

**3** Two Kuwaiti doctors win new medical patent



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# Kuwait plans new rules to control iqamas, visit visas

Overstayers to be punished • New fees, private insurance eyed • Nationality curbs mullied

## Kuwait second cheapest Gulf city for expats

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is ranked 131st worldwide on the Mercer Cost of Living Index for expats, and seventh in the Gulf region, out of 227 cities around the world, despite a rise in inflation in Kuwait and around the world that has made expat workers increasingly worried about their purchasing power. Kuwait City is the second cheapest Gulf city behind Doha, Qatar, which is eighth in the Gulf and 133rd worldwide.

Hong Kong, Zurich and Geneva are the top three

most expensive cities for foreign workers, with Basel fourth, Bern fifth, and New York and Singapore in seventh and eighth spots respectively, followed by Tokyo and Beijing. The Mercer index reflects issues that have an effect on the lives of expat workers worldwide. The return of high inflation all over the world has made expat workers worried over their purchasing power, which led them to expect an increase in their salaries.

In the Arab world, Dubai and Abu Dhabi are the 31st and 61st most expensive cities for foreign workers, followed by Riyadh in 103rd place, Jeddah (111), Manama (117), Muscat in 119th place, Doha (133), Cairo (154), Rabat (162) and Tunis in the 220th spot. Ankara is the least expensive city on the list in 227th place, while Bishkek is 226th, Dushanbe (225), Islamabad and Karachi 224th and 223rd respectively, Istanbul 222nd and Tashkent in the 221st spot.

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry has received instructions from the Cabinet to wait for a new plan to grant residencies in Kuwait. The Public Authority of Manpower has also received instructions on the conditions to grant work permits and who can renew them and who cannot. This comes after visit visa issuance was halted until new mechanisms are in place to decide who has the right to get them.

Official sources said the number of residency violators has increased more than that during the coronavirus pandemic, to over 120,000 residents, which is a massive number and constitutes a danger to domestic security. They said instructions given to the interior ministry include "rationalizing" visit visas to a minimum after the start of reissuing them, and limiting them to expats with certain jobs with high salaries. According to the instructions, only those whose salary is KD 600 or higher can bring in a parent, but that will rise to double the figure as new developments occur.

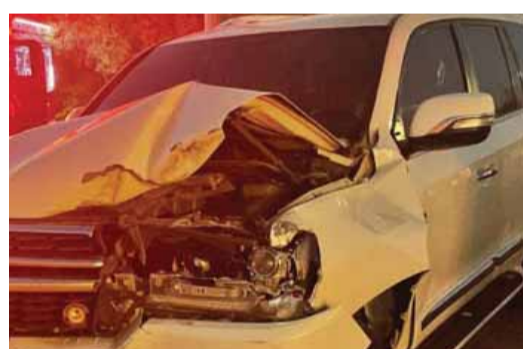
Sources said visit visas have become a business for some and are dealt with commercially on social media, which reflects a defect, and calls for a pause and review of granting of residencies and work permits. They said in a few months, the Cabinet will issue, through an agreed-upon system between the interior ministry and PAM, conditions for coming to Kuwait for work, and banning the transfer of visit visas to work permits of any type, in addition to doubling punishments for visitors who do not leave on time.

Punishments will also be doubled for those who employ visitors living in Kuwait, because it was found that many expat visitors come to work in any job only to make money, and this is what keeps them in the country after their visit period expires. It will also be decided that the duration of a visit visa will be only one month and will not be renewed.

The sources said conditions for allowing residency in Kuwait will be toughened through increasing

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## News in brief



### 5 expats killed in road crash

**KUWAIT:** Five expats were killed in a horrific traffic accident involving two vehicles on Sixth Ring Road early Wednesday, Kuwait's Fire Force (KFF) said. Upon arrival, firefighters found four people had succumbed to their injuries and four others were in critical condition, including a Kuwaiti. The firefighters handed the injured to medical teams, but one person died on arrival at the hospital. Firemen also dealt with an accident involving a diesel truck and a dump truck on Seventh Ring Road, which left two people injured. Firefighters evacuated the injured persons and dealt with the fuel leak after securing the location.



Captagon pills are seen in this file photo.

### Syria seizes record Captagon haul

**DAMASCUS:** Syrian counter-narcotics units seized a record haul of 2.3 tons of the amphetamine-type stimulant known as Captagon, the interior ministry announced Wednesday. With a kilo of Captagon estimated to amount to around 6,000 pills, the cumulated number of pills seized tops 14 million, the largest recorded haul by the Syrian government in years. Several recent reports have accused senior members of President Bashar Al-Assad's government and security apparatus of being at the heart of the booming Captagon trade. — AFP

## Turkey seeks extraditions under deal

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey said Wednesday it would seek the extradition of 33 alleged Kurdish militants and coup plot suspects from Sweden and Finland under a deal to secure Ankara's support for the Nordic countries' NATO membership bids. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan dropped weeks of resistance to the two countries' NATO ambitions at crunch talks held on the eve of an alliance summit Wednesday focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Erdogan emerged from the meeting declaring victory after securing a 10-point agreement under which the two countries vowed to join Turkey's fight against banned Kurdish militants and to swiftly extradite suspects. Turkey put the deal to the immediate test by announcing that it would seek the extradition of 12 suspects from Finland and 21 from Sweden.

"We will seek the extradition of terrorists from the relevant countries within the framework of the new agreement," Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag said in a statement.

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## Lockdown in Udaipur after grisly killing

**UDAIPUR, India:** Hundreds of police were deployed in an Indian city on Wednesday after the murder of a Hindu tailor allegedly by two Muslims in revenge for inflammatory comments about Islam by a ruling party member. The attack - in which the men seemingly tried to behead their victim - in the western city of Udaipur was captured on video that went viral and has gripped a country with a long history of communal violence.

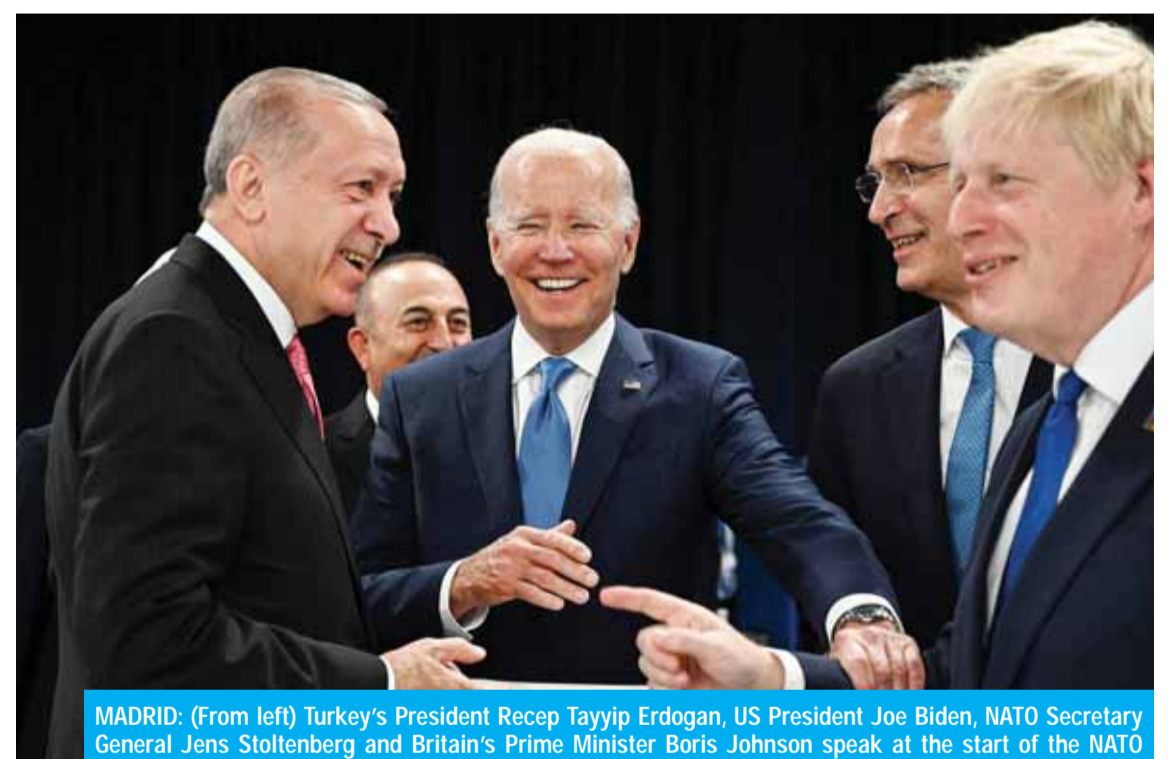
The video showed Kanhaiya Lal being attacked in his shop, with further footage showing the two accused purportedly brandishing large knives and threatening to kill Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They then justified their murder as a response to Lal's alleged support of comments about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by a spokeswoman for Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP party - remarks that have triggered protests across parts of the Islamic world in recent weeks.

Hundreds gathered outside Lal's house ahead of his funeral on Wednesday, a day after several hundred protested and chanted Hindu slogans in response to the killing. People on motorcycles and cars

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## World Bank lends \$500m to Egypt, \$130m to Tunisia

**CAIRO/TUNIS:** The world's top wheat importer Egypt said Wednesday it is to receive \$500 million



MADRID: (From left) Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, US President Joe Biden, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speak at the start of the NATO summit on June 29, 2022. — AFP



UDAIPUR, India: People follow the hearse carrying the body of slain Hindu tailor Kanhaiya Lal during his funeral procession on June 29, 2022. — AFP

from the World Bank to alleviate the impact of war between its main suppliers Russia and Ukraine. "The World Bank financing will support the government's efforts to meet food needs and enhance resilience to future shocks," International Cooperation Minister Rania Al-Mashat said in a statement.

Egypt's food security has been under mounting pressure since Russia invaded Ukraine in late February causing massive disruption to exports from Black Sea ports. Before the invasion, the two coun-

tries accounted for 85 percent of Egypt's wheat imports. The new tranche of World Bank financing will go towards "funding wheat purchases" as well as "increasing wheat storage capacities" in anticipation of future crises, the ministry said.

Since the war began, the government has already ramped up wheat purchases from domestic farmers as well as trialing wheat substitutes in a bid to counter the supply shortfall.

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## Local

# Kuwait urges more transparent, efficient UN Security Council

## Kuwait voices alarm at ambiguous destiny of the missing in Syria

**NEW YORK/GENEVA:** The state of Kuwait renewed its support to a more transparent, accountable and efficient UN Security Council, affirming its full preparedness to support such efforts. This came in a speech delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations' Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi to the council's open session regarding UNSC's work mechanisms.

Otaibi mentioned that the open discussion was held just as the world begins to recover from ramifi-

stipulating that if power of veto was used, a UN general assembly discussion will take place within 10 days of the vote, Ambassador Otaibi mentioned. He further affirmed importance of "penholder" status, and necessity of guaranteeing fair distribution of responsibilities between member states, to ensure fair and active participation in the decision-making process.

Ambassador Otaibi proposed allowing newly elected members to attend and observe Security Council meetings prior to assuming office in five months, to allow for better preparation. To boost transparency, Otaibi suggested including unofficial council meetings in the UN paper. Furthermore, he hailed the UNSC's efforts in providing an annual report, while also encouraging members to make content of reports even more detailed. Otaibi pointed out that tangible change can only be achieved through cooperation and real desire to make change happen.

### Missing people

Separately, Kuwait on Wednesday expressed deep concern at the plight of missing people due to the conflict in Syria. According to the relevant international law and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2474, parties of the armed strife are primarily responsible for taking all necessary measures to determine destiny of unaccounted for persons, due to hostilities, said the Permanent Representative at the UN and International Organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim.

Ambassador Ghunaim was addressing the UN Human Rights Council as part of the interactive dialogue with the independent fact-finding commission in Syria. The senior Kuwaiti diplomat noted that the commission reported that there had been wide-scale cases of coercive disappearance during the past decade in Syria, where tens of thousands of men, women and children had been held and



**NEW YORK:** Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations' Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks to the council's open session regarding UNSC's work mechanisms. — KUNA

remained unaccounted for. In this respect, The State of Kuwait calls on the parties to stop disappearance of persons due to the armed conflict, immediately release all those deprived of their freedom and dedicate special attention to missing children. Moreover, it robustly decries all human rights breaches suffered by the brotherly Syrian people and calls for ending the conflict through a just and comprehensive settlement.

Ambassador Ghunaim expressed deep concern at ongoing and explicit violations of the international humanitarian law and the human rights laws by all parties, namely the continuing attacks on innocent

civilians, where some cases are tantamount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Furthermore, the State of Kuwait urges the parties in Syria to devote attention to humanitarian issues, such as allowing safe and sustainable delivery of aid and medics to evacuate victims unharmed, abstaining from besieging residential regions or using starvation as a war tool. Ghunaim affirmed support for the appeal that had been made by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for silencing the guns worldwide for allowing delivery of relief assistance to those in need and create the atmosphere for resolving conflicts diplomatically. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Winners of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award and the Award's organizers pose for a group picture.

International Book Fair for three consecutive years. The pictures of the award's 486 volunteers from 21 countries were also showcased at the exhibition. The Informatics Award relied heavily on the efforts of local and regional volunteers who contributed in substantially making Kuwait and region stronger in the digital industry.

Last Monday's event further celebrated the winners of the 20th Edition of Informatics Award which are:

### The Kingdom of Bahrain

- The General Directorate of Traffic of the Ministry of Interior for its project Traffic Services, represented by Director General of Traffic, Brigadier General Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulwahab Al Khalifa.

- The Ministry of Education for its project Electronic Education Portal, represented by Dr Majid bin Ali Al Nuaimi, Minister of Education.

### The Sultanate of Oman

- The Ministry of Health for its project Trassud+ represented by Dr Fatma bint Mohammed al Ajmi, Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial and

### Planning Affairs in MoH.

### The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- The Communications and Information Technology Commission for its project Platform for Delivery Applications via Electronic Platforms represented by Deputy Governor Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Jarbou.

- The Saudi Red Crescent Authority for its project Asefein represented by Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Rasheed

### The State of Kuwait

- The Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT), in joint collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Zain, for its project Shlonik, represented by The Director General CAIT, Haya Ahmed Al Wadani.

- The Public Institution for Social Security for its project Insurances Dhukhr (treasure), represented by General Manager Mishaal Abdulaziz Al Othman.

- Jif Company for the design and management of websites for its project Jif, represented by Ahmed Nader Marafie.

- Fanajeen General Trading Company for its project Fanajeen, represented by partner and founder Abdulaziz Adnan Al Shalfan.

any change that were hiding behind the smoke of slow change. Coronavirus, which changed, or rather accelerated, the structure of international relations in a different way than it was before, has led to a very important result, which is embodied in the weakness of the United States as a hegemonic power trying to assume responsibility of international stability. This pandemic also contributed to accelerating the rearrangement of global economic relations and drawing new invisible alliances that reject the so-called, Pax Americana.

Accordingly, the new American strategy emerged in light of all these changes in order to target the escalation of its competitor's influence in some regional spheres. To make it very clear, the US is targeting China, Russia, and Iran raising political domination. Consequently, Ukraine for the United States is merely a spearhead in undermining the Russian influence on the republics that disintegrated from the former Soviet Union. Within this contestation arena, the war between Russia and Ukraine is deliberately motivated to serve as traps surrounding the movement of the Russian bear looking forward to its new role in the coming multi-polar system.

Alas, the tragic story of wars will not end in

Ukraine, but probably extend to the entirety of the two continents, Europe and Asia (Eurasia), and then there will be great repercussions and forebodings, and the United States and its "honest" European allies will not be able to confront the Triple Alliance with a military counteraction, but all that is there are economic and political movements followed by understandings. The hard truth, that the United States should learn, is that Pax Americana became like a mirage. However, in the real world, a newly multinational system is evolving and this fact should be recognized. The United States should accept sharing Hollywood theater with new actors to prevent being a rogue state as Samuel Huntington has stated. It is very obvious that the United States cannot be the only superpower but if it continues such international behaviors, it will definitely be the "lonely" superpower that has lost even its closest friends and associates.

Yet, the important question; particularly for political scientists, is how these hard strategies will shape the upcoming international scenarios? It is a huge question that needs great minds.

- Prof Abdullah Yousef Sahar Mohammad is a Professor at Kuwait University's Political Science Department



### Kuwait makes proposals to boost transparency

cations of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect it had on the whole world including the UN and the UNSC, while also commending the flexibility and resilience of the council through such times as it adapted to accommodate this extraordinary health situation. The Kuwaiti ambassador also noted that the work of the council improved significantly throughout the past two decades, adding that such improvement is necessary to ensure efficiency of its work in safeguarding international peace and security.

On that note, Otaibi added that Kuwait is part of innovative initiatives as it has signed the council's code of conduct specifying that signing members will not oppose proposed resolutions countering crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. Kuwait, along with several other countries, proposed a resolution to the general assembly

## Informatics Award holds exhibition showcasing 20 years of achievements

**KUWAIT:** His Highness Sheikh Salem Al Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award held an exhibition entitled "The Journey of the Award" to showcase 20 years of achievements and in honor of late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The exhibition was held parallel to the Informatics Award ceremony on June 27 at Bayan Palace.

"The exhibition honors the noble stances of late Emir of Kuwait who had blessed us with his generous patronage for 14 years with his wisdom, continuous guidance and support and his presence in most of the award ceremonies... He deserves from us all honor, appreciation and reverence," said Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Award, Sheikha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, adding that Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was visually represented throughout the exhibition.

Speaking at the event, she said that the exhibition is a living witness to the Informatics Award's national, Arab and international impact and role in preparing for a developed technical society that Arab countries feel the urgent need for.

Visitors of the exhibition, which was divided into five pavilions, noted the award's important accomplishments to date as well as its aspirations for more advancement in the field of information technology and digital applications. "The Journey" further reflected the award's activities on a global level, such as the Informatics Medal which were received by international individuals and entities. Honoring the late Emir of Kuwait with the 2020 Informatics Medal attests to its importance, as His Highness was considered an exceptional worldwide figure and a unique humanitarian leader, who effectively supported the digital transformation of the State of Kuwait.

system! But America, over the past thirty years, could not do that for many reasons related to the American interior and the external international environment.

During the thirty years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, a great deal of transformation of the international system have taken place. In addition, during the past thirty years, a new conceptualization of power has appeared and states along with non-governmental entities interact in an unprecedented manner in history. Furthermore, new signs and forms of concepts of power have been advanced by the technological revolution paving the way to a new space evolution. During this era, the coronavirus pandemic bubble exploded. All these monumental events have contributed to shaping many potential transformations. Examples of such ramifications have expressed their forms in new types of alliances such as the tacit collusion between China, Russia, and Iran. Another episodic event that appeared in the international order is expressed in the amalgamation of technology and politics which shaped the new virtualization era of international order and maybe virtual states in the near future.

It can be said that the coronavirus pandemic contributed to bursting the bubbles of evolution-

## From corona to Eurasia: Ukraine is just a station in the Middle!

By Prof Abdullah Yousef Sahar Mohammad  
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From the announcement of the coronavirus pandemic in 2019 to the Ukraine crisis, large international bubbles have exploded, heralding the arrival of a new world order. Usually, world systems change after wars between the great powers that separate the victor from the vanquished, so that the first party forms the configuration of the world system according to its power and interests. It is rare, however, for a dominant superpower to withdraw from the scene without a war so that the competing parties re-design the world order differently. This exception occurred when the Soviet Union decided to withdraw and left space for the United States to assume the role of forming a unipolar international

Local

# Pandemic, food price increases blamed for rising wedding costs

## Clients cut guestlists to reduce financial burden

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** After almost two years of banning wedding parties in Kuwait due to the COVID-19 pandemic, prices of wedding halls, especially hotel ballrooms, have increased by around 15 percent. The reason for this is a result of a global rise in food prices, according to wedding hall managers at hotels.



**Up to KD 4,500 without photography, other requirements**

But price hikes have not only affected food services at weddings, as hotels have increased the total cost of hosting weddings. Ahmad Khaled, a 5-star hotel wedding hall manager, told Kuwait Times the cost for reserving a wedding hall is KD 1,350 without added services, while the cheapest wedding party costs KD 3,000 including food service but without additional services such as DJ, photography and decor.

Some hotels charge by the number of guests at the wedding, while others set their prices by combining the ballroom rent and cost per person. Sameh Ali, a 4-star wedding hall manager, said prices at his hotel have increased from KD 13 to KD 17 per person. Due to these price increases, most clients have reduced the number of their guests in order to reduce the financial burden. The average number of guests at an expat wedding is around 250 persons, so at KD 18 per person, the cost will be around KD 4,500, not to mention other wedding requirements, such as photography, which costs around KD 600, while makeup and hairstyling can easily cross KD 300.

Shereen Al-Nather, a 5-star wedding hall manager, told Kuwait Times the Kuwaiti clients have reduced their number of guests as well. While previously they were inviting around 600 people for wedding receptions attended only by women, recently the number of guests does not exceed 400, pointing out the price increase for hotel wedding halls as the reason.

Dima Al-Jallad, a 5-star hotel wedding hall manager, said the price per guest at her hotel has risen to KD 33 per person, while before the pandemic it was KD 28. Wedding hall clients believe hotels are trying to compensate for their losses due to the closures during the pandemic, stressing the price hikes are exaggerated at some hotels.

A bride, Nadeen Mahmoud, told Kuwait Times she paid KD 3,000 for a wedding hall at a 4-star



hotel without any added services other than food for guests and one night free stay at the hotel, which does not have any facilities. She believes prices have not increased after the pandemic due to the discounted packages offered by hotels to attract clients.

Meanwhile, Hanan Omar said some hotels obligate their clients to take a full wedding package, which impacts the budget of the client due to the high prices. "Some of them set a minimum number of guests, which prevents us from reserving the hall," she said.

## Duaween Games launches new application system in preparation for next growth phase

**KUWAIT:** Duaween Games announced the launch of its updated mobile application system in the presence of the Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Kuwait, James Holtznider, and a number of officials, initiators, and application owners, as well as representatives of prestigious American technology companies.

The launch represents an important step in the context of the strategic transformations of "Duaween Games" and the efforts at raising the quality of games it offers. This aligns with their aim of developing mobile game applications as a fresh addition to the entertainment industry. These updates also state their development steps regarding the growth strategy set by the shareholders, which aims to move the "Duaween Games" to a new stage of expansion.

The introduction of the new updated system comes after their partnership with "VO", the first integrated platform in Kuwait to offer young talents an influential share in the application, during the month of January. While the telecommunication company Zain entered as the main yearly sponsor of the "Duaween Games" applications.

### Rapid developments

The launch of this updated version of the "Duaween Games" application is the result of its cooperation with a group of prestigious American technology companies, including:

- Google: which developed the Flutter programming language for developing application interfaces across all major mobile operating systems (Apple/Google/Huawei) and even Web which will be launched soon. This allows players to play depending on their gaming preferences.

- Amazon (AWS): is a web services company responsible for the cloud computing infrastructure. Noting that the giant American company is represented in Kuwait by "KUWAITNET" company.

- Docker: an OS-level virtualization to deliver software in packages called containers (Microservices).

### Update Highlights

On the technical side, the new system is more secure, reliable, and scalable, as it

allows direct updates to be completed without disturbing users. It has been designed keeping in mind the requirements and needs of the users. It was also designed using the latest technologies, as these updates can be used across all major operating systems. This system represents the new generation of card games that provide all possible options for virtual diwanias (chat, voice, and video).

### The main updates made to the application are:

- 1- Updated UI/UX for both portrait and landscape modes.
- 2- Shortcuts for Language - Modes - Sound and more games.
- 3- Introducing New Points System and Leaderboard. (Stats, Badges, Details).
- 4- Profile Update (Bezah, Rank, Level).
- 5- Notifications Service (Requests and Tournament invitations).
- 6- Chat Lobbies Service (Main, Waiting).
- 7- Chatting Service (lobby live chatting).
- 8- Live Tournament Service (view and share games, track live scores, round status throughout).
- 9- Invite Contacts instead of friends only.
- 10- Save created diwanias options for a smooth experience.
- 11- Updated card designs to enhance visibility.
- 12- Information guide for Points, Rank, Level, Badges and Bezah.
- 13- Updated end-match pop-ups to view earned points and bezah rewards.
- 14- Tournament end results, earned points, and bezah reward.

### US-Kuwaiti cooperation

Commenting on this important event, the Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Kuwait James Holtznider, expressed his happiness with the rapid developments taking place at the level of Kuwaiti applications and the successes they have achieved over the past years. These applications are rich in unique opportunities for cooperation with American technology companies, which reflects the special relations between the United States of America and the State of Kuwait.

He pointed out that the successes



Dawood Marafie

achieved by Kuwaiti applications, and the innovative ideas they contain, reflect Kuwait's youth with their distinctive ideas and visions.

### New stage of growth

Entrepreneur and Partner in "Duaween Games", Dawood Marafie said: "This event is part of our commitment to the comprehensive development and modernization plan, which aims to make the application a major platform in the world of digital games and the entertainment industry at the level of Kuwait and the region."

The application is facing a new stage of growth, expansion and development, in light of the remarkable demand for its basic games and the trend towards expanding new markets in the region. Marafie expressed the commitment of all those responsible for the application and its shareholders to continue the growth strategy through a clear operational plan aimed at using more users and geographical expansion, ahead of all concerned parties, led by the "VO" platform, "KUWAITNET" and American technology companies, thanks for what they provided. They made an effort to make the new update system a success.

### Most advanced applications

As for the founder and CEO of the technology sector at "KUWAITNET" Bashar Al-Abdulhadi, he pointed out that the company's presence in this event comes from being an agent for Amazon Cloud Computing Company in Kuwait (Amazon AWS), explaining that "KUWAITNET" is keen to cooperate with the largest and best technology companies around the world in order to keep pace with the needs of Kuwaiti and Gulf companies, entrepreneurs, business and application owners by providing technological infrastructure, cloud computing services and others.

Abdulhadi praised the qualitative devel-



KUWAIT: A group photo during a ceremony to celebrate the launch of Duaween Games' new application system.



Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Kuwait James Holtznider is seen during the event.

opments achieved by the "Duaween Games" application, which is clearly reflected in the updates included in the new system and the update for its mobile phones, which reinforces its role as one of the most advanced applications in the world of digital games and the entertainment industry in Kuwait and the region.

### Zain's Sponsorship

The CEO of Relations and Communications at Zain Kuwait, Waleed Al-Khashti, explained that Zain's sponsorship of the "Duaween Games" is a reflection of Zain's strategy in the social and economic areas to support initiatives dedicated to youth and entrepreneurs, which have been incorporated over the past years through several specialized programs and partner-

ships with vital initiatives, noting that Zain is counting on these partnerships to take advantage of innovative ideas in the digital world and the rapid developments it is witnessing.

Khashti added: "The application of "Duaween Games" is an embodiment of the model that Zain is looking to cooperate with, especially in light of the vital developments that it has witnessed during the past few years. In addition to the success of its organizers in dedicating it as an important application in the world of digital entertainment, pointing to the latter occupies an important space in online gaming and represents a stand-alone industry, as it is on the cusp of a new phase of growth in the region in light of the new investments that are being pumped into it."

## Two Kuwaiti doctors win new medical patent

**KUWAIT:** Assistant Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Dr Muhammad Kamal from Kuwait University, and Ear, Nose and Throat consultant Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Turki, from the Ministry of Health, obtained a patent from the United States of America for an alternative medical splint for nasal wicks. In a press statement, Kuwait University said that the invention came as a result of a joint cooperation between the College of Dentistry and the Ministry of Health, with the support of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity. According to the statement, Dr Muhammad Kamal explained that the invented splint will dispense the use of nasal wicks that cause difficulty in breathing, and severe pain when removed after surgical intervention. It will allow adding medical materials directly on the surgery and to the nasal septum



KUWAIT: Assistant Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Dr Muhammad Kamal (left) and Ear, Nose and Throat consultant Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Turki. — KUNA

without any pain or obstruction for the patient's breathing. — KUNA

## Kuwait ophthalmologist shows innovative techniques at Milan conference

**ROME:** Dr Khalid Al-Sabti, a well-known Kuwaiti ophthalmologist, conducted a successful critical surgery via video at an international conference in Milan City in Italy, to become the first Arab surgeon to do so. The Kuwaiti doctor was among 16 surgeons from different countries partaking in the vitrectomy conference in Milan to display up-to-date retina treatment techniques. Dr Sabti conducted a critical surgery using an innovative technique in a video call on the first day of the international conference held this week. Speaking to the press, Sabti said he was so proud as a Kuwaiti and Arab surgeon to join an elite of international retina specialists participating in this biennial world conference. He elaborated that this conference is a significant scientific and medical event where doctors display their up-to-date surgery techniques. He added that the event focuses on innovative vitrectomy techniques and progress made in robot surgery and artificial intelligence, attracting experts from the US, South America, Europe, Africa and Middle East. He added that he had conducted a



ROME: Dr Khalid Al-Sabti (center) with fellow surgeons in Rome. — KUNA

complicated surgery for a myopia patient during the international conference, using a live innovative technique. He boasted that his presence in this medical event, together with other international conferences, reflect Kuwait's progress and advancement in the ophthalmological field. — KUNA

## Local

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## KRCS celebrates Int'l Widows' Day

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) celebrated on Wednesday the International Widow's Day, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2010. Upon the occasion, the KRCS distributed humanitarian aid to more than 200 widows from needy families — including electrical appliances, household utensils and foodstuffs. Director of KRCS's Media and Public Relations Khaled Al-Zaid stressed in a statement the importance of bringing feelings of joy and happiness to the heart of widowed women in such humanitarian initiatives. The KRCS salutes the International Widows' Day as a reflection of Kuwait's interest in the family, and in recognition of the important role played by civil society institutions in strengthening the family structure, he added. This celebration comes in appreciation for the widowed woman to alleviate her suffering, providing aid to her to face difficulties, and to help her enjoy basic social rights. Zaid noted. Zaid said that the KRCS sponsors segments of widows, orphans and needy families, and works to connect the people of society by communicating with them on all occasions. He indicated that the association is working to intensify its efforts to support needy families inside Kuwait on many occasions, including religious and national holidays, the holy month of Ramadan, as well as winter season, education and health projects. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** KRCS workers distribute aid to widows. —KUNA

### News in brief

#### Speaker to attend NAM meeting

**KUWAIT:** National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem left to Azerbaijan on Wednesday to take part in the Parliamentary Network of Non-Aligned Movement Conference. Ghanem is set to address a speech on behalf of the Kuwaiti delegation during the conference, due in the capital Baku, under the patronage of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. The conference's theme is "Enhancing the Roles of National Parliaments in Promoting Peace and Sustainable Development Worldwide."

#### No lockdown in August, September

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has no plans to impose lockdowns or any other restrictions in August and September as rumored, health ministry sources told Kuwait Times. Despite an increase in COVID-19 cases in Kuwait, the situation in hospitals remains under control, said the sources who advised the public to avoid crowds, wear facemasks and take the booster dose of the coronavirus vaccine.

#### Kuwait crude oil at \$117.46 pb

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti crude oil price rose by \$2.98 during Tuesday's trading session to hit \$117.46 per barrel (pb), compared with \$114.48 pb a day earlier, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday. Benchmark Brent futures went up by \$2.89 to \$117.58 pb and West Texas Intermediate rose \$2.19 to \$111.76 pb.

#### GCC agree on e-media cooperation

**RIYADH:** Officials of the electronic media in the GCC states have approved a five-year plan for cooperation in the realm of electronic information. The GCC Secretariat General said in a statement, released on Wednesday, that the blueprint was agreed upon at the seventh meeting of these officials, virtually held on Tuesday. The conferees had also examined implementation of previously issued recommendations and ideas for bolstering cooperation at the electronic media level.

### Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** A view of the sunset from a desert area in Kuwait. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Zain main sponsor of Eco Business Conference

Company took part in panel discussion on private sector's role in green economy

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of Eco Business Conference, during which the all-new ECO sustainability business incubator was launched. The event came under the patronage and attendance of Chairman and Director of the Environment Public Authority Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

The conference was attended by Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khalid Mahdi, General Manager of the Public Authority for Industry Abdulkarim Taqi, General Manager of the Youth Public Authority Dr Meshal Al-Rubaiya, General Manager of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development Adel Al-Hasawi, Eco Sustainability Incubator Chairman Jasem Al-Abou, as well as many executives and officials from both the private and public sectors.

ECO is the first sustainability business incubator and accelerator in Kuwait that offers early-stage startups and entities with the support, expertise, and networks to launch resilient businesses. ECO also offers green working spaces, recycling programs, renewable energy and consultancy services, and more.

During the panel discussion titled "private sector's role in sustainable development and transforming into a green economy", Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations



### Robust transformation to mitigate risks

Officer Waleed Al-Khashti said: "through our corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy, Zain is committed to building climate change scenarios that are aligned with the Paris Agreement (2015) to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate physical and environmental risks. We are well aware of the urgent need to tackle the climate crisis the world is facing today".

Khashti continued: "Currently, Zain scores A- through its participation in the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), a reflection of our success in meeting the standards and requirements of the project. Zain is also one of the few companies in the region's markets to have a membership in the CDP".

Khashti noted: "we established an array of initiatives across Zain's operating companies, includ-



**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Jasem Al-Abou recognize Waleed Al-Khashti for Zain's support.

Waleed Al-Khashti during the panel discussion.



Waleed Al-Khashti with the conference's guests.

ing the distribution of reusable bags to all employees, and installing water coolers to reduce the use of plastic bottles".

Khashti added: "This year, Zain developed its first comprehensive Scope 3 inventory process aligned with the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol guidelines for a more accurate and transparent evaluation of its value chain emissions. This allows us to not only disclose and report in a more concise manner but be able to identify areas in which we can reduce our GHG emissions".

Khashti explained that Zain continues to address its strategic approach to addressing climate change under its 2020-2025 sustainability strategy. Climate change is a pillar on which the organization has set three focus areas where Zain can address its negative impacts on the environment and create positive ones: Network and Energy Consumption, Strategy and Communication, and Waste Management and the

Circular Economy.

Zain is keen on supporting any efforts that serve sustainability and environmental goals, as it believes this is a crucial topic that affects everyone. The company's social message seeks to tackle the most important issues and reinforce the role of individual efforts like preserving natural resources, decreasing consumption, recycling, and other concepts that will contribute to reducing the impacts of climate change.

Zain's part does not stop at raising awareness and supporting environmental programs, but also extends to reducing its own footprint. The company continues to exert more efforts into reducing the environmental footprint of its operations, including preserving natural resources, reducing energy consumption, recycling waste, implementing green solutions for water and electricity management, monitoring the company's overall effects on climate change, and more.

## Kuwaiti caricaturists partake in Jordan expo



**AMMAN:** Caricaturists Mona Al-Tamimi and Mohammad Al-Qahtani in front of the Kuwaiti pavilion at the caricature exhibition. —KUNA photos



Kuwaiti caricaturist Mohammad Al-Qahtani draws a caricature for a visitor.



Some displayed works.

**AMMAN:** The Kuwaiti caricature has occupied a noticeable space in the currently held Amman's first caricature exhibition. The Kuwaiti Caricature Society is represented at the event by the carica-

turists Mona Al-Tamimi and Mohammad Al-Qahtani, displaying a collection of pieces; fruit of efforts by 13 artists, members of the Kuwaiti association. In remarks to the press, they both affirmed

substantial impact of the "digital revolution" on the art that has also improved works' quality. Caricaturists from 12 Arab countries are participating in the event. —KUNA



Zionist entity heads towards snap election

Philippines' Ressa says 'business as usual' despite news outlet's shutdown order

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MADRID, Spain: US President Joe Biden (C) and other leaders depart after posing for the official group photograph during the NATO summit at the Ifema congress centre in Madrid. — AFP

## US to reinforce Europe's defences

### An army brigade will rotate in and out of Romania

**MADRID:** The United States will reinforce Europe's defences with a wave of new military deployments, President Joe Biden announced Wednesday, as more Russian missiles smashed into Ukrainian cities. News of the US plan came as NATO leaders met to welcome Sweden and Finland as candidates to join the alliance, a double blow to Russia's President Vladimir Putin and his bid to redraw Europe's security map.

Biden boasted that the US announcement was exactly what Putin "didn't want" and Moscow reacted with predictable fury, denouncing Sweden and Finland's entry plan as "destabilising" and accusing an "aggressive" NATO of seeking to contain Russia. As Western leaders met in Madrid, in Ukraine officials complained that Russian missiles had hit civilian housing and businesses in and around the cities of Dnipro, Mykolaiv and Kharkiv, leaving at least seven dead and 14 wounded.

In Kremenchuk, the town where a Russian missile on

Monday destroyed a shopping centre and—according to local officials—killed at least 18 civilians, clearing operations continued. A giant crane was working near the site of the impact and in the rubble-strewn parking area shopping trolleys piled with clothes and household goods lay abandoned. Western leaders have dubbed the Kremenchuk strike a war crime, and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has demanded that UN investigators visit. Russia said it targeted a Ukrainian depot storing Western arms.

#### 'What needs to be done'

The Russian defence ministry said it had inflicted severe casualties on Ukrainian troops defending the town of Lyssychansk, in the eastern Donbas region, and said the Kharkiv attack had hit Ukrainian command centres and a training base for foreign "mercenaries".

Moscow's February 24 invasion of pro-Western Ukraine triggered massive economic sanctions and a

wave of support for Zelensky's government, including deliveries of advanced weapons. At this week's summit, two formerly neutral European countries—Sweden and Russia's north-western neighbour Finland—will be accepted as candidates to join NATO and Washington has announced that it will shift the headquarters of its 5th Army Corps to Poland. An army brigade will rotate in and out of Romania, two squadrons of F-35 fighters will deploy to Britain, US air defence systems will be sent to Germany and Italy and the fleet of US Navy destroyers in Spain will grow from four to six.

"That's exactly what he didn't want but exactly what needs to be done to guarantee security for Europe," Biden said, of Putin's efforts to roll back Western influence and re-establish influence or control over territories of the former Russian empire. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said NATO's expansion was "the opposite" of what Putin hoped for, and said that the leaders meeting at the summit would "state clearly that

Russia poses a direct threat to our security". Moscow rose to the bait.

#### Weapons shipments

"The summit in Madrid confirms and consolidates this bloc's policy of aggressive containment of Russia," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said, Russian news agencies reported. "We consider the expansion of the North Atlantic alliance to be a purely destabilising factor in international affairs."

The Swedish and Finnish leaders are to be welcomed as candidates for full membership in the alliance, after Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to lift his threat of a veto—the NATO ally accuses Stockholm and Helsinki of harbouring wanted Kurdish militants. Turkey announced Wednesday that it would request the extradition of 33 alleged "terrorists" under the terms of the agreement signed Tuesday with Sweden and Finland to allow them to make membership bids.—AFP

## Spain to 'fully' cooperate with migrant death probes

**MADRID:** Madrid will offer "total collaboration" with the Spanish and Moroccan investigations into the deaths of 23 migrants during a mass attempt to enter Spain's Melilla enclave, Pedro Sanchez said Wednesday. The Spanish premier's remarks came a day after the United Nations denounced authorities on the border between Morocco and Spain for using "excessive force", describing it as "unacceptable".

The tragedy happened at dawn on Friday, when around 2,000 migrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, tried to break through the fence from Morocco into Melilla, one of Spain's two tiny North African enclaves.

"I regret the loss of human life and express my solidarity with the families of the migrants who died," Sanchez told Cadena Ser radio, pledging his government would work with investigators to understand what happened. Sanchez stressed that three investigations had been opened, one by Moroccan prosecutors, one by Spain's public prosecutor and a third by the Spanish rights ombudsman. "We have to trust these institutions and I pledge the government's total collaboration with their efforts to clarify what happened," he said. Moroccan authorities said some of the victims had fallen while trying to scramble over the fence, giving an initial toll of 18 dead, but later raising it to 23 after another five migrants died of their injuries.

Few details about the incident were available, but Spanish media showed footage of people on the ground, some with bloodied hands and torn clothes. The death toll was by far the worst recorded in years of attempts by migrants to cross into Spain's Ceuta and Melilla enclaves, which have the EU's only land borders with Africa, making them a magnet for those desperate to escape grinding poverty and hunger.

In Morocco, prosecutors are pressing charges against 65 migrants, mostly Sudanese, for trying to storm the border, a defence lawyer in Rabat said. Spain's public prosecutor on Tuesday opened its own investigation "to clarify what happened", citing the "seriousness and gravity" of the incident.

Images of the violence provoked an unusually strong response from the United Nations, which hit out at the border authorities. "We saw the use of excessive force by the authorities, which needs to be investigated because it is unacceptable," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's spokesman Stephane Dujarric on Tuesday. "People who are on the move have human rights and those need to be respected and we're seeing them all too often disrespected. We've seen it on both sides of the border," he added.—AFP



SAN ANTONIO: Residents of San Antonio cry as they attend a vigil for the victims found in an abandoned truck in San Antonio, Texas on June 28, 2022. — AFP

## US opens probe after 51 migrants die in sweltering trailer

**SAN ANTONIO, United States:** The death toll of undocumented migrants who were abandoned in a scorching-hot trailer in Texas rose to 51 Tuesday, as President Joe Biden blamed "criminal" professional smugglers for the tragedy. Rebeca Clay-Flores, a Bexar County official, reported the new tally of "39 men and 12 women" dead, following the Monday discovery of the tractor-trailer on an isolated road in her district.

She did not say how many survivors remained in hospital, but the number could be around 11 based on initial figures that officials gave, including possibly four children. The Department of Homeland Security announced it had opened a criminal investigation, as Biden took aim at human smuggling gangs.

"The tragic loss of life in San Antonio, Texas that took place yesterday is horrifying and heartbreaking," he said in a statement. "This incident underscores the need to go after the multi-billion dollar criminal smuggling industry preying on migrants and leading to far too many innocent deaths," he said.

#### Intense heat

Federal law enforcement agents on Tuesday arrested

two men at the address linked to the tractor-trailer's registration, court documents showed. Juan Francisco D'Luna-Bilbao and Juan Claudio D'Luna-Mendez, both Mexican nationals whose US tourist visas had expired, were illegally in possession of multiple firearms, the documents alleged.

A third person, suspected of being the driver of the tractor-trailer, was arrested nearby while "very high on meth," reported the local daily San Antonio Express-News, citing a law enforcement officer. According to Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, of the dead whose identities are known, 22 were from Mexico, seven from Guatemala and two from Honduras.

"It's a tremendous misfortune," he told reporters. It was the deadliest single incident involving migrants along the southern border in memory, and drew more attention to the risks that hundreds of thousands of people face seeking to enter the United States from Mexico without permission.

On Monday, the high temperature in San Antonio was 103 degrees Fahrenheit (39.4 degrees Celsius), and the temperature in the unvented trailer would have been much higher. By Tuesday afternoon, authorities had removed the trailer from where it had been abandoned with its human cargo, on a narrow road sandwiched between train tracks and auto junkyards. Replacing it were makeshift crosses adorned with artificial flowers.

"I feel that if these people walk hundreds of miles to get over here, it wouldn't hurt us to walk maybe one mile to put the crosses and candles," said Angelita Olvera, who lives nearby. "Hopefully, whoever had them in the trailer will pay the consequences," she said.—AFP

## Critics round on UK govt over net-zero targets 'failure'

**LONDON:** Environmental campaigners, business groups and opposition politicians all urged the UK government Wednesday to ramp up delivering climate change policies after an expert panel warned it was failing to make adequate progress.

Britain's Climate Change Committee (CCC) last year praised the government for its net-zero strategy to be carbon neutral by 2050, and a series of targets to be met along the way. But its latest annual progress report found "scant evidence of delivery against these headline goals so far", prompting wide-ranging criticism of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's administration. "Time is running out," Greenpeace UK's political campaigner, Ami McCarthy, said, accusing ministers of stalling "on greening our homes, delivering renewables and moving our food production system away from meat".

"The government must roll up its sleeves and deliver the benefits of a climate friendly economy for all." The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) echoed the sentiment, saying "delivery must now be the government's watchword—both in the short and long-term".

"Weathering the cost-of-living crisis requires urgent action on energy efficiency to help bring down household bills," its decarbonisation director Tom Thackray added. "Delivering an affordable, resilient and net-zero energy network would also help put pounds back in people's pockets and propel the UK's net-zero journey forward."

#### 'Under-delivery'

The CCC, an independent body established under 2008 climate change legislation to advise the government, said although there were some "bright spots" of progress, in most areas "the likelihood of under-delivery is high". A "clear and effective programme" was needed to achieve the goals, it added, noting renewed focus on insulating homes and reducing emissions from farming was needed. The average land temperature in Britain had risen by around 1.2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels and sea levels had risen by 16 centimetres since 1900, the body said last year.

Episodes of extreme heat were becoming more frequent, and it warned that further delay in taking action to mitigate the risks would lead to higher costs in the future. "The UK is a champion in setting new climate goals, now we must be world-beaters in delivering them," said CCC chairman John Gummer, a member of Britain's House of Lords. "In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, the country is crying out to end its dependence on expensive fossil fuels," he added.—AFP

## International

# Zionist entity heads towards snap election, Lapid poised to be PM

## Former television anchor set to head caretaker government

**JERUSALEM:** Zionist entity's parliament is expected to dissolve Wednesday, ending Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's year-long tenure and triggering a fifth election in less than four years that could see ex-premier Benjamin Netanyahu reclaim power.

Barring an 11th-hour shock agreement to save the coalition or form a new government within the existing parliament, Bennett's eight-party alliance is due to end by midnight, installing Foreign Minister Yair Lapid as prime minister.



**"Not to let dark forces tear us apart"**

The former television anchor is set to head a caretaker government, ahead of polls due in late October or early November. Bennett's motley alliance formed in 2021 offered a reprieve from an unprecedented era of political gridlock, ending Netanyahu's record 12 consecutive years in power and passing Zionist entity's first state budget since 2018.

Netanyahu — a divisive hawk aligned with far-right nationalists and Zionist entity's ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties — has promised victory in new elections but may again struggle to rally a parliamentary majority, opinion polls show.

He is currently on trial over corruption charges, which he denies. The anti-Netanyahu camp will likely be led by Lapid, a centrist who has surprised many since being dismissed as a lightweight when he

entered politics a decade ago.

As he and Bennett announced last week that their coalition was no longer tenable, Lapid sought to cast Netanyahu's potential return to office as a national threat. "What we need to do today is go back to the concept of Zionist entity unity. Not to let dark forces tear us apart from within," Lapid said.

While parliament's collapse appeared a near certainty, last-minute surprises remained possible given Zionist entity's volatile political climate. Factions across the political spectrum fear fresh polls will see them lose seats or end up out of parliament entirely by falling below the minimum support threshold, which is 3.25 percent of votes cast.

But options to avoid another election were vanishing, according to Zionist reports.

That means Lapid is expected to take office at midnight after parliament gives final approval to a dissolution bill, in accordance with the power-sharing deal he agreed with Bennett last June.

A parliamentary committee was meeting Wednesday to finalise the bill that must clear two more plenum votes before becoming law. One reported holdup was a dispute over the election date.

Netanyahu and his allies are fighting for an October election when their supporters will be on a break from religious study centres, hoping that might boost turnout in what could be another extremely close contest, media said.

### 'Fought like lions'

Bennett, a religious nationalist, has led a coalition of right-wingers, centrists, doves and Islamists from the Raam faction, which made history by becoming the first Arab party to support an Zionist government in the Jewish state's 74-year history.

The alliance, united by its desire to oust Netanyahu and break a damaging cycle of inconclusive elections, was imperilled from the outset by its ideological divides.

al places of detention in Libya since 2016," it said.

Migrants are routinely detained by authorities, human traffickers and others in Libya — a key departure point for tens of thousands of people mainly from sub-Saharan Africa hoping to reach Europe. Human traffickers have profited from the chaos that has raged since the 2011 toppling and killing of Libyan dictator Moamer Gaddafi. Talks between rival Libyan governments are being held in Geneva this week over the rules for long-awaited elections, with an aim to end the chaos.

### 'Inhumane acts'

The fact-finding mission report, to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council next week, said it had gathered broad evidence of "the systematic use of prolonged arbitrary detention" of migrants in Libya. The investigators, who made several trips to Libya, described how migrants in detention face "acts of murder, torture, rape and other inhumane acts."

The sources said imposing health insurance on every expat has become a serious government thought which will be implemented after legal, administrative and technical aspects are reviewed, so that every expat in Kuwait must obtain health insurance like those who are 60 years or older without a university degree, and this will be a prerequisite to granting residency and work permits.

The sources said a decision to ban work permits for citizens of countries with large communities in Kuwait will be seriously discussed, so only technical and qualified labor can be brought in from these countries. They said the new residency law will be supervised directly by the Cabinet, as each department must take the approval of the Cabinet first and it will not be up to their directors to decide who will be authorized to enter and work in the country.

pledge to "address Turkey's pending deportation or extradition requests of terror suspects expeditiously and thoroughly", "Finland and Sweden confirm that the PKK is a proscribed terrorist organization," says the agreement. "Finland and Sweden commit to prevent activities of the PKK and all other terrorist organizations and their extensions, as well as activities by individuals... linked to these terrorist organizations."

Erdogan's office hailed the agreement as a full victory. "Turkey got what it wanted," his office declared in a statement. Erdogan also secured the promise of a long-sought meeting with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the NATO talks. A US official told reporters that Biden was "keen" to improve relations with Turkey after a difficult spell caused in part by Turkey's crackdown on human rights.

Most of Turkey's demands and past negotiations have involved Sweden because of its more robust ties with the Kurdish diaspora. Sweden keeps no official ethnicity statistics but is believed to have 100,000 Kurds living in the nation of 10 million people.

Stockholm recognized the PKK as a "terrorist" organization in the 1980s but has adopted a more supportive stance toward the YPG. Pro-government Turkish media were outraged by two meetings Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde held last year with Ilham Ahmad - the leader of the political wing of the YPG-led forces that expelled IS from a large swathe of Syria. Linde called her two meetings "good" and "fruitful" on Twitter.

It was not immediately apparent whose extradition Turkey sought. Finnish President Sauli Niinisto told reporters that his country has "not been presented with any list so far, at least as far as I know". —AFP



**JERUSALEM:** Zionist entity's Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid (C) takes part in a Knesset (parliament) session in Jerusalem. — AFP

But Bennett said the final straw was a failure to renew a measure that ensures the roughly 475,000 Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank live under Zionist law.

Some Arab lawmakers in the coalition refused to back a bill they said marked a de facto endorsement of a 55-year occupation that has forced West Bank Palestinians to live under Zionist rule.

For Bennett, a staunch supporter of settlements, allowing the so-called West Bank law to expire was intolerable. Dissolving parliament before its June 30 expiration temporarily renews the measure.

"We fought like lions, down to the very last

moment, until it simply became impossible," Bennett said days after announcing his coalition's demise.

Bennett is expected to stay on as alternate prime minister and be responsible for Iran policy, as world powers take steps to revive stalled talks on Tehran's nuclear programme. Zionist entity opposes a restoration of the 2015 agreement that gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme. Lapid will retain his foreign minister title while serving as Zionist entity's 14th premier. He will find himself under an early microscope, with US President Joe Biden due in Jerusalem in two weeks. — AFP

"I let them rape me. I had no choice. It was for my daughter. I could not leave her like that," she said, according to the report. The fact-finding mission, which was created by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2020, will see its mandate expire in a few days.

But a group of African countries has presented a draft resolution to the council that would allow it to continue its work for another nine months. In a big report presented last October, the investigators concluded that crimes against humanity had likely been committed in the country, including in detention centres and against migrants.

They have drafted a list of individuals and groups believed to be behind those crimes, but it remains confidential. They are due to present another report in a few days providing more details on crimes committed in the town of Tarhuna, southeast of Tripoli, where dozens of mass graves have been discovered over the past two years. — AFP

## Migrants in Libya forced into rape for food: UN

**GENEVA:** Migrants detained in Libya face horrific abuse, with women especially facing sexual violence, and often forced to submit to rape in exchange for food, UN investigators said Wednesday. In a fresh report, the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya reiterated that the worst crimes under international law were likely being committed in the war-ravaged country, with migrant women suffering some of the worst abuse.

"The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the crimes against humanity of murder, torture, imprisonment, rape, enforced disappearance and other inhumane acts have been committed in sever-

## Kuwait plans new rules to control...

Continued from Page 1

residency fees, with the possibility of imposing annual fees on each resident in exchange for state services. Every employer will have to pay new fees for bringing in an expat from abroad in order to reduce the number of expat workers in the private sector and end iqama trade, in addition to preventing any employer from having employees more than needed, because the more employees they have, the more fees they will have to pay, closing a loophole that was exploited for iqama trading.

## Turkey seeks extraditions...

Continued from Page 1

"We ask them to fulfil their promises." The unnamed suspects were identified as being members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and a group led by a US-based Muslim preacher that Erdogan blames for a failed 2016 coup attempt.

The European Union and Washington both recognize the PKK as a "terrorist" organization because of the brutal tactics it employed during a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. But the agreement also stipulates that Sweden and Finland vow to "not provide support" to the YPG - a PKK offshoot in Syria that played an instrumental role in the US-led alliance against the Islamic State group.

Sweden and Finland abandoned decades of military non-alignment in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and were formally invited into the alliance at Wednesday's summit in Madrid. Their applications appeared to be headed for swift approval until Erdogan stepped in. The Turkish leader accused Finland and particularly Sweden of providing a haven to Kurdish fighters and financing terror.

Erdogan also wanted the two countries to lift embargoes on weapons deliveries they imposed in response to Turkey's 2019 military incursion into Syria. The memorandum appears to address many of Erdogan's concerns. It says Finland and Sweden

## World Bank lends \$500m to Egypt...

Continued from Page 1

On Tuesday, state bakeries in New Valley province in the southwest hailed successful trials of "sweet potato bread", Egyptian media reported. The adjusted recipes use sweet potato to supplement wheat in the flour used to make state-subsidized flatbread - an everyday staple for the country's 103 million people.

Some 71.5 million Egyptians rely on bread subsidies, which account for 57 percent of the state's subsidy budget, according to official figures. Soaring world commodity prices helped to push Egyptian inflation to a three-year high of 15.3 percent in June, according to official figures. In late March, the Central Bank of Egypt allowed the Egyptian pound to depreciate against the dollar, causing it to lose around 18 percent of its value overnight.

Foreign currency reserves fell around \$6 billion in April and May to stand at \$35.5 billion, as a result of

moves "to calm the markets" as well as "external debt repayments", the bank said. To help weather the crisis, Egypt has requested a new loan from the International Monetary Fund, that will add to an already sizeable foreign debt equivalent to almost 90 percent of GDP. On a visit to Cairo earlier this month, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen pledged "immediate relief of 100 million euros" to support food security in Egypt.

Meanwhile, the World Bank announced a \$130-million loan to help Tunisia cover the cost of cereal imports whose prices have spiraled since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The package aimed "to lessen the impact of the Ukraine war by financing vital soft wheat imports and providing emergency support to cover barley imports for dairy production," the lender said. It would also help buy "seeds for smallholder farmers for the upcoming planting season," it said in a statement late Tuesday.

Tunisia was already dealing with heavy public debt, a low credit rating and steep inflation before the Ukraine war, and has been left reeling by Russia's military blockade of Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea. "Tunisia faces a major grain supply shock due to difficulties in accessing financial markets and rising global prices which affected the ability to procure imported grain," said the World Bank's Tunisia country manager Alexandre Arrobbio. — AFP

## Lockdown in Udaipur after...

Continued from Page 1

waved saffron flags - the color of the Hindu faith - and shouted slogans demanding the death penalty for the accused. "Hang them, hang them. My husband has gone," the man's distraught widow told reporters. "If the law doesn't want to do anything, give them to us so that we can kill them," said another relative.

The two young men were arrested on Tuesday as they attempted to flee Udaipur by motorbike, news reports said. The central National Investigation Agency (NIA) said that the men circulated the video "in order to trigger panic and strike terror among the masses across the country". To prevent potential sectarian violence, authorities deployed 600 extra police and put the city of around 450,000 people under curfew, cutting mobile Internet access there and in other parts of Rajasthan state.

Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot appealed to people not to share the video as it would "serve the attackers' motive of creating discord in society". "The involvement of any organization and international links will be thoroughly investigated," Indian Home Minister

Amit Shah tweeted. On social media, members of the ruling BJP party and supporters depicted the killing as an attack on all Hindus.

Indian Muslim organizations condemned the killing, but Surendra Kumar Jain from the far-right Hindu group Vishwa Hindu Parishad said that many Muslim leaders have "insulted Hindu beliefs". "You should be afraid of the day when Hindus too start giving reply to the insult in the same coin," Jain said in a video message. A demonstration in New Delhi called by a far-right Hindu group drew around 100 people shouting slogans.

The remarks about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by BJP spokeswoman Nupur Sharma at a TV debate in late May sparked protests that turned violent in some parts of India and demonstrations across the Islamic world. She was sacked by the party after her comments, which prompted the governments of nearly 20 countries to summon their Indian envoys to express their displeasure.

Lal's wife told broadcaster NDTV that on June 10 her husband was arrested over a social media post supporting Sharma and released on bail a day later. Five days later the father of two said he had received death threats but on Tuesday returned to work in his shop, she said. The purported video of the killing - which police have not yet confirmed is genuine - showed Lal measuring one of the men for new clothes before he and his accomplice attacked him. — AFP

## International

# Philippines' Ressa says 'business as usual' despite news outlet's shutdown order

## Marcos Jr's presidency could worsen situation for human rights and freedom of speech

**MANILA:** Philippine journalist Maria Ressa's news company Rappler was continuing to work "as usual", the Nobel Peace Prize winner said on Wednesday, after it was ordered to shut down by authorities ahead of President Rodrigo Duterte's last day in office.

Ressa has been a vocal critic of Duterte and the deadly drug war he launched in 2016, triggering what media advocates say is a grinding series of criminal charges, probes and online attacks against her and Rappler.

The latest blow was delivered by the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission. In a statement Wednesday, it confirmed the "revocation of the certificates of incorporation" of Rappler for violating "constitutional and statutory restrictions on foreign ownership in mass media".

Rappler said the decision "effectively confirmed the shutdown" of the company and vowed to appeal, describing the proceedings as "highly irregular". But Ressa was characteristically defiant, vowing the news site would continue to operate as they followed the legal process.



**'Let the law take its course'**

government accused it of violating a constitutional ban on foreign ownership in securing funding, as well as tax evasion. It has also been accused of cyber libel—a new criminal law introduced in 2012, the same year Rappler was founded.

Duterte has attacked the website by name, calling it a "fake news outlet", over a story about one of his closest aides. The news organisation is accused of allowing foreigners to take control of its website through its parent company Rappler Holdings' issuance of "depository receipts".

Under the constitution, investment in media is reserved for Filipinos or Filipino-controlled entities.

The case springs from a 2015 investment from the US-based Omidyar Network, which was established by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar. Omidyar Network later transferred its investment in Rappler to the site's local managers to stave off efforts by Duterte to shut it down.

"Let the law take its course, and allow the Securities and Exchange Commission (to) perform its mandate," presidential spokesman Martin Andanar said. "Rappler may avail of remedies accorded to it by law."

Ressa, who is also a US citizen, and Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October for their efforts to "safeguard freedom of expression". Ressa is fighting at least seven court cases, including an appeal against a conviction in a cyber libel case, for which she is on bail and faces up to six years in prison. Rappler faces about eight cases, Ressa said.

### 'Legal harassment'

Human Rights Watch said the website was facing



**MANILA:** An employee of news online portal Rappler walks past the company logo at their office in Pasig City, suburban Manila on June 29, 2022. —AFP

"retaliation for its fearless reporting". The International Center For Journalists (ICFJ) urged the Philippine government to reverse its order to shut down Rappler. "This legal harassment not only costs Rappler time, money and energy. It enables relentless and prolific online violence designed to chill independent reporting," ICFJ said on Twitter.

The future of Rappler and its battle in the country's highly politicised legal system under Marcos Jr's presidency is uncertain. The president-elect has given few clues about his views on the website and

the broader issue of freedom of speech.

He has largely shunned media interviews and press conferences, preferring to communicate via his press secretary and through social media. US Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, who is heading a delegation to the Philippines for Marcos Jr's inauguration, would not comment on the Rappler case.

He told reporters in Manila that the US administration had a "deep commitment towards freedom of speech, freedom of expression, human rights". —AFP

## Far-flung Hong Kong diaspora linked by 'shared destiny'

**HONG KONG:** Looking back on her decision to leave Hong Kong with her family just before the city's handover from Britain to China 25 years ago, Mary still believes she made the right call. "We just didn't trust the Chinese government," she told AFP, using a pseudonym. She was not the only one.

Government estimates show hundreds of thousands of people quit Hong Kong in the years that preceded the handover for a new life overseas—many citing fears of a future under Beijing's thumb. As the territory celebrates the handover's 25th anniversary on Friday, with citywide posters proclaiming "a new era of stability, prosperity and opportunity", another exodus is under way. Under the One Country, Two Systems principle set out with Britain, China agreed that Hong Kong would maintain a high degree of autonomy and independent judicial power and that the city's leader would be appointed by Beijing on the basis of local elections or consultations. Beijing's imposition of a sweeping national security law has helped propel a new wave of emigrants across the world, swelling the diaspora of those who feel dispossessed by Chinese rule. "Hong Kong people in different parts of the world will have differ-

ent definitions of Hong Kong," said Fermi Wong, who moved to Britain in 2020. "But we share a strong sense of community, with shared destiny." "The thing that connects us may be something indescribable, some kind of temperament—I can always recognise Hong Kongers walking down a street." Mary, now 59, has lived in Britain ever since she boarded a one-way flight with her husband and two sons in April 1997. She adapted quickly to life abroad, never really feeling homesick.

Years later though, Mary said she found herself transfixed watching news of the huge pro-democracy protests that engulfed her city in 2019. "I was watching every night and I was crying," she said. "The young people were just saying how they felt." Beijing's response to the protests—the national security law to crush dissent, as well as electoral reforms that effectively disqualify most opposition—has turned Hong Kong into a place she no longer recognises.

### Voting with feet

It was the security law that prompted Wong, who had worked as an advocate for ethnic minorities in Hong Kong for more than two decades, to leave. Since the law came into force in 2020, critics



**HONG KONG, China:** File picture shows family and friends gathering at the departure gates to bid goodbye at Hong Kong International Airport, as the city recorded a net outflow of 123,700 residents in 2020 and 2021. —AFP

say the premise of One Country, Two Systems has been comprehensively eroded, and many of the freedoms it promised have been eviscerated.

"We will never believe in it ever again," said Wong. She was part of the net outflow of 123,700 residents that Hong Kong recorded in 2020 and 2021, and one of many who went to Britain. More than 92,000 British Nationals Overseas visas have been issued since London started accepting applications in 2021, explicitly linking the permit's introduction to the political changes.

Canada and Australia, which also have

"lifeboat schemes", have accepted 47,000 and 8,900 arrivals from Hong Kong, respectively since 2019. In an interview with the South China Morning Post, Hong Kong's main English-language newspaper, even pro-establishment politician Jasper Tsang said Hong Kongers were "voting with their feet". The government, however, maintains the outflow represents "normal movement", with outgoing leader Carrie Lam accusing other countries of "disguising their grab for talent" with a political pretext. Her successor John Lee has warned emigrants they might regret missing opportunities if they leave. —AFP

## Iran says guard killed at Afghan border

**TEHRAN:** An Iranian border guard was killed in an "incident" in the country's southeast at a border crossing with Afghanistan, Iran's foreign ministry said Wednesday. "The dimensions of this unfortunate incident in the Milak border area, which led to the martyrdom of the dear border guard of the Islamic Republic of Iran, are being investigated by the authorities and will be announced as soon as the issue is clarified," ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said.

He expressed condolences to the family of Mohammad Sayyad who was killed at Milak crossing in Sistan-Baluchestan province. Afghan officials told AFP there had been no clashes between Iranian and Afghan forces near the border.

"Officials in Afghanistan's caretaker government are expected to take serious action to clarify the dimensions of the issue, punish the perpetrators and

take the necessary measures to prevent similar incidents," Kanani added.

Iran, like many other nations, has so far not recognised the new government formed by the Taliban after it took power amid a hasty withdrawal by US-led foreign forces in August. While Iran insists that the Taliban form an inclusive administration, the Islamist movement has formed an all-male cabinet made up entirely of members of the group, and almost exclusively of ethnic Pashtuns.

Water rights issues have also increased tensions between the two neighbours. In January, demonstrators in Sistan-Baluchestan rallied at a border crossing for a protest over water from the Helmand River.

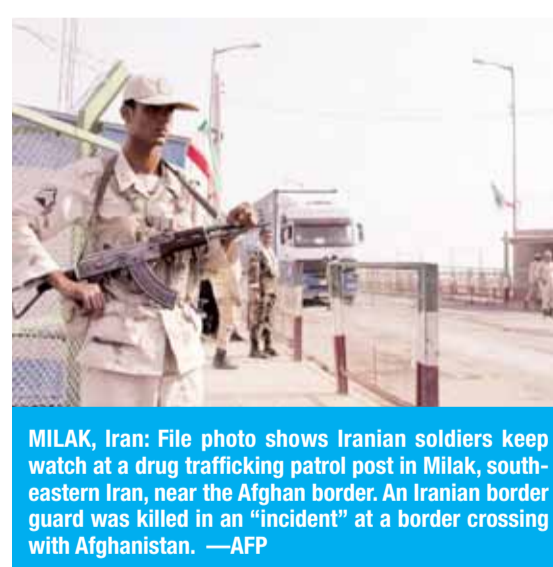
Last year, then Afghan president Ashraf Ghani inaugurated Kamal Khan Dam on the river, announcing that Afghanistan would no longer supply "extra" water to Iran for free but instead exchange it for oil. Iran has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for decades, but fresh waves have flooded the country since the Taliban's return to power.

The two nations have the Persian language in common—known as Farsi in Iran and Dari in Afghanistan—but a majority of Afghans are Sunni

capital — which sits only 1.5 metres (five feet) above sea level and is perennially beset by flooding — earning time off their sentences.

But fears of spreading the virus meant the gutter-diving work has been done by city authorities and workers, until now. "It is a pretty tough and exhausting job," said one 33-year-old prisoner, who was not permitted to give his name, adding — not unsurprisingly — that the work was "smelly".

He is one of roughly 80 inmates shipped in from three prisons to an eastern Bangkok suburb and set to labour, earning money and a day off their sentences for each day worked. "I still want to do this



**MILAK, Iran:** File photo shows Iranian soldiers keep watch at a drug trafficking patrol post in Milak, south-eastern Iran, near the Afghan border. An Iranian border guard was killed in an "incident" at a border crossing with Afghanistan. —AFP

Muslims compared to their mostly Shiite neighbours. Iran has long had testy relations with the Taliban, who raided Tehran's consulate in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998 killing 10 diplomats and a journalist. —AFP

job, so I can return home to my family earlier," explained the man, wearing a bright blue baseball cap and a dark blue prison uniform.

After hauling up the concrete slabs covering the drains, the inmates — wearing protective waders and heavy-duty gloves — drop down and scabble out the grime, filling large iron tubs with stinking slop. They work through the day, fuelled by donations from grateful shopkeepers pleased to see the drains outside their stores finally cleared.

"This is the first time since the pandemic" that the drains have been cleared by prisoners, said a Bangkok Remand Prison guard, who declined to be identified

## AU urges restraint over Ethiopia, Sudan tensions

**ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia:** The head of the African Union Commission voiced concern on Wednesday over "escalating military tension" between Ethiopia and Sudan, calling for restraint and dialogue.

The comments by Moussa Faki Mahamat follow claims by Khartoum that the Ethiopian army had executed seven Sudanese soldiers and a civilian in an incident in a volatile border region last week—allegations denied by Addis Ababa. Faki "is following with deep concern the escalating military tension between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of Sudan and deeply regrets the loss of life at their common border," the AU said in a statement.

"The chairperson appeals for complete refrain from any military action whatever its origin and calls for dialogue between the two brotherly countries to solve any dispute." Sudan accused Ethiopia of capturing the soldiers on June 22 in Al-Fashaqa, a fertile strip at the centre of a bitter border dispute between the two neighbours.

Khartoum recalled its ambassador to Addis Ababa on Monday and vowed to lodge a complaint with the UN Security Council and regional organisations. Addis Ababa said Tuesday that Sudanese forces had crossed into Ethiopian territory and the casualties resulted from a skirmish with a local militia, denying its soldiers were in the area at the time. The Sudan Tribune newspaper reported that the Sudanese army had launched an attack Tuesday on Ethiopian troops in the Al-Fashaqa area but this was denied by army spokesman Nabil Abdalla. "We have not attacked anyone and we will not and we are not planning that. But we will not allow any armed force from another country that wants to cross our international border. It's our right legally to deal with it," he told AFP in Khartoum.

Relations between Khartoum and Addis Ababa have soured over Al-Fashaqa, which is close to Ethiopia's restive Tigray region. Al-Fashaqa has long been cultivated by Ethiopian farmers but claimed by Sudan, and the dispute has sparked sporadic clashes between the Sudanese and Ethiopian sides, some fatal. The rift over Al-Fashaqa feeds into wider tensions over land and water between the neighbours, particularly stoked by Ethiopia's mega dam on the Blue Nile. Sudan and Egypt, both downstream countries, have been opposed to the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and pushed for an agreement on the filling of its reservoir and the dam's operations. —AFP

## Thai prisoners clean Bangkok sewers after pandemic delay

**BANGKOK:** Flecked with sewage, a Thai prisoner grapples with an overflowing bucket as he and his fellow inmates clean Bangkok's congested drains for the first time in two years. Pre-pandemic, convicts could volunteer to clear the sewers of Thailand's

as he was not authorised to speak to the press. Once dubbed the "Venice of the East", the capital endures flooding during the rainy season — from roughly July to October — with backed-up drains contributing.

"The increased cleaning when the rainy season starts will help the drains (remove water) quicker," said a Bangkok Metropolitan Administration official. And for at least one of the prisoners, who had less than a year remaining to serve, cleaning the sewers helped him feel better about his past. "We have made mistakes in life so we end up in jail," he said. "Having a chance to come out and help the public makes me feel very good." —AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2022



NEW YORK: Polestar CEO Thomas Ingenlath was joined by members of the Polestar and Gores Guggenheim teams, gathering in New York City to mark the latest milestone in Polestar's journey towards sustainable mobility.

## Polestar rings Nasdaq bell to celebrate public listing

### Public listing boosts Polestar's ambitious plans for growth

NEW YORK: Polestar, the Swedish electric car brand, has rung the famous bell at the Nasdaq stock exchange in New York City to celebrate its public listing. Polestar began trading officially under the ticker "PSNY" on 24 June, 2022. Polestar CEO Thomas Ingenlath was joined by members of the Polestar and Gores Guggenheim teams, gathering in New York City to mark the latest milestone in Polestar's journey towards sustainable mobility.

Thomas Ingenlath, CEO of Polestar, states: "This is such a proud day and ringing the bell at Nasdaq is a symbolic celebration. Today truly marks the beginning of the next chapter in the story of Polestar. We have a clear vision of what that story will be, and the listing gives us the platform to accelerate and push harder for a transition towards more sustainable mobility." The bell-ringing was amplified on Nasdaq's digital billboard screens in Times Square which flashed images of some

of Polestar's over 2,000 global employees as well as the company's vision statement. PSNY-branded Polestar 2 cars were also on display on the famous city square.

Polestar offices and retail locations across its 25 active markets were connected and watched the event live, celebrating locally. The public listing will help Polestar build its ambitious plans for growth in some of the most attractive global EV segments, while driving

forward its industry-leading sustainability goals, including a completely climate-neutral car by 2030. Polestar has great momentum as it enters a period of rapid growth and builds a diversified product portfolio, launching three new premium electric cars, including two SUVs, by 2024. The first, Polestar 3, a full-size electric SUV, is expected to launch in October 2022 and will set a new standard in this high margin, premium segment.

### Hong Kong's economy faces uncertain future 25 years after handover

HONG KONG: When Hong Kong transitioned from British to Chinese rule, Edmond Hui was a floor trader at the bustling stock exchange, witnessing the roaring growth of a city at the crossroads of the West and Asia. Under a deal signed with Britain ahead of the 1997 handover, China promised Hong Kong could keep its capitalist system for 50 years, an arrangement that helped the city thrive as one of the world's top financial hubs. Friday marks the halfway point of that experiment, with uncertainty clouding the economic future of Hong Kong—a city reliant on an increasingly isolated China, struggling to shake off the reputational damage from political unrest and pandemic-induced border closures.

Hui, now the chief executive of a mid-tier stockbroker with nearly 300 employees, said post-handover markets have undergone a drastic shift, becoming more China-focused than ever. "Before 1997, foreign capital propped up half of the market," he said. "After 1997, things changed gradually until the whole market was held up by Chinese capital." China's meteoric rise in the past two decades yielded vast benefits for Hong Kong, which became the gateway for mainland firms to raise funds and for foreign businesses to access what is today the world's second-largest economy.

"Hong Kong was sort of a poster child of free trade and open markets," veteran pro-Beijing Hong Kong politician Regina Ip told AFP. But the interlocking of its fate with China has also led to warnings about overreliance and complacency. Chinese companies made up around 80 percent of the market capitalization in Hong Kong's stock market this year, up from 16 percent in 1997.

And Chinese firms now account for seven of the top 10 holdings of the benchmark Hang Seng Index, which used to be anchored by homegrown brands such as

Cathay Pacific and Television Broadcasts Limited. Hong Kong's GDP, meanwhile, has gone from being equivalent to 18 percent of mainland China's in 1997 to less than three percent in 2020. Hui greeted this comprehensive shift with a mild shrug. "It's just a matter of changing who's boss," he said. "We can only hope that our country's momentum will surpass that of Europe and the United States."

#### 'The gateway to China'

As China's economic and political power has grown over the last few decades, so have tensions with Western nations—which has also affected Hong Kong. Beijing cracked down on dissent in the city after massive democracy protests in 2019, prompting the United States to revoke Hong Kong's preferential trade status on the grounds that it was no longer autonomous enough.

Washington also sanctioned some Hong Kong officials. "Back in 1997, we were able to play the role of a very important middleman. But now... everyone has more doubts about our background," Yan Wai-hin, an economics lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, told AFP. "If a trading partner feels that (Hong Kong) isn't a neutral middleman... then the mutual trust might be lost." Yan said regional rivals such as Singapore were looking to capitalize on what they saw as an opening to supplant Hong Kong.

Adding to that pressure, the tightening of political control has also meant Hong Kong has stuck to mainland China's zero-COVID policy. Stringent travel restrictions have kept the business hub cut off both from China and the world for the last two years, with authorities acknowledging it has prompted a talent exodus. But Ip said once restrictions were lifted, Hong Kong would recover. —AFP

### How long will it take to get over inflation hump?

SINTRA: Inflation has surged back to levels not seen in many developed economies since the 1970s and 1980s. Economists and central bankers at the European Central Bank's conference in Portugal warn it will take time before price rises cool.

#### How did we get here?

For the ECB, established in 1998 to oversee the European single currency, the burst of inflation is without precedent. "The current levels of food and industrial goods inflation have not been seen since the mid-1980s," ECB President Christine Lagarde said in her remarks at the conference on Tuesday. Likewise, the "increase in the relative price of energy in recent months is much higher than the individual spikes that occurred in the 1970s" during the oil shock, Lagarde said. The take-off in inflation, over eight percent in the eurozone in May, was at the end of a "a sequence that happens in a chaotic world", Richard Baldwin, an economics professor at the Graduate Institute of Geneva, told AFP. The supply shock caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 had been followed by a "demand twist" where people used their money more on goods, Baldwin said. Instead of seeing this fading, the Russian invasion in Ukraine is causing "a huge spike in fuel and food prices" and heaping pressure on inflation, he said. But it is not just energy. As health restrictions fall away, consumers are turning back to services, while the pent-up demand for tourism is being released, Lagarde noted. "There is no playbook for this inflation," said economist Baldwin.

#### How long will it stay?

With no end in sight for the war in Ukraine, the disruptions caused to the supply of energy could keep prices high for some time to come. Domestic factors could also prop up high inflation rates, with workers demanding higher and higher compensation to make up for the rising cost of living. Adding to the pressure are low unemployment rates, handing more leverage to workers looking for pay rises.

#### What can central banks do?

The message put out by central banks is one of their most powerful tools to calm markets and control prices. But the task at hand "has become quite difficult in view of high inflation numbers" and as "people feel high inflation every day when they're buying food or going to the gas station", Isabel Schnabel, a member of the ECB's executive board, told AFP. "We can do little about current inflation, but we will take decisive measures so that inflation returns to our (two-percent) target over the medium term," Schnabel said. "Once inflation is there and it starts to increase the expectations and wages, monetary policy should act," Sebem Kalemli-Ozcan, an economic professor at the University of Maryland, told AFP.—AFP



TUDELA: A pilot drives the first solar car Lightyear 0 during its world premiere presentation on a road in Tudela, northern Spain.—AFP

### Solar panels provide more juice to electric vehicles

PARIS: Startups and major carmakers are starting to incorporate solar panels on their electric vehicles, an addition that extends the range of the cars even if perpetual motion remains a dream. As it rolls under the blistering sun of northern Spain, the Lightyear 0 generates enough electricity every day to drive 70 kilometers thanks to the five square metres of solar panels integrated into hood and roof. The company was founded by young Dutch engineers who earned their spurs in running solar cars in races across the Australian desert.

Thanks to the drop in the price of solar panels, Lightyear is trying to incorporate them into road cars. With its sleek, aerodynamic line and motors integrated into the wheels, the Lightyear 0 consumes less energy than electric SUVs. Coupled with a battery that offers 625 kilometers per charge, the company says some customers who drive only short distances each day may only need to charge during the winter. "The clock is ticking, we need to have sustainable cars as soon as possible," one of the founders, Lex Hoefsloot, told AFP. "Charging points are still a big hurdle. If we don't need them, we can scale electric cars much quicker," he added. Lightyear targeted the top-end of the market with the 0, with the 1,000 or so cars produced setting back buyers 250,000 euros, the equivalent of a Bentley. The company hopes to launch a mass-market model with a price tag of 30,000 euros (\$31,500) in 2024-2025.

As sales of electric vehicles are soaring, a number of models with solar panels are expected to arrive in dealerships in the coming months. Toyota is now proposing solar panels as an option on Prius hybrids, as well as its first 100 percent electric vehicle, the BZ4X. Tesla also plans to offer solar panels as an option on its pickup that is due to hit the road next year. Mercedes equipped its luxurious EQXX with solar panels in the roof.—AFP



HONG KONG: Police watch pedestrians walking on a bridge in the Wanchai district of Hong Kong on June 29, 2022.—AFP



## Business

# China accuses G7 of 'creating division' over trade criticism

## 'Don't boycott G20 summit if Putin attends': British PM

BEIJING: China accused Group of Seven countries on Wednesday of irresponsibly sowing division after the forum condemned Beijing's trade practices in an end-of-summit statement. G7 leaders had slammed China's "non-transparent and market-distorting" international trade tactics on Tuesday, in a statement that also vowed to reduce "strategic dependencies" on the Asian giant. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Wednesday hit back at the criticism, saying the statement showed the allies were "keen to create divisions and confrontations without any sense of responsibility or morality".

The G7 should "advance globalization" rather than encourage division "at a critical time for the international community fighting the pandemic and striving for economic recovery," Zhao said at a regular press conference. The G7 statement, in which leaders pledged to "foster diversification and resilience to economic coercion, and to reduce strategic dependencies," came hours before the leaders joined 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. 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 prompted other countries, including export giant Germany, to also reconsider their economic reliance on the Asian giant.

Beijing's increasingly strident claims over much of the South China Sea has also sparked alarm over its military ambitions. Western allies acknowledge that the world's biggest challenges, including climate change, cannot be solved without Beijing's cooperation, but have become more cautious about China's actions and aims. A US official called the collective statement "unprecedented in the context of the G7" in acknowledging "the harms caused by China's non-transparent, market distorting, industrial directives."



BEIJING: A child plays at an outdoor fountain at a shopping mall in Beijing on June 28, 2022. — AFP

### Don't boycott G20

In another development, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned Wednesday against boycotting a G20 summit in Indonesia in November if Vladimir Putin attends, saying this would hand a "propaganda opportunity to others". Indonesia holds the rotating presidency of the G20 this year and Jakarta has come under Western pressure to exclude Russia's president from the gathering after announcing in April he had been invited.

"I would be absolutely amazed if Putin goes in person. He's a pariah figure," Johnson told reporters on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Madrid. "I don't think he will go. The question is do we as Western countries vacate our seats at the G20 and leave the whole argument to China, to Russia?" he said. "I think if you vacate something like the G20, you risk just

handing the propaganda opportunity to others." The Kremlin has said Putin will attend the November 15-16 summit. Indonesia, like most major emerging economies, has tried to maintain a neutral position and called for a peaceful resolution to Russia's months-long offensive in Ukraine.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo was on Wednesday in Kyiv for talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and will travel to Moscow on Thursday. He also took part in the G7 summit in Germany earlier this week. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Tuesday said G7 leaders "don't want to drive the G20 apart" and for now they are still planning "to go there", referring to the Indonesia summit. Putin joined last October's G20 summit in Rome via videoconference due to the coronavirus crisis.— AFP

## EU approves end of combustion engine sales by 2035

LUXEMBOURG: The European Union approved a plan to end the sale of vehicles with combustion engines by 2035 in Europe, the 27-member bloc announced early Wednesday, in a bid to reduce CO2 emissions to zero. The measure, first proposed in July 2021, will mean a de facto halt to sales of petrol and diesel cars as well as light commercial vehicles and a complete shift to electric engines in the European Union from 2035.

The plan is intended to help achieve the continent's climate objectives, in particular, carbon neutrality by 2050. At the request of countries including Germany and Italy, the EU-27 also agreed to consider a future green light for the use of alternative technologies such as synthetic fuels or plug-in hybrids.

While approval would be tied to achieving the complete elimination of greenhouse gas emissions, the technologies have been contested by environmental NGOs. Environment ministers meeting in Luxembourg also approved a five-year extension of the exemption from CO2 obligations granted to so-called "niche" manufacturers, or those producing fewer than 10,000 vehicles per year, until the end of 2035. The clause, sometimes referred to as the "Ferrari amendment", will benefit luxury brands in particular.

These measures must now be negotiated with members of the European Parliament. "This is a big challenge for our automotive industry," acknowledged French Minister of Ecological Transition Agnes Pannier-Runacher, who chaired Tuesday night's meeting. But she said it was a "necessity" in the face of competition from China and the United States, which have bet heavily on electric vehicles seen as the future of the industry. These decisions will "allow a planned and accompanied transition", the minister said.

Europe's automotive industry, which is already investing heavily in the move to electric vehicles, fears the social impact of a too-rapid transition. "The overwhelming majority of car manufacturers have chosen electric cars," said Frans Timmermans, the EU Commission Vice President in charge of the European Green Deal, at a press conference. He affirmed the EU body's willingness to be open-minded to other technologies - like synthetic fuels, which are also referred to as e-fuels. "We are technology neutral. What we want are zero-emission cars," he explained.—AFP



MOSCOW: Pedestrians walk near the Red Square with Saint Basil's cathedral in the background, as the air temperature approaches 28 degrees Celsius in downtown Moscow on June 28, 2022. - AFP

## EU insurance ban targets Russian oil exports

LONDON: An EU ban on insuring ships transporting Russian oil could potentially hurt Moscow more than its embargo on the nation's crude, analysts say. The European Union recently unveiled the insurance ban in a sixth set of economic sanctions aimed at punishing Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. In a further knock, G7 leaders are seeking a price cap for Russian oil to further hurt Kremlin revenues. The EU insurance and reinsurance ban, covering all maritime transportation of Russian oil, comes as Moscow seeks to ramp up sales to China and India to help offset the embargo.

### 'Further reaching than embargo'

The insurance ban "would have further-reaching consequences for the oil market than the EU oil embargo", noted Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch. Companies will no longer be permitted to transport oil from Russia by sea, or to insure such shipments. EU insurers have until the end of this year to implement the ban, while those in Britain are

expected to follow suit.

"There is going to be an impact and there is going to be a pricing impact," said Marcus Baker, international head of marine at US broker Marsh. A similar ban was used in 2012 when the EU prohibited European insurers and reinsurers from covering vessels carrying Iranian oil. The bloc had also slapped an embargo on the purchase of Iranian crude as part of sanctions against Tehran's controversial nuclear program.

Commercial ship operators require insurance for the vessel, its cargo and for protection and indemnity (P&I) covering events such as war and environmental damage. Mathieu Berrurier, managing director of marine insurance broker Eyssautier-Verlingue, told AFP that vast amounts of cash were required for potential payouts caused by such disasters. This results in insurers forming P&I clubs that "are able to offer guarantees equal to the risks involved in" events including "a major oil spill or collision with an ocean liner", said Berrurier. "Colossal amounts are needed," he stressed, adding that such disasters can potentially cost "billions of dollars". Russia's former president Dmitry Medvedev, who is deputy head of the country's security council, has hinted that Moscow could get around the ban by providing state guarantees to cover oil exports. That could allow Russia to self-insure and circumvent EU sanctions, he insisted. "That is true to an extent," said analyst Livia Gallarati at consultancy Energy Aspects.—AFP

apartments that employees from out of town can use when visiting for work. Ventilation systems in the buildings use 100 percent outside air, a plus against the spread of COVID-19.

### 'Not going empty'

Ground floors feature cafes, fitness centers, meeting rooms, social spaces and playful touches such as multi-colored stationary bikes that people can pedal as they chat, with the option of plugging in to charge devices with power they generate. Upper floors of the two story structures are home to desks, with furniture and fixtures easily reconfigured as teams want. Work areas are divided into "neighborhoods" with homey touches and even "courtyards" with cozy furniture.

"The ground level is really like a market, so it's more the vibrant," Kaufmann said. "Upstairs is more the quiet space where the teams really do a lot of their work," she added. Bay View campus is planned to accommodate 4,500 workers, with move in to take place during the coming weeks. Solar panels provide power, geothermal systems aid with heating and cooling and water collection and recycling systems result in surplus that is used to help restore wetlands on the property.—AFP

## Google's new offices bank on in-person work

MOUNTAIN VIEW: Roofs coated with canopy-like solar panels and indoor spaces awash in sunlight: Google has bet big on in-person work with its sprawling new Silicon Valley offices. AFP visited Google's 1.1 million square foot campus on Monday as the tech giant welcomes employees back after pandemic-era telecommuting. "Luckily, a lot of the things we were already planning kind of set us up for success with COVID," said Michelle Kaufmann, Google director of development for built environments.

"Thank god, because otherwise we would have built these buildings and we would have to change," she added. The campus spans 42 acres (17 hectares) of leased federal land next to NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, close to the company's headquarters. It includes an event center and small



CALIFORNIA: Visitors ride stationary bikes at Google's Bay View campus in Mountain View, California. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Tesla cuts around 200 jobs

NEW YORK: Electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla has closed an office in the California city of San Mateo, cutting around 200 jobs, according to multiple US media reports. Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AFP seeking confirmation of the move on Wednesday. The employees involved reportedly worked on the analysis of data from the vehicles' autopilot driver assistance system. Most of them were hourly workers, Bloomberg reported. According to the specialist outlet TechCrunch, 81 members of the San Mateo team kept their jobs, but will be transferred to Buffalo, New York. Tesla's unpredictable boss, Elon Musk, said last week that 10 percent of the company's full-time employees would be eliminated in the coming three months, but the number of hourly workers would grow. Musk also indicated in a recent interview with a club of Silicon Valley Tesla owners that new factories in Austin, Texas and Berlin were "gigantic money furnaces," causing losses of billions of dollars.

#### US regulators sue Walmart

WASHINGTON: US regulators filed a lawsuit Tuesday against retail giant Walmart for allowing fraudulent money transfers that scammed customers out of hundreds of millions of dollars. The global chain offers transfer services in its stores such as Western Union and MoneyGram as well as several in-house options. In its lawsuit, the Federal Trade Commission alleged that "for years, the company turned a blind eye while scammers took advantage of its failure to secure the money transfer services offered at Walmart stores," the agency said in a press release. "The FTC is asking the court to order Walmart to return money to consumers and to impose civil penalties for Walmart's violations," the agency said in a statement. The FTC accused the mega-retail chain of allowing suspicious transfers, not having an anti-fraud policy and permitting large cash withdrawals.

#### Prosecutors raid Hyundai-Kia

FRANKFURT: German prosecutors have raided the offices of South Korean auto group Hyundai-Kia and a supplier over alleged diesel-emissions cheating affecting more than 210,000 vehicles. Investigators searched eight locations in Germany and Luxembourg, Frankfurt prosecutors said in a statement sent to AFP Wednesday. Working together with authorities in Luxembourg, the raids were aimed at securing "communications, software and planning documents" in relation to the emissions-cheating accusations. Specifically, the Asian motor group is said to have sold "more than 210,000 diesel vehicles up to 2020" installed with "defeat devices" that made the vehicles appear less polluting than they actually were. The engine control software "came from Bosch and the then supplier Delphi", which now belongs to the BorgWarner group, whose offices were also raided. Together, the targeted groups were suspected of "fraud and air pollution, as well as abetting" these offences.

#### S Africa escalates power cuts

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa, a country plagued by power shortages, on Tuesday imposed the toughest electricity rationing in two and a half years after labor disputes disrupted production at several plants. Highly unpopular power rationing to consumers was ramped up to so-called Stage 6 load-shedding to prevent countrywide blackouts. Stage 6 means that South Africans will now experience multiple cuts per day, each lasting between two and four hours, on a rotational basis. The power utility Eskom, which generates more than 90 percent of the country's energy, has been hit by strike action over wages since last week. "Eskom is in this position because of the industrial action which has meant that in many power stations up to 90 percent of the staff could not attend to the duties... because of intimidation," State Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan told a media briefing shortly after the ramped-up rationing kicked in.

#### Multi-million-euro fraud

MADRID: Spanish police said Tuesday they had broken up a criminal gang running a multi-million-euro fraud that dodged import and carbon taxes on the sale of refrigerated greenhouse gases. In a series of raids, police arrested 27 suspects and seized 110 tons of different kinds of gas worth 11 million euros. The gang specialized in the "illegal traffic in greenhouse gas refrigerants" that damage the ozone layer, said a police spokesman. The gang brought the gases in from China at the port of Valencia on Spain's east coast, passing it off as being intended for other destinations such as Jordan, said the statement. In fact, the refrigerant gases stayed in Spain and were sold in various regions across the country. The gang exploited the fact that European businesses have the right to transit goods imported from non-EU countries through EU territory - where they are intended for a third country - without having to pay customs duties.

## Business

# German inflation slows as government steps in

## Germany plans return to debt-limit rules in 2023

## News in brief

### Sri Lanka economy shrinks

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's economy shrank 1.6 percent in the first quarter of this year as an unprecedented financial crisis began to impact commercial activity, according to official data. The island nation's painful downturn has seen months of lengthy blackouts, runaway inflation and severe shortages of vital consumer goods. A shortage of foreign currency needed for the import of fuel, fertilizer and other essentials had a devastating effect on the economy just as the coronavirus pandemic was receding. The January-March contraction was worsened by the "adverse effects" of inflation and Sri Lanka's crashing currency, the statistics department said. The agency noted that a ban on pesticide and fertilizer imports last year, since repealed, had a devastating effect on farmers with the first-quarter rice harvest down 33 percent. It added that an ongoing fuel shortage was having serious impacts on transport and industry.

### Vietnam economy expands

HANOI: Vietnam's economy expanded in the second quarter at its fastest pace in 11 years thanks to a big rebound in exports and the lifting of punishing COVID-19 restrictions, authorities said Wednesday. Growth in the communist nation and manufacturing powerhouse had stuttered at around three percent for two consecutive years as the pandemic shut down most of the world and authorities imposed strict lockdowns. But on Wednesday the General Statistics Office said gross domestic product grew 7.72 percent on-year in April-June, its best performance since 2011. Turnover from exports rose 21 percent to \$96.80 billion in the period, the GSO added. Economic growth for the first half of the year was 6.42 percent, the GSO said, inching back towards the seven percent enjoyed before the pandemic in 2019. Earlier this month the World Bank said Vietnam's economic recovery "remains strong" despite uncertainties caused by the war in Ukraine, lockdowns in China and inflation.

### Network targets mineral firms

PARIS: A Pro-China online network is targeting Western companies mining for elements used to make smartphones and other hi-tech products, US cybersecurity firm Mandiant said in a report on Tuesday. China controls 80 percent of the world's supply of rare earth elements, vital components for anything from electric vehicles to fluorescent lighting, and Western powers have been trying for years to redress the balance. Mandiant identified a network of thousands of fake social media accounts in 2019 that it has linked to several campaigns pushing pro-China messages and disinformation. The US firm's report on Tuesday said the network, which it has named "Dragonbridge", had spent months targeting rare earth mining companies. It said Dragonbridge had attacked on social media Australian company Lynas Rare Earths over its environmental record and urged protests at a planned construction site for a processing facility in Texas.

### Uber, Australia union inks deal

SYDNEY: Uber has reached a deal with a powerful Australian union after years of legal battles, campaigns and negotiations that will offer 100,000 drivers and food delivery workers more protections. The Transport Workers Union-one of Uber's most vocal critics-reached the agreement with the rideshare giant late Tuesday, with both sides backing minimum standards for all gig economy workers and the right to unionise. In a joint statement, Uber and the union said they also supported the setting up of an independent body by the Australian government to create standards across the sector. The "gig economy"-which uses temporary independent contractors for short-term tasks-has grown rapidly since Uber's launch in 2009 and is promoted as a flexible way for people to earn money without the constraints of a full-time job.

### Novartis slashes 8,000 jobs

ZURICH: Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis is slashing around 8,000 jobs worldwide, or just over seven percent of its global workforce, as part of a large restructuring push. Novartis, which currently employs some 108,000 people around the world, confirmed late Tuesday that it would shed thousands of jobs as part of a restructuring plan announced in April. Under that plan, the company aims to simplify its structure, among other things gathering oncology and other pharmaceutical activities in a single division. No figures were initially given for the layoffs, but Swiss media reported the global number Tuesday, and also said the company planned to slash 1,400 jobs in Switzerland-about 12 percent of its workforce in the country. In an email sent to employees, Novartis chief Vas Narasimhan explained the company's new structure, which he promised would be "both leaner and simpler". But this "will unfortunately entail layoffs," he wrote, according to the Tages-Anzeiger newspaper. —From AFP

FRANKFURT: German inflation slowed slightly in June, official figures published Wednesday showed, as government measures to ease the pressure on consumers from rising prices took force. Inflation sat at 7.6 percent in June, according to the federal statistics office Destatis, still well above the two-percent target set by central banks but down from 7.9 percent in May. Consumer prices in Germany have been on an almost constant climb for 18 months, with the last fall in the rate registered in January this year.

Inflation was first stoked by the disruptions arising from the coronavirus pandemic, and then by the war in Ukraine. Russia's invasion had caused "prices for energy to climb markedly", leading to high rates of inflation, Destatis said. Year-on-year energy costs were up 38 percent in June, according to the statistics body, while prices for food also increased by 12.7 percent in the same timeframe. The disruption caused to supply chains by the war and the pandemic also added to price pressures, it said.

The upwards momentum was only broken by government moves to ease the pressure on consumers, including a discounted fuel tax and a flat-rate ticket for public transport. The full impact of these measures could "not be assessed" in the preliminary data, Destatis said. "This is not yet the end of surging inflation rates," said Carsten Brzeski, head of macro at the ING bank. Rather, it was an example that it is "currently governments, not central banks, that can stop inflation", he said. Despite the relief for consumers from the government on the costs of transport and energy, "food price inflation continued to pick up" while prices were also marked up for services, Brzeski said.

Looking ahead, the government's measures are set to expire at the end of August, while "the potential end to Russian gas for Germany is also likely to increase energy prices going into the winter season", he said. Spanish inflation reached double digits in June, coming in at 10.2 percent, according to figures published earlier Wednesday. The data suggested "eurozone inflation is moving up and not down like German inflation", adding to the pressure on the European Central Bank, Brzeski said.

## IKEA announces the winner of its fourth and last raffle draw

KUWAIT: IKEA Al Homaizi is excited to announce the lucky winner of IKEA's fourth and last Raffle Draw, Najat Naimi. The draw has been conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Naimi was granted the KD 10,000 home makeover prize by Ahmad Adel Ahmad, the Customer Relations Manager of IKEA The Avenues during a special ceremony in IKEA The Avenues. The prize consists of IKEA products and services, including planning service and delivery & Assembly.

Year after year, IKEA continues to be by your side to create a better life at home. IKEA is always excited and pleased to welcome everyone to come and enjoy a unique shopping experience at all IKEA in Kuwait: IKEA The Avenues, IKEA 360, The Assima Mall, or online through IKEA.com.kw and the IKEA App.

## Spain inflation hits 10.2%, highest level since 1985

MADRID: Inflation in Spain has jumped to its highest level since 1985, largely driven up by soaring energy prices, official data showed on Wednesday. Inflation has soared worldwide as economies have emerged from the COVID pandemic while Russia's invasion of Ukraine has pushed commodity prices higher.

Consumer prices in Spain rose sharply to 10.2 percent in June on an annual basis, up from 8.7 percent in the previous month. It was the highest level since April 1985 with the increase kicking in despite measures introduced by the Spanish government to ease household bills. "We knew that the effect of gas cuts by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin was going to be reflected in the prices in Spain," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told Cadena SER radio.

He was referring to the sharp reduction in Russian gas imports to Europe in response to the bloc's military and political support for Kyiv in the face of Moscow's

invasion. Last week, Spain cut the value-added tax rate on electricity by half to five percent to shield consumers from soaring inflation. A similar move in 2021 saw the VAT on electricity reduced from 21 percent to 10 percent. In March, the government unveiled a package of financial measures to ease the impact of soaring prices which includes six billion euros (\$6.4 billion) in direct aid for companies and households.

### Opposition slams 'policy failure'

And this weekend, Sanchez's administration unveiled a new nine-billion-euro (\$9.5-billion) aid plan to help the country weather the ongoing fallout of the conflict in Ukraine. It also extended other measures which had been due to expire on June 30, by another six months until the year's end, such as a discount of 20 cents per litre of fuel. The government also announced a direct aid handout of 200 euros to the self-employed and unemployed, and said pensions and disability benefits would also be increased by 15 percent.

Although Sanchez on Wednesday acknowledged the inflation figure was "bad", he told Cadena SER it reflected "the seriousness of the situation (globally) and the appropriateness of the measures



WISMAR: The main assembly hall of the shipbuilder MV Werften is pictured in Wismar. Submarine and ship builder Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems said it was buying the Asian-owned MV Werften shipyard on Germany's Baltic coast which had filed for bankruptcy at the start of the year. —AFP

### Debt-limit rules

Meanwhile, Germany will reinstate its so-called debt brake in 2023 after suspending it for three years to cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, sources in the finance ministry said Wednesday. The government will borrow 17.2 billion euros (\$18.1 billion) next year, adhering to the rule enshrined in the constitution that normally limits Germany's public deficit to 0.35 percent of overall annual economic output, despite new spending as a result of Russia's war in Ukraine, the sources said.

The new borrowing set out in a draft budget to be presented to the cabinet on Friday is almost 10 billion euros higher than a previous figure for 2023 announced in April. However, "despite a

considerable increase in costs, the debt brake will be respected," one of the sources said. After taking on almost 140 billion euros of new debt in 2022, Germany will next year benefit from the end of many expenses related to the coronavirus pandemic, as well as higher tax revenues, the sources added.

Although Germany is traditionally a frugal nation, the government broke its own debt rules at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and unleashed vast financial aid to steer the economy through the crisis. The government has this year unveiled a multi-billion-euro support package to help companies in Europe's biggest economy weather the fallout from the Ukraine war and sanctions against Russia. —AFP



MADRID: A Spanish police officer look on as tourists ride bikes near the Palacio Real in Madrid on June 28, 2022. —AFP

we are taking". But opposition leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo, who heads the right-wing Popular Party, said the numbers reflected the failure of government policies. "Prices have been rising for more than a year and the June figure shows the failure of the government's erratic policies," he wrote on Twitter.

Although the rise in inflation is main-

ly due to increases in fuel and food prices the INE also noted a hike in hospitality sector prices in one of the world's top tourist destinations. Core inflation, which is seasonally adjusted and excludes energy, jumped to 5.5 percent in June compared to 4.9 percent in the previous month—the highest since August 1993. —AFP

## UK extends steel tariffs, breaching WTO obligations

LONDON: Britain has extended steel tariffs for another two years to protect its ailing industry, the government said Wednesday, breaching World Trade Organization obligations. Trade minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan cited "global disruptions to the energy

markets and supply chains" for the decision. "A strategic steel industry is of the utmost importance to the UK, especially given the uncertainty of political and economic waters that we are currently all charting," Trevelyan told parliament.

"Trade remedies are one of the ways that government can protect their businesses. They tackle issues of dumping, of unfair government subsidies, or ... give businesses time to adjust to unforeseen increases in imports," the minister added. The energy-intensive steel sector in Britain, already suffering at the hands of cheap Chinese imports, now faces sky-rocketing production costs as fuel prices surge. Tariffs for certain steel product categories imposed on developed

countries and China have now been extended to June 2024. "It is in the economic interest of the UK to maintain these safeguards, to reduce the risk of material harm if they were not maintained," Trevelyan told lawmakers.

After Britain's departure from the European Union, the country rolled over quotas and tariffs on 10 steel products until mid-2024. The UK has now decided to extend temporary safeguards on five other categories for "a further two years", Trevelyan said. "I have... concluded there would be serious injury, or the threat of serious injury to UK steel producers, if the safeguards on the five additional categories were to be removed at this time," the minister added. —AFP

## Lifestyle | Features

Woody Allen says 'thrill is gone,'  
next movie may be his last

In a rare interview on Tuesday, filmmaker Woody Allen did not rule out Tuesday that his next movie, to be shot in Paris, will be his last, saying that "a lot of the thrill is gone." The 86-year-old director and comedian, who fell from grace in the United States after his adopted daughter accused him of sexually abusing her as a child, spoke for about half an hour with actor Alec Baldwin on the latter's Instagram show.

Baldwin has himself been at the center of recent controversy after he accidentally shot dead the director of photography on one of his own movies last October while handling a firearm. "I'm probably making this one more movie but a lot of the thrill is gone," the director of "Annie Hall" and "Manhattan" told Baldwin. He said the excitement had been in showing his films



US director Woody Allen holds a press conference in the northern Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian, where he will start shooting his yet-untitled next film. — AFP

on the big screen in cinemas, while these days so many people stream their movies at home.

"I don't get the same fun [as] doing a

movie and putting it in a theater," Allen said. "It was a nice feeling to know that 500 people were seeing it at once." "I don't know how I feel about making movies. I'm going to make another one and I'll see how it feels," he said.

Baldwin had announced the controversial interview on his Instagram account on Sunday to talk about Allen's new book "Zero Gravity," but he anticipated the emotions that would be stirred up. "I have ZERO INTEREST in anyone's judgments and sanctimonious posts here," Baldwin said in his trailer for the interview. He did not mention the accusations of sexual abuse in the interview. Allen has always denied them. —AFP

## Sony launches PC gaming gear, expanding beyond PlayStation

Japan's Sony is launching a new brand that will offer PC gaming gear, the company announced Wednesday, as it tries to compete for a share of the lucrative gaming peripherals market. Sony is looking to expand beyond its flagship PlayStation console and boost revenue from other sectors, including PC and mobile gaming.

The gaming peripherals market of items used by players was valued at \$3.88 billion globally in 2019 according to Grand View Research. Sony's first offerings from its new Inzone brand will be three wireless headsets and two monitors, the priciest of which will retail for a suggested \$899.99 in the United States.

"The market has been expanding with a higher interest in gaming with the spread of esports tournaments and the advancement of gaming entertainment," said

Yukihiro Kitajima, head of Sony's game business and marketing office, in a statement. Sony is "very late" to the "hopelessly crowded" sector, said Serkan Toto, CEO of game industry consultancy Kantan Games.



Rival Microsoft is already well-positioned, along with competitors like Razer, though Sony will bring unique hardware features, he told AFP. The firm's decision to enter the market now is linked to its "aggressive plan to boost sales from PC and mobile for its PlayStation unit to around 50 percent by fiscal 2025," Toto said. It "apparently believes that the goal is easier to achieve by leveraging its position in hardware to raise awareness among PC gamers." —AFP

## Early human ancestors one million years older than thought

The fossils of our earliest ancestors found in South Africa are a million years older than previously thought, meaning they walked the Earth around the same time as their East African relatives like the famous "Lucy", according to new research. The Sterkfontein caves at the Cradle of Humankind world heritage site southwest of Johannesburg have yielded more Australopithecus fossils than any other site in the world.

Among them was "Mrs Ples", the most complete skull of an Australopithecus africanus found in South Africa in 1947. Based on previous measurements, Mrs Ples and other fossils found at a similar depth of the cave were estimated to be between 2.1 and 2.6 million years old. But "chronologically that didn't fit," said French scientist Laurent Bruxelles, one of the authors of a study published Monday in the PNAS science journal. "It was bizarre to see some Australopithecus lasting for such a long time," the geologist told AFP. Around 2.2 million years ago the Homo habilis—the earliest species of the Homo genus that includes Homo sapiens—was already roaming the region. But there were no signs of Homo habilis at the depth of the cave where Mrs Ples was found.



This file photograph French anthropologist Yves Coppens poses next to a model of Lucy.

calcite flowstone mineral deposits, which were younger than the rest of that cave section, the study said. For the latest study, the researchers used a technique called cosmogenic nuclide dating, which looked at levels of rare isotopes created when rocks containing quartz were hit by high-speed particles that arrived from outer space.

"Their radioactive decay dates when the rocks were buried in the cave when they fell in the entrance together with the fossils," said the study's lead author, Darryl Granger of Purdue University in the US. The researchers found that Mrs Ples and other fossils near her were between 3.4 and 3.7 million years old. This means that members of Australopithecus africanus like Mrs Ples were "contemporaries" of East Africa's Australopithecus afarensis, including 3.2-million-year-old Lucy who was found in Ethiopia, said Dominic Stratford, director of research at the caves and one of study's authors.

## Our family tree 'more like a bush'

It could also possibly alter our understanding of our ancestral history. The South African Australopithecus had previ-



This file photograph shows French paleontologist Yves Coppens posing at his home in Paris, while holding a head model of Lucy, a female Australopithecus. — AFP

ously been considered "too young" to be the ancestor of the Homo genus, Stratford said. That meant that Lucy's home of East Africa was thought to be the more likely place where the Homo genus evolved. But the new research shows that the South African Australopithecus had almost a million years to evolve into our Homo ancestor. Or they could have worked on it together.

"Over a timeframe of millions of years, at only 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) away, these species had plenty of time to travel, to breed with each other... so we can largely imagine a common evolution across Africa," Bruxelles said. The research showed that the history of hominids was "more complex than linear evolution", he added. Our family tree is in fact "more like a bush, to use the words of our late friend Yves Coppens," Bruxelles said, referring to the French palaeontologist credited with co-discovering Lucy. Coppens died last week. "He had long understood the pan-African nature of evolution," Bruxelles said. — AFP



These An undated handout photographs show researchers collecting samples at a dig-site around the caves in Sterkfontein, also known as the "Cradle of Humankind".



first quarter of the year—its first decline in a decade. "We don't have a precise timeline yet," Anne-Gabrielle Dauba-Pantanacce, head of communications for Netflix France, told AFP.

"We are actively working on it. It's a priority—this idea of giving subscribers more options in the context of high inflation," she added. Bloomberg reported over the weekend that Netflix has yet to appoint a head of advertising or build a sales team. The Wall Street Journal said Netflix is actively looking into partnerships with

Google and Comcast to provide ads. There are also tricky questions about where to place the ads.

Should they come only at the start of programming? Or will their teams have to go back through countless hours of content to find suitable moments for an ad break in shows like "Stranger Things" that were never created with ads in mind? "For now, nothing is decided," said Dauba-Pantanacce.

In its bid to rake in more cash, Netflix is also looking to crackdown on users who share their passwords with others. Despite losing subscribers, which led to a tumble in its share price, Netflix remains by far the most popular streaming service in the world with 222 million subscribers. But they are shared with an estimated 100 million other households that are not paying for the service. — AFP



Tunisian actor Hichem Rostom (second right) arrives at the opening of the 32nd Carthage Film Days (JCC) festival in Carthage. — AFP

Tunisian film star  
Hichem Rostom dies

Tunisian actor Hichem Rostom, who starred in The English Patient and dozens of films across Europe, died on Tuesday at the age of 75, the culture ministry said. Rostom, seen as the most influential Tunisian actor of his generation, had started his career during his studies in

France, where he worked as a presenter at the People's National Theatre.

He moved into cinema in the mid-1970s, going on to star in dozens of Tunisians, French, Italian, English and German films. They included Alain Berberian's 1998 comedy Paparazzi and Jean-Jacques Annaud's 2011 drama Or Noir (Black Gold), filmed in Tunisia. He returned to Tunisia in 1988 and worked on a string of films and local television shows. — AFP

## Singer R Kelly faces sentencing over sex crimes case

A US federal judge on Wednesday was set to sentence disgraced R&B singer R Kelly nearly a year after he was convicted of leading a decades-long effort to recruit and trap teenagers and women for sex. Prosecutors have urged the court to put the "I Believe I Can Fly" artist behind bars for at least 25 years, saying he still "poses a serious danger to the public."

In September, a jury in Brooklyn federal court found the fallen superstar guilty on all nine charges he faced, including the most serious of racketeering. "His actions were brazen, manipulative, controlling and coercive. He has shown no remorse or respect for the law," prosecutors wrote in their sentencing memo.

"A lengthy sentence of imprisonment will serve to deter others—including those with wealth, fame and the outsized power such status brings—from engaging in similar crimes," they added. The legal team representing the 55-year-old Kelly, who is currently incarcerated in Brooklyn awaiting his fate, have urged a lighter sentence with a maximum of approximately 17 years.

Jury selection in Kelly's separate, long-delayed federal trial in Chicago is meanwhile scheduled to begin August 15. In that case, Kelly and two of his former associates are alleged to have rigged the singer's 2008 pornography trial and hid years of sexual abuse of minors. The musician who once dominated R&B also faces prosecution in two other state jurisdictions.

## #MeToo milestone

Kelly's conviction in New York was widely seen as a milestone for the #MeToo movement: it was the first major sex abuse trial where the majority of accusers were Black women. It was also the first time Kelly faced criminal consequences for the abuse he for decades was rumored to

have inflicted on women and children. Prosecutors were tasked with proving Kelly guilty of racketeering, a federal charge commonly associated with organized crime syndicates that depicted Kelly as the boss of an enterprise of associates who facilitated his abuse.

Calling 45 witnesses including 11 alleged victims to the stand, they painstakingly presented a pattern of crimes they say the artist born Robert Sylvester Kelly carried out for years with impunity, capitalizing on his fame to prey on the less powerful. To convict Kelly of racketeering, jurors had to find him guilty of at least two of 14 "predicate acts"—the crimes elemental to the wider pattern of illegal wrongdoing.

Lurid testimony intended to prove those acts included accusations of rape, druggings, imprisonment and child pornography. His accusers described events that often mirrored one another: many of the alleged victims said they had met the singer at concerts or mall performances and were then handed slips of paper with Kelly's contact details by members of his entourage. Several said they were told he could bolster their music industry aspirations. But prosecutors argued all were instead "indoctrinated" into Kelly's world-groomed for sex at his whim and kept in line by "coercive means of control," including isolation and cruel disciplinary measures, recordings of which were played for the jury.

Core to the state's case was Kelly's relationship with the late singer Aaliyah. Kelly wrote and produced her first album "Age Ain't Nothin' But A Number"—before illegally marrying her when she was just 15 because he feared he had impregnated her. His former manager admitted in court to bribing a worker to obtain fake identification allowing the union, which was later annulled. — AFP

## Netflix 'actively' working on ad-supported subscription

Netflix is "actively" working on building its cheaper, ad-supported deal, the company's French team said on Tuesday, but added there was no clear timeline. It was revealed last month that the streaming platform was planning to introduce a new cheaper subscription model by the end of the year that would break its taboo on advertising. That leak to the New York Times followed news that Netflix had lost 200,000 subscribers in the



In this file photo singer R Kelly leaves the Leighton Criminal Court Building after a hearing on sexual abuse charges in Chicago.



Elephants drink water at a water point in Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area run by a private company, in Amboseli, Kenya. — AFP photos



Maasai women work at a village nearby Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area run by a private company, in Amboseli, Kenya.



A Maasai woman arrives with collected firewoods at a village nearby Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area run by a private company.

## KENYAN PILOT PROJECT TO PUT PRICE ON NATURE'S TREASURE

The bird count gets underway—two members of the superb starling family, a Nubian woodpecker, and so on. The census unfolding in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro is part of a project with a dual aim—using biodiversity to make money, which will then help to preserve natural resources and support local communities. The 5,000-hectare (12,400-acre) terrain on the edge of Amboseli National Park in southern Kenya boasts elephants, giraffes, antelopes and lions.



The reserve's owners are the Maasai people, and no fence separates the land from territory used by herders for their cows, sheep, goats and donkeys. These days, well-heeled visitors are returning to the reserve after the COVID-19 pandemic, which had wrenching financial consequences.

"Tourism completely collapsed, and we realized that we need to find other ways of rising revenue and income to be able to continue paying the leases," said Mohanjet Brar, managing director of tour operator Gamewatchers Safaris, which rents Selenkay from the Maasai. The reserve has an eye on the potential from carbon credits and planned biodiversity credits—mechanisms designed to channel funds to landowners who preserve natural hotspots for rare species and carbon storage.

### Data first

For Selenkay, the first step towards realizing these gains is to collect data to make an inventory of the reserve's treasure house. Cameras and acoustic recorders are being used to give an idea of which animals are present on the reserve and in what numbers, and these are supplemented by human observations.

Over one month, morning and evening, team members are stationed at specific points to make a tally of all the



Elephants eat grass at a swamp in Amboseli National Park, Kenya.

animals seen and heard for 10 minutes. "Is biodiversity higher in the conservancy than outside the conservancy and what's driving that increase?" said Andrew Davies, an assistant professor at Harvard University in the United States, who is helping the research.

"Once we know that from a scientific perspective, we can begin thinking about making a credit to sell." Helped by a drone, the researchers are also getting a picture of the amount of carbon stored in trees and in the soil. Tourism income from Brar's company supports the local community in many ways, helping to provide water for people and livestock and generating jobs. All of the rangers and most all of Selenkay's staff are Maasai.

Even so, living conditions are still difficult, said Noolasho Keteko, one of the women from the Maasai village bordering the conservancy. The crop-haired mother of eight, adorned with colorful bead jewelry, also makes money from tourist visits to the mud-hut village and from selling jewelry. But when Selenkay closes in April and May for the rainy season, the village needs assistance, she explained.

People in the district want to prevent the land from being sold, turned into fields and fenced off, preventing wildlife from moving freely. But a short distance from the reserve, a high fence already crosses the landscape to make way for fields. Income from credits could ease the pressure on the environment, said one of

the guides, Nicholas Koyieyo. It would encourage herders to cut back on numbers of cattle, enabling grass and trees to regenerate, he said.

### Market question

The big question is whether Selenkay's resources can be adequately monetized. "Kenya has a very fast-growing population—the land price is also high (and) there are many options for land use," Brar said. The market for carbon credits is well-established, although far from perfect.

Under it, carbon polluters can offset their greenhouse-gas emissions by "purchasing" emissions that are reduced or saved by other members in the scheme.

But the much-touted market for biodiversity credits has yet to be created.

On Sunday, preparatory talks for a UN biodiversity summit due in December wound up in Nairobi after making scant progress. "There's no biodiversity trading market and we have to develop that," said Davies. "We need carbon as a first step to get the things going, to get trust from the landowners," he said. "A lot of money needs to go back to the community, so if we start to get money and giving it to the community then they will have faith in us." — AFP



Maasai women and children gather at a village nearby Selenkay Conservancy.



Maasai women are seen at a village nearby Selenkay Conservancy.



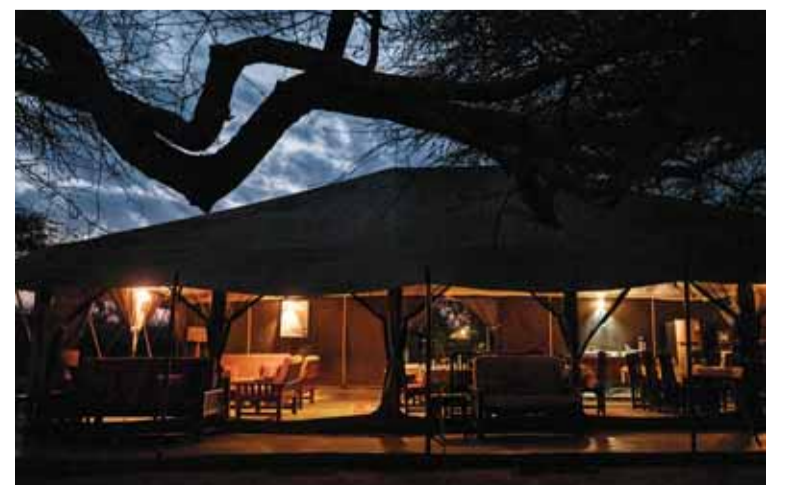
A male gerenuk eats leaves in Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area run by a private company, in Amboseli, Kenya.



A wildebeest walks at a swamp in Amboseli National Park, Kenya.



Maasai women sing at a village nearby Selenkay Conservancy.



Lights generated by solar panels are on after sunset at Porini Amboseli Camp in Selenkay Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area run by a private company, in Amboseli, Kenya.



This handout picture shows a view from the intended site of Wadi AlFann, or "Valley of the Arts", an art project in the desert of the northwestern Saudi town of Al-Ula. — AFP photos

# SAUDI ARTISTS MARVEL AT SURPRISE PATRON: THEIR OWN RULERS

In one of Saudi artist Ahmed Mater's best-known works, a silhouette of a gas pump morphs into a man holding a gun to his head—a clear critique of oil's damaging influence. Yet for several years, most Saudis couldn't see the piece, titled "Evolution of Man", as local curators deemed it too sensitive to show in the oil-reliant kingdom.

Its inclusion in a recent exhibition in the capital Riyadh is just one sign of changing times. With Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto ruler, eager to rebrand conservative Saudi Arabia as a global arts destination, officials are heaping previously unheard-of opportunities on Mater and his peers.

They unveiled the latest on Monday: a plan to feature Mater and another politically minded Saudi artist, Manal AlDowayan, in a series of permanent installations in the deserts outside Al-Ula, a budding tourist magnet in the northwestern Medina region.

To critics of the Saudi royal family, such projects smack of "artwashing", an attempt to launder the image of a country notorious for silencing dissidents, most notably slain journalist Jamal Khashoggi. But for artists like Mater, the state backing is a welcome relief after years of straining to reach Saudi audiences and cultivate a vibrant domestic arts scene. "I usually believe in creating a grassroots movement that will be organic, but what if there is top-down support for this? Even better," he told AFP. "That's the change. That's the new thing."

## 'Valley of the arts'

The project in Al-Ula-known as Wadi AlFann, or "Valley of the Arts"-is ultimately meant to cover 65 square kilometers (16,000 acres) of Saudi desert with new examples of "land art", the movement that sought to bring art out of galleries and into nature.



This handout picture shows an undated portrait of US artist James Turrell.

Besides Mater and AlDowayan, contributors include land art giants like Hungarian-American Agnes Denes, who in the 1980s famously planted and harvested two acres of wheat just blocks from Wall Street. It is part of a broader goal to transform Al-Ula, famed for its ancient Nabataean tombs dotted amid sandstone mountains and wadis, into a top-tier arts hub, complete with luxury eco-resorts and a posh theatre covered in mirrored panels.

The Wadi AlFann works "are on a scale and ambition, and they have such vision behind them, that I think people will want to come for many, many generations to visit them", said curator Iwona Blazwick, former director of London's Whitechapel Gallery. AlDowayan, one of the Saudi contributors, told AFP that until recently her work had been seen more frequently outside the kingdom than within it, though she

dismissed the notion that this had anything to do with censorship.

"I was talking about very tough subjects when it was really restrictive here, and I was fine. They published me in every single newspaper. I've never been censored," she said. The nature of visual artists' work gives them more space to speak out than Saudi activists might enjoy, said Eman Alhussein, non-resident fellow with the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

"Artists are able to express themselves more freely because their artwork can be interpreted in different ways," she said. That seems especially true these days, as Saudi authorities lean on the arts to help soften their austere reputation.

After two decades of showing largely for foreigners, AlDowayan is now basking in a surge of domestic attention. "I'm being exhibited constantly here," she said. "I'm



A handout picture shows a view from the intended site of Wadi AlFann, or "Valley of the Arts", an art project in the desert of the northwestern Saudi town of Al-Ula.

being rediscovered by my people, my community. They used to follow me on Instagram. Now they can actually go and see the artworks."

## Legacy of restrictions

Mater, too, has had mostly positive experiences with Saudi authorities. Yet he has also seen the limits on free expression in Saudi Arabia through the case of his childhood friend Ashraf Fayadh, a fellow artist who has been behind bars for nearly a decade. Fayadh, a Palestinian poet living in the kingdom, was charged with apostasy in 2014 after a Saudi citizen accused him of promoting atheism.

A court sentenced him to death in 2015, though his sentence was reduced to eight years on appeal. Mater sees Fayadh's case as a throwback to a less open period and does not think it would

play out the same way today. Nevertheless, "the case is still very important because Ashraf has to come out", Mater said, adding that he hopes his friend will be released soon.

In the meantime, Mater is pressing on with his politically charged work. His project for Wadi AlFann involves building tunnels that visitors can enter. Once inside, their hologram-like images will be projected above the dunes—an effect akin to a mirage. The idea is to use a monument to center ordinary people, a concept that doesn't necessarily jibe with monarchical rule. "Usually sculpture is about landmarks of power," Mater said. "And what I'm talking about here is, the power is the people themselves." — AFP



This handout picture shows Saudi artist Manal AlDowayan at an undetermined location.



Saudi artist Ahmed Mater works at his studio in the capital Riyadh.



A pedestrian walks under a sign reading "No Entry for EU citizens without Visa" displayed at a restaurant in Pristina. — AFP photos

## Kosovo cafe bans Europeans over visa 'humiliation'

Europeans have been banned from a restaurant in Pristina in retaliation for the EU keeping its door shut to Kosovo passport holders. The symbolic gesture is "a sign of revolt and despair" said Shpejtim Pefqeli, the owner of Mama's Restaurant, which is just across the road from the European Rule of Law Mission in the Kosovo capital. Pefqeli once served up Italian fare to lots of Europeans, but not anymore.

His ban came after last week's EU-

Western Balkans summit, where Kosovo had hoped to be accepted into a scheme that would allow its citizens to visa free travel in Europe's Schengen Area. But by the summit's end, the measure was not adopted even as Pristina argued that it fulfilled all the conditions.

It was a devastating blow to many and came four years after the European Commission first said Kosovo was eligible for entry into the arrangement. Since Kosovo declared independence in 2008, the territory has been recognized by over 100 countries. But its passport still opens few doors. Indeed in languishes alongside Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and North Korea in the bottom 11 of the Henley index, which ranks countries according to the number of destinations their passport holders can visit.

With few visa-free destinations available, Kosovars are forced to wait weeks, if

not months, while completing mountains of paperwork to secure the necessary documents to travel abroad. "We got angry. We saw that we were humiliated," Pefqeli told AFP, saying he felt compelled to protest after the summit. Plastered at the entrance of his restaurant is a sign that now reads: "No entry for EU citizens without visa."

"There were two Bulgarian women in the restaurant" when Pefqeli put up the sign. "They laughed when I told them not to hurry, but to finish their meal and drinks before they leave," he said. And while Pefqeli's move to ban European diners is not exactly legal, passersby appeared to approve. "It seems very good to me," said Valdrin Januzi, a 26-year-old engineer. "Everyone should do something creative, because in this way the problem and this injustice stands out more." — AFP

## Sports

# Sparkling Maori All Blacks stun Ireland in tour opener

## Irish paid for ill-discipline and inaccuracy

**HAMILTON:** Ireland conceded they were a distant second best after opening their tour of New Zealand with a 32-17 loss to a sparkling Maori All Blacks in Hamilton on Wednesday. In a worrying sign three days out from the first Test of a three-match series against New Zealand, the Irish paid for ill-discipline and inaccuracy against a Maori outfit who scored all their four tries in the first half to open a 32-10 lead at the break. Despite wet conditions at Waikato Stadium, the home team weren't afraid to take risks and strung together some sweeping attacking moves, with two tries emanating from within their own half.

Fly-half Josh Loane kicked 12 points and was a constant menace with ball in hand. Ireland paid for a heavy penalty count against them in the opening half, with their problems exacerbated by an aimless kicking game and a back-peddalling scrum. Coach Andy Farrell will be concerned about the health status of at least two of his players, after back Jamie Hume and prop Cian Healy were assisted from the field nursing leg injuries.

Farrell fielded an inexperienced, virtual second-string, side with most of his likely starters for the first Test at Auckland on Saturday watching on from the grandstand. He took some positive elements from "a game of two halves" but said the Maori were clearly deserved winners. "We're

disappointed. We know it was a big week for the Maori boys but it was a big week for some of our guys, playing for Ireland for the first time," Farrell said. "There was really good stuff from certain individuals but a lot of dumb stuff along the way."

"It was brilliant as far as our learning is concerned because that's what you've got to iron out if you want to make it to the top." Maori captain Brad Weber said all of his players were encouraged to attack with ball in hand if they saw space. "We just wanted the boys to play with a bit of flair and at a speed that we would hope that Ireland couldn't handle," he said. "That first half certainly showed it. It was fun to be part of, man. We're all Maori so we all want to bring out that flair."

Ireland's New Zealand-born Bunde Aki captain crossed to put his side 10-8 ahead in response to an early try from impressive Maori fullback Zarn Sullivan. The home side then took control with three tries in the space of 11 minutes in the leadup to halftime, with wing Shaun Stevenson, halfback Weber and forward Cullen Grace all crossing. A more even second half threw up just one try, when Ireland forward Gavin Coombes burrowed across. The two teams will meet again in Wellington on July 12, midway between the second and third Tests. —AFP



**HAMILTON:** Brad Weber (center) of the New Zealand Maori feeds the scrum during the rugby union match between the New Zealand Maori and Ireland at Waikato Stadium in Hamilton on June 29, 2022. —AFP

## PGA and European tours unveil 13-year joint venture

**WASHINGTON:** The PGA Tour and European Tour announced a 13-year operational joint venture on Tuesday, uniting in a tighter alliance to combat the new Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series. The new partnership through 2035 follows a strategic alliance unveiled last November that saw co-sanctioning of the Scottish Open, Barbasol Championship and Barracuda Championship events to provide more playing opportunities. There will also be a defined path for players to move from the European Tour to the PGA Tour.

From 2023, the top 10 players in the season-ending European Tour rankings will earn PGA Tour cards for the following season. "We are thrilled with today's announcement of this expanded partnership," PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said. "We will continue to collaborate on a global schedule and key commercial areas as we draw our organizations and memberships even closer together while innovating to provide the most entertaining and compelling golf possible to fans around the world."

The move is also aimed at boosting prize money on both tours and comes as LIV Golf has lured away top players with the richest purses in golf history. LIV Golf debuted in England earlier this month and its second event is set to tee off Thursday at Pumpkin Ridge in Oregon. They feature 54-hole formats with shotgun starts and team and individual competitions.

Dustin Johnson, Patrick Reed, Bryson DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka, Phil Mickelson and Sergio Garcia are among the players who have opted for LIV Golf despite concerns over human rights issues by the Saudi financiers. The PGA Tour banned 17 members and former members who played in the first LIV event and warned that more indefinite suspensions would follow for players taking part in subsequent tournaments. In the wake of more recent player departures, the PGA announced plans for higher prize money in several events and three new international tournaments with large purses.

### Strengthens both tours

As part of the new joint venture, the PGA Tour will increase its stake in European Tour Productions from 15 percent to 40 percent. The European Tour "will guarantee growth in annual prize funds to its membership for the next five years, all above the record 2022 levels", according to a news release from the tours. "This move will significantly enhance the meritocracy that has successfully served the professional game on both sides of the Atlantic for more than 50 years," said Keith Pelley, European Tour chief executive officer. "Today's announcement strengthens both tours for the betterment of both memberships..." "I passionately believe that this move is the right thing for our players, our tour, our fans and the game of golf in general." —AFP

## DeChambeau: Saudi LIV Golf critics should 'move on' from 'bad'

**LOS ANGELES:** Bryson DeChambeau says he understands criticism of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series over human rights issues, but said Tuesday people need to "move on" from past "bad" Saudi actions. The 2020 US Open champion spoke ahead of Thursday's kickoff of the upstart tour's first US event and second overall at Pumpkin Ridge in North Plains, Oregon. Asked about concerns over the new circuit's financial backers, the 28-

## MLB suspends 12 for roles in Angels, Mariners brawl

**NEW YORK:** Major League Baseball has announced suspensions for 12 people in the wake of Sunday's benches-clearing brawl between the Los Angeles Angels and Seattle Mariners. The punishments imposed included three members of the visiting Mariners and nine members of the Angels and for some began with games on Monday.

Seattle outfielder Jesse Winker received a seven-game ban while shortstop J.P. Crawford was issued a five-game suspension and outfielder Julio Rodriguez got two games. Angels interim manager Phil Nevin was hit with a 10-game ban and Anthony Rendon, an injured third baseman who entered the melee despite an arm in a cast, earned a five-game suspension and will not be allowed on the bench for the next seven games.

Angels pitchers Ryan Tepera and Andrew Wantz were each given three-game bans and pitcher Raisel Iglesias was handed a two-game suspension. Among Angels staff, assistant pitching coach Dom Chiti was banned for five games, catching coach Bill Haselman for one game and both bench coach Ray Montgomery and translator Manny Del Campo for two games.

Seattle's three players, all ejected from Sunday's 2-1 road loss to the Angels, will appeal the punishments, with the team being told it will be allowed to stagger the suspensions to reduce how badly they will be shorthanded. The Mariners already

## Lyon bags five in spin battle

**GALLE:** Nathan Lyon's five-for helped Australia bowl out Sri Lanka for 212, before the hosts hit back with three wickets in a fast-moving opening Test on Wednesday. The tourists reached 98 for three at stumps after Sri Lankan spinner Ramesh Mendis struck twice, including David Warner's key wicket for 25, on a turning pitch at the picturesque Galle stadium. Steve Smith was run out on six after a mix up with opener Usman Khawaja, unbeaten on 47, and returned to the pavilion waving his hands in dismay. Khawaja and fellow left-hander Travis Head, on six, were batting with Australia still trailing by 114 runs in their first innings.

Mendis, an off-spinner, trapped Warner lbw after the left-handed opener hit five boundaries in an attacking stay at the wicket. Marnus Labuschagne was out on an attempted reverse sweep but it was Smith's wicket that brought the home crowd alive. The former captain was turned down midway for a quick single by Khawaja and failed to make the crease despite a desperate dive. Khawaja, who survived a missed stumping by wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella, kept up the fight till close of play.

Earlier, Dickwella made a defiant 58 before

year-old American said people need to look at the good things LIV Golf could bring.

"I understand people's decisions on their comments and whatnot. But as it relates to me, I have made my own decision," DeChambeau said. "Golf is a force for good and I think as time goes on, hopefully people will see the good they are doing and what they are trying to accomplish rather than looking at the bad that has happened before. I think moving on from that is important and going and continuing to move forward in a positive light is something that could be a force for good for the future of the game."

Saudi money is backing the richest prizes in golf history with \$25 million at stake in this week's 54-hole tournament. It has lured a number of US PGA Tour stars despite bans for those who jump to LIV Golf. Asked about concerns with Saudi involvement, four-time major winner Brooks Koepka



**ANAHEIM:** The Seattle Mariners and the Los Angeles Angels clear the benches after Jesse Winker #27 of the Seattle Mariners charged the Angels dugout after being hit by a pitch in the second inning at Angel Stadium of Anaheim. —AFP

have three top batters on the injured list and cannot add to their 40-man roster to replace suspended players.

Winker said the Angels' manager Nevin and injured infielder Rendon fanned the flames after both teams were tense over batters being hit by opposing pitchers over two days. "If the guy in the cast and their manager don't talk, nothing happens."

the Sri Lankan innings folded in the third session following the hosts' decision to bat first at the start of the two-match series. Lyon, who bagged his 20th five-wicket haul in Tests, combined with fellow spinner Mitchell Swepson, a leg-spinner who took three wickets, to rattle the opposition batting. Fast bowlers Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc struck early with a wicket each as Sri Lanka took lunch at 68-2. The spinners soon took charge on a pitch traditionally known to assist the slow bowlers.

The left-handed Dickwella counter-attacked during his 59-ball stay at the crease and put on key partnerships, including a 54-run stand with Mendis, who made 22, for the seventh wicket. Dickwella reached his fifty off 42 balls in the second session but Lyon finally got him out, also sending back Mendis after tea. Lyon got his fifth wicket in Lasith Embuldeniya and Swepson, who was on a hat-trick denied by Dickwella, ended the innings after 59 overs.

Angelo Mathews also contributed to the Sri Lankan total with his 39 and stood with Dickwella in a 42-run stand broken by Lyon. Sri Lanka are bowling with four spinners and a lone fast bowler in Asitha Fernando. Debutant leg-spinner Jeffrey Vandersay bowled three overs. The island nation, which won the one-day international series against Australia 3-2, is battling an unprecedented economic crisis, with people across the country struggling to pay for food, fuel and other necessities. —AFP

said, "We're here to play golf. We're excited about it. We're going to go out there, put on the best show we can."

American Pat Perez, also making his LIV debut this week, replied, "I don't have any concerns. I'm playing golf. This group has provided me an opportunity to play golf and have a different schedule and that's my only concern. I understand the topics you're trying to bring up, and they're horrible events, but I'm here to play golf. That's my deal."

Players said a smaller schedule, only eight events this year, and richer purses were major reasons they made the jump to LIV Golf. "I wanted to spend more time with my children," said 2018 Masters winner Patrick Reed. "I wanted to be a dad. And to have an opportunity where I can play with some of the top players in the world. The reason why we're able to do that is because our purses are higher." —AFP

But they were talking, and I didn't want to talk," Winker said. "As far as I'm concerned, it's done." Nevin received the toughest punishment only 19 games into his stint as interim manager. "What's done is done. Yesterday's over and done with," Nevin said. Wantz received three games for intentionally throwing at Winker in the second inning and will not appeal. —AFP

## Roglic insists Jumbo twin front can deliver Tour de France win

**COPENHAGEN:** Tour de France title challengers Primoz Roglic and Jonas Vingegaard of Jumbo Visma believe their team's two-leader strategy can finally deliver cycling's most treasured title after consecutive narrow defeats. Roglic and Vingegaard came second to arch-rival Tadej Pogacar in 2020 and 2021 respectively, but said on Wednesday UAE Team Emirates' 23-year-old Slovenian can be beaten by their united front.

"As long as we work together, doing as good as possible together, we believe that we can beat him," Roglic said two days before the 109th edition of the 21-day race starts with three stages in Denmark. Roglic pulled out in week one last year after a fall and on Wednesday denied feeling any threat from his junior partner Vingegaard who shone in his absence. "We make each other stronger. When you have strong individuals around, the whole team gets stronger," said the 32-year-old triple Vuelta a Espana winner.

Vingegaard, a modest former fish-factory worker, said he and Roglic enjoyed going for a beer together. "Primoz and I are good friends also out of bike racing," said the 25-year-old who was born and raised in the far north of Denmark in the small community of Hillerslev. "But it is totally different from last year. Last year I came to the Tour as a helper. And now I am one of the leaders of the biggest race in the world." Both Roglic and Vingegaard spoke about it being crucial to survive the first week, although team boss Merijn Zeeman took issue with that notion. "I don't like the term surviving because we are not afraid. We stay on the bike and stay upfront," Zeeman said of Jumbo's tendency to race from the front. "Surviving sounds like we are not sleeping at night because we are afraid of the first week."

He described the decision to head up the team with two strong lead riders as the best tactically. "They are both in really, really good shape and close to each other," Zeeman said of his two leaders. "In the best scenario, both of them are better than Pogacar. But there is a strong possibility that is not going to happen. It's not a secret that Pogacar is the big favourite. We need everybody to be at his top level and we definitely need a two-leader strategy. —AFP

Sports

# Remaining WCup tickets to go on sale next week

## 1.8 million tickets sold in the first two batches of sales

DOHA: The remaining tickets for this year's World Cup in Qatar will be available on a first-come, first-served basis from next week, FIFA said on Wednesday. About 1.8 million tickets were sold in the first two batches of sales, FIFA said, without saying how many are now available. Qatar will host the first World Cup in the Middle East from November 21 to December 18 at eight stadiums in and around the capital, Doha.

The latest tickets will go on sale online from July 5 at 12pm Doha time until 12pm on August 16, FIFA said in a press release. "Huge worldwide interest is anticipated in the new sales period," the world body said. Officials said three million tickets are available in total, including those allocated to sponsors.

Last week, the World Cup's chief organizer Hassan Al-Thawadi said 1.2 million tickets had been sold so far. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said there were five million ticket requests just for the final at the 80,000-seat Lusail stadium. Doha, with a population of about 2.4 million and limited accommodation, is bracing itself for a huge influx of visitors for the 32-team tournament. Last month, Qatar announced scores of daily shuttle flights from neighboring Gulf countries, allowing fans to stay elsewhere and fly in to watch games.

### World Cup fans

Meanwhile, Qatar said on Tuesday that World Cup fans have "a lot of options" with more than 100,000 rooms currently available and tens of

thousands more expected by the tournament's kickoff. Some football supporters have expressed concern that they have been unable to find accommodation in line with their budget for the World Cup, which runs from November 21 to December 18. Prices range from 300 Qatari rials (just over \$80) to several thousand dollars per night.

Qatar has so far taken more than 25,000 bookings, said Omar Al-Jaber, the official in charge of accommodation for the tournament's organizing committee, specifying that he was talking about "bookings, not rooms or nights". "If you go through our website, you will find a lot of options," he told reporters on a tour of an available apartment in Doha. "And if you don't find it today, you need to check tomorrow or after tomorrow... because... we add more inventory to this portal."

"More than 100,000 rooms (are) available as of today," he said. "If we go to November, maybe we'll reach more than 130,000 rooms or 140,000 rooms." Supporters normally find accommodation themselves for such tournaments. But Qatar - set to host the most geographically concentrated World Cup in history and with limited hotel capacity - is seeking to channel supporters through an official platform that is reserved for ticket holders and managed by the tournament's organizers.

Eighty-five percent of accommodation - whether permanent or temporary - is now complete and the remainder will be finished by a "deadline" of end-August, according to Jaber.



DOHA: Photo shows a view of a gym facility at the Centara Hotel, which will host fans during the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup. —AFP

The country will be closed to visitors without match tickets during the course of the tournament, Jaber said. As of Tuesday, the US,

Mexico, United Kingdom, Argentina and India accounted for some of the biggest sources of reservations. —AFP

## Serena's career at a crossroads after Wimbledon defeat

LONDON: With her 41st birthday just months away and without a Grand Slam title since 2017, Serena Williams faces searching questions over her future after a painful first-round Wimbledon exit. The American was back on Centre Court on Tuesday after a year away from singles tennis but it was a miserable return to the scene of some of her greatest triumphs.

The 23-time major winner was cheered as she entered the court and supported throughout by a crowd desperate to see her recapture former glories against unseeded Harmony Tan of France. But she looked a pale shadow of her former self, making 54 unforced errors in an uncharacteristically sloppy display that ended with a tame forehand dumped into the net. Despite her lack of form and fitness, Serena, who lost 7-5, 1-6, 7-6 (10/7), looked to have the match in her grasp at various points.

She served for victory when 5-4 up in the decider and even in the tie-break raced into a 4-0 lead before her game fell apart. Putting a brave face on her defeat, the American said it was "definitely better than last year", when an ankle injury forced a tearful exit in her first-round match against Aliaksandra Sasnovich. The 40-year-old only returned to tennis last week, teaming up with Ons Jabeur in the doubles at Eastbourne. Asked if she might have played her final Wimbledon, she said she was unsure.

### Uncertain future

"I don't know," she said. "Who knows? Who knows where I'll pop up?" Questioned as to whether she would be happy if the defeat by 115th-ranked Tan was her final memory of Wimbledon, she said: "Obviously not. You know me. Definitely not. "But today I gave all I could do. Maybe tomorrow I could have given more. Maybe a week ago I could have given more. But today was what I could do." The former world number one, handed a wildcard to compete at the All England Club, first won Wimbledon way back in 2002.

But despite her bitter disappointment she



WIMBLEDON: US player Serena Williams returns the ball to France's Harmony Tan during their women's singles tennis match on the second day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships on June 28, 2022. —AFP

sounded motivated to play on, even though she is nearly twice as old as world number one Iga Swiatek. "It definitely makes me want to hit the practice courts because, you know, when you're playing not bad and you're so close," she said. The US Open, which starts in August, is firmly in her sights. Williams's win there in 1999 was her first singles Grand Slam triumph, launching her stellar career in the majors - which has featured periods of near-total dominance.

"When you're at home, the US Open, that being the first place I've won a Grand Slam, is something that's always super special," said Williams, who has won at Flushing Meadows six times. "Your first time is always special. There's definitely lots of motivation to get better and to play at home."

Williams's place in the pantheon of all-time greats is already assured but she remains agonizingly one singles title short of Margaret Court's all-time Grand Slam record of 24.

The American, who has also won multiple major doubles titles with her sister Venus, last won a Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in 2017, giving birth later that year to her daughter, Olympia. Since then she has been in four Grand Slam finals, including two at Wimbledon and two at the US Open, but has come up short each time. Williams, who has won 73 singles titles in her career overall, has plummeted to 1,204th in the world after her year out of the game. It must look a long way back to the top for a once-dominant player as she considers her future in the game. —AFP

## Judo coach gets nine years for throwing boy to death

TAIPEI: A Taiwanese judo coach who killed a seven-year-old pupil by repeatedly throwing him to the floor was sentenced to nine years in prison on Wednesday, prompting the boy's parents to demand a harsher punishment. The child, identified only by his family name Huang, was rushed to a hospital in central Taichung city in April last year after he was reportedly thrown 27 times by his coach Ho Tsung-le. He remained in a coma for 70 days with brain haemorrhages, and developed respiratory problems as well as multiple organ failure before his parents decided to take him off life support.

The Taichung district court on Wednesday handed down a nine-year prison sentence, saying Ho forced the boy to obey his instructions and "neglected the possibility that (the instructions) could lead to death". But the boy's parents vowed to appeal the "light" sentencing and said the coach has never shown any remorse. "I think it's too light, it should be a life for a life. His attitude is really terrible. He's never admitted to any wrongdoing and blamed it on my child," the boy's father told reporters.

According to a court statement, Ho instructed the boy to practice throwing with a much more experienced classmate, despite knowing that he was unfamiliar with basic judo movements. After Huang resisted the orders and said "the coach is a big idiot", Ho used multiple throwing techniques on the child, including a shoulder throw. When the boy complained of a bad headache, the coach said he was "faking it" and went on to throw him a dozen more times, causing him to vomit, the statement said.

After getting other pupils to clean the vomit from the floor, Ho continued to throw the child a few more times until he collapsed completely on the floor, it added. The boy's uncle reportedly attended the class but failed to stop the coach. Local media cited the boy's family as saying he was thrown about 27 times. The court statement said his head repeatedly hit the floor but did not specify how many times. "He carried out the extremely inappropriate training measures that caused Huang to sustain injuries and unfortunately die at a young age," the court said. —AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

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

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707	Kaifan	24849807
Rawda	22517733	Shamiya	24848913
Adaliya	22517144	Shuwaikh	24814507
Khaldiya	24848075	Abdullah Salem	22549134
		Nuzha	22526804
		Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
		Qadsiya	22515088
		Dasmah	22532265

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Mohmed Munsif holder of Passport No. U0748866 do hereby change my name to Mohammed Munsif (as Given name) Fayyaz Surve (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known by the name Mohammed Munsif Fayyaz Surve and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C 2014) 30/06/2022

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WIMBLEDON: Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis during their men's singles tennis match on the third day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships on June 29, 2022. —AFP

## Sweet 16 for Djokovic as Wimbledon seeds crash

### Second seed Kontaveit knocked out of Wimbledon

LONDON: Defending champion Novak Djokovic reached the Wimbledon third round for the 16th time on Wednesday as potential semi-final opponent Casper Ruud crashed out. Top seed Djokovic brushed aside 79th-ranked Thanasi Kokkinakis of Australia 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 and will face Serbian compatriot Miomir Kecmanovic for a last-16 place.

Third seed and French Open runner-up Ruud was knocked out by 112th-ranked Ugo Humbert, 3-6, 6-2, 7-5, 6-4. "I'm very happy with my performance. I started very well, solid from the back of the court," said Djokovic, who is looking to join Pete Sampras as a seven-time Wimbledon champion. "I made him work for every point and worked him around the court," added the 20-time major winner.

Kokkinakis had likened Djokovic to a "brick wall" before the match. "It was one-way traffic. I got chopped today," said the 26-year-old Australian after his Centre Court torment. In the women's event, second seed Anett Kontaveit lost 6-4, 6-0 to Germany's Julie Niemeier as the Estonian endured another Grand Slam to forget. Kontaveit has made the quarter-finals of a major just once in 29 attempts. Ninth seed and 2017 champion Garbine Muguruza also exited in her delayed first-round clash, losing 6-4, 6-0 to Belgium's Greet Minnen.

#### 'Amazing support'

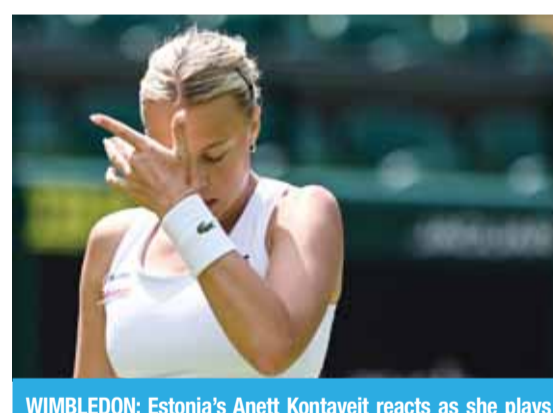
Lesia Tsurenko came out on top in three sets over

Ukrainian compatriot Anhelina Kalinina to make the third round for the second time. Tsurenko, ranked at 101, proudly wore a ribbon in the colors of Ukraine on her shirt. "It was a big court. Two Ukrainian players but a lot of people were watching us. We felt amazing support," said Tsurenko after her 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 win.

"Today on the way from hotel to the club, we got a driver," she added. "She has taken two people from Ukraine into her house. 'I think it's amazing when people help Ukrainians so much.'" Later Wednesday, two-time champion Andy Murray puts his 8-0 record against John Isner on the line in their second-round clash. Former number one Murray, now down at 52 in the world, needed four sets to defeat Australia's James Duckworth on Monday.

At one point, the British star dropped in an underarm serve to carve out a winning point, much to the delight of the Centre Court crowd. "I don't know why some people find it disrespectful," said Murray. Despite his losing record against Murray, 37-year-old Isner has never played the Briton on grass. He is confident he has the weapons at his disposal, having fired 54 aces to knock out qualifier Enzo Couacaud on Monday. "I'm older than Andy, I'm no spring chicken, but I work hard," said the American, who stands 6 feet 10 inches tall.

Isner has now served 13,688 aces in Tour-level matches during his career—just 40 behind the record of



WIMBLEDON: Estonia's Anett Kontaveit reacts as she plays against Julie Niemeier during their women's singles tennis match on the third day of the 2022 Wimbledon Championships on June 29, 2022. —AFP

13,728 held by Ivo Karlovic. Isner was one of 13 American men to reach the second round, the most since 1995. Spanish teen sensation and fifth seed Carlos Alcaraz aims for a place in the last 32 for the first time when he meets Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands. Britain's US Open champion Emma Raducanu tackles France's Caroline Garcia, who collected her third grass-court title at Bad Homburg last week. —AFP



VIENNA: In this file photo, Brazilian former Formula One pilot Nelson Piquet (right), French former Formula One pilot Jean Alesi (center) and British Formula One pilot Lewis Hamilton (left) escort the coffin of late Austrian three-time Formula One world champion Niki Lauda as it's being carried out of the Stephansdom (St Stephen's Cathedral). —AFP

## Piquet apologizes for 'racist insult'

PARIS: Three-time Formula One world champion Nelson Piquet on Wednesday apologized "wholeheartedly" to Lewis Hamilton after using a racially offensive term to describe the Mercedes star. Hamilton said the "time has come for action" following Piquet's remarks, while Formula One and motorsport's governing body the FIA condemned the 69-year-old Brazilian. "I apologize wholeheartedly to anyone that was affected, including Lewis, who is an incredible driver, but the translation in some media that is now circulating on social media is not correct," Piquet said in a statement. Piquet, who won the world title in 1981, 1983 and 1987, 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. "What I said was ill thought out, and I make no defense for it, but I will clarify that the term used is one that has widely and historically been used colloquially in Brazilian Portuguese as a synonym for 'guy' or 'person' and was never intended to offend," said Piquet. "I would never use the word I have been accused of in some translations. I strongly condemn any suggestion that the word was used by me with the aim of belittling a driver because of his skin colour." Piquet is a supporter of Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, and was a chauffeur to him on the country's Independence Day last year. 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 US. Hamilton has also campaigned for LGBTQ+ rights and on environmental issues. —AFP



DOHA: A picture shows a view of the Al-Egla training facility in the capital Doha. —AFP

## WHO: Qatar can manage World Cup pandemic risk

GENEVA: The WHO voiced confidence Tuesday that hosts Qatar would successfully manage the COVID-19 risks at the 2022 football World Cup. There was no reason to think the pandemic risks would be higher at the November-December tournament than at other major events which

have passed off safely, the World Health Organization's emergencies director Michael Ryan said. "Properly managed mass gatherings that have the proper planning can be run very safely," he told a live interaction on the WHO's Facebook page.

"We've been working very closely with the authorities in Qatar on that as WHO, and providing advice as needed to them on how to run a safe World Cup. 'The public health authorities in Qatar have been very engaged... on the public health risk management of the World Cup. 'Overall, the risks are being very carefully managed.'" —AFP

## Kuwait's boxer wins silver medal

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Asia Boxing Champion Kuwait's Noura Qushaia Al-Mutairi won second place and the silver medal in 64kg Category of the International Women's Boxing Cup held in France and concluded on Tuesday. Al-Mutairi lost on points to her French opponent. Noura Al-Mutairi said she was happy with her third international medal - adding that she qualified for the final match with determination and hard work. "I was able to prove that Kuwait women can able showcase their best in various games," she said, adding that she will participate in the Portuguese International Women Boxing Championship which starts July 10th.



Noura Qushaia Al-Mutairi