that Turkey





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International

German court gives 101-year-old ex-Nazi guard five years in jail

German prosecutors are racing to bring the last surviving Nazi perpetrators to justice

BRANDENBURG AN DER HAVEL, Germany: A German court on Tuesday handed a five-year jail sentence to a 101-year-old former Nazi concentration camp guard, the oldest person so far to go on trial for complicity in war crimes during the Holocaust. Josef Schuetz was found guilty of being an accessory to murder in at least 3,500 cases while working as a prison guard at the Sachsenhausen camp in Oranienburg, north of Berlin, between 1942 and 1945.

shot. So every guard was actively involved in these murders."

More than 200,000 people, including Jews, Roma, regime opponents were detained at the Sachsenhausen camp between 1936 and 1945. Tens of thousands of inmates died from forced labour, murder, medical experiments, hunger or disease before the camp was liberated by Soviet troops, according to the Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum.

Contradictory statements

Schuetz, who was 21 when he began working at the camp, remained blank-faced as the court announced his sentence. "I am ready," he said when he entered the courtroom earlier in a wheelchair, dressed in a grey shirt and striped trousers.

Schuetz was not detained during the trial, which began in 2021 but was postponed several times because of his health. His lawyer, Stefan Waterkamp, told AFP he would appeal-meaning the sentence will not be enforced until 2023 at the earliest.

Thomas Walther, the lawyer who represented 11 of the 16 civil parties in the trial, said the sentencing had met their expectations and "justice has been served". But Antoine Grumbach, 80, whose father died in Sachsenhausen, said he could "never forgive" Schuetz as "any human being facing atrocities has a duty to oppose them".

During the trial, Schuetz had made several inconsistent statements about his past, complaining that his head was getting "mixed up". At one point, the centenarian said he had worked as an agricultural labourer in Germany for most of World War II, a claim contradicted by several historical documents bearing his name, date and place of birth.

'Warning to perpetrators'

After the war, Schuetz was transferred to a prison camp in Russia before returning to Germany,

where he worked as a farmer and a locksmith. More than seven decades after World War II, German prosecutors are racing to bring the last surviving Nazi perpetrators to justice.

The 2011 conviction of former guard John Demjanjuk, on the basis that he served as part of Hitler's killing machine, set a legal precedent and paved the way for several of these justice cases. Since then, courts have handed down several guilty verdicts on those grounds rather than for murders or atrocities directly linked to the individual accused.

Among those brought to late justice were Oskar Groening, an accountant at Auschwitz, and Reinhold Hanning, a former SS guard at Auschwitz. Both were convicted at the age of 94 of complicity in mass murder but died before they could be imprisoned.

However, Schuetz's five-year sentence is the longest so far handed to a defendant in such a case. Guillaume Mouralis, a research professor at France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), told AFP the verdict was "a warning to the perpetrators of mass crimes: whatever their level of responsibility, there is still legal liability." — AFP



BRANDENBURG AN DER HAVEL, Germany: (L to R) Plaintiff lawyer Thomas Walther, and co-plaintiff lawyers Hans-Jurgen Foerster and Pascal Luongo arrive for the sentencing hearing of the trial of former Nazi concentration camp guard Josef Schuetz. — AFP

where he worked as a farmer and a locksmith. More than seven decades after World War II, German prosecutors are racing to bring the last surviving Nazi perpetrators to justice.

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Libya talks begin at UN on breaking elections stalemate

GENEVA: The UN called for a "final and courageous effort" to break the deadlock over the rules for long-awaited elections in war-torn Libya, as talks between rival institutions began in Geneva. Parliament speaker Aguila Saleh and President of the High Council of State Khaled Al-Mishri are meeting at the UN's Palais des Nations for two days of talks to discuss the draft constitutional framework for elections.

Presidential and parliamentary elections, originally set for December last year, were meant to cap a UN-led peace process following the end of the last major round of violence in 2020. But the vote never took place due to several contentious candidacies and deep disagreements, over the polls' legal basis, between rival power centres in the east and west of the country.

"Your presence here today is an example of responsible leadership," the UN's top Libya official Stephanie Williams said as she opened the talks. "You have now reached a critical stage of what has been a long and difficult path."

"It is now the time to make a final and courageous

effort to ensure that this historic compromise takes place, for the sake of Libya, the Libyan people and the credibility of its institutions." She said the two figureheads needed to find consensus on timelines, modalities and milestones to guarantee a clear path towards holding national elections as soon as possible.

A week of talks between the Tripoli-based High Council and Saleh's eastern-based House of Representatives (HoR), aimed at agreeing on a constitutional basis for a vote, ended last Monday without a deal.

The prospect of elections appears as distant as ever since the HoR, elected in 2014, appointed a rival government to replace that of interim prime minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, arguing that his mandate has expired.

After failing to enter Tripoli in an armed stand-off in May, the rival administration has taken up office further east in Sirte-hometown of dictator Muammar Gaddafi, whose overthrow in a NATO-backed revolt in 2011 plunged the country into years of often violent chaos.

HoR-backed premier Fathi Bashagha said Wednesday in a letter to UN chief Antonio Guterres that he would "now be leading all efforts to bring elections to Libya at the earliest possible opportunity". Recent weeks have seen repeated skirmishes between armed groups in Tripoli, prompting fears of a return to full-scale conflict. — AFP



"I don't know why I am here"

He is highly unlikely to be put behind bars given his age. The pensioner, who now lives in Brandenburg state, had pleaded innocent, saying he did "absolutely nothing" and had not even worked at the camp. "I don't know why I am here," he said at the close of his trial on Monday.

But presiding judge Udo Lechtermann said he was convinced Schuetz had worked at Sachsenhausen and had "supported" the atrocities committed there. "For three years, you watched prisoners being tortured and killed before your eyes," Lechtermann said.

"Due to your position on the watchtower of the concentration camp, you constantly had the smoke of the crematorium in your nose," he said. "Anyone who tried to escape from the camp was

Ghislaine Maxwell to learn sentence for sex crimes

NEW YORK: Ghislaine Maxwell will learn her fate Tuesday when a US judge sentences the former socialite for helping late disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse girls. Maxwell, 60, faces receiving an effective life term in prison when judge Alison Nathan hands down her sentence in Manhattan's federal court.

The Oxford-educated daughter of the late British press baron Robert Maxwell was convicted late last year on five of six counts, the most serious for sex trafficking minors. Her lawyers have argued for leniency, citing a traumatic childhood and claiming that Maxwell is being unfairly punished because Epstein escaped trial. They called for Nathan to hand down a sentence less than the US probation office's recommended 20 years.

Prosecutors have asked that Maxwell receive between 30 and 55 years in jail, arguing that she has shown an "utter lack of remorse" for her crimes, committed between 1994 and 2004. Maxwell's attorney Bobbi Sternheim wrote in a letter Saturday to Nathan

that her client had been placed on suicide watch-despite not being suicidal-and that her lawyers would look to postpone her sentencing if she remained in solitary confinement.

During her high-profile trial late 2021, the prosecutors successfully proved that Maxwell was "the key" to Epstein's scheme of enticing young girls to give him massages, during which he would sexually abuse them. Two of Epstein's victims, identified as "Jane" and "Carolyn," testified that they were as young as 14 when Maxwell began grooming them.

Maxwell's lawyers say their client had "a difficult, traumatic childhood with an overbearing, narcissistic, and demanding father." "It made her vulnerable to Epstein, whom she met right after her father's death," they wrote in submissions filed earlier this month.

Money manager Epstein killed himself in prison 2019 aged 66 while awaiting his own sex crimes trial in New York. "Ms Maxwell cannot and should not bear all the punishment for which Epstein should have been held responsible," her attorneys pleaded.

The prosecution contended in its own court filing last week that Maxwell "was an adult who made her own choices." "She made the choice to conspire with Epstein for years, working as partners in crime and causing devastating harm to vulnerable victims," wrote Damian Williams, the US attorney for the Southern District of New York. — AFP

50 migrants dead in Texas...

Continued from Page 1

Early Tuesday, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said the toll had reached 50, mostly from Latin American nations including Mexico. "It's a tremendous misfortune... so far there are 50 dead: 22 from Mexico, seven from Guatemala, two from Honduras and 19 still without information about their nationality," the Mexican leader said at a morning press conference.

US officials said three people were in custody over the incident. Hood, the fire chief, said survivors had suffered heat stroke and heat exhaustion, and that there were no signs of water in the truck. "It was a refrigerated tractor-trailer but there was no visible working A/C unit on that rig," Hood said. San Antonio, which lies about 250 km from the border, is a major transit route for people smugglers.

US, Iran chief negotiators to...

Continued from Page 1

The talks in Doha will take place indirectly, with the delegations in separate rooms and communicating via intermediaries. The US and Iran do not have diplomatic relations. Earlier Malley met Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani to discuss "joint diplomatic efforts to address issues with Iran", the US embassy in Doha tweeted.

Bagheri met Qatar's foreign ministry secretary-general, Ahmad bin Hassen Al Hammadi, Qatar's foreign ministry said. "Indirect messages have been exchanged between the parties involved," a diplomat in the region told AFP. Sheikh Mohammed also discussed the Iran talks with his French counterpart Catherine Colonna in a phone call on Tuesday, the official Qatar News Agency said. Qatar hopes

It has also been gripped by a record-breaking heat wave, and temperatures in the area hit 103 degrees Fahrenheit on Monday. The US Customs and Border Protection agency director, Chris Magnus said he was "horrified" at the deaths near San Antonio. "This speaks to the desperation of migrants who would put their lives in the hands of callous human smugglers who show no regard for human life," he added on Twitter.

The vehicle was found near Highway I-35, a major US artery that stretches to the Mexican border. According to San Antonio police chief William McManus, authorities were first alerted by an emergency call at about 5:50 pm local time (2250 GMT). "A worker who works in one of the buildings up here behind me heard a cry for help," he told reporters. "(He) came out to investigate, found a trailer with the doors partially open, opened them up to take a look, and found a number of deceased individuals inside."

Texas Governor Greg Abbott, a Republican who advocates a tough line on immigration, quickly hit out at Biden over the disaster - blaming the Democrat's "deadly open border policies". — AFP

the "indirect talks will be culminated in positive results that contribute to the revival of the nuclear deal signed in 2015", the foreign ministry said.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said during a visit to Tehran on Saturday that the Iran-US talks would be held in a Gulf country to avoid confusion with the broader talks in Vienna. Qatar, which has better relations with Iran than most Gulf Arab monarchies, also hosted US-Taleban talks before the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan last year.

The Vienna talks began in April 2021 but hit a snag in March following differences between Tehran and Washington, notably over Iran's demand that its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps be removed from a US terror list. Alex Vatanka, director of the Iran program at the Washington-based Middle East Institute think tank, called Doha a "moment of reckoning" for the nuclear process. "The Iranians and the Americans both seem to believe the talks in Doha represent a sink-or-swim moment for US-Iran nuclear negotiations," he wrote in an analysis. — AFP

Modi in UAE as critic held...

Continued from Page 1

Nupur Sharma over her comments. The remarks were also blamed for clashes in India and prompted demands for her arrest.

India's foreign minister said Modi's visit was to convey his sympathies to Sheikh Mohamed - whose brother, former president Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, died in May - and his congratulations on taking over as leader. The two countries enjoy strong trade and cultural ties, with Indians making up 35 percent of the UAE's 10 million population, the biggest expatriate community.

India-UAE trade is valued at \$59 billion, making the oil-rich Gulf country India's third largest trading partner for the year 2019-20 after China and the United States, according to the Indian foreign ministry. The UAE is also India's third largest export destination, with nearly \$16 billion clocked in 2020-21, it added. Major exports include petroleum products, precious metals, stones, gems and jewelry, minerals, food and textiles. In February, the two countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to boost trade and investment.

Meanwhile, rights activists and journalists on Tuesday condemned the "arbitrary" and "unlawful" arrest of the co-founder at a top fact-checking website in India who has been a vocal critic of Modi. Mohammed Zubair was detained on Monday after being questioned by police, before a Delhi court ordered he be held for four more days for further interrogation.

Zubair had played a role in drawing attention to the incendiary remarks about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made by Sharma. Amnesty International said India was "targeting" Zubair for his "crucial work" combating disinformation and calling out discrimination against minorities. Amnesty's India board chair Aakar Patel said the arrest "shows the dangers facing human rights defenders in India have reached a crisis point".

Pratik Sinha, who runs the Alt News website together with Zubair, said he was detained illegally

and without warning. Zubair has been one of the fiercest critics of the BJP and has frequently drawn attention to hate speech by Hindu fringe groups. He has faced several legal cases over the years that supporters have dismissed as politically motivated attempts to silence him.

Police cited a four-year-old tweet by Zubair about a Hindu god as the reason for his arrest, saying complaints had been made by religious groups. But government critics see Zubair's detention as part of a crackdown on free speech and rights activists since Modi's ascent to power in 2014. "Every person exposing BJP's hate, bigotry and lies is a threat to them," Rahul Gandhi of India's main opposition Congress party tweeted. "Arresting one voice of truth will only give rise to a thousand more. Truth ALWAYS triumphs over tyranny," Gandhi added.

Amnesty's Patel called the arrest "harassment, intimidation, unlawful and arbitrary", saying the imprisonment of human rights defenders had become "alarmingly commonplace in India". The Editors Guild of India also condemned the arrest. "This is extremely disturbing," the journalists' group said, describing Zubair's work as "countering disinformation campaigns in a very objective and factual manner".

On Saturday, police detained activist Teesta Setalvad who hails from Modi's western home state of Gujarat. Setalvad has been campaigning to have Modi declared complicit in deadly sectarian riots 20 years ago. Protests were held in several Indian cities on Monday with rights activists and free-speech organizations demanding Setalvad's release and describing her detention as "politics of vengeance".

India has also directed Twitter to locally censor accounts and dozens of posts, including some referencing a report that mentioned the country's declining internet freedoms, the social media platform confirmed to AFP Tuesday. Last year the government ordered Twitter to take down tweets by the US think-tank Freedom House that had discussed the detention of Indian citizens for questioning government policy on social media, and the use of Internet shutdowns to stifle dissent.

The tweets were no longer available in India as of this week, along with several accounts representing Pakistan's government that had been flagged by India. — AFP

International

Duterte unlikely to face court over Philippines drug war killings

Still hugely popular among many in Philippines who support his quick-fix solutions to crime

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte often incited violence and ordered police to shoot dead suspects in a drug war that has killed thousands. But analysts say he is unlikely to face charges after he steps down Thursday. Duterte's signature policy to rid the country of drugs has been widely condemned and sparked an international probe into a possible crime against humanity.

But the 77-year-old is still hugely popular among many in the Philippines who support his quick-fix solutions to crime, and he remains a potent political force. Last month's election results reinforced Duterte's bulwark against potential prosecution after he leaves office, analysts said.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr, son of the country's late dictator, won the presidency after striking a powerful alliance with Duterte's daughter, Sara, who was elected vice president. Marcos Jr has backed Duterte's drug war and signalled his government will not cooperate with the International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigation into the killings.

"The election basically decided that there would not be a serious investigation into President Rodrigo Duterte's role in the drug war for the next six years," said Greg Wyatt, director for business intelligence at PSA Philippines Consultancy. A self-professed killer, Duterte told officers to fatally shoot narcotics suspects if their lives were at risk.

He defended the crackdown, saying it had saved families and prevented the Philippines from turning into a "narco-politics state". Government data show more than 6,200 people have died in police anti-drug operations since Duterte was swept to power in 2016.

Rights groups say Duterte created a climate of impunity and estimate that tens of thousands have been killed by police, hitmen and vigilantes, even without proof they were involved in drugs. Only

three policemen have been convicted for slaying a drug suspect.

Under pressure from the UN Human Rights Council and the ICC, the government has examined around 300 cases of drug operations that led to deaths. Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra told AFP in October that a review of 52 cases had cast doubt on the officers' common claim of self-defence.

Charges have been filed in five cases. Lawyers representing families of victims have vowed to take legal action against Duterte in the Philippines after June 30. But they admit the odds are stacked against them.

"We are not that hopeful but it's worth a shot," said Edre Olalia, president of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers. Olalia said it can take years for a case to be resolved in the creaky judicial system. And lawyers struggle to gain access to evidence held by police.

'Window dressing'

A major challenge to mounting a case against Duterte will be the Ombudsman he appointed, said jailed Duterte critic and Senator Leila de Lima.

"His clout with the present Ombudsman, the only official authorised to file charges against him in relation to the EJKs (extra-judicial killings), survives even after he leaves office," de Lima said in a statement to AFP.

The last hope for many families seeking justice is the ICC, said Carlos Conde, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch. ICC judges authorised a full-blown investigation into the anti-narcotics campaign in September, saying it resembled an illegitimate and systematic attack on civilians. It suspended the probe two months later, after Manila said it was looking into the alleged crimes.

Conde said the government was trying to "hood-wink" the international community, particularly the

A junta court has convicted Suu Kyi of corruption, incitement against the military, breaching Covid-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law and sentenced the Nobel laureate, 77, to 11 years in prison. She faces a barrage of other charges and could be jailed for more than 150 years if convicted on all counts.

Last week she was transferred from house arrest to solitary confinement in prison, a move that prompted condemnation from the United Nations.

Last year, the junta refused to grant ASEAN's then special envoy permission to visit Suu Kyi, who has been detained since the coup. The bloc later barred Min Aung Hlaing from attending a leader's summit, a major snub from the body that has long been seen as a toothless talking shop.

Meanwhile, China's foreign minister will travel to Myanmar this weekend for a regional meeting, a junta spokesman told AFP Tuesday, in what will be Beijing's highest-profile visit since the military seized power. China is a major arms supplier and ally of the junta and has refused to label the power grab that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government last year a coup. Wang Yi will visit Myanmar to attend a foreign ministers' meeting of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism, junta spokesman

online remarks. "He made a bad comment and used bad language about the bridge," said Sadequr Rahman, the police chief in the coastal district of Comapaniganj.

There was no immediate comment from Azad, who police said deleted his post after it triggered "widespread reactions" in his coastal town. His arrest came on the same day police detained a TikTok user who allegedly posted a short video showing that bolts used to fasten the bridge together could be easily unscrewed.

Bayazid Talha was taken into custody in Dhaka on Monday after his post went viral. A senior police officer told reporters that Talha had made the video to "smear" the reputation of both the bridge and the government. Neither man has been formally charged with an offence but both were scheduled to appear in court Tuesday to be remanded into custody.

The four-mile bridge, which took nearly eight years to build, ends an economic bottleneck that required freight destined for the country's underdeveloped south and the Indian megacity of Kolkata to be slowly ferried over the Padma river.

Major roads across Dhaka were festooned with lights, lasers and decorations to mark Saturday's opening ceremony and thousands of people have visited the bridge each day since.

"The scale of devastation this time is so much more" than earlier floods, said Sanjeev Kafley of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). An estimated 7.2 million people were in "desperate need of shelter and emergency relief items" in the worst-hit Sylhet region, the IFRC said in a statement.

The government has sent food rations and other emergency humanitarian aid to those hit by the floods, said Nitai Dey Sarker of Bangladesh's disaster management authority. He added that once flood waters receded further, relief workers would send corrugated iron as building material for those who had



MANILA: File photo shows Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (C) holding a Galil sniper rifle with outgoing Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Ronald dela Rosa (L) during a change of command ceremony at Camp Crame in Manila. —AFP

ICC. "A lot of what they've been doing is just window dressing, they are just trying to buy time," he said. ICC prosecutor Karim Khan announced Friday that he intended to resume his probe into the drug war "as quickly as possible", saying Manila's request to defer the investigation was unjustified.

Duterte has refused to cooperate with The Hague-based court, claiming it has no jurisdiction. He pulled the Philippines out of the ICC in 2019 after it launched a preliminary investigation into his drugs crackdown.

Even if the ICC gathers enough evidence to bring a case against Duterte, its rules prevent him from being tried in absentia. "ICC, I know you're

listening, stop the drama that you'll indict me," Duterte said Thursday, offering to act as a lawyer for anyone in uniform who shoots dead a criminal after he leaves office.

Another option for justice was an "unofficial truth commission", said Ruben Carranza, a senior expert at the New York-based International Center for Transitional Justice. Carranza, who was previously involved in efforts to recover money and assets stolen by the Marcoses, said it would allow families of drug war victims to tell their stories.

"In a country like the Philippines," he said, "I think it's important to fight for the truth whenever it's possible." —AFP

ASEAN Myanmar envoy won't meet Suu Kyi during visit: Junta

YANGON: A regional envoy tasked with facilitating talks between Myanmar's junta and its opponents will not be allowed to meet Aung San Suu Kyi during his upcoming visit, a junta spokesman said on Tuesday. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led stalled diplomatic efforts to end the chaos unleashed by last year's putsch, which sparked mass protests and a bloody crackdown on dissent.

ASEAN envoy and Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn is due to arrive in Myanmar on Wednesday for a five-day visit aimed at kickstarting dialogue between the junta and opponents to its rule. Details have not been released over who he will meet during his visit.

But the envoy would not be permitted to see "those who have been sentenced according to the law or those who are facing trials under the law", junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told AFP.

Two arrested in Bangladesh for criticising bridge

DHAKA: Bangladesh police have arrested two men for social media posts deemed critical of a new bridge that had been trumpeted by the government as one of its greatest achievements. The Padma Multipurpose Bridge was inaugurated on the weekend in a ceremony attended by almost a million people, after a long construction plagued by delays and corruption allegations.

Its opening caps a key infrastructure goal by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and her government's fanfare over the project has been matched by a hardline response to any criticism. One man was arrested on Monday after a Facebook post in which he expressed a desire to take a photograph of himself urinating on the bridge, according to local media reports.

Police confirmed to AFP the arrest of Abul Kalam Azad, a former low-level official of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), without clarifying the nature of the 42-year-old's

Seven million in 'desperate need' after floods

DHAKA: More than seven million Bangladeshis are still in "desperate" need of shelter and aid after deadly floods earlier this month, the Red Cross said Tuesday. At least 101 people were killed in the country's northeast when rivers swelled to record levels and inundated rural villages, after some of the heaviest rains in a century.



Aung San Suu Kyi

Zaw Min Tun told AFP. The spokesman said he was "not sure" whether a meeting between Wang and junta chief Min Aung Hlaing would take place. The China-backed forum gathers countries that share the Mekong river — known in China, which controls its headwaters, as the Lancang.

The foreign ministers of Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam will attend the July 2-5 meeting, the spokesman added. —AFP



MUNSHIGANJ, Bangladesh: In this handout photo released by Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office and taken on June 25, 2022 shows Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (4R) inaugurating the 6.15km long Padma Bridge at Mawa point in Munshiganj. —AFP

But the project had a troubled history even before construction began, with the World Bank and other lenders withdrawing finance after graft allegations.

And in 2019, eight people were killed in vigilante lynchings sparked by social media rumours of children being kidnapped and sacrificed as offerings for the bridge's construction. —AFP

lost their homes.

Sarker said the situation had improved around Bangladesh in recent days, but many in the northeast fear more floods to come, with two-thirds of the monsoon season still ahead of them. "We are still stuck up in the flood shelter and yet to head back home to calculate the damage," Abdul Hakim, a farmer from Sylhet, told AFP.

"The water levels in the rivers are rising again and that is very worrying," he added. The government said nearly 200,000 people were sheltering in schools and colleges that had been closed to accommodate those forced to flee their homes. —AFP

Pakistani migrants in Afghanistan caught in quake no-man's land

SPERA DISTRICT: When Gul Nayeb Khan tried to claim a parcel of aid for earthquake victims being handed out in eastern Afghanistan at the weekend, he was turned away because he is Pakistani — one of thousands of migrants caught in limbo between the two countries.

"I wish I had been among the dead," he told AFP, holding back tears as he bemoaned his fate in the aftermath of last week's 5.9-magnitude quake that killed at least 1,000 people near the border with Pakistan.

Just two months earlier, Khan said, he lost 28 members of his family when Pakistan army helicopters fired rockets into his village — ostensibly targeting militants seeking shelter in Afghanistan. Khan is one of thousands of Pakistanis who fled their homeland for Afghanistan around a decade ago after Islamabad cracked down on militants in the north of the country.

Islamabad says its home-grown version of the Taliban — Tehreek-e-Taleban Pakistan (TTP) — are carrying out attacks from Afghan soil across the porous border. Khan, 30, said around 50 people were killed in the raid on Afghan-Dubai village in mid-April — an operation never acknowledged by Pakistan but described by Afghanistan's Taliban as an attack on innocent civilians.

Islamabad has repeatedly called on the Afghan Taliban — with whom tensions have risen since their takeover in August — to take "tough action" against the militants. Those injured in Khan's family were just beginning to rebuild their homes when the earthquake struck.

"My heart is suffering so much. We are facing all the misfortunes you can imagine," he said. In Afghan-Dubai — named at a time when the pine nut trade between the two places flourished in the coniferous mountain region — the distribution of aid is strictly supervised by armed Afghan Taliban. It takes place on a small hill in the centre of the village, in a space the size of a basketball court.

The distribution area is cordoned off with rope, and anyone trying to cross without permission risks being beaten with sticks or belts by the Taliban. Khan was denied aid because his name was not on a list compiled by the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is trying to encourage the Pakistanis to return home.

Hazrat Omar, 25, another exile from Pakistan, thought the village was being attacked again when the earthquake struck. "It was midnight... we heard a loud noise... then the roof of our house collapsed," he said. "As this is a border area, we thought Pakistan was bombing our houses." —AFP

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2022

Business

G7 leaders condemn China's market-distorting practices

G7 urges nations, companies to release food stockpiles

ELMAU CASTLE: G7 leaders on Tuesday condemned China's "non-transparent and market-distorting" international trade practices in an end-of-summit statement that hit out directly at Beijing for the first time. The statement, which also pledged to reduce "strategic dependencies" on China, came hours before the leaders join a larger group of their counterparts at a NATO summit in Madrid.

There, the 30-member alliance was also poised to toughen its stance against Beijing in an update of its "strategic concept". The United States has long cast a wary eye at China over its trade practices, which Washington believes are designed to accord an unfair advantage to Chinese companies over foreign firms. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Beijing's refusal to distance itself from Vladimir Putin has meanwhile prompted other countries, including export giant Germany, to also reconsider their economic reliance on the Asian giant.

In their closing statement following a three-day summit in the Bavarian Alps, the G7 leaders signaled that they would seek to extricate themselves from economic dependence on China. They vowed to "foster diversification and resilience to economic coercion, and to reduce strategic dependencies". The leaders also voiced concern about human rights violations in China, urging Beijing to respect fundamental freedoms.

They stressed that the situation in Tibet, and in Xinjiang, where there is "forced labor", "is of major concern to us". The statement also urged China to "honor its commitments" under the Sino-British Joint Declaration, in which Beijing agreed Hong Kong could keep some freedoms and autonomy for 50 years under a "One Country, Two Systems" model. It also pressed Beijing to get Russia to withdraw from Ukraine.

Serious danger

After several years of detente and cooperation as China caught up economically with the West, Beijing has since taken a more assertive tone on the world stage. Western allies acknowledge that the world's biggest challenges, including climate change, cannot be solved without Beijing's cooperation, but have become more wary about China's actions and aims.

The export powerhouse has over recent years offered billions in investments and loans to build roads, rail and bridges in poorer countries around the world. While greeted enthusiastically in the beginning,



ELMAU CASTLE: (From center counterclockwise) US President Joe Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, France's President Emmanuel Macron, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, European Council President Charles Michel, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson attend a working session during the G7 leaders summit at Bavaria's Schloss Elmau castle on June 28, 2022 on the last day of the G7 Summit.—AFP

receiving countries have later found themselves mired in debt. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz recently warned that China's years-long lending spree in poorer countries, particularly in Africa, poses a "serious danger" that could even plunge the world into the next financial crisis.

Critics have also accused Beijing of seeking to buy influence in the south. To offer an alternative to the world's poorest, the G7 on Sunday pledged \$600 billion for global infrastructure programs. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the huge program showed partners in the developing world "that they have a choice". Beyond economic aid, Western allies are also poised for the first time to pivot their military strategy to address the challenges posed by China. The update of the "strategic concept" is the alliance's first in a decade.

Jazeera Airways, Mustafa AlMaghrabi. The panelists discussed the latest findings governing GCC retail investors' attitudes and investment decisions. Kuwaiti, Omani and Saudi retail investors had the highest exposure to their local equity markets, while the UAE had the lowest. As per the survey results, some international trends such as Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices as well as Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are becoming more important to retail investors and issuers are expected to actively communicate on these matters.

Speaking at the seminar, Ranya Afifi said, "This was an absolutely fantastic opportunity for us to share some of our insights about retail investors, particularly in the GCC, and find out what motivates them to make their investment decisions." She added, "A lot of information is available about institutional investors, and what motivates they have to make their decisions. On the other hand, not a lot of information is available on retail investors, which still make up a large percentage of investors in the region. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for organizing this seminar, which was a great platform to converse with the panelists and allow them to share their insights and experiences with retail investors."

Collaboration with Boursa

The collaboration between Boursa Kuwait and MEIRA is part of the Education pillar of Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy and is an example of its endeavors to raise financial literacy and capital market awareness among current and prospec-

Food stockpiles

Meanwhile, G7 industrialized nations on Tuesday urged countries and companies with large food stockpiles to help ease a hunger crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "We call on those partners with large food stockpiles, as well as on the private sector, to make food available without distorting the market," the Group of Seven leaders said in a statement after a summit in Germany.

They called "on all countries to avoid excessive stockpiling of food which can lead to further price increases". The war in Ukraine, a country known as Europe's breadbasket, has pushed up food prices and led to shortages, as Russia's blockade of Black Sea ports prevents millions of tons of grain from being shipped out.

The crisis has sparked fears of famine in vulnerable

countries highly reliant on Ukrainian exports, particularly in Africa. The issue was a key topic of discussion at a three-day summit of the G7 - comprising Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States-held in the Bavarian Alps. In their final communique, G7 leaders pledged an additional \$4.5 billion to combat global food insecurity, bringing the total sum committed this year to more than \$14 billion.

They again urged Russia to "end its blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea ports, destruction of key port and transport infrastructure, grain silos and terminals, illegal appropriation by Russia of agricultural commodities and equipment in Ukraine". These actions "can only be assessed as a geopolitically motivated attack on global food security", they said. Russia denies being responsible for the food crisis and blames the delivery disruptions on Western sanctions.—AFP

Boursa Kuwait and MEIRA host seminar

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait collaborated with the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) and its Kuwait Chapter to organize an Investor Relations (IR) seminar entitled "What Motivates GCC Retail Investors to Invest in Listed Companies" on Thursday, June 23, 2022, as part of their constant efforts to develop the ever-expanding investor relations field, aiming to increase transparency - considered the backbone of the IR industry - in communications with current and prospective investors, locally and around the world.

The seminar reviewed the motivations of GCC retail investors and their investment behavior, including what influences their investment decisions, which sources they trust and the type of content they find most engaging. Also discussed were the findings of a Brunswick survey of 1034 retail investors across Kuwait, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman.

Keynote speakers

The seminar was moderated by John Gollifer, the General Manager of the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) and its keynote speakers included Boursa Kuwait's Head of Markets Sector Noura AlAbdulkareem, Ranya Afifi, Director and Head of Gulf Insight at Brunswick and the Head of Investor Relations at



KANDAHAR: A laborer pushes a wheelbarrow of baked bricks at a kiln in Dand district of Kandahar.—AFP

Unions report 'record' level of labor abuses

PARIS: Workers faced record abuse of their labor rights in the past year, from union bans to violence and murder, the International Trade Union Confederation said on Tuesday. Physical violence was reported in 50 of 148 countries covered in the group's Global Rights Index between April 2021 and March 2022, up from 45 nations in the previous year. Trade unionists were killed in 13 countries, including Italy, India and South Africa, the union group said. The 10 "worst countries for working people" are Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Myanmar, the Philippines and Turkey, and two new entries, Eswatini and Guatemala.

The Middle East and North Africa remains the worst region for workers in the world. "We know that workers are on the front line of multiple and extraordinary crises-historic levels of inequality, the climate emergency, a pandemic destroying lives and livelihoods, and conflicts with devastating domestic and global impacts," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. The index "exposes how this instability is being exploited with so many governments and employers attacking workers' rights", Burrow said in a statement.

The report lists companies that "violated workers' rights, are linked to a violation of workers' rights, or failed to use their leverage to address workers' rights violations". The list includes Coca-Cola in Hong Kong and Uruguay, H&M in New Zealand, Amazon in Poland, Nestle in Brazil and Hyundai in South Korea, among many others. The index also names P&O Ferries, the ferry company that caused uproar in Britain after it sacked 800 seafarers without notice in March and immediately replaced them with foreign agency workers earning less than the minimum wage.—AFP

Business

'Greenwashing': A new climate misinformation battleground

Fossil fuel firms are misleading the public

PARIS: Fossil fuel firms are misleading the public about their moves to cut greenhouse gases and curb climate change—and social media are hosting ads that perpetuate this “greenwashing”, researchers say. AFP Fact Check took an in-depth look at how this is happening. The full report, including lobbying and communications fact boxes on 10 top oil and gas companies, is at <http://u.afp.com/wDuA>.

Talking the talk

Many companies have vowed to reach the “net zero” level of greenhouse gas emissions needed to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius under the Paris climate accords, the threshold established by scientists for avoiding the worst impacts. At the same time, research shows, they are advertising and lobbying for more drilling and burning of the fossil fuels that are heating the Earth's surface.

Leaders and businesspeople agree that changing how we warm our homes and power industries is no simple task. But critics say the gap between slogans and action undermines meaningful efforts to cut emissions. In a study published by the open-access science journal PLOS, scientists analysed the gap between talk and deeds on climate and low-carbon energy by four big oil companies: BP, Shell, ExxonMobil and Chevron.

Their green strategies “are dominated by pledges rather than concrete actions,” concluded the study, under lead author Mei Li of Tohoku University in Japan. “Until actions and investment behavior are brought into alignment with discourse, accusations of greenwashing appear well-founded.” A search on the Facebook pages of big oil and gas firms and the social platform's Ad Library shows that companies are posting green slogans while also running ads urging customers to “fill up your tank” or win “a year's worth of gasoline”.

Contacted by AFP, the companies detailed plans to develop lower-carbon energy sources and measures such as carbon capture and storage—a method currently not advanced enough to be very helpful, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). ExxonMobil and Chevron spokespeople insisted that due to energy demand, the scenarios foreseen by the Paris deal and the IEA mean fossil fuels will have to play a part in the transition.

Walking the walk

Watchdogs also see greenwashing in environment-friendly but limited gestures by firms that campaigners say distract attention from their climate-harming oper-



DHI QAR: A boat lies on the dried-up bed of a section of Iraq's receding southern marshes of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province, on June 28, 2022. Iraq's drought reflects a decline in the level of waterways due to the lack of rain and lower flows from upstream neighboring countries Iran and Turkey. — AFP

ations. Digital monitor Eco-Bot.net monitors cases where an online post “selectively discloses the company's credentials or portrays symbolic actions to build a friendly brand image.” It flagged ads and posts on protecting silkworms (Mexican cement firm Cemex), frogs (gas firm TransCanada), possums (Eletronuclear, subsidiary of Brazilian power firm Eletrobras), forests (various companies, including Spanish oil company Repsol) and one by US giant ExxonMobil on recycling fishing ropes in Patagonia.

New York-based greenwashing researcher Genevieve Guenther told AFP the key is to measure pledges against two standards: the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) net-zero date of 2050 and the IEA's clean 2021 energy transition roadmap. The latter says that to meet the 2050 target there would have to be “no investment in new fossil fuel supply projects” from now on. Any company planning new investments while also trumpeting net zero targets, Guenther said, is guilty of greenwashing.

Delaying tactics

An analysis by London-based research group InfluenceMap showed the five biggest publicly traded oil and gas companies spent \$1 billion over three years to push misleading climate messages on Facebook. Such amounts are small compared to the billions in revenues of Big Tech and Big Oil—for the latter, the two

biggest US companies swung into combined profits of over \$38 billion in 2021. But pushing messages via social media has an outsize impact, said Melissa Aronczyk, an associate communications professor at Rutgers University who has co-authored several studies on the subject. “It is very easy and inexpensive to produce ads and campaigns for social media that can have a massive effect,” she told AFP. Facebook says it monitors ads for misleading content just as it does with other forms of information on its platforms. InfluenceMap analyzed thousands of documents “to build up a very detailed picture of how major companies and industry groups are engaging on climate policy and how they are trying to influence debate,” said program manager Faye Holder.

“This greenwashing is essentially a tactic to delay government regulation. It also has the potential to mislead the public, by convincing them that action is already being taken on climate while Big Oil continues to lobby behind the scenes for new oil and gas development.” In the United States, a Democrat-led committee has been hounding the big oil firms over their lobbying. “Much of the lobbying has been indirectly done, cleverly, skilfully, cynically done by industry trade groups that have been formed by these companies,” Democratic congressman John Sarbanes told the committee on February 8. “It is often very hard to disentangle the web of relationships and the sources of funding.” — AFP



VADU: Facilities of a gas processing plant using the rich gas resources from the Black Sea are pictured during a press tour on June 28, 2022 in Vadu, Romania. The EU looks to reduce its dependency on Russian gas after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Moody's says Russia 'defaulted' on debt

PARIS: Moody's ratings agency has confirmed that Russia defaulted on its foreign debt for the first time in a century, after bond holders did not receive \$100 million in interest payments. The historic default follows a series of unprecedented Western sanctions that have increasingly isolated Russia from the global financial system following its invasion of Ukraine.

Russia lost the last avenue to service its foreign-currency loans after the United States removed an exemption last month that allowed US investors to receive Moscow's payments. “On 27 June, holders of Russia's sovereign debt had not received coupon payments on two eurobonds worth \$100 million by the time the 30-calendar-day grace period expired, which we consider an event of default under our definition,” Moody's said.

Moscow said on Monday there were “no grounds to call this situation a default”, as the payments had not reached creditors due to the “the actions of third parties”. The Russian authorities insist they have the funds to honor the country's debt, calling the predicament a “farce” and accusing the West of pushing an “artificial” default. Moody's warned that more defaults “are likely”. Moody's released an “issuer comment” instead of a formal default declaration, as sanctions bar

credit ratings agencies from covering Russia's sovereign debt.

'Limited' impact

The sanctions have included freezing the Russian government's stockpile of \$300 billion in foreign currency reserves held abroad, making it more complicated for Moscow to settle its foreign debts. After the United States closed the last payment loophole last month, Russia said it would pay debt in rubles that could be converted into foreign currency, using a Russian financial institution as a paying agent.

But Moody's said it “would likely treat payments in rubles as a default for bonds that do not allow for such redenomination in the contractual terms”. Noting that Moody's no longer covers Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: “Does this mean that Moody's restarted the ratings process? The agency must surely explain itself.”

The country last defaulted on its foreign debt in 1918, when Bolshevik revolution leader Vladimir Ilich Lenin refused to recognize the massive debts of the deposed tsar's regime. Russia defaulted on domestic debt in 1998 when, due to a drop in commodity prices, it faced a financial squeeze that prevented it from propping up the ruble and paying off debts that accumulated during the first war in Chechnya. The International Monetary Fund's number two official, Gita Gopinath, said in March that a Russian default would have “limited” impact on the global financial system. — AFP

Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) said.

Currently, anyone using less than 30 kilowatts a month pays a flat 54.27 rupees (\$0.15), which the CEB sought to raise to 507.65 rupees (\$1.44). “A majority of the domestic consumers will not be able to afford this type of steep increase,” PUCSL chairman Janaka Ratnayake told reporters in Colombo. “Hence we proposed a direct subsidy from the Treasury to keep the increase to less than half of what they have asked.”

Domestic rates have yet to be decided, but prices will go up by 43 to 61 percent for commercial and industrial users, he added. The CEB will also be allowed to charge users who earn foreign exchange, such as exporters, in dollars, he added, to help the generator finance imports of oil and spare parts. The government imposed 13-hour power cuts a few months ago, but blackouts have been reduced to about four hours a day as rains filled hydropower reservoirs. — AFP

Global stocks bounce as China eases COVID quarantine measures

LONDON: Stock markets jumped Tuesday and oil prices rallied further as China slashed the quarantine time for visitors, fuelling hopes of recovery for the world's second largest economy. The news came as Beijing and Shanghai appeared to have contained a COVID outbreak that had forced officials to impose lockdowns that compounded global supply chain snarls, further pushing up inflation.

Authorities said inbound travelers would have to quarantine for only 10 days instead of three weeks. The news boosted share prices, already striving to rebound from recent sharp losses triggered by fears of a global recession. “The COVID crisis appears to be rapidly retreating in China,” noted Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. “The prospects of rapid recovery for the world's second largest economy is helping lift miners, as metals prices rise in expectation of a surge in demand in the commodity-hungry economy.”

At the same time, G7 leaders will condemn China's “distorting” international trade practices in an end-of-summit statement Tuesday, a senior US official said. “You'll see leaders release a collective statement, which is unprecedented in the context of the G7, acknowledging the harms caused by China's non-transparent, market distorting, industrial directives,” the official told reporters. Traders digested comments also from European Central Bank boss Christine Lagarde, who said the ECB would go “as far as necessary” to fight inflation that is set to remain “undesirably high”. Ben Laidler, a global markets strategist at online trading platform eToro, said current economic weakness had been largely factored in by dealers. “Much is already discounted by markets, which may be in ‘bad news is good news’ mode, as a slowdown cools inflation and interest rate fears,” he said. Global equity markets are recovering ground as investors believe central banks could decide to raise interest rates by more modest amounts than previously thought. — AFP



COLOMBO: People stand outside a closed Ceylon Petroleum Corporation fuel station that ran out of gasoline in Colombo. — AFP

News in brief

Heathrow ordered to cut fees

LONDON: Britain's aviation regulator on Tuesday ordered London Heathrow airport to cut landing fees, in the hope that airlines will reduce fares. Bucking the trend of higher costs as inflation soars, the Civil Aviation Authority said Heathrow must cut charges as air traffic demand recovers. “Today's announcement is about doing the right thing for consumers,” CAA chief executive Richard Moriarty said in a statement. In final proposals, the watchdog said the price per passenger would gradually fall 13 percent to £26.31 (\$32.30) by 2026. Landing charges paid by airlines to Heathrow are generally included in air fares. “Heathrow is among the most expensive airports in the world for its charges to airlines,” the CAA added. Heathrow chief executive John Holland-Kaye said the “proposal will only result in passengers getting a worse experience at Heathrow as investment in service dries up”.

Norway to reclaim SAS stake

OSLO: Norway said Tuesday it was willing to once again become an owner in struggling Scandinavian airline SAS four years after pulling out. “Given the situation of the company ... we can, on certain terms, accept to convert outstanding debt into shares if we consider this necessary,” Norwegian Trade and Industry Minister Jan Christian Vestre said in a statement. Norway sold off its stake in the airline between 2016 and 2018. But it issued a guarantee of 1.5 billion Norwegian kroner (\$154 million) to SAS during the pandemic to ensure the airline's liquidity when it was hit hard by travel restrictions. “The Norwegian state will not contribute new capital and will not be a long-term owner of SAS,” Vestre insisted. SAS is also co-owned by Sweden and Denmark which each hold stakes of 21.8 percent. The Danish government said on June 10 it was prepared to increase its stake in SAS to up to 30 percent and write off debts of 3.5 billion Danish kroner (\$500 million).

German consumers mood

FRANKFURT: The mood among German consumers has reached an all-time low, according to a key survey published Tuesday, as the war in Ukraine drives a painful wave of inflation. Pollster GfK's forward-looking barometer fell to minus 27.4 points for July, the lowest figure since the series started in 1991. The deterioration in the index was due “above all” to the rising cost of living, GfK consumer expert Rolf Buerkl said in a statement. The outbreak of the war has driven increases in the cost of energy, food and raw materials for which Ukraine and Russia are key suppliers. Inflation rose to 7.9 percent in May, the highest rate since German reunification in 1990 and well above the two-percent target of central banks. “Broken supply chains”, which have likewise contributed to higher prices, were also behind the darkening mood among consumers, Buerkl said. The GfK survey of some 2,000 people also found that Germans were again more pessimistic about the prospects for the economy, with the indicator dropping by 2.4 points to minus 11.7 points in June.

Firm gifts drones to Ukraine

ISTANBUL: Turkish drone-manufacturer Baykar, which has President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-law as one of its directors, offered three of its drones to the Ukrainian army on Monday. In a statement posted on Twitter, the company noted that a crowd-funding campaign had raised enough money to buy several of its TB2 UAVs “for Ukrainians to use in defence of their Homeland”. “Baykar will not accept payment for the TB2s, and will send 3 UAVs free of charge to the Ukrainian war front,” it added. “We ask that raised funds be remitted instead to the struggling people of Ukraine.” Turkey has never announced any military aide to Ukraine, but this delivery could hardly take place without Erdogan's endorsement. Ukraine has already said that the Turkish drones it had at the start of the war had proved their worth against the Russian forces. One of Baykar's directors is Selcuk Bayraktar, the husband of Erdogan's youngest daughter.

Algeria discovers gas

ALGIERS: Algerian state energy firm Sonatrach announced Monday the discovery of an “important” deposit of gas condensate in the Hassi R'mel field in the Sahara desert. “Sonatrach announced today that it has identified a significant potential of hydrocarbons... at the level of the Hassi R'mel exploitation perimeter,” a statement by the firm said. The deposit is estimated to have between 100 and 340 billion cubic metres of gas condensate, the statement said. “These volumes constitute one of the largest revaluations of reserves in the last 20 years,” it added. Sonatrach plans to start operating the field in November, with production expected to reach 10 million cubic meters per day. Algeria has proven natural gas reserves of about 2.4 trillion cubic meters and supplies Europe with about 11 percent of its gas imports. Sonatrach said in February that it was prepared to increase supplies to Europe in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — From AFP

Business

UK's bid to override N Ireland Brexit pact clears first hurdle

Illegal deals could spark a trade war, EU warns

LONDON: The UK government's bid to scrap parts of post-Brexit trade arrangements in Northern Ireland cleared its first hurdle on Monday, despite EU warnings it is illegal and could spark a trade war. MPs in the House of Commons voted through the controversial Northern Ireland Protocol Bill by 295 votes to 221 after a debate, allowing it to progress to the next stage of scrutiny in parliament.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in Germany for a G7 leaders meeting, earlier insisted the legislation was needed to remove "unnecessary barriers to trade from Great Britain to Northern Ireland." "All we're saying is that you can get rid of those, whilst not in any way endangering the EU single market," he told reporters.

MPs voted as Johnson socialized at the G7 with top EU leaders, including European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron. Irish premier Micheal Martin rejected Johnson's attempts to play down the planned changes to the protocol, which was agreed as part of the UK's Brexit withdrawal from the European Union. Martin said "any unilateral decision to breach international law is a major, serious development."

"There can be no getting out of that," he said in Dublin, also warning against another government bill to revamp human rights in the UK that could affect a 1998 peace deal for Northern Ireland. In parliament, Johnson's predecessor as prime minister Theresa May, who quit after failing to get parliamentary backing for her own Brexit divorce deal, said she could not back the bill. It was "not legal... will not achieve its aims and... will diminish the standing of the United Kingdom in the eyes of the world", she told MPs.

'Legal and necessary'

The UK government unveiled its plan to unilaterally change trading terms for the politically fraught British province earlier this month, prompting the EU to pledge legal action. Brussels says overriding the deal it struck in 2019 with Johnson's government breaches international law, and has warned of trade reprisals, which Britain can ill-afford as prices surge on the back of the war in Ukraine. Days of further scrutiny and subsequent votes now loom, and despite winning the vote, Johnson is facing criticism among some of his own Conservatives after he only narrowly survived a no-confidence vote this month.

Launching the debate, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said problems were "baked in" to the protocol and wholesale change was needed to entice pro-UK unionists back to a power-sharing government in Belfast. "It is both legal and necessary," she said, denying the UK was breaching international law and stressing the need to prioritize the peace process. "We continue to raise the issues of concern with our European partners, but we simply cannot allow the situation to drift," Truss added.

'Unrealistic'

There was no immediate response from Brussels. But on Sunday, the bloc's ambassador to Britain, Joao Vale de Almeida, said the legislation did break international, EU and UK law, and was "unrealistic".

"We are committed to find the practical solutions on implementation, but we cannot start talking if the baseline is to say everything we have agreed before is to be put aside," he added. The protocol requires checks on goods



BELFAST: A car-transporter lorry leaves Larne port, north of Belfast in Northern Ireland, after arriving on a ferry. The UK government on Tuesday announced its intention to drastically overhaul post-Brexit trade rules in Northern Ireland, arguing the plan was needed to end political paralysis in the territory but risking a trade war with the EU. —AFP

arriving into Northern Ireland from England, Scotland and Wales, to track products that could be potentially headed to the bloc via the Republic of Ireland.

This creates a customs border down the Irish Sea, keeping Northern Ireland in the EU's customs orbit to avoid a politically sensitive hard border between the territory and EU member Ireland.

Unionist parties and the UK government argue the protocol is threatening the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that ended three decades of violence over British rule in Northern Ireland. They want checks to be removed on goods, and animal and plant products, travelling from Great Britain through the creation of a "green channel" for goods intended to stay in Northern Ireland. —AFP

Nissan introduces 9-speed automatic transmission

KUWAIT: Strengthening its model line-up and continuing to build on its SUV dominance across the region, Nissan has introduced a new 9-speed automatic transmission to the Middle East, offering customers a host of benefits and improved driving experiences. Making its debut in the recently launched all-new 2022 Nissan Pathfinder, the new high efficiency, quick-response automatic transmission delivers on customers' needs in the region for greater fuel efficiency without compromising on power.

The new 9-speed automatic transmission offers a 30% improvement in the Pathfinder's acceleration, building on the benefits offered by the Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) in previous models. In addition to being lighter than the CVT, the 9-speed automatic transmission offers higher efficiency as a result of design upgrades, along with a highly responsive actuator for a more engaging driving experience.

With the widest gear ratio coverage in the segment, the all-new Pathfinder's latest transmission enables highly responsive gear changes, to prioritize power or efficiency as and when needed. The low first gear delivers instantaneous power for greater confidence on-and off-road, while the high ninth gear keeps engine rotations as low as possible for improved fuel efficiency.

The new transmission features design and mechanical optimizations to maximize durability and responsiveness, offering drivers enhanced control and a smoother drive. Its modular construction furthers the driving comfort and pleasure the Pathfinder is admired for. Equally at home on city streets and off the beaten path, the all-new Pathfinder showcases its ruggedness through the introduction of paddle shifters and Hill Start Assist as standard on all grades, and Hill Descent Control on certain 4WD variants in the region.

The all-new 9-speed automatic transmission, which is controlled through an electronic gear shifter, is paired to an all-new Intelligent 4WD system that offers drivers even unique Drive and Terrain modes to tackle all terrain. The all-new Pathfinder is an ideal family adventure vehicle not just in looks, but in modern capability as well. All grades of the 2022 Pathfinder feature a 271-horsepower 3.5-liter Direct Injection V6 with 340 Nm of torque.



LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Let's Connect' promotion



KUWAIT: In a one-of-its-kind promotion, LuLu Hypermarket, the regional leader in retailing, launched its 'Let's Connect' promotion for smartphones and mobile accessories on 23 June at the hypermarket's Fahaeel outlet. The 11-day promotion that runs until 3 July at all branches of LuLu



Hypermarket in Kuwait, was inaugurated by Jamal Marzouq Al-Dawi, Kuwait municipality along with top management of the hypermarket in Kuwait, in the presence of leading online tech-bloggers and social media influencers in the country, as well as a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers of the

brand. The 'Let's Connect' promotion offers amazing, 'never-before' discounts on a wide variety of branded smartphones and mobile accessories, and provides shoppers with 'one-off' opportunity to avail of high quality smartphones at exceptionally competitive prices.

NBK Economic Update

Oil prices retreat as global recession fears weigh on sentiment

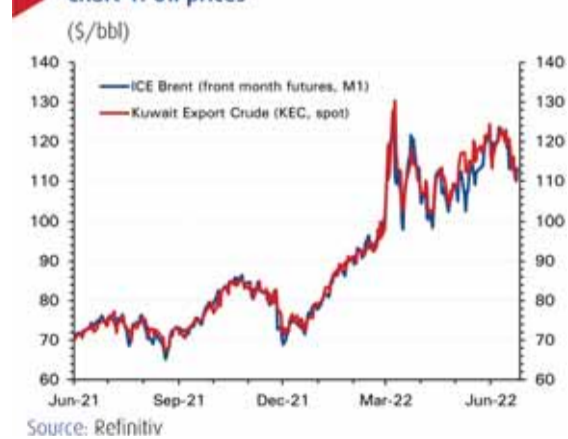
KUWAIT: Oil prices have been in retreat in recent weeks over worries about weakening US and global economic growth amid aggressive monetary policy tightening by the US Fed and other central banks to combat surging inflation. At its close last week, Brent was down 8.9% in June at \$113.1/bbl, having fallen to its lowest in more than a month in the previous trading session.

Brent is on course for its first monthly decline since November. Local marker, the medium sour Kuwait Export Crude (KEC), dropped to \$110.9/bbl (-10.9% in June), having traded at a premium over the lightsweet Brent due to increased demand from Asian refineries amid constrained Russian crude supplies.

Market fears of a global recession amid soaring prices and tighter financial conditions appear to be growing more acute. June's 75 bps interest rate hike by the US Fed and recent comments by Chairman Powell that a recession was 'certainly a possibility' have rattled markets, spurring sell-offs across asset classes, with oil caught in the crossfire. Worries about oil demand-destruction due to high prices have also gained traction. Energy watchdog, the International Energy Agency (IEA), has been building this into its oil demand estimates, which have been repeatedly lowered since the start of the year.

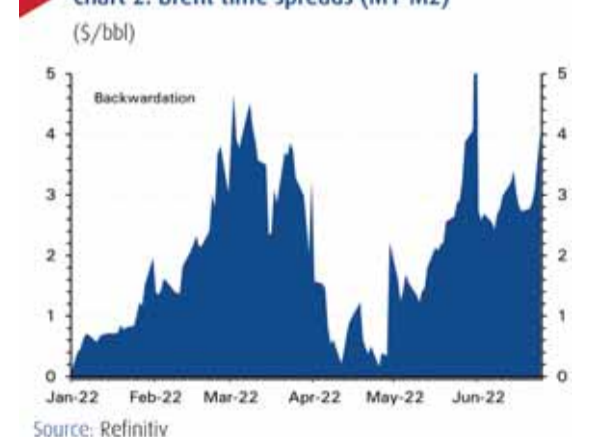
Oil market bears took the most recent week US petroleum data release that showed a second consecutive week of commercial crude inventory builds in the US (+1.9 mb to 418.7 mb), an easing in refinery runs and below-seasonal levels of gasoline demand, as evidence that record high fuel prices are beginning to crimp demand just as the peak US summer driving season gets underway. Retail gasoline prices have topped \$5/gallon in the US, forcing President Biden to take the unusual step of proposing a three-month suspen-

Chart 1: Oil prices (\$/bbl)



Source: Refinitiv

Chart 2: Brent time spreads (M1-M2) (\$/bbl)



Source: Refinitiv

sion of the federal gasoline tax.

Nevertheless, the oil market remains structurally tight, in terms of crude and especially refined products supplies. Brent futures remain in 'backwardation', where near-term prices are higher than longer-dated prices. Indeed, prompt time spreads (M1-M2), the price difference between Brent's two nearest contracts, has actually widened in recent days, to over \$4.0/bbl.

The IEA, having trimmed its oil demand growth estimates for the fifth consecutive month since January, now sees global oil demand rising by 1.8 mb/d to 99.4 mb/d in 2022, a marked slowdown from the 3.3 mb/d it was forecasting at the start of the year. Among forecasts by energy reporting agencies and research houses, the IEA's is probably the most conservative.

The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) puts growth slightly higher at 2.2 mb/d this year, while OPEC expects growth to be a far more robust 3.4 mb/d. The agencies differ largely in the extent to which they see the Chinese economy being negatively affected by the protracted COVID-19 lockdowns, the extent of the slowdown in global economic growth due to inflationary pressures and the direct economic fallout from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. For the IEA, 2023 should see higher oil consumption from a resurgent China, driving oil demand to gains of

2.2 mb/d and pushing global oil demand to finally surpass pre-pandemic levels, at 101.6 mb/d. Implied stock changes will shift from a build in 2Q22-4Q22 to a draw in 2023.

On the supply side, OPEC+ continues to struggle in resupplying the market at the rate it set in its production schedule. OPEC+ crude output (excluding Libya, Iran, Venezuela and Mexico) reached 37.6 mb/d in May. While the group increased supplies by 335 kb/d over April, aggregate production remained below target in May, by 2.75 mb/d, with the group slipping further behind schedule after the monthly quota increase to 432 kb/d from 400 kb/d in that month.

Of course, Russian production curtailments—about 750 kb/d in May, according to Platts—due to self-sanctioning by its customers are a major factor, but the OPEC+ members' inability to raise monthly output in line with their higher quotas has been a long-running issue. While field maintenance and disruptions caused by civil strife and sabotage have undoubtedly played their part, the shortfalls are also a consequence of under-investment in oil field production and maintenance; the IEA had been warning about this eventuality for several years even before the pandemic caused prices to crash in 2020. Among OPEC-10 members, Angola and Nigeria have sustained considerable production losses.



Spanish designers Jose Victor Rodriguez (left) and Jose Luis Medina, also known as "Victorio" and "Lucchino" pose for pictures during the inauguration of their museum at the Covento de Santa Clara in Palma del Rio, near Cordoba.



This photograph shows parts of the exhibition on Spanish designers Jose Victor Rodriguez and Jose Luis Medina.

TOP SPANISH DESIGNERS VICTORIO AND LUCCHINO GET OWN MUSEUM



Top Spanish fashion designers Victorio and Lucchino, who have dressed singers and aristocrats, on Thursday inaugurated a museum dedicated to their works in their southern home region of Andalusia. The museum housed in a centuries-old former convent in the southern city of Palma del Rio displays a retrospective of their creations, which are characterized by bright colors and the use of lace and ruffles.

It includes fabrics, dress prototypes, shows, accessories and jewelry from a career spanning nearly five decades. "It is a nice finishing touch to our professional careers, a satisfaction, to leave a vestige of our work to future generations," Jose Luis Medina del Corral, 68, who goes by the alias Lucchino, told AFP before the museum's opening.

Lucchino and Jose Victor Rodriguez Caro, 72, who goes by the alias Victorio, met as teenagers in the 1960s and soon became a couple, united by their passion for fashion. They joined forces in 1975 to

create the Victorio y Lucchino brand, and burst onto the international scene a decade later by taking part in the New York International Fair.

Their creations have since appeared on catwalks in Japan, Germany, Italy and the United States, worn by top models such as Claudia Schiffer and Elle McPherson. The duo's customers have included one of Spain's most famous singers, Rocio Jurado who died in 2016, and Spain's late Duchess of Alba, one of Europe's wealthiest aristocrats.

She wore a salmon-colored dress with a moss-green sash by Andalusian designers at her 2011 wedding to a civil servant at her palace in Seville. The designers say they have long drawn inspiration from the culture of Andalusia, Spain's center for flamenco and bullfighting. "Every creator lives from the land where he lives," said Victorio who was born in Palma del Rio. — AFP



This photograph shows parts of the exhibition on Spanish designers Jose Victor Rodriguez and Jose Luis Medina.



A promise kept or betrayal? Hong Kong 25 years on from handover

As midnight struck on June 30, 1997 and Hong Kong transitioned from British to Chinese rule, pro-democracy lawmaker Lee Wing-tat stood with colleagues on the balcony of the city's legislature, holding a defiant protest. Hong Kong will mark the 25th anniversary of the handover on Friday and the halfway point of One Country, Two Systems—the governance model agreed by Britain and China under which the city would keep some autonomy and freedoms.

That model was set to last 50 years. But even in its first hours, battle lines that would define Hong Kong's politics for the next two decades were drawn. Furious at outgoing British governor Chris Patten's last-gasp attempts at democratization, China had announced that any legislator who had openly supported the measures would be thrown out.

So the minute the handover became effective, Lee and many of his colleagues became seatless, but remained within the legislature to protest their expulsion. Other opposition figures went to the handover ceremony to show goodwill, but returned

to join the rally later. "This is a moment when all Chinese people should feel proud," Martin Lee, founder of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, said in a speech at the time. "We hope Hong Kong and China can progress together."

Lee Wing-tat had more mixed feelings. "We were no longer that optimistic and I no longer believed we would have full-fledged democracy," he told AFP. Twenty-five years later, there are no opposition lawmakers left in Hong Kong's legislature at all. Many have been arrested under a national security law Beijing imposed in 2020 or disqualified from standing for office under new "patriots only" electoral

rules. Others have fled—including Lee Wing-tat, who now lives in Britain.

Escalating mistrust

Like many, Lee had been hopeful in 1984, when the Sino-British Joint Declaration laid the path to ending more than 150 years of British colonial rule. One Country, Two Systems promised a high degree of autonomy, independent judicial power, and that the city's leader would be appointed by Beijing on the basis of local elections or consultations. "Deng (Xiaoping, China's then leader) back then said a lot about things like 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong', which

was rather compelling," Lee said.

But China's deadly 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, which saw Beijing send in tanks to crush a democracy movement, shattered his faith in the ruling Communist Party (CCP). In the years after the handover, mistrust between Beijing and Hong Kongers like Lee only escalated. The pro-democracy camp saw Beijing as ruthless authoritarians set on denying Hong Kongers their promised rights. And the CCP increasingly saw their demands as a challenge to China's sovereignty.

There were successful mass protests in 2003 and 2012 that led to government climbdowns. But campaigns to let Hong Kong pick its own leaders, including the 2014 Umbrella Movement, came to nothing. Tensions finally exploded in the huge, sometimes violent protests of 2019, which China responded to with a comprehensive crackdown that has transformed the once outspoken city.

'Not overkill'

Critics like Patten, the last British governor, accuse the CCP of betraying its promises to Hong Kong. "China has ripped up the joint declaration and is vengefully and comprehensively trying to remove the freedoms of Hong Kong because it regards them as a threat, not to the security of China but to the ability of the Chinese Communist Party to hang on to power," Patten told AFP last week.

But former Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying said the crackdown over the last three years was "not overkill". "You can't say, 'We want to have a high degree of autonomy and you stand aside'-that will

be de facto independence of Hong Kong," he told AFP. Leung, whose administration faced down the Umbrella Movement, blamed years of social and political unrest on people being misled by political figures and misunderstanding Hong Kong's mini-constitution.

He also suggested hostile "external forces" were involved, but declined to be specific. Echoing Beijing, Leung described One Country, Two Systems as a success and said the arrangement might continue beyond its 50-year term, calling July 1, 2047 "a non-event".

'One Country'

Many Hong Kongers remain unconvinced. Public confidence in One Country, Two Systems hit a historic low in mid-2020, according to polls carried out by the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute since 1994. Some, like Herman Yiu, a young politician born in the year of the handover, have lost all hope of ever being able to make change within the system.

"Being born in 1997... it felt like my fate was connected to Hong Kong's fate," Yiu told AFP. "I wanted to participate to make Hong Kong better." As a fresh graduate, Yiu was part of a pro-democracy landslide at one-person-one-vote district council elections in 2019. His career was short-lived, though—in June he became one of the many politicians disqualified from office. "I think now the emphasis of One Country, Two Systems is on 'one country'," Yiu said. "I feel helpless, for Hong Kong and myself." — AFP



People wave Chinese and Hong Kong flags as fishing boats with banners and flags to mark the 25th anniversary of the Handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China sail through Hong Kong's Victoria harbor. — AFP



Four-month-old juvenile Komodo dragons, hatched in captivity as part of a breeding program for the endangered lizard, are seen in their enclosure at the Surabaya Zoo.

Indonesian zoo breeds dozens of endangered baby Komodo dragons



A four-month-old juvenile Komodo dragon, hatched in captivity as part of a breeding program for the endangered lizard, climbs a perch in an enclosure at the Surabaya Zoo.

An Indonesian zoo has welcomed dozens of new baby Komodo dragons hatched in captivity in recent months as part of a breeding program, its director said Tuesday, offering hope for efforts to conserve the endangered species. The world's largest living lizards are found only in Indonesia's World Heritage-listed Komodo National Park and neighboring Flores, and just 3,458 adult and baby species are left in the wild according to estimates.

The fearsome reptiles, which can grow to three meters (10 feet) in length and weigh up to 90 kilograms (200 pounds), are threatened by human activity and climate change destroying their habitat.

But a breeding program in Indonesia's second-largest city of Surabaya is trying to change that, successfully breeding 29 dragons in incubators between February and March. "We have habitats that mirror the Komodo's natural habitat, including its humidity and temperature," zoo director Chairul Anwar told AFP.

The newborns were hatched from two female Komodo dragons after their eggs

were placed in incubators to prevent them from being eaten by their mothers or other Komodo dragons. Female Komodos can fertilize an egg without the need for a male dragon.

The zoo started the program in the 1990s as part of the effort to conserve the species in a city located more than 700 kilometers (434 miles) away from the dragon's natural habitat. After the spate of births this year, Surabaya Zoo now houses 134 Komodo dragons, the largest population group outside of its habitat in the cluster of islands east of Bali, Anwar said.

In a report last year, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature warned the endangered species' habitat was expected to shrink by 30 percent in the next 45 years due to rising sea levels. Anwar said the dragons will not be released back into the wild on Komodo or Flores until conditions improve. "Komodo Island is still working to rejuvenate the forests," which feed the dragon's declining natural prey such as deer, he said. — AFP



A zookeeper holds a four-month-old juvenile Komodo dragon, hatched in captivity as part of a breeding program for the endangered lizard, at the Surabaya Zoo in Surabaya, East Java province. — AFP photos



A four-month-old juvenile Komodo dragon, hatched in captivity as part of a breeding program for the endangered lizard.



Four-month-old juvenile Komodo dragons, hatched in captivity as part of a breeding program for the endangered lizard, are seen in their enclosure at the Surabaya Zoo.

Widow reveals Gene Kelly's Cold War mission for JFK

He starred in one of the most iconic musical moments in film history, but his wife told AFP that Gene Kelly also had a cameo in the Cold War. Patricia Kelly (nee Ward) was just 26 when she was sent to make a documentary about the legendary dancer, then 73. She soon became his biographer, and his third and final wife.

Among the surprising tales she gathered about Kelly's eventful life was his time as a cultural ambassador to Africa at the peak of the Cold War. Kelly was close to US president John F. Kennedy. "They were buddies," Patricia told AFP. "Gene used to sing Irish rebel songs with him in the White House." After performing at Kennedy's inauguration in 1964, he fell

into conversation in fluent French with singer Yves Montand and first lady Jacqueline Kennedy.

It led to an invitation to Ghana and French-speaking Senegal, where the United States was trying to check the growing influence of the Soviet Union. Kelly found himself competing for attention with Moscow's envoy, a female astronaut. It was not a fair fight, since Kelly's movie "The Three Musketeers" had just been shown in Accra and he ended up being chased down the street by people shouting "Dartagnan!" and had to take refuge in a public library, jumping onto the stacks.

'Adored Paris'

Kelly's widow has been going through her mountains of recordings after agreeing to make a documentary for French radio. "I hadn't listened to those tapes since he died. It took my breath away," she told AFP. "Gene saw his role as going out into the world and not only sharing the style of dance he created, but also breaking down barriers and expanding our ability to communicate. I wish he was around now," she said. France and Paris in particular were always central to Kelly's life. "He adored Paris. He had so many close friends here, many from the

French Resistance," said Patricia, now in her sixties.

He shot several movies in the French capital—not least the Oscar-winning "An American in Paris". No one thought his next film could possibly match that success—let alone still be one of the most

popular musicals in the world 70 years later. "I get more mail about 'Singin' in the Rain' now than ever before," said Patricia of the classic Kelly directed alongside Stanley Donen. "Just this morning, I got a picture of a one-year-old called Teddy who watches it every day!"

'Hanging off lampposts'

It was Kelly who came up with the slow, ambling start to the title song—wanting to integrate the music into the story. "Gene wanted dance to tell the story, and 'Singin' in the Rain' is probably the best example of that because what better way to say that you're in love?" said Patricia. "He didn't know anything would become iconic. There wasn't this notion back then that people would be watching things again and again.

"There's only a handful of things that are as recognizable as 'Singin' in the Rain'... As soon as it starts raining—every one is out there, hanging off lampposts." There was much more to Kelly—who died in 1996 — than just his tap-dancing. An accomplished director and choreographer, he was also the first American to create a ballet for the Paris Opera (currently being revived in Scotland). "Gene was a visionary person. He changed the entire look of dance on film, with dolleys and panning, lights and color and the movement of the camera," said his widow. "He was always looking for the next frontier." — AFP



In this file photo taken on September 17, 1981, US actor Gene Kelly (center) talks to princess Grace of Monaco during a gala in his honor in a theatre in Paris. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Moroccan fashion designer Artsi Ifrach poses for a photograph next to his creation "A Dialogue Between Cultures" during a photo call for the 'Africa Fashion' exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.



A man takes a picture of the dress known as "Tuareg Artistry" designed by Alphadi, during a photo call for the 'Africa Fashion' exhibition.



A Dress of Onder Die Invloed designed in 2018 is seen displayed.

A Cowrie dress by Lafalaise Dion is seen during a photo call for the 'Africa Fashion' exhibition at the Victoria and Albert museum in London.

First ever 'Africa Fashion' exhibition opens in London

A museum worker poses for a photograph next to "Irene dress" by Patience Tortlowei during a photo call for the 'Africa Fashion' exhibition.

"Dress and head tie" designed by Carol Achieng and Joice Makokha, is seen displayed during a photo call for the 'Africa Fashion' exhibition.

Britain's most extensive exhibition of African fashion is set to open in London, showcasing designers past and present, as well as the continent's diverse heritage and cultures. "Africa Fashion", at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum from Saturday, is also the country's first exhibition dedicated to the medium.

Project curator Elisabeth Murray said the show will provide a "glimpse into the glamour and politics of the fashion scene". "We wanted to celebrate the amazing African fashion scene today. So the creativity of all the designers, stylists, photographers, and looking at the inspiration behind that," she told AFP. Included in the exhibition are objects, sketches, photos and film from across the continent, starting from the African liberation years in the 1950s to 1980s to up-and-coming contemporary designers.

Senior curator Christine Checinska has called it "part of the V&A's ongoing commitment to foreground work by African heritage creatives". Global anti-racism movements, including Black Lives Matter, have forced Britain to reassess its divisive colonial past, from museum collections and public monuments to history teaching in schools.

The V&A was founded in 1852, as Britain under queen Victoria expanded its global empire, including, in the decades that followed, in Africa. But



A museum worker poses for a photograph next to "Irene dress" by Patience Tortlowei during a photo call for the 'Africa Fashion' exhibition.

Checinska said African creativity had "largely been excluded or misrepresented in the museum, owing to the historic division between art and ethnographic museums arising from our colonial roots and embedded racist assumptions".

"The conversations and collaborations that have shaped the making of the Africa Fashion exhibition are a testbed for new equitable ways of working together that allow us to imagine and call into being the V&A of the future," she added. Displaying a diverse range of African designs, textiles and influ-

ences, the ambitious exhibition is a way to address that imbalance, she said.

Celebration

The scene is set with a section on "African Cultural Renaissance", highlighting protest posters and literature from independence movements that developed in conjunction with fashion. "The Vanguard" is the central attraction, displaying iconic works by well-known African designers including Niger's Alphadi, Nigeria's Shade Thomas-Fahm and Kofi Ansah of Ghana.



"Dress and head tie" designed by Carol Achieng and Joice Makokha, is seen displayed during a photo call for the 'Africa Fashion' exhibition.

A variety of African textiles and styles such as beadwork and raffia are employed in innovative designs with cross-cultural influences. Thomas-Fahm's designs, for example, reinvented traditional African-wear for the "cosmopolitan, working woman". Other displays with names such as "Afrotopia", "Cutting-Edge" and "Mixology" explore fashion alongside issues such as sustainability, gender, race and sexual identity.

One highlight is the center-piece made by Moroccan designer Artsi espe-

cially for the exhibition. It is a piece inspired by the British trenchcoat and Muslim hijab, navigating how to "present Africa in England", he told AFP. Fashioning a "meditation on our common humanity", Artsi emphasizes the beauty of African fashion which "doesn't come from a source of commercialized clothes". "It comes from a source of heritage and celebrating culture," he added. — AFP

Alec Baldwin to interview Woody Allen on Instagram live

Actor Alec Baldwin announced Monday he will chat live on Instagram with disgraced comedian and movie director Woody Allen. "I have ZERO INTEREST in anyone's judgments and sanctimonious posts here," said Baldwin, himself at the center of a scandal after a cinematographer was shot dead last year on a film set by a gun Baldwin was holding.

The announcement of the interview, set for Tuesday, came just days after the release of "Zero Gravity," the latest book by Allen, whose career has been overshadowed for decades by allegations of sexual abuse by his adopted daughter Dylan Farrow. "I am OBVIOUSLY someone who has my own set of beliefs and COULD NOT CARE LESS about anyone else's speculation," Baldwin wrote in a message accompanying a short video

announcing the conversation, in which he held up a copy of Allen's new book.

In less than 24 hours, the post garnered more than 1,000 comments, many of them critical. "I've supported u 100% thru everything. But woody Allen? Bye" wrote one follower. "If you believe that a trial should be conducted by way of an HBO documentary, that's your issue," said Baldwin, 64, referring to the documentary "Allen vs Farrow", which came out on the streaming channel in 2021, and cast Allen in a poor light.

In the first of the four episodes of the show, Dylan Farrow, adopted by Allen and his ex-wife Mia Farrow, reiterated her accusations that the Oscar-winning director sexually abused her when she was seven years old, in 1992. The 86-year-old director of "Annie Hall" and "Manhattan" has denied the allegations and has faced multiple investigations. "I love you Woody," said a smiling Baldwin in his video.

Baldwin has spent several months in the eye of the storm himself after he fatally shot his director of photography on set in New Mexico while rehearsing a scene for his movie "Rust." Baldwin said that the conversation with Allen will start at 2:30 pm GMT on his Instagram account. — AFP



Alec Baldwin



In this file photo US Secretary of State John Kerry congratulates US artist Sam Gilliam during an Art in Embassies Medal of Arts Award event at the US Department of State in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

Sam Gilliam, US abstract artist, dies at 88

US abstract painter Sam Gilliam, who was the first Black artist to represent his country at the Venice Biennale fifty years ago, has died at the age of 88, his gallery said Monday. "Sam Gilliam was one of the giants of Modernism," said Arne Glimcher, the founder of the Pace Gallery in New York.

He said Gilliam, who lived most of his life in Washington "was able to convey the shared torments and triumphs of life through the universal language of abstraction" and made a name for himself with "revolutionary work that freed the canvas from its support." An acclaimed

colorist, Gilliam was hailed in the 1960s and '70s for taking the abstract canvas off the wooden stretcher and hanging it like a drape, or between two sawhorses, adding a spatial dimension that spanned the gap between painting and sculpture.

Glimcher said he had "painted right up until the end of his life and his most recent works are among his best." Gilliam was born in Mississippi in 1933 but became a leading figure in the Washington Color School in the 1950s. He represented the US in the Venice Biennale in 1972. — AFP



This undated handout photo taken by Fredrik Nilsen Studio and provided by David Kordansky Gallery and Pace Gallery, shows US artist Sam Gilliam.

Robbers raid top European art fair in Dutch city

Suspected armed robbers raided one of Europe's biggest art fairs in the Dutch city of Maastricht in broad daylight on Tuesday, police said, with video showing men smashing a display case with a sledgehammer. "Police are investigating a possible armed robbery of the TEFAF in Maastricht. Four suspects are believed to be involved. They are now searched for by multiple units," Limburg province police said on Twitter.

Police later said they had arrested two people and had closed a number of nearby roads and a major road tunnel. Dutch media said the display case targeted by the robbers contained items from a London jeweler. Dramatic video on social media showed four men dressed in smart clothes, flat caps and glasses smashing their way into a jewelry case at the show. Two of the men brandished what appeared to be weapons at a bystander, who tried to intervene using a large glass vase full of flowers. The European Fine Art Fair, commonly known as TEFAF, is one of the biggest in Europe and regularly draws tens of thousands of visitors. — AFP

Sports

F1 labels Piquet's racist language towards Hamilton 'unacceptable'

'Lewis is an incredible ambassador and deserves respect'

LONDON: Formula One branded a racist term used by three-time world champion Nelson Piquet against Lewis Hamilton as "unacceptable" on Tuesday. The 69-year-old Brazilian, who won the world title in 1981, 1983 and 1987, used a racially offensive term when referring to Hamilton on a Brazilian podcast. "Discriminatory or racist language is unacceptable in any form and has no part in society," Formula One said in a statement.

"Lewis is an incredible ambassador for our sport and deserves respect. His tireless efforts to increase diversity and inclusion are a lesson to many and something we are committed to at F1." Motorsport's governing body the FIA also spoke out in "solidarity" with Hamilton. "The FIA strongly condemns any racist or discriminatory language and behavior, which have no place in sport or wider society," the FIA said in a statement. "We express our solidarity with Lewis Hamilton and fully support his commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in motor sport."

Piquet was discussing an accident between Hamilton and Red Bull's Max Verstappen on the first lap of last year's British Grand Prix when he used the term. His daughter, Kelly, is Verstappen's partner. Hamilton, the only black driver on the grid, has been an outspoken campaigner for greater diversity in the sport. The seven-time world champion regularly displayed "black lives matter" on his apparel and took the knee before races in the 2020 season following the murder of George Floyd in the USA.

"We condemn in the strongest terms any use of racist or discriminatory language of any kind," Mercedes, Hamilton's team, said in a statement. "Lewis has spearheaded our sport's efforts to combat racism, and he is a true champion of diversity on and off track. Together, we share a vision for a diverse and inclusive motorsport, and this incident underlines the fundamental importance of continuing to strive for a brighter future." Hamilton is back in action on home soil this weekend for the British Grand Prix at Silverstone. —AFP



MONTREAL: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton waves to the crowd during the parade of drivers, ahead of the Canada Formula 1 Grand Prix at Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve in Montreal. —AFP

Cycling in Danish DNA as Copenhagen readies for Tour de France

COPENHAGEN: Eager to welcome the start of the Tour de France which embarks from the Danish capital on Friday, Copenhagen senses an opportunity to promote its deep cycling culture in a land where bikes, not cars, rule the roads. "Cycling in Denmark and in Copenhagen is more than just a way of transportation from A to B. In a way it's a part of our DNA." Copenhagen mayor Sophie Haestorp told AFP. "Last year we were the host of the European Championship in football. And it was a great big party, everybody was going out. And I think this is going to be even bigger except that now it's going to be yellow and not only red and white," she said.

The streets are decked out in the colors of the Tour in Copenhagen where everything is made for bikes—there are more than five times more bikes than cars. Over 100 million euros (\$105.5 million) have been invested during the past 15 years to facilitate two-wheeled travel, with 12 "motorways" exclusively devoted to cyclists and five dedicated bridges.

"A lot of people in Denmark take responsibility for themselves and for their health, but also for the climate. That's why we ride bicycles," Danish cycling federation chief Jens Peter Hansen told AFP. Around 15 percent of all journeys in this nation of a population of 5.8 million are made by bike. "It's a small country with small distances, you don't have mountains. So I guess that's why a lot of people could see why the bicycle is really a nice way of getting around," Hansen said. "I think it's the Danish mentality. We like to be independent."

Controversy

For the authorities, the socio-economic benefits of cycling are exceptional. In the capital, they estimate pedal-power saves one million days of work stoppage and makes one billion kroner (more than 130 million euros) in savings annually. According to figures from the promotional organization the Bicycle Embassy, the morbidity of adults who use their bicycles daily is 30 percent lower than that of non-cyclists. Yet Danes are cycling less than 20 years ago, a trend authorities hope to reverse with the Tour. "I think it's so inspiring to have the world's greatest cycling race here... when we see the professional cyclists the young kids also want to get up on their bikes," says Haestorp.

The Grande Boucle has never gone so far north. A reward also for the Danish passion for a race followed so assiduously each month of July. "This is going to be a huge party," says 31-year-old cyclist Christian. The 'huge party' comes as the Danish cycling conscience has just been piqued by the former American ambassador in the country. "In Denmark, middle-class people can't afford to drive a car. They have a bike and take the train for long trips," Carla Sands wrote in a Twitter post in June.

However, in this country considered the most "sustainable" in the world by the Environmental Performance Index, daily cycling has nothing to do with the average salary. With nearly 6,000 euros monthly, Denmark is among the richest in the world according to the OECD. "Every time I start thinking about it I start laughing, it's completely crazy," says Hansen. "We are actually deeply proud of our cycling culture." Denmark hosts the first three stages of the 21-day race, starting with a city-centre individual time-trial in Copenhagen on Friday, with Saturday's stage crosses the 20km long bridge across the sea at Nyborg. —AFP

Eoin Morgan - England's white-ball game changer

LONDON: Eoin Morgan may be England's all-time leading run scorer in one-day and Twenty20 cricket, but the World Cup's winner game-changing impact on the team was measured in more than just figures. Morgan, 35, announced his international retirement on Tuesday at Lord's, where he captained England to their memorable World Cup final win against New Zealand in 2019.

That thrilling victory was the culmination of Morgan's white-ball revolution as he oversaw a complete change in attitude towards the limited-over game in his adopted country. Always his own man, the Dublin-born Morgan rose rapidly through the ranks of Ireland cricket, becoming known for his unorthodox shot-making.

But with Ireland not then a Test nation, he made no secret of his desire to qualify for England and made his debut for Middlesex a week after his 19th birthday. The left-hander was equally decisive when he stood down from Test cricket after playing the last of 16 matches in the longer format in 2012 when he realized there was no chance of a red-ball recall. By concentrating on limited-overs internationals, Morgan became England's all-time leading scorer in ODI and T20 cricket with 6,957 and 2,458 runs respectively.

His tally of 225 ODI appearances and 115 T20Is is another England record, but it was as a ground-breaking captain that Morgan had his greatest impact. Appointed on the eve of the 2015 World Cup after the selectors

dispensed with Alastair Cook, he led England to a miserable first-round exit sealed with a woeful defeat by Bangladesh. But inspired by the attacking approach of New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum, who recently became England's red-ball coach, Morgan oversaw a remarkable revival.

Just under three months after being thrashed by New Zealand at the World Cup in a match where McCullum hit 77 from only 25 balls, England turned the tables on the Black Caps by smashing 408-9 in a 210-run win at Edgbaston. Morgan, with the support of coach Trevor Bayliss—the Australian was drafted into the England set-up after the 2015 debacle—presided over 16 wins from 20 bilateral series during the four years between World Cups.

England in that time climbed to number one in the rankings, with the likes of Jos Buttler, Jason Roy, Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes buying into Morgan's policy of fearless attacking cricket. Morgan was also adept in the field, his sensitive captaincy allowing leg-spinner Adil Rashid to flourish. The skipper also wisely had a calming word with Jofra Archer after the fast bowler sent down a wide at the start of a Super Over that ended with England beating New Zealand in the World Cup final.

In a nod to the Muslim faith of Rashid and England team-mate Moeen Ali, Morgan also acknowledged the team's diversity after that match by saying "Allah was with us". Morgan

Ortiz among latest trio to join LIV Golf

WASHINGTON: Mexico's Carlos Ortiz joined American Matthew Wolff and Spanish amateur Eugenio Chacarra as the latest players to sign with the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series, the competition announced on Monday. Reports had named 77th-ranked Wolff and Chacarra, the world amateur number two, as joining LIV Golf while 119th-ranked Ortiz signed on after a PGA career that saw him win the 2020 Houston Open.

All three were among 36 players named on Monday to the 48-player field for LIV Golf's second 54-hole event, to be staged on Thursday through to Saturday at Pumpkin Ridge

Aggressive England have set 'alarm bells' ringing

LEEDS: Brendon McCullum believes England's aggressive performances against his native New Zealand have sent a warning to their rivals in Test cricket. McCullum's first series as England's red-ball head coach ended in a 3-0 whitewash of Test world champions New Zealand.

The hosts made short work of seemingly stiff chases of 277, 299 and 296 in victories at Lord's, Trent Bridge and Headingley, scoring their runs at a rapid rate of 4.54 an over. It was a marked contrast to England's woeful run of just one win in 17 Tests prior to the campaign against the Black Caps. England's dynamic performances in the New Zealand series served as vindication of the fearless approach championed by their new leadership duo of

McCullum and captain Ben Stokes.

"The world Test champions were a formidable opponent to overcome and the alarm bells have probably gone off somewhat around world cricket as to how this team is going to play," said McCullum following England's seven-wicket win at Headingley. "When Ben's out there captaining he's constantly making plays, which I think is great because it means at least we're in control, regardless of what the scoreboard says."

'Pushing the envelope'

"Then when he's batting, he's pushing the envelope as well, which is sending a message to not just our dressing room but to other dressing rooms around the world that this is how we're going to play. Obviously you want to be the number one team in the world and you want to achieve the ultimate success, which is being world Test champions, winning the Ashes and

beating the top teams consistently.

"That's the end goal, but what we need to do first of all is enjoy what we've been able to achieve over the last three weeks and understand what we've achieved as well. Cherish it." The 40-year-old McCullum may have been one of the most attacking players of his generation but he believes Stokes needs no lessons from him in that regard. "I'm aggressive but Ben's got me covered, which is saying something," he said.

England don't have long to wait to put their new philosophy into operation again, with India their next opponents at Edgbaston starting Friday in a Test delayed from last year by the tourists' COVID-19 concerns. McCullum, however, expects all-rounder Stokes to rise to the challenge, saying: "I think the timing of him getting the captaincy is perfect. I know it's early days, but he's exceeded my expectations already to be honest." —AFP

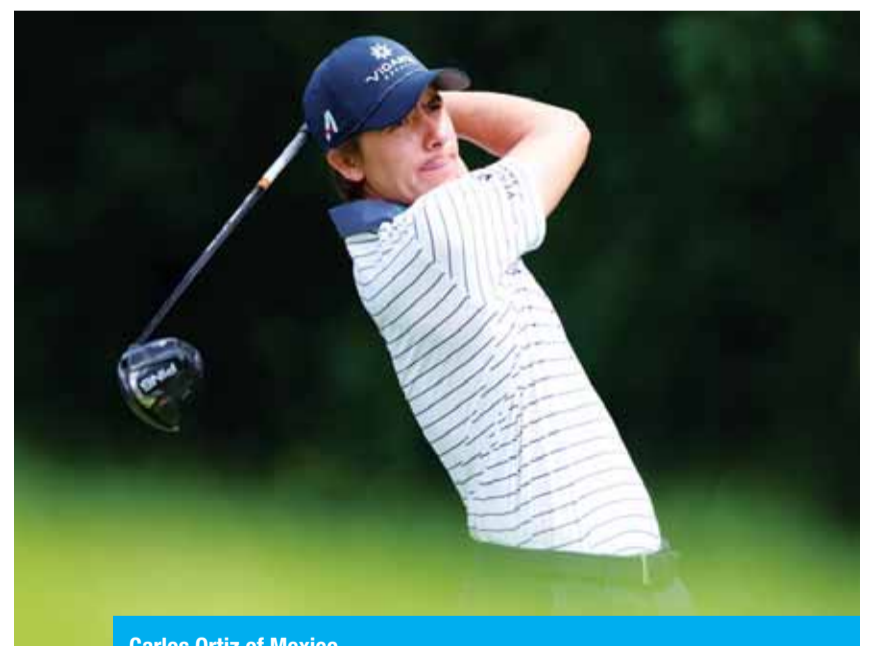


GEORGETOWN: In this file photo, Ireland's Eoin Morgan dives into his crease in a near run-out against South Africa during the Super-Eight match at Guyana National Stadium in Georgetown, Guyana. —AFP

also had a ruthless streak, as evident by the way big-hitting batsman Alex Hales has remained in England exile since testing positive for recreational drugs in the build-up to the 2019 World Cup as a result of what the captain said was a "breakdown in trust". There were setbacks, notably a 2016 T20 World Cup final defeat by the West Indies, while his own form has declined during the past year.

Morgan was twice out for nought during the recent ODI series in the Netherlands and has made just two

fifties from his past 28 international innings across the two white-ball formats. Morgan's legacy, however, remains secure, with former England captain Nasser Hussain telling Sky Sports: "Eoin has been the most influential white-ball cricketer England have ever had. He's been our best white-ball captain, and he has been a fantastic player. And he gave us the best moment in English white-ball cricket that we've ever had, at Lord's. A lot of it was down to the skipper." —AFP



Carlos Ortiz of Mexico

Sports

West Indies sweep Bangladesh with 10-wicket rout in 2nd Test

Windies extent winning streak to three

GROS-ISLET: West Indies wasted no time on a day when more than five hours were lost to the elements to complete a 10-wicket victory over Bangladesh on the fourth day of the second and final Test in St Lucia on Monday. Frustrated by torrential overnight showers which left a sodden outfield and prevented play until mid-afternoon, the home side claimed the last four wickets swiftly despite an entertaining, unbeaten 60 by Nurul Hasan to dismiss the visitors for 186 in their second innings after they had resumed in the already precarious position of 132 for six.

That left captain Kraigg Brathwaite and opening partner John Campbell with the formality of knocking off the 13 runs required for victory in less than three overs for another comprehensive triumph and a 2-0 sweep of the series. "Our confidence levels were very high coming into this game after that win in the first Test," Brathwaite said. "There is always room for improvement but it was good to see the way we fought back from a difficult position against the Bangladesh bowlers on the second day.

"It is especially pleasing to see our plans coming to fruition now because we know it's going to be very tough for our next Test series in Australia at the end of year but we believe we can put up a good fight there," he added. It extended the West Indies' Test match winning streak to three matches following a series-clinching victory over England at the end of the series in Grenada three months earlier. Kyle Mayers, whose 146 was the fulcrum of the West Indies first innings total of 148, took both the Man of the Match and Man of the Series awards.

Any fears of being frustrated by lower-order resistance from Bangladesh dissipated within minutes of play getting underway as Alzarri Joseph had Mehidy Hasan Miraz caught behind fending at a lifting delivery. Nurul, who impressed with a second innings century in the seven-wicket defeat in the first Test in Antigua a week earlier, seemed to get into white ball mode with a succession of extravagant shots, his unbeaten half-century coming off just 50 balls



GROS ISLET: Kyle Mayers, of West Indies, takes evasive action during the second day of the 2nd Test between Bangladesh and West Indies at Darren Sammy Cricket Ground in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia. —AFP

and embellished by six fours and two sixes.

Yet as impressive as he was when on strike, the wicketkeeper-batsman was powerless to prevent the demise of his teammates as Jayden Seales removed Ebadot Hossain and Shoriful Islam while last man Khaled Ahmed was run out by a direct hit from Campbell to the non-striker's end to terminate another generally meek Bangladesh batting effort.

Joseph, Seales and Kemar Roach claimed three wickets each in the innings. For Shakib al Hasan, back in the role of captain after a lengthy period off the Test side, this experience opened his eyes to possibilities. "We have a long break before our next Test series so we need to take the positives,

especially the encouraging performances of our fast bowlers, and make sure we are ready in five months' time," he said.

"We need to be mentally tougher in our batting to compete with the best teams in the world, but our greatest improvement in the last three-four years has been with our fast bowlers. "So while the fast bowlers are working really hard and getting the results, we need to improve overall as a team to be more competitive in Test cricket away from home." Both sides now adjust for the white ball formats with the three-match T20 International series starting next Sunday in Dominica after which they will meet in three One-Day Internationals. —AFP

Much-changed Springboks to face Wales in first Test

JOHANNESBURG: Siya Kolisi-captained South Africa will face Wales in Pretoria on Saturday with a much changed starting line-up from that which lost to England in their last Test seven months ago. Into the backline come full-back Damian de Allende, star winger Cheslin Kolbe, fly-half Elton Jantjies and scrum-half Faf de Klerk in place of Willie le Roux, Jesse Kriel, Handre Pollard and Cobus Reinach.

Forward alterations see prop Frans Malherbe, flanker Franco Mostert and No. 8 Jasper Wiese take over from Trevor Nyakane, Kwagga Smith and Duane Vermeulen. Le Roux and Smith are among a six forwards-two backs bench for the first of three Tests on consecutive Saturdays between the world champion Springboks and the struggling Welsh.

Injuries rule out Reinach and Vermeulen while Kriel, Pollard and Nyakane are in a 43-man squad named

by coach Jacques Nienaber for the series. The two uncapped players in the match-day 23 are lock Salmaan Moerat and loose forward Elrigh Louw, who were consistently impressive for the Stormers and Bulls in the recent United Rugby Championship (URC).

"We have a fantastic crop of youngsters who have been training hard and putting up their hands and it is pleasing for us to give Salmaan and Elrigh opportunities," said Nienaber. Choosing Willemse at full-back surprised pundits as he operated regularly at inside centre for URC champions the Stormers. He has, however, lined up at full-back and fly-half in the past. Nienaber emphasised the versatility of Willemse, Smith and Mostert as South Africa seek to continue a record of winning every home Test against Wales, having triumphed 10 times since 1964.

"Damian (Willemse), for example, can cover fly-half and centre in addition to



SOUTH-WEST LONDON: In this file photo, England's wing Joe Marchant (2nd right) is fouled by South Africa's flanker Siya Kolisi (3rd right) during the Autumn International friendly rugby union at Twickenham Stadium. —AFP

full-back, while Kwagga (Smith) covers each loose forward position and can even slot in at wing with his (sevens) experience. "Franco (Mostert) also gives us options at loose forward and lock, so we look forward to seeing what this team can produce." South Africa had a mixed

2021 season, winning eight Tests, including a series against the British and Irish Lions and losing five. Wales lost four of five 2022 Six Nations Championships matches, with a defeat in Cardiff to perennial strugglers Italy particularly embarrassing. —AFP

Australia pick Swepson for spin battle

GALLE: Australia's Mitchell Swepson will play the opening Test against Sri Lanka, with touring skipper Pat Cummins on Tuesday calling the leg-spinner an "important cog" in their bowling attack. The 28-year-old Swepson will partner premier spinner Nathan Lyon at the start of the two-match series on Wednesday in Galle, where the pitch is expected to be a turner. Cummins stopped short of disclosing the full Australian XI, with doubts over batsman Travis Head, who injured his hamstring during the team's loss in the one-day international series.

"Just want to see how Travis gets through, so we'll give him bit more time. But yes, Mitchell Swepson will be the second spinner in the Test match," Cummins told reporters. Swepson made his debut in Pakistan earlier this year and was part of the visiting team's 1-0 Test triumph there. He took two wickets in two matches. But Cummins insists the up-and-coming wrist spinner is ready for the Sri

Lankan challenge as Australia look to avenge their 3-0 loss to the hosts in 2016.

"We're really happy with Swepo. I think he is bowling beautifully and really ready for this one," said Cummins. "I think his role here might be slightly different as well. Pakistan we knew was going to be a slow grind and I thought he did his job despite not taking the wickets he would like. He was a really important cog in that bowling engine." Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said leg-spinners were a wicket-taking option and the hosts could hand a Test debut to wrist spinner Jeffrey Vandersay. "Wrist spinner has more control on these tracks," he said.

Spin to win

Veteran spinner Rangana Herath was the wrecker-in-chief with his 28 wickets in Sri Lanka's series sweep of the Australians six years ago. Karunaratne insists the team's present spin group of Lasith Embuldeniya, Ramesh Mendis, Praveen Jayawickrama and Vandersay can match Herath's exploits.

"There are three spinners who can play that role, so whoever comes and bowls well he can do the job," said Karunaratne. "Embuldeniya has good experience on these wickets, Mendis, Praveen and Vandersay also there. I think those are capable of doing Rangana Herath's job".

December 2020, supervised training as the Nice squad returned from a summer break.

"Coming back is special. I kept in contact with a lot of people. I was contacted by a club but as soon as there was Nice, I said 'I'm going there.'" Favre told a news conference. "What (club owners) Ineos are doing is very interesting. What they want to continue building is huge." "Over the next two years Nice must progress, do good things in the transfer windows and finish regularly in the top three. And even more. "You have to tell the truth, that's the goal. In other sports, Ineos is number one."

Favre spent two years as coach of Nice between 2016 and 2018, guiding the club to a third-place finish in his first season and the qualifying rounds of the Champions League. "I am absolutely delighted that Lucien Favre is joining us," said Jim Ratcliffe, the British billionaire chair-



Australia's Mitchell Swepson

Cummins admitted Sri Lanka are a tough side to beat on home soil. "I think Sri Lanka play really well over here, it's quite different from what we experience in Australia," said Cummins. "They are going to pose a challenge but we are up for it." All-rounder Glenn Maxwell could return to the Test team after a gap of five years since he last played a five-day game. Cummins also lauded the Sri Lankan people for their courage during an unprecedented economic crisis on the island nation. —AFP

Favre 'new Nice coach' as Galtier in PSG talks

NICE: Former Borussia Dortmund coach Lucien Favre was appointed manager of Ligue 1 club Nice on Monday, replacing Christophe Galtier who is in talks with Paris Saint-Germain. "Christophe Galtier is no longer in charge of Nice's first team," Nice said in a statement. Favre, the 64-year-old Swiss who has been without a club since he was released by Dortmund in

News in brief

French minister apologizes

PARIS: French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin on Tuesday made a partial apology for chaos at last month's Champions League final between Real Madrid and Liverpool in Paris, while insisting fake tickets and "delinquency" were mostly to blame. "Should things have been managed better at the Stade de France (stadium)? The answer is yes. Am I partly responsible? The answer is yes," Darmanin told RTL radio. "Of course, I readily apologize towards everyone who suffered from this bad management of the event," he added. After scenes of fans crowded into tight spaces and being tear-gassed by police caused outrage around Europe, Darmanin poured fuel on the fire by blaming supporters with fake tickets for the disruption. UEFA events director Martin Kallen last week told French senators investigating the fiasco that the football body's count of fake tickets was far short of the tens of thousands claimed by French authorities.

Destro signs for Empoli

MILAN: Italy international striker Mattia Destro has signed for Empoli on a one-year deal, the Serie A club announced on Tuesday. In a statement Empoli said that free agent Destro has "signed a contract until 30 June 2023" after being let go by Genoa. Destro, who earned the last of his eight international caps in 2014, scored nine times in 27 Serie A appearances last season, not enough to keep Genoa in the Italian top flight. The 31-year-old has also played for Roma and AC Milan in a largely underwhelming career which had started promisingly at Genoa and Siena just over a decade ago. Empoli finished 14th last season after being promoted from Serie B, and will be led by Paolo Zanetti in the coming campaign following the departure of previous coach Aurelio Andreazzoli. Zanetti was sacked by Venezia in April as part of a failed bid for Serie A safety.

Fernandinho returns to Paranaense

SAO PAULO: Former Manchester City captain Fernandinho has returned to his first club and signed for Athletico Paranaense, the Brazilian club said on Monday. The 37-year-old midfielder, who left City at the end of last season following a trophy-laden nine-year stint in England, signed a two-and-a-half year contract. "It is with great satisfaction that I return home... Knowing that I can apply a little bit of everything I achieved in these years playing in Europe," said Fernandinho in a press conference to unveil his arrival in the southern city of Curitiba. Born in Parana state, whose capital is Curitiba, Fernandinho began his career at Athletico as a teenager in 2002 before moving to Ukraine to join Shakhtar Donetsk in 2005. After eight years in Donetsk that saw him win six Ukrainian league titles, four Ukrainian cups and the UEFA Cup, the precursor to the Europa League, in 2009, Fernandinho caught the eye of City scouts.

Red Bull eyes hypercar

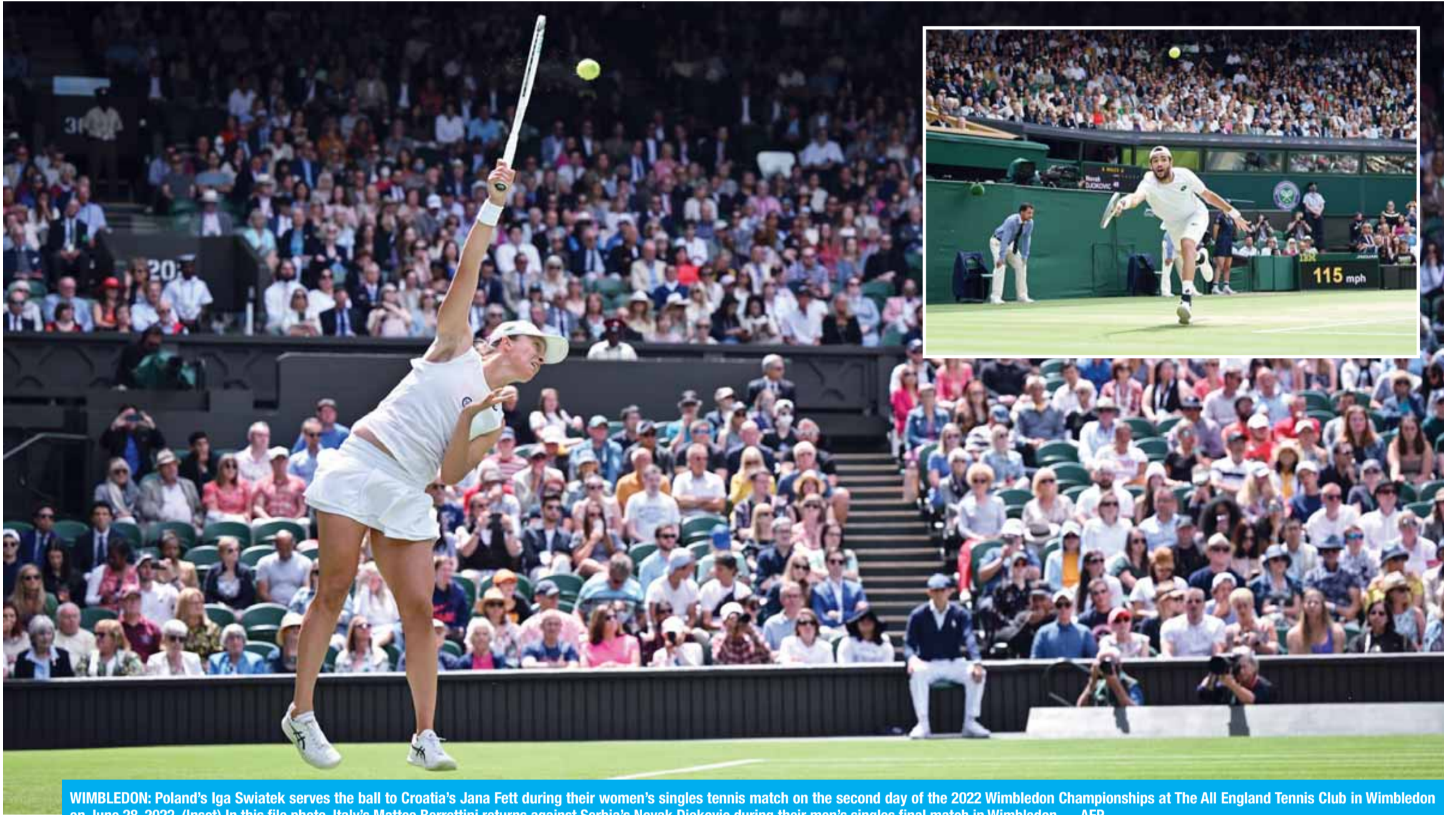
PARIS: Red Bull announced on Tuesday its first foray into the exclusive world of the hypercar with a limited production run of 50 starting in 2025. The RB17 road car will carry a price tag of \$5 million (5.79 million euros), before tax, a statement reported, with the project overseen by Andrew Newey, the Chief Technical Officer who designed Red Bull's four Formula One world championship winning cars. Production on the two-seater hybrid V8 engine producing over 1100bhp will be at Red Bull's Milton Keynes site. Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said the RB17 "marks an important milestone in the evolution" of their Advanced Technologies arm which for the first time is producing a car with the energy drinks giant's logo on the bonnet. Newey said the RB17 "distills everything we know about creating championship-winning Formula 1 cars into a package that delivers extreme levels of performance in a two-seat track car".

Okagbare's ban extended

PARIS: Sprinter Blessing Okagbare has been given an additional one-year ban for doping violations on top of her existing 10-year suspension, a decision that rules Nigeria out of the sprint relay at the world championships. The Athletics Integrity Unit charged the 33-year-old with "evading sample collection, and tampering or attempted tampering with the doping control process". In February, Okagbare was given her original ban for "multiple breaches of anti-doping rules". She was suspended during last year's Tokyo Olympics after failing a drug test. Six days after she had evaded sample collection on June 13, 2021, she competed in the relay event at Nigeria's Olympic trials, helping her team to qualify for the world championships. Those results have now been disqualified due to Okagbare's involvement and Nigeria has therefore lost its potential qualification place in the women's 4x100m relay at the world championships in Oregon in July.

Cuban boxer trying to flee

HAVANA: Olympic and triple world boxing champion Andy Cruz was caught trying to escape Cuba, the island nation's boxing federation said on Tuesday, accusing the fighter of "serious indiscipline". The Cuban Boxing Federation (FCB) issued a statement on the website of Cuba's Inder sports institute saying it had been "informed that the athlete Andy Cruz Gomez took part in an attempt to illegally leave the country". But the FCB gave no more details about the escape attempt nor Cruz's current whereabouts. Cruz, who won gold at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, is considered by many experts to be the finest Cuban boxer of his generation. He faces a temporary or permanent suspension from Cuban boxing over the incident. The FCB said it was a case of "serious indiscipline" that would "generate corresponding assessments" that would soon be published. Cruz did not turn up to the national championships last week, nor a pre-competition training camp. —From AFP



WIMBLEDON: Poland's Iga Swiatek serves the ball to Croatia's Jana Fett during their women's singles tennis match on the second day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon on June 28, 2022. (Inset) In this file photo, Italy's Matteo Berrettini returns against Serbia's Novak Djokovic during their men's singles final match in Wimbledon. —AFP

Coronavirus-hit Berrettini pulls out of Wimbledon as Swiatek extends streak

Djokovic racks up 80th Wimbledon win as Alcaraz fights back

LONDON: Title contender Matteo Berrettini was forced to pull out of Wimbledon on Tuesday after testing positive for coronavirus as women's top seed Iga Swiatek extended her winning streak to 36 matches. Elsewhere on day two of the Championships, Serena Williams prepared to return to singles tennis after a year away and Rafael Nadal was due to begin his quest to win the third leg of a potential calendar Grand Slam. The early action at the All England Club on Tuesday was overshadowed by the announcement from Berrettini - last year's runner-up - that he was out of the event.

"I am heartbroken to announce that I need to withdraw from @wimbledon due to a positive COVID-19 test result," the 26-year-old Italian wrote on Instagram. Berrettini was widely regarded as one of the biggest threats to defending champion Novak Djokovic at Wimbledon, having captured back-to-back grass-court titles in Stuttgart and Queen's. He is the second man to withdraw from Wimbledon with COVID in two days after 2017 runner-up Marin Cilic of Croatia also tested positive.

"I have no words to describe the extreme disappointment I feel," Berrettini, seeded eighth, said in his statement. "The dream is over for this year, but I will be back stronger." The Italian was a potential semi-final opponent for two-time champion Nadal. His place in the Wimbledon first round will be taken by Sweden's Elias Ymer, a lucky loser from qualifying. Wimbledon has returned to normal this year after the tournament was cancelled due to COVID in 2020 and last year was played in front of reduced crowds.

The All England Club said in a statement that protocols remained in place to minimize the risk of infection. "We are following UK guidance around assessment and isolation of any potential infectious disease," the statement said. "Our player medical team also continue to wear face masks for any consultation." Poland's world number one Swiatek coasted into the second round with a routine 6-0, 6-3 against Croatian qualifier Jana Fett.

The French Open champion, who has won her past six tournaments, said she was relishing the atmosphere at the grass-court tournament. "I feel I have only played 12 weeks of my life on grass but the whole atmosphere and tradition is pumping me up and just looking forward to the next matches," she said. Also in the women's draw, fourth seed Paula Badosa of Spain beat American Louisa Chirico for the loss of just three games.

Alcaraz fights back

Meanwhile, Novak Djokovic became the first player to win 80 matches at all four Grand Slams as he made a successful start to his Wimbledon title defence on Monday while teenage star Carlos Alcaraz battled over five sets to make the second round. Six-time champion and top seed Djokovic saw off South Korea's Kwon Soo-woo 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. But 20-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic was made to work after falling a break down in the opening two sets against his 81st-ranked opponent. "Now we have got to 80 wins, let's get to 100," said Djokovic. Djokovic, 35, is attempting to win a fourth successive Wimbledon title and join a select group.

that's part of our research," Stubley said the first aim was to make sure the new courts worked for tennis, reproducing the characteristics of a grass court. The head of courts and horticulture, who has worked at Wimbledon for nearly three decades, is passionate about promoting grass-court tennis.

"We want to champion global grass tennis, not just for the Championships but hopefully you can potentially have tournaments in any country in the world, depending on whether it's a warm-season or a cool-season grass," he said. "We're doing a lot of research in southern hemisphere grasses, Bermuda grasses and the like, so we can actually end up having a product where we can have the right root zone and the right grasses on top to give us the same characteristics of a court at Wimbledon."

Football lesson

Stubley said tennis was learning from football, which has used grass-stitching for a number of years. He said other sports including cricket were interested in the technology as it could lead to longer seasons. "We've got some trial courts that we've built (in Britain)," said Stubley.

"We're just getting players and members to play on it, get feedback, doing that same data collection that we would do with STRI (sports turf consultancy), with hardness, ball bounce, ball height, speed, the ball coming through. "If we can have a more free-draining soil, could we actually extend the grass-court season by four to six weeks and make it more appealing for the general public to play grass-court tennis?" But Stubley does not see any immediate use for grass-stitching on Wimbledon's courts.

In the Open era, only Bjorn Borg, Pete Sampras and Roger Federer have managed such a streak at the All England Club. Next up for Djokovic is Thanasi Kokkinakis. "Novak is kind of a brick wall," said the Australian. Alcaraz, a potential quarter-final opponent for Djokovic, came back from two sets to one down to defeat Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff. The 19-year-old fired 30 aces and 73 winners in a dazzling display of shot-making to win 4-6, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4. "Last year, I played five sets in the first round here as well so this shows how much I like grass," joked Alcaraz.

Lunch or siesta

Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina knocked out 2021 semi-finalist Hubert Hurkacz courtesy of the tournament's first final-set 10-point tiebreak. World number 37 Davidovich Fokina triumphed over the seventh-seeded Pole 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, 5-7, 2-6, 7-6 (10/8) in a match interrupted twice by rain. "When the rain came at 5-5 in the third set, I didn't know whether to have lunch or take a siesta," admitted 2017 junior champion Davidovich Fokina, who needed five match points to seal the win.

Two-time Andy Murray also made it through, coming from a set down to see off Australia's James Duckworth, who hasn't registered a single win in 2022. Murray won 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4. "I'm getting on a bit now so don't know how many more chances I'll get to play on Centre Court," said the 35-year-old. Around two hours of play was lost on Monday due to rain and 10 matches cancelled-but that did not faze new women's world number two Ons Jabeur. —AFP



Ukraine's Lesya Tsurenko

Wimbledon set for all-Ukrainian clash

LONDON: Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko has a message for the world as she prepares to face compatriot Anhelina Kalinina at Wimbledon: "We still need help to win this war." Russian and Belarusian players have already been banned by the All England Club in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February. Now, by a quirk of the draw, two Ukrainians get the chance to hammer home their country's ongoing plight to a global audience after they both won their first-round matches.

"It's another way to show that we are a strong nation and to remind the world that we are still here, we still have war," said Tsurenko. "We need help. We still need help to win this war." Since the invasion, Tsurenko, 33, has been forced to take refuge in Italy, staying at a tennis academy but constantly worries for her family in Kyiv. At the weekend, she said, a Russian rocket landed just "100 meters away from my home, the building where I lived".

"So every time my area of the city where I live gets bombed and since the war started, I start to feel this tension inside of me," she added. "I work every day with a psychologist. This feeling of tension will only be released when the war will finish. There is nothing I can do about it." Tsurenko, a former top 25 player, now ranked at 101, has won four titles in her career. When she faces Kalinina on Wednesday she will be attempting to make the third round for just the second time at the All England Club.

However, she is more concerned with the symbolism of the match than the outcome. She intends to seek permission from Wimbledon organizers to wear a Ukraine ribbon on her shirt. "For me emotionally, winning or losing doesn't exist anymore," she said. "For me, there is a big issue in my life-it's war. And there is nothing else that can beat this." Kalinina, the 29th seed, revealed to AFP at the French Open that she had been living out of a suitcase since leaving Ukraine in February. She has not been back since, making a home in a succession of hotel rooms in tournaments in the Gulf, Europe, the United States and back in Europe again. —AFP

Wimbledon's chief has a global vision for tennis on grass

LONDON: Wimbledon head of courts Neil Stubley is on a mission to champion grass-court tennis around the world by harnessing modern technology to recreate the unique conditions of the All England Club. Players only get the chance to compete on the surface for a few weeks each year, with clay and hard-court tournaments dominating international tours. But Stubley, whose role is to keep the lush turf of Wimbledon in tip-top shape, is involved in trials in Britain and Australia using synthetic fibres alongside grass to improve court surfaces.

"One of the biggest challenges for grass tennis is that you need quite a heavy clay soil because what you need to do is be able to dry it out and get the ball bounce," he said. "In the UK we've naturally got quite a lot of clay soil within our soil make-up, whereas in other parts of the world some countries are very much dominated by chalk or sand so they find it a lot harder to find the sort of soils that we naturally find in the UK." Stubley said using grass-stitching with sandier soils helps make the structure of the playing surface more stable and resilient.

"You can actually have a more free-draining surface but you can still get the hardness on the surface as well so then you can go to places like Australia that have got very silty, sandy soils and create good grass courts, so



Neil Stubley

"The stitch system probably for the betterment of world grass-court tennis," he said. "I think the Championships are a standalone. "We kind of get to the point where we can have better-quality courts around the world. It's more about getting juniors more used to grass so it's not so alien to them when they come on the main tour." But Stubley said Wimbledon itself, which from this year permanently loses its middle Sunday rest day, meaning more constant wear and tear, has benefited from technological advances over the years.

This has included painstakingly trialing and selecting the best type of ryegrass and a better understanding of the use of nutrients and chemicals. Steam-sterilizing the courts at high temperatures helps control weeds, pests and fungi, meaning there is less reliance on fungicides. "It's just a combination of those sorts of things that's put us in a position now where we just feel confident that that extra day won't have a direct impact on the quality of the turf," he said. —AFP