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15-year iqama for investors; 10 years for property owners

5-year iqama limit for expats mulled as panel amends residency law

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's interior and defense committee yesterday approved sweeping amendments to the foreigners' residency law, under which investors would for the first time get residency for 15 years, while owners of real estate and children of Kuwaiti

women will get iqamas valid for 10 years. Rapporteur of the panel MP Saadoun Hammad said the committee discussed the government-sponsored amendments and approved them, and will send the report to the National Assembly.

The draft law, which must be approved by the National Assembly and signed by the government to become

effective, states that foreigners can get regular residency of up to five years, but they must leave the country if their iqama expires and their request for renewal is denied.

All foreigners who enjoy regular residence in Kuwait must not stay outside the country for more than six months, otherwise the residency will be can-

celled. Investors, owners of real estate and children of Kuwaiti women are all exempt from this condition. Domestic helpers however cannot stay outside the country for more than four months, otherwise their residency will become invalid.

The bill stipulates that the Cabinet will set out conditions under which

investors can obtain the 15-year residency, including the amount of investment. Under the new law, Kuwaiti women are all exempt from this condition. Domestic helpers however cannot stay outside the country for more than four months, otherwise their residency will become invalid. Foreign widows or divorcees of Kuwaiti husbands who have children can also sponsor themselves.

News in brief



SUAKIN, Sudan: This picture taken on May 25, 2022 shows a massive fire in this Red Sea port. — AFP

Massive blaze at Sudan port

KHARTOUM: Firefighters have contained a large blaze that erupted in a cargo area of the Sudanese Red Sea port of Suakin, the port's director said Thursday. The fire, which raged for hours, broke out in the cargo drop off area of the port on Wednesday sending plumes of acrid smoke into the sky. A port official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, had earlier described the damage as "catastrophic". — AFP

Lebanese pound hits record low

BEIRUT: The Lebanese pound hit a new low against the US dollar on the black market Thursday after a sharp drop that coincided with May 15 parliamentary elections. According to websites monitoring the exchange rate, the pound crashed below the symbolic threshold of 35,000 to the greenback, a historic low for the national currency. — AFP (See Page 8)

200+ monkeypox cases worldwide

STOCKHOLM: The number of confirmed cases of monkeypox worldwide has reached 219 outside of countries where it is endemic, according to an update released by the European Union's disease agency. The UK currently has the largest bulk of confirmed cases, 71. It is followed by Spain with 51 cases and Portugal, 37. Outside of Europe, Canada has 15 and the US has nine. — AFP

11 babies die in Senegal fire

TIVAOUANE, Senegal: Eleven newborn babies perished in a hospital blaze in the western Senegalese city of Tivaouane late on Wednesday, president Macky Sall said. The tragedy occurred at Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh Hospital in the transport hub of Tivaouane, and was caused by "a short circuit", health minister Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr was quoted in media reports as saying. — AFP (See Page 6)

Qatar braces for 200K daily World Cup passengers

DOHA: Qatar expects up to 200,000 air passengers a day during the World Cup, authorities said Thursday, with airlines across the Gulf organizing scores of shuttle flights to bring fans in. In a major operation to cope with the four-week long football tournament, Akbar Al-Baker, tourism minister and the Qatar Airways chief executive, said some routes to countries not involved in the 32-nation tournament would be halted and others reduced.

Baker said Qatar's Hamad International Airport and the older Doha International Airport would see capacity doubled to more than 200,000 people a day. With Qatar under mounting pressure to find room for fans, Saudia, Kuwait Airways, flydubai and Oman Air will organize more than 160 daily shuttle flights from Nov 20 to bring supporters on one-day trips to see matches.

Officials estimate that more than 20,000 fans could come in each day on shuttles from Gulf neighbors. Saudia chief executive Ibrahim Koshy said the

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One dead in Iran defense research unit 'accident'

TEHRAN: Iran said Thursday an engineer was killed in an "accident" at a defense research unit in an area near Tehran that hosts a military complex previously

Boeing Starliner completes key mission to ISS

WASHINGTON: Boeing's Starliner capsule returned to Earth Wednesday in the final step of a key uncrewed test flight to prove itself worthy of providing rides for NASA astronauts to the International Space Station. The gumdrop-shaped spaceship landed in a puff of sand at 4:49 pm local time (2249 GMT) in the New Mexico desert, wrapping up a six-day mission crucial to restoring

Is Ukraine the attack helicopter's grave?

PARIS: Is the war in Ukraine sounding the death knell for attack helicopters? The large number destroyed has sparked a debate among experts over whether the aircraft are under-performing or being used poorly by Russian forces. Saturated with



DOHA: Akbar Al-Baker (third left), Qatar's Tourism Minister and CEO of Qatar Airways, gives a press conference regarding preparations for the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup on May 26, 2022. — AFP (See Page 2)

scrutinized by the UN nuclear watchdog. The Wednesday evening incident came days after a colonel in the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military, was shot dead near his home in east Tehran.

Iran's arch foe the Zionist entity told the United States it was behind the operation, The New York Times reported. Iranian officials had blamed agents of the US and its allies for the "assassination", the most high profile inside Iran since 2020. Iran's defense ministry said it was investigating the "accident" at the

research unit in the Parchin area, southeast of the capital Tehran.

"On Wednesday evening, in an accident that took place in one of the research units of the defense ministry in the Parchin area, engineer Ehsan Ghad Beigi was martyred and one of his colleagues injured," the ministry said in a short statement. "Investigations into the cause of this accident are underway." State media had earlier reported that one person was killed and another injured in an "industrial

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Boeing's reputation after past failures.

"Just a beautiful touchdown in White Sands this evening," said an announcer on a NASA live feed, as ground control reacted with applause, and a recovery team raced to the landing site. Orbital Flight Test-2 (OFT-2) was the last hurdle for Starliner to clear before it carries humans in another test flight due to take place by the end of this year. If that succeeds, the spaceship will begin regular service.

Addressing reporters at a post-touchdown briefing, NASA's Steve Stich, who oversees the commercial crew program, summed up: "We have a few things to work on...but I don't really see any show-stoppers. We really do have the crewed flight test next on our focus."

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WHITE SANDS, New Mexico: Boeing and NASA teams work around Boeing's CST-100 Starliner spacecraft after it landed at White Sands Missile Range's Space Harbor on May 25, 2022. — AFP

anti-aircraft defenses, both long-range systems and short-range missiles that can be carried and launched by a soldier (Manpads), the skies above Ukraine are deadly for helicopters.

The numerous videos on social media of Russian helicopter gunships being shot down are very public evidence of the extent of the losses. Russia has lost at least 42 helicopters since its February 24 invasion and Ukraine seven, according to specialist blog Oryx, which has recorded material losses from photographs and videos taken from the battlefields.

Attack helicopters were designed to aid troops and tanks on the battlefield.

They are armored themselves and heavily armed, but as the conflict shows, they too are extremely vulnerable. Experts are divided as to why. "Since those early days of the war, the air defenses of both sides have had a clear deterrent effect on helicopter operations," according to Sash Tusa, an aerospace and defense analyst at Britain-based Agency Partners.

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Local



Crown Prince sends greetings to Amir

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable from his brother His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in which he greeted him on returning back to the country safely after his private leave. His Highness the Crown Prince praised God Almighty for His Highness the Amir's safe return, and wished him good health and the country of Kuwait further security and stability. Replying to the cable, His Highness the Amir thanked the Crown Prince for his kind sentiments and asked God for further development and prosperity for the country. —KUNA

Central Bank and IBS promote education, capacity building

Program aims to develop executive leaders in Kuwait banks

KUWAIT: Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Basel A Al-Haroon said Thursday that CBK will continue supporting the talented cadres to play an effective role in backing the national economy. The CBK and the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS), in cooperation with local banks, will continue to promote education and capacity building through IBS training programs, including the Kafa'a initiative, to back economic growth, he said.

Al-Haroon, also Board Chairman of the IBS, made the comments in a ceremony to honor the graduates of a virtual executive program of Harvard Business School. The program, titled "Leading in a World Transformed," aims to develop executive leaders in the Kuwaiti banks and is a part of Kafa'a, a CBK initiative sponsored by the Kuwaiti banks and organized and executed by IBS.

In his speech during the ceremony, Al-Haroon, congratulated the graduates, and called on them to continue learning to keep abreast with the accelerated developments in the banking and financial industry. On his part, IBS Director-General Prof. Yaqoub Al-Rifai appreciated the cooperation between the institute and Harvard Business School over the past thirteen years. Both sides jointly developed diverse training programs, which contributed to the development and qualification of dozens of executives and middle management in Kuwait and the region.

Prof. Al-Rifai spoke highly of "the great support" provided to IBS by the CBK and Kuwaiti banks, according to a press release from the CBK. A number of participants in the program also spoke about their rich experience in this program, the knowledge

they obtained, and they expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the support of the CBK, IBS and their employers for investing in them. Kafa'a initiative has eight programs, covering a range of specializations and targeting different areas. The initiative aims to build up the financial and banking institutions cadres in Kuwait with a strong national workforce capable of leading the industry.

Oil price up

The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by \$1.30 to \$118.53 per barrel on Tuesday after it was at \$117.23 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Thursday. At the global level, the Brent crude went up by 47 cents to \$114.03 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by 56 cents to \$110.23 pb. —KUNA



Gulf Arab forces boost defense cooperation

RIYADH: Military chiefs from across the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) convened for talks in a bid to ratchet up defense cooperation, the bloc said on Wednesday. The talks examined common plans to bolster military cooperation between the region's armed forces, said a GCC statement, highlighting the gathering as part of routine talks involving Gulf Arab military chiefs.

In another development, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met on Wednesday with the

Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha on the sidelines of the inaugural of US-OIC Strategic Dialogue. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement that Blinken underscored "the importance of the OIC's role as a valued partner in deescalating conflicts and working to protect human rights."

The statement added Blinken thanked Taha for the OIC's "sustained efforts on issues of global priority, including Afghanistan and countering violent extremism." Blinken reaffirmed the US' commitment "to expanding collaboration with the OIC to advance joint priorities, including women's empowerment, minority rights, religious freedom, climate change, health issues, strengthening economic ties and expanding educational and cultural exchanges," the statement noted. —KUNA

Kuwait military partakes in 'Dragon Group' meeting

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti military took part in the annual Dragon Group meeting in the United Kingdom alongside top military brass from the GCC states, Jordan, Iraq, and Britain. A statement from

the Kuwaiti Defense Ministry indicated Thursday that Kuwait's Army Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Fahad Al-Turiji and the accompanying delegation represented Kuwait at the meeting.

During the event, the involved parties discuss ways to enhance military and defense cooperation in various fields. On the sidelines of the event, Major General Al-Turiji met with the UK's Chief of the Defense Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, discussing with him ways to develop ties between the two militaries. The Dragon Group is an annual meeting of Defense Chiefs from the Middle East. The name of the meeting came from the group's first gathering on the Royal Navy destroyer HMS Dragon in 2018. —AFP

Kuwait has 'golden opportunity' to advance economic reforms

KUWAIT: The World Bank's regional director for the Arab Gulf region Issam Abu Suleiman affirmed on Thursday, that Kuwait currently has a "golden opportunity" to push economic reforms forward in light of the rise in oil prices and the improvement of state finances in the short term.

Abu Sulaiman said in an exclusive interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of issuing the bank's report on the latest developments for the Arab Gulf states that Kuwait could move more towards the sustainability of its economy by quickly starting to restructure important economic sectors and rationalizing the subsidies directed to citizens so that they hit the most needy of them and

reduce them to those with high incomes, which leads to their sustainability in the future.

He added that current oil prices help in the short term. The Kuwait government aims to inject investments into the "green economy" that is not dependent on oil, so that the state benefits from the huge jump in oil prices by starting innovative, creative economic projects that ensure the diversity of industries. Abu Suleiman explained that "creating a more sustainable green economy is a challenge that is not easy," but Kuwait is able to pass it "easily" due to its strong capital that enables it to pump investments and build an infrastructure.

The World Bank is "fully ready" to assist the Kuwaiti government in transforming from an oil-based economy at a rate of more than 90 percent to an advanced green economy in which carbon emissions are reduced "and in which public funds are sustainable to save them for future generations, and this is something that is not strange for the Arab Cooperation Council countries. Abusli predicted the extent to which Kuwait's credit rating had improved in light of the current high oil revenues and the soundness of the state's public finances. —KUNA



Ma'n Razouqi and Akbar Al-Baker with senior officials.

Kuwait Airways partners with Qatar Airways to fly WCup fans

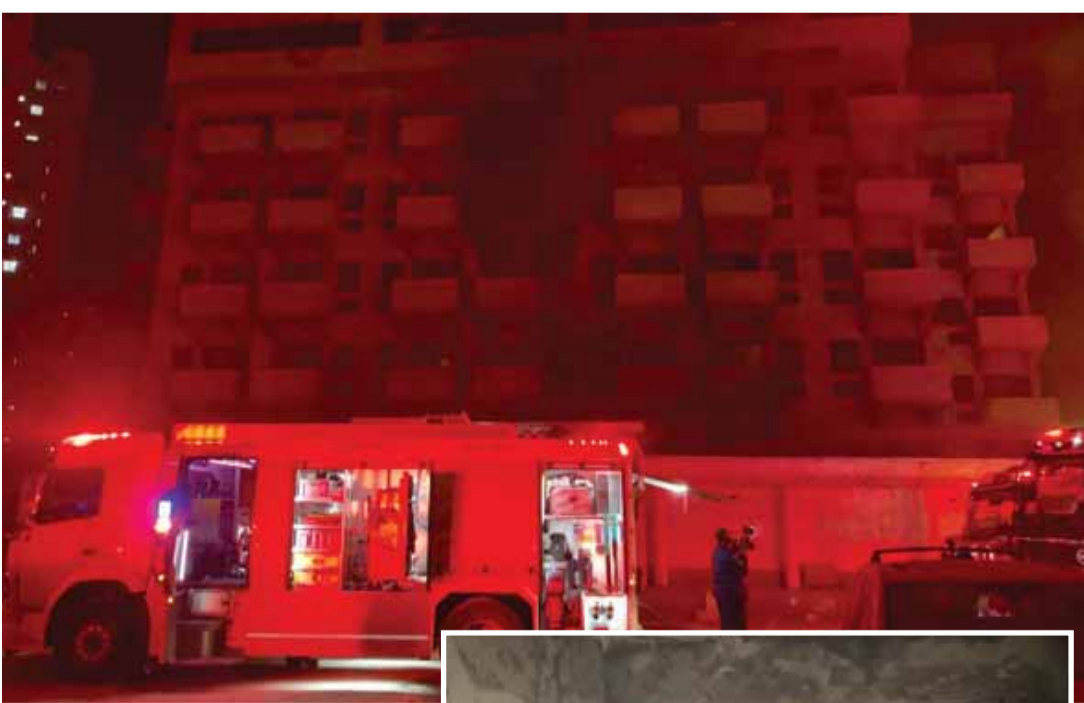
KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways, the national flag carrier, signed a deal with its Qatari peer on Thursday to fly the football fans to and from Qatar during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Under the deal, KAC will operate 20 flights a day as from November 21, including 10 departures from Kuwait and 10 arrivals, KAC's Board Chairman Ali Al-Dakhan said in a press release.

"Those daily direct flights to and from the State of Qatar will be run around the clock to enable the football fans to enjoy the much-anticipated event," he noted. For his part, KAC CEO Ma'n Razouqi said the flights are scheduled to arrive in Qatar five hours ahead of the match and leave in the same day. "The flights will carry nearly 1,700 passengers a



KAC CEO Ma'n Razouqi presenting a memorial shield to Akbar Al-Baker, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive.

day," he said, noting that only the fans holding "the Fan ID" and a ticket for the match are entitled to book a KAC return ticket. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Salmiya, Hawally and Hilali fire stations responded to a fire in a Madian Hawally building. The fire was on the third floor of the six-storey building. Residents were evacuated as a precautionary measure, and the fire was put out. There were no injuries. Investigations are underway to determine the cause of fire.



KUWAIT: The delegation of Kuwait Fire Force headed by Chief Lt General Khalid Al-Mikrad and Kuwait Liaison officer with the United Nations office for disaster risk reduction Lt Colonel Mushari Hassan participated in the 7th World Forum being held in Indonesia in the presence of Indonesia President Joko Widodo. Lt General Al-Mikrad met (on the sidelines of the conference) with the head of United Nations office for disaster risk reduction Mami Mizutori to discuss related topics that aimed at reducing the risks of disasters and the importance of early warning.

Local

EU-GCC trade, investment growing steadily, Kuwait's ambassador says

EU - the GCC's second biggest trading partner

BRUSSELS: Trade and investment have steadily grown between the 27-member European Union and the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) since the 1988 Cooperation Agreement between the two sides, according to Kuwait's ambassador to Belgium, the EU and NATO, Jassem Al-Budaiwi. "Despite the dual challenges of Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic the recovery is now blazing ahead and set to only increase to even greater levels" he said at an event organized by the Arab-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce (ABLCC) on Wednesday.

Al-Budaiwi was the guest speaker at a luncheon conference hosted by the ABLCC on the topic "Belgium and EU Investment Opportunities in Kuwait and the GCC: My 6 years-experience". He noted that from a trade and investment point of view, the six GCC countries, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, represent an important region to the EU and together are the Union's 10th largest trading partner.

The EU is the GCC's second biggest trading partner, he noted and stressed, "There is so much potential, so much room for further growth and investment." "The GCC States have clearly demonstrated their courage and trust by continuing to invest in European companies and projects," said the Kuwaiti ambassador, but lamented that "European companies hesitate when deciding to invest in Kuwait and other GCC countries for a number of reasons, many of which are unjustified."

"It is time to ramp up the confidence building and ensure that the future growth of investment and trade between the GCC and the EU is not



Ambassador Jassem Al-Budaiwi speaking at the luncheon



one sided," he said. Al-Budaiwi urged for new collaborative projects between the two regional blocks to tackle global challenges such as, digitization, green energy, Artificial Intelligence, food security, healthcare and education. Many of the GCC countries, Kuwait included, have grand plans for the future through a number of groundbreaking initiatives that offer big opportunities for European companies.

He also announced that the economic partnership between Kuwait and Belgium would witness a major boost in the near future as a proposal, submitted by the Belgian side and currently being studied by the Kuwaiti authorities, is in the works.

Al-Budaiwi drew attention to two recent important developments that will lead to further strengthening of EU-GCC ties. Last week, the EU released a document entitled the "Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf" which covers trade, investment, security, political energy, tourism, and many other topics.

The European Commission recently proposed to lift Schengen visa requirement for nationals of Kuwait and Qatar. "Hopefully this announcement will be closely followed by the remaining GCC countries obtaining a similar proposal. This is a game changer," he added. On his part, Qaisar Hijazin, ABLCC secretary-general, in his introduc-

tory remarks said the cooperation between the Chamber and Arab embassies in Brussels played an important role in boosting contacts between the business communities from both sides.

"Indeed our chamber acts as a bridge between the business communities to develop economic and trade ties and cooperation between both sides," he said. He estimated that Arab-EU trade exchanges were worth 290 billion euros (USD 309 billion) annually. EU and Belgian diplomats, Arab Ambassadors and diplomats accredited in Brussels, representatives of Belgian and European companies and think-tanks attended the lunch. — KUNA

Zain participates in first Envirathon

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, recently took part in the nation's first environmental marathon 'Envirathon' held at Shuwaikh beach. The event featured volunteers of all ages along with public and private sector officials, diplomats, and community members. Zain's participation in this volunteer initiative came in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards supporting environmental efforts.

Through its well-focused strategy, the company is keen on supporting similar programs that pre-

serve the environment, call for climate change action, and contribute to reflecting a positive image of the Kuwaiti community. Envirathon is considered the first environmental marathon of its kind in Kuwait and aimed at empowering youth and children to voice their opinion on environmental crises and climate change in a fun and active way. Students from across Kuwait's schools were invited to join in cleaning Shuwaikh beach along with their families, public and private sector officials, diplomats, and community members.

Through its 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. The company is well aware of the urgent need to

tackle the climate crisis the world is facing today.

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. Zain is keen on launching such initiatives that contribute to preserving Kuwait's environment, as well as encouraging volunteering, recycling, and taking part in social activities for all age groups within the community. The company will spare no efforts to contribute to spreading positive awareness for a better environmental culture in the society.



Zain recognized for taking part in the event.

Kuwait, Brazil officials discuss cooperation

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Mohammad Al-Fares met on Thursday with Brazilian Secretary for Strategic Affairs Admiral

Flavio Rocha and the accompanying delegation. According to the Cabinet Secretariat, Dr Al-Fares — also state minister for cabinet affairs — discussed with Rocha during the meeting ways to bolster bilateral relations. Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraian, Deputy Chairman of the Board and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and officials from the Foreign Ministry, Kuwait Investment Authority, and state officials were present at the meeting. — KUNA



Zain recognized for taking part in the event.

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Marina Wave is pictured in the photo. Marina Waves offers an outstanding and spectacular view of both the sea and the city.

— Photo by Tasneem Ali Asgar Paliwala



KUWAIT: Commerce Ministry closed down three domestic helpers' offices for not complying with the amount set in the Ministerial Decision 33/2021. The closure came during the usual inspections to make sure the ministry decisions are complied with.

Dasman Diabetes Institute organizes lecture series

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), recently held a two-day lecture series titled "Scientific Writing and Clinical Methodology". The lectures were presented by Prof Abe Fingerhut MD, FACS (hon), FRCPs (g), FRCS (Ed) hon Co-Editor-in-Chief of Annals of Laparoscopic and Endoscopic Surgery (ALES). During the lectures, Prof Fingerhut showcased various topics including, but not limited to: Systematic Approach to Writing and Publishing, General Principles for Structure and Content, Statistics and Study Design, Critical Appraisal and Special Aspects of Writing a Surgical Paper.

The lectures were well attended by many internal and external researchers, in addition to academics, scientists and doctors from Kuwait University, Ministry of Health and other institutions in Kuwait. Attendees were given certificates of attendance with CME credits. Holding such scientific lectures stems from the Institute's mission which is "To address the diabetes epidemic in Kuwait through focused diabetes, research, integrated prevention, training, education and treatment". It also incorporates the Institute's vision which is "To be the leading diabetes institute in the MENA region and to be recognized internationally".



KIB sponsors event, raises banking awareness

KUWAIT: As part of its plans to expand the scope of its pioneering and multifaceted social responsibility program, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored a ceremony that was recently held at the Saleh Shehab School campus, honoring the academic achievements and success achieved by its high school students. Besides supporting the school event, KIB took part in its activities to introduce them to the various and integrated banking services and products it offers, as part of its ongoing community engagement initiative to raise banking awareness, under the umbrella of the national awareness campaign, "Let's Be Aware."

On this occasion, the Senior Manager of External Communications at KIB, Fahad Hamed Al-Sarhan, commented: "Sponsoring such important event in the field of education stems from our belief in the importance of supporting the success of students,



Fahad Al Sarhan

seeing ourselves as more than just a banking institution, but a partner in life to our customers and an active corporate citizen. By utilizing our resources, we find it very necessary that we celebrate this level of excellence, in order to encourage our Kuwaiti students to maintain higher performance levels throughout their academic careers."

It serves to note that youth have shown great enthusiasm to learn more about "Let's Be Aware", through receiving major financial and banking information and useful advice from KIB staff at the Saleh Shehab achievements ceremony. KIB has been maintaining its presence at these events, as part of its community engagement efforts, which fall under its corporate slogan "Bank for Life". Through its approach to keeping channels of communication with the public continuously open by all means, KIB also aims to spread more banking awareness, including its ongoing support for "Let's Be Aware" campaign.

White Palace hosts high-ranking South Korean delegation

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah hosted at the White Palace a high-level South Korean business delegation, headed by South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha. The visiting delegation represented various sectors in South Korea. Sheikh Mubarak welcomed the delegation saying "Kuwait and South Korea have deep rooted relations, and there are certainly growing opportunities on means of boosting the bilateral trade, commercial and investment cooperation between the two countries in all domains and sectors, and much to learn

from the South Korean experience of its economic model for growth and development."

On his part, Ambassador Chung praised the friendly relations with Kuwait and said that "South Korea have a great desire to enhance business partnerships and alliances in trade and economic areas, moreover, there are ways to develop cooperation in new areas and sectors such as healthcare, consumer goods, and renewable energy."

Sheikh Mubarak emphasized "This visit by South Korean delegation highlights the importance of Kuwait market and its strategic location in the GCC Gulf region which offers opportunities to Korean companies looking to reach the Gulf markets. Sharing knowledge and strengthening our partnership with one of the world's biggest economies benefits Kuwait and the entire GCC Gulf region as well", wishing the visiting business delegation a successful and fruitful visit to Kuwait.





Four bombs kill at least 16 in Afghanistan

Eleven newborn babies perish in Senegal hospital blaze

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UVALDE, United States: People mourn as they attend a vigil for the victims of the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. —AFP

Texas town mourns school victims

America's worst school shooting in a decade

UVALDE, United States: Ryan Ramirez fought back tears at a Wednesday vigil as he spoke of his "lovable" 10-year-old daughter Alithia, an aspiring artist who was among the 19 schoolchildren killed in a cold-blooded shooting that has devastated a tight-knit community.

As mourners embraced and wept, relatives and friends of those murdered in the latest US school massacre gathered on the bleachers and on the dirt of a fairground arena in the small town of Uvalde. Some in the crowd of about 1,000 held portraits of the dead, others squeezed stuffed animals and drawings, each struggling to comprehend the unspeakable horror of the previous day.

"I'm just heartbroken right now," Ramirez told AFP and others as Alithia's mother hugged their other daughter. "She was a real good artist" and aspired to greatness, Ramirez said, flipping through a portfolio of Alithia's colorful paintings as well as birthday cards she drew for her mother.

"My daughter would want everybody that was involved to be strong, and keep it together. That's what we're trying to do." Religious figures offered prayers at the bilingual vigil, where Governor Greg Abbott gripped Uvalde's Mayor Ruben Nolasco in a long hug.

A grieving Esmeralda Bravo held a photograph of her granddaughter Nevaeh, one of those who died. "This has no explanation, my granddaughter did not deserve this," Bravo said quietly.

"She was a good little girl, very shy and very

pretty," she added. "It means so much to me to have this support from the community, but I would rather have my granddaughter here with me."

Hours earlier and blocks away, Aida Hernandez shed bitter tears as she left mass at the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic church. In the small house of worship off Uvalde's main street, the largely Hispanic congregation prayed for the victims of America's worst school shooting in a decade.

"My experience was of horror and pain. I knew the victims. I'm still in shock," said Hernandez, in her sixties. The town of 15,000 inhabitants, located 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the border with Mexico, was until 24 hours ago like every other small US town: a grid of streets dotted with shopping malls, gas stations and fast-food chains.

But on Tuesday everything changed, when an 18-year-old gunman sowed carnage at Robb Elementary School, killing 19 young children and two of their teachers.

The massacre plunged residents into both incomprehension and despair.

"When you teach and you're in the classroom, that's your job to protect them," said Hernandez, who taught at Robb Elementary until she retired two years ago. "They did more beyond what they were supposed to do."

'Too many times'

Rosie Buantel was equally grief-stricken — but outraged, too.

"I'm sad and I'm angry at our government, for not doing more about gun control," the woman in her fifties told AFP.

"We've gone through this one too many times. And still there's nothing done. They're still debating." Throughout the day, people in Uvalde made their way to a municipal center, where they could receive psychological support.

On the day of the shooting, many relatives and friends of the victims faced hours of anguished waiting to find out what happened to their loved ones.

In front of the municipal center, in the blazing midday Texas heat, groups of adults and children chatted, coming and going under the watchful gaze of police officers.

Volunteer psychologist Iveth Pacheco had traveled from San Antonio to provide support to those in need. "It's just one of those situations where you just have to be present," she said. "We have to be ready for the child whatever questions they have, and it's the same thing with the adults right now."

Young Alithia had similar questions last September when she lost a close classmate, Nico, in a car crash in Dallas, her father said.

She processed the grief in one of the few ways that made sense: through art.

The girl made a richly detailed drawing of Nico up in heaven, looking down at the friend he left behind. In Alithia's picture, "he was drawing her down there," Ramirez said. —AFP

Pakistan's ex-PM issues ultimatum on elections

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan on Thursday warned the government to stage fresh elections or face more mass protests, after leading thousands of supporters to the capital Islamabad in a showdown with his political rivals. His morning address was the culmination of a chaotic 24 hours which saw the capital blockaded and clashes break out between police and protesters across the country.

The government had attempted to prevent the convoy from reaching the capital by shutting down all entry and exit points around the city, but was forced to allow in protesters by an emergency Supreme Court order.

Since being removed from power through a no-confidence vote last month, cricket star turned politician Khan has held pressure on the country's fragile new coalition rulers by staging rallies, touting a claim he was ousted from office in a "foreign conspiracy".

"I want to give a message to this imported government to announce elections within six days. Dissolve the assemblies and call an election in June," he said to a crowd of thousands who later dispersed. He warned that he would return to the capital with his supporters next week if elections were not scheduled.

"We will not accept his dictation," prime minister Shehbaz Sharif told parliament on Thursday afternoon. "When elections are to be held, it will be decided by this house." "If he thinks he will blackmail us, he is mistaken."

Thousands of supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party heeded his call to march to the capital from nearby cities on Wednesday. But



ISLAMABAD: Ousted Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan (C) waves at his party supporters during a rally in Islamabad on May 26, 2022. —AFP

political analysts said Khan's attempt to stage a historic sit-in was a failure, with smaller numbers than expected hobbling his bargaining power. "With around 30,000 people, it was not a good idea to stay in Islamabad and face the powerful police that broke his momentum," said Qamar Cheema.

Tear gas

Confrontations erupted between police and protesters who attempted to remove roadblocks on key highways to join the convoy. Police repeatedly deployed tear gas to disperse crowds in the capital, as well as in the cities of Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said it was "deeply concerned by the highhandedness of law enforcement agencies" in disrupting the march. "The state's overreaction has triggered, more than it has prevented, violence on the streets," it tweeted.

The government had pledged to stop the protesters from entering the capital, calling the rally an attempt to "divide the nation and promote chaos". But as unrest was breaking out around the country, the Supreme Court granted permission for PTI to stage its rally on the edge of the city. —AFP

Taleban 'making women invisible' in Afghanistan

KABUL: The Taleban government's restrictions on women are aimed at making them "invisible" in Afghan society, a UN human rights observer said Thursday during a visit to the nation. Since the Taleban stormed back to power last year, they have imposed harsh restrictions on women and girls to comply with their austere vision of Islam.

Teenage girls have been shut out from secondary schools, while women have been forced from some government jobs and barred from travelling alone. This month Afghanistan's supreme leader and Taleban chief Hibatullah Akhundzada ordered women to cover up fully in public, including their faces.

These policies show a "pattern of absolute gender segregation and are aimed at making women invisible in the society", Richard Bennett, UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, told reporters in Kabul.

"The de facto authorities have failed to acknowledge the magnitude and gravity of the abuses being committed, many of them in their name," Bennett said. His comments came as Taleban fighters on Thursday broke up a women's protest calling for the reopening of secondary schools for girls.

"Angry Taleban forces came and dispersed us," Munisa Mubariz, an organiser of the rally, told AFP. In March the Taleban ordered all secondary schools for girls to shut, just hours after opening them for the first time since taking power in August. —AFP



QUEZON: Philippine President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr (left) poses with his certificate of proclamation as the country's president with Senate President Vicente Sotto III, as his mother and former first lady Imelda Marcos (2nd R) and Senator Imee Marcos-Manotoc look on at the House of Representatives in Quezon City, suburban Manila. —AFP

Philippines to uphold South China Sea ruling

MANILA: Philippine president-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr said Thursday he would uphold an international ruling against Beijing over the disputed South China Sea, insisting he would not let China trample on Manila's maritime rights. China claims almost all of the resource-rich waterway, through which trillions of dollars in trade passes annually, with competing claims from the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Beijing has ignored a 2016 decision by The Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration that declared its historical claim to be without basis. Outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte fostered warmer ties with his more powerful neighbour by setting aside the ruling in exchange for promises of trade and investment, which critics say have not materialised.

In his strongest comments yet on the longstanding source of tensions between the two nations, Marcos Jr said he would not "allow a single millimetre of our maritime coastal rights to be trampled upon".

"We have a very important ruling in our favour and we will use it to continue to assert our territorial rights. It is not a claim. It is already our territorial right," he told selected local media. "We're talking about China. We talk to China consistently with a firm voice."

But he added: "We cannot go to war with them. That's the last thing we need right now." Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said Beijing's position on the international ruling had not changed.

"China is willing to continue communication and dialogue with the Philippines to appropriately handle differences, and together uphold the peace and stability of the South China Sea region," Wang said.

Marcos Jr, popularly known as Bongbong, secured more than half of the votes in the May 9 election to win the presidency by a wide margin and cap a remarkable comeback for his family. His father and namesake ruled the Philippines for 20 years, presiding over widespread corruption and human rights abuses before he was ousted in 1986. —AFP

International

Eleven newborn babies perish in Senegal hospital blaze

Tragedy in Tivaouane comes after several other incidents at public health facilities

TIVAOUANE, Senegal: Eleven newborn babies perished in a hospital blaze in the western Senegalese city of Tivaouane late on Wednesday, president Macky Sall said. "I have just learned with pain and dismay about the deaths of 11 newborn babies in the fire at the neonatal department of the public hospital," Sall wrote on Twitter just before midnight (0000 GMT).

"To their mothers and their families, I express my deepest sympathy," he tweeted. The tragedy occurred at Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh Hospital in the transport hub of Tivaouane, and was caused by "a short circuit", health minister Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr was quoted in media reports as saying. The maternity unit was equipped to take care of 13 babies.

"At the time of the fire, there were 11, whom nurses were unable to save," the minister said. But according to the city's mayor, Demba Diop, "three babies were saved". "My son was christened yesterday. He was only nine days old. The maternity ward was full and I don't think there are any survivors," one unidentified mother told the news website, Dakaractu.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus tweeted that he was "beyond heartbroken with this tragic news. I'm sending my deepest condolences to the parents and families of the babies who lost their lives." "It is with horror and great pain that I learned of the death of 11 newborn babies at Tivaouane hospital. Let us pray for these innocent people who have disappeared. My deepest condolences to the bereaved parents," said former prime minister Abdoul Mbaye.



Fire caused by "a short circuit"

Newly inaugurated
According to local media, the Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh Hospital was newly inaugurated. Health minister Sarr, who had been in Geneva attending a meeting with the World Health Organization, said "an investigation is under way to see what happened".

The tragedy in Tivaouane comes after several other incidents at public health facilities in Senegal, where there is great disparity between urban and rural areas in healthcare services. In the northern town of Linguere in late April, a fire broke out at a hospital and four newborn babies were killed. The town's mayor cited an electrical malfunction in an air conditioning unit in the maternity ward.

The accident on Wednesday comes over a month after the nation mourned the death of a pregnant woman who waited in vain for a Caesarean section. The woman, named Astou Sokhna, had arrived at a hospital in the northern city of Louga in pain. The staff had refused to accommodate her request for a C-section, saying that it was not scheduled. She died April 1, 20 hours after arrival.

Sokhna's death caused a wave of outrage across the country over the dire state of Senegal's public health system, and health minister Sarr acknowledged two weeks later that the death could have been avoided. Three midwives-on duty the night Sokhna died-were sentenced on May 11 by the High Court of Louga to six months of suspended imprisonment for "failure to assist a person in danger" in connection to her case.

Amnesty International's Senegal director Seydi



TIVAOUANE, Senegal: Visitors stand in front of the Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh Hospital, where eleven babies died following an electrical fault, in Tivaouane, on May 26, 2022. —AFP

Gassama said his organisation had called for an inspection and upgrade for neonatology services in hospitals across Senegal after the "atrocious" death of the four babies in Linguere. With the new tragedy, Amnesty "urges the government to set up an independent commission of inquiry to determine responsibility and punish the culprits, no matter the level they are at in the state

apparatus", he tweeted.

Opposition lawmaker Mamadou Lamine Diallo also responded with outrage to the Tivaouane blaze. "More babies burned in a public hospital... this is unacceptable @MackySall," he said. "We suffer with the families to whom we offer our condolences. Enough is enough." —AFP

Party or not? Couples in Ukraine face wedding quandary

IRPIN, Ukraine: As wedding season gets under way in Ukraine despite months of war, couples are faced with a difficult choice-celebrate their unions in style or stay discreet so as not to upset anyone. At the wedding registry in Irpin, a town close to Kyiv that has been devastated by Russia's invasion, Ivan Khvatov, 39, and Olesya Khvatova, 41, celebrated their nuptials in restrained fashion.

There were no guests or witnesses present, the couple wore jeans and trainers and Wednesday's ceremony conducted by a registrar was over in minutes-just time for a kiss after signing the registry. "We didn't tell anyone about it," the groom told AFP. "First of all, a lot of people who evacuated at the start of the war have not come back... also people might tell us that now is not the time. Many people, including our friends, lost their homes. They might not understand," Khvatov said.

"Despite the war, we want to keep on living. We feel full of joy but we're trying to hide it." Irpin found itself on the front line in the weeks after Russia invaded on February 24 and lived under Russian occupation for a month.

Unlike in Kyiv, which has seen 3,800 weddings during the war, registry offices in the surrounding region shut down as Russian tanks advanced and many future brides fled across Europe. Men aged between 18 and 60 were eligible for military service and not allowed to leave.

In Irpin, the registry only re-opened on May 10. "Morally it was hard after what the town went through,"



BUCHA, Ukraine: Mykhailo and Anastasia Dewberry pose for their wedding pictures in front of a damaged building, after getting married at a nearby pentecostal church, in Bucha, northwest of Kyiv on May 26, 2022. —AFP

said Liana Samoylenko, head of the Irpin department of registration of civil status acts, which deals with both weddings and death notices. "Life is returning. And the weddings resuming bring back the hope that everything will be fine. These families that are being created will bring a new generation that will revive Ukraine," she said. Khvatov and Khvatova, who met at a glassware factory where they work, had been due to marry on March 17.

But, when the war began, Khvatova fled. She returned only when Russian troops withdrew and began focusing their attacks on the south and east of the country. Mykhaylo Dewberry, 26, and his bride Anastasia, 20, also fled during the Russian occupation of the area. —AFP

Berlusconi back on the rack over sex parties

ROME: Silvio Berlusconi dreamed of finishing his career as Italy's president, but the billionaire former premier is instead again facing the threat of criminal sanction over his notorious "bunga-bunga" sex parties. Milan prosecutors on Wednesday requested six years in jail for the 85-year-old for allegedly paying guests to lie about the parties in the third instalment of the so-called "Ruby" affair, named after the underage exotic dancer at the centre of the case.

Berlusconi denies wrongdoing, and even if convicted has little chance of going to jail due to a long appeals process and restrictions against imprisoning the elderly. Around 20 former guests of the parties at Berlusconi's sumptuous mansion near Milan are also on trial, accused of accepting money and gifts from the media mogul in return for their silence.

"These young women were assured that they would be OK both in terms of income, with a 2,500-euro (\$2,677) monthly payment, and for a roof, a house, accommodation," prosecutor Luca Gaglio told the court in his summing up on Wednesday. Previously, fellow prosecutor Tiziana Siciliano accused Berlusconi of hiring "sex slaves".

Young women who attended would later describe the events as sex fests, but Berlusconi always insisted they were nothing more than elegant, "convivial" dinner parties. Berlusconi's lawyers insist payments amounting to millions of euros were compensation for the reputational

damage suffered by the women from the scandal.

The former prime minister is among 29 people accused in the trial, including Karima El-Mahroug, the Moroccan teenager and dancer who used the name "Ruby", for whom prosecutors asked for five years in jail. The verdict is expected in the autumn.

'Politically motivated'

The "Ruby" investigations date back to El-Mahroug's arrest for theft in 2010 — and Berlusconi's intervention for police to release her-and each time Berlusconi has emerged victorious, eventually. He was sentenced to seven years in prison in 2013 for paying for sex with El-Mahroug, but the verdict was overturned on appeal after the judge said there was reasonable doubt he knew she was underage.

A second trial, named "Ruby-bis" (Ruby Two), ended in jail terms for Berlusconi's close allies for supplying young prostitutes. The Ruby-ter (Ruby Three) trials are spread out across several Italian cities, including in Siena, where Berlusconi was cleared last October of bribing a piano player to lie about the parties.

Berlusconi and his allies have long claimed the extensive legal proceedings against him in recent decades-he claimed in 2021 he had gone through 86 trials-are politically motivated. He has never spent any time behind bars but in 2013, with his first definitive conviction for tax fraud, he carried out community service in a care home for Alzheimer's patients.

Berlusconi was prime minister three times between 1994 and 2011 and remains active in politics, although his career is reaching its twilight. His Forza Italia party is part of Prime Minister Mario Draghi's coalition government but is languishing in the polls and his January bid to become Italy's president, a ceremonial but prestigious post, was an embarrassing failure. —AFP

Qatar braces for 200K daily World...

Continued from Page 1

airline would run at least 30 round trip flights each day from the cities of Riyadh and Jeddah, that could carry 10,000 fans. Flydubai would operate at least 30 return flights, Kuwait Airways 10 and Oman Air 24, Baker said.

All flights would be reserved for fans with World Cup tickets and who have carried out special registration, including biometric details. Baker promised "seamless" immigration and security processing that would see them treated as though they were arriving on a domestic flight. Qatar has predicted that 1.4 million people will visit the tiny Gulf state during the World Cup, and many fan

groups have expressed concerns about accommodation and air travel.

Baker said Qatar's civil aviation authorities were increasing airspace capacity so that the three runways at Hamad airport could operate "continuously" during the World Cup from November 21 to December 18. He said Qatar Airways would cut flights to destinations that are "irrelevant" to the World Cup, so that it could increase flights to countries taking part.

Some 70 per cent of Qatar Airways regular flights would see their times changed so that extra flights can be organized. The airports would have to handle charter flights and airlines that have asked to establish regular lines because of the World Cup. "There will be no room left (for incoming airlines), when you are tailor-making the capacity, for delays, for holding times," Baker warned. He said that "state of the art immigration systems" would be introduced to speed up the arrival of international passengers. — AFP

tions of key scientists that it has blamed on the Zionist entity. Zionist leaders have repeatedly refused to rule out military action to prevent Iran developing an atomic bomb. Iran has consistently denied any ambition to develop a nuclear weapon, insisting its activities are entirely peaceful.

On Sunday, assailants on motorcycles killed Guards colonel Sayyad Khodai with five bullets as he sat in his car outside his home. The Guards described Khodai as a "defender of the sanctuary", a term used for anyone who works on behalf of the Islamic republic in Syria or Iraq. Iran maintains significant political influence in both countries and has backed President Bashar Al-Assad's government in Syria's grinding civil war.

President Ebrahim Raisi warned on Monday that Iran will avenge Khodai's killing. Iran blamed "elements linked to the global arrogance" - the Islamic republic's term for the United States and its allies, including the Zionist entity. In a letter to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Iran's UN ambassador Takht Ravanchi said the international community must condemn the killing. "In line with its responsibilities to genuinely fight terrorism and in a non-discriminatory manner, the UN is expected to condemn this atrocious act," Ravanchi said. — AFP

Is Ukraine the attack helicopter's...

Continued from Page 1

"These unpleasant reminders of the realities of high-intensity warfare against near-peer adversaries are in turn undermining the case for further investment in and maintenance of Western air assault capabilities, whether fixed- or rotary-wing," he wrote in the specialist magazine Aviation Week. In other words, the future of the helicopter as an assault craft is in question, according to Tusa.

Other experts point to Russian mistakes, such as the helicopter assault on the Gostomel airport near Kyiv at the opening of the invasion, which Ukrainian forces repelled. Joseph Henrotin, a researcher at the Paris-based Institute of Comparative Strategy,

called the operation a "Russian fiasco" that had nothing to do with the capabilities of the helicopters, but with how they were used.

"The Russians did a poor job," he said. "Before an airborne operation, you have to ensure the skies have been cleared and anti-aircraft defenses wiped out." One of the major surprises of the war is that Russia did not gain air superiority at the start of the conflict by suppressing Ukraine's anti-aircraft defenses, a mission normally carried out by fixed-wing aircraft and missiles rather than helicopters.

Michael O'Hanlon, an expert at the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington, agreed the problem is not with the helicopters but how the Russians are using them. "They aren't outdated, but assaulting a predictable location when an enemy is on alert won't generally work," he told AFP. Yet the conflict in Ukraine is very much like the war envisaged by Soviet and NATO experts during the Cold War, when the current generation of attack helicopters were developed. — AFP

One dead in Iran defense research...

Continued from Page 1

accident" in Parchin. The Parchin complex is alleged to have hosted past testing of conventional explosives that could be used to detonate a nuclear warhead, something Iran has repeatedly denied. The site came under renewed scrutiny by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2015 when Tehran reached a landmark deal with major powers under which it agreed to curb its nuclear activities under UN supervision in return for the lifting of international sanctions.

Iran had previously denied the IAEA access to Parchin, insisting it was a military site unrelated to any nuclear activities, but the agency's then chief, the late Yukiya Amano, paid a visit. In June 2020, a gas tank explosion in a "public area" near the complex shook the capital, 30 km away, but caused no casualties, the defense ministry said at the time.

Iran's nuclear program has been the target of a campaign of sabotage, cyberattacks and assassina-

Boeing Starliner completes key...

Continued from Page 1

NASA is looking to certify Starliner as a second "taxi" service for its astronauts to the space station - a role that Elon Musk's SpaceX has provided since succeeding in a test mission for its Dragon capsule in 2020.

Both companies were awarded fixed-price contracts - \$4.2 billion to Boeing and \$2.6 billion to SpaceX - in 2014, shortly after the end of the Space Shuttle program, during a time when the United States was left reliant on Russian Soyuz rockets for rides to the ISS. Starliner docked with the orbital outpost on Friday, a day after blasting off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Over the weekend, astronauts living aboard the station opened the hatch and "greeted" the capsule's passengers: Rosie the Rocketeer, a mannequin equipped with sensors to see what astronauts would have experienced, and a plush toy named Jebediah Kerman, the ship's zero-g indicator.

The spacecraft brought back more than 600 pounds

(270 kg) of cargo, including tanks that provide breathable air to station crew members, which will be refurbished and taken back up on a future flight. As it flew over the Pacific Ocean, Starliner initiated a de-orbital maneuver, and then ejected its expendable service module, leaving the remaining crew module to withstand temperatures of around 3000 degrees Fahrenheit (1650 Celsius) during atmospheric re-entry.

Having shed most of its velocity, it deployed a sequence of parachutes culminating in its three giant main chutes, colored red, white and blue. At 3,000 feet (915 m), it jettisoned its base heat shield - revealing airbags that inflated to aid a gentle landing. The mission wasn't without its hiccups, which NASA and Boeing teams are now going to probe thoroughly in case they could cause future problems.

Early on, two thrusters responsible for placing Starliner in a stable orbit failed, though officials insisted there was plenty of redundancy built into the system to overcome the problem. On the day of docking, the vessel missed its scheduled contact time by more than an hour, after a ring responsible for latching on to the station failed to deploy correctly. Engineers had to retract the ring and pop it out again before it worked the second time. After touchdown, recovery teams detected hydrazine vapor around Starliner and had to back off until it cleared. — AFP

International

Western powers sound alarm on China plan for South Pacific

Chinese package would offer 10 small island states millions of dollars in assistance

HONIARA, Solomon Islands: Western powers sounded the alarm Thursday over leaked plans to dramatically expand China's security and economic reach in the South Pacific, in what one regional leader called a thinly veiled effort to lock island states into "Beijing's orbit". If approved by Pacific island nations, the wide-ranging draft agreement and a five-year plan, both obtained by AFP, would give China a larger security footprint in a region seen as crucial to the interests of the United States and its allies.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi rejected Western criticism of Beijing's deepening engagement in the Pacific as he launched an eight-nation tour to present the potentially lucrative offer. "China's cooperation with Pacific Island countries does not target any country," he said in the Solomon Islands' capital Honiara, while warning other countries not to interfere.

"All the Pacific island countries are entitled to make



HONIARA, Solomon Islands: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (L) and his counterpart Solomon Islands' Jeremiah Manele (R) attend a press conference in Honiara on May 26, 2022. — AFP

The Chinese plan is also raising alarm bells in regional capitals. In a stark letter to fellow Pacific leaders, Federated States of Micronesia President David Panuelo warned the agreement seems "attractive" at first glance, but would allow China to "acquire access and control of our region". Calling the proposals "disingenuous", Panuelo said they would deliver Chinese influence over government and industries, and allow "mass surveillance" of calls and email.

Lucrative

Micronesia has a compact of free association with the United States, making it one of the region's closest US allies. But other Pacific leaders may see the Chinese proposal as possibly lucrative or beneficial.

Policymakers in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan are still reeling from revelations in April that the Solomon Islands secretly negotiated a security agreement with Beijing. A leaked draft of the agreement contained a provision allowing Chinese naval deployments to the island nation, which lies less than 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) from Australia.

Solomon Islands has said it will not host a Chinese military base but Honiara is also prohibited from speaking publicly about the deal without China's permission. During his visit to the Solomon Islands, Wang stressed Beijing had "no intention at all" to build a military base in the island state.

Wang signed a series of agreements with Solomon Islands, according to the island state's Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele, including one on maritime investment. A leaked draft of the maritime deal, details of which have not been made public, showed it covers undersea cables, port wharves, shipbuilding and other areas. The pair also discussed a possible project to build a police training centre, Manele said. Travelling until June 4, Wang will also stop in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa, as well as hold video calls with Micronesia and the Cook Islands—a self-governing part of New Zealand. — AFP



Australia 'needs to respond'

their own choice instead of being just mere followers of others," he told journalists. The Chinese package would offer 10 small island states millions of dollars in assistance, the prospect of a China-Pacific Islands free trade agreement and access to China's vast market of 1.4 billion people.

It would also give China the chance to train local police, become involved in local cybersecurity, expand political ties, conduct sensitive marine mapping and gain greater access to natural resources. The "comprehensive development vision" is believed to be up for approval when Wang meets regional foreign ministers on Monday in Fiji.

No help needed

"This is China seeking to increase its influence in the region of the world where Australia has been the security partner of choice since the Second World War," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said. Australia "needs to respond", he said, outlining a "step-up" in Pacific engagement with extra money for defence training, maritime security and infrastructure to combat the effects of climate change. Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong flew to Fiji on the same day her Chinese counterpart began his Pacific tour.

Under the new Australian government there would be no more "disrespecting" Pacific nations or "ignoring" their calls to act on climate change, she said in the capital Suva. In a barb seemingly directed at Beijing, she added: "We don't seek to create unsustainable debt levels." New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the region had no need for Beijing's security arrangements. "We are very strongly of the view

that we have, within the Pacific, the means and ability to respond to any security challenges that exist, and New Zealand is willing to do that," she said after a meeting with US senators in Washington. US State Department Spokesman Ned Price warned the countries in question to be wary of "shadowy" agreements with China.

'Mass surveillance'

The Chinese plan, if approved, would represent a significant change, facilitating the deployment of Chinese police and increased flights between China and the Pacific Islands. Beijing would appoint a regional envoy, supply training for young Pacific diplomats and provide 2,500 government scholarships.

"It's relatively rare paper evidence of China's ambition to establish itself as a regional security power," said Mihai Sora, Pacific foreign policy analyst at the Sydney-based Lowy Institute.

Blinken to call for China to adhere to rules

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will call for China to abide by international rules as he delivers a major speech Thursday on America's relationship with its rival. Days after President Joe Biden visited Japan and South Korea to shore up key alliances, Blinken will give a long-awaited speech billed as the most comprehensive statement by the administration yet on China.

In a contrast with the abrasive approach of Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, Blinken will steer clear of talk of a sweeping global conflict and will not ask nations to shun China, officials said. "This is not about a new Cold War. This is not about dividing the world into rigid ideological blocs," a senior official said as he previewed the speech.

"It is not about containing or keeping down any power. It is about upholding and, just as importantly, revitalizing the international order in a way that protects core principles that have enabled peace and prosperity for decades—and, indeed, enabled China's remarkable rise."

The White House had long mulled whether Biden should deliver the speech but finally decided it would be given by Blinken, part of the administration's attempt to compete with China but also lower the temperature.

Blinken had been set to deliver the speech, to take place at George Washington University with the Asia Society as host, in early May but postponed it after being diagnosed with COVID-19.

Shifting focus from Russia

Blinken's speech, Biden's trip and a first-of-its-kind summit in Washington in early May with Southeast Asian leaders have aimed to show that the United States is still focused on Asia-identified from the start of the administration as a priority—despite months of effort to confront Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. The United States believes that Russian President Vladimir Putin presents an "acute, immediate threat" to the international order and that countering him reinforces the message on upholding rules, the official said on customary condition of anonymity.

"China is the one country that has the intention, as well as the economic, technological, military and diplomatic means, to advance a different vision of international order," the official said. The Biden administration has repeatedly spoken of pressing China to abide by established rules, including in its conflicts in the dispute-ridden South China Sea and on trade, in which the United States accuses Beijing of widespread theft.

Biden has been seeking to unite allies in the face of China's rise, unveiling in Tokyo the Asia Pacific Economic Framework billed as coordinating trade policies around the region. The Biden administration has similarly launched a forum with the European Union to develop technological standards, hoping to prevent China from dominating the 21st century through its rapid gains in artificial intelligence.

Blinken will also voice support for working with China in limited areas where cooperation is seen as feasible, such as on climate change, after diplomacy between the world's two largest emitters ahead of last year's Glasgow summit.—AFP

Four bombs kill at least 16 in Afghanistan

KABUL: The death toll from four bombs that ripped through minibuses and a mosque in Afghanistan has risen to at least 16, officials said Thursday, with some of the attacks claimed by the Islamic State group. A top UN expert called on Taliban authorities to investigate Wednesday's attacks, as well as a series of previous deadly blasts that targeted members of the minority Shiite and Sufi communities.

While the number of bombings has dropped across the country since the Taliban seized power in August, several fatal attacks rocked the country last month during Ramadan. On Wednesday, at least 10 people were killed when three bombs placed on separate minibuses exploded in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, a health official and police said.

Najibullah Tawana, head of the Balkh health department, said three women were among the 10 killed in the blasts. Hours after the explosions the Islamic State group (IS) said on Telegram that its "soldiers" were responsible. Late on Wednesday one other bomb exploded inside a mosque in the capital Kabul, killing six and wounding 18, according to police spokesman Khalid Zadrar. The interior ministry said the bomb was placed inside a fan in the mosque. It was unclear whether Wednesday's bombings targeted any specific community, and no group has so far claimed responsibility for the Kabul attack.

'Crimes against humanity'

Dozens of civilians were killed in Kabul and other cities in primarily sectarian attacks during the holy month of Ramadan, which ended on April 30 in Afghanistan, with some claimed by IS. Many of those attacks targeted the Shiite Hazaras and Sufi communi-



MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Afghanistan: An injured bomb blast victim rests inside a hospital in Mazar-i-Sharif. Four bombs ripped through minibuses and a mosque in Afghanistan on May 25, killing at least 11 people, officials said. — AFP

ties. UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan Richard Bennett told reporters such attacks "reflect elements of an organisational policy" and so bear the "hallmarks of crimes against humanity". Bennett called for an investigation as he wrapped up his visit to Afghanistan, where he met several Taliban officials and visited some of the sites targeted by recent attacks. On April 29, at least 10 people were killed in a Sunni mosque in Kabul in an attack that appeared to target members of the minority Sufi community performing rituals. A week earlier, a bomb at a Shiite mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif killed at least 12 worshippers and wounded scores more.

The deadliest attack during Ramadan came in the northern city of Kunduz, where another bomb targeting Sufi worshippers tore through a mosque on April 22. At least 33 people were killed in that blast and scores more were wounded. The regional branch of IS in Sunni-majority Afghanistan has repeatedly targeted Shiites and minorities such as Sufis, who follow a mystical branch of Islam. IS is a Sunni Islamist group, like the Taliban, but the two are bitter rivals. The Taliban have pursued an Afghanistan free from foreign forces, whereas IS wants an Islamic caliphate stretching from Turkey to Pakistan and beyond.—AFP

Nigeria parties set to name candidates for 2023 election

LAGOS: Commuters driving through Lagos's wealthy Ikoyi district have been greeted for months by the face of Bola Tinubu whose Nigeria presidential campaign posters are scattered around the city he once ran. The former governor known locally as "Godfather of Lagos" looks down from one electronic billboard over the city's Falomo Bridge with a slogan touting him as a "great leader". Tinubu, 70, may be confident of finally achieving his presidential ambition in the 2023 election, but he is just one in a packed field of high-profile potentials still scrambling for position. Their political fates will be decided this weekend when the ruling All Progressives Congress party and opposition People's Democratic Party both hold primaries for candidates to govern Africa's most populous nation.

Deciding the APC and PDP candidates settles who will be the likely favourite to replace President Muhammadu Buhari, a former military commander stepping down after two terms. Buhari, 79, leaves office with Nigeria still struggling with a jihadist conflict in its northeast and violent banditry and kidnapping in its northwest. Africa's largest economy is also dealing with the double hits of the coronavirus pandemic and the Ukraine war that have pushed up fuel and food prices across the continent. As delegates decide on candidates for the presidency, parliament and governorship races, all eyes will be on Buhari to



LAGOS: A woman walks past campaign posters of presidential aspirant of New Nigeria Peoples's Party (NNPP) Rabiu Kwankwaso displayed in Lagos. — AFP

see whom he endorses and whether he will push the APC to accept a consensus candidate.

He has also yet to approve an amendment to a new election law, which analysts say is clouding the way some delegates can vote for candidates in the primaries. For the APC, Tinubu faces rivalry from former ally and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo who has been touting his experience helping run the federal government.

Tinubu and Osinbajo, who once worked together in Lagos State, have busily canvassed support from governors and local delegates in recent weeks. "If there was anybody who can hit the ground running, that person is me," Osinbajo said on a delegate visit to southwest Ogun state.

Many stranded after ransomware attack on Indian airline

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of Indian air travellers were stranded inside their planes after the low-cost airline SpiceJet cancelled or delayed flights due to an "attempted ransomware attack", the company has said. Many angry passengers, some of whom were left waiting inside their planes for up to five hours earlier this week, complained about a lack of communication from the budget carrier.

"Certain SpiceJet systems faced an attempted ransomware attack last night that impacted our flight operations," the airline said Wednesday on Twitter. The company added that it had "to a large extent contained and rectified the situation", but ongoing delays had forced some flights to airports with night curfews to be cancelled. An airline official on Thursday told AFP that flight operations were back to normal, without sharing details of any investigation into the incident. Mudit Shejwar, a SpiceJet passenger stuck waiting inside a plane Wednesday, said the only communication his flight had received was "of some server down and (an) issue with paperwork for fuel".

"What about the losses we are going to suffer due to the delay?" he posted on Twitter, adding that his flight finally took off after a five-hour wait. Ransomware attacks occur when hackers take control of a computer system by encrypting all its data until a ransom is paid. They have become increasingly common as more official and commercial business is conducted online. The United States last year offered a \$10 million reward for help in tracking down leaders of the "DarkSide" gang, an outfit Washington blamed for a hack that shut down one of the country's largest oil pipelines.—AFP

Rotimi Amaechi, who recently resigned as Buhari's transport minister and who is from Nigeria's southern oil region, is also challenging the two top APC players. An alliance of smaller parties drawn together for the 2015 election, the APC has often struggled to contain internal divisions. For such a key primary competition, it is likely Buhari may again seek a consensus candidate as he did in March with the party convention to choose a new chairman. "Because the conduct of the presidential primaries and the party's eventual nominee will help define Buhari's legacy, he will likely become involved," said Eurasia Group's Africa analyst Amaka Anuku. "Osinbajo is the most obvious choice for Buhari's endorsement.—AFP

Business

FRIDAY, MAY 27, 2022

Lebanese currency hits new low

Pound crashes below the symbolic threshold

BEIRUT: The Lebanese pound hit a new low against the US dollar on the black market Thursday after a sharp drop that coincided with May 15 parliamentary elections. According to websites monitoring the exchange rate, the pound crashed below the symbolic threshold of 35,000 to the greenback, a historic low for the national currency. For decades, the Lebanese pound was pegged to the dollar at 1,500, meaning that it has lost around 95 percent of its value in two years.

A financial crisis widely blamed on government corruption and mismanagement has caused the worst economic crisis in Lebanon's history. The cost of a full tank of petrol now far exceeds the minimum monthly wage, mains electricity comes on barely two hours a day and unaffordable school fees are driving increased student dropouts. Four out of five Lebanese are now considered poor by the World Bank. The country desperately needs an international rescue package but the required reforms have not been forthcoming.

The exchange rate, which is unofficial but applies to most transactions, had recently stabilized at around 26,000 to the dollar but took a tumble after the latest legislative polls. The results brought in a handful of independents who support the spirit of a 2019 protest movement which called for the wholesale ouster of Lebanon's corrupt and hereditary ruling class. But they also yielded a more scattered assembly that observers predict could remain stuck in a political deadlock that will further delay any meaningful economic recovery program. —AFP



BEIRUT: A first batch of buses donated by the French government to Lebanon's public transport sector is unloaded from a cargo ship at the Beirut Port. — AFP

Abbott apologizes for US baby formula shortage

WASHINGTON: A top Abbott official apologized Wednesday to US families affected by the baby formula shortage, acknowledging the manufacturer of the essential product "let you down." "We are deeply sorry and are committed to making sure that a shortage like this never happens again," said Christopher Calamari, the senior vice president of nutrition, in testimony before Congress.

He said "it will take time" to regain families' trust, but the company is doing everything it can to resolve the crisis. The United States has been struggling with a severe shortage of infant formula for months. Initially caused by supply chain blockages and a lack of workers due to the pandemic, the shortage was exacerbated in February when, after the death of two infants, Abbott announced a "voluntary recall" for formula made at its factory in Michigan.

Regulators forced the company to shut down that location to resolve complaints it did not adequately protect against contamination from bacteria. "Frankly, the inspection results were shocking," said FDA chief Robert Califf. There was standing water in key equipment "that present the potential for bacterial contamination," leaks in the roof and a lack of basic hygiene facilities such as for washing hands, he said. FDA teams concluded there was a weak culture of safety in production for an "essential" good, he said.

However, Calamari said, "we continue to believe that there is no conclusive evidence to link our formula" to the infant illnesses and deaths blamed on the



VIRGINIA: Pallets of baby formula are unloaded after being sent in through Operation Fly Formula, at Dulles International Airport in Dulles, Virginia, on May 25, 2022. — AFP

bacteria *Cronobacter sakazakii*. Though the organism was found in certain areas of the Michigan factory, the samples were taken from areas that "do not come into direct contact" with the formula, he said. Abbott's Michigan plant is one of the largest formula factories in the United States, and produces specialized recipes for children with certain allergies or metabolic conditions.

'No choice'

The FDA said it has made a series of visits to the Sturgis, Michigan location, the last on March 18. "We knew that ceasing plant operations would create supply problems but we had no choice given the unsanitary conditions," Califf said. The FDA director

acknowledged that the investigation was slow to start, which he blamed on the pandemic. He said the agency could not start the probe until late January because of Abbott employees testing positive for COVID-19.

The agency's process was "too slow" and lacked coordination, Califf admitted, but there was no "intentional delay." The crisis has gotten so bad that President Joe Biden announced last week that the US government would fly in formula on commercial planes contracted by the military. Biden also invoked the Defense Production Act to give baby formula manufacturers first priority in supplies. The first military plane carrying more than 31 tons of formula from Germany landed Sunday at an airport in Indiana. —AFP

UK plans consumer support as energy bills soar

LONDON: Britain's finance minister Rishi Sunak was Thursday to unveil a support package for consumers hit by soaring energy bills, reportedly with help from a controversial windfall tax on oil giants. Reports suggest a government package worth £10 billion (\$12.5 billion) could be funded in part by an exceptional levy on soaring profits enjoyed by the likes of BP and Shell that have benefitted massively from surging oil and gas prices.

This would be a U-turn for embattled Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has insisted such a move would hinder efforts by oil majors to invest in greener energy. Sunak was set to address parliament at around 1030 GMT, a day after Johnson promised to "move on" from a critical report about his leadership that allowed lockdown-breaking parties at Downing Street. Both Johnson and Sunak were fined by police over one breach of the laws they set for the public, causing widespread outrage.

But Downing Street's chief of staff Steve Barclay dismissed suggestions the announcement was timed to deflect attention from the "Partygate" scandal. "There is a huge pressure coming for families in terms of energy costs," he told Sky News.

In paying for "targeted support", the government needed to "look at the balance between how much is done through debt, and how much is done through revenue raising", he added. Britain's annual inflation rate has surged to a 40-year high on rocketing energy costs, squeezing household budgets and leaving many struggling to make ends meet. —AFP

Central bank slashes rate to rein in ruble

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank cut its key interest rate Thursday following an emergency meeting, as authorities seek to rein in the ruble which has surged in value despite the conflict in Ukraine. The Bank of Russia slashed the rate to 11 percent from 14 percent, saying external conditions for the economy remained "challenging, considerably constraining economic activity."

The policy-setting meeting was originally set to take place on June 10 but the central bank surprised the market by announcing Wednesday that an extraordinary meeting would take place the next day. "Financial stability risks decreased somewhat, enabling a relaxation of some capital control measures," it said in a statement on Thursday.

The Bank of Russia said it "holds open the prospect of key rate reduction at its upcoming meetings." Central Bank head Elvira Nabiullina said that Russia managed to stabilize the economy but it was too early to "exhale calmly". "As the economy adapts, it will be difficult for both companies and citizens," she said after the meeting. "The first months were a time of tactical decisions: the first shock of the sanctions had to be counteracted," she added.

"As a result, we managed to protect financial stability and prevent an inflationary spiral. But this, of course, does not mean that we can exhale calmly." The next rate-setting meeting is set to take place on June 10. After the West slapped Russia with debilitating sanc-



MOSCOW: An illustration photo taken on May 26, 2022, shows Russian ruble coins in Moscow. — AFP

tions over the start of Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine in February, financial authorities introduced strict capital controls to boost the economy.

Since then, the ruble has staged a spectacular rebound and strengthened by around 30 percent against the dollar. After the decision on Thursday, the ruble weakened by 7 percent against the dollar. A strong ruble is not desirable for the Russian government, which fears it can hit budget revenues and exports. Generally, lower interest rates are unattractive for foreign investment and decrease the value of a country's currency.

The Kremlin said on Wednesday the government was paying "special attention" to the strong ruble but President Vladimir Putin sought to cast the rallying currency as a positive development. "As we know, the dollar is shrinking, the ruble is strengthening," he said on Wednesday. —AFP

No slump for pump and dump cryptocurrency

PARIS: In a sleepy corner of the crypto-economy, the value of an obscure coin called Enzyme was tumbling downwards along with its peers earlier this month—but then something unusual happened on May 15. Enzyme, also known as MLN, rocketed from 30 cents to 47 cents in just minutes and daily trading volumes exploded from around \$3 million to more than \$100 million, according to CoinGecko.

A few hours later, it crashed back down to 35 cents. The coin had just been "pumped and dumped", an age-old scam when traders get together and orchestrate a price hike to bag a quick profit. "In the stock market, pump and dump is illegal, which is why criminals take advantage of the less robust regulatory framework around crypto assets," said Mircea Mihaescu of compliance outfit Coinfirm.

The crypto economy has been torn to shreds in recent weeks with hundreds of billions knocked off the value of the sector and some currencies completely collapsing. The scamming industry—worth some \$7.8 billion last year according to Chainalysis data—has not given up though. Scammers continue to find fertile ground on the Telegram app and Twitter, positioning themselves as benevolent heroes helping those who have lost out in the crash. The rationale preys on the cult-like nature of crypto investing, but experts say it is far from the truth.

'Shill it on Twitter'

The May 15 call to arms came on a Telegram group called WallStreetBets - Pumps. After several messages building the hype, the group wrote: "The coin we are buying is \$MLN... Shill it on Twitter to make it trending." Twitter immediately lit up. "Whales accumulating, worth a shot!" tweeted a user called CryptoSanta, referring to the nickname of mega-rich investors. Enzyme Finance, the firm that owns the MLN coin but has no link to the Telegram channel, quickly tried to calm things down.

"Please be careful of fake accounts looking to operate pump and dump schemes," the firm tweeted, distancing itself from the feeding frenzy. But everyone who saw the Telegram messages or the hype on Twitter knew their only chance to make a profit was to get in and out fast. In reality, almost all of them would have lost. The price spike lasted for just minutes and the only ones guaranteed success were those organizing the scam.

"In any pump and dump scheme, everyone is convinced they are the pumper," said behavioral economist Stuart Mills from the London School of Economics. AFP was unable to reach WallStreetBets - Pumps for comment. But it is far from the only group openly pumping coins on Telegram. Kucoin Crypto Pumps Trading, for example, is already advertising a pump timed for next week. Monaco Pump Group claims to be run by "two of the richest whales in Monaco". — AFP

Business

China's PM issues warning on pandemic-hit economy

Restrictions tangle supply chains

BEIJING: China's premier called for more to be done to stabilize the world's second-largest economy, issuing an unusually stark warning as the country's zero-COVID strategy bites into growth. China is the last major economy welded to a policy of mass testing and hard lockdowns to eliminate virus clusters, but the strict curbs have battered businesses.

Restrictions around the nation in recent months—including on the manufacturing hubs of Shenzhen and Shanghai, as well as the breadbasket province of Jilin—have tangled supply chains and dragged economic indicators to their lowest levels in around two years. In some ways, the challenges now are “greater than when the pandemic hit hard in 2020”, Premier Li Keqiang told a State Council meeting on Wednesday, according to a readout by the official Xinhua news agency.

“We are currently at a critical juncture in determining the economic trend of the whole year,” Xinhua quoted Li as saying. “We must seize the time window and strive to bring the economy back onto a normal track.” Li also said officials ought to make sure there is “reasonable” growth in the second quarter, fuelling fears that the country's target for yearly expansion of around 5.5 percent may not be met.

Li's remarks are the latest in a growing chorus of calls from officials and business leaders for more balance between stopping the virus and helping the ailing economy. On Monday, the central bank and banking regulator urged financial institutions to boost lending, citing pressure on the economy, Chinese media reported. This came as retail sales plunged 11.1 percent on year in April while factory output sank 2.9 percent—the worst showing since the early days of the COVID crisis.

And the urban unemployment rate edged back towards its February 2020 peak. In March, and particularly in April, indicators including employment, industrial production and freight dropped “significantly”, Li said at the Wednesday meeting. He stressed the importance of coordinating virus control and economic development, according to Xinhua. On Thursday, the State Council will also send teams to 12 provinces to oversee local work in implementing state policies, the report said.

Wilting growth

The latest company to sound a warning on the impact of strict Covid measures in China was tech giant Baidu, which Thursday reported \$140 million in net loss over the January-March period. Baidu co-founder Robin Li said business had been “negatively



BEIJING: People commute on an electric bicycle in Beijing on May 26, 2022. — AFP

impacted by the recent COVID-19 resurgence in China” and warned “challenges related to the virus continue to pressure” their operations. The country's current outbreak-fuelled by the Omicron variant-is the worst since early in the pandemic in 2020. Financial hub Shanghai has been almost entirely sealed off since April, crushing businesses, while curbs are creeping in across the capital Beijing with no clear end in sight.

The government has offered tax relief and a bond drive to help industries, and President Xi Jinping earlier called for an “all-out” infrastructure push. But analysts cautioned that growth will keep wilting until China eases its rigid virus controls. S&P Global Ratings this month lowered its full-year growth forecast for China from 4.9 percent to 4.2 percent due to COVID curbs. And Nomura analysts warned in a recent note that there is “increasing potential for negative GDP growth in the second quarter”.

Wednesday's State Council teleconference involved an unusually large cohort of officials, Chinese outlet The Economic Observer reported. The economic woes come in a pivotal political year for Xi, who is eyeing another term in power at the Communist Party Congress this autumn. China's economy is a key driver of global growth and is crucial domestically for the Communist Party, which has based its legitimacy on delivering steady expansion and improved standards of living. — AFP

WTO chief urges countries not to block food exports

DAVOS: WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on Wednesday urged countries not to block or restrict exports of basic foodstuffs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine worsened tensions on global food markets. “We're trying to tell members also on the export prohibition, restriction side, let's keep it down,” Okonjo-Iweala told reporters at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. “We don't want this to exacerbate and lead to price spikes.” Her comments followed India's decision the same day to cap sugar exports at 10 million tons in the year to September, following up on a ban on wheat sales abroad. New Delhi said the decision aimed to “maintain the domestic availability and price stability during the sugar season”. Moscow's invasion has disrupted supplies of fertilizer, wheat and other commodities from both Russia and Ukraine. In response, “we have about 22 countries now with 41 export restrictions or prohibitions on food,” Okonjo-Iweala said. As well as foodstuffs themselves, “let's not forget inputs, seeds and fertilizer,” she added. —AFP

Twitter agrees to pay a \$150m fine

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter agreed to pay \$150 million to settle allegations the platform gave advertisers some user information that was supposed to be employed to strengthen account security, US authorities said Wednesday. The Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice accused Twitter of taking phone numbers or email addresses provided to tighten privacy and then letting advertisers use the details to make money.

“Twitter obtained data from users on the pretext of harnessing it for security purposes but then ended up also using the data to target users with ads,” commission chair Lina Khan said in a release. The personal information that users hand over to tech companies, and how that data gets used, is a front of repeated conflict between regulators and powerful firms like Facebook parent Meta, Twitter and others.

Clashes over privacy have resulted in periodic suits or settlements but critics have long called for a comprehensive updating of US national rules for how people's data is handled online. In a five-year period ending in 2019, more than 140 million Twitter users gave phone numbers or email addresses to the San Francisco-based service to help secure accounts with two-factor authentication, regulators said.

The security technique involves augmenting passwords with one-time codes sent by text or email messages. Without telling users, Twitter let advertisers use the personal information to target ads, said the FTC, which worked with federal prosecutors to pursue a case against the tech firm. “Consumers who share their private information have a right to know if that information is being used to help advertisers target customers,” US Attorney Stephanie Hinds said in a release. Along with agreeing to pay \$150 million, Twitter will implement new measures including having its privacy program regular evaluated by an independent assessor, the settlement deal indicated. —AFP



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AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 26 MAY 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,030	1,006	1,030	991	39	29,442,954	-14	-1.37%	5.95%	1,005	1,030	20.7	1.98	2.8%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	370	341	373	336	37	57,988,437	-32	-8.58%	28.33%	338	346	24.7	1.66	1.9%	1.03
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	230	222	231	219	12	17,042,784	-7	-3.06%	5.91%	217	225	32.8	0.68	1.7%	1.10
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	272	270	280	257	23	11,196,166	-2	-0.74%	12.95%	267	271	18.8	0.98	1.8%	1.30
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	904	860	905	819	86	108,972,806	-40	-4.44%	13.70%	840	861	30.2	4.10	1.3%	1.26
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	854	818	855	801	54	5,618,181	-32	-3.76%	14.83%	813	822	66.3	4.11	0.5%	1.05
204	National Investments	Financial Services	406	388	414	385	29	22,195,695	-15	-3.72%	77.17%	384	405	8.6	1.23	11.6%	1.60
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	171	162	171	154	17	10,616,833	-7	-4.14%	14.08%	161	172	29.3	0.85	3.1%	0.96
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	111	102	111	100	11	14,547,122	-10	-8.93%	-13.56%	102	112	101.0	0.59	8.8%	1.16
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	162	152	162	150	12	16,705,292	-12	-7.32%	-12.54%	148	154	22.5	1.11	1.9%	0.98
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	779	800	810	760	50	5,181,114	24	3.09%	6.94%	787	825	17.5	1.88	1.7%	1.07
501	National Industries	Financial Services	291	292	295	281	14	40,650,237	1	0.34%	12.21%	287	296	4.1	1.27	0.0%	1.41
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,643	1,490	1,643	1,365	278	2,724,498	-153	-9.31%	71.07%	1,490	1,513	14.4	1.17	4.1%	0.87
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	1,044	1,045	1,055	1,020	35	6,648,438	6	0.58%	22.65%	1,019	1,049	13.9	1.94	5.3%	0.87
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	369	367	373	365	8	2,248,682	-3	-0.81%	5.76%	365	371	17.0	0.89	4.3%	0.92
603	Agility	Industrials	1,133	1,101	1,153	1,045	108	22,351,477	-29	-2.57%	16.51%	1,092	1,111	63.8	1.27	0.8%	1.37
605	Zain	Telecommunications	648	616	658	606	52	34,746,297	-26	-4.05%	3.53%	613	617	15.2	2.33	5.4%	0.88
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,159	3,141	3,165	3,090	75	978,791	-4	-0.13%	-2.57%	3,100	3,160	6.6	3.90	12.7%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	203	187	203	184	19	7,173,968	-13	-6.50%	-14.22%	184	195	NULL	0.65	0.0%	1.21
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,805	1,851	1,900	1,800	100	2,273,198	7	0.38%	43.49%	1,820	1,880	24.7	15.13	1.7%	1.38
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	277	269	279	255	24	117,817,116	-7	-2.54%	6.44%	247	275	16.9	1.77	3.1%	1.74
821	Warba Bank	Banking	269	260	269	256	13	17,277,287	-8	-2.99%	-5.11%	258	264	30.3	1.41	0.0%	1.01
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	553	524	553	519	34	1,471,574	-22	-4.03%	-11.04%	519	541	25.0	1.42	3.1%	0.34
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	438	430	443	415	28	8,933,578	-8	-1.83%	2.30%	428	445	37.4	1.75	2.3%	0.68
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	214	215	217	210	7	4,100,418	0	0.00%	-5.70%	213	220	16.3	2.65	8.5%	0.54
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,470	2,415	2,500	2,350	150	634,634	-95	-3.78%	19.55%	2,300	2,439	27.0	9.15	2.7%	0.71

* As of end of week closing

Business

Lab-grown meat maker strikes new deal to boost production

Eat to build massive bioreactors

NEW YORK: The US sustainable food start-up Eat Just has struck a deal to build massive bioreactors with the goal of producing tens of millions of pounds of lab-grown meat a year. Founded in 2011, Eat Just specializes in egg alternatives and meat grown from animal cell cultures. The company's subsidiary GOOD Meat announced Wednesday it had signed an agreement with equipment manufacturer ABEC Inc, which typically works with the biotech and pharmaceutical industries, to develop 250,000-liter (66,000 gallons) bioreactors to grow the cultures.

Eat Just said in a statement it plans to install 10 of the bioreactors in the United States and hopes to begin production in 2025, with the goal of generating 30 million pounds of chicken and beef annually. Several other start-ups are working on lab-grown meat, which promises to produce animal protein with less environmental impact than intensive farming and without causing animal suffering. The San Francisco-based Eat Just is the first company in the world to receive regulatory approval to market its cultured meat, after getting the green light from

Singapore at the end of 2020.

This was a crucial step in the effort to ramp up output, co-founder and CEO Josh Tetrick told AFP. Current production is still minimal-less than 10,000 pounds a year in Singapore-and very expensive. In order to sell large amounts of cultured meat at affordable costs, Eat Just needs to significantly increase its production capacity, Tetrick said. In the meantime, the group plans to install smaller bioreactors-of 3,500- and 6,000-liters-in California and Singapore over the coming year. Each will be able to produce tens of

thousands of pounds of meat a year.

Once given the green light by US regulators, GOOD Meat will be ready to begin sales there within 30 days, Tetrick said. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) still needs to approve the manufacturing process, while the Department of Agriculture (USDA) needs to determine how countries should label the product. Eat Just did not specify how much the ABEC deal was worth, saying only that the start-up's total investment amounted to several hundred million dollars. —AFP

After long trek to Davos, Ukrainians await Western aid

DAVOS: Ukraine's foreign minister, lawmakers and mayors made long journeys by car, train and plane to the Swiss Alps to convince global elites to send more help to repel Russian invaders. As the four-day World Economic Forum in Davos wrapped up on Thursday, they were returning home without the heavy weapons they desperately want or the new sanctions they demand against Moscow. But while major announcements were not expected in Davos, the summit gave the Ukrainians a chance to press the world's political and business leaders face-to-face for urgent help after three months of fighting.

Ivan Fedorov, the mayor of the southeastern city of Melitopol, drove from Zaporizhzhia to Warsaw, then by plane to Zurich, and again by car from Zurich to Davos—a two-day trek. "It's very important for us (to come to Davos) because for a long time Russian propaganda and diplomacy worked very well," Fedorov told AFP. "Civilized countries must be united with Ukraine... not with their words but with their deeds," said Fedorov, who was held for several days by Russian forces in March.

President Volodymyr Zelensky led the pleas in a headline speech via videolink at the start of the confab, while the Ukrainian delegation included the star power of Kyiv mayor, Vitali Klitschko, and his brother Wladimir, the former heavyweight boxer. "Usually, Davos is considered a place where people only talk, but we took the opportunity to also discuss and agree on some issues with our counterparts," said Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who travelled by train, car and plane.

'Russian War Crimes House'

The gathering was also a chance for Ukraine to push its case to gain candidate status to join the European Union. Ukrainian officials and lawmakers took the opportunity to meet corporate chief executives as Kyiv seeks help to rebuild the country. Another major concern raised in Davos was the Russian blockade preventing Ukraine, once the world's breadbasket, from exporting its wheat to countries that depend on it. Kuleba said Ukraine was in talks with the United Nations on the idea of opening a safe passage for ships out of the port of Odessa, which would require demining the harbor and getting security guarantees from Moscow.

But the main refrain in Davos was Kyiv's more immediate need for military help to defeat a better-armed Russia. To press their case, they reminded the world of the atrocities of conflict. With Russians banned from attending this year's meeting, Ukraine took over Moscow's usual residence in Davos, turning the "Russia House" into the "Russian War Crimes House" and covering its walls with images of dead bodies.

Zelensky used Davos to urge the West to show more unity with Ukraine, singling out Hungary for holding up an EU embargo on Russian oil, while Kuleba lamented that some are "dragging their feet" on providing heavy weapons. Washington and European countries have poured billions of dollars' worth of arms into Ukraine, but Kuleba appealed for multiple-launch rocket systems to match Russian firepower.

The Ukrainians also made it clear that the endgame of the war should be defeating Russia, not ceding territory as former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger suggested in a video appearance at the WEF. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who addressed the forum on its last day, said Russian President Vladimir Putin will not be allowed to dictate peace in Ukraine. —AFP



DAVOS: A participant asks a question during a session at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on May 26, 2022. —AFP



LuLu Hypermarket launches 'World Food Fest 2022'

KUWAIT: Regional retail heavyweight, LuLu Hypermarket, launched its highly anticipated mega food festival, 'World Food Fest 2022', with a colorful ceremony at the Al-Rai outlet of the brand on 25 May. The event was inaugurated by three of the top-tier Indian Master chefs Nikita Gandhi and Sijo Chandran, along with Arabic chef Abu Mehndi, in the presence of top management officials of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, and representatives from the main sponsors of the food festival.

The inauguration day celebrations were marked by several highlights, including a live-demo cooking with celebrity Master Chefs, presentation of the longest Swiss Roll, displays and offers on a variety of breads by Bakery Bread House, a Cakes and Cookies promotion titled 'For the Love of Desserts'. Additionally, street trucks were lined up at all outlets of LuLu Hypermarket offering various fast-food choices, Arabian Delights providing the best of Arabian cuisines, Pagkaing Pinoy tantalizing visitors with the ultimate in Filipino foods, Desi Dhaba offering the best of North Indian cuisines, and, providing a taste of authentic rural dishes from Kerala were the traditional Malabar 'Chayakada' and the 'Thattukada'.

World Food Fest 2022, which is a celebration of foods from around the world, provides customers with an opportunity to introduce themselves to the widest range of international foods. Amazing discounts and special offers on all foods are available at LuLu Hypermarket outlets throughout the festival period.



NBK welcomes new Cohort of Trainees

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) welcomed the 9th Cohort of Trainees in the "Moody's Credit Curriculum Program", which was designed and organized in partnership with Moody's Analytics, with a view to increase the efficiency of the bank's employees. The new trainees were welcomed in a ceremony attended by Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait, Emad Al-Ablani, GM -Group Human Resources, Mohamed Al-Othman, GM -Consumer Banking Group, and Ahmed Bourisly, GM -Corporate Banking Group, as well as executive managers and officials from Training and Development Department.

The program will be provided over a period of two months, and will cover a variety of topics mainly including: Introduction to banking services and financial analysis, comprehensive introduction of risk management and structuring of banking institutions, key challenges in credit and financing, analysis of corporate cash flows forecasts, as well as the solutions adopted by the departments in banks and banking institutions.

It also highlights the basics of managing relationships with customers and ways to develop communication skills with them to reach balanced discussions with business owners to identify their needs and develop financial ideas. The program will host 24 trainees from Corporate Banking Group, Consumer Banking Group, Risk Management, International Banking and other relevant divisions.

The training partnership extending for 6 years with Moody's Analytics is a concrete embodiment of NBK's strategy to upgrade its human capital, by providing them with the best training programs. NBK gives paramount importance to upgrading its human capital by providing a unique training and development environment, which contributes to enhancing their skills and supporting them in building a professional career path that ultimately helps improve the quality of the various types of banking services provided by the bank across the different markets where it operates.

NBK regards its employees as its most valuable resource, and therefore invests heavily in developing their talents and help them build their career in the bank. It also believes that maintaining success depends on the quality of the human factor, which is a key part of the bank's strategy and ambitious plans towards achieving a sustainable future.

US govt deficit to drop to \$1 trillion

WASHINGTON: The US government deficit will fall dramatically this year to \$1 trillion, down from levels not seen since World War II hit during the pandemic, the Congressional Budget Office said Thursday. The budget shortfall in the current fiscal year will shrink significantly from the prior year, when it reached nearly \$2.8 trillion due to the massive spending pumped out to keep the US economy afloat amid the COVID-19 downturn, which caused massive layoffs and business closures. But even with the decline the deficit remains "large by historical standards" and is expected to rise over the next decade, CBO Director Phillip Swagel said in a statement. The CBO expects the deficit to fall again in the next fiscal year-which runs October 1 to September 30 - but rise to 6.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by FY2023, significantly higher than the average recorded over the past 50 years, Swagel said. Meanwhile, federal debt is projected to dip to 96 percent of GDP by 2023, according to the report from the independent and non-partisan CBO, which produces regular forecasts and analyses the costs of proposed US legislation. —AFP



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Elephants cross a road early morning, outside the Hwange National Park, Hwange, Zimbabwe. — AFP photos



A pride of lions are seen at the gate of a clinic in residential compound of the Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

ZIMBABWE'S BALLOONING JUMBO HERDS A GROWING THREAT TO HUMANS

Seventy-five-year-old Hanganani Gideon Dube has walked with a slight limp and his speech been labored since he miraculously survived being trampled by an elephant in north-western Zimbabwe. He considers himself lucky to be alive following the assault one afternoon in May 2021 near Mabale village on the outskirts of Hwange National Park, the country's biggest. But the injuries have left him unable to fend for his family of six. Dube was tending his cattle when "suddenly I found myself face-to-face with an elephant".



A lion is seen near a residential compound of the Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

He sprinted off, without realizing he was running straight into the path of another elephant. "There was no time for me to evade the second elephant. It attacked me swiftly and I blacked out," he said in the local Ndebele language. Dube said he's still puzzled "why the elephant didn't finish me off".

"I am lucky to be alive but I am now useless as I can no longer do any physical work, including looking after my cattle," he said sitting on a stool by a cooking fire at his homestead. At least 60 people have been killed by elephants in Zimbabwe since the start of the year, compared with 72 over all of 2021 year. Zimbabwe's conservation success story

has had unfortunate side-effect of heightening jumbo-human conflict.

With some 100,000 elephants, Zimbabwe has the world's second-largest population after Botswana, and about one-quarter of the elephants in all of Africa. More than half of those pachyderms live in and outside the unfenced Hwange, a wildlife park nearly half the size of Belgium, some 14,600 square kilometers (5,637 square miles) of vege-

tation. Elephants roam freely from Zimbabwe's sprawling and unfenced game reserves and it is common to find herds crossing or resting along the main highway from Hwange to the nearby prime tourist resort of Victoria Falls.

'Reward not punishment'

Zimbabwe's elephant population is growing at about five percent a year, reaching unsustainable levels. "Our conservation methods are working and I believe that instead of being punished we should be rewarded," Fulton Mangwanya, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority director told AFP. He spoke on the sidelines of a conference in Hwange where the government is this week lobbying allies to push for legal ivory trade. Zimbabwe, along with Botswana, Namibia and Zambia, wants the UN Convention on International Trade Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, commonly referred to as CITES, to lift the ban on the trade in ivory.

They argue that scrapping the ban can help to better preserve the animals and bring economic benefit to local communities who live close to the animals. Zimbabwe has a huge \$600-million stockpile of ivory which it recently



Hanganani Gideon Dube, 75, a local farmer at his homestead in Mabale Village, Hwange, Zimbabwe.

showed to ambassadors representing various countries including the European Union, China and Japan. It has urged EU diplomats to allow a one-off sale of the ivory. The country's last official elephant census in 2014 counted more than 80,000, a figure now estimated at 100,000, which authorities say is three times more than capacity.

But some conservationists doubt the accuracy of the statistics and fear that lifting the trade ban would pose a threat to elephant populations. America, along with

EU countries and Britain remain opposed to lifting the ban while China and Japan are some of the countries in support. International trade in ivory and elephants has been banned since 1989 under the CITES. One-off sales were allowed in 1999 and 2008, despite fierce opposition. The Harare government has threatened to pull out of the convention if it doesn't have its way on ivory trading. — AFP

Critically endangered elephant, unborn baby suspected poisoned in Indonesia

A critically endangered Sumatran elephant and its unborn baby were found dead from suspected poisoning in western Indonesia, a conservation official said on Thursday. The carcass of the heavily pregnant mammal was found next to a palm plantation in Riau province on Sumatra, a large island home to some of the world's rarest animals.

The archipelago nation faces an ongoing battle against wildlife crime and several elephant poisoning cases have been reported in recent years, including one in 2019 when a Sumatran elephant was found decapitated with its tusks ripped off. A plantation worker discovered the

mother, who was 22 months pregnant, on Thursday and immediately reported the carcass to authorities who collected samples before burying the body.

"We estimated the female elephant to be around 25 years old and during the necropsy test we found that it was pregnant and was close to giving birth," said Hartono, the head of the local chapter of the Natural Resource Conservation Agency. Officials are still testing samples to determine the cause of death, added Hartono, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

They suspect poisoning because the mother was foaming at the mouth when she was discovered. According to the World Wildlife Fund, Sumatran elephants are on the brink of extinction with only about 2,400-2,800 left in the world. The elephant population is also threatened by rampant poachings because of their tusks, which are prized in the illegal wildlife trade. Rampant deforestation has reduced the critically endangered elephants' natural habitat and brought them into increasing conflict with humans. — AFP



This picture shows South Korean actor Song Kang-ho (left), actress Lee Joo-Young (second left), actress and singer Lee Ji-eun (second right) and actor Gang Dong-won (right) posing for photos during a press conference to promote their film "Broker" in Seoul. — AFP photos



Japanese film director Hirokazu Kore-eda poses during a portrait session, on the sidelines of the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.

Japan's Kore-eda back at Cannes with Korea collaboration

Acclaimed Japanese film-maker Hirokazu Kore-eda is back in competition at this year's Cannes Film Festival, with his first South Korean film which explores the country's controversial practice of "drop boxes" for unwanted babies. The movie is one of two South Korean pictures competing for the Palme d'Or along with Park Chan-wook's "Decision to Leave", after Bong Joon-ho's "Parasite" became the country's first film to win the coveted honour in 2019.

Since then, more Korean-language productions have enjoyed explosive global success, from Netflix's "Squid Game" to Apple TV+'s "Pachinko". Kore-eda, who won the top prize at Cannes in 2018 for his family drama "Shoplifters"—about a group of Tokyo misfits and crooks who form a kind of alternative family—is back with another tale delving into similar themes. His new South Korean-produced film "Broker" looks at so-called baby boxes where mothers can anonymously abandon their newborns to avoid the stigma and hardship of being a single mother in a patriarchal society.

While researching the project, the Japanese film-maker, who has been lauded for his sensitive, contemplative explorations of complex family relationships, met children at orphanages.

The youngsters, Kore-eda said, questioned whether, as unwanted babies, it would have been better not to be born.

Their question became the focus of the film, Kore-eda said. "Baby boxes exist in Japan as well," Kore-eda said at a press conference in Seoul earlier this month, which he attended virtually. "I wanted to portray the journey of a group of people—some with good intentions and some with malice—with various stories surrounding a baby who was left in a baby box."

'Naturalistic'

The film is a collaboration between Kore-eda and a South Korean all-star cast, including top actors Song Kang-ho (Parasite), Gang Dong-won (Peninsula), and K-pop megastar Lee Ji-eun. "It is a massive ensemble cast-hard to think of a recent film that has had such a long list of high-profile names," Jason Bechervaise, a visiting professor at Korea University, told AFP.

Song, 55, has long been a favorite with leading South Korean film-makers, including Bong, who he collaborated with on 2019's Oscar-winning "Parasite". Kore-eda said Song's previous performances were a key inspiration for "Broker". The versatile actor has played a range of characters from a repressed Catholic priest who becomes a vampire to a Joseon-era king who starves his son to death. In "Broker", Song plays a debt-ridden man who discovers an abandoned baby and volunteers to find him a new family—in exchange for mon-

ey. "Song Kang-ho is such an expressive actor, whether that is expressing tension, comedy, or confusion," Brian Hu, a film professor at San Diego State University, told AFP. "On the other hand, Kore-eda's work is so much more naturalistic, often treating professional actors as he might non-professional ones," he said. "So this is not just a clash across cultures, but also across cinematic styles."

'Meticulous and calculated'

Kore-eda has defied geopolitical tension to build strong relationships with top South Korean talent, even visiting the Busan International Film Festival in 2019 during a trade war. At the time, he said Japan and South Korea—which have a long, complex history—could "solve and overcome political problems" through solidarity. "Kore-eda is obviously a much-admired film-maker so he is able to attract such talent," Bechervaise said.

"It's interesting that he has come to Korea to make his next film despite frosty ties." Song said he had expected "meticulous and calculated" direction from Kore-eda, partly based on his own preconceived ideas about Japanese artists. "But he really respected us and brought out our certain emotions in such a way that was really free, comfortable and inexhaustible." — AFP



Barking mad: Indian stadium closes early 'so official can walk dog'

Delhi authorities on Thursday ordered all sports facilities to stay open until 10:00 pm after a media report claimed that one stadium shuts early every evening—so that an official can walk his dog. Built for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, athletes and coaches at the Thyagraj Stadium in the Indian capital New Delhi have to clear out by 7:00 pm for the senior bureaucrat and his pet, The Indian Express reported.

"We used to train till 8-8.30 pm under lights earlier," the newspaper quoted one unnamed coach as saying, publishing a photo of what it said was Delhi official Sanjeev Khirwar, a woman and a dog on the running track. "But now we are asked to leave the ground by 7:00 pm so that the officer can walk his dog on the ground. Our training and practice routine

has been disrupted."

The paper quoted the parent of one trainee athlete at the stadium, which is used by national and state athletes and footballers, describing the situation as "unacceptable". "(Can) you justify using a state-owned stadium to walk your dog? This is gross misuse of power," said the unnamed parent.

Khirwar, Delhi's principal secretary (revenue), confirmed to the paper that he walks his dog in the stadium but denied that others had been told to leave on his account. "I would never ask an athlete to leave the stadium that belongs to them. Even if I visit, I go after the stadium is supposed to close," the Indian Express quoted Khirwar as saying. — AFP



In this file photo US actor Kevin Spacey poses for photographers on the red carpet ahead of the world premiere of the television series 'House of Cards - Season 3 Episode 1' in London. — AFP

Actor Kevin Spacey charged with sexual assaults in UK

Hollywood actor Kevin Spacey has been charged with four counts of sexual assault against three men, the Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales said Thursday. "The CPS has authorized criminal charges against Kevin Spacey, 62, for four counts

of sexual assault against three men," said Rosemary Ainslie, from the service. "He has also been charged with causing a person to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent," she added in a statement. — AFP

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In this file photo TV host Ellen DeGeneres holds her awards for Outstanding Show and Outstanding Talk Show Host during the 34th annual Daytime Entertainment Emmy awards held the Kodak theatre in Hollywood.



In this file photo Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton (left) and TV host Ellen DeGeneres talk during a commercial break of the taping of the Ellen Show in Burbank, California.



In this file photo US President Barack Obama presents actress and comedian Ellen DeGeneres with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, during a ceremony honoring 21 recipients, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

ELLEN DEGENERES ENDS PIONEERING TALK SHOW UNDER CLOUD

For nearly two decades, "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" have beamed into homes across America, busting stereotypes and charming daytime TV audiences with a feel-good blend of quirky comedy and celebrity cameos. But after more than 3,000 episodes, a talk show that came to rival even Oprah Winfrey's in terms of its cultural impact departs Thursday under a cloud, after allegations of a toxic workplace at stark odds with its "be kind" mantra.

"When we started this show in 2003, the iPhone didn't exist. Social media didn't exist," DeGeneres said last month, after pre-taping the show's final episode. "We watched the world change-sometimes for the better, sometimes not." There is no doubt the cultural landscape has been upended since rising comedian DeGeneres came out in 1997 — simultaneously as her character on sitcom "Ellen," and in real life with an interview on the cover of Time magazine.

DeGeneres was hailed as a gay icon, but her sitcom was cancelled a year later amid a backlash, and she spent five

years in the wilderness before reinventing herself as a talk show host. "It was a sensation, it was a landmark-and it became a political football," said Mary Murphy, associate professor of journalism at University of Southern California. "She led the way. She was probably-and may still be-the most famous LGBTQ person in America."

No 'gotchas'

Her Rolodex of A-list guests and light touch have been key to the talk show's success, especially in more conservative parts of America. For 19 seasons, Hollywood A-listers and pop stars have jostled for seats on DeGeneres' couch, where they are invited to promote their latest projects, and never put through more than a gentle ribbing.

Some have appeared more than a dozen times-Jennifer Aniston, the show's first-ever guest, will return for Thursday's finale. "She is one with the celebrities, she's their friend. They know that. And she made it jovial," said Murphy. "Maybe it was because, having been so burned,

as she was, she didn't want to burn other people. There were no gotchas."

Audience members and the latest viral YouTube stars are also regularly invited on stage to enjoy their 15 minutes of fame, in human interest segments and wacky games. "Ellen is this funny, silly, quirky character that really didn't take herself too seriously," said Jeetendr Sehdev, author of "The Kim Kardashian Principle." "We hadn't quite seen a daytime talk show host before that looked like her and that behaved like her... She was the cropped haired woman wearing a suit and tie while everyone else was getting blowouts."

'Full of contradictions'

But rumors that life was less rosy backstage came to a head with a 2020 BuzzFeed expose alleging a "toxic work culture" including sexual harassment, bullying and racism. Three senior producers were fired, while DeGeneres was accused of failing to mind her shop-and of being less affable with employees in private than her cheery public persona

would imply.

Last May, DeGeneres announced the show would end after its 19th season, but denied it was due to the workplace claims. "I need something new to challenge me," she told The Hollywood Reporter. But DeGeneres has courted increasing controversy, including her defense of comedian Kevin Hart after he withdrew as Oscars host in 2018 over a series of homophobic tweets. "Suddenly, she kind of fell from grace," said Murphy.

"She seemed to be... in touch with celebrities, in touch with audiences, out of touch with the people working for her." According to Sehdev, Ellen has always "been full of contradictions." "That has been both partly the reason why she has also appealed to people, and has been capable of generating that mass appeal," he said. "And at the same time, (it) has also been the reason why her integrity and her credibility and authenticity have been questioned." — AFP



In this file photo US actress and TV host Ellen DeGeneres poses in the press room with the Carol Burnett award during the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

'How to murder your husband' writer found guilty of killing spouse

A US romance novelist who wrote an essay entitled "How To Murder Your Husband" has been convicted of killing her spouse. A jury in Portland, Oregon, took just eight hours on Wednesday to return a guilty verdict against Nancy Crampton Brophy for shooting dead Daniel Brophy. Prosecutors said the writer, whose "Wrong Never Felt So Right" series of novels include "The Wrong Husband" and "The Wrong Lover," had been struggling financially before she shot her husband twice through the heart in June 2018 at a culinary institute where he worked.



This undated booking photo from the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office in Oregon shows murder suspect Nancy Crampton Brophy. — AFP

Crampton Brophy, 71, had denied the charge, insisting security camera footage that put her at the scene of the crime merely showed her scouting for writerly inspiration. She also claimed a missing gun police believe was the murder weapon had been bought as part of research for a novel, and denied the hundreds of thousands of dollars in life assurance she stood to gain were a motive for murder. Crampton Brophy's lawyers said they would appeal the second-degree murder conviction, The Oregonian newspaper reported. "Nancy Brophy loved her husband," attorney Kristen Winemiller told the jury at the trial. "You can see that in her eyes every time she talked about him. Her eyes lit up, they absolutely twinkled."

Crampton Brophy was arrested in September 2018, and has been in custody ever since. Prosecutor Shawn Overstreet laid out reams of evidence showing how Crampton Brophy had plotted to kill her husband, who was 63. "It's not just about the money. It's about the lifestyle Nancy desired that Dan could not give her," he said during the trial. Crampton Brophy had rejected claims of penury when she took to the stand last week, insisting her monetary woes had long been resolved. — AFP



In this file photo US President Barack Obama and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres speak during a break in the taping of The Ellen DeGeneres show at Warner Brothers Studios in Burbank, California.

Ellen DeGeneres: Four memorable moments

After 19 seasons and well over 3,000 episodes, US talk show "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" airs its final episode Thursday. Here are five memorable moments from over the years:

Obama dancing

DeGeneres is known for dancing with her audiences at the start of each show. Guests are also invited to offer a few moves — including an ambitious young senator called Barack Obama in 2007. "You're the best dancer so far of the presidential candidates," DeGeneres told Obama, as he grooved to Beyonce's "Crazy in Love." "It's a low mark. But I'm pretty sure I've got better moves than (Rudy) Giuliani," he replied, referring to the former Republican candidate.

'Super Bass'

In 2011, young British girls Rosie McClelland and Sophia Grace Brownlee were invited onto the show dressed in frilly pink tutus to perform their recently viral rendition of Nicki Minaj's "Super Bass." What came next melted audience and viewer hearts, and the cousins from Essex have returned multiple times since, hosting a segment called "Tea Time with Sophia Grace and Rosie" — and eventually meeting Minaj on stage.

Dakota Johnson

It has not all been lightness and fun on



US actor Johnny Depp arrives with Celebrity therapist Beechy Colclough (left) at the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse in Fairfax, Virginia. — AFP

"The Ellen DeGeneres Show," with one particularly excruciating moment coming in 2019 when actress Dakota Johnson appeared on Ellen's couch. DeGeneres jokingly complained that she had not been invited to the "Fifty Shades" star's birthday party, to which Johnson bluntly replied: "That's not the truth, Ellen." As the host frantically tried to backpedal, a seemingly offended Johnson stuck to her guns, adding: "Ask anybody." The exchange swiftly went viral and was turned into countless memes, with some detractors even alleging that this moment exposed DeGeneres' chummy persona as less than genuine.

Kevin Hart

Arguably the show's most controversial moment came in 2019, when comedian Kevin Hart appeared as a guest soon after losing his role as Oscars host over a series of homophobic tweets. DeGeneres backed Hart and told the audience she had personally called the Academy in the hope of having him rehired. "As a gay person... I am sensitive to all of that," said DeGeneres, before exploring Hart to not "let those people win," and to "host the Oscars." Both DeGeneres and Hart were criticized for the conversation, with LGBTQ groups accusing the host of failing to stand up for her community, and also assuming to speak on its behalf. — AFP

Abuse accusations by ex-wife Amber Heard are 'insane': Johnny Depp

Actor Johnny Depp testified on Wednesday at his defamation trial against his ex-wife Amber Heard that it has been "unimaginably brutal" to listen to her "heinous" accusations of domestic abuse. "No human being is perfect, certainly not, none of us, but I have never in my life committed sexual battery, physical

Olya Polyakova fundraises for Ukraine with US tour

Her draped gown colored in the image of Ukraine's flag, artist Olya Polyakova is touring the United States to raise funds for her country's war against Russia. At Massachusetts' Regent Theatre on Tuesday, Polyakova had the crowd on its feet, with many of her fans-some drove hundreds of miles for the connection to home-waving flags, singing along and embracing her as she greeted them offstage. About an hour into sound-check, one young woman, Renata Yasinakaya, ran onstage for a tight, tearful hug from her family friend, who she was seeing for the first time since the war began.

"I love her, and she for me is like (my) mother," said the 18-year-old. "I missed her. I miss my family. I'm here alone." It was a reaction to Polyakova that embodied the room's emotion for much of the night, as the singer herself also grew tearful at points, concertgoers rallying behind her. Her tour is an effort to fundraise "for people whose life was destroyed because of war" and also serves as a reminder of the war's longevity, she told AFP in English.

She pleaded with the global community "to not forget about the war in my country."



Ukrainian singer Olya Polyakova performs on stage for a few hundred fans at the Regent Theatre in Arlington. — AFP

abuse," the 58-year-old Depp said.

Taking the witness stand as the six-week-long trial in Fairfax, near the US capital, nears an end, Depp was asked by his lawyers what it has been like to listen to Heard's testimony. "It's insane to hear heinous accusations of violence, sexual violence, that she's attributed to me," the "Pirates of the Caribbean" star said. "All these outlandish, outrageous stories of me committing these things."

"Horrible, ridiculous, humiliating, ludicrous, painful, savage, unimaginably brutal, cruel and all false," he told the seven-person jury. "All false." Depp said he brought legal action because he needed to address "what I've been carrying on my back, reluctantly, for six years." The 36-year-old Heard, who was married to Depp from 2015 to 2017, obtained a restraining order

against her then-husband in May 2016, citing domestic violence.

Depp, a three-time Oscar nominee, filed a libel suit in London against British tabloid The Sun for calling him a "wife-beater." He lost that case in November 2020. Depp brought suit against Heard in Fairfax over an op-ed she wrote for The Washington Post in December 2018 in which she described herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse." The Texas-born Heard did not name Depp in the piece, but he sued her for implying that he was a domestic abuser and is seeking \$50 million in damages. Heard, who had a starring role in "Aquaman," countersued, asking for \$100 million and claiming she suffered "rampant physical violence and abuse." — AFP

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In this file photo taken on June 02, 1953 Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (center) sits in Westminster Abbey on London on June 2, 1953 during her coronation.



In this file photo taken in 1933 Britain's Princess Margaret (left) and her older sister, Britain's future Queen Elizabeth II.



In this file photo taken on June 02, 1953 Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (left) and Britain's Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh wave to the crowd from the Balcony at Buckingham Palace, following her coronation.

Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years on the throne: Key dates

Queen Elizabeth II is the longest-serving monarch in British history, and is this year celebrating her 70th year on the throne.

1926: Royal birth

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor is born at 2:40 am on April 21, 1926 in Mayfair, central London. She is the first child of the Duke and Duchess of York, who will become King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

1940: Move to Windsor

As Nazi Germany bombs the British capital, Elizabeth and her younger sister, Princess Margaret, move to Windsor Castle, west of London, for their safety. During World War II, she trains as a military vehicle mechanic.

1947: Marriage and family

Princess Elizabeth marries Prince Philip at Westminster Abbey. Their first child, Prince Charles, is born in 1948. A daughter, Anne, arrives in 1950, followed by Andrew in 1960 and Edward in 1964.

1952: Princess to Queen

Princess Elizabeth, then aged 25, is visiting Kenya with Philip when her father dies aged 56 on February 6, 1952. She cuts short the trip and rushes back to Britain.

1953: The coronation

She is crowned at Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953, in front of 8,500 assembled guests. The ceremony is watched across the world and leads to a surge in sales of television sets.



1977: Silver Jubilee

The queen reaffirms the vow of lifelong service to Britain and the Commonwealth she had made in a speech aged 21 in 1947. She tours the country and the Commonwealth. Celebratory street parties brighten the economic gloom of industrial decline and strikes at home.

1992: 'Annus horribilis'

Prince Charles separates from Princess Diana, and Andrew splits from his wife, Sarah. The queen's only daughter, Princess Anne, divorces her husband, Mark Phillips. Windsor Castle is also seriously damaged by fire. The queen calls the 12 months her "annus horribilis".

1997: Death of Diana

Diana's death in a car crash on August 31, 1997 rocks the royal family, provoking rare criticism of the queen for continuing to stay at her Balmoral estate in Scotland.

She eventually returns to Buckingham Palace, where the Union Jack is lowered to half-mast, and she makes a televised tribute to Diana, helping to calm public anger.

2002: Golden Jubilee

Celebrations for the queen's 50 years on the throne come in the same year as the deaths of her own mother and younger sister Margaret, and show public support for the monarchy.

Huge crowds gather on The Mall in central London to watch Queen guitarist Brian May play the national anthem from the roof of Buckingham Palace before a star-studded pop concert.

2011: Ireland state visit

The queen's high-profile visit to Ireland is the first by a British monarch since the Republic of Ireland won independence in 1922. An address in Irish, plus other symbolic gestures, helps galvanise reconciliation and cement the peace process in Northern Ireland, after years of conflict over British rule.

2012: Olympics and Diamond Jubilee

The queen and other senior royals visit every region of Britain to mark her 60 years on the throne. Beacons are lit across the country, and a river pageant is held in London. A surprise cameo for the monarch alongside James Bond actor Daniel Craig is a hit at the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics.

2021: COVID, Philip, health fears

The coronavirus pandemic forces the ageing queen into self-isolation at Windsor, from where she makes public appearances over video conference. Prince Philip dies aged 99 in April 2021, while later that year fears grow for the queen's own health after she spends a night in hospital and is forced to cut back her duties.

2022: Platinum Jubilee

On February 6, she becomes the first monarch in British history to rule for 70 years. Four days of celebrations are planned for early June. — AFP

Sunset or new dawn for the British monarchy after Elizabeth II?

British republicans are hoping that Elizabeth II will be the last queen, but experts say the monarchy seems set to survive, as long as it moves with the times. "We're not expecting the monarchy to be abolished whilst the queen is on the throne," said Graham Smith, head of the Republic movement that wants the UK to have an elected, non-partisan president as head of state. But he told AFP: "This is the last monarch who is going to have anything like the sort of popular support the queen has."

Once her eldest son Prince Charles is on the throne, "then yes, we can certainly achieve that goal and get rid of the monarchy," he added. Next week sees concerts, parades and picnics over four days to mark the queen's 70 years on the throne, with the country turned a sea of red, white and blue. The unprecedented Platinum Jubilee is being seen as a chance to reflect on the queen's central place in British life since 1952.

But with the queen now 96, the jubilee also heralds the inevitable end of the second Elizabethan age. That, said the Republic movement on its website, is a chance to "Make Elizabeth the last". Smith said Charles is not necessarily held in the same affection as the queen and slammed the monarchy as an "undemocratic, anti-democratic and elitist" institution that costs taxpayers millions.

'Old man'

Opinion polls indicate that the monarchy is less popular among younger people who are less attached to tradition and more sensitive to anti-colonial struggles. Smith predicts this trend will continue. According to the British Future think-tank, 58 percent of Britons support the monarchy, while 25 percent would prefer a republic after Elizabeth. But the gap between the two narrows to 40 percent royalist and 37 percent republican among the young.



In this file photo Britain's Queen Elizabeth II watches a military ceremony to mark her official birthday at Windsor Castle in Windsor. — AFP photos

"When the Queen dies, it will be a very big turning point," said Robert Hazell, professor of government and the constitution at University College London. The queen was in her twenties when she ascended to the throne and was "a very attractive young woman", he told AFP. But Charles, 73, will

by contrast be "an unattractive old man" when he becomes king, Hazell added. "You might have a difficult accession." "There might be a bit of a public campaign by some of the tabloid newspapers for Prince William to become the king," he said of Charles' eldest son, aged 39.

William is second in line to the throne and his son, Prince George, is third in the succession. So even if the British monarchy does endure it is unlikely to have another reigning queen for quite some time. To maintain public support, the

monarchy will have to adapt to a world that is very different from that of the last century, said public relations expert Mark Borkowski.

Reform

Right-wing tabloid the Daily Mail has reported that William respects his father and grandmother's approach "but believes the monarchy should be 'agile' to survive and thrive". William and his wife Kate had a tumultuous tour of the Caribbean in March, hit by anti-monarchy protests and accusations of colonial overtones. "He is looking ahead to how things will be in 40 years' time. He wants the monarchy to continue to be a unifying force, to bridge the gap," the Mail wrote.

William is also open to a lesser role for the monarchy in the Commonwealth, 14 of whose members other than the UK have the queen as head of state. Commonwealth member Barbados ditched the queen as head of state last November but Hazell doubts there will be a domino effect leading back to the UK. In any case, a referendum would be needed for the UK to become a republic but no one is calling for one and is not seen as a political vote-winner. Besides, he said, "the UK is a republic in all but name". "Our monarchy is a parliamentary monarchy and a constitutional monarchy, where the monarch has no effective political power." — AFP

accept him but it won't be easy. "He's following one of the most amazing monarchs we ever had in this country. She served in the war. We now have got these problems with (grandson Prince) Harry and all these things she just copes with magnificently. "Whenever things get tough here she goes on television and she speaks to the nation. When Diana died, she spoke to the nation. With COVID, she spoke to the nation. She is a woman that matters."



The Sun newspaper's Arthur Edwards

How is she?

"Last October I photographed her, she was frail but she was stoic, she was magnificent. She was with Boris Johnson and she was introduced to John Kerry from America, Bill Gates... and she was fine. "She was on her feet for an hour, but the next day she went to hospital. "In the last six months she's become very frail, she's lost a lot of weight. The clothes have been adjusted, the dresses are hanging on her sometimes. "She takes doctor's advice. The problem is... she wants to walk and she can't. "And she doesn't want to embarrass herself. I wrote a piece saying she should get a wheelchair. It's no shame, but she, for some reason, won't do it. "If we don't see the queen over the jubilee, there'll be millions of people disappointed. "They come into London to see the concert and they are going to see the pageant, but what they really want to see is the queen." — AFP

monarchy will have to adapt to a world that is very different from that of the last century, said public relations expert Mark Borkowski.

"I'm not sure anybody knows what the shape of the monarchy will be but it certainly won't be in the same shape as it

Veteran royal photographer: 45 years snapping the queen

The Sun newspaper's Arthur Edwards, 81, has been photographing Queen Elizabeth II for 45 years, and describes her as an enduring source of inspiration. But ahead of the 96-year-old monarch's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the veteran royal snapper told AFP the royal family faces a "difficult transition".

What kind of person is the queen?

"She was always the same every visit you went on, nothing changed, she went slow, at her own pace. She never, ever was fazed. "She's never given an interview so no one really knows her thoughts on things. But you glean these little things from people you talk to, like her dresser. "For instance, she goes to her Balmoral Scottish estate every year for a holiday. I once said to her, 'why don't you go somewhere else?' and she said 'well, where can I go?' "The lady-in-waiting laughed and came back to me and said she absolutely loves it at Balmoral and I said 'why?'. She said because for three months, people ignore her. "And the reason she likes dogs and horses is because they don't know she's the queen."

What's going to happen over the next few months?

"It is going to be difficult, the transition. Everybody just knows the queen: she's on every bank note, she's on every coin, she's on every stamp. "The queen is just part of our culture, it's part of our life. "The Prince of Wales (heir to the throne Prince Charles) has done tremendous work himself and I know that because I've been working with him closely. "He's an incredible man, but it's going to be difficult."

"He's done several things where he stood in for the queen recently. He does that without any fuss and people will see that he's genuine and I think they will

Queen's Platinum Jubilee: What's happening?

Public celebrations to mark Queen Elizabeth II's record-breaking 70-year reign will take place over four days next week.

Thursday June 2

More than 1,200 soldiers from the Household Division of the British Army perform the "Trooping of the Color" ceremony to officially mark the queen's birthday. The military pageant, complete with musicians and horses, combines pomp and tradition dating back more than two centuries. The event culminates with the royal family's appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, to wave to crowds and watch a fly-past of military jets.

Appearances this year are restricted to working royals only, which means no Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, nor Prince Andrew. More than 2,800 beacons will be lit at the palace and across the UK, including atop the country's four highest peaks, as well as on the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and British Overseas Territories. Flaming tributes will be seen in 54 Commonwealth capitals across five continents, from Tonga and Samoa in the South Pacific to Belize in the Caribbean. Nine bridges over the River Thames in central London will be lit up, as will the capital's landmark BT Tower, and several English cathedrals.

Friday June 3

A national service of thanksgiving for the queen's record-breaking reign takes place at London's St Paul's Cathedral, featuring a rare ringing of the Great Paul bell. Great Paul, cast in 1882, is the largest church bell in the country. Its mechanism broke in the 1970s but it was restored to its former glory last year. It has only been sounded eight

times since then, and never for a royal occasion.

Saturday June 4

A keen horseracing fan, the queen is expected to attend the 243rd running of the country's most prestigious flat-racing event, The Derby, at Epsom Downs. In the evening, some 22,000 people—including 5,000 key workers such as frontline medics—are expected to attend the BBC Platinum Party at Buckingham Palace. Performers include rockers Queen + Adam Lambert, Motown legend Diana Ross and Elton John. Alicia Keys, Nile Rodgers and the Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli are among others lined up for the 2.5-hour musical extravaganza.

Sunday 5th June

More than 70,000 people have registered to host Big Jubilee Lunches, with 10 million expected to share food and friendship with their neighbors, the government said. More than 600 lunches have been planned throughout the Commonwealth and beyond, from Canada to Brazil, New Zealand to Japan and South Africa to Switzerland. The final day culminates with the Platinum Jubilee Pageant—a public parade through central London. The Mounted Band of the Household Cavalry lead the Gold State Coach—used to transport the monarch at coronations and jubilees—to Buckingham Palace. Some 10,000 people are involved in a musical and creative display of how British society has been transformed since the queen acceded in 1952. It ends with the singing of the national anthem, "God Save the Queen", outside the palace, led by singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran. — AFP

Sports

Verstappen heads to Monaco; Leclerc awaits change of luck

MONACO: World champion Max Verstappen heads home this weekend hoping to survive the chaos and beat archrival and luckless local hero Charles Leclerc again in Sunday's 79th running of the Monaco Grand Prix. Just days after leading his team-mate Sergio Perez over the line in a Red Bull one-two last weekend in Spain, the 24-year-old Dutchman will bid for a repeat to consolidate his grip at the top of this year's title race.

Verstappen took control of the championship by easing six points clear of Monegasque driver Leclerc of Ferrari, who was forced into retirement at the Circuit de Catalunya. He seeks a fourth consecutive win and second in the classic contest in Sunday's potentially rain-affected race. "Qualifying is critical, like always," said the 2021 victor.

"Monaco is always a hectic weekend, but special. The track is old school, narrow and it makes your heart rate go so high it's insane. We have to be constantly on the edge. It's a pretty crazy place with Formula One cars! I finally won there last year - and it was a massive relief to cross the line."

Like Leclerc, who was born and lives in the Mediterranean principality, Verstappen is based there - for climatic and tax purposes - along with several other drivers including seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, Valtteri Bottas, Lando Norris and Daniel Ricciardo. As a result, they enjoy an intimate knowledge of the circuit regarded as the most iconic and glamorous on the F1 calendar, but also the rare luxury of sleeping at home during a race weekend.

For Leclerc, however, that comfort has yet to be of any help on the tight, unforgiving and sinuous barrier-lined street track that requires total concentration and extraordinary driver skills. At just 3.337 kilome-

tres, it is the shortest on the calendar, offers few overtaking opportunities, rapid and multiple gear changes and tricky changes in elevation and direction. Only 42 percent of the lap is run at full speed, the lowest of the year.

Despite knowing all this and having gone by bus to school on the same stretches of asphalt, Leclerc has yet to finish his home Grand Prix in three attempts since 2018. Last year, after crashing on Saturday, he could not start Sunday's race.

'Smallest mistake'

Before that, he had to retire after starting from pole in a Formula Two race in 2017 and, more recently, earlier this month, crashed a classic 1974 Ferrari, raced by Niki Lauda, at a historic demonstration event. Yet he remains calm and optimistic, hoping a change to the classic Monaco routine this year - with practice starting on Friday, and not Thursday, as was once traditional - will help.

"I think it gives us the rhythm of the other races, which could be good so I am looking forward to that and giving it a go," he said, deflecting any negative thoughts after a power failure in Spain, while leading, brought him his first DNF (Did Not Finish) of the season. "My attitude is always the same, regardless," he added. "Every point is valuable. We know that even the smallest mistake can make a big difference."

After dominating practice and starting from pole in Spain, Leclerc and Ferrari will hope they can continue to set the pace, but they know Red Bull will be a threat and reliability a key factor. "Since the start of the season, the team that has done everything perfectly was the one to win. We will do everything to be that team," said Leclerc. "We have the confidence



MONACO: Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen signs autographs on the eve of the free practice sessions of the Monaco Formula One Grand Prix at the Monaco street circuit on May 26, 2022. —AFP

that we can make it, which is a good starting point."

After returning to competitive form with a heavily upgraded car in Spain, where George Russell was third and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton fifth, Mercedes will also be hopeful, but realistic. "We made a big step and halved the advantage of the front-runners," said team chief Toto Wolff. "But there's still a long way to go. And Monaco was not

our happiest place in the past. My expectations are lower than at any other circuit."

Mercedes have won only once since 2016 after winning four in a row and the unique showpiece race has been Red Bull's twice in three years since Ferrari's last win in 2017, with Sebastian Vettel. To many observers, another Ferrari win and an end to Leclerc's agonies is long overdue. —AFP

Celtics beat Heat to reach brink of NBA Finals

MIAMI: Jaylen Brown scored 25 points and Jayson Tatum added 22 as the Boston Celtics moved to the brink of the NBA Finals on Wednesday by defeating Miami 93-80.

Tatum also contributed game-highs of 12 rebounds and nine assists as the visiting Celtics took a 3-2 edge in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals series, which continues in Boston on Friday. "We can't think it's over with," Tatum said. "We have to go home like we're down 3-2, with that sense of urgency. Not being satisfied. We've got things to clean up, we've got to be playing better. The job is not done yet."

'It's far from over.'

The Celtics, who rallied from a 3-2 deficit to eliminate defending champion Milwaukee in the second round, are one victory from reaching the NBA Finals for the first time since 2010, when they lost to the Los Angeles Lakers. They have not captured the NBA crown since 2008, when they beat the Lakers. "This is a great opportunity," Brown said. "We have an opportunity to do something special."

The Celtics improved to 6-2 on the road in this year's playoffs. A physical, defensive-minded contest was decided late in the third quarter and early in the fourth, when the Celtics went on a 24-2 run, Brown scoring 13 in the spurt and Tatum adding seven. "We just got it going offensively," Brown said. "We stopped turning the ball over. We cleaned it up, made more shots and got settled in."

The Celtics dominated the third quarter, outscoring Miami 32-16 and closing the period with a 10-0 run for the largest lead to that point at 69-58 entering the fourth quarter. For the game, Brown hit 10-of-19 from the floor, 5-of-9 from 3-point range,



MIAMI: Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball against Gabe Vincent #2 of the Miami Heat during the fourth quarter in Game Five of the 2022 NBA Playoffs Eastern Conference Finals at FTX Arena on May 25, 2022. —AFP

"The game opened up in the second half," Brown said. "My team needed me to come out and respond." Miami went 4-for-22 shooting from the floor in the third quarter. "The consecutive missed open shots started to affect us on the other end," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "As poorly as we played offensively, we were able to compete defensively and keep them to under 100."

Boston then opened the fourth quarter with a 14-2 run to seize command at 83-60 and the Celtics held off Miami from there, an emphatic slam dunk by Brown serving notice the visitors would not be letting the Heat make the game dramatic over the final minutes. "We played great defense in the first half. We played great defense in the second half," Brown said. "Once we started shooting the ball straight I knew we'd have a good half."

Bam Adebayo led Miami with 18 points and also

added 10 rebounds. But the Heat shot only 30-of-94 from the floor and 7-of-45 from 3-point range. "We wear teams out defensively and make it hard on them mentally and physically," Celtics coach Ime Udoka said. "If we do that we're in good shape."

The Heat's starting backcourt, Max Strus and Kyle Lowry, were a combined 0-of-15 from the floor, 0-for-12 from 3-point range. "I've got to play better," Lowry said. "Tonight I played terrible. When I get on the court I have to be better."

Al Horford added 16 points, seven rebounds, five assists and two blocks for the Celtics. The 35-year-old Dominican center seeks his first NBA crown. "Al is old reliable," Brown said. "He gives us whatever we need." Boston's Marcus Smart played despite a right ankle sprain and teammate Robert Williams was on the court despite a left knee injury. —AFP

Kohli hails Patidar nerve as Bangalore close on IPL crown

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli praised the "very, very special" performance of unlikely hero Rajat Patidar after his match-winning ton put Royal Challengers Bangalore two victories away from their first IPL title. Patidar hit an unbeaten 112 to become the first uncapped player in the Twenty20 tournament's history to score a century in the play-offs as Bangalore surged past Lucknow Super Giants on Wednesday.

The Faf du Plessis-led side will take on Rajasthan Royals in Friday's second qualifier in Ahmedabad, with the winners to take on Gujarat Titans in the final two days later at the same venue. The 28-year-old Patidar, a top-order batsman who was drafted into the side midway through the tournament as an injury replacement, came to Bangalore's rescue after the loss of Du Plessis for nought.

"I have seen many impact innings and many innings under pressure over so many years, but I have not seen better than how Rajat played today," Kohli said in a post-game chat with man of the match and team-mate Patidar. "The magnitude of the game was so big that I was feeling the tension in the air because I have been in those situations where you have to cross the line as a team," added Kohli, whose own usually blistering form with the bat has come under scrutiny.

"So what he did was very, very special and I don't think that anyone should take that for granted. You should understand the excellence of his innings and appreciate as a cricketer to watch an innings like that." Patidar put on key partnerships including a 66-run stand with Kohli, who made 25, and 92 runs with in-form wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik, who made 37 off 23 balls. —AFP

Kuwait continues to top medals table at Gulf Games

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The third Gulf Games being held in Kuwait until May 31 enters its 12th day as Kuwait continues to top the medals table. The volleyball competition will conclude on Friday, with tennis to start. Padel matches will resume, while the women's 3x3 basketball will start on Saturday.

The volleyball finals will conclude on Friday at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah Complex with UAE vs Qatar at 3:00 pm, followed by Saudi Arabia vs Oman. The final match of the day will be at 7:00 pm between Kuwait and Bahrain. Qatar is on top of the standings with 9 points, followed by Bahrain, also with 9 points, Kuwait with 7 points, Oman with 5, Saudi Arabia 3 and finally UAE, who are pointless. On Wednesday, Kuwait beat Saudi Arabia 3-0, while Oman defeated UAE 31.

Kuwait handballers lose to Bahrain

Kuwait handball team lost to Bahrain 29-30 Wednesday in the opening of handball competitions.



as Kuwait failed to maintain their early lead in the first half (19-14). In the second match, Qatar defeated Saudi Arabia 33-20. Technical Director of Kuwait Handball Association Dr Khalid Al-Sharji lauded the performance of Kuwait, particularly in the first half. "We are participating in the Gulf Games with the youth team with some professional players, and all have shown what we wanted from them. It was only the lack of experience that caused them to lose," he said. Sharji asked everyone to stand behind the team and help them in their Gulf mission, so that they perform better in the coming matches.

Team tennis starts today (Friday)

The team tennis competitions will resume on Friday at 4:30 pm at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah International Tennis Complex with five teams participating: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE and Bahrain. The singles semifinal matches resulted in Kuwait's Essa Qabazard beating Qatar's Rashed Nawaf 6-4, 4-6, 6-2. In the second match, Saudi Arabia's Omar Al-Haqbani defeated his compatriot Saud Al-Haqbani 6-4, 6-3. In the doubles matches, the Saudi Omar and Saud Al-Haqbani team defeated Kuwait's Ali Al-Shatti and Abdelhameed Mubarak 6-1, 6-2. Qatar's Mubarak Shanan and Rashed Nawaf defeated Saudi Arabia's Nawaf Omar and Abdallah Al-Faraj 6-3, 6-2.



Second win for men's and women's padel

The padel competitions that are held for the first time in the Gulf Games will have two matches on Friday, the first between Qatar and UAE and the second between Saudi Arabia with Bahrain. Meanwhile, in the women's competitions, Kuwait will play UAE and Oman will play Bahrain. Kuwait men's padel team defeated Bahrain 3-0 (7-6, 6-2), (6-2, 7-6), (2-6, 6-4, 6-4). UAE defeated Saudi Arabia 2-1 (6-0, 6-1), (6-0, 6-2), (7-5, 6-1). In the women's competition, Kuwait defeated Bahrain 2-1 (4-6, 6-3, 7-6), (6-0, 6-2), (6-1, 6-0). Oman defeated Saudi Arabia 2-1 (7-5, 6-2), (6-0, 6-0), while the third set was won by Saudi Arabia (6-0, 6-3).

Bronze for Kuwait eSport team

Kuwait eSport team added another bronze medal as it was third in the League of Legends competitions, in which Saudi Arabia claimed gold and UAE won silver.

Judo competitions conclude

Judo competitions were completed Wednesday with four categories. In the under-81 kg, Bahrain's Aslerbii Gerbekov won the gold medal, Qatar's Mohammad Reyahi won silver, while the bronze went to Kuwait's Mohammad Mohammad. In the under-90 kg, UAE's Nugzari Tatalashvili won the



gold medal, while Qatar's Khalil Rabahi won silver and Kuwait's Yousuf Dashti won bronze.

In the under-100 kg, UAE's Aram Grigorian won gold, Saudi Naif Ammar won silver while Kuwait's Hamad Al-Rashed won bronze. In the over-100 kg UAE's Magomedmarov Magomedmarov won gold, while silver went to Bahrain's Azamat Chotchaev and the bronze to Kuwait's Abdullah Taleb.

Kuwait basketball team wins silver

Kuwait basketball team took the silver medal after losing to UAE 73-76 leaving the gold to UAE. Kuwait's player were not lucky in executing three-pointers from free throws and it was too late for them, though they cut the UAE's lead to three points. Meanwhile, the bronze went to Saudi Arabia after defeating Bahrain 65-57. President of Kuwait Basketball association Rasheed Al-Enezi lauded the players' efforts and described them as "heroes" despite their loss in the final, adding that the team beat all other teams, which goes to their credit.

Sports

'One in a million' Klopp makes Liverpool European giant again

LIVERPOOL: "We are not here by any kind of magic," said Jurgen Klopp of Liverpool's third appearance in a Champions League final in five years. "We deserve this." Real Madrid stand in the Reds' way at the Stade de France on Saturday, just as they did four years ago in the first of Liverpool's European Cup finals under their German guru.

The 3-1 defeat that night in Kyiv as a result of two goalkeeping errors from Loris Karius, having lost star man Mohamed Salah early on to a dislocated shoulder, might have broken other sides. "This was a harsh night for us," Klopp reflected on Wednesday. Instead, a year later, the Reds were back on the biggest stage to right those wrongs by beating Tottenham in Madrid to lift a sixth European Cup.

Since then Klopp has also ended Liverpool's 30-year wait to win a league title, in 2020. "If I sit here in four years, I am pretty confident we will have one title," Klopp said when he first arrived as Liverpool manager. Seven years on, they are on the verge of winning three trophies in one season - and it could have been four.

Saturday's final will be their 63rd game of the campaign, having reached the final of every competi-

tion. The League Cup and FA Cup are already back in the Anfield trophy room, but Manchester City held off Liverpool's charge since the turn of the year to win a thrilling Premier League title race on Sunday. "Without the Champions League it would be a great season. With the Champions League it would be a fantastic season," Klopp said.

'Special man'

Credit for Liverpool's sustained success has been shared around. The club's outgoing sporting director, Michael Edwards, has been lauded for near-faultless recruitment in the transfer market. Klopp has welcomed in a series of experts from throw-in coaches to neuroscientists to help his players take penalties in pursuit of marginal gains. But it is his mix of tactical acumen, man-management and cult of personality that has transformed a sleeping giant struggling just to qualify for the Champions League back into a European superpower.

"The players deserve unbelievable credit, but it is all down to that man. Liverpool have a very, very special man at the top of their club," said former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher. "What he has

created right through this club is the standard that he expects, that spirit, that mentality. He is just an absolute revelation."

Klopp has six major honors to his name as Liverpool boss. That tally would be much higher had he not been up against Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, backed by the state wealth of Abu Dhabi. Liverpool have posted three of the highest nine points tallies in Premier League history in the past four years for the reward of just one title as City have twice edged them by a solitary point. The Reds' lesser resources mean Klopp has needed to drain every ounce of effort from his squad just to keep up.

"After the Champions League final (in Madrid), I said it wouldn't be possible to win it without the manager," said Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson. "I felt from day one he came in the door he changed everything and we have all followed him."

Luckily for the Liverpool support there is much more to come. Against prior expectation, Klopp extended his contract to 2026 last month, which would take his stay at Anfield beyond a decade. Aston Villa manager and former Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard has long been tipped as a possible



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp drinks from a mug with the words 'The Normal One' written on it during a press conference at their training ground on May 25, 2022. —AFP

successor. But even he urged the Liverpool support to enjoy the ride under Klopp as long as it lasts. "Liverpool fans should enjoy Jurgen Klopp," said Gerrard. "I think he's one in a million - he's that good." —AFP

Harmony reigns as Ancelotti and Real a winning combination

MADRID: Even Carlo Ancelotti, the calm and carefree Italian, whose return to Real Madrid has been as harmonious as it has been successful, will get the jitters before Saturday's Champions League final against Liverpool. No manager has reached as many Champions League finals as Ancelotti's five, with the 62-year-old winning three of his previous four, the first with AC Milan almost two decades ago, back in 2003.

But experience has not made the build-up to the biggest games any easier. "The most stressful moment is always in the three or four hours before the game. It's a physical thing and I've struggled with it a bit more this season," Ancelotti said at a press conference on Tuesday, a smile coming across his face. "There is a lot of sweating, the heart beats faster and those negative thoughts creep in. Believe me, there is no tablet or medicine you can take. You just have to put up with it."

As Ancelotti spoke, journalists laughed and shortly after, the players laughed too. Ancelotti beginning his training session at Valdebebas with a short speech, the squad huddled round, applauding as it finished. "For now it's about enjoying it," said Ancelotti. "We are calm, they are calm. Everyone is happy, there is a good atmosphere. As we get closer to the match there will be all the other things, some nerves, which is all very normal. Today it's just about really looking forward to playing in another final."

Ancelotti's ability to manage and motivate

players means his tactical nous perhaps get overlooked. Real Madrid won La Liga with four games to spare, finishing 13 points ahead of Barcelona. In the early months, Ancelotti successfully fixed Madrid's defense, which had been ripped apart after the departures of Sergio Ramos and Raphael Varane.

'Motorbike' Vinicius

He found a way of playing that unleashed Vinicius Junior, the 21-year-old Brazilian, who he said had "a motorbike in his boots" and who this season has been one of the deadliest forwards in the world. He unashamedly played deeper, which suited Vinicius and Karim Benzema on the break, and accommodated a classy but ageing midfielder.

"(Jurgen) Klopp and (Thomas) Tuchel, the German school of tactics, they have brought more intensity in recent years," Ancelotti said. "I don't think I'm from an older generation, I watch the changes in football, what is happening and what will happen next. But the most important thing is the characteristics of the players you have. It's about what's in front of you, not what's in your head. You can't press with a striker who is fat."

Yet Real Madrid's success this season has come less from the system or the style than Ancelotti's connection with the players. Every controversy has come and gone, the player and team always put ahead of his own ego and reputation. When Toni Kroos showed his frustration at being substituted, Ancelotti said "he got annoyed with the manager not the man". When Real Madrid were thrashed at home by Barcelona, he said: "We have to keep perspective, we can't lose our heads." Even the sidelining of Eden Hazard and Gareth Bale has happened without fuss.

'Not a single mess this season'

During the semifinal against Manchester City,

storm. With six goals in 25 matches for the Reds, he has already helped his new side lift the League Cup, FA Cup and reach the Champions League final against Real Madrid on Saturday. For his uncle Yelkis Diaz, the winger's success is down to his indigenous Wayuu "tradition". The impoverished community's "transport is walking, jogging ... running," he told AFP.

'Almost impossible' conditions

Thousands of miles away from England, Diaz's family and friends watch excitedly whenever he gallops down the wing for Liverpool. It is the first time an indigenous Colombian has reached football's elite in a country whose greatest sports stars generally come from the Afro-Colombian community on the Pacific coast and whose indigenous population amounts to just 4.4 percent of the 50 million.

Young people in Barrancas have few options outside of working for multinationals exploiting the neighboring El Cerrejon, the largest open air coal mine in Latin America. The dreamers imagine themselves playing football or Vallenato folk music. Diaz would often walk onto the town pitch in his bare feet and wearing the jersey of the local Club Barrio Lleras that his father used to play for. Playing in "almost impossible" conditions was



MADRID: Real Madrid's Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti heads a training session at the Ciudad Real Madrid in the suburb of Valdebebas during the club's Media Day on May 24, 2022. —AFP

Kroos said Ancelotti asked the veteran players for advice about substitutions in extra time. "That describes perfectly the manager he is and why he works so well with this team," Kroos said. "I haven't had a single mess this season," said Ancelotti.

Ancelotti's arrival last year came as a surprise, not least to Real Madrid. The decision came after a chance conversation between Ancelotti and the club's president Florentino Perez. For Madrid, it was a safe appointment, a coach for the short-term who could be hired easily and, perhaps, fired without too much trouble.

For Ancelotti, it was an unexpected and, probably, final chance to work at the very highest level. For club and coach, it has gone much better than expected, a La Liga title already in the bag and now a 14th European Cup in sight. "I knew about the quality of these players but what has surprised me is how they have kept their seriousness, their humility and professionalism," said Ancelotti. "Players who have made history haven't changed, that's impressive." —AFP

what forged his talent, says his uncle. "Running and controlling a ball where there are stones, holes, earth" is not easy and many have given up the dream. La Guajira is the poorest department in Colombia with more than two thirds of the population living in poverty. More than 5,000 children have died of hunger there in the last decade, according to the main indigenous organization.

When he returns home, Diaz kicks off his shoes for a nostalgic feel of his native earth. He was last home in July 2021, welcomed by the entire town, following his starring role at the Copa America in which he finished as joint top goalscorer alongside global superstar Lionel Messi. In a recent interview, Diaz said his style of play shows "my roots, where I grew up".

In 2015, the Wayuu community took part in Colombia's first ever indigenous football tournament. Colombian great Carlos Valderrama was in the stands to spot the talent he would pick for an indigenous team to represent Colombia in a continental tournament in Chile. Diaz and his best friend Daniel Bolivar, an attacking midfielder, made the team and would be its stars. "In these villages so lost to sport," impressing Valderrama "was something that really motivated us," said Bolivar. —AFP

Real Europe's most valuable football club

PARIS: Real Madrid remain Europe's most valuable football club despite the ever-increasing dominance of the English Premier League, according to a report published Thursday by analysts Football Benchmark. The report ranks Europe's 32 most prominent clubs, calculating their value based on their annual financial statements and assessing squad values.

Real, who face Liverpool in Saturday's Champions League final, came out on top for the fourth consecutive year of the report, with a valuation of €3.184 billion (\$3.4 billion). That is still short of their valuation in 2020, just before the pandemic, of nearly €3.5 billion, although the report points out that they were one of few clubs to register a net profit in both seasons impacted by the pandemic.

"Real Madrid have extended their lead at the top due to continuous sporting and commercial success," says the report's author, Andrea Sartori. It said Real lost €84 million due to the absence of matchday revenues with supporters shut out due to the pandemic. However, Real "made the most of the restrictions...accelerating works on the Bernabeu. It will be ready at the end of 2022 or the beginning of 2023 and will certainly give them a massive revenue boost and potentially a competitive advantage".

Manchester United (€2.9 billion) and Barcelona (€2.8 billion) rounded out the podium, with Bayern Munich fourth and Liverpool fifth (€2.556 billion). Of the 32 most valuable clubs, only four (Ajax, Galatasaray, Porto and Benfica) are from out the big five European leagues of England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France. Ten of the top 32 are English, at a time when Premier League sides are dominating in Europe.

"What is pushing English clubs towards increased continental glory is their success on the financial side," the report acknowledges. "The Premier League's aggregate operating revenues of 5.1 billion euros put them comfortably at the top," while "what really sets them apart are highly remunerative broadcasting agreements".

Paris Saint-Germain boast the highest overall growth in value over the seven years since the first Football Benchmark report, up 153 percent to now more than two billion euros. Above all, the report added, football is showing signs that the downturn caused by COVID is over. "Last year's financial results still bear the negative impacts of COVID-19, while the past several months reflect solid signs of football returning to normal, most notably with crowds back in stadia and with continued robust demand from sponsors and investors." —AFP

Liverpool's Diaz from indigenous community that breeds 'toughness'

BARRANCAS, Colombia: Running around barefooted on a dust bowl of a pitch, a young indigenous Colombian began kicking a ball more than 20 years ago. Now that boy, Luis Diaz, is on the verge of becoming champion of Europe with Liverpool. In the town of Barrancas, where almost half the population is from the Wayuu indigenous community, everyone remembers how the timid "Luisfer" would never get tired.

Liverpool's newest star emerged from this desert outback in the northern La Guajira department that borders the Caribbean Sea to the north-west and Venezuela to the southeast, to become a national phenomenon. From a young age, Diaz, whose father Luis Manuel was a coach at the only football school in the small town of 38,000, stood out for his speed, toughness and ability to weave around opponents with the ball at his feet.

In just four months since Liverpool signed Diaz for an initial 45 million euros (\$48.1 million) from Portugal's Porto, he has taken English football by

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Khaldiya	24848075	Dasmah	22532265
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Kaifan	24849807	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Shamiya	24848913	Shaab	22518752
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700			Shuwaikh	24814507	Qibla	22459381
Chest Hospital	24849400	Kaizen center	25716707	Abdullah Salem	22549134	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Rawda	22517733	Nuzha	22526804	Mirqab	22456536
Adan Hospital	23940620	Adaliya	22517144	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Sharq	22465401
				Qadsiya	22515088	Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Mohamed Haja Chahul Hamid holder of Indian Passport No. V3760102 hereby change my name to Mouhamad Hadja Chahul Hamid. (C 2002)

I, Lejo Renjith, Karimbintottal house, Navolimatom, Mannathoor P.O, Ernakulam, PIN 686723, Kerala, India have

changed my name and address to Lejo Puthoor, Puthoor Palappillil house, Pampakuda P.O, Muvattupuzha, Ernakulam, PIN 686667, Kerala, India. As in my SSLC Book Reg. No - 216808 and Adhaar card 900125188018. (C 0867)

Old Name - Modhini Sivaiah, New name - Madhini Sivaiah Passport No. U0610193 (C 0868)

Automated enquiry about the Civild card is 1889988

EMERGENCY 112



TIRANA: Roma's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the UEFA Europa Conference League final against Feyenoord at the Air Albania Stadium on May 25, 2022. —AFP

Roma win Conference League title

TIRANA: Nicolò Zaniolo won Roma their first ever major European trophy on Wednesday with the only goal in a 1-0 win over Feyenoord in the inaugural Europa Conference League final. Italy international Zaniolo struck with a well-taken finish in the 32nd minute to earn Roma their first trophy of any kind since 2008 and cap a successful first season for coach Jose Mourinho in Rome.

Mourinho was moved to tears by his fifth continental cup as a coach, the first for an Italian team since he led Inter Milan to the Champions League 12 years ago. "It was a real struggle but I'm really happy," Zaniolo said to Sky. "It was my dream and now I've done it."

Roma, Fairs Cup winners in 1961, rode their luck

with Feyenoord having the lion's share of the play and twice striking the woodwork in the second half. But they remained solid in the face of Dutch dominance and brought joy to one of Europe's most passionate and success-starved fan bases. Over 50,000 fans packed the Stadio Olimpico in the Italian capital to watch their team make a little piece of history in Albania and poured onto the pitch once the trophy was secured.

Meanwhile the small corner of supporters allowed into Tirana's National Stadium roared with delight once referee Istvan Kovacs blew his whistle to end their team's trophy drought. "We know that after these amazing victories it's always difficult to start again but

a real team wins, celebrates and then gets going again," said Rome-born captain Lorenzo Pellegrini.

For 1970 European champions Feyenoord it was their first ever defeat in a European final as well as being the first loss in the competition for Arne Slot's team. Zaniolo broke the deadlock with the only real moment of magic in what was a tight, scrappy opening half. He expertly brought down Gianluca Mancini's ball over the top that just escaped Gernot Trauner before flicking a finish past the onrushing Justin Bijlow.

The goal made Zaniolo the first Italian to score in a European final since Filippo Inzaghi in 2007 as well as a confirmed hero for Roma fans. Feyenoord had dominated the ball, creating nothing of interest, but that

changed almost immediately after the restart. Trauner diverted a low cross off the post and seconds later Rui Patrício made his first real save of the match, the Portuguese reacting well to push Guus Til's shot away.

And the 34-year-old was called into action again four minutes after the break, flinging himself to his left to just tip Tyrrell Malacia's rocket of a shot onto the woodwork. Almost straight after Tammy Abraham had his hands in the air in disbelief when he was pulled back by Marcos Senesi just as he was charging through on goal, but Feyenoord were clearly on top. The Dutch side continued to push but a spirited defensive display typical of Mourinho's teams held them off and handed Roma a rare moment of glory. —AFP

Kaepernick working out with Raiders

LOS ANGELES: Colin Kaepernick has been invited to train with the Las Vegas Raiders, marking the first time the quarterback has worked out with an NFL team since his de facto exile from the sport following his 2016 social justice protests, reports said Wednesday. ESPN and NFL Network both reported that Kaepernick was working out with the Raiders this week after being approached by the team.

Kaepernick, 34, has not played in the NFL or trained with a club since becoming a free agent in 2017 after being informed that he would be released by the San Francisco 49ers. Kaepernick's departure from the 49ers, who he led to a Super Bowl appearance in 2013, followed a tumultuous 2016 campaign in which he sparked a nationwide debate by refusing to stand for the US national anthem to draw attention to racial injustice. It followed the deaths of several unarmed black men at the hands of US law enforcement. In Sept 2017, the wider protest movement started by Kaepernick became a target of criticism by then US President Donald Trump, calling a player who knelt a "son of a b****" and saying all who knelt should be fired for insulting the nation and its military.

Kaepernick later sued the NFL, accusing team owners of colluding to keep him out of the league following his departure from the 49ers. He subsequently settled the suit for a figure reported to be less than \$10 million.



ANN ARBOR, Michigan: In this file photo taken on April 2, 2022, Colin Kaepernick participates in a throwing exhibition during half time of the Michigan spring football game at Michigan Stadium. —AFP

Kaepernick's activism has been viewed more sympathetically by the NFL in the wake of the nationwide debate over racial injustice triggered by the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis in 2020. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell later apologized over the league's handling of Kaepernick's protests. "I wish we had listened earlier, Kaep, to what you were kneeling about and what you were trying to bring attention to," Goodell said in 2020. "We had invited him in several times to have the conversation, to have the dialogue. I wish we had the benefit of that, we never did. We would have benefited from that, absolutely." —AFP

more susceptible to muscle injuries. Mane and Salah have travelled an average of 90,000 km each to represent their club and national teams this season, the analysis shows, while Real Madrid duo Eder Militao and Vinicius Junior have travelled 128,000 km each, mostly to play for Brazil. For Liverpool, who have already won the English League Cup and FA Cup, Saturday's final will be their 63rd competitive outing of the campaign. According to FIFPro's report, 54 percent of players said they had suffered an injury due to schedule overload, while 82 percent of coaches said they observed mental health issues in players caused by playing too many games.

It cites the example of Mikel Oyarzabal, the Spain forward who played at Euro 2020 and then travelled to the Tokyo Olympics. Eight days after playing in the Olympic final, he played for Real Sociedad against Barcelona in their first match this season. In October he suffered a muscle tear which saw him miss seven matches, before in March he suffered a ruptured cruciate knee ligament and missed the rest of this season.

"We are athletes, not machines. Our bodies and our minds have natural limits," says the foreword to FIFPro's report, jointly signed by a group of players including Inter Milan's Arturo Vidal, Leonardo Bonucci of Juventus and Italy, and Japan's Maya Yoshida. —AFP

Alcaraz, Zverev pull off escapes as Nadal, Djokovic cruise

PARIS: Spanish teenage sensation Carlos Alcaraz and third seed Alexander Zverev both saved a match point in five-set French Open thrillers, while 13-time winner Rafael Nadal and reigning champion Novak Djokovic eased into the third round Wednesday. Alcaraz, widely tipped as a title contender, rallied from the brink to defeat compatriot Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-1, 6-7 (7/9), 5-7, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 after four hours and 34 minutes. "I feel tired," said Alcaraz. "It was a great battle, a great match and we fought until the last point."

The 19-year-old Alcaraz is attempting to become just the eighth teenager to capture a major men's title, and backed as the man to break the stranglehold of Djokovic and Nadal. But he was pushed to the limit by the seasoned Ramos-Vinolas, 15 years his elder and whose best performance at a Grand Slam came when he made the quarter-finals in Paris six years ago.

Alcaraz, the tour's dominant player in 2022 with a season-leading four titles, fought off a match point to break Ramos-Vinolas as he served at 5-4 in the fourth set. He then clawed his way back from 3-0 in the decider, producing an outrageous backhand pass to retrieve the break and more sensational baseline scrambling to move 5-4 in front before closing out victory with an ace. Alcaraz goes on to face US 27th seed Sebastian Korda, the last man to defeat him at Monte Carlo in April in what was his only loss in 19 matches on clay this season.

Zverev, a 2021 semi-finalist, dug himself out of a deep hole against Argentina's Sebastian Baez to avoid his earliest loss at a major in three years. Zverev overcame Baez 2-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 7-5 and will play Brandon Nakashima of the US for a place in the last 16. "I'm happy still being in the tournament right now," said Zverev, who was match point down on serve at 4-5 in the final set.

"I was finishing my holiday in Monaco, where I was going to go and who I was going to with and that relaxed me, thinking about the beach. "You just have to find a way." It was the third comeback from a two-set deficit in Zverev's career. He trailed fellow German Oscar Otte 2-0 in the opening round at Roland Garros a year ago before his run to the last four.

Nadal brings up triple century

Nadal breezed past French wildcard Corentin Moutet 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 for the 300th Grand Slam win of his career. Roger Federer (369) and Djokovic (325) are the only men to have more than the record 21-time major champion. His French Open record now stands at a staggering 107 wins and just three losses since his



PARIS: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz stretches to return the ball to Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas during their men's singles match of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Simonne-Mathieu on May 25, 2022. —AFP

2005 title-winning debut. "I think it was a good match against a very difficult player with lots of talent," said Nadal, whose build-up to the tournament was hampered by a foot injury. The last couple of months haven't been easy. The victories help a lot."

Djokovic made comfortable work of Slovakia's Alex Molcan, the world number one winning 6-2, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) against a player trained by his long-time former coach Marian Vajda, the man who inspired most of his 20 Grand Slam titles. "So far so good. I'm pleased with the way I'm feeling on the court," Djokovic said after reaching the last 32 at Roland Garros for the 17th straight year. "It was never going to be an easy match, but I thought I performed very well. Everything is going in the right direction. I'm looking forward to the next challenge." The top seed will continue his bid for a third Roland Garros crown against Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene in the last 32.

Meanwhile, Karolina Pliskova became the sixth top 10 women's seed to exit the French Open on Thursday when she was knocked out by world number 227 Leolia Jeanjean. Eighth-seeded Pliskova, last year's Wimbledon runner-up and a semi-finalist in Paris in 2017, lost 6-2, 6-2 to the 26-year-old Frenchwoman who cut her teeth as a leading college player in the United States.

Former number one Pliskova joins fellow top 10 seeds, defending champion Barbora Krejickova, Maria Sakkari, Ons Jabeur, Anett Kontaveit and former winner Garbine Muguruza in failing to get through to the third round. Jeanjean is the lowest-ranked woman to beat a top 10 player at Roland Garros in 34 years. "I don't really realize what's going on. I find it just incredible," said Jeanjean, all smiles on the court just after his victory.

Considered a future star at 12, Jeanjean saw her career abruptly halted by injuries, including a triple dislocation of the knee. She then left to study in the United States, only returning to top-level tennis at the end of 2020. "I wanted to come back so as not to regret anything. I think I made the right choice," she said. —AFP

FIFPro sounds alarm over player workloads

PARIS: Global players' union FIFPro has sounded the alarm over the damaging impact on professional footballers of playing too many matches in a report released Thursday, ahead of this weekend's Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid in Paris. FIFPro's Player Workload Monitoring report focuses on the findings of a survey carried out between October and December 2021 of 1,055 professional male players aged 18 and older, as well as of 92 high-performance coaches.

The survey asked questions of the demands of playing too many games and not having long enough rest periods in between, with 88 percent of coaches believing players should not play more than 55 matches per season. Saturday's final will see Liverpool stars Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah play their 70th matches this season, starting with pre-season, according to analysis by FIFPro and Football Benchmark.

Over 60 percent of those matches were in what is known as the critical zone, defined as when players have had less than five days' rest beforehand and are therefore