



3 Massive blaze guts tent market in Rai



5 Texas school massacre town begs Biden to 'do something'



8 Zain first telecom operator globally to launch Vo5G



16 Celtics beat Heat in game 7, face Warriors in NBA Finals



Speaker calls for emergency session over pensioners' grant

MP enquires about role of private petrol stations • PAM denies withholding workers

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Monday the Assembly office has decided to hold an emergency session on June 14 over the KD 3,000 grant to retired Kuwaitis. The speaker said he will coordinate with the caretaker government and send out invitations for the session. The government decided to pay each retired Kuwaiti a grant of KD 3,000 around two months ago, but could not convene the Assembly to approve the decision because it has resigned.

Ghanem also said the Assembly office decided to

call for one or more emergency sessions to discuss and approve the state budget for 2022/2023 fiscal year, adding that the office members believe that such sessions are important and thus can be held in the presence of the caretaker Cabinet. The government resigned last month following a grilling of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. The resignation has been accepted but the process has taken a long time. HH the Amir is yet to name a new prime minister or reappoint the same premier.

MP Thamer Al-Suwait meanwhile sent a series of questions to Minister of Oil Mohammad Al-Fares regarding the government's supervision over petrol

stations operated by private companies. The lawmaker asked the minister about which government agency monitors petrol stations and asked about the number of petrol stations run by private companies and those run by state-owned Kuwait National Petroleum Co (KNPC).

Suwait asked the minister if the ministry has found any financial or administrative violations at the private stations and enquired about profits the government makes from such stations. The lawmaker also asked about the number of Kuwaitis employed at the stations and the number of expats and enquired why there has been a drop in the number of expat workers at the sta-

tions in recent weeks, resulting in long queues.

The questions come after many vehicles were seen waiting for long periods at private stations to fill their tanks. One of the companies said the Public Authority of Manpower has refused to allow them to recruit more expat workers. But the authority denied in a statement on Monday that it has rejected requests by private fuel companies to recruit foreign workers, adding that no one has approached the authority over this matter. The authority said that it had allowed the two private companies to recruit as many as 1,600 foreign workers, but they have only recruited around 750 workers. (See Page 2)

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| 7 June 2022 | Consumer Staples | ALG | الغانم |

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| Financial indicators | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | Quarter 1 2022 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|----------------|
| Par Value Per Share (Fils) | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| Book Value Per Share (Fils)* | 234.45 | 227.52 | 206.64 | 202.08 |
| Net Profit Attributable to Equity Holders of Parent Company (KWD Million) | 9.73 | 7.16 | 14.68 | 4.07 |
| EPS (Fils)* | 35.08 | 25.80 | 52.88 | 14.68 |
| Share Capital (million KWD) | 17.75 | 17.75 | 27.75 | 27.75 |

* Book Value Per Share and Earnings Per Share are calculated based on the shares outstanding at end of Q1 2022.

Based on the approval of the Capital Markets Authority and the Bursa Kuwait, the Shares of Ali Alghanim Sons Automotive Company will be traded on the Bursa Kuwait (Premier market) starting from 7th June 2022.

| Value in Million Kuwaiti Dinars | As at 31 December | | | Quarter 1 |
|---|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 7.66 | 22.50 | 19.07 | 24.66 |
| Accounts receivable and prepayments | 7.41 | 7.52 | 8.08 | 7.96 |
| Receivables from related parties | 2.34 | 2.52 | 0.33 | 0.08 |
| Inventories | 35.76 | 30.09 | 24.09 | 23.19 |
| Assets held for sale | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2.98 | 2.21 |
| Total current assets | 53.18 | 62.63 | 54.55 | 58.10 |
| Property, plant and equipment | 107.33 | 103.20 | 91.98 | 92.74 |
| Intangible assets | 0.50 | 0.35 | 0.33 | 0.31 |
| Medium-term instalment credit receivables | 0.41 | 0.33 | 0.34 | 0.29 |
| Investment in associate | 0.00 | 0.38 | 0.25 | 0.25 |
| Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.00 | 0 |
| Total non-current assets | 108.29 | 104.30 | 92.90 | 93.60 |
| Total assets | 161.47 | 166.93 | 147.45 | 151.71 |
| Loans and borrowings | 12.44 | 10.59 | 2.25 | 1.75 |
| Accounts payable and accruals | 34.46 | 46.11 | 41.16 | 51.12 |
| Payables to related parties | 0.37 | 0.50 | 4.55 | 4.27 |
| Bank overdrafts | 0.13 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Liabilities directly associated with assets classified as held for sale | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1.99 | 1.62 |
| Total current liabilities | 47.40 | 57.20 | 49.96 | 58.76 |
| Loans and borrowings | 33.14 | 26.93 | 19.98 | 14.19 |
| Employees' end of service benefits | 4.04 | 4.46 | 4.71 | 4.93 |
| Accounts payable and accruals | 9.27 | 8.25 | 8.83 | 11.37 |
| Total non-current liabilities | 46.45 | 39.64 | 33.53 | 30.50 |
| Total liabilities | 93.85 | 96.84 | 83.48 | 89.26 |
| Share capital | 1.00 | 17.75 | 27.75 | 27.75 |
| Amounts collected for share capital increase | 16.75 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Statutory reserve | 0.50 | 1.23 | 2.73 | 2.73 |
| Asset revaluation surplus | 24.96 | 24.96 | 20.79 | 20.79 |
| Cash flow hedge reserve | 0.08 | 0.00 | (1.06) | (1.80) |
| Cost of hedging reserve | (0.03) | (0.02) | (0.03) | (0.18) |
| Fair value reserve | 0.00 | 0.00 | (0.05) | (0.05) |
| Other reserve | 0.00 | 0.73 | 0.73 | 0.73 |
| Foreign currency reserve | 0.00 | (0.04) | (0.05) | (0.05) |
| Retained earnings | 21.81 | 18.53 | 6.52 | 6.15 |
| Equity attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company | 65.06 | 63.14 | 57.34 | 56.08 |
| Non-controlling interests | 2.56 | 6.95 | 6.63 | 6.37 |
| Total equity | 67.62 | 70.09 | 63.97 | 62.45 |
| Total equity and liabilities | 161.47 | 166.93 | 147.45 | 151.71 |

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Local

'Manpower' refutes accusations of causing gas stations' labor shortage

Labor assessment policy unchanged for years

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: People have been complaining of waiting in long queues at fuel stations around Kuwait. The reason given is that the petrol pumps are not fully operational due to a great shortage of staff. The stations blamed the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) of not allowing them to recruit staff from abroad, claiming the staff available in Kuwait are not trained for this job.

After Kuwait Times contacted PAM, it issued a statement clarifying that reports published in some papers and on social media on importing labor for fuel stations is not accurate. PAM assured its decisions have been consistent since 2015, and that the list of needs assessment issued by the authority since 2016 has not witnessed any fundamental changes, whether related to fuel companies or other employers. All companies and employers are subject to the labor law in the private sector.

In the statement, PAM also clarified that none of these companies have contacted the authority

regarding this problem. Most of these companies have suitable needs assessment for their commercial activities, which was issued based on the demand submitted by the representatives of these companies.

The statement included the exact number of needs assessment of each of the fuel station companies. One had permission to hire 892 workers, but the company only recruited 412 workers from abroad, while the actual number of workers is 530 workers presently. This means their unused needs assessment is of 362 workers.

Another fuel company was given a needs assessment of 710 workers, but the company only recruited 342 workers on work permits from abroad, while their actual number of workers is currently 567. So their unused needs assessment is of 143 workers. PAM concluded the statement by assuring that its doors are open to welcome both employers and employees at its various locations or on its social media channels.

Kuwait Times tried to contact three fuel station



Records show companies can still recruit labor



KUWAIT: Vehicles lined up at a gas station in Jahra on May 29, 2022. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

companies for the past two days, but none of them responded or agreed to give a statement or comment on this issue. On Monday, Kuwait National

Petroleum Company issued a statement that no extra changes will be applied for filling up fuel, and that self service will be voluntary.

Kuwait chief lawmaker sees imminent Schengen visa exemption deal

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Monday that a number of his fellow lawmakers are heading to Belgium in a bid to finalize a deal on allowing Kuwaitis visa-free travel to Schengen countries. The lawmakers will join a vote in the Belgian capital Brussels, alongside their counterparts from the European Union's (EU) legislative arm, on whether to

greenlight the move, he said in a statement. On the outcome of the vote, he expressed "confidence" that it would pan out in Kuwait's favor, thanks largely to its solid relations with EU member states. The European Commission said last month that it would include Kuwait in its list of nations whose citizens are granted visa-free travel to the EU's Schengen zone. —KUNA



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

Kuwait works with WB to implement national youth policy

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait's Public Authority for Youth (PAY) Dr Mishal Al-Shahin said the Authority cooperates with the World Bank to implement the projects listed in the national policy for training and employing the youth. The policy aims also to increase the number of beneficiaries from

the capacity building programs and measure the efficacy of the youth projects, he said in a statement on Sunday. A technical team from the WB attended meetings with PAY to explore areas of cooperation and assess the assistance the Bank could offer to PAY in the framework of Kuwait-WB partnership (2021-2025), he noted. The partnership has two axes - investment in human resources, and empowering the private sector to drive economic growth and create job opportunities, Al-Shahin revealed. He added that the WB team praised the progress made by PAY in supporting the youth and empowering them, and the great efforts being made to implement the youth-oriented programs. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani visited Kuwait Times on Monday and met with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Exhibition celebrates 200 years of Kuwait, France friendship

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The French Research Center of the Arabian Peninsula (CEFREPA) organized on Sunday an exhibition titled "France and Kuwait: a Friendship of More Than Two Centuries" in cooperation with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) at the National Library of Kuwait.

In a press statement, French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher praised the excellent and historical relations that unite the two countries in various fields, saying the close relations between Kuwait and France have been manifested among others by the growth in efforts to bring about collaboration in sectors and solid ties.

Le Flecher noted the depth of the joint relations and cooperation between the two countries in military, political and cultural fields, along with strong economic relations since the Kuwaitis' trade in pearls before the discovery of oil. She stressed the exhibition came as part of the 60th anniversary of distinguished diplomatic relations between France and Kuwait, indicating the exhibition showcases the beginning of non-diplomatic relations between the two sides, which was written by several French travelers who roamed the region in the past, in addition to France's early interest in the Arabian Gulf region and Kuwaitis' desire to establish ties with the French.

Director of CEFREPA Makram Abbes said the exhibition sheds light on the history of Kuwaiti-French relations since the 17th century by French

cartographer Nicolas Sanson, where the exhibition aimed to explore available documents and unpublished archives that showcase the depth of relations between the two countries.

"Archived documents, maps, photographs and videos show a memory of moments and historical ties in the past - a lasting friendship that unfolds throughout several contexts and fields, encompassing not only politico-military contacts but also cultural influences, scientific collaborations as well as economic relations," he added.

Sheikh Duaij Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah expressed joy to attend the exhibition, praising the efforts exerted in holding it to present the hidden history of Kuwait. "We hope such exhibitions continue. I wish other countries organize similar exhibitions to showcase the history of the relationship of Kuwait with other countries," he said, stressing that this initiative is a great step in the direction of developing bilateral relations with France.

The exhibition showcases joint relations after the discovery of oil in Kuwait and technological and scientific cooperation, which supported the economic relations between the two countries, in addition to the start of diplomatic relations after Kuwait's independence. It highlights the French-Kuwaiti archaeological mission that carried out excavations on Failaka Island.

The exhibition also highlights certain unpublished documents thematically. It shows the longest first French text written on Kuwait and the Arab Gulf in 1902 by French traveler Gaston Bordat and features French-speaking sources, which like the Cairo magazine Images, address different scenes of life in the country like pearl diving and discovery of oil. Other materials are from the collection of the French National Audiovisual Institute (INA) and photographs and diplomatic documents from French National Archives.



KUWAIT: French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher inaugurates the exhibition. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



The late Yousuf Al-Alyan, founder and former Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times, appears in a documentary film shown at the exhibition.



From the exhibition.

Info Minister meets Tomooh delegation

KUWAIT: Information and Culture Minister Dr Hamad Rouhaddeen received a delegation from Tomooh Sport Club including Deputy Chairwoman Huda Al-Khaldi, Secretary General Sadiqa Al-Ansari, Assistant Secretary Fahad Al-Sahly along with players Sheikha Al-Hindi, Mariam Thiyab, Haidar Al-Demnkhi and Nasser Al-Hashimi.

The two sides discussed several issues related to the activities of the club and means of supporting sports of the disabled. They also discussed local and foreign participations as well as programs and initiatives the club will carry out.

Huda Al-Khaldi thanked Information Minister for his gesture and his affirmation that Information Ministry will spare no effort in extending all types of support and removing all obstacles to enable the club carry out its mission. The players thanked the minister for the distinguished role the ministry is playing to spread awareness about disabilities in general and mental disability in particular.



Local



KUWAIT: An aerial view showing a plume of smoke from the tent market's fire in Rai on Monday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh

Massive blaze guts Kuwait tent market



Firefighters battle the blaze at the tent market.



KUWAIT: Firefighters battled a blaze that erupted in the tent market located in Al-Rai area southwest of Kuwait City, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said on Monday. Four firefighting units were at the scene to contain the blaze, KFF said in a statement. The area of the blaze is at approximately 4,000 square meters with damage mostly affecting tent's building materials and camping products, it added, noting that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire. —KUNA

Kuwait deploras Al-Aqsa Mosque storming by extremists

KUWAIT: The Foreign Ministry voiced Sunday Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of Al-Aqsa Mosque's storming by extremists under the protection of the Zionist entity's forces. In a statement, the Ministry said these flagrant violations, which provoke Muslims' feelings and run counter to international law, portend repercussions on international and regional stability and security, and increase the opportunities of religious-based confrontations. The Ministry called on the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities against these violations and compel the Zionist occupation forces to respect international law and international legitimacy's resolutions, and to provide required protection to the brotherly Palestinian people. It further stressed Kuwait's principled and firm stance supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) strongly denounced the Zionist entity's authorities for allowing the extremist settlers to break into Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of East Jerusalem in the occupied Palestinian West Bank under police protection. The permission for extremists waving the Zionist entity's flag to organize a provocative march in the occupied Jerusalem constitutes a flagrant and abhorrent violation of the international laws, and a serious esca-



RAMALLAH: Paramedics carry a man towards an ambulance during a protest to denounce the annual nationalist "flag march" through Jerusalem, near the Beit El settlement at the northern entrance to the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on May 29, 2022. —AFP

lation of the already tense situation, Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf said in a press release. Stressing the need of the Zionist entity respecting the historical, religious and legal status of Jerusalem, including the sacred sites, Dr Hajraf urged the international community to shoulder its responsibility for protecting Al-Aqsa Mosque and forcing the Zionist entity, the occupying power, into meeting its obligations under the International Humanitarian Law. —KUNA

head of the strategy and work development division, Shatha Al-Dabbous, conducted the sale according to standing procedures.

The company did not mention identity of the buyer in its statement. The 15-year-old tanker, manufactured in South Korea in 2007, has a cargo capacity of 113,849 tons. KOTC, a subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), is mainly involved in the ownership and management of tankers engaged in the transport of crude oil, refined petroleum products and liquefied petroleum gases (LPG). —KUNA

In remarks to the press, Moussa added that the conferees discussed appointing the Arabs' representatives at the coordination and formulation commissions, where Dr. Abdullah Al-Rashed of Kuwait was nominated as member of the formulation committee.

The Kuwaiti delegation expressed satisfaction that Mohammad Mahmoud Saafan of Egypt was named head of the Arab group during the current convention. He added that the delegation would take part in meetings of various committees and discussions regarding labor issues world wise. Among the files on the table is modifying the International Labor Organization's declaration on basic labor principles and rights. The committees' works kick off as of May 30, pending the broad sessions due to begin on June 6. —KUNA

KOTC sells oil tanker

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Tanker Company said on Monday it sold the oil tanker "Wafra" and handed the giant vessel to the buyer at Al-Fujaira port in the United Arab Emirates. The KOTC said in a statement to KUNA that a company's team including the head of the trade group, Fatma Al-Ghanem, director of the fleet operations group, Ahmad Al-Salem, and the

Kuwaiti delegation partakes in Arab Group meeting

GENEVA: Director General of Kuwait's Public Authority of Manpower Ahmad Al-Moussa said on Monday the delegation of the State of Kuwait to the international labor conference participated in the first coordination meeting of the Arab group. The meeting, held late on Sunday, aimed at finding a common perspective regarding prior topics and development needs in the Arab countries in the foreseeable future.

In my view

Kuwait's crying trees



By Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Seleh

local@kuwaittimes.com

Have you seen a tree crying? I saw this - a group of tall, pale trees on Maghreb Expressway across the green Bayan Palace trees. This may be due to lack of water, neglect or both. We are now in the month of May, before the scorching weather of July and August arrives. Despite this, we see drying branches on the sides of the roads, and the disappearance of the touches of beauty from Kuwait's streets. There are very few bright trees remaining in all of Kuwait's streets. A few trees discovered the Kuwaiti mentality, because they do not trust us, and extended their roots to the underground waters to quench their thirst. This is what is taking place today in planting in Kuwait's streets. As for the condition of the pavements, it raises the question whether there is a budget to repair them. The repeated ugly image is not limited to one street - all you have to do is to drive on the main streets: Maghreb, Sixth Ring, Fifth Ring and so on, and you will see what I mean.

We, in Kuwait, have lost the spirit of beauty in our streets. Our roads and pavements became neglected, our trees forgotten, and what makes it more worrying is that the cleanliness Kuwait was famous for is fading, and we started to see concrete leftovers, plastic bags and cans of types thrown on the sides of the roads, in an early sign of the coming danger. I met a friend at the end of Riyadh Expressway towards Kuwait City, and at the First Ring Road traffic light, I saw trees that are not watered, with broken tiles due to plants emerging from between them. So if you stop at this light, I wish you look around you, as it is a place in the heart of the capital and not in a remote area. We were deprived of the touches of beauty and soon we will be deprived of cleanliness. A few weeks earlier, I returned from Al-Madinah Al-Munawwara, and our entry was from the western side. The skies were clear, so I looked at Kuwait from this side, and I was scared from what I saw. An arid desert with black spots, so asked myself: Is this the Kuwait we dreamt of? We have lost the touches of beauty, and we are not good at planting. We only succeeded in forming authorities, departments, spending money, officials submitting reports, and the image remained as is. Even Kuwait airport is deprived from green plants and is full of dry, yellow grass. Who is responsible, and who hears the cries of trees? And most importantly, who will restore Kuwait's beauty and cleanliness?

—Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh is a retired medical consultant and member of Kuwait Writers Association. He has many literary collections and scientific papers in the field of cancers. He is Chairman of Kuwait Society for Preventing Smoking and Cancer and the Cancer Awareness National Campaign (CAN)

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News in brief

Amir expresses sorrow
over Brazil floods victims

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable of condolences to Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, expressing sorrow over the casualties, which occurred in the floods hitting the northwestern State of Pernambuco. His Highness the Amir wished peace and solace for the families of those killed in the floods, and expressed hopes for swift recovery for those wounded. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Amir offers condolences
over late Albanian President

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addressed on Monday a condolence cable to the President of Albania Ilir Meta over the death of former Albanian President Bujar Nishani. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent to the President of Albania cables of identical sentiments.

Crown Prince meets
Interior Minister

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

Kuwait highlights
need to speed up
efforts for smart govt

KUWAIT: The Director of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Haya Al-Wadaani stressed on Monday, the importance of speeding up efforts to implement the 'Smart Government' project and digital transformation to benefit society. In a speech delivered in the opening of 'Microsoft Smart Government Summit 2022', she said that any delay in transforming into digital government would affect the economical and development plans at all levels. Application of digital transformation will benefit many ongoing projects and initiatives carried by CAIT and Microsoft such as the Center of Excellence for Cloud Computing, Wadaani explained.

Director General of Microsoft Alaoudin Kareem that this conference aims to participate with government bodies the latest technologies and developments that supports the digital shifting. He said that the event aims to share the successes achieved by many government agencies during the past three years, especially in the field of electronic services, and discuss the latest developments and technologies that can be applied in the next stage effectively and quickly.

On the other hand, Deputy Director-General of the Central Agency for Information Technology, Dr Ammar Al-Husseini, said that the authority announced the submission of a new initiative called "Massar" to government agencies in order to develop a road map to help them in digital transformation according to a timetable for each party. —KUNA

Alghanim Industries
receives AUM
Corporate Award 2022

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest privately-owned companies in the region, received the American University of the Middle East's 2022 Corporate Award during the inaugural awarding ceremony held at the AUM Cultural Center. This recognition underscores Alghanim Industries' commitment to develop national talent and support their growth throughout the youth's foundational years of their professional careers. Alghanim Industries participated in five career fairs at local public and private educational institutes, including the AUM Career Fair. During the career fairs, Human Resources representatives from Alghanim Industries introduced graduates to Alghanim Industries Academy, the company's new program focused on recruiting fresh college graduates and kickstarting their careers. The Academy offers a hands-on approach in addressing the challenges of education-to-workplace transitions in the country. During the year-long program, the recruits work closely with an experienced mentor to guide them through these first stages of their career. Alghanim Industries Academy recruits are also tasked with core business challenges that they will have

High demand for coworking spaces
among entrepreneurs in Kuwait

Developing through business incubator while saving on rent

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: According to Kuwait Financial Center Company (Al-Markaz), the number of small and medium businesses in the country before the pandemic reached 25,000 to 30,000 firms. Meanwhile, demand has increased among local entrepreneurs to rent coworking spaces, which have evolved to not only provide rental spaces and offices, but also a support system to help develop the entrepreneurs through a business incubator.

According to the benefits that have reflected on the business after renting coworking spaces, coworking space owner Mohammad Al-Musallam told Kuwait Times that small or first-time entrepreneurs are always searching for a way to develop their business. "Starting from scratch with the entrepreneur is one of the main services that we provide, which includes suggesting business ideas and combining their professional experience with available business opportunities in the local market," he said.

"Co-working services also include training entrepreneurs on financial management and auditing, bookkeeping, how to analyze the market and its segments, and other services that support their business," Musallam added. He said coworking spaces provide investment opportunities for entrepreneurs through the coworking company itself or other entrepreneurs who rent with them.

Some coworking spaces provide offices that include secretarial services, commercial licenses, high-speed wi-fi, meeting rooms, kitchens equipped with all facilities among others. Musallam assured that the cost for leasing coworking spaces is less than a regular place due to the free services that include the rent and services provided, instead of paying for their own services. He said rentals range between KD 300 and KD 1,000 per month.

"During the pandemic, many entrepreneurs lost their businesses, which affected their cash flow and eventually affected the coworking spaces business," Musallam said. "Most of the entrepreneurs who tried to revive their business focused on renting spaces and stayed away from business incubator services due to a lack of money and awareness."



More productivity

Despite the featured services of coworking spaces, entrepreneurs are looking to develop their business productivity by reducing the challenges

ing spaces is encouraging, especially since you don't need to submit a commercial license, unlike regular offices. Meeting other entrepreneurs in open areas is an advantage that supports both businesses and encourages collaboration that increases benefits."

The first official coworking space was launched in 2005 by software engineer Brad Neuberg in San Francisco. Coworking spaces are an idea that took off from a desire of combining the feel of independence and freedom of working by the entrepreneur themselves with a community feel and structure of working with others.

Soon after Neuberg sparked the trend, other American cities took notice, and by 2012, there were over 2,000 spaces in the world, cementing its power as a global trend. Coworking spaces are one of the side sectors that emerged during the spread of freelancing that help entrepreneurs grow their businesses.



Rentals range
between KD
300 and KD
1,000 per month

they face. One of these challenges is disruptions in their houses. Musaed Al-Khalidi, an entrepreneur, told Kuwait Times: "The ease of renting cowork-

Boursa Kuwait
gives AUK students
tour to raise capital
market awareness

KUWAIT: Reinforcing its commitment to nurturing a new generation of well-informed retail investors and securities professionals, Boursa Kuwait hosted a group of finance students from the American University of Kuwait on May 24, 2022, for an exclusive tour of the stock exchange, providing them with a deep understanding of the capital market operations.

The students were able to get an inside look at the recent developments made at Boursa Kuwait, and how their efforts have significantly improved their international ratings and allowed Kuwait to become more attractive to local and international investors. A presentation that shed light on the various aspects of the company's activities and operations, which included major milestones in Boursa Kuwait's journey to a leading stock exchange, as well as it being the crown jewel of the market's development and one of the key cogs in the reclassification of Kuwait from a Frontier to an Emerging Market in three of the world's top index providers.

The participants also took a tour of the company's recently refurbished Nasser Al-Kharafi / Jassim Al-Bahar Trading Hall, which is now equipped with the latest, state-of-the-art technologies, including energy efficient trading screens and an opening/closing bell podium as well as a media center, as part of the company's efforts to maintain and upgrade facilities and utilities. Students also gained first-hand knowledge of trading operations and got an up-close look at the tools and equipment involved in trading before the adoption of electronic trading.

The event comes in line with Boursa Kuwait's



corporate sustainability initiatives, which conform to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and falls under the 'Education' pillar of the company's Corporate Sustainability strategy. The pillar envisions a robust capital market ecosystem where all stakeholders are fully equipped with the knowledge and skill required to be an active player in the nation's exchange in particular and its capital market in general. The strategy also includes 'Community' and 'Environment' pillars that envision a profitable business while also contributing to the well-being of the society and the environment.

The company has launched a number of initiatives under the Education pillar, including the Boursa Academy free digital education portal, ongoing collaboration with a number of universities to advance capital markets literacy among students and raise awareness of Boursa Academy, as well as investor relations workshops and seminars for executives and professionals from companies listed on the stock exchange.

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

As part of the strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched many initiatives in partnership with local and international organizations, focusing on support for nongovernmental organizations and charity programs, financial literacy and capital market awareness, the empowerment of women, environmental protection as well as safety and preventive measures against COVID-19.



KUWAIT: Chief Human Resources Officer at Alghanim Industries Anas Al-Ateeqi (left) receives the award.

to resolve and present on when the program concludes. "As the academic year comes to an end, we are proud to have interacted with graduates from some of the most educational institutes in Kuwait to introduce our Alghanim Industries Academy. The first batch of the program is well underway, and we look forward to reaping the rewards of this initiative when we celebrate the success of our promising and ambitious youth. Our commitment to education and empowering the leaders of tomorrow reflects ideals we've long stood for," said Chief Human Resources Officer at Alghanim Industries Anas Al-Ateeqi.



The Academy builds on the company's decades of talent management expertise conducting large scale internship and career development programs. Ateeqi explained, adding: "As a private sector organization, we are keen on having a proactive role in developing our young professionals at this very foundational stage of their careers," Al-Ateeqi concluded.

A longtime supporter of Kuwaiti youth, Alghanim Industries holds a distinguished track record of mobilizing initiatives that nurture local talent, with a focus on education and professional development. The new program aligns with Kuwait government's efforts under the

human capital pillar of its Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" which aims to engage the private sector in developing local talent and supporting the development of a sustainable economy.

The first cohort, who joined the company earlier this year, includes over 40 distinguished, young Kuwaiti women and men from a variety of academic backgrounds such as information technology, engineering, marketing, finance, and accounting. Alghanim Industries looks forward to hosting the next cohort and honing their skills further as they enter the many industries they will lead in the future.

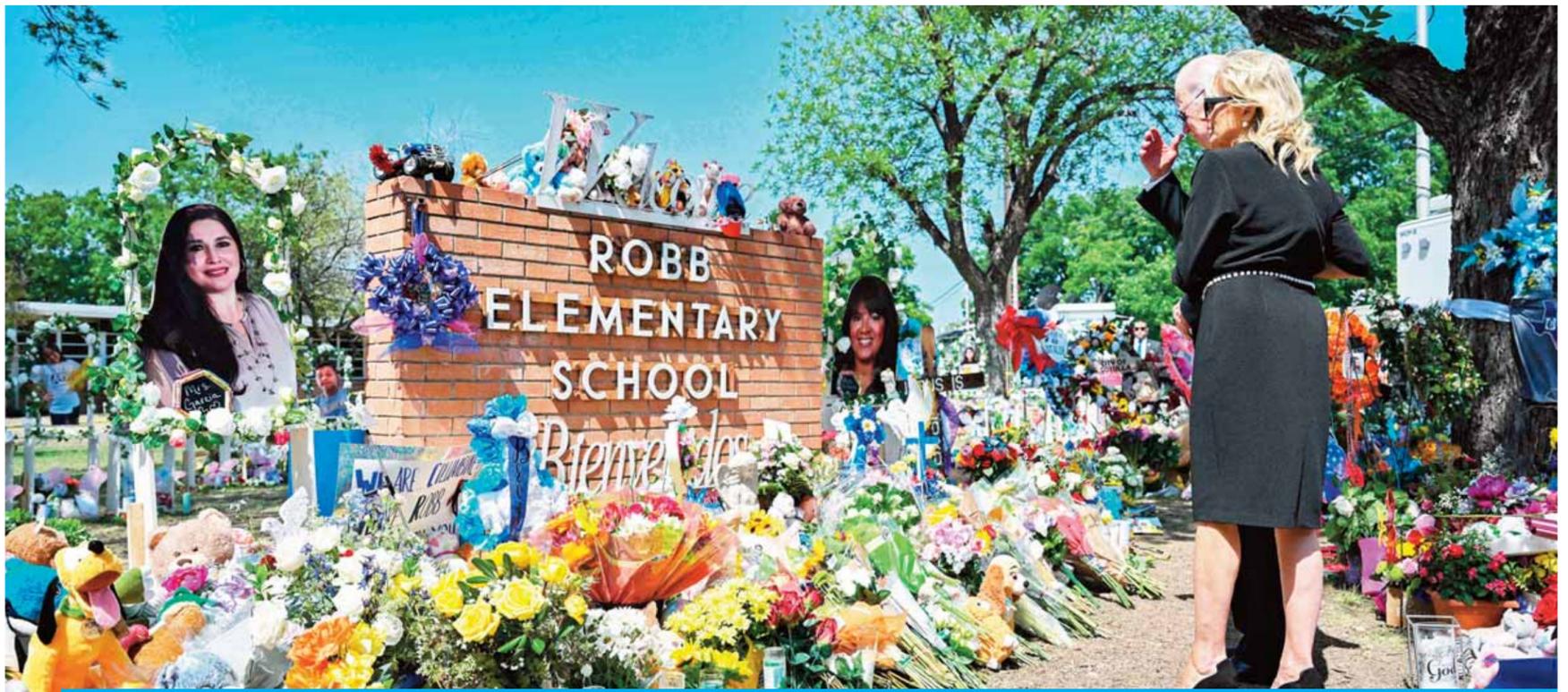


Historic leftist win in first round of Colombian vote

Bodies pulled from wreckage of crashed Nepalese plane

Page 7

Page 6



UVALDE, Texas: US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden pay their respects at a makeshift memorial outside of Robb Elementary School on May 29, 2022. — AFP

Uvalde begs Biden to 'do something'

Heartbroken Texas school massacre town boos governor Abbott

UVALDE, Texas: Desperate pleas for a stop to the gun massacres plaguing the United States rang out Sunday during President Joe Biden's visit to Uvalde, where he prayed for the 19 children and two teachers slain by a teen gunman in the small Texas town. "Do something!" rang out shouts from a crowd in the street as Biden left Sacred Heart Church where he attended mass with mourning relatives.

"We will. We will," Biden responded to the crowd, before heading to private meetings with relatives of the dead and with first responders. Biden, accompanied by his wife, Jill Biden, was in Uvalde less than two weeks after making a similar trip to the site of another mass shooting - this time targeting African Americans in a racist attack - in Buffalo, New York.

The first couple began by visiting a makeshift shrine at Robb Elementary School, where last Tuesday the teen gunman walked in with an AR-15-type semi-automatic and began his slaughter. Both wearing black, the Bidens held hands in front of the memorial, walking slowly along the thicket of wreaths, bouquets, white crosses and blown-up photos of the slain children.

Biden, whose adult son Beau died seven years ago this Monday from cancer, and whose first wife

and infant daughter perished in a car accident, made the sign of the cross, appearing to wipe away a tear. The arrival of the Bidens' motorcade at the school was met with applause from a crowd. However, illustrating the tension in the town, there were boos at the appearance of Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott, who strongly opposes new restrictions on gun ownership. "We need changes," shouted one man.

"Our hearts are broken," Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller said at the church. Biden was not scheduled to speak publicly in Texas, but on Saturday he renewed his so-far fruitless call for Congress to overcome years of paralysis to toughen firearms regulations - especially on weapons like the AR-15. "We cannot outlaw tragedy, I know, but we can make America safer," Biden said.

Ricardo Garcia, who works at Uvalde's hospital, said he was "honored" Biden came to visit his town, but wanted to see more action on gun control. The 47-year-old was at work on Tuesday when first responders brought in children from Robb. "I just can't get out of my mind that screaming in the halls from the moms when they got the bad news," Garcia said. "It's still there. I can't sleep at night."

Harrowing accounts emerged of the ordeal faced

by survivors of Tuesday's attack, where the behavior of the police is under severe scrutiny. Ten-year-old Samuel Salinas was sitting in his fourth-grade classroom when the shooter, later identified as Salvador Ramos, 18, barged in and announced: "You're all going to die." Then "he just started shooting," Salinas told ABC News.

Texas authorities admitted Friday that as many as 19 police officers were in the school hallway for nearly an hour before finally breaching the room and killing Ramos, saying the officers mistakenly thought that he had stopped killing and was now barricaded. Parents have expressed fury and on Sunday the Justice Department announced an inquiry "to identify lessons learned and best practices to help first responders prepare".

Surviving children described making desperate, whispered pleas for help in 911 phone calls while police waited. Some played dead to avoid drawing the shooter's attention. Eleven-year-old Miah Cerrillo smeared the blood of a dead friend on herself to feign death. Salinas said he thinks Ramos fired at him, but the bullet struck a chair, sending shrapnel into the boy's leg. "I played dead so he wouldn't shoot me," he said.

Another student, Daniel, whose mother would

not provide his last name, said he saw Ramos fire through the glass in the classroom door, striking his teacher. Though his teacher lay on the floor bleeding, she repeatedly told the students, "Stay calm. Stay where you are. Don't move," Daniel told The Washington Post.

'Have the courage'

Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday attended the funeral of a victim of the Buffalo mass shooting - Ruth Whitfield, who was among 10 people killed on May 14, allegedly by a self-described white supremacist. "Congress must have the courage to stand up, once and for all, to the gun lobby and pass reasonable gun safety laws," Harris tweeted.

The Uvalde shooting was the deadliest school attack since 20 children and six staff were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012. But Congress has repeatedly failed to agree on possible new gun regulations. This time might be different, some lawmakers say. Democratic Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy said Sunday there were "serious negotiations" underway involving members of both parties. — AFP

Indian rapper killed in gang related violence

NEW DELHI: An Indian rapper with a major following both at home and among the diaspora in Canada and Britain was gunned down near his hometown in a gang-related killing, Indian police have said. Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu - known as Sidhu Moose Wala to his 11 million followers on YouTube and millions of fans - was driving his SUV in the northern state of Punjab when he was attacked by suspects in two or three cars who fired about 30 bullets on Sunday afternoon.



Sidhu Moose Wala

Viresh Kumar Bhawra, state police chief, said the killing "looks like an inter-gang rivalry" and added that a Canada-based gangster known as Goldy Brar "has claimed the responsibility on behalf of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang". Bhawra, who is facing questions about reducing Sidhu's security detail last week, said the rapper was not travelling with his bodyguards and even left his bullet-proof vehicle at home.

Moose Wala, 28, earned a particularly large following among young Punjabi men with his catchy rap videos that attacked rival singers and politicians, and portrayed him as a man who fought for the community's pride, delivered justice and gunned down his rivals. The rapper unsuccessfully contested state elections as a candidate for India's main opposition Congress party earlier this year.

The political bid attracted additional scrutiny and criticism of Sidhu's work with rivals accusing him of glorifying guns, Sikh nationalism and gang culture. His biggest hits, such as "Legend", "Old Skool", "Devil" and "Just Listen", are among the most popular tunes on different short-video platforms in India. — AFP

Around 100 dead in clashes between Chad gold miners

N'DJAMENA: Around 100 people have died in clashes between gold miners in northern Chad, Defense Minister General Daoud Yaya Brahim said on Monday. Violence broke out on May 23 at Kouri Bougoudi near the Libyan border, sparked by a "mundane dispute between two people which degenerated", he said, adding that the toll was "around 100 dead and at least 40 wounded".

The clashes occurred in the Tibesti Mountains, a rugged and lawless region in the central Sahara some 1,000 km from the capital N'Djamena. The discovery of gold there 10 years ago sparked a rush of miners from across Chad and neighboring countries, and tensions often run high. The latest clashes were between Mauritians and Libyans, Yaya Brahim said.

He spoke to AFP by phone from the area, where

he said he was with a large military contingent sent to help restore order. "This isn't the first time that there's been violence among gold miners in the region, and we have decided to suspend all gold mining at Kouri until further notice," he said, adding that "the great majority (of mines in the area) are illegal".

The incident was first announced last Wednesday, when Communications Minister Abderaman Koulamallah said in a statement there had been "loss of human life and several wounded," but gave no further details. The same day, the head of Chad's National Human Rights Commission, Mahamat Nour Ibedou, told AFP that after the fighting broke out, "the government sent in a force to intervene, which fired on people". "According to our information, there are at least 200 dead," he said, adding that he had no evidence to support this figure.

Succes Masra, who heads an opposition party called The Transformers, and Chad's main armed rebel movement, the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), also gave a toll of some 200 dead. But Yaya Brahim denied this figure and said the authorities were not to blame. "The defense and security forces absolutely did not open fire, and

there were not 200 deaths," he said. On Monday, another rebel group in the region, the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR), said in a statement there had been "carnage," which had unfolded "under the complicit gaze of the security forces."

Troubled region

The Tibesti region is notorious for ethnic troubles and for fostering revolts that have marked Chad's history since the vast central West African country gained independence from France in 1960. In Jan 2019, several dozen people died in Kouri when fighting erupted between Libyan Arabs and people from the eastern Chadian region of Ouaddai.

Koulamallah, in comments to AFP last Wednesday, described the gold-mining area as a "hostile zone, almost lawless, it's the Far West. They all go there because there's gold, so there's conflict."

The impoverished Sahel state last year lost its 30-year ruler, Idriss Deby Itno, who was killed during an operation against rebels. His place was taken by his son, General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, at the head of a 15-member military junta. — AFP

Guards accuse 'Zionists' of killing colonel

TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Monday accused "Zionists" of shooting dead a colonel in Tehran earlier this month, days after the Zionist entity reportedly told the US it was behind the killing. Guards Colonel Sayyad Khodai, 50, was fatally shot on May 22 outside his home in the east of the Iranian capital by assailants on motorcycles. He was hit with five bullets, according to official media.

It was the most high-profile killing inside Iran since the Nov 2020 murder of top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh - an act Tehran blamed on

arch-enemy the Zionist entity. Khodai was killed "by the most vicious people, the Zionists, and God willing, we will avenge his death," head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Major General Hossein Salami said during a visit to his family, according to the Guards' Sepah News website.

The general did not, however, use the term "Zionist regime", routinely used by the Islamic republic as a direct reference to the Zionist entity. "The enemy pursued him (the colonel) from the heart of the White House and Tel Aviv for months and years, door to door and alley to alley to martyr him," Salami added. The New York Times reported last week that the Zionist entity has told the United States that the Zionist state was behind the killing of Khodai. The US daily cited an anonymous "intelligence official briefed on the communications".

Iran had earlier blamed Khodai's killing on "elements linked to the global arrogance", its catch-all term for the United States and allies including the

Zionist entity. According to the New York Times, Zionist officials claimed Khodai was the deputy commander of a "secret unit within the Quds Force", involved in "planning plots against foreigners, including (Zionists)". The Quds Force is an elite unit of the Guards in charge of external operations. The source, who spoke to the Times on condition of anonymity, said the Zionist entity told US officials the killing was meant as a warning to Iran to halt the operations of this covert group.

Iran's state television has said that Khodai was a member of the Quds Force and that he was "known" in Syria, where Iran has acknowledged deploying "military advisers". The Guards described Khodai as a "defender of the sanctuary", a term used for those who work on behalf of Tehran in Syria or Iraq. Iran maintains significant political influence in both countries and has backed President Bashar Al-Assad's regime in Syria's grinding civil war. — AFP

International

Historic leftist win in first round of Colombian presidential vote

Petro's road to presidency complicated by Hernandez's late surge

BOGOTA: Colombians clamoring for "change" gave a leftist ex-guerrilla an historic lead Sunday in a first round of presidential elections that will culminate in a runoff against a maverick outsider in June. With more than 99 percent of votes counted, preliminary results showed 62-year-old Gustavo Petro, a former Bogota mayor, taking 40.3 percent. He now has a shot at becoming Colombia's first-ever leftist president and wresting power from the political and economic elites historically at the helm.

Rodolfo Hernandez, a 77-year-old millionaire and himself an ex-mayor, came out of left field to snatch second place with 28 percent of the vote, denying Petro the 50 percent-plus needed for an outright, first-round win. Hernandez, who ran on an anti-corruption platform, also edged out right-winger Federico Gutierrez - a former mayor of second city Medellin who carried the hopes of establishment parties and who pollsters had predicted would finish in second place.

On Sunday, Petro vowed "real change" if elected, and promised to pursue "social justice and economic stability." "A company cannot grow if society is impoverished. Profits cannot grow

sustainably if the majority of the population (suffers from) hunger," he said.

'Danger for democracy'

Analysts say Petro's road to the presidency has been complicated by Hernandez's late surge. With his anti-establishment, populist reputation, some polls have suggested Hernandez would stand a better chance than Gutierrez at



Petro vows 'real change' if elected

beating Petro in a second round. The gloves came off as soon as the results were out, with Petro pointing out that Hernandez is under investigation for graft and asking: "Is this what we want?"

In his speech, a defeated Gutierrez said he would vote for Hernandez in the second round as Petro represented "a

danger for democracy". "We do not want to lose the country and we will not put at risk the future of Colombia, of our families, our children," he said. In a country marked by a deep-rooted fear of the political left - associated with guerrilla groups that sowed decades of misery - the pushback against Petro has been fierce, with rivals seeking to paint him as a radical, Hugo Chavez-style populist. For his part, Hernandez said the results showed that Colombians were "serious about ending corruption as a system of government."

'We all want change'

Some 12,000 polling stations were open for eight hours Sunday in a tense atmosphere one year after a brutal security crackdown on street protests fueled by deepening socioeconomic woes. More than 8.5 million Colombians voted for Petro, hoping he is the man to address biting poverty, rural violence, urban crime and endemic corruption in a country historically governed by rightist elites. Hernandez, who is not aligned to a political party, garnered 5.9 million votes and Gutierrez 5.0 million.

"We all want change," 34-year-old



BOGOTA: Colombian presidential candidate for the Historic Pact coalition, Gustavo Petro, shows his ballot as he votes during the presidential election on May 29, 2022. —AFP

hotel porter Elison Beltran, one of Hernandez's voters, told AFP of his choice. Hernandez had awaited the results with a beer, poolside, at his home, according to video shared by his campaign team. His politics are often described as inscrutable and not fitting comfortably into any specific political doctrine. "It is very hard to

know what his real policies will be," analyst Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank told AFP. "I don't think it was his policies that got him this strong vote, I think it was more his rhetoric and appealing to a lot of disenfranchised voters who were very nervous about Petro, basically." —AFP

Toll mounts from Brazil downpours

RECIFE, Brazil: Torrential rains in northeastern Brazil have left at least 79 people dead and dozens missing, civil defense officials said Sunday, as rescuers capitalized on a lull in downpours to search for survivors. "As of 6:00 pm (2100 GMT) this Sunday, the number of people killed as a result of the rains has reached 79," the civil defense authority of Pernambuco state, where the affected communities of Recife and Olinda are located, said in a statement.

The disaster is the latest in a recent series of deadly landslides and floods triggered by extreme weather in Brazil. The number of dead has mounted steadily over the weekend, including dozens in landslides, as heavy rains caused rivers to overflow and torrents of mud swept away everything in their path. The latest statement from the civil defense did not offer an update on the number of people missing, though the agency had earlier reported 56 people still unaccounted for and nearly 4,000 who had lost their homes.

"We still don't have an exact number, but there are still reports of victims... who have not been found," Pernambuco Governor Paulo Camara said during a press conference. "The search will continue until we can identify all the missing people," he said. Authorities warned that rain was forecast to continue Monday, but in the meantime while the storm subsided some 1,200 personnel - some in boats or helicopters - resumed search and rescue



RECIFE, Brazil: A man removes debris from a landslide area in the Ibura neighborhood on May 29, 2022. —AFP

work, state officials said.

Minister of Regional Development Daniel Ferreira urged caution in a press conference Sunday in Recife, the capital of hard-hit northeastern Pernambuco state. "Although it has stopped raining now, we are forecasting heavy rains for the next few days," he said. "So the first thing is to maintain self-protection measures." Between Friday night and Saturday morning, rainfall volume reached 70 percent of what was forecast for all of May in some parts of Recife.

'Everyone poaches'

"There's no standard profile of a poacher. Everyone poaches - from the villager who is looking for something to eat to some big guy in the city who has an international network," the brigade's commander, Jerry Ibala Mayombo, told AFP. The unarmed unit sees its role as "educating, awareness-building and, as a last resort, punishing," he said. The heaviest sentences are for ivory smuggling, which can carry a 10-year jail term.

The two-year-old service was created by a partnership between Gabon's ministry for water and forests, a Belgian NGO called Conservation Justice and a Swiss-Gabonese sustainable forestry firm, Precious Woods CEB. "At the start, the overall feeling towards us was mistrust. But that's not the case today, because we have got the message across to people about what we do," said Ibala Mayombo. "We sometimes face violent poachers who threaten us, sometimes with their guns," he said. The team can be given a police escort when necessary. Last year, the unit seized 26 weapons, several dozen items of game and arrested eight individuals for ivory smuggling. "The trend is downward," said Ibala Mayombo. — AFP

same thatched round hut where the two sisters lived. No-one saw or heard anything. The homes, known as rondavels, are far apart from each other in Zingqolweni, a Xhosa-speaking community lying three hours from the nearest large city of East London. Here the sun sets behind the green mountains of the Eastern Cape province by 6pm (1600 GMT) in the winter months.

Never in South Africa

South Africa is one of the world's most violent countries outside a war zone, with a murder committed every 20 minutes on average. But even hardened police have been taken aback by the gruesomeness of this killing spree. All the victims were brutally stabbed. Some also had their throats slit. "They literally bled to death," a senior police investigator told AFP. "A series of murders of elderly people with a psychological motive. No, not seen before in South Africa," said the investigator, who asked not to be named. Six men have been arrested over the killings, and their trial is set to begin in June. Local police believe the murders are simply burglaries that have gone wrong.

But local official Geinikaya Koki, 64, is among those who doubt that thieves are to blame. "After the killings, when people were searching the house

Images circulated on local media showed rescue workers and volunteers clearing heaps of debris in Jardim Monteverde, on the border between Recife and the municipality of Jaboatao dos Guararapes, where 19 died Saturday morning in a landslide that ripped through precariously built homes. Luiz Estevao Aguiar, who lives in a different municipality, lost 11 relatives in the disaster, he told TV Globo. "My sister, my brother-in-law, 11 people from my family died. It was difficult... I did not expect this," he said tearfully. — AFP



LASTOURVILLE, Gabon: A team of tree cutters is seen at work on March 29, 2022 in the forest near the village of Bambidi in the Ogoue province. —AFP



ZINGQOLWENI, South Africa: Nontukunina Mbenyana, 82, whose son was the first victim of a wave of murders that affected the village, poses for a portrait outside of her house on May 16, 2022. —AFP

they found the money in the house," he said, adding that other valuables were also untouched. "Now, you then ask yourself, 'What is it that they want from this person that they killed?'" The only clue ever found has been a piece of clothing. Fears of a serial killer on the loose have swept the village. Some have fled and women have started sleeping together at night. — AFP

Russia advances in east Ukraine as EU meets on oil ban

KYIV: Russian forces edged toward the center of the eastern Ukrainian city of Severodonetsk Monday, while President Volodymyr Zelensky prepared to appeal to EU leaders at an emergency summit where a ban on Russian oil imports is on the agenda. Zelensky is expected to press EU officials at the summit "to kill Russian exports" as he seeks to crank up international pressure on Moscow.

Member states are searching for a compromise on a sixth round of sanctions, which has been delayed by resistance from within the bloc, namely from Hungary. Meanwhile, Russia forces continued their push in the eastern Donbas region, upping the pressure on the twin cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk. Since failing to capture Kyiv in the war's early stages, Russia's army has narrowed its focus, hammering cities with relentless artillery and missile barrages as it seeks to consolidate its control.

The situation in Severodonetsk, just across the Donets river from Lysychansk, was "very difficult", the local Lugansk regional governor Sergiy Gaiday said in a statement on social media. "The Russians are advancing into the middle of Severodonetsk", while the fighting continued, Gaiday said.

While Russia concentrated its efforts in the east, Ukrainian forces pushed back over the weekend in the southern region of Kherson, the country's military leadership said. At the same time, two people were injured following an explosion in the Moscow-controlled city of Melitopol in south-eastern Ukraine, with local pro-Kremlin authorities said pinning the blame on Kyiv. — AFP

Anti-government protesters clash with police in Armenia

YEREVAN: Armenian opposition supporters clashed briefly with police on Monday during the latest in weeks of protests over Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's handling of a territorial dispute with arch-foe Azerbaijan. Opposition parties have been staging rallies since mid-April to demand Pashinyan's resignation, accusing him of planning to make unacceptable concessions to Baku over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Nagorno-Karabakh, located in Muslim-majority Azerbaijan but largely populated by Christian Armenians, is the focus of a decades-long territorial dispute between the two ex-Soviet Caucasus neighbors. On Monday, hundreds of protesters marched through the center of the Armenian capital, Yerevan, before blocking the entrance to a building housing government offices.

Clashes erupted after demonstrators attempted to break through police cordons and enter the building, an AFP journalist witnessed. During the protest, parliament deputy speaker and opposition leader Ishkhan Saghatlyan urged government employees to distance themselves from Pashinyan, so they do not "share his responsibility for ruining the country".

Pashinyan met Azeri President Ilham Aliyev in Brussels last week for a fresh round of European Union-mediated talks on a future peace treaty. They have agreed to "advance discussions" on normalizing ties and on overcoming differences over border delimitation, as well as unblocking transport communications. Azeri Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov told journalists last Friday there was a "positive atmosphere" in relations with Yerevan. — AFP

Gabon's grassroots against poaching

LASTOURVILLE, Gabon: A whistle blows. The car stops, and the driver is politely asked to turn off the engine and get out. A team from Gabon's anti-poaching brigade then searches the vehicle from top to bottom, looking in every cranny for guns or game. Nothing is found, and the driver is allowed to move on. The unit's task is to help guard Gabon's rich biodiversity.

Forests cover 88 percent of the surface of this small central African nation, providing a haven - and a tourism magnet - for species ranging from tropical hardwoods and plants to panthers, elephants and chimps. The team was on patrol close to a small village called Lastourville, 500 km southeast of the capital Libreville. The area has been badly hit by poaching, and tracks dug into the forest floor by logging vehicles are also used by illegal hunters to enter and shoot game.

Sleepless nights in South Africa's 'Village of Death'

ZINGQOLWENI, South Africa: Sleep is something that the inhabitants of Zingqolweni abandoned many months ago. Tucked in a remote corner of South Africa, this frightened village of 3,000 people has suffered a murder almost every month, occurring with clockwork regularity for a year. The brutal series of killings has earned Zingqolweni a chilling moniker: "The Village of Death."

All 11 victims have been elderly people, most of whom were women and most of whom lived alone. They have been stabbed to death in their homes after nightfall, when pitch darkness falls over a village where the unpaved roads are unlit. Nobongile Fihla, 50, spoke to AFP as she walked back from the cemetery. Her mother was among the first victims, killed in May 2021. "I found my mother there, next to the door, lying in a pool of blood. Her throat was slit," Fihla told AFP.

Her aunt was then found stabbed to death in the

International

Bodies pulled from wreckage of crashed Nepalese plane

Aircraft made its first flight more than 40 years ago

POKHARA, Nepal: Nepali rescuers have retrieved the bodies of all but one of 22 people on board a plane that crashed into a Himalayan mountainside over the weekend, the army said Monday. Air traffic control lost contact with the Twin Otter plane operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air shortly after it took off from Pokhara in western Nepal on Sunday morning headed for Jomsom, a popular trekking destination.



“Flight seems to have collided with a big rock”

Resuming a search on Monday after failing to find any trace a day earlier, the army shared on social media a photo of aircraft parts and other debris littering a sheer mountainside, including a wing with the registration number 9N-AET clearly visible. “Twenty-one bodies have been recovered and teams are searching for the remaining one,” Nepal Army spokesman Narayan Silwal told AFP. “It is a very difficult area to work. The aircraft is several pieces scattered all over the slope,” a police official at the crash site said.

About 60 people were involved in the operation, including the army, police, mountain guides and locals, most of whom trekked uphill for miles on foot to get there. The civil aviation authority said the plane “met an accident” at 14,500 feet (4,420 m) in the Sanosware area of Thasang municipality. “Analyzing the pictures we received, it seems that the flight did not catch fire. Everything is scattered in the site. The flight seems to have collided with a big rock on the hill,” said Pokhara Airport spokesman Dev Raj Subedi.

Families

Four Indians were onboard, as well as two Germans, with the remainder Nepalis including a computer engineer, his wife and their two daughters who had just



MUSTANG, Nepal: The wreckage of a Twin Otter aircraft, operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air is seen on a mountainside on May 30, 2022, a day after it crashed.— AFP

returned from the United States. The four Indians were a divorced couple and their daughter and son, aged 15 and 22, going on a family holiday. Indian police official Uttam Sonawane told AFP. “There was a court order for (the father) to spend time with the family for 10 days every year, so they were taking a trip,” Sonawane said. According to the Aviation Safety Network website, the aircraft was made by Canada’s de Havilland and made its first flight more than 40 years ago.

Past crashes

Tara Air is a subsidiary of Yeti Airlines, a privately owned domestic carrier that services many remote destinations across Nepal. It suffered its last fatal accident in 2016 on the same route when a plane with 23 on board crashed into a mountainside in Myagdi district. Nepal’s air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas as well as foreign trekkers and climbers.

But it has long been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance. The European Union has banned all Nepali airlines from its airspace over safety concerns.

The Himalayan country also has some of the world’s most remote and tricky runways, flanked by snow-capped peaks with approaches that pose a challenge even for accomplished pilots. The weather can also change quickly in the mountains, creating treacherous flying conditions.

In March 2018, a US-Bangla Airlines plane crashed near Kathmandu’s notoriously difficult international airport, killing 51 people and seriously injuring 20. That accident was Nepal’s deadliest since 1992, when all 167 people aboard a Pakistan International Airlines plane died when it crashed on approach to Kathmandu airport. Just two months earlier a Thai Airways aircraft had crashed near the same airport, killing 113 people.— AFP

Scores quarantined after Beijing man breaks COVID rules

BEIJING: A Beijing man has landed thousands of his neighbors in quarantine after he ignored an order to stay at home and later tested positive for COVID-19, prompting a police investigation. The Chinese capital has ordered hundreds of thousands of residents to stay home over the last five weeks to curb its largest coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic.

Officials said Sunday a man in his 40s surnamed Sun had failed to follow a requirement to isolate that he was given after he visited a shopping center considered high-risk. “During the home isolation period he... went out many times and walked in the neighborhood,” said Beijing public security official Pan Xuhong. Sun and his wife later tested positive, prompting authorities to lock down 5,000 of their neighbors at home and send 250 to a government quarantine center.

It came as virus restrictions began to be eased in Beijing on Monday, with authorities re-opening parks, museums and cinemas and declaring the outbreak under control. China is wedded to a zero-COVID strategy of hard lockdowns, mass testing and long quarantine periods to wipe out clusters as they emerge. There are

Sri Lanka police tear-gas students in fresh clashes

COLOMBO: Police fired tear gas to disperse thousands of students trying to storm the Sri Lankan president’s home Sunday as the government offered an olive branch to demonstrators demanding his resignation. Anti-riot squads used water cannon followed by tear gas, as furious protesters pulled down yellow iron barricades across a road leading to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s official residence in Colombo.

Nearby, thousands of men and women demonstrated for the 51st straight day outside Rajapaksa’s seafront office, demanding he step down over the country’s worst economic crisis since independence. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe went on national television on Sunday evening offering young protesters a greater say in how the country is administered. “The youth are calling for a change in the existing system,” Wickremesinghe said, laying out plans for 15 committees that would work with parliament to decide national policies.

“I propose to appoint four youth representatives to each of the 15 committees,” he said, adding that they could be drawn from the current protesters. The demonstrations led to tense scenes in Colombo, where authorities struggled to disperse large crowds and chemical irritants hung over the streets. Several men were seen picking up canisters spewing tear gas and throwing them back towards the police who fired them.

Female medical and science students joined the protests, with many running for cover when authorities unleashed water cannon. Wickremesinghe is not from Rajapaksa’s party, but was given the job after the president’s elder brother Mahinda resigned as prime minister on May 9 following weeks of protests, and when no other legislator agreed to step in. Wickremesinghe is the sole parliamentary representa-

tive of the United National Party, a once-powerful political force that was nearly wiped out in Sri Lanka’s last elections.

Rajapaksa’s party, which has a majority in the legislature, has offered to provide him with the necessary support to run a government. Sunday’s student action came a day after a similar clash when protesters tried to storm Rajapaksa’s heavily guarded colonial-era official residence, where he has bunkered down since thousands surrounded his private home on March 31.

An unprecedented shortage of foreign exchange to import even the most essential supplies, including food, fuel and medicines, has led to severe hardships for the country’s 22 million people. The government last month asked the International Monetary Fund for urgent financial assistance. Talks are continuing. The country has defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt. Its currency has depreciated by 44.2 percent against the US dollar this year, while inflation hit a record 33.8 percent last month.— AFP



COLOMBO: Police use tear gas shells to disperse students taking part in an anti-government protest demanding the resignation of Sri Lanka’s President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on May 29, 2022.— AFP

Xi welcomes Hong Kong leader, hails ‘new atmosphere’

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping has met with Hong Kong’s next leader in Beijing, telling John Lee he has the full trust of the central government, state media said Monday. Lee travelled to the capital on Saturday to receive Beijing’s blessing as he prepares to take office in a month. The 64-year-old former security chief, who oversaw a crackdown on Hong Kong’s democracy movement, was chosen as the next chief executive by a small committee of Beijing loyalists in early May. “I believe that the administration of the new government will definitely bring forth a new atmosphere, and compose a new chapter in Hong Kong’s development,” Xi said, according to official news agency Xinhua. Lee will assume office on July 1, which is the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong’s transfer from British to Chinese rule and the halfway point of its “One Country, Two Systems” political model.

Hong Kong has never been a democracy - the source of years of public frustration and protests - but China agreed that Hong Kong could maintain certain freedoms and autonomy for 50 years after its handover. According to Xinhua, Xi said Lee has the “courage to take responsibility” and “had made contributions to safeguarding national security and Hong Kong’s prosperity and stability”. “The central government fully affirms and fully trusts you,” Xi added. Lee was the sole candidate in the race to succeed outgoing leader Carrie Lam at a time when Hong Kong is being remolded in China’s authoritarian image. According to a statement from the Hong Kong government, Lee said in the meeting that he was “deeply honored by the appointment and fully aware of the great responsibility upon me”. He promised to “unite all sectors” and bring the government and people together to “strive for the well-being of Hong Kong and its people”. “Together, we will build Hong Kong into a city with long-term prosperity and a caring and inclusive society,” he added.— AFP

Tiananmen masses axed in Hong Kong

HONG KONG: For the first time in 33 years, church services to commemorate the Tiananmen crackdown will not be held in Hong Kong, erasing one of the last reminders of China’s bloody suppression of the 1989 protests. Since Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law in 2020 to snuff out pro-democracy demonstrations, once-packed candlelit vigils have been banned, a Tiananmen museum has been forced to close, and statues have been pulled down.

The annual Catholic masses were one of the last ways for Hong Kongers to come together publicly to remember the deadly clampdown in Beijing on June 4, 1989, when the Chinese government set tanks and troops on peaceful demonstrators. But this year, they too have been cancelled over fears of falling foul of Hong Kong authorities.

“We find it very difficult under the current social atmosphere,” said Reverend Martin Ip, chaplain of the Hong Kong Federation of Catholic Students - one of the organizers. “Our bottom line is that we don’t want to breach any law in Hong Kong,” he told AFP. The Diocese, whose Justice and Peace Commission was a co-organizer, said its frontline colleagues were concerned they might violate Hong Kong law.

Decades erased in months

Discussion of the 1989 crackdown is all but forbidden in mainland China. But in semi-autonomous Hong Kong, its history was often taught in schools and advocacy for ending the rule of the Chinese Communist Party was alive and kicking - until the imposition of the security law. In the space of months, decades of commemoration have been wiped out as authorities wield the law to refashion Hong Kong in Beijing’s authoritarian image.

The Hong Kong Alliance, the most prominent Tiananmen advocacy group and the candlelight vigil organizer, was prosecuted as a “foreign agent” over incitement to subversion. Last September, its leaders were arrested, their June 4 Museum was shuttered after a police raid, and digital records of the crackdown were deleted overnight under a police order to close the group’s website and social media accounts.

For others, much like the organizers of the masses, uncertainty over where the new red lines fall has been enough to make them pull back. Six universities removed June 4 monuments that had stood on their campuses for years - just before Christmas last year, three were whisked away within 48 hours. The “Pillar of Shame” in the University of Hong Kong (HKU), an eight-meter-high sculpture by Danish artist Jens Galschiot, was dismantled, tucked into a cargo container and left on an HKU-owned plot of rural land.

At Lingnan University, a wall relief by artist Chen Weiming was banished to an underground storage room. His “Goddess of Democracy” statue at the Chinese University of Hong Kong was sent to a secretive “safe place”. “They are trying to wipe out a shameful episode in history when the state committed a crime on its people,” Chen told AFP. The universities said they had never consented to the statues’ presence, and that their removal was based on an assessment of legal risk.— AFP



SUVA: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama arrive for a joint press conference on May 30, 2022.— AFP

Pacific nations reject China security pact

SUVA: Ten Pacific island nations rebuffed China’s push for a wide-ranging regional security pact Monday, amid worries the proposal was designed to pull them into Beijing’s orbit. Talks in Fiji between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and leaders from the small island nations failed to reach an agreement, in a high-profile diplomatic setback for Beijing.

China is offering to radically ramp up its activities in the South Pacific, directly challenging the influence of the United States and its allies in the strategically vital region. The proposed pact would see Beijing train Pacific island police, become involved in cybersecurity, expand political ties, conduct sensitive marine mapping and gain greater access to natural resources on land and in the water.

As an enticement, Beijing is offering millions of dollars in financial assistance, the prospect of a potentially lucrative China-Pacific islands free trade agreement and access to China’s vast market of 1.4 billion people. Behind the scenes, Pacific leaders have voiced deep misgivings about the offer. In a recent letter to fellow leaders, David Panuelo, the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, warned the offer was “disingenuous” and would “ensure Chinese influence in government” and “economic control” of key industries.

A more soft-spoken public rebuke came after the talks, when leaders said they could not agree to Beijing’s proposed “Common Development Vision” due to a lack of regional consensus. “As always, we put consensus first,” co-host and Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama said after the meeting, indicating that broad accord would be needed before inking any “new regional agreements”.

Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Federated States of Micronesia were said to be among those concerned about the proposals, along with Taiwan-recognising Palau, which was not invited. “We would rather deal with our own security issues with China,” Papua New Guinea Foreign Minister Soroi Eoe told AFP, indicating concern about any region-wide pact.

Chinese officials - working frantically to secure support during Wang’s 10-day diplomatic blitz of the region - admitted their entreaties had fallen short. “There has been general support from the 10 countries,” Chinese ambassador to Fiji Qian Bo told reporters in Suva. “But of course, there are some concerns on some specific issues and we have agreed that these two documents will be discussed afterwards until we have reached an agreement.” Speaking from Suva, Wang made the face-saving announcement that the 10 countries had agreed to memorandums of understanding on China’s “Belt and Road” infrastructure initiative.— AFP

Business

TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2022

Zain first telecom operator globally to launch Vo5G

Nationwide coverage in all Kuwait areas and on all-new Samsung Galaxy S22 lineup

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of voice over 5G services, becoming the first telecom operator globally to commercially launch Vo5G with nationwide coverage in all of Kuwait's areas and on the all-new Samsung Galaxy S22 lineup.

This revolutionary technology offers Zain's customers an unprecedented experience with ultra-fast internet while making voice calls on compatible smartphones. The commercial launch of this service comes after Zain has completed extensive tests to assess the readiness of its network and its technical capabilities to operate this service at the highest quality on a nationwide level.

Vo5G is currently available on the all-new Samsung S22 lineup and is activated for customers



Crystal-clear voice calls over 5G on Kuwait's biggest network

without any additional cost. The service will also be available on all compatible future devices. Voice over 5G offers users a practical solution with unique technical capabilities, allowing them to enjoy the fastest telecommunications experience with flexibility and quality. With Vo5G, Zain customers will be able to make crystal-clear voice calls over the 5G network side by side with data services without interruption.

In addition, Vo5G allows users to enjoy using the internet, streaming services, and data-hungry apps while making voice calls with the consistent and



ultra-fast speeds of 5G. The service offers a great solution for users who heavily depend on data services, as they will not have to end phone calls to get back to the best internet experience anymore.

The voice over 5G service is hosted on Zain's state-of-the-art standalone 5G network (SA 5G), which the company deployed earlier this year. SA 5G is widely considered the future of 5G, allowing

Zain's network to reach its full potential by increasing coverage and laying a foundation for applications that harness the fast speed and low latency of 5G. Zain's 5G development leads the Kuwait telecom market, and its business success has been a result of its overall strategic objective to provide first-class 5G services for users in Kuwait. This announcement reflects Zain's efforts in presenting

Kuwait's biggest and most powerful 5G network. Back in June 2019, Zain was the first operator to offer 5G technology in the GCC region via the Kuwaiti market with nationwide coverage of all areas. The company succeeded in designing the first integrated network for 5G services built on a world-class infrastructure, ultimately transforming the telecom sector across the country and region.

Tech giant Grab's female co-founder blazes a trail

SINGAPORE: As co-founder of multi-billion dollar ride-hailing and food delivery firm Grab, Tan Hooi Ling is already smashing stereotypes in tech but she's also trying to blaze a trail for the next generation of female entrepreneurs in the industry. This month the company announced it will raise the proportion of women in leadership positions to 40 percent by 2030 — up from 34 percent now—and is committed to ensuring equal pay.

The key weapon in her arsenal for gender equality? Data.

"Data helps keep us honest," the 38-year-old tells AFP. "Right now, we have monthly and quarterly reports that help us look at how many female 'Grabbers' we have in different teams to ensure there is no unintentional bias and whether our pay parity is equal."

Globally, tech firms suffer from a serious gender imbalance, with a study from consultancy Accenture and NGO Girls Who Code showing the proportion of women working in the sector is now smaller than in 1984. While male tech executives such as Meta's Mark Zuckerberg and Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma are well-known, top female tech leaders remain more low-profile.

Tan co-founded Singapore-headquartered Grab, a household name in Southeast Asia, in 2012 and now oversees hundreds of engineers. She hopes to be a catalyst for change in the male-dominated sec-

tor. She insists she did not face discrimination as she built up her company, but recognizes others have. "That's the role I'm hoping to play—to help create more of these environments where I was fortunate enough to grow up," she adds.

Battling sexism and inequality

But industry experts say tech faces significant challenges in its bid for gender equality with reports of sexism and toxic cultures in some firms. A total of 44 percent of female tech founders said they had been harassed, according to a global poll by NGO Women Who Tech, which surveyed more than a thousand people.

Last year, a female employee at Alibaba alleged she had been sexually assaulted on a work trip by her manager and a client. The Chinese e-commerce giant fired the manager—but later police dropped the case and the employee was also sacked. And in the United States, video game giant Activision Blizzard is under investigation over accusations the firm condoned a culture of sexual harassment and discrimination.

For the climate to improve across the sector, critics say addressing gender imbalance is vital. In Southeast Asia, 32 percent of the technology workforce is female, higher than the global average, but still lower than the 38 percent in other industries, according to a Boston Consulting Group study.

Some issues around gender diversity are a "by-product of history" Tan says—girls have not been encouraged enough to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). According to the 2017 UNESCO report Cracking the code: girls' and women's education in STEM, only 35 percent of students of these subjects in higher education globally are female. "We believe in 'normalizing' women



SINGAPORE, Singapore: This photo taken on March 18, 2022 shows ride-hailing and food delivery company Grab's co-founder and chief operating officer Tan Hooi Ling looking at sample displays of Grab delivery outfits in Singapore. —AFP

in tech. This starts by exposing females to many examples of women who have built their careers in tech," Tan says. The company holds women's leadership events and runs mentoring schemes to guide new female entrants to the industry.

Girls should be motivated to take up courses such as software development and data science to help drive change, she adds. "We need to help break that bias," she argues, adding that it is crucial to ensure a fair hiring process and female representation on interview shortlists. Grab's role in the growth of Asia's gig economy has created opportunities for women who might previously not have been able to join the workforce, Tan suggests. —AFP

Inflation in Germany, Spain climbs in May

FRANKFURT: Germany and Spain on Monday reported another jump in inflation in May as the war in Ukraine continued to push up food and energy prices, heaping pressure on the European Central Bank to speed up interest rate rises. In Europe's top economy Germany, the annual inflation rate quickened to 7.9 percent to reach the highest level since reunification in 1990, according to preliminary data from federal statistics agency Destatis. The last time inflation accelerated at a comparable pace was in West Germany in January 1952.

Spain's inflation rate hit 8.7 percent year-on-year in May, after slightly cooling to 8.3 percent in April, according to the INE National Statistics Institute. As in other countries, the increase was driven by soaring costs for energy and commodities despite efforts from the Spanish government to ease the burden on households. In Germany, Destatis said energy prices rose more than 38 percent in May, while food prices were up 11 percent.

"Energy prices, in particular, have increased considerably since the war started in Ukraine and have had a considerable impact on the high inflation rate," Destatis said.

"Another factor with an upward effect on prices is interruptions in supply chains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," it added. Analysts surveyed by FactSet had expected a lower inflation rate of 7.7 percent for Germany.

July rate hike

Monday's figures suggest the 19-nation currency club has yet to reach peak inflation, with many European nations highly reliant on Russian gas and oil imports. Heavy Western sanctions against Russia have also added further upheaval to already strained global supply chains. The latest eurozone inflation data will be released on Tuesday. In April, eurozone inflation soared to an all-time high of 7.5 percent—well beyond the European Central Bank's two-percent goal.

The ECB has signaled it plans to hike interest rates in July for the first time in over a decade in a bid to tame inflation, following similar recent moves by other major central banks. ECB chief Christine Lagarde has said that the bank aims to end negative interest rates by September. The ECB currently has a bank deposit rate of minus 0.5 percent, meaning lenders pay to park their excess cash at the central bank. —AFP

Nearly 90% think UAE bank account opening complicated

DUBAI: Nine out of 10 UAE bank account holders think opening a bank account takes too much time and that bank onboarding processes are too complicated. The findings are part of IDnow Middle East's UAE digital identity proofing and verification report that surveyed over 1,000 people across the Emirates.

Other key discoveries from the public survey included that 82 per cent of bank customers were unhappy with having to go to a branch and physically hand over documents. Meanwhile, 76 per cent of UAE residents want an entirely digital bank account opening process, with that figure rising to 85 per cent amongst higher income groups (with a monthly salary of \$6,500 or more). Amongst non-bank account holders, 86 per cent said they had started a bank account application but quit the process because it was too complicated.

IDnow commissioned YouGov to conduct the survey across a representative demographic sample of UAE residents. IDnow wanted to discover customer perceptions about traditional bank account opening which involves manually sharing documents and identity cards in a branch, versus modern digital processes which can allow verification to be performed remotely through a laptop or smartphone. Digital identity verification can reduce bank account approval processes from days or even weeks to just a few minutes.

Oliver Obitayo, chief commercial officer at IDnow said, "Customers across the UAE are crying out for easier ways to open a bank account. We know how deeply UAE banks care about their customers, so these results should be a wake-up call. Over the past few years, we have seen rapid innovation and improvements in the banking sector, and by deploying the right technology the problems of slow, complicated bank account onboarding can quickly become a thing of the past."

Digital identity proofing and verification can help onboarding for a range of financial services, including but not limited to banking, fintech, buy now-pay later, digital assets and cryptocurrency platforms.

Obitayo continued, "Customers want convenient,



quick and entirely digital procedures. They don't want to carry lots of paperwork to a branch and they value instant account opening that is safe and secure. Effective digital identity verification and document proofing can help to simplify the process for customers and save banks time and money." — Agencies

Business

EU leaders plead with Orban to support Russian oil ban

Oil embargo seen as an atom bomb against Hungary's economy



BUDAPEST: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban presents the members of the new Hungarian government prior to an oath-taking ceremony at the Hungarian Parliament building in Budapest on May 24, 2022.

BRUSSELS: EU leaders on Monday will try to persuade Hungarian President Viktor Orban to back a watered-down oil embargo against Russia after a month of haggling over the bloc's latest sanctions.

The sixth wave of measures against Moscow was put on the table weeks ago, but has been refused by Orban who argues that an oil embargo would be an "atomic bomb" against his country's economy.

French President Emmanuel Macron cautiously told reporters that a long-sought-after deal was "getting closer", but others doubted that the Hungarian leader was ready to sign on at this stage.

"I don't think we'll reach an agreement today," said Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas at a political meeting ahead of the summit in Brussels. "Of course we're going to have discussions, but everybody needs to be on board," she said, adding that she did not expect a solution before a summit in late June.

EU sanctions require the backing of all 27 member states and ambassadors fell short of finalizing a deal just hours before the start of the summit. A senior EU diplomat described the failure as the "elephant in the room", especially given that Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky was also slated to address the leaders by video link.

Still, an EU official said the leaders would attempt to find a "political agreement" on the Russian oil ban, with exceptions for specific countries worked out "as soon as possible".

'Orban's antics'

Landlocked Hungary imports 65 percent of its oil from Russia through the Druzhba pipeline and, along with Slovakia and the Czech Republic, have asked for an exception from the import ban. Diplomats said a two-year delay to the embargo has been granted to the countries concerned, but that Budapest wants at least four years and nearly 800 million euros (\$860 million) in European funding to adapt its refineries.

"There is quite a lot of sympathy for Hungary's oil supply issues, which are great, despite the antics by Orban," an EU diplomat said on condition of anonymity. The latest compromise solution would exclude the Druzhba pipeline from the embargo and only impose sanctions on oil shipped to the EU by tanker vessel, which counts for two-thirds of Russian oil imports.

"The European Council aims to reach a political agreement today on an embargo on Russian oil," an EU official told reporters, referring to the leaders' summit. "Some temporary exceptions have been granted to ensure security of supply for certain Member States. The council will come back to these exceptions as soon as possible."

Hungary's intransigence comes on the back of Orban's recent resounding re-election to a fourth term and some experts are skeptical about the official claims of alarm over a Russian oil ban.

Also complicating the stand-off is Hungary's share of the EU's 800-billion-euro recovery fund, which Brussels has yet to approve due to disagreements over Budapest's respect for the rule of law and human rights. A senior diplomat warned that some leaders accused negotiators of going too far in their efforts to placate Orban, who before the war was Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest EU ally.

The question of how we answer Russia is always "emotional" for certain member states and will be "one of the most sensitive issues" at the summit, the diplomat added. — AFP

NBK Economic Report

Oil prices up at nine-week highs

KUWAIT: Oil markets continue to endure quite pronounced volatility, linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and uncertainties over the near-term outlook for both oil supply and oil demand. ICE Brent crude closed at \$119.4/bbl (+9.2 percent mtd; +53.5 percent ytd) on 27 May, gaining support from further crude stock declines and higher refining activity in the US. The tighter supply picture is also evident in the increase in the price premium for near-term Brent futures ('backwardation').

Range-bound for several weeks, Brent finally broke free last week, rising to its highest level since late March at Friday's close. Markets had spent April and May largely alternating between concerns over the prospect of tighter supplies if the EU's planned embargo on Russian oil imports goes ahead amid only incremental OPEC+ output growth on the one hand and worries about faltering global economic growth amid high inflation and monetary policy tightening on the other.

Attention has increasingly focused on the refined products market, especially in the US, where surging post-pandemic demand from industry and transportation has combined with limited oil supplies from Russia, due to self-sanctioning, and from China, due to reductions in export quotas, to send gasoline and middle distillate (e.g. diesel) futures prices to record highs.

Indeed, product prices have outperformed crude prices this year, with US gasoline and heating oil futures up 72 percent and 66 percent, respectively. Both gasoline and diesel distillate stock levels are at multi-year lows, the former at the lowest seasonal level in a decade (219 mb) and the latter at a fourteen year-low (107 mb), amid record high refining margins and reduced refining capacity. The latter has partly been a reflection of refinery closures during the Covid-19 pandemic. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that refineries will be tapping 95 percent of their capacity during the forthcoming peak summer demand season. The focus on these dynamics is providing a bullish impulse to oil prices, helping to counteract the bearish pressure of potentially slower global economic and oil demand growth due to factors including fallout from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, weaker Chinese economic activity following months of COVID-19 restrictions, and tighter monetary policy as key central banks address spiraling inflation. The IMF in its April World Economic Outlook revised down its forecast of global growth from its January estimate by almost a percentage point to 3.6 percent. The International Energy Agency (IEA) and others have also lowered their* 2022 oil demand forecasts once more. Citing 'soaring pump prices and slowing economic growth', the IEA reduced its estimate by 70 kb/d in May and now sees oil demand rising this year by 1.8 mb/d on average, a marked slowdown from 2021's post-pandemic bounce of 5.6 mb/d.

In total, the agency has shaved 1.23 mb/d off its demand growth estimates since February. OPEC went further in its May revision, slashing this year's average oil demand growth by 210 kb/d, but sees demand rising by 3.36 mb/d, almost twice as much as the IEA. On the supply side, the disruption to Russian crude flows due to oil embargoes by the US and its allies hangs heavily over the market. The IEA estimates that 1 mb/d of Russian crude was shut-in in April, a figure that could treble to 3 mb/d from June onwards after major trading houses ceased oil purchases with government-owned Rosneft, Gazprom Neft and Transneft on 15 May. Should the EU-27 reach an agreement on banning Russian oil imports by yearend, Russian oil losses could extend to 4 mb/d. The decline in Russian crude was behind the substantial, 846 kb/d fall in aggregate OPEC+ output (excluding Iran, Libya and Venezuela) in April to 37.2 mb/d according to OPEC secondary source data. This is the lowest figure in six months. Once again, the group fell short of its target, but this time by a massive 2.7 mb/d.

OPEC-10 in April actually increased output by 284 kb/d (m/m), more than the 254 kb/d mandated by the supply increase agreement. This was largely due to Iraq's quota-busting monthly gain of 103 kb/d (versus 44 kb/d). But OPEC-10 production of 24.5 mb/d in April is still 800 kb/d below the target for that month, largely due to serial underproducers Angola and Nigeria, whose production capacity has likely shrunk due to chronic under-investment. The OPEC+ undersupply picture is quite stark: by April, the group should have* collectively returned 7.4 mb/d of the original 9.7 mb/d of supply cuts, but they only managed to resupply 4.7 mb/d of that target. As was agreed at April's OPEC & non-OPEC ministerial meeting, the broader OPEC+ group will be looking to increase the rate of monthly supply increases to a combined 432 kb/d from May onwards.

KFH: Draw worth KD 100,000 for Hesabi customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) launched a promotional campaign for "Hesabi" youth customers to attract their student allowances. The campaign comprises prizes totaling KD 100,000 and shall extend during the period from mid-May till the end of this year. This campaign comes as part of KFH endeavor to provide the best privileges on deposited funds, strengthen relations with various categories in a comprehensive manner that would enable customers to benefit from all services and products provided by KFH and the best offers and privileges at the market level.

The "Your Student Allowance with Us" campaign provides the largest exclusive draw for "Hesabi" youth customers totaling KD 100,000. The draw includes 4 winners of grand prize amounting KD 5,000 through-

out the campaign, 20 winners of KD 500 monthly prize, in addition to several other advantages and offers including: free prepaid card for the first year, subscription in Baitak Rewards Points and earning 1K points upon activation, distinguished offers, weekend offers, and banking services round the clock.

Customers who obtain their student allowance via their KFH account receive one chance to win in the draw on monthly prizes or at the end of the campaign as soon as they transfer their student allowance through their KFH account. They will have the chance to win and enter the draw one month after allowance transfer to account. Upon winning, the prize value will be credited in the winner's account directly.

The campaign depicts the appreciation and care KFH extends to "Hesabi" youth customers, reiterates its efforts to achieve financial inclusivity and encourages customers to perform more financial and banking transactions. This process aims to achieve distinction in service and affirm KFH understanding of customers needs and requirements as well its keenness to enhance positive values in all different categories including the saving value and provide all motivating advantages and offers.



HONG KONG: People walk past an electronic display showing the Hang Seng Index in the Central district of Hong Kong. —AFP

Equity markets extend rally as China eases curbs

LONDON: Asian stock markets advanced Monday and Europe followed cautiously in their wake on a wave of investor optimism as China eases some of its strict Covid curbs in Shanghai and Beijing. After Tokyo and Hong Kong closed above two percent, London equities crept 0.1 percent ahead two hours from the close while Frankfurt and Paris added around 0.5 percent.

Asian indices rebounded as traders also digested strong US data and a pre-weekend rally on Wall Street, which was closed Monday for the Memorial Day public holiday. "Worries about global growth have eased-and hopes (are) that China's worst COVID woes may be over," said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter.

"There was a ripple of relief across European markets after authorities in Shanghai announced a lifting of restrictions from Wednesday, with more production now expected to begin across the manufacturing and tech hub." The prospect of easing COVID curbs has buoyed hopes for the world's number two economy.

But inflation remains a top concern for investors who worry that central banks could act too harshly to contain it, bringing a halt to the economic recovery. New data on Monday showed German inflation hitting a new record at 7.9 percent in May as Russia's

invasion of Ukraine fuels higher energy and food prices. Spanish inflation also surged, rising 8.7 percent year-on-year in May from 8.3 in April.

The readings add to pressure on the European Central Bank to speed up interest rate rises, with a first hike expected in July.

Rate hikes

Monday's gains extended a positive end to last week for global equities, with some commentators saying there was a growing hope that the months-long sell-off may have run its course. Wall Street provided a strong lead and snapped a series of weekly losses, with Friday's rally supported by data showing an easing of the key personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index.

Markets have been pummeled this year as soaring prices-caused by the Ukraine war, supply chain snags and China's lockdowns among other things-forced central banks to hike interest rates and warn of more to come. The US reading lent hope that the worst of the inflation surge may have passed and could allow the Federal Reserve to ease back from its hawkish rate hike drive later in the year.

May jobs data-due for release on Friday-should provide a fresh snapshot of the economy and possibly an idea about the Fed's next policy moves.

The possibility that China's COVID curbs could be gradually removed helped oil prices rise, with Brent briefly topping \$120 per barrel for the first time in two months as traders bet on a pick-up in energy demand. European leaders began a summit Monday to discuss a Russian oil embargo over the Ukraine war, but Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban warned that the bloc has yet to come up with a compromise that he could agree to. — AFP

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 360 million for six months with a rate of return at 2.000 percent.

KIB's RBD enhances digital expansion plans, electronic services

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) continues to solidify its leading position within the financial and banking industry, by offering world class banking products with the latest technologies and exceptional levels of service. Within this vein, the Bank recently announced its notable achievements within its Retail Banking Department (RBD), serving as a testament to the Bank's continuous efforts in striving to maintain higher performance levels, and garner further retail customer trust and satisfaction with offerings that meet their aspirations and suit their needs.

Among the most prominent of these achievements was the installation of 120 ATMs so far and spreading them across Kuwait, reflecting the success of the strategic expansion plans put forward by KIB's Retail Banking Department - aiming to broaden the Bank's reach to serve the largest number of its customers possible from all different segments.

On the other hand - as part of its customer-focused strategy that has been implemented to ease banking transactions on customers and save them time and effort - KIB succeeded in adding the option of remotely updating customer civil ID data and completing the "Know Your Customer" form via the Bank's Contact Center over

the phone service. This enables customers to conveniently complete this particular transaction through one of KIB's main customer service channels that can be accessed without having to visit a branch.

Speaking about KIB's RBD digital and electronic services achievements, the Bank's Executive Manager in the Retail Banking Department, Nawaf Al-Khrayef, said: "In the Retail Banking Department, we are always keen on putting forward all our efforts to fully understand the needs of our customers, while focusing first and foremost on enriching their banking experience with the Bank. We strive to provide our retail banking services as broadly and conveniently as possible, utilizing all different methods and employing across various channels as best suits the need of each segment and all demographics. Accordingly, we have accomplished a set of achievements during the past months that reflect our diligent efforts in positioning KIB as a key player within the financial and banking sector - providing the best of integrated services to its customers."

Among its other notable achievements, that came as part of KIB's integrated strategy to digitize most of its banking services, Al-Khrayef stated that the Bank succeeded in implementing six new digital services on the KIB Mobile: app sharing account and IBAN number and splitting the bill. He also noted that the number of application users increased by 30 percent. Within this vein, the bank also doubled increase in digital account openings, and deposit investment openings through the KIB App during the first quarter of this year, compared to the first quarter of the year 2021.

It also worth noting that KIB's Retail Banking Department continues to offer a suite of innovative banking services and products, including providing various different accounts that suit the requirements of each customer segment. This includes, but is not limited to, its Youth, Amil, as well as KIB's premier Black account, designed especially for bank's select group of elite customers. Additionally, KIB's Retail Banking Department offers its customers a wide selection of debit and credit cards that suit all the different needs and lifestyles of its customers, with exclusive packages that they can benefit from locally and abroad. KIB's banking products also come with special offers and reward campaigns. In line with KIB's slogan, 'Bank for Life', the Department also presents its customers with a set of attractive and hassle-free financing services to aid them in all their necessary purchases and attend to their financial needs.



Nawaf Al-Khrayef

Business

Heads roll at Aussie power giant AGL after green takeover bid

Company scraps long-planned move to spin off its lucrative coal business

SYDNEY: Australia's biggest carbon emitter AGL abruptly announced on Monday the departure of its chairman, CEO and a string of board members, while scrapping a long-planned move to spin off its lucrative coal business. In a statement to investors, the company said Peter Botten would resign as chairman and Graeme Hunt would step down as CEO when a replacement is found.

Operations at AGL-Australia's largest energy company-have been under fierce scrutiny since billionaire green activist Mike Cannon-Brookes tried to buy the firm for about \$6 billion. AGL rejected the bid in March, saying the offer was "well below the fair value of the company".

Cannon-Brookes, a 42-year-old tech mogul, launched his audacious bid to acquire the company in order to shutter its highly-polluting coal-fired power plants and repurpose the network to focus on renewables. He had opposed a "demerger" of AGL's coal and retail business, saying if it was allowed to be spun off his takeover would no longer make sense.

Australia is one of the world's largest producers of coal and gas, and during a decade of conservative rule backed the building of new fossil fuel

projects. But Australians-hit by a series of intense droughts, floods and bushfires-overwhelmingly support more action to tackle climate change and recently voted in a centre-left government to do just that.

Cannon-Brookes described the news as a "huge day for Australia" and said there was a "better, greener path ahead". It was also welcomed by environmental group Greenpeace, who said AGL's outgoing leadership had "failed to understand the shifting political landscape towards climate action."

Monash University Energy Institute Director Ariel Liebman said preserving the company whole could help Australia pivot away from fossil fuels.

"The abandonment of the demerger is a great outcome not only for AGL shareholders, as it will preserve shareholder value, but also for energy consumers and Australia's transition to renewable energy," he said. A split company would have had less clout to raise financing for renewable projects and more incentive to keep coal and gas generators.

"AGL Energy, in its current state, can manage an accelerated retirement of its coal and gas fleet in a much more orderly manner," he added. —AFP



Ferrari Portofino M: A voyage of rediscovery

KUWAIT: There is no shortage of technical innovation in the stunning new evolution of the Ferrari Portofino, the most notable being its redesigned powertrain, a brand-new eight-speed gearbox and the five-position Manettino that includes a Race mode, an absolute first for a Maranello GT spider. As a consequence of these and many other new features, the Portofino M guarantees an unprecedented combination of authentic GT performance, driving pleasure, agility and exceptional versatility in everyday driving contexts.

This latest design and engineering masterpiece from the Prancing Horse is the perfect evolution of the Ferrari Portofino. Sportier in character than its predecessor, it also delivers superior handling whilst not only maintaining but enhancing on-board comfort, courtesy of specific new optional features, such as ADAS, and ventilated and heated seats. The Ferrari Portofino M thus retains the Ferrari Portofino's twin soul and is the only car on the market that can rightfully be described as an authentic coupe with its top closed and a genuine spider when it is open. This is thanks, of course, to the Retractable Hard Top (RHT), the signature feature of all the Prancing Horse's convertibles.

The Portofino M's compact dimensions also make it ideal for all occasions. In fact, its unparalleled versatility and on-board comfort turn every trip into a voyage of (re)discovery.

Powertrain

The Ferrari Portofino M's 3855cc engine belongs to the V8 turbo family voted "International Engine of the Year" on four consecutive occasions (2016-2019). The power unit can punch out 620 cv at 7,500 rpm, 20 cv more than the Ferrari Portofino. To achieve these performance levels, the Ferrari engineers used new cam profiles to increase valve lift and optimise combustion chamber filling.

A speed sensor was also added to the turbocharger assembly to measure the turbine revolutions. This in turn allowed the maximum revolutions per minute of the turbine to be increased



by 5,000 rpm.

Lastly, to comply with the strictest pollution emissions standards, a Gasoline Particulate Filter has been included in the exhaust system. The GPF allows the car to comply with the strictest European anti-pollution standards (Euro-6D) without compromising driving pleasure. This result comes thanks to a control logic that continuously regenerates the filter, limiting the amount of accumulated particulate matter. This is achieved by using two dedicated sensors per cylinder bank to accurately measure differential pressure deltas up- and down-stream of the GPF.

The 8-speed gearbox is a completely new unit compared to the previous 7-speed version and is based on a dual-clutch oil bath architecture. It differs from the SF90 Stradale's 8-speed transmission in its longer gear ratios and the introduction of a mechanical reverse gear. The new layout and integration of its components have also optimized the gearbox's size and its installation in the car.

Like all the other turbo cars in the range and in line with the "zero turbo lag" concept, the Ferrari Portofino M delivers instantaneous throttle response throughout the rev range. The car boasts Variable Boost Management, a control software developed by Ferrari that adjusts torque delivery to suit the gear selected. The result is increasingly powerful pick-up as revs rise, whilst optimizing fuel consumption. As the car goes up through the gears (from 3rd to 8th), the amount of torque delivered by the engine increases all the way up to 760 Nm in 7th and 8th gear.

On the one hand, this has allowed Ferrari to use longer gear ratios in the higher gears, which helps keep fuel consumption

and emissions down, while on the other, adopting a steeper torque curve through the rev range in the lower gears for a feeling of smooth and powerful pick-up. The introduction of the eighth gear and the improvement in transmission efficiency have resulted in a significant reduction in fuel consumption in urban and motorway contexts in addition to noticeably improving performance even under sportier, more press-on driving.

The new clutch module is 20 percent smaller but delivers 35 percent more torque, with up to a maximum 1,200 Nm of dynamic torque transmitted when gear shifting. The transmission software strategy has also been evolved with a more powerful ECU.

Lastly, particular attention was focused on gear change strategies aimed at improving the power unit's fuel consumption and emissions levels. Due to more efficient clutch torque control, the car is now also easier to drive in urban contexts during Start & Stop cycles. This guarantees that the car is smoother to drive at low speeds in traffic, as well as delivering a more intuitive experience and improved responsiveness. By tradition, every single Ferrari engine has its own particular soundtrack that makes it unique. The Ferrari Portofino M is no exception. In addition to the flat-plane crankshaft, the geometry of the entire exhaust line is new. The two rear silencers have been eliminated (which in addition to boosting sound also significantly reduces backpressure in the tailpipes) and the bypass valves are now oval in shape to enhance the exhaust sound. Both solutions significantly reduce exhaust backpressure and improve sound quality. The last notable modification is "proportional" by-pass valve control, which is continuous and progressive depending on the driving situation.



LuLu Hypermarket opens 'Lulu British Food Week 2022' promotion

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, by far the foremost retailer in Kuwait and the region, launched its 'Lulu British Food Week 2022' shopping festival with a full slate of promotions and offers on British foods and goods.

The festival was inaugurated on 28 May at LuLu hypermarket Qurain outlet, by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom Belinda Lewis in the presence of top management officials of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers of the brand.

A highlight of the inauguration ceremony was a reverberating performance by a special music band from the UK that riveted guests and shoppers with its high energy lively beats.

Adding to the gaiety and vibrancy of the week-long festival, and in keeping with the event's theme of 'British Food Week', all outlets of LuLu Hypermarket feature large cut out displays of iconic British monuments that underline the rich tradition and heritage of the United Kingdom. The 'Best of British 2022', which runs from 28 May to 3 June at all LuLu Hypermarket branches in Kuwait, provides promotions and special offers on a slew of branded British products throughout the festival period.

Among the British products on special offer are items from leading brands such as: Baker Street, Billington S, Biona, Birds Eye, Bisto, Blue Dragon, Branston, Coldpress, Comfort, Costa S, Delamere, Doves Farm, Groovy Food, Heinz, Heinz Imp, Ice King, Infinity Foods, Johnwest, Kingdom, Minvita, Nescafe Imp, Onken, Rachel S, Rowse, Saxa, Soysolei, Specialite Locale, St Pierre, The Berry, Tropicana, Vimto, Walkers, and Warrior Crunch among others.

The 'British Food Week 2022' is yet another initiative by LuLu Hypermarket to bring the best of products from around the world to customers in Kuwait, and to provide them with exceptional value with extremely competitive prices.

NBK Money Markets Reports

Markets calmed on signs of abating inflation

KUWAIT: Global economies have experienced a sustained rise in inflation since the late 2020s following the outbreak of COVID-19. As the outbreak began to subside, price levels were further intensified by the Russian military operation in Ukraine in February. Russia is the world's second-largest producer of crude oil and a key exporter of gas and aluminum, while Ukraine is a key exporter of wheat, resulting in both energy and food price increases in Europe. Additionally, China is now two months into harsh COVID lockdowns that have choked global supply chains. Today, price uncertainty, supply constraints, and an unclear end to the Russia-Ukraine conflict will continue to threaten the post-pandemic recovery. On a positive note, last week's Federal Reserve minutes and the release of PCE helped dampen fears regarding high interest rates, with global stocks marking their first weekly gain after seven straight weeks of declines.

The greenback lost 1.32 percent of its value last week, leaving the euro and pound above the 1.07 and 1.26 marks respectively. Meanwhile safe havens such as the Japanese yen and Swiss franc saw stronger support against the USD, ending the week 0.63 percent and 1.78 percent higher respectively. On Wall Street, the S&P 500 recovered all losses incurred in the previous two weeks after ending the week 6 percent higher. Moving to bonds, yields on 2-year and 10-year Treasuries marked their third week of declines.

Fed minutes lack surprise

Minutes from the US Federal Reserve's May 3-4 meeting echoed Fed Chairman Jerome Powell's urgency to tackle inflation as voiced in his post-meeting press conference. The May meeting resulted in the central bank raising interest rates by a half point to a range

of 0.75 percent-1.0 percent, while unveiling plans to begin reducing the size of its \$9 trillion balance sheet consisting mostly of Treasuries and mortgage backed securities.

While hinting at similar hikes in the future, they further noted that policy may have to move past a "neutral" stance in which it is neither supportive nor restrictive of growth. Inflation was mentioned 60 times in the minutes as members expressed concern, noting that the war in Ukraine and Covid associated lockdowns in China would exacerbate inflation. Nevertheless, officials remained committed to raising rates and reducing the balance sheet. The minutes stated that doing so would leave the Fed "well positioned later this year" to reevaluate the effect policy was having on inflation. The Fed's minutes confirmed two more 50 bps hikes in June and July, with policymakers suggesting a potential pause later in the year. Markets cheered that the minutes did not take a more hawkish tone as inflation continues to run at a 40-year high.

PCE increase

In an encouraging sign of abating inflation, the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation rose just 0.2 percent in April, marking the smallest increase in a year and a half. Looking over the past year, PCE slowed to 6.3 percent in April from a 40-year high of 6.6 percent in March, demonstrating the first decline since November 2020. A narrower measure of inflation that omits volatile items such as food and energy rose a somewhat higher 0.3 percent in April. Nevertheless, even the increases in the core rate were the smallest since last summer. On a yearly basis, the core rate slowed to 4.9 percent from 5.2 percent - its second straight decline. The last time the core rate was seen declining back-to-back was in 2020, early pandemic.

Looking at GDP, US economic growth will exceed 3 percent in 2022 while strong inflation has peaked and will cool to around 2 percent by 2024, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates. The growth will be driven by consumer spending and demand for services. However, the upbeat report depends

on the notion that the Federal Reserve will be able to raise interest rates throughout 2022 and 2023 without tipping the US economy into a recession. "In CBO's projections, the current economic expansion continues, and economic output grows rapidly over the next year," the CBO said in its report. "To fulfill the elevated demand for goods and services, businesses increase both investment and hiring, although supply disruptions hinder that growth in 2022."

German economy

Business activity in Europe's largest economy continued to grow, led by a strong post-lockdown recovery particularly across the country's service sector. Nonetheless, there are signs of waning demand due to market uncertainty, rising prices and supply issues evident by manufacturers reporting the steepest drop in new orders for almost two years. The headline PMI Composite Index came in at 54.6 in May, recording a slight improvement from April's 54.3 amid a sustained strong rebound in the service sector's business activity. Breaking it down, the flash PMI index for services was 56.3 in May, down from April's 57.6 level though still well above the 50-expansion mark. Meanwhile the flash PMI for manufacturing improved slightly this month to 54.7 from April's final reading of 54.6.

Bailey defends BoE's approach

Last week, Governor Andrew Bailey sought to defend the Bank of England's cautious approach regarding monetary policy, noting policymakers are considering the wider picture of the inflation shock facing the economy. While the central bank concluded its fourth rate rise in a row, many are still questioning whether it should be acting more aggressively with larger hikes. Notably, the bank's Monetary Policy Committee approved the hike however faced three dissenters after UK inflation hit 9 percent in April, a figure expected to remain exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

Bailey admitted he the BoE could not claim to have any "tremendous foresight" in the current situation, however added that regarding

Asia-Pacific

New Zealand's central bank raised interest rates by half a percentage point for a second straight meeting while forecasting further aggressive hikes to come. The Official Cash Rate was lifted to 2 percent from 1.5 percent as widely expected. Moving ahead, the RBNZ projected the OCR to rise to at least 3.25 percent this year and peak to 4 percent next year. "It remains appropriate to continue to tighten monetary conditions at pace to maintain price stability and support maximum sustainable employment," the RBNZ said. "The Committee is resolute in its commitment to ensure consumer price inflation returns to within the 1-3 percent target." The move marks the first time the central bank delivered consecutive 50 basis-point increases since the OCR was introduced in 1999. Stable inflation expectations "will be a key indicator that the current monetary policy strategy is working," it added. Today, the RBNZ projects inflation will slow to 3 percent in the second half of 2023 from a peak of 7 percent in the current quarter, and prices are not seen returning to the 2 percent midpoint of the target band until 2025.

Commodities

After gaining nearly 50 percent YTD, oil prices remain supported by the prospect of a tight market due to rising consumption in the US over the summer and the possibility of an EU ban on Russian oil. US gasoline stocks fell by 482,000 barrels last week to 219.7 million barrels just before the start of summer season in the US, which normally entails increased consumption.



Indian Ambassador Sibi George is seen during the 'Indian Handloom Exhibition'.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



INDIA'S HANDLOOM HERITAGE ON DISPLAY AT SADU HOUSE

By Sajeev K Peter

The 'Indian Handloom Exhibition', organized by the Indian Embassy, in association with National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), at Sadu House on Sunday is a symbolic representation of India's diverse and rich handloom sector. Each textile piece on display reflects the aesthetic intricacies involved in the craft and the cultural richness and elegance of India's distinct handloom tradition.

The exhibition was jointly inaugurated by Indian Ambassador Sibi George and NCCAL's Assistant Secretary-General for Cultural Affairs Dr Bader Al-Duwaish. The exhibition is open for public from 10 am to 8 pm until May 31.

"This exhibition is part of the yearlong celebration we launched last year to mark the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait," the ambassador told a press conference on Sunday on the sidelines of the exhibition.

A tour of the exhibition will help you realize how the handspun and woven fabrics from handlooms are integral to India's cultural identity. From Jammu and Kashmir to Kerala and Tamil Nadu, from North East to Rajasthan and Gujarat, handloom crafts in diverse variety and style are spread across thousands of towns and villages in all states of India. Indian artists are now distinguished worldwide for their hand-spinning, weaving and printing elegance. The visitors will not only get to see the exquisite handloom products of each Indian state on display, but can get a glimpse of each region's geography and culture.

For instance, 'Pochampally Ikat' textile works from Bhoodan, Pochampally in Telangana state is known for its geometric patterns and an intentional bleed. With 5,000 looms in the Pochampally village weaving this ikat fabric, the place has found a place on UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage Sites as part of the iconic sari-weaving clusters of India. Similarly, a hand-woven silk sari from



the town of Paithan in Maharashtra, vouches for effort-intensive process of weaving the garment. Interestingly, Paithani fabric looks exactly the same on both sides. History of the Bandhani handloom of Gujarat dates back to the Indus

Valley Civilization, where dyeing was done as early as 4000 BC. Made by the Khatri community of Gujarat, this gorgeous tie-dye textile is usually found in multiple colors like yellow, blue, green and red and features white dots that form

interesting patterns on the fabric.

Dubbed as the pride of Kerala, the 'Kasavu' is the traditional off-white and gold Kasavu sari and is famously worn by women of the Malayali community on festival occasions. Kasavu actually refers to the golden sari border on dhoti-sari that is hand-woven, using 100 percent unbleached cotton. These saris feature line designs at the bottoms and sometimes peacock designs as well.

Similarly, Kalamkari of Andhra Pradesh comes from the Persian words 'qalam' meaning pen and 'kari' means craftsmanship. This art form, which was particularly patronized by the Mughals, is now more popular as block-print used on saris, dupattas and more. Chikkankari from Uttar Pradesh, Muga Silk from Assam, Lepcha from Sikkim and Shisha from Rajasthan were among the other exquisite handloom garments on display at the exhibition.



Nigerian biker completes London to Lagos ride for polio campaign

A crowd cheered Kunle Adeyanju as he turned off his motorbike engine after completing an arduous 41-day trip to raise funds to fight polio in his native Nigeria. The 44-year-old departed London on April 19 and arrived in Nigeria's commercial hub Lagos on Sunday after slogging through more than 13,000 kilometers (8,000 miles) across 13 countries. His aim was to raise funds for Rotary International's fight against polio, which remains a threat in Africa despite being eradicated in 2020. "I am sleep-deprived because I slept only three to four hours per night. But I feel proud

because I accomplished this challenge," Adeyanju told AFP just after he arrived, wiping sweat off his face.

Accompanied by a dozen bikers for the last stretch of the journey from Benin Republic, the group was welcomed by supporters in Ikeja, in central Lagos. Adeyanju, called "Lion Heart" by fans, became popular by posting daily pictures with comments of his journey on social media. At every stop along the way, he was greeted by jubilant supporters. In Senegal, Ghana, and even in countries battling jihadist insurgencies like Mali and Burkina Faso, Adeyanju posed for selfies with fans and local officials, waving a banner saying "End Polio Now."

He did face some challenges, like in Mali where one of his wheel rims broke. "I was standing in the middle of the night, alone in a bush, not knowing what to do, without speaking the language," he said, explaining he had to walk to the nearest village. "I could have been disposed of but instead, they helped me. Humanity at its best!" Not all of the challenges he faced were resolved as smoothly.

Mauritania was "hellish" he said, after he got robbed of hundreds of euros (dollars). "The worst experience," he added. With only three followers on Twitter a few months ago, the Nigerian national now has almost 100,000, catching the attention of the social platform's CEO. "Thanks for sharing your inspiring journey with the world on Twitter, and with our @TwitterGhana team. Love to see it #LondonToLagos," said the tech boss Parag Agrawal.

Polio fight not over
Adeyanju said he embarked on the epic journey in memory of a friend who was affected by polio.

The former Shell employee self-funded his trip with 19,000 euros (\$20,400) in savings, hoping to raise up to 20 million naira (\$48 million) for Rotary International. "Polio still exists," said Delight Sunday-Anicho, who manages Rotary's branch in Ikoyi, a wealthy neighborhood in Lagos. "We haven't won the fight yet, even if we have largely contained it."

Polio can cause life-long paralysis. The virus is transmitted among humans through water or food that has been contaminated by faeces. There is no cure, but a cheap and highly effective vaccine has been available since the 1950s. Indigenous polio was eradicated from Africa in 2020 after a decades-long vaccination campaign, which in Nigeria was marred by attacks by Boko Haram jihadists. But the disease remains to be wiped out in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and this poses a threat to the unvaccinated people elsewhere.

Outbreaks have occurred this year in Malawi and Mozambique from a strain that had circulated in Pakistan. The authorities have engaged on a mass immunization of youngsters. Adeyanju is eyeing a possible cycling trip to Ghana or a bike ride to Israel to help raise more funds. And he has another dream: to climb Mount Everest.—AFP



Kunle Adeyanju (center) celebrates with supporters after arriving at the Ikeja Rotary club in Lagos after a 41-day trip from London, by motorbike, to raise funds and awareness for the End Polio campaign.—AFP photos

Killer whale stranded in France's River Seine dies

A killer whale stranded for weeks in France's River Seine was found dead Monday after attempts to guide it back to sea failed and revealed it was severely sick, local authorities said. Regional officials had already decided to euthanize the killer whale—also known as an orca—to end its suffering, but a sailor spotted the animal lying on its side Monday morning. Sea Shepherd France, who went out to the animal and confirmed its death, said on Twitter they were watching over the orca's body to prevent it from being hit by a ship, which would compromise the autopsy.

The investigation will try to establish why the orca got stranded and how it died, as well as gather information on its illness, local authorities said. A group of experts attempted to use sonar techniques to help guide the animal back into its natural salt-water habitat this weekend, after its appearance in the iconic French river that flows through Paris astonished onlookers. But the operation

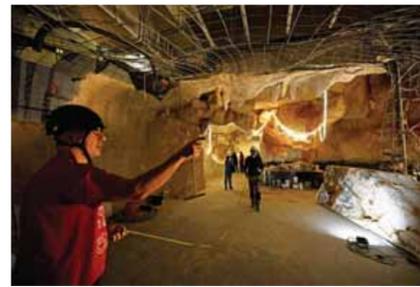
seeking to save the animal encountered "a lack of alertness, inconsistent reactions to sound stimuli and erratic and disoriented behavior," regional authorities said in a statement.

"The sound recordings also revealed vocal calls similar to cries of distress," it said, adding that the animal appeared to be in a "critical state of health." "Her skin was so ulcerated... She must have been in agony. Pieces of skin were falling off, there was nothing that could be done," said Gerard Mauger, vice-president of GECC, a Cherbourg-based association for the conservation of marine animals in the Channel.

"Everything was ready to euthanize her" when she was found dead, Mauger added. The animal appeared to be suffering from mucormycosis, a fungal infection increasingly seen among marine mammals and which causes them severe distress. Killer whales, which, despite their name belong to the dolphin family, are occasionally spotted in the English Channel but such sightings are considered rare, and even rarer in a river. Experts said that while being in a river helped the animal to conserve energy, it also complicated its search for prey, especially for a species known to hunt in packs.—AFP



Lifestyle | Features



In these file photos workers are seen on the site of the Cosquer cave replica at the Villa Mediterranee in Marseille, southern France. — AFP photos

Two archeologists dive on their way to the Cosquer cave off Marseille.

Workers are seen on the site of the Cosquer cave replica at the Villa Mediterranee in Marseille, southern France.

RACE TO SAVE UNDERSEA STONE AGE CAVE ART MASTERPIECES

To reach the only place in the world where cave paintings of prehistoric marine life have been found, archaeologists have to dive to the bottom of the Mediterranean off southern France. Then they have to negotiate a 137-metre (yard) natural tunnel into the rock, passing through the mouth of the cave until they emerge into a huge cavern, much of it now submerged. Three men died trying to discover this “underwater Lascaux” as rumors spread of a cave to match the one in southwestern France that completely changed the way we see our Stone Age ancestors.

Lascaux-which Picasso visited in 1940 — proved the urge to make art is as old as humanity itself. Archaeologist Luc Vanrell’s life changed the second he surfaced inside the Cosquer cavern and saw its staggering images. Even now, 30 years on, he remembers the “aesthetic shock”.

But the cave and its treasures, some dating back more than 30,000 years, are in grave danger. Climate change and water and plastic pollution are threatening to wash away the art prehistoric men and women created over 15 millennia. Since a sudden 12-centimetre (near-five-inch) rise in the sea level there in 2011, Vanrell and his colleagues have been in a race against time to record everything they can. Every year the high water mark rises a few more millimeters, eating away a little more of the ancient paintings and carvings.

Prehistoric wonders

Vanrell and the diver-archaeologists he leads are having to work faster and faster to explore the last corners of the 2,500 square meter (27,000 square feet) grotto to preserve a trace of its neolithic wonders before they are lost. An almost life-sized recreation of the Cosquer cavern will open this week a few kilometers (miles) away in Marseille. AFP joined the dive team earlier this year as they raced to finish the digital mapping for a 3D reconstruction of the cave.

Around 600 signs, images and carvings-some of aquatic life never before seen in cave paintings-have been found on the walls of the immense cave 37 meters below the azure waters of the breathtaking Calanques inlets east of Marseille. “We

fantasized about bringing the cave to the surface,” said diver Bertrand Chazaly, who is in charge of the operation to digitalize the cave. “When it is finished, our virtual Cosquer cavern-which is accurate to within millimeters-will be indispensable for researchers and archaeologists who will not be able to physically get inside.”

Children’s hands

The cave was some “10 kilometers from the coast” when it was in use, archaeologist Michel Olive told AFP. “At the time we were in the middle of an ice age and the sea was 135 meters lower” than it is today. From the dive boat, Olive, who is in charge of studying the cave, draws with his finger a vast plain where the Mediterranean now is. “The entrance to the cave was on a little promontory facing south over grassland protected by cliffs. It was an extremely good place for prehistoric man,” he said.

The walls of the cave show the coastal plain was teeming with wildlife-horses, deer, bison, ibex, prehistoric auroch cows, saiga antelopes but also seals, penguins, fish and a cat and a bear. The 229 figures depicted on the walls cover 13 different species. But neolithic men and women also left a mark of themselves on the walls, with 69 red or black hand prints as well as three left by mistake, including by children.

And that does not count the hundreds of geometric signs and the eight sexual depictions of male and female body parts. What also stands out about the cave is the length of time it was occupied, said Vanrell, “from 33,000 to 18,500 years ago”. The sheer density of its graphics puts “Cosquer among the four biggest cave art sites in the world alongside Lascaux, Altamira in Spain and Chauvet,” which is also in southern France.

“And because the cave walls that are today underwater were probably also once decorated, nothing else in Europe compares to its size,” he added. Exploring Cosquer is also “addictive”, the 62-year-old insisted, with a twinkle in his eye. “Some people who have been working on the site get depressed if they haven’t been down in a while. They miss their favorite bison,” he smiled. For Vanrell, diving down is like a “journey into oneself”. The spirit “of the place seeps into you”.

Discovery and death

Henri Cosquer, a professional deep sea diver running a diving school, said he found the cave by chance in 1985, just 15 meters off the bare limestone cliffs. Little by little he dared to venture further and further into 137-metre-long breach in the cliff until one day he came out through a cavity cut out by the sea. “I came up in a pitch-dark cave. You are soaking, you come out of the mud and you slide around... It took me a

Climate change damage

Only in 2011 did things begin to change when Olive and Vanrell raised the alarm after the rapid rise in the sea level led to irreparable damage to some images. “It was a catastrophe, and it really shook us psychologically,” Vanrell recalled, particularly the enormous damage to the horse drawings. “All the data shows that the sea level is rising faster and faster,” said geologist Stephanie Touron, a specialist in pre-

historic painted caves at France’s historic monuments research laboratory.

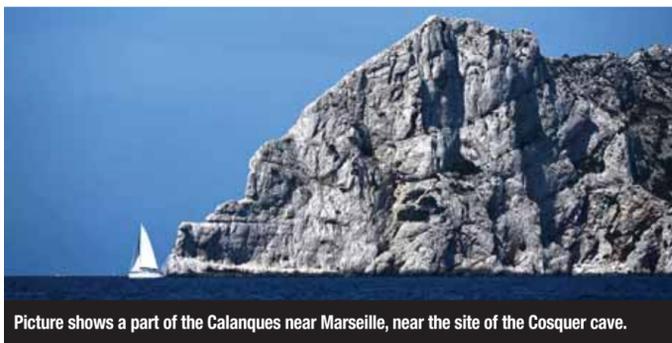
“The sea rises and falls in the cavity with variations in climate, washing the walls and leeching out soil and materials that are rich in information,” she said. Microplastic pollution is making the damage to the paintings even worse. In the face of such an existential threat, the French government has launched a major push to record everything about the cavern, with archaeologist Cyril Montoya tasked with trying to better understand the prehistoric communities who used it.

Replica

The idea of making a replica of the site was first mooted soon after the cave was discovered. But it wasn’t until 2016 that the regional government decided that it would be in a renovated modern building in Marseille next to Mucem, the museum of European and Mediterranean civilizations at the mouth of the city’s Old Port.

Using the 3D data gathered by the archaeological teams, the 23-million-euro (\$24-million) replica is slightly smaller than the original cave but includes copies of all the paintings and 90 percent of the carvings, said Laurent Delbos from Klebert Rossillon, the company which copied the Chauvet cave in 2015. Artist Gilles Tosello is one of the craftspeople who has been copying the paintings using the same charcoal and tools that his Stone Age forerunners used.

“The prehistoric artists wrote the score long ago and now I am playing it,” he said sitting in the dark in his studio, a detail of a horse lit up before him on the recreated cave wall. Clearly moved, he hailed the great mastery and “spontaneity” of his prehistoric predecessors, whose confident brush strokes clearly came from “great knowledge and experience. That liberty of gesture and sureness never ceases to amaze me,” he said. — AFP



Picture shows a part of the Calanques near Marseille, near the site of the Cosquer cave.

few trips to go right around it,” he told AFP.

“At the start, I saw nothing with my lamp and then I came across a hand print,” the diver said. While the law dictates that such discoveries must be declared immediately to the authorities so they can be preserved, Cosquer kept the news to himself and a few close friends. “Nobody owned the cave. When you find a good spot for mushrooms, you don’t tell everyone about it, do you?” he said. But rumors of this aquatic Lascaux drew other divers and three died in the tunnel leading to the cave. Marked by the tragedies, Cosquer owned up to his discovery in 1991. The cave which bears his name is now sealed off by a railing. Only scientific teams are allowed inside.

Dozens of archeological research missions have been carried out since to study and preserve the site and make an inventory of the paintings and carvings. But resources began to drain away when Chauvet, which is much easier to access, was discovered in the Ardeche region in 1994.

historic painted caves at France’s historic monuments research laboratory.

“The sea rises and falls in the cavity with variations in climate, washing the walls and leeching out soil and materials that are rich in information,” she said. Microplastic pollution is making the damage to the paintings even worse. In the face of such an existential threat, the French government has launched a major push to record everything about the cavern, with archaeologist Cyril Montoya tasked with trying to better understand the prehistoric communities who used it.

Mysteries

One of the mysteries he and his team will try to solve will be the trace of cloth on the cave wall, which might confirm a theory that hunter gatherers were making clothes at the time when the cave was occupied. Images of the horses with long manes also raises another major question. Vanrell suspects this might indicate that they may have been already domesticated, at least partly, since wild horses

Iran rejects Cannes movie award as ‘biased, political’



Iranian actress Zar Amir-Ebrahimi poses with her trophy during a photocall after she won the Best Actress Prize for her part in “Holy Spider”.

Iran on Monday rejected as “biased and political” last week’s award at Cannes for a film about a serial killer who targeted sex workers in an Iranian Shiite shrine city. Iranian Zar Amir Ebrahimi won the best actress award at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday for her performance in the film “Holy Spider”, directed by Danish-Iranian Ali Abbasi.

Ebrahimi, who went into exile following a smear campaign about her love life, was awarded for her portrayal of a journalist trying to solve the serial murders of sex workers in Iran’s holy city of Mashhad. The Cinema Organization of Iran, affiliated with the culture ministry, lashed out at the decision, accusing the festival of “committing a biased and political act by praising a false and disgusting film”. The film presents “a distorted image of Iranian society and openly insults the beliefs of Shiites”, the organization said in an official statement.

It said the film “follows the same path as Salman Rushdie in ‘The Satanic Verses,’” in reference to the Booker Prize-winning British-American novelist of Indian descent. Iran’s former supreme ruler Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had in 1989 called Rushdie’s work “blasphemous” and issued a fatwa, or religious edict, calling for the author’s murder.

“Holy Spider” is inspired by the true story of a working-class man who killed sex workers in the early 2000s and became known as the “Spider Killer”. The movie, which was shot in Jordan, shows Iran’s second-largest city with its spider-like network of streets leading to the shrine. Its star Ebrahimi began her career in Iran, but it was derailed when a sex tape was leaked online in 2006 allegedly of her and her boyfriend. — AFP

60s filmstar Claudia Cardinale honored in Tunisian birthplace

Actress Claudia Cardinale may have been a sixties legend of Italian and French cinema, but in Tunisia, in the portside district where she grew up, she says she feels “at home”. “I left very young, but I spent my whole childhood here, my adolescence,” said Cardinale, now 84. “My origins are here.” To celebrate her connection to the North African country, authorities on Sunday named a street after her in the La Goulette suburb of the capital Tunis, where petals were scattered in a ceremony in her honor.

“You marked the world of cinema for almost half a century with your dazzling beauty, your charisma and through the roles you played,” said Amel Limam, the mayor of La Goulette. “I am very honored, because it is here that I was born and spent my childhood,” Cardinale said. “I kiss you!”

The multicultural beachfront neighborhood was once home to a sizeable Sicilian population-including Cardinale’s parents. Before Tunisia’s independence from France in 1956, more than 130,000 Italians were resident, and many of their ancestors had settled there before French colonial rule. “I still keep a lot of Tunisia inside me-the scenery, the people, sense of welcome, the openness,” Cardinale told AFP.

‘We’re all equal’

In 1957, aged 19, Cardinale won a beauty contest for “the prettiest Italian” in newly independent Tunisia. Her prize was a trip to the Venice film festival, where she caught the eye of influential cinema figures. That led to her first film role, in Mario Monicelli’s Le Pigeon. Soon afterwards, she moved with her family to



Italo-Tunisian actress Claudia Cardinale (right) poses with a painting of her during the inauguration of the ‘Claudia Cardinale’ street in the city of La Goulette near the Tunisian capital.—AFP

Rome to pursue her career, which took off with a role in Luchino Visconti’s film The Leopard, alongside French film star Alain Delon and Hollywood legend Burt Lancaster.

That was the start of a long career that has continued into her 80s. After starring in The Pink Panther opposite David Niven in 1963, she shot to attention in the United States and Britain. In one of her latest roles, she plays a grandmother in a film by Tunisia’s Ridha Behi, “L’île du Pardon”, currently in post-production.

Her parents never recovered from their departure from Tunisia, which they experienced as an exile. “It was very hard. My father never wanted to come back, that’s how much he dreaded the pain of what was for him a real heart-break,” she said. “My mother recreated

Tunisia in Italy. She planted all Tunisian plants and kept on cooking Tunisian meals.” But Cardinale said the Tunisian sense of hospitality can be a model for how to treat migrants.

The country “can and should be proud of its history,” she said. And in an era when many Tunisians are willing to risk their lives boarding unseaworthy boats to reach Europe, she stresses the importance of “remembering this shared past to build the future”. “The wind changes, and we’re all equal in terms of the need to leave,” she said. “Tunisia for us was a welcoming land. I wish everyone in the world who needs to leave somewhere could receive the same welcome.” — AFP



(From left) Mediator Robert Gray, producer Jacob Jarek, Iranian actress Zar Amir-Ebrahimi, Iranian-Danish director Ali Abbasi, Iranian actor Mehdi Bajestani, translator Massoumeh Lahidji, and producer Sol Bondy attend a press conference for the film “Holy Spider” during the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes. — AFP



Mona Lisa covered in cake in Louvre stunt

The Mona Lisa was smeared with cake at the weekend by a man in a woman's wig who jumped out of a wheelchair and said artists should focus more on the planet. Officials at the Louvre Museum in Paris, where the enigmatic portrait holds pride of place, declined to comment on Monday on the bizarre incident, which was captured on several phones and posted on social media on Sunday. The treasured work by Leonardo da Vinci, which has been the target of vandalism attempts in the past, was unharmed thanks to its protective bulletproof glass case.

A Twitter user identified as Lukeeee posted a video showing a museum employee wiping what he says is cake off the glass and another showing a man dressed in white being escorted away by

security guards.

"A man dressed as an old lady jumps out of a wheelchair and attempted to smash the bulletproof glass of the Mona Lisa. Then proceeds to smear cake on the glass and throws roses everywhere, all before being tackled by security," Lukeeee wrote. Speaking French, the man says: "There are people who are destroying the Earth... All artists, think about the Earth. That's why I did this. Think of the planet."

No image have emerged showing the actual incident. The Mona Lisa has been behind glass since a Bolivian man threw a rock at the painting in December 1956, damaging her left elbow. In 2005, it was placed in a reinforced case that also controls temperature and humidity. In 2009, a Russian woman threw an empty



teacup at the painting, which slightly scratched the case. The Louvre is the largest museum in the world, housing hundreds of thousands of works that

attracted some 10 million visitors a year before the Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

Ukraine's Eurovision winners auction trophy for army

Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra, which won the Eurovision this year, has auctioned its trophy for a \$900,000 donation to a foundation that helps the Ukrainian army. The trophy—a large crystal microphone with the song contest's logo—was put up for auction on Facebook. The bidding ended Saturday night and was won by WhiteBIT, a Ukrainian bitcoin company. "You guys are amazing!" Kalush Orchestra wrote on Facebook late Sunday announcing the winner.

"Special thanks to the WhiteBIT team

who bought the trophy for \$900,000 (837,000 euros) and are now the rightful owners." The band said that funds raised in auction, which could be entered using cryptocurrencies, will be donated to the Prytula Foundation, which helps the Ukrainian army. The group Kalush Orchestra won the European contest on May 14 with its song "Stefania" mixing hip-hop and traditional music. Russia, which invaded Ukraine on February 24, was excluded from the competition. — AFP



36 years later, 'Top Gun' again tops N America box office

Much-anticipated action film "Top Gun: Maverick" was expected to have a big opening and it did not disappoint, taking in an estimated \$151 million in North America for the four-day Memorial Day weekend, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported. Viewers had to wait 36 years to see the sequel to the original "Top Gun," but critics say the Paramount/Skydance production was worth the wait, with some calling it superior to the original film. "The source material remains strong, the execution is excellent, and Tom Cruise makes it work impeccably well," said analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research.

The film—whose release had been delayed two years by the Covid-19 pandemic—notched \$124 million for the first three days of the holiday weekend and took in the same amount overseas, despite not playing in China or Russia. It was Cruise's first opening to top \$100 million.

He again plays cocky (if grayer) navy test pilot Pete "Maverick" Mitchell, now a captain, as he trains to bomb a rogue nation's uranium enrichment facility. A strong supporting cast includes Ed Harris, Jennifer Connelly, Miles Teller and Jon Hamm; original "Top Gun" veteran Val (Iceman) Kilmer appears briefly.

place, with \$5.9 million for three days and \$7.5 million for four. Based on the hugely popular British series, it again stars Maggie Smith, Hugh Bonneville, Elizabeth McGovern and Michelle Dockery. And in fifth was Universal's family-friendly animation "The Bad Guys," at \$4.6 million for three days and



Slipping a notch to second place was "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," which in its fourth weekend took in \$16.4 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period and \$21.1 million for the full four days. The Disney film, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, had opened to a year's best \$187 million. In third spot was 20th Century's new "Bob's Burgers Movie." The animated film, based on a popular television show, earned \$12.6 million for three days and \$15 million for four. Focus Features' "Downton Abbey: A New Era" took fourth

\$6.1 million for four. Rounding out the top 10 were:

"Sonic the Hedgehog 2" (\$2.5 million for three days; \$3.1 million for four)
 "Everything Everywhere All at Once" (\$2.5 million; \$3.1 million)
 "The Lost City" (\$1.8 million; \$2.3 million)
 "Men" (\$1.2 million; \$1.5 million)
 "Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore" (\$905,000; \$1.1 million)

—AFP



Rut Larsson and her tandem partner Joackim Johansson from Linköping's parachute club pose for a picture before their jump in Motala.

Rut Larsson and her tandem partner Joackim Johansson from Linköping's parachute club perform their parachute jump.

Daredevil granny, 103, beats record for parachute jump



A 103-year-old Swedish woman on Sunday set the world record for the oldest person to complete a tandem parachute jump, saying she planned to celebrate "with a little cake". "It was won-

derful to do this, I've been thinking about it for a long time," Rut Larsson told Swedish news agency TT, adding: "It all went as planned."

With family and friends waiting on the

airfield below, Larsson completed her jump harnessed to parachutist Joackim Johansson in Motala, 240 kilometers (150 miles) southwest of Stockholm. The pair sailed down to the ground smoothly, as helpers rushed to Larsson's side with her walker to help her get up.

Asked what she saw and felt as she came down, Larsson replied: "Nowadays I don't see so well, but it felt good". She said she liked "that you slowly glide down from above, I think it feels nice." An official from the Guinness Book of World Records was on hand to record the jump. Larsson, who is 103 years and 259 days old, beat the previous record of 103 years and 181 days. — AFP



Rut Larsson and her tandem partner Joackim Johansson from Linköping's parachute club complete their parachute jump on a field in Motala.



103-year-old Rut Larsson (center) from Mjölby is given her record certificate by Joanne Brent (right), controller at Guinness world records, and celebrates with parachutists from Linköping's parachute club after she completed her jump in Motala, Sweden. — AFP photos

Sports

Perez claims 'dream' Monaco win as bungled strategy foils Leclerc

Champion Verstappen book third place

MONACO: Sergio Perez took full advantage of his Red Bull team's superior strategic decisions to resist late pressure from Ferrari's Carlos Sainz and win Sunday's rain-delayed and crash-hit Monaco Grand Prix. In a breathless race, completed under a two-hour timing rule, the 32-year-old Mexican came home 1.1 seconds clear of his Spanish rival with Red Bull team-mate, series leader and world champion Max Verstappen third, a further second adrift.

Local favourite Charles Leclerc finished fourth in the second Ferrari after a confused double pit-stop cost him his position as leader. For the Monegasque driver, there was little consolation in finishing the race for the first time after starting from pole. "I have no words," said a bitterly disappointed Leclerc on team radio. An altogether happier Perez was basking in getting his hands on one of the jewels in the F1 calendar.

"It's a dream come true," he said. "As a driver you dream of winning here. After your home race, there is no other more special weekend to win. It's a massive day for myself and my country." It was Perez's first win of the season, ending the domination of Verstappen and Leclerc, and the third of his career, making him the most successful Mexican F1 driver, moving one clear of Pedro Rodriguez. Verstappen was philosophical with a result that moved him nine points ahead of Leclerc in the drivers' championship.

"I tried the best I could and as a team we did a really good job with the strategy," he said, congratulating Perez on his win. George Russell came home fifth for Mercedes with a well-judged drive ahead of

fellow-Briton Lando Norris of McLaren, two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Alpine and a frustrated Lewis Hamilton, the seven-time champion unable to make passing progress in his Mercedes. Valtteri Bottas finished ninth for Alfa Romeo and four-time champion Sebastian Vettel 10th for Aston Martin.

Vettel's fellow-German Mick Schumacher survived a spectacular crash when his Haas car split in two after hitting the barriers. After an hour's delay due to heavy rain and a sequence of cautious decisions by Race Control, followed by two laps behind the Safety Car, the race finally began with a rolling start. In spite of the tension, Leclerc made a smooth start and led Sainz through Ste Devote and up the hill, followed by the rest in grid order amid plumes of spray.

Luckless Leclerc

Leclerc led by 5.4 seconds after 16 laps with Sainz 2.3 clear of Perez who traded his wet tyres for 'inters' allowing Verstappen to take third, followed by Norris and then on lap 19, Leclerc, who re-joined third 13 seconds behind new leader Sainz and Perez. Ferrari, on lap 21, pitted both Sainz and, unexpectedly, Leclerc in a 'double stack' stop for slicks that left the Monegasque driver in a fury, complaining it had cost him places. In a blur of confused radio messages, Leclerc was called in and then asked to stay out as Ferrari realised that Red Bull were also pitting their men for slicks, but it was too late.

As he ranted, Red Bull pitted and emerged on slicks ahead of their respective Ferrari rivals. By lap 26, Perez led ahead of Sainz and Verstappen, with



MONACO: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (right), Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr (2nd right), Red Bull Racing's Mexican driver Sergio Perez (2nd left) and Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (left) compete in the Monaco Formula 1 Grand Prix on May 29, 2022. — AFP

the luckless Leclerc in fourth. Two laps later, the race was halted again when Schumacher lost control and smashed into the barriers in the Swimming Pool complex. His Haas car was severed in two, the gearbox, rear axle and rear wing cut apart, but he emerged unhurt as the Safety Car was deployed again followed by a red flag to allow for the barriers to be repaired.

When the action re-started, behind the Safety Car

on lap 31, Ferrari had switched to used hard dry tyres, and the rest to mediums, for the estimated final 32 laps to the flag as racing resumed in a 'timed' contest. But overtaking proved difficult, if not impossible. With 10 minutes remaining, the top four were separated by two seconds, with Perez hanging on with his worn tyres and Sainz attacking him. Russell remained fifth, eight seconds adrift, but ahead of Norris as the race ended with a two-hour cut off. — AFP

News in brief

All-female rugby officials

LONDON: Scottish referee Hollie Davidson will make history when she leads an all-female team of match officials for the men's international between Portugal and Italy on June 25. Davidson will have England's Sara Cox and France's Aurelie Groizeleau as her assistant referees, with England's Claire Hodnett working as the Television Match Official for the match in Lisbon. It will be the first time an all-female team have taken charge of a men's Test match and the first time a female referee has officiated a men's Six Nations team in a Test. Davidson became Scottish rugby union's first full-time professional women's referee in 2017. She has taken charge of four men's matches in the United Rugby Championship and has also refereed in the European Challenge Cup. "To be the first woman to referee a men's Six Nations team is a tremendous honor and an achievement I am proud of," Davidson said. — AFP

Burns beats Scheffler in playoff

LOS ANGELES: Sam Burns rolled in a 38-foot birdie putt from off the green at the first playoff hole to beat world number one Scottie Scheffler at the Charles Schwab Challenge on Sunday. Burns, seven back to start the day, matched the biggest comeback in tournament history at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas, a mark set by Zimbabwe's Nick Price in 1994. Burns polished it off with a playoff win over his good friend Scheffler. Burns shared a house with the Texan at Augusta in April, when Scheffler won his maiden major title at the Masters. "Gosh, I don't even know," Burns said of how he made his winning putt, some two hours after he had completed a five-under par 65 final round for a nine-under total of 271. — AFP

Cambage denies racial slur

SYDNEY: Australian basketball star Liz Cambage denied on Monday using racist language towards the Nigerian team during a warm-up game for last summer's Tokyo Olympics. The 30-year-old stalwart of the Australian women's Olympic basketball team, the Opals, pulled out of the Games shortly beforehand, citing a struggle with her mental health fuelled by the thought of "terrifying" isolation in the COVID-19 "bubble". But Australian media at the weekend published footage of what it said was a bad-tempered, closed-door practice match in the United States and said that it was this "five minutes of Las Vegas mayhem that ended Liz Cambage's Opals career". — AFP

Marathon cricket summer

SYDNEY: Cricket Australia unveiled a bumper home fixture list on Monday with eight bilateral men's series against five different opponents either side of their defense of the T20 World Cup. The marathon five-month schedule starting in August will thrust the Australian men's team into at least 27 games in front of home supporters rising to 29 if they reach the T20 World Cup final in Melbourne on November 13. Australia's recently-crowned women's 50-over world champions have a lighter program, staging twin limited-overs series against Pakistan in late January. International cricket will return to Perth for the first time since 2019, with the city's new stadium to host the first of two Tests against the West Indies from November 30 with the second a day-night match in Adelaide. — AFP

Ji defeats Furue to capture LPGA Match-Play crown

LOS ANGELES: South Korean Ji Eun-hee won the LPGA Match-Play tournament on Sunday, defeating Japan's Ayaka Furue 3&2 in the championship match at Shadow Creek in Las Vegas. At 36, Ji became the oldest South Korean winner of an LPGA title, taking her first tour victory since the 2019 Tournament of Champions.

Ji called it the hardest victory of her career. "Very much. It was really hard," she said. "We have to play 36 holes (Saturday and Sunday). That makes it a lot harder. My feet almost not moving last couple holes. My back hurts. Really tired now." Ji, ranked 83rd, claimed her sixth career LPGA triumph and the last berth in next week's US Women's Open. Ji's only major title came at the 2009 US Women's Open.

"Definitely day off tomorrow and then try to work hard again," Ji said. "I hit it pretty well this week. I

was really positive going to play." World number 27 Furue, who turned 22 on Friday, is a seven-time winner on the LPGA Japan Tour who earned her way onto the US LPGA circuit for 2022 at qualifying school. In the morning semi-finals, Ji ousted American Andrea Lee 4&3 while Furue defeated American Lilia Vu 2&1. Vu beat Lee 3&2 in the third-place match, each earning her best LPGA finish.

In the final, Ji won the par-4 third hole with a par, but par putt lip outs at the par-5 fifth and seventh holes handed Furue a 1-up lead. Ji responded by winning the next three holes, taking the par-3 eighth with a five-foot birdie putt after Furue made a sand-save par putt from 12 feet. Ji holed out from the fairway for eagle at the par-5 ninth, her approach landing and rolling two feet ahead into the cup, then sank a six-foot par putt at the 10th to seize a 2-up advantage.

Furue won on Ji's concession at the 11th after finding greenside rough out of a bunker but Furue missed a four-foot par putt to drop the 12th and fall 2-down to Ji once again. Ji's seven-foot par putt at the 14th kept her 2-up while Furue holed a 12-footer to par the 15th and stay 2-down with three holes remaining. At the par-5 16th, Ji needed two shots to escape greenside



LAS VEGAS: Ji Eun-hee of South Korea poses with the champions trophy after defeating Ayaka Furue of Japan 3&2 on May 29, 2022. — AFP

rough but sank a clutch 10-foot par putt while Furue missed a par putt from just inside 10 feet to drop the hole and the match. — AFP

Sweden's Marcus Ericsson wins 106th Indianapolis 500

WASHINGTON: Sweden's Marcus Ericsson won the 106th Indianapolis 500 on Sunday, holding off Mexico's Pato O'Ward in a two-lap shootout after a late red flag halted the race. Chip Ganassi driver Ericsson was leading O'Ward by more than a second when Jimmie Johnson's crash with five laps remaining brought out the red flag in the 200-lap classic at the famed 2.5-mile (4km) Indy oval. "Those 10 minutes sitting there in the pit lane during that red flag was some of the hardest 10 minutes of my life," Ericsson said.

When the green flag waved for full-speed racing with two laps remaining, Ericsson repelled O'Ward's attempt to pass early on the final lap to claim the victory. "Pato had a really good run on me," Ericsson said. "I just kept my foot down and that was the race-winning move. He made me work for it, for sure." Ericsson became the second Swede to win the race after Kenny Brack in 1999. Brazil's Tony Kanaan grabbed third place for Ganassi as teammate Scott Dixon endured another Indy 500 heart-break after starting from pole.

New Zealand veteran Dixon, who won from pole in 2008, led much of the race but was handed a pit lane speed violation penalty on his final pit stop with 23 laps remaining. "Come on! Are you serious?" Dixon could be heard yelling into his radio as he was informed of the violation that sent him to the



INDIANAPOLIS: Marcus Ericsson, driver of the #8 Huski Chocolate Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, leads a pack of cars during the 106th running of the Indianapolis 500 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on May 29, 2022. — AFP

back of the pack. It marked the fourth time that Dixon—a six-time IndyCar series champion—had started from pole and failed to win the fabled race. He has been runner-up three times.

"It's heartbreaking," Dixon said. "I came into the pit and had to lock the rears and kind of locked all four. I knew it was going to be close. I think it was a mile an hour over or something. Just frustrating. I just messed up." While Ganassi had five cars starting in the first four rows on Sunday, Ericsson wasn't looking like the likeliest team driver to win for most of the day. Dixon and Spanish teammate Alex Palou traded the lead early before a pit lane penalty ended Palou's chances.

Ericsson notched his third career IndyCar victory after winning at Detroit and Nashville last year.

He was in control with five laps remaining when US stock car great Johnson, making his Indianapolis 500 debut, hit the wall in turn three, scattering debris across the track. Organizers, not wanting to finish the race under a yellow flag caution, brought out the red flag to bring the drivers into the pits. "I couldn't believe it," Ericsson said. "I was praying so hard it was not going to be another yellow." Even with the restart giving him a chance to pass Ericsson, O'Ward said he simply didn't have the necessary speed. — AFP

Gauff, Stephens in all-American French Open showdown

PARIS: Teenager Coco Gauff will bid to reach her first Grand Slam semi-final on Tuesday at the French Open when she takes on experienced compatriot Sloane Stephens in the last eight. The 18-year-old is playing in her second straight Roland Garros quarter-final after losing to eventual champion Barbora Krejickova 12 months ago. Five different US players have reached the women's quarter-finals in the last five years, but there has not been an American champion since Serena Williams won her third title in 2015. World number one Iga Swiatek is the only top-10 seed left in the draw and is firm favorite for the title.

But Gauff believes that "anybody can win", using last year's US Open—when qualifier Emma Raducanu

beat fellow teenager Leylah Fernandez in the final—as an example. "I know that some of the higher seeds on my side definitely dropped out of the draw," she said. "I'm thinking, especially if US Open taught us anything, anybody can win on any day. I think all players should really (be) going into the match thinking about that." Gauff added: "I think really we just have to take a step back, especially in the Grand Slams, and not look at rankings anymore."

It will be Gauff's second meeting with former US Open champion Stephens, after falling to a straight-sets defeat when they met in an all-American second-round clash at Flushing Meadows last year. "I think last time I played her I was super nervous going into the match," she said. "Not because it was Sloane. Just because we were on (Arthur) Ashe (court) and it was an all-American match-up. I think a lot of people expected a lot from me in that match."

Stephens is hoping to reach the semi-finals of a major event for the first time since losing the 2018 French Open final to Simona Halep. The 29-year-old has slipped from a career-high of world number three



PARIS: US' Coco Gauff returns the ball to Belgium's Elise Mertens during their women's singles match on day eight of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Philippe-Chatrier. — AFP

to 64th spot in the WTA rankings. But the clay-court tournament is the only Grand Slam where Stephens has made three quarter-finals. — AFP

Sports

France blames 'massive' ticket fraud for fiasco

Chaotic scenes mar Champions League final

PARIS: France on Monday blamed massive ticket fraud for the chaotic scenes that marred the Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid that raised questions over the capacity of Paris to host the 2024 Olympics. The French government has faced a barrage of criticism from press and politicians in Britain over police handling of the match on Saturday, which saw thousands of Liverpool fans with tickets struggling to enter.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman told reporters in London many Liverpool fans were in the French capital "in good time". "We're hugely disappointed by how they were treated," the spokesman added. "Fans deserve to know what happened." But after a crisis meeting at the sports ministry, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin defiantly insisted that ticket scams and the behavior of Liverpool fans was to blame.

"What has been confirmed is a massive, industrial-scale and organized fraud in fake tickets... this was the root cause of the delay to the match," Darmanin said, also charging that Liverpool fans had been less well-organized than their Spanish counterparts. Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera said French authorities were "extremely sorry" for the approximately 2,700 fans with tickets

that were unable to enter the Stade de France because of the crowd control problems and suggested they receive compensation.

The scenes tarnished the image of the French capital, raising questions about its ability to host major sporting events as it gears up for the 2024 Olympics, as well as the 2023 Rugby World Cup. Leading French daily Le Monde echoed the British complaints Monday, saying the French authorities were "in denial" about their shortcomings that had turned the event into a "fiasco".

'Absolutely shambolic'

Monday's meeting at the sports ministry involved European football's governing body UEFA, French football chiefs and the French police. Darmanin and Paris police chief Didier Lallement were both in attendance, along with the Sports Minister Oudea-Castera. Lallement has called for a formal investigation into the production of fake tickets, which he said had helped cause the problems. Darmanin defended the policing of the final, saying officers had "prevented deaths" that might have been caused by crowd crushes outside the stadium to the north of Paris.

He acknowledged that some officers had been

seen making "inappropriate" use of teargas, after images posted on social media showed even children being targeted at close range. But he said it was "rather low and disproportionate" to criticize the police, adding: "The decisions that were taken prevented deaths." The chaos inevitably brought back painful memories for Liverpool, a club haunted by the 1989 Hillsborough disaster which cost the lives of 97 people in a stadium crush.

Labour MP for Liverpool area Ian Byrne, who was present at the match, told Sky News that the fans had been treated "like animals". "It was horrific—there's no other words to describe it. It was absolutely horrific and as someone who was at Hillsborough in 1989, it brought so many terrible memories flooding back," he said. The mayor of Liverpool, Joanne Anderson, who was also at the scene, told the BBC that it was "absolutely shambolic" but also the police behavior was also really brutal. Liverpool Football Club have requested a formal investigation.

'Not worried'

The match was delayed by 36 minutes, almost unprecedented for an occasion of this magnitude and a huge embarrassment for UEFA and the French

authorities. Oudea-Castera told RTL radio that Liverpool, in contrast to Real Madrid, had failed to properly organise the supporters who came to Paris. "Liverpool let its supporters on the loose, this is a major difference," she said.

The minister added that there had been 30,000 to 40,000 Liverpool fans with fake tickets or without tickets outside the Stade de France. Part of the problem was Liverpool's request for paper tickets for its fans, rather than electronic ones, both ministers said. But Oudea-Castera insisted France was capable of hosting major sporting events. "I am not worried, I am very committed that we learn absolutely all the lessons from what happened on Saturday evening to improve everything," she said.

Paris had been awarded the final three months ago after Saint Petersburg was stripped of the event because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The French interior ministry said 105 people had been detained, of whom 39 were placed under arrest and remanded in custody, meaning they could face charges. In another instance of football trouble in France, angry Saint-Etienne fans invaded the pitch after they were relegated from Ligue 1 on Sunday in their play-off against Auxerre, with French police using tear gas. — AFP



Kuwait athletes shine at Third Gulf Games

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Third Gulf Games Kuwait 2022 concludes today, as Gulf athletes competed for 16 days in various games - 16 for men and 7 for women. New games were introduced in this years' games - most notably Padel and eSport. The final day of the championship will see the finals in fencing, tennis and handball. Kuwait athletes are eyeing more gold medals they continue their lead in the Games. Kuwait fencers started strongly yesterday when they won the singles Sabre and Foil competitions despite the fierce competition. Ammar Al-Ammari won the gold medal after defeating Saudi Ali Al-Bahrani 15-7 in the final match.

Meanwhile, Kuwait fencer Mohammad Al-Fadhli and Saudi Adel Al-Mutairi shared the bronze. Ali Abbas won gold. He defeated Qatar's Ali Ouwaidha in the Foil final, while Kuwait's Yaqoub Al-Shatti and Ali Nassar won two bronze medals. Al-Ammari said he trained hard for the gold and won all his matches in the tournament and promised to work harder.

Tennis

The tennis competitions will be concluded today with a match between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia - for the teams' gold medal. Kuwait enters the final match with 6 points through after they beat Bahrain, UAE and Qatar. Kuwait's tennis player Essa Qabazard (singles gold medalist) called for organizing an annual tennis championship which he said will have a



positive effect on Gulf players.

Fight for Handball Gold

Handball fans will be at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah Halls Complex to see the closing of the Third Gulf Games with a decisive game between Qatar and Bahrain for the gold medal in the fifth and final round of the competition. This match will be preceded with a match between UAE and Saudi Arabia at 5:00 pm. In the fourth round, Kuwait defeated UAE 24-20 while Bahrain defeated Saudi Arabia 35-27.

Al-Mousawi wins gold

Kuwait Karate player Sayyed Mohammad Al-Mousawi won the gold medal of the Kata competition, while UAE's Marwan Abdallah won Silver. Qatar's Hisham Adham and Saudi Arabia's Misfir Al-Asmari won bronze.

Women basketball

Kuwait women basketball 3x3 team won the silver medal after losing to UAE 8-12 in the final match. Bahrain grabbed third after defeating Saudi Arabia 10-9. Assistant secretary at Kuwait Basketball association Ouwayed Al-Enezi said Kuwait women participation in the tournament is satisfactory.



Police, fans clash as Saint-Etienne relegated

SAINT-ETIENNE: Saint-Etienne, one of France's biggest clubs, were relegated from Ligue 1 on Sunday after losing a penalty shoot-out in their play-off against Auxerre, who return to the top flight after 10 years away. Their defeat was greeted by a pitch invasion by angry Saint-Etienne fans and the intervention of French police who used tear gas to stem the trouble. Saint-Etienne, who finished third from bottom in Ligue 1, had already drawn the first leg of their play-off 1-1 with Ligue 2's Auxerre. Sunday's second leg at their Stade Geoffroy-Guichard also ended 1-1 with Saint-Etienne's Mahdi Camara cancelling out Hamza Sakhi's opener.

Tearful Marcelo bids farewell as Madrid celebrate 14th Cup

MADRID: Real Madrid captain Marcelo bid a tearful farewell as the players celebrated winning a 14th European Cup at the Santiago Bernabeu. Real Madrid defeated Liverpool 1-0 at the Stade de France on Saturday night, with Vinicius Junior scoring the winning goal to secure the club their fifth Champions League title in the last nine seasons. To celebrate the success, the players took the trophy on an open-top bus tour around Madrid on Sunday, which included stops at the Almudena Cathedral, regional government headquarters, City Hall, Plaza Cibeles and finally the Santiago Bernabeu.

Marcelo led the celebrations and broke into tears as he was presented to the crowd inside the stadium. The Brazilian has been at Real Madrid since 2007 and leaves this summer after collecting his fifth Champions League trophy. "It is a wonderful moment in my life, I close a cycle here, at the best club in the world," Marcelo said in a speech to the fans. "Today is not a day of sadness, it is a day of joy because we have won again, the best competition in the world."

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez had earlier told the team to turn their attention to winning a 15th European Cup next season. "Real Madrid has made history again and here is our 14th European Cup and 35th La Liga trophy," Perez said at the regional government headquarters. "This European Cup, won against a legendary club like Liverpool, will be remembered as one of the greatest in the history of the Champions League."

"This club's legend grows bigger and bigger. We have beaten four of the best teams in Europe by fighting and always believing until the end. "It has been a wonderful season and it has been achieved in one of the most beautiful and difficult times in our history. Five Champions Leagues in eight years is something very difficult for football fans to forget from all over the world. Madrid is

With the scores 2-2, the tie went into a penalty shoot-out which Auxerre edged 5-4 with goalkeeper Donovan Leon making a crucial save to deny Ryad Boudebou. As soon as Birama Toure converted the final penalty to win the tie, Saint-Etienne fans invaded the pitch and threw flares towards the official stand. The players of both teams took refuge in the changing rooms but Prime Video television footage from the tunnel showed players, stewards and staff coughing from tear gas used by the police on the pitch to disperse the invaders.

Saint-Etienne have already been sanctioned several times this season for the behavior of its supporters and this game was played with one stand closed following incidents during the match against Monaco at the end of April. The result marks the end of a nightmarish season for the 10-time French champions who are now facing serious financial difficulties as they return to Ligue 2 for the first time since gaining promotion in 2004. — AFP

eternal. And now, let's go for the 15th."

'Haven't slept much'

Perez also praised Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who this season has become the first coach to win four European Cups and the first to win all five major European leagues. "He symbolizes what Real Madrid is," said Perez. Dressed in black suits, white shirts and black ties, the Real Madrid players paraded the Champions League and La Liga trophies at each location, while also signing shirts, giving autographs and posing for photos with their adoring fans. On top of the bus, the players put on Real Madrid shirts that had the number 14 and 'champions' written on the back.

"I haven't slept much, I had too much adrenaline to be able to sleep," said Thibaut Courtois, Real Madrid's goalkeeper who was named man of the match in the final. "I still couldn't believe it, it's an incredible feeling. For me it's an honor to play for Real Madrid and I hope I can help the team win more." Thousands of fans gathered at Plaza Cibeles, the central square at the end of Gran Via, where the club traditionally celebrates its biggest successes around the statue of the goddess Cybele.

Marcelo tied a Real Madrid scarf around the statue's crown, draped a flag around its neck and kissed its cheek, before hoisting the Champions League trophy to huge cheers. Marcelo was wearing five large gold rings on his fingers, one for each of his Champions League victories. The players took it turns to sing songs to the crowd while Eden Hazard made a pledge for next season. "It's been three years of injuries and other things but next season I will do everything for you," Hazard told the supporters.

The players then took the bus to the Santiago Bernabeu, where they were presented to the fans one by one. Gareth Bale, who will leave this summer after a turbulent last few years at Real Madrid, was applauded and cheered by the supporters, with Bale applauding them in return. "Thank you for all the support," said Ancelotti in a short speech. "What a season, what a season. In this stadium, we've had a nice time, a really nice time. We are all Madridistas like you." — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|------------------------|------------|
| Sabah Hospital | 24812000 | Al-Razi Hospital | 24846000 |
| Amiri Hospital | 22450005 | Physiotherapy Hospital | 24874330/9 |
| Maternity Hospital | 24843100 | | |
| Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital | 25312700 | | |
| Chest Hospital | 24849400 | | |
| Farwaniya Hospital | 24892010 | Kaizen center | 25716707 |
| Adan Hospital | 23940620 | Rawda | 22517733 |
| Ibn Sina Hospital | 24840300 | Adaliya | 22517144 |

Clinics

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|---------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| Khaldiya | 24848075 | Dasmah | 22532265 |
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MIAMI: The Boston Celtics celebrate with the Bob Cousy Eastern Conference Championship Trophy after Game 7 of the 2022 NBA Playoffs Eastern Conference Finals on May 29, 2022. —AFP

Celtics overcome Heat in game 7

Boston Celtics set up a title showdown against Warriors

MIAMI: The Boston Celtics, sparked by 26 points from Jayson Tatum, advanced to the NBA Finals by defeating Miami 100-96 on Sunday, setting up a title showdown against the Golden State Warriors. Boston captured the winner-takes-all matchup to claim the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals 4-3 and secure a place in the championship series, which begins Thursday in San Francisco. "We aren't satisfied. We've still got a long way to go," Tatum said. "We know we have a tough task ahead. I'm looking forward to it." The Celtics, who eliminated 2021 NBA champion Milwaukee in seven games, led from start to finish but had to hold off a Heat fightback in the dying minutes to reach their first NBA Finals since 2010.

"We fought through a lot of adversity," Celtics coach Ime Udoka said. "We're a resilient group. We can't ever really slam the door but we held them off. 'Now our focus is to win four more.'" Boston advanced after losing the conference finals three times in the past five seasons. "To get over the hump with this group, it means every-

thing," Tatum said. "Not a lot of people believed in us, but it worked out." Tatum, who also had 10 rebounds and six assists, was named the Eastern Conference Most Valuable Player.

"It was the biggest game of my career," Tatum said. "Going through those tough times helped us grow, helped us learn. They kept coming at us. We kept responding. We left it all on the floor. We got it done." Marcus Smart and Jaylen Brown each added 24 points for Boston while Jimmy Butler led Miami with 35 points in a losing cause. "Not good enough. I didn't do enough," Butler said. "Stats don't mean anything. I learned I have to be better and I will be better. We're going to come back better than ever."

Miami, the East's top seed, missed a chance at a second NBA Finals trip in three years and a first title since 2013. "It's one of the worst feelings in the world to address your locker room after a game like this," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "It's heartbreaking when it

ends like this." Golden State split two games with the Celtics in the regular season, winning 111-107 in December at Boston and losing 110-88 in March at home when star guard Stephen Curry was injured.

Boston hadn't been to the finals since losing 12 years ago to the Los Angeles Lakers. The Celtics haven't won the NBA crown since 2008. The Warriors, in the NBA Finals for the sixth time in eight years, seek their fourth title in that span and the first since 2018. "This is a great opportunity. This is what you put all the work in for your whole life," Brown said. "We've got to embrace it but also embrace the challenge. 'We're playing a team that has been there, done that before. We've got to come with our A-game.'"

'We persevered'

Smart had six points in a 10-1 spurt by Boston for a 65-52 Celtics lead early in the third quarter, but a 7-0 Heat run soon after pulled Miami within 72-65 and the

Celtics carried an 82-75 lead into the final quarter. An 8-0 Celtics run early in the fourth quarter lifted Boston ahead 90-79, the Heat missing nine shots in a row. "We had plenty of opportunities. We just couldn't get control of the game," Spoelstra said. "Most of the game we were grinding." Max Strus's three-pointer closed an 11-0 run to lift Miami within 98-96 in the dying seconds, but Butler missed a late three-pointer. Smart hit two free throws and the Celtics held on.

"We've been responding all year to adversity," Brown said. "Today was the biggest test of the year, of our careers, and we got past it. 'We persevered. We got the job done.'" Boston's Al Horford, a 35-year-old Dominican center, played 44 minutes and grabbed a game-high 14 rebounds to reach his first NBA Finals. "I'm happy to be sharing this moment with these guys," Horford said. "This is a special group." Butler, who had 24 first-half points, played all 48 minutes. "We just couldn't afford to have him off the court," Spoelstra said. —AFP



PARIS: This combination of file photos shows (left) Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Spain's Rafael Nadal in Paris. —AFP

Djokovic braced to deliver Nadal hammer blow

PARIS: Novak Djokovic renews his epic 16-year rivalry with Rafael Nadal at the French Open on Tuesday with a semi-final spot at stake and where victory could end the 13-time champion's Roland Garros career. Nadal, who will turn 36 on Friday, puts his record of 109 wins and just three losses in Paris, since his title-winning debut in 2005, on the line against the defending champion.

The Spaniard was taken to five sets for only the third time in his tournament history by 21-year-old Felix Auger-Aliassime in the fourth round. In the immediate aftermath of that victory, Nadal admitted that not only was this year's French Open at stake for him but possibly his entire playing future. "I know my situation, and I accept it. I can't complain much," said Nadal, who arrived in Paris unsure if he would be able to take part after suffering a recurrence in Rome of a chronic foot injury which has plagued him for large parts of his career.

"I am just enjoying the fact that I am here for one more year. And being honest, every match that I play here, I don't know if it's going to be my last at Roland Garros. 'I went through a tough process again with my foot, so I don't know what can happen in the near future.'" Overall, Djokovic leads Nadal 30-28 since their first career meeting at the 2006 French Open.

Nadal has a 19-8 edge on clay and has won seven of the pair's nine meetings in Paris. Djokovic, however, came out on top in the semi-finals at Roland Garros in 2021 on his way to a second title.

Night fears

That defeat took a physical toll on Nadal who then skipped Wimbledon, the Olympics and the US Open. With Djokovic departed from Melbourne on the eve of the Australian Open, Nadal seized the opportunity to claim a record-setting 21st Grand Slam title, breaking a tie with Djokovic and Roger Federer. Both men are playing in the quarter-finals at Roland Garros for the 16th time. Djokovic has reached the last-eight with ease. He has won 22 sets in a row, a run stretching back to his Italian Open triumph in Rome.

"I'm glad that I didn't spend too much time on the court up to the quarter-finals, knowing that playing Nadal in Roland Garros is always a physical battle. It's a huge challenge and probably the biggest one that you can have here," said Djokovic. Adding an extra twist to the clash was a battle of wills over scheduling which Nadal lost Monday when organizers selected the clash for the night session under the Court Philippe Chatrier lights.

"I don't like to play on clay during the night, because the humidity is higher, the ball is slower, and there can be very heavy conditions especially when it's cold," said Nadal. Djokovic had hinted he would prefer to face Nadal as late as possible. "All I will say is Rafa and I would make different requests," he said. Carlos Alcaraz, who faces Alexander Zverev also on Tuesday, said it would have been "unfair" if he was ordered to play after 9pm for the third time. Nadal and Djokovic have played one match each after dark. —AFP

Forest promoted to Premier League for first time in 23 years

LONDON: Nottingham Forest clinched promotion to the Premier League for the first time in 23 years with a 1-0 win against Huddersfield in the Championship play-off final on Sunday. Levi Colwill's own goal late in the first half at Wembley was enough for Steve Cooper's side to hit the jackpot in the most lucrative single match in world football. Promotion to the top-flight is estimated to be worth at least £170 million (\$214 million) in increased revenue.

Forest will gratefully accept the huge financial windfall, but it was the relief at ending their long exile from English football's elite that spurred the frenzied scenes of celebration among their thousands of red and white-clad fans. For the first time in the 21st century, Forest can look forward to welcoming the Premier League's elite to their City Ground stadium on the banks of the River Trent. The promotion was a personal triumph for Cooper, who has revitalised Forest since replacing the sacked Chris Hughton in September.

Forest were bottom of the table after taking one point from their first seven games, but Cooper had the midas touch as he erased the bitter taste of his defeat with Swansea in last year's Championship play-off final against Brentford. "I'm really pleased for the players and the supporters. Everybody connected with the football club deserves this today and we're now really looking forward to a positive future," Cooper said. "It's relief and pride. This isn't about me but it's changed my life, potentially anyway. 'We've brought Nottingham to Wembley today, we've taken over the place and here we are in the Premier League.'"

Cooper repaired the wounds of Forest's worst start to a season for 108 years and ensured they remained focus after losing a shot at automatic promotion in their penultimate game of the season against top-two rivals Bournemouth. Fourth placed Forest beat Sheffield United on penalties in the play-off semi-final and held their nerve again to earn the ultimate prize against Huddersfield. Having knocked Arsenal and Leicester out of this season's FA Cup before losing narrowly to Liverpool, Forest's sleeping giants have awoken from their slumber at last.



LONDON: Nottingham Forest's English striker Lewis Grabban lifts the Championship Playoff trophy after Nottingham Forest's victory at the end of the English Championship play-off final football match between Huddersfield Town and Nottingham Forest on May 29, 2022. —AFP

Back in the big time

Forest's golden period came under legendary boss Brian Clough, who led them to the English title in 1978 and won the European Cup in 1979 and 1980. Clough's retirement in 1993 triggered a steep decline in Forest's fortunes, with their wilderness years featuring a three-season spell in the third tier. Forest had been regular visitors to Wembley during Clough's heyday but this was their first appearance at the national stadium since 1992. No wonder the Forest supporters in the 80,000 crowd were in fine voice from the moment Ryan Yates headed James Garner's free-kick wastefully wide from six yards. Forest were the better side in a frantic encounter, but there was more perspiration than inspiration for long periods as passes went astray from both teams. Driven forward by on-loan Manchester United midfielder Garner, Forest broke the deadlock in the 43rd minute.

Garner whipped a dangerous inswinging cross into the Huddersfield area and Colwill inadvertently deflected it into his own net as the on-loan Chelsea defender tried to get to the ball before Yates. Rocked by that blow, Huddersfield finally raised their tempo after half-time and Jonathan Hogg should have done better with a header that failed to hit the target from a corner. The decisive moment came in the 73rd minute when Huddersfield were left fuming after being denied a strong penalty claim. Harry Toffolo went down under a challenge from Jack Colback but referee Jon Moss booked the Huddersfield wing-back for diving and VAR refused to overturn the decision. —AFP